



Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Department of Tourism & Northern Studies

Laughing through the unknown

Implementing humor into guiding work by international students in Alta, Norway

Maksim Zakharov

Master thesis in Tourism Master Studies REI-3910 Spring 2022



Figure 1: Cruise boat in Alta harbor. Photo by: Maksim Zakharov, 2020

Foreword

Life is an interesting thing, and it is often impossible to predict what awaits us in the future. We are living day by day, following the routine, and often it is hard to see the big picture. Even when you are striving to achieve something, at least it was like this for me, it is difficult to see the progress when comparing two neighboring days, weeks or even months. And only when you reach your goal, your mountain peak, your cherished, beautiful dream, only then you can step aside, put down your tools, take a deep breath, and look over the path in awe of how far you have come.

As I am writing this thesis and contemplating about all the steps that led me to this moment, I can say that I consider myself a very lucky person, because, and I see it clearly now, every time when I was lost, every time when I was in trouble, in times of adversity, I was never left alone. Instead, I always found myself at the doorsteps of amazing people, who always helped me to find my purpose and my motivation, and guide me to the right path.

Taking the possibility, I would like to express my gratitude to those who have been with me on this journey.

I would like to say thank you to my English teacher and my friend, Elena Khromova. Dear Elena, it can, of course, sound funny, but it all started with you. Back in 2013, after countless failed attempts to learn English in school and after it, I was quite depressed and frankly came to terms with the fact that I would never be able to speak any English... Then I met you. I still remember your words in the beginning of our journey, when I was still a lazy person and frankly a huge procrastinator, you said to me, referring to my abilities in the English language, that I had a choice to either put in hard work and finally achieve my dream, or come to a halt, forget what little I have already achieved, and go back to my old life. I can not stress enough how important it was for me to hear it. Your words changed everything! And by this day, as well as for days to come, this is my best motivation, and whenever I feel lazy, weak, or unmotivated, I always remember you and your words, and it helps me to move forward. Thank you, my dear friend!

I would like to say thank you to my supervisor and my teacher Kari Jæger. Dear Kari, thank you very much for your help and guidance. In all those five years that I have been your

student, I have learned from you a lot, and you have helped me to overcome my greatest fears in studies, and made me look at the education process from a different perspective. I used to think that the final project, whether it is an exam or a thesis, must be some sort of final product, the last chapter, so to say, where I draw the line at the end of my educational journey. It was always bringing me a lot of stress. Your words, when you were my supervisor for my Bachelor thesis, that I should refrain from seeing my thesis as a final product, but rather consider it a part of the learning process, and by writing the thesis I am not only showing my competence, but also actually learning how to write a thesis, had a great impact on me and eased my worries, allowing me to concentrate on, value and trust the process, rather than result. Thank you for that!

I would like to say thank you to my friend and co-worker Martin Isaksen. The part-time job with Isbil was my salvation, when in the beginning of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic reached Northern Norway, and many businesses were shut down, when there were no tourists, and all my classmates were laid off their part-time jobs, working for Isbil and having a steady income was vital for my studies. Plus, driving around and selling ice-cream was and still is a lot of fun! All those wonderful summer days, filled with Isbilen melody, meeting happy kids waving along the road, will stay in my memory forever. Thank you, Martin, for all those fishing trips. Those beautiful moments when one can reconnect with nature, become the one with fjords and water are priceless! Your words, that in life as in fishing, there is no place for rush helped me balance my life, and made me remember about the importance of slowing down and taking a break.

I would like to say thank you to my friend and co-worker Jonathan Matte. My journey as a guide started with you, and you were a great example of how to be a guide and how to manage humor professionally. I want to thank you for your optimism and for your life philosophy. I have taken a great deal of time to think about it, and now I see its advantages. I will remember it and apply it to my life, as it will definitely help me move forward.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my family and friends, for always believing in me; and to all my peers and co-workers for such a fantastic time we had together. My heart goes out to all of you!

And thank you, Mom! I know, my childhood must have been challenging for you, and I admire your strength.

UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Campus Alta, 15th May 2022

Maksim Zakharov

Abstract

There can be different views and opinions about what it takes to be a newcomer when travelling for educational or work purposes. Some people can find it fairly uncomfortable when faced with new social norms, languages, rules, and regulations; while others are eager to embrace all challenges and immerse themselves into the new environment. Different people can employ different solutions - some can often think for a long time and hesitate before making the big decision, ruminating about each and every step, how something could (or even would) go wrong, while others promptly decide just to take the leap of faith, open a new chapter of their life, and worry about the consequences later. In some sense, I believe, it's the kernel of exchange students' life - they jump into the unknown, change the country, city, university, and then figure out things "on the go".

Norway overall, and Alta city particularly, provide international and exchange students with once-in-a lifetime opportunity to experience multiculturalism, Nordic educational system, pristine nature, and last but not least the aspect of work life, even though part-time; and this aspect, still and all being part-time and ultimately non-essential for study purposes, can be of great interest for above mentioned students, as it provides them with such valuable things as a new network in local businesses, real-life work experience (often related to the studies), and additional income, to name some of those.

When I came to Norway to study Arctic Adventure Tourism in the distant glorious 2017, I also got a part time job as a guide in one of the local businesses, but my first tours were not staggeringly successful, to put it lightly. Even though the company I have been working for has invested a lot of time and effort in training all new guides and has been very helpful in providing the information about the area, for me, as a newcomer it was quite hard to memorize all the facts about the region, partly due to the fact that it was my first months here, and since I have never lived in the Arctic before, everything was new and exciting, from dazzling radiance of the midnight sun at 3 AM, to mysterious romance of polar nights; and party because even if I memorized all the material, it was quite unnatural, and honestly seemed boring for me to just cite the facts by memory. Thus, I had a feeling that there was something essential that I was lacking in my performance makeup as a guide.

As months went by, I came to meet more and more guides who were, same as I, international students and were quite puzzled as to how to approach the guide job. Being, like myself, limited, as non-locals, in deep knowledge and experience about the area, they too were forced to implement other techniques in their work in order to have productive tours, gain work experience, and hold to the job, as more often than not, it was a valuable resource of income to sustain a student's life, and through the exchange of experience and thoughts, slowly but surely I was coming to the idea that, as it seemed, one of the universal ways to appear as an interesting and knowledgeable guide and storyteller, that has been used by the majority of newcomers, was to implement humor into work, thus improving the quality of tours and the overall emotional state of the guests; and with a qualitative research approach, with the use of interviews of currently employed and former guides, I will show the importance of implementation as well as types and timing of humor in the guiding work.

The idea to write my thesis about the topic of using humor in the guiding work has emerged from evaluating of and reflecting on my personal work experience as a guide and contemplating about my future occupation. There is no doubt that the studies in tourism and the training provided by the company I have been working for, have been a vital source of information and essential pillars for my road to success as a guide, but the topic of applying humor has always been something I was exploring on my own and learning about, by trial and error.

All the pictures that have been used in this work are my own, and have been made by me during my hiking or working hours.

Keywords: Guiding, tourism, students, humor, humor in guiding, laughing, cruise boat, guide, performance, tourist experience, experience, experience production, international students, role of guide, improving the work of guides, Alta, Hurtigruten, Northern Norway, Arctic.

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1 Introduction

Guiding is a fascinating profession with deep roots in our history: “Humans have roamed the earth since they emerged, and the earliest historical accounts refer to those who lead the way – “pathfinders,” “bear leaders,” “proxemos,” and “cicerones” – all antecedents of today’s guides.” (Pond, 1993, p. 1).

In the modern world, however, there has been a slight shift in the meaning of the guides’ role, and nowadays we can find in literature that: “Most tour managers and guides work as freelancers; it is very, very unusual to be employed full-time.” (Collins, 2000, p. x). So now, it is not a secret that a city tour guiding job often seems as an entry-level position with no age and/or formal educational requirement, and as Collins (2000) pointed out: “if you enjoy your job and can enthuse your audience, you will find work from the age of 16 to 75 and over.” (p. x). Some may even refuse to consider it a job, but rather label it as a hobby, and they can rightfully do so since it is hard to rely on a single source of income, especially if it is based on travel and leisure activities, taking into consideration all the weak spots of any tourism-related profession and its heavy reliance on the one crucial peoples’ ability – to travel, which in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic may be jeopardized: “The landmark report, published at a time of unprecedented disruption for the sector, shows that almost all global destinations have imposed restrictions on travel since January 2020, including complete bans on all travel as they work to contain the pandemic.” (World Tourism Organization, 2020).

Yet, in scholars we can find that a guiding profession has just relatively recently started its evolution, as Pond (1993), highlighting future possibilities of tourism: “As the twenty-first century draws near, travel and tourism is emerging as the world’s largest and most dynamic industry.” (p. vii), specifically pointed out about guiding: “Over the past few years, several guide guilds and associations have emerged worldwide, galvanizing the profession and exploring such long-ignored issues as education, certification, and business practices, among many others.” (Pond, 1993, p. vii), which gives rise for the hope that when the pandemic is over and travel restrictions are lifted worldwide, everything will get back to normal, and the guiding profession will continue its growth and development, providing new workplaces for professional guides, and will be a source of additional income as well as serve as a vital work experience which is so necessary for students.

When discussing guides and guiding work, first and foremost one might imagine a person with local knowledge, possibly one who was born in this particular area, and who knows a particular city in excruciating details, whom others can trust in confidence and knowledge, as they see him or her as some sort of authority in a particular area, or, in the words of Cohen (1985) : “The two lines of origin of the modern tourist guide are the pathfinder and the mentor. These are the antecedents, respectively, of the leadership and the mediatory spheres in the guide's role.” (p. 5).

Surely, guides play an important role in conducting a tour, or as it was mentioned by Pond (1993): “The tour guide makes or breaks the tour.” (p. 65); and thus, consciously or unconsciously bears a responsibility to guests and him/herself to perform accordingly; but what about those who have little to no knowledge about a place they are about to guide in, but yet have a burning desire or/and a need to take a job? How can they compensate for the initial lack of knowledge and become competent and experienced guides, having zero background in the social and geographical area without sacrificing the quality of the “guiding product”? It is doubtful that there are a lot of people who would like to pay for a guided tour in order to get the information about the area, to listen to its history and learn about the way of life of people of the past and present, yet, sit in silence instead, and just enjoy through the window an ever changing, so close but so foreign landscape.

One of the possible solutions of improving the quality of tours provided by not so well experienced guides, as I see it, apart from memorizing numerous historic books in the hurry, can be an opportunity to recruit humor on tour, compensating for the lack of experience with a more personalized (or customized, if you will) approach and thus shift from the role of the sole provider of information to the realm of edutainment, i.e. a mix of education and entertainment. As a matter of fact, the ability of working in both directions by providing tourists with knowledge and information as well as employing the possibility to do it in a more personalized approach, catering to the needs and wants of tourists and not seeing them as a mere audience is, according to Cohen (1985), the sign of a professional tourist guide: “interpretation and not the mere dissemination of information, is the distinguishing communicative function of the trained tourist guide.” (p. 15).

I have built my thesis as a complete overview of all the necessary parts the guiding job consists of, with the logical ascension as the tour progress. The selection of literature starts from the general overview of the tours and tourists, describing various factors of travelers’

motivation as well as presenting possible age brackets of tourists in order to better understand what and how a guide might be expected to perform. After classifying possible tourists and their reasons for travelling I move on to explain the guiding job overall and the roles of guides in particular, touching on such subjects as guides' personality traits and domains of operation. I end the literature review with a thorough explanation of the humor factor and its functions, focusing on such distinct roles as emotional, social and cognitive.

When working with literature, I tried to lay emphasis on the humor part, describing and discussing in detail how humor works, because firstly there is not so much discussion available at the moment about the presence of humor in the tourism industry: "The topic of humor has received only modest attention in tourism studies but it has been analyzed extensively in other contexts." (Pearce, 2009, p. 627), and secondly I wanted my thesis to be a clear guideline for me, as well as an inspiration for any current and/or future international students who would like to improve their guiding performance, or decide to try their hand in becoming guides. Moreover, taking into consideration the nature of the studying programs as well my personal experience of over four years of working side by side with other guides, I can tell that the vast majority of international students who decide to take a guide job are firstly, studying tourism in Alta (or had studied tourism before), and secondly, have a solid understanding of tourism industry overall and a guide's work in particular. However, when discussing the application of humor, they usually replied that they had not thought of it and mostly did it "by tune", meaning that they applied humor when and how they felt appropriate at any given moment. This approach seems to be pragmatical and logical, since, as it has been stated, there is not much literature and few studies have been done on the topic of implementing humor in tourism settings: "the extensive literature on the topic of humour [sic] in general has not been comprehensively tapped by tourism researchers." (Pearce, 2009, p. 627), thus some clarification is required here.

1.1 Research question

Being a city tour guide in an almost unfamiliar place can be a challenging as well as an exciting task. It usually takes good communication skills to be able to present the place you yourself are not familiar with very well, and to keep the monologue going on, while going with guests from one destination to another. But what are the key factors to a successful city tour guiding and how can a guide attract and keep the attention of guests, given the possible lack of extensive knowledge about the particular place? I found myself searching for an

answer for this question when I began my guiding career after moving to Alta city for my studies at university.

The application of humor was one of the logical solutions that has always been on my mind, and I have tested it extensively throughout the years I have been working as a guide.

While contemplating over the past four years of my work experience as a guide and evaluating the highs and lows in my workflow, I have come to recognize that humor has been and still is something that I apply consciously or unconsciously in guiding on a daily basis. From recognition of this fact came understanding that in the process of guiding there are some jobs I get done by employing humor on tours, but when I decided to figure out the mechanics, to sort and systematize knowledge about the use of humor in tourism, and to get to the nuts and bolts, so to say, I found out that there are void of information and research about the presence of humor in the workplace overall, as it has been pointed out by R. Martin (2007): “very little psychological research of any kind has been conducted on the general topic of humor in the workplace.” (p. 361) and the implementation of humor in tourism concepts particularly: “research on humour [sic] and its value for tourism experiences only started to emerge in the early 2000s, making it a relatively new area of research with many unexplored aspects that warrant further investigation.” (Pabel, 2019, p. 1).

When I turned to my fellow guides, I discovered that some are familiar with the concept of humor in tourism settings, and some have quite a big interest in this topic as well. Yet, they – same as me – could not quite put a finger on the fact whether the application of humor on tour was something they were conscious about, and what kind of benefits employment of humor can bring to the guide. Thus emerged the research question:

How can the use of humor help international students do a better job as tourist guides?

All in all, the lack of research and information in existing tourism literature on such diverse and widely applicable topic as humor, which may be used both externally to improve the quality of tours for the guests, as well as internally – to improve the outcome of workers in tourism industry: “more analytical attention to the use of humour [sic] might generate applied rewards for some tourism interest groups.” (Pearce, 2009, p. 629), and the overall prospective of implementation of humor in the workplaces, as it was stated by R. Martin (2007), when discussing present lack of research available: “[t]his is potentially fruitful domain for

industrial-organizational psychologists to explore.” (p. 361), worked as a catalyst for this Master thesis.

And now, with examples from a local tourist company, my personal experience, as well as the experience of many students who worked as guides in Alta city I will try to identify in what ways the sense of humor can help navigate through the profession of a guide overall and for international students in Alta city in particular, and how the application of humor can make each and every tour an inspiring and fascinating journey into the wonderful unknown for both the guests and their guide.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

I have built my thesis as a complete overview of the most important parts of the guides’ work.

In the first chapter I have presented my background and explained the rationale for the start of this research project, as well as given a general overview of the guiding work as a phenomenon.

In the second chapter I present the literature overview in relation to guiding, looking at it from the beginning to the end of the tour. I start chapter two by presenting the literature in relation to classification of tours and tourists, providing the information about the reasons why people travel and how tourists might be classified into demographic groups, because it is important for the future and current guides to have an overview and understanding of different groups and types of tourists so as to meet their expectations and conduct the tour accordingly. After describing what type of guests a guide can usually have, I then focus on the guide himself or herself, describing domains as well as spheres of operation of a guide on tour, touching on different roles a guide must take on while with tourists, as well as the process of creation of experience for his or her guests. I finish the subchapter devoted to guides by presenting an outline of different personality traits suitable for this work. Having explained who the tourists are and why they can decide to take one trip or another, as well as having presented the qualities of a guide and how he or she can conduct the tour with beforementioned tourists, I move to the part where I present the notion of humor and its functions. I look in detail at how humor plays social, emotional and cognitive roles in order to have a complete picture of mechanics of this phenomenon. At the end of chapter two I provide a short summary.

The third chapter describes the methods and methodology I have used. I provide the information on my position as a researcher as well as my ethic in connection with this project.

I overview the process of participant selection as well as data collection. Then I describe in detail the processes of preparing and conducting interviews, as well as procedures of analyzing the collected data and the notions of validity, reliability and generalizability in my work. To conclude this chapter, I briefly mention the limitations and challenges I have encountered during the process of writing my Master thesis.

The fourth chapter gives an overview about the data I collected from the interviews. I have divided the chapter into three subchapters in accordance with the interview guide structure, so it develops in logical ascension from guides' personal relation to humor, how guides approach the process of selecting humor, and last but not least describes the process of applying humor.

Chapter five is devoted to the discussion of my findings. In this chapter, I connect my findings with the existing literature and discuss the relation between a guide and humor, as well as go into details of employing humor on tours. I divide the process of applying humor on tour in three logical parts of tour development – before, during, and after the tour.

Last chapter is devoted to the conclusion and thoughts about future research.

2 Literature review and theoretical framework

In this chapter, I present an overview of the literature upon which I built my thesis. The overview has been structurally organized regarding the progression of a tour. The overview commences by defining the motivations of people that urge them to travel. It then transitions to define the roles of guides. Next, literature related to the cognitive functions of humor on travelers is considered. This structural organization creates a vector for thought progression and idea development in my attempt to answer the question of this research project:

“How can the use of humor help international students do a better job as tourist guides?”

I end this chapter with a short summary of the literature presented.

2.1 Classification of tours and tourists

People are travelling in numerous ways and for various reasons, and in some way or another, we will all take on a role of a tourist or a traveler at some point in our life. In order to provide the best possible experience, it can be useful for a guide to firstly get a better understanding of his or her guests, starting from such basic information as their approximate age group and underlying reasons for taking the trip.

2.1.1 Motivation

There are different reasons why people choose one trip over the other, and so, if looked at closely, it can help to understand tourists' motivation, which, as it was stated by Pearce (2011), is a “perquisite study topic for assessing many tourists' experiences” (p. 57). Knowledge about the particular tourists' motivation and anticipation of experience is the key component that helps forecast tourists' expectations; or in the words of Pond (1993): “It behooves those in the travel industry to understand why people travel and what these reasons mean to guides and others in the industry.” (p. 54). By and large, we can distinguish between two types of reasons that motivate people to take a voyage, that can be presented as “push” and “pull” structure. The “push” factors are “internally generated drives causing the tourist to search for signs in objects, situations, and events (henceforth objects) that contain the promise of reducing prevalent drives.” (Gnoth, 1997, pp. 290-291); Thus, push factors relate to the internal motivations of tourists, “pushing” them to seek new adventures and destinations based on the very tourists' personal needs, wants, or underlying problems, and can be seen as a way of changing the “life” (even if for a short period of time), and breaking off the routine; or, in a words of Said and Maryono (2018), “Push factors is a socio-psychological visitor

contract that affects on their motivation to visit an attraction and destination (peacefull [sic], loneliness, to feel a new experience, etc).” (p. 3). The “pull” factors, on the other hand, are “generated by the knowledge about goal attributes the tourist holds.” (Gnoth, 1997, p. 291); and thus relate to external sources of motivation – what the destination or place is promising to the tourists, “pulling” them to choose one destination and/or activity over the other.

When speaking about guides and guiding job, it seems safe to assume that a guide is well aware of most (if not all) of the pull factors of destination he or she is currently working with, as it is part of the guide’s job to present the most appealing and fascinating stories and information about the particular place; but another part of the “formula” for having successful tours – the “push” factors of tourists who are currently with the guide on a bus tour, are often hidden as they are linked to a better or lesser extent to each particular individual.

In this case, it is particularly useful for a guide to learn about his or her guests’ background and overall to study the guests in order to adjust the workflow accordingly.

When working with a group of tourists, as opposed to solo travelers, it can be quite difficult at the initial stage to know, at first sight, about the guests’ needs and desires, how to proceed with guiding and what type of humor is appropriate to use with them, and thus, it can be quite helpful to categorize tourists, in the beginning of the tour, into particular types and groups by assuming that people who bought the same tour have, by and large, been ruled by the same “pull” factors (seeing the beauty of Northern Lights, experiencing pristine wilderness of Arctic, rock carvings, snow and negative temperatures, reindeers, to name just a few); as well as that it is quite possible that they can all share the same “push” factors (living in a metropolitan city and hot climate/no snow, leading a steady life which explains their desire for unique experience/extreme temperatures), facilitating by this the guides’ learning process of his or her guests and helping them to start the tour and probe the humor which seems more appropriate to a particular type of guests.

According to Cohen (1972), we can distinguish between four types of tourists:

The first type is “The organized mass tourist”, who is “the least adventurous and remains largely confined to his [or her] "environmental bubble" throughout his [or her] trip” (Cohen, 1972, p. 167). This, judging by experience, is the most common type of tourists guides are working with when dealing with cruise ships. This kind of tourists is not very interested in an adventurous side and relies heavily on their guide.

The next type is “The individual mass tourist”, which can be described as a tourist whose trip is “not entirely pre-planned, the tourist has a certain amount of control over his [or her] time and itinerary and is not bound to a group” (Cohen, 1972, p. 167). The important note here is that this type of tourists is more independent, yet seeking the comfort of a familiarity and thus have some reliance on their guide. As Cohen (1972) stated: “Familiarity is still dominant, but somewhat less so than in the preceding type; the experience of novelty is somewhat greater, though it is often of the routine kind.” (pp. 167-168). Those are tourists who, based on experience, are more likely to take tours with elements of an adventure – dogsledding, reindeer sledding safari or taking a ride on the snow scooter. It is also possible – and I have observed it on numerous occasions during my guiding practice in Alta – that this type of tourists will be initially in the group for city guiding, but somewhere along the tour they will decide to separate from the group and begin to explore the city on their own. The funny thing for me was when some of them were telling me that they had joined the guided group just to get a lift to the city center.

The third one is “The explorer” type, who “arranges his [or her] trip alone; he [or she] tries to get off the beaten track as much as possible, but he [or she] nevertheless looks for comfortable accommodations and reliable means of transportation.” (Cohen, 1972, p. 168). It is rare, but yet not impossible to have an opportunity to work with this kind of tourists for international students in Alta, even though brief acquaintances and help with navigating the city is a common thing, usually performed voluntarily.

And last but not least is “The drifter”, who “ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life of his [or her] home country. He [or she] shuns any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and considers the ordinary tourist experience phony.” (Cohen, 1972, p. 168). This is the type of tourists who has no interest in guiding services, and thus presents no interest for us in this research project.

In addition to the typology of tourists, it is useful for the guide to have an understanding of the main characteristics of different age groups of travelers.

2.1.2 Cohort

Since the humanity “moves on” and new generations of people are born, it is, of course, impossible to include all the past and future generations in our list, thus, I will limit it to the five groups of people, who are nowadays at the age of having ability and opportunity to travel:

I will start with the “Baby Boomlet” cohort who, according to scholars, “consists of those born between 1977 and 1988” (Pond, 1993, p. 52). It is assessed that people of this generation will focus on family trips: “As children of the Baby Boomers, they will travel with their families more than others of the same age have done previously.” (Pond, 1993, p. 52). They will also be one of the most demanding tourist groups: “In 2000 and beyond, they will likely be more favorably inclined to travel than others, and they are also likely to be more discerning and more demanding travelers.” (Pond, 1993, pp. 52-53).

Then comes the “Baby Busters” generation, or those who were “born between 1965 and 1976” (Pond, 1993, p. 53). They are seen as tourists who: “to travel frequently, especially for business and within family groups; to be more demanding and difficult to please; and to be more familiar and comfortable with international travelers and visitors.” (Pond, 1993, p. 53).

The next ones are “Late Baby Boomers”, or people who were “born between 1955 and 1964” (Pond, 1993, p. 53); also called “the “me” generation” (Pond, 1993, p. 53); are seen as “frequent and demanding travelers, and are likely to travel often for both business and pleasure, alone or with their families, into the next decade.” (Pond, 1993, p. 53).

After them comes the “Early Baby Boomers”, or the group of people “born between 1946 and 1954” (Pond, 1993, p. 53); This cohort was influenced by “a decade noted for rejection of traditional values, the women’s movement, and the inception of a concern for physical fitness, the environment, and civil rights.” (Pond, 1993, p. 53). The travelling hallmark of this group is thought to be that people who were born in that day and age are “to have great impact on travel trends as they approach their middle and later years with more money and time than any generation before them.” (Pond, 1993, p. 53).

And last but not least, is the generation of “World War II Babies”, with the age brackets “between 1935 and 1945” (Pond, 1993, p. 53). This group of travelers is seen as “less demanding than other groups” (Pond, 1993, p. 53); They, as tourists, are also seen “[w]ith

ample discretionary time and money, as people in this group retire they are more likely than other groups to prefer group travel.” (Pond, 1993, p. 53).

It is also possible to include in this list Generations Z and Alpha, as people born in the respective years reaching nowadays particular levels of maturity and independency for travelling alone, within groups and with families, yet, as being the youngest ones among tourists, they are usually not inclined to buy city guided tours in buses we are focusing on.

The understanding of age brackets of different generations is important for the purposes of choosing the type of humor to employ, as well as the type of information and stories to tell. It is common knowledge that slang and jargon (even in humorous settings) is more (or at least easier) accepted and appreciated among younger generations, while seniors can see this approach as unprofessional and sassy. The same applies to the choice of information the guide is about to use: different generations are interested in different spheres – some will be fascinated by the history and World War 2, for instance, while others will be eager to learn how local industries operate nowadays and what the latest trends of energy saving in the given region are. Since as a rule, the time on tour is limited, the guide usually has to choose what to talk about. On top of that, we should not forget about the other side of the “equation” – all that has been stated above takes the position from a guide’s point of view and refers to the choice of “tools” to work with his or her guests. However, there is another side which is no less important – how guests perceive the guide, since their recognition of the guide in different roles (friend, mentor, boss, leader, to name some of those, but by and large the division can be made in realms authority / not authority) will affect their attitude towards the guide and the information he or she is providing. Scholars provide numerous examples of it:

“The age of travelers weighed significantly in the evaluation of a guide’s role. Senior citizens, who travel in groups more often than do other age groups, were more likely to see a guide in a social capacity, as “companion,” “leader,” or “caretaker of details, situations and personalities.” Younger students responded most often by saying that the guide’s purpose was to teach”. (Pond, 1993, p. 66).

Thus, to appear knowledgeable, to successfully relate with tourists and build rapport, and overall provide a top-quality guided tour, it will be useful to have an understanding in what age category the guide is operating.

2.2 Guides and the job of guiding

Guiding is an exciting and demanding profession, with elements of travelling and socializing, communication and play, in which, while working with people, guides have substantial power as well as considerable responsibility for their guests, that goes beyond the mere notion of safety (though safety is as important as other aspects of the guide's work), to the depths of interpersonal communication. Pond (1993) argues that a guiding job contains an immense opportunity: "And yet, all guides are struck by the tremendous opportunity they have – on a daily basis – to affect people profoundly, and even to alter their perceptions or eliminate prejudices." (p. ix); of course it takes curiosity and a quick eye, as well as storytelling techniques: "Good tour guides capture the essence of a place and ignite an interest or new understanding about their region and its culture." (Pond, 1993, p. ix); but it is always rewarding from the guests' side: "travelers respond to effective guides with extreme gratitude and appreciation." (Pond, 1993, p. ix). To reach such depth, guides have to operate on different levels of communication between the guests as well as locals, bringing the landscape and complexity of cultures into this equation as well. In some sense one can say that a professional guide is molding landscapes of nature and culture into palatable experience for his or her guests. Indeed: "Such performative competences involve the complex maneuvering in native and foreign cultures, intercultural mediating, functioning as pathfinders and mentors, and negotiating in unfamiliar destinations to their guests in a culturally sensitive manner, and coordinating group movements in space." (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012, p. 55).

To get a better understanding of what it means to be a guide, let me start with an overview of spheres a modern guide can find himself or herself in.

2.2.1 Domains of operation

Returning to the work of Cohen, we find that guides operate in two different areas – the "Leadership" and "Mediatory" spheres.

The "Leadership sphere" includes two groups with various subsets:

The first group describes the "Instrumental Component", which points to the guides' "responsibility for the smooth accomplishment of the tour as an ongoing social enterprise." (Knebel, 1960:120, as cited in Cohen, 1985, p. 11). This group consists of three subsets:

The first subset is "Direction", in which the guide is "responsible for the spatio-temporal direction of the trip: to find and sometimes also to choose the way, which under unsettled

conditions may necessitate considerable orientational skills.” (Cohen, 1982:242, as cited in Cohen, 1985, p. 11). Indeed, it is the most common and sometimes the main role of the guide, depending, of course, on the structure of the tour. But it definitely refers to the original meaning of guiding, as it has been mentioned earlier in this thesis: “Humans have roamed the earth since they emerged, and the earliest historical accounts refer to those who lead the way – “pathfinders,” “bear leaders,” “proxemos,” and “cicerones” – all antecedents of today’s guides.” (Pond, 1993, p. 1).

The next subset is “Access”, where the guide “leads his [or her] tour not only through a geographical space, but also through a socially organized territory.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 11). The examples of it can be found when the guide chooses a specific route for his or her tour as well as provides access to the places of interest (museums, installations, libraries) where it is impossible to get without a guide or any other official representative.

Last but not least is “Control”, where the guide “bears responsibility for the safe and efficient conduct of the party.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). It is in the guide’s best interest to keep his or her group safe and in a good mood, avoiding the places with high criminal rates, for instance, and conducting the tour in an interesting or fascinating way. There can be additional time-related difficulties for the guides, since “[t]he problem of control is complicated by the fact that guides are normally responsible for keeping to the timetable of the tour, including the duration of the various stages of the trip, as well as the length of stay in the intermediate destinations.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). Interestingly enough, the “control” part of guiding work is one of the many mentioned parts, which can be facilitated through humor. I will touch on that topic later in this work.

The second group describes the “Social Component”, where “the guide’s leadership role relates to his [or her] responsibility for the cohesion and morale of the touring party, and stands in some contrast to his [or her] role as an instrumental leader.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). This component, in turn, includes four subcategories:

The first subcategory describes “Tension-Management”, in which “[t]he tour guide is an important agent of group integration and instigator of sociability.” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 457), as well as “social referee” between opposite parties, who can solve misunderstanding between them “by relying on the tour guide to salvage the group ethos.” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 457). As a

matter of fact, being a middle man and negotiating between different parties can promote the use of humor: “One very effective means at his [or her] disposal is the use of humor. Even if the guide’s sense of humor does not merit laughter, such as the pun variety, he [or she] can unite the group against him [or her] through group groans.” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 457). All in all, here the guide’s ability to be able to negotiate between different parties is in high demand, and the sense of humor can come quite handy if all other aids have failed.

The second subcategory is about “Integration”, in which the guide is “responsible for the social integration of his [or her] group.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). In this element, the ability to communicate between different people with different cultural and economical, as well as educational and political backgrounds is crucial for success of any tour. Moreover, in order to be able to conduct such communication, it is useful for a guide to have an idea and understanding of his or her guests’ background.

The third subcategory touches on “Morale”, in which we can also find the mention of importance of the use of humor: “The guide is supposed to keep his [or her] party in good humor and in high morale through pleasant demeanor and occasionally jocular behavior.”(Cohen, 1985, p. 12).

And last but not least is “Animation”, which refers to the guide’s ability to “try to “animate” members of his [or her] party, i.e., to induce them to undertake various activities offered by the touristic facilities encountered on the itinerary.”(Cohen, 1985, p. 13). This is an important element in the guide’s work, as it helps to include all members of his or her party into the tour and help them feel included and generate more interest and understanding of the tour.

The “Mediatory Sphere” also includes two parts with various subsets:

The first part is the “Interactional Component”, in which “the guide’s role relates to his [or her] function as a middleman between his [or her] party and the local population, sites and institutions, as well as touristic facilities.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 13). This component, in turn, consists of such subsets as:

“Representation”, which relates to the work of a guide where he or she “both integrates his [or her] party into the visited setting as well as insulates it from that setting. He [or she] does this by interposing himself [or herself] between the party and the environment, thus making it

non-threatening to the tourist.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 13). This is an important part of any guide’s work, since tours often include meeting locals who can have completely different social and cultural expectations.

And “Organization”, where “[t]he guide is frequently responsible for the provision of services and amenities to his [or her] party during the tour, such as refreshments, meals, and overnight stays, as well as medical care and other services in cases of emergency.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 14). It is vital to keep in mind that people, being on tour in an unfamiliar place can be quite vulnerable in the face of unexpected difficulties such as medical or police help, shopping, or getting around the city, and their guide must be able to assist them if such a need arises.

The second part is the “Communicative” component, with four different subsections:

The first subsection is “Selection”, which means for the guide “to “point out objects of interest” as he [or she] conducts his [or her] tour, means, at a minimum, that he [or she] selects from the multifarious stream of impressions impinging upon his [or her] party those which he [or she] deems worthy of their attention.” (e.g., McKean 1976: 15; cf. also Buck 1978:230 - 1; Schmidt 1979:442 – 3, as cited in Cohen, 1985, p. 14). This is one of the primary elements through which the guide is able to get attention of his or her party, as well as spark the interest in the surrounding area.

Next comes “Information”, which is undeniably the cornerstone of the guide’s work: “The dissemination of correct and precise information is by many considered to be the kernel of the guide’s role.” (e.g., McKean 1976:13; Nettekoven 1979:142, as cited in Cohen, 1985, p. 15). This is probably the single area where there is no place for humor.

The third subsection is “Interpretation”, where the guide is able to interpret the information for his or her group, as is stated that the “interpretation and not the mere dissemination of information, is the distinguishing communicative function of the trained tourist guide. In transcultural tourism, a cultural gap ordinarily exists between the visitors and the locals.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 15).

And last but not least is “Fabrication” element. It can be considered as “the most tricky” one, since: “While “keying” is still based on at least some vestiges of truthfulness, as understood by the guides themselves, “fabrication” consists of outright invention or deception.” (Cohen,

1985, p. 16). This can be used for both – the good and evil, which solely depends on the guide’s personal state of morale.

It can be seen that “Interactional component” of the guide’s work, which “relates to his [or her] function as a middleman between his [or her] party and the local population, sites and institutions, as well as touristic facilities” (Cohen, 1985, p. 13) is one place to put humor into (though it can be very tricky – the problem lies in the guide’s ability to present facts in a clear way, and not distort the information with inappropriate jokes); and the “Communicative” role of a guide’s work seems quite appropriate for an informal approach, and thus for the use of humor – according to Cohen, this role includes “Selection” component, where the guide can “point out objects of interest, as he [or she] conducts his tour” (Cohen, 1985, p. 14), and thus allows the freedom of selection of outside objects, yet, anything that can provoke amusement and a smile, ranging from wild animals and traces on the snow to clouds in the sky, and the possibilities to implement humor, as my findings will show further, exist, to the greater or lesser extent, in the majority of spheres of the guide’s job, whether it relates to the “Leadership” sphere, in which guides demonstrate such expertise as “willingness to assume responsibility, ability to organize and make judicious decisions, strength to respond unflappably to emergencies and glitches, and the skill to coordinate many administrative tasks simultaneously.” (Pond, 1993, p. 78); or “Mediatory” sphere, where guides operate in the domains of “social mediation and cultural brokerage”. (Cohen, 1985, p. 10). There can be disparities in the amount, as well as in the type and the role of humor in application to those two spheres, and I will come back to this question later when discussing my findings.

2.2.2 Experience production

Experience and experience production are comprehensive, yet vital topics when discussing the guiding work. We can find a division among scholars in their approach to understanding tourist experience: “there is a discrepancy between the social science approach and the marketing/management approach.” (Quan & Wang, 2004, p. 298). The difference of those approaches is of the nature that: “The first one is characterized as the tourist experience and is understood to be something that is in sharp contrast or directly opposite to the daily experience.” (Mossberg, 2007, p. 63); while the approach from the marketing standpoint provides the notion that tourists are seen as: “consumers because they are involved in different commercial exchange relationships.” (Mossberg, 2007, p. 63). Here and further on, I

will refer to the experience from the point of view of social science, as the implementation of humor into guiding work in the scope of this thesis leans more to the social, rather than commercial relationships.

The understanding of the notion of experience and experience production is important for anybody who works in the tourism industry, and especially for guides, since more often than not they have a power of direct influence on the perception of their guests, and thus are able to control, in a way, the experience to unfold. Even though some scholars argue that it is the tourist, who controls the process:

“Tourist experiences can’t be bought. They can only take shape in the mind of the tourist. No one but the tourist can have any control over the experiences and, in most cases, not even the tourist is fully able to have such control.” (Andersson, 2007, p. 46)

and categorizing the experience into completely new cluster: “Experiences are as distinct from services as services are from goods.” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 3); yet the preparation process and the creation of the opportunity for the tourist to receive the experience is ultimately in the hands of their guide (the host, the business, the tourism industry overall); I would argue that it is the delivery, and not merely the “product” of experience that plays the key role, since it is engagement that serves as a starting point for creation of emotions and turns any trip into a memorable event. Indeed, as it was stated by Pine and Gilmore (1999) when discussing experience production: “this doesn’t mean that experiences rely exclusively on entertainment; entertainment is only one aspect of experience. Rather, companies stage an experience whenever they engage customers, connecting with them in a personal, memorable way.” (p. 3). And from here we can move to the performance of the guide, since, when on tour, it is the guide who is the main actor, entertainer and a source of engagement. In fact, the way and type of engagement plays an essential role in experience production: “the manner in which guides interact with tourists influences possibilities for co-creation of experiences” (Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017, p. 19). Thus, the most important piece of information for a guide in this setting is to remember that the burden of receiving the experience is completely up to his or her guests, yet the vector of development of experience is in the guides’ hands, and the way he or she acts, connects and engages with guests is a key component of experience production overall that turns any trip into a fascinating and memorable journey. Indeed, as Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue: “While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are memorable.” (pp. 11-12).

Delving deeper into the spheres guides operate in, it becomes clear that in each and every sphere a guide is performing the role – it is just that the designation of the roles differs whether it lies in “Mediatory” or “Leadership” spheres, and through the workday a guide must shift up and down between them (it is important to mention though that it is not in all of them there is a place for humor, and some, quite frankly, require level-headedness instead of wittiness or amusement).

Long ago, Pine and Gilmore (1999) pointed out the performance component in a work setting: “Whenever employees work in front of customers, an act of theatre occurs.” (p. 105). As they stated, the notion of the theatre that emerges at a workplace should not be taken at its core value, and rather should be seen as a means to an end: “Let us be very clear: We do not mean to present work as theatre. It is not a metaphor but a model.” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 104); which can be used to engage the customers (guests in our case): “With theatre as the model, even mundane tasks engage customers in a memorable way.” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 106), and turn their trip into unforgettable experience.

Guides can engage customers in numerous ways, even by only the means of his or her social skills, through the emotional work and especially storytelling, which is a form of acting and a perfect place to introduce the humor. Now, emotional work is a very important part of guiding that requires elements of empathy and sympathy so that the guide could connect with tourists. Let me take Northern Lights tours as just one example. When working with tourists in Alta, it is usually the longest trip for a guide, since we travel far away from the city to eliminate light pollution as well as to find better weather conditions. And during this long trip the guide has time and thus a possibility not only for delivering longer stories and providing more facts about the place, but also for managing tourists’ expectations through his or her emotional labor. As Heimtun (2016) pointed out:

“Through emotional labour [sic] they engaged with tourists who expected that seeing the Northern Lights would fill them with feelings of joy, happiness, excitement and awe, but also, potentially, disappointment and distress if there was a no-show or if the lights were faded.” (p. 230).

So, being attentive and as excited as guests are, while at the same time telling stories about fascinating colors of Northern Lights, and mentioning about what a wonderful show he or she has seen a couple of days (or hours) ago, the guide can increase the guests’ expectations for

meeting Lady Aurora. On the contrary, in case the guests' expectations are initially high, but there is big cloud coverage and overall unsuitable conditions for Northern Lights, the guide can downplay the expectations mentioning that the opportunity to see the Northern Lights is subject to change and has strong reliance on the weather; the important part here for the guide though is to be attentive to the guests and sympathetic to the fact that people who came here to see the Northern Lights had big dreams of it and paid money for the "show". So the idea of emotional work of a guide is: "to have satisfied customers, regardless of whether the group saw the lights." (Heimtun, 2016, p. 230).

Therefore, the emotional work of a guide lies in the realm of "Mediatory Sphere" discussed by Cohen, and a guide' ability to be a "middleman [sic] between his [or her] party and the local population, sites and institutions, as well as touristic facilities" (Cohen, 1985, p. 13), or, in the words of Valkonen (2010): "the guide who acts as mediator between customer and wilderness has to be able to modify or translate the circumstances into a language of satisfaction, pleasure and experience for fulfilling [sic] the commitment to customer service as planned." (p. 174).

To conclude this section, I would like to mention that every situation is unique, and in some sense, the outcome of emotional labor can vastly rely on social skills as well as personality traits of a given guide, as different guides can assess the same situation in a different way and have different views on and approaches to emotional labor.

2.2.3 Personality traits

In order to be a successful performer and facilitator of tourists' experiences, a guide must certainly have (apart from the knowledge about the subject and overall understanding of his or her current audience) a number of traits suitable for working in a social setting. The difficulty arises from the fact that those traits are quite subjective, and the trainability of them (as well as fake-ability) is quite unlikely.

In relation to the guides' ability to employ humor on tour, those characteristics can include but definitely are not limited to:

"Enthusiasm": "Perhaps the single most important characteristic of successful guides is passion, both for the subject matter and the travelers." (Pond, 1993, p. 105) In some sense we can say that enthusiasm is the key to success: "This enthusiasm will not only make the traveler's experience more compelling, but will sustain both guide and visitors through

mentally and physically exhausting experiences.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105). The key which, unfortunately, can not be manufactured: “Enthusiasm is not easily feigned; to a greater extent, a guide either has it or does not.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105). To a certain extent, the attribute of enthusiasm is similar to the sense of humor – a person either has, or does not have a sense of humor, though, as my findings will reveal later, the majority of guides permit variations with implying meaning of “low”, “average” and “above average” sense of humor.

“An outgoing and affable nature”: “As guides are in the business of meeting, welcoming, and working for strangers, it is essential that they be approachable, open, and comfortable in many types of situations and with a wide range of personalities.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105). The idea is that people should not only be able to approach the guide and ask questions, but to have a genuine desire for it and be able to do it without second thoughts. In the best-case scenario, tourists want to learn about both the place they are visiting and about the guide; and I do not mean it in a sense that they want to know any little detail about the guide’s life (more to that, as I will discuss later, some guides can resent this attempt from tourists and employ humor to maintain privacy), but rather experience the connection on a personal level. In a sense, one can say that guests can look at a guide as a representative of the given time and space or, in other words, an ambassador, and it perfectly allies with mediatory component of a guide’s work, where: “the guide’s role relates to his [or her] function as a middleman [sic] between his [or her] party and the local population, sites and institutions, as well as touristic facilities.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 13).

“A proactive nature”: “One of the hallmarks of a true leader is the belief in one’s own ability to affect change and the willingness to assume responsibility for initiating change.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105). Bridging to the work of Cohen, the “proactive nature” relies to the leadership component of a guide role, specifically to the “Social component” subsection: “the guide’s leadership role relates to his [or her] responsibility for the cohesion and morale of the touring party, and stands in some contrast to his [or her] role as an instrumental leader.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12).

“Good communication skills”, which include: “articulation, eye contact, natural gestures, and a clear, pleasant speaking voice.” (Pond, 1993, p. 106). It is worth mentioning that both verbal and non-verbal communication skills are important not only for smooth conduct of a tour but also crucial for the sake of implementing humor in the guiding job, the connection of which will be presented in findings and discussed later.

“Authenticity”: “Few qualities will offend or alienate people more quickly than phoniness or dishonesty.” (Pond, 1993, p. 106). Here comes a little trick, since, of course, one must be true and honest when it comes to the information and details about the tour, but what if guests start asking personal questions and the guide is not quite comfortable with that? Thus, it can be seen as a sweet spot for humor, since it allows participants to reveal only the information they want or are ready to reveal, covering the rest by the jokes, funny stories, wittiness and other means of humor. In fact, when doing interviews I discovered three coping tactics of guides relating to this issue – to indulge into vulnerability and reveal all the truth, to politely skip the topic, and last but definitely not least – to deliver the answer in a humorous manner. I will cover this topic in the chapter devoted to discussion.

“Self-confidence”, which “enables guides to carry out their duties assertively and effectively, to put people at ease, and to help create enjoyable experiences.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105). Though self-confidence is closely tied to the “Instrumental Component” of “Leadership Sphere” in Cohen’s classification discussed above, it still can bear quite subjective notion and differ from person to person.

And last comes the “Sense of humor”: “A good sense of humor can bring people closer together, put them at ease, and help make the inevitable glitches of travel amusing instead of stressful and unpleasant.” (Pond, 1993, p. 106). This ability to employ humor on tour can be beneficial for both the guide and guests, if used appropriately, and turn any trip into an exciting journey into wonderful yet funny unknown. The important note here is that, by and large, the implementation of humor should be mindful, so as not to offend anybody unintentionally, hence it pays for the guide to have knowledge of basic humor features and applications that I will be describing further.

Given the content of this section, there are quite a lot of qualities that people who would like to be guides must possess and/or develop. The positive aspect of such variability can be seen in the fact that guides are usually working with people and not machines, and some variations are admissible, thus the possibility of mixing and matching different characteristics in different proportions, adjusting so to say on the go, because there is no definitive way of saying how much or how little of those traits a guide should have. In fact, the same idea is

applicable to humor as well, but in order to be confident in the use of humor, it is worthwhile to have a complete overview of its functions.

2.3 Humor and its functions

The experience of humor is an inevitable part of human life, especially when it comes to communication between people; or, in the words of R. Martin (2007): “Humor is a ubiquitous human activity that occurs in all types of social interaction. Most of us laugh at something funny many times during the course of a typical day.” (p. xv). When we think about humor, the first thing that usually springs to mind is different types of jokes, laughter, funny gestures and how such experience made us feel at a particular time. But there is much more to it, and the skill, so to say, of humor (if used appropriately and in a professional context) can be beneficial for both the messenger and the recipient of it. Indeed: “Although it is essentially a type of mental play involving a lighthearted, nonserious attitude toward ideas and events, humor serves a number of “serious” social, emotional, and cognitive functions.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 1). It is crucial to understand applications of those functions in order to select and further use humor appropriately.

2.3.1 Social role

Let me start with the “social” function of humor. In the social context, the application of humor serves the purposes far beyond making somebody (or oneself) feel good, safe, validated, amused, etc.: “humor is one of the methods that people use to influence each other in a complex variety of ways.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 113); and thus it can be considered as successful use of social instruments rather than plain mirth and luck: “It can be a means of reducing but also reinforcing status differences among people, expressing agreement and sociability but also disagreement and aggression, facilitating cooperation as well as resistance, and strengthening solidarity and connectedness or undermining power and status.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 5). Yet, at the same time one should not disregard all the joy humorous interactions can bring to our life, since humor is “essentially a way for people to interact in a playful manner” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 5) and it is never a bad idea to make your opponent laugh so hard that he or she will actually forget what the bone of contention was. Thus, one can say that in application to social context, humor can be seen as a skill or a tool that can be taught and practiced. Moreover, this “tool” comes with a fail-safe mechanism that can be employed at a short-term notice – if the “receiver” of information seems confused, offended, angry, etc., the “provider” of information can simply deny the seriousness of what has just been said and

simply refer to the fact that it was a joke, and the opponent just did not get it. Indeed: “When someone says something in a humorous way, he or she can always take it back by saying “I was only joking”.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 116); de-escalating by it the situation and making it a win-win for everybody: “humor enables individuals to “save face” for themselves and others.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 116).

By and large, in application to social context and interpersonal communication, humor can be employed in a wide array of ways and for multiple purposes, including but not limited to:

“Self-Disclosure”: “By making a humorous remark about certain attitudes, feelings, or opinions, we can reveal something about ourselves in a way that allows us to deny it if it is not well received.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 117). For a guide, this is probably the most common, as well as the safest way to start a trip and get acquainted with his or her guests – to be in a good mood and try to perform in such a way that whatever he or she says can be accepted as a humorous attempt, so if something goes wrong later, it will be easy to deny it and write off as a failed attempt to joke.

“Social Probing”: “[B]y observing whether or not others respond with laughter or reciprocate with similar humorous comments, we can ascertain whether they share similar views.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 117). The feedback from guests is as important in determining whether the guide performs appropriately for the current audience as “Self-Disclosure” during the “initial contact” with newcomers so does well into the trip. It is worth mentioning the dual nature of the very feedback: the audience can laugh at some jokes either because it was really funny or because “it feels right” to laugh at a particular moment (especially, if at least one person in the group laughs). There are plenty of reasons for it – one worth considering is that usually people on tour (judging from my personal experience) in general would like to have a good time and thus consciously or subconsciously want the guide to succeed. Thus “Social Probing” must be approached with caution and one must always keep in mind that not everyone laughs because of great jokes and the guide’s stunning sense of humor, but people can just try to be friendly and polite and react in a way they are expected to.

“Norm Violation”: “[B]y using obscenities or other types of shocking language in a humorous manner, one is able to violate social norms in a way that reduces the likelihood that others will take offence, since everyone knows that humor is not to be taken seriously.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 118). In a professional setting it must be used with caution because it is very easy to

“cross the line” since the default state for guests (at least those I have been working with) is that they take everything their guide says quite seriously and believe his or her words. It is quite logical, if we think about it: people came to participate in a guided tour to see and learn about a strange land, its people, nature and culture, and thus cannot, quite often, register the guide’s humorous attempt to “norm violation”, considering it to be cultural differences.

“Decommitment”: “By using humor to indicate that the proposed or past action was intended as a joke and was therefore not meant to be taken seriously, one can save face by “decommitting” oneself from the action.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 119). This tactic can be considered as a very popular jail-free card for many of guides. There can be numerous examples when the guide wishes he or she had never done or said something he or she had already done for a number of reasons, e.g., a misunderstanding between the guide and the guests, unmatched expectations/empty promises, events that lie beyond the guide’s control (natural/political phenomenon). So, to avoid the consequences the guide can use “decommitment” tactic.

“Social Norms and Control”: “By using irony, teasing, sarcasm, or satire to make fun of certain attitudes, behaviors, or personality traits, members of a group can communicate implicit expectations and rules concerning the kinds of behavior that are considered acceptable within the group.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 119). Now, this can be quite a slippery road because there is a possibility to really offend someone even without knowing it. Of course, at first sight it can be seen as a good idea and a handy tool of group management, but in practice it can bring plenty of disadvantages. I will touch on this topic further in the discussion section.

“Status and Hierarchy Maintenance”: “The role of humor in controlling behavior and enforcing social norms also implies that it can be used by individuals to reinforce their own status in a group hierarchy. For example, you are more likely to crack jokes and amuse others in a group in which you are the leader or have a position of dominance than in a group in which you have lower status and less power than others.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 120). While humor can partly be employed for such reasons, my findings will show later that guides are quite hesitant about it and prefer not to establish any hierarchy.

“Group Identity and Cohesion”: “Although humor can be used to reinforce status differences between people, it can also be a way of enhancing cohesion and a sense of group identity.”

(Martin R. , 2007, p. 122). Here humor is used by the members of the group and for their benefit: “Humor may help group members to maintain smooth relations by serving as a stress reliever when the pressures of task accomplishment begin to build.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 122). In a way, we can say that the use of humor here serves the purpose of creating the sense of belongingness or association between guides themselves.

“Discourse Management”: “Humor can also be used to initiate conversations in situations in which there is little shared knowledge between the participants (e.g., strangers).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 123). It is, I would argue, the easiest and best way to start a conversation with guests when a guide first meets them – some neutral jokes about the current weather conditions. From my personal experience some short statements when meeting guests like ‘Oh what a glorious day in the Arctic!’ (while it is -20⁰ Celsius) or ‘Welcome to the winter wonderland’, to name just a few, were great starters to make guests feel welcome and open up. This type of usage might be very beneficial for a guide, and I will return to this topic when discussing my findings.

“Social Play”: “Playing off one another, they amuse themselves with the multiple meanings of words and ideas, relating funny anecdotes about incongruous events and experiences, and often using exaggeration, gestures, and facial expressions to maximize the humorous effect.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 124). Humor in the form of “social play” usually takes place at the end of the tour, when all the information has been given, the guests have experienced all the attractions, and the bus is heading back to the pier. This is a great opportunity to tell some jokes or funny stories, and thus end the tour on a high note, so to say, and leave the guests wanting more.

No doubt, there can be many more ways and a greater variety of possibilities of employing humor in social settings. Mentioned above is only a fraction of them, but for the scope of the guiding work, it appears to be enough, because humor plays not only a social role but an emotional one as well.

2.3.2 Emotional role

In application to the emotional functions of humor, one of the most important highlights that must be mentioned is that humor is often recognized as something that makes us feel good: “The perception of humor invariably also evokes a pleasant emotional response, at least to

some degree.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 7). Of course, this response can vary greatly depending on the target it is aimed at, the producer and the recipient of this very humorous attempt: “humor comprises an emotional response that is elicited by a particular set of appraisals, namely the perception that an event or situation is incongruously funny or amusing.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 8), and can depend on the so called “sense of humor” of both parties. Interestingly enough, the ability to be humorous (or to have a sense of humor) is, as argued by some scholars, inextricably linked to the way a particular person thinks and behaves on a daily basis: “Thus, sense of humor may be viewed as a personality trait (or, more accurately, a set of loosely related traits), referring to consistent tendencies to perceive, enjoy, or create humor in one’s daily life.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 191); yet, the application of humor is not strictly place-specific:

“Although people’s behavior is partly influenced by situational factors (you are more likely to tell jokes at a party than at a funeral, for instance), individuals also display some degree of consistency across situations (some people are more likely than others to tell jokes in any particular situation).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 191);

which actually hints to the places and means to look at, for finding and hiring future successful guides and public speaker figures, or simply pleasant people to be around, since, undoubtedly, “[p]eople generally associate a sense of humor with many desirable characteristics beyond merely the tendency to create or enjoy humor.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 193).

As mentioned before, humor has a wide range of applications and all in all it can be seen as a multidimensional concept. When we talk about the emotional functions of humor, unlike the social ones where the “power” of humor is directed outwards to gain the advantage or manipulate outcome, here the “power” of humor is directed inward by making somebody feel a certain way or revealing the feeling of an individual. Thus, humor can be seen as a tool not only for the producer, but also for the recipients of it, since the type of humor that is being currently used can say a lot about the “producer”.

By and large, in application to the emotional functions, there can be distinguished four primal dimensions of humor:

The first one is “Affiliative humor” which points to “the tendency to say funny things, to tell jokes, and to engage in spontaneous witty banter, in order to amuse others, to facilitate

relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions (e.g., “I enjoy making people laugh”).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 211). This is a so-called “everyday” type of humor, the sole purpose of which is to “break the ice” and make interactions light and enjoyable.

The second one is “Self-enhancing humor” which touches upon “the tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when one is not with other people, to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life, to maintain a humorous perspective even in the face of stress or adversity, and to use humor in coping (e.g., “My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things”).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 211). This type of humor can be used as a “self-help” approach as well as preparation before meeting the group of people to elevate ones’ emotional state.

The third one is “Aggressive humor” which indicates “the tendency to use humor for the purpose of criticizing or manipulating others, as in sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, or disparagement humor, as well as the use of potentially offensive (e.g., racist or sexist) forms of humor (e.g., “If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it”).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 211). This type of humor is the one to look out for, as it is the best indicator that the person is not ready to work with the group. If one notices such a behavior (or it has been pointed at), it is best to abstain from the guiding job.

And the final type is “Self-defeating humor” wherein “the use of excessively self-disparaging humor, attempts to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one’s own expense, and laughing along with others when being ridiculed or disparaged (e.g., “I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults”).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 211). There is a fine line between the desire to amuse people at one’s own expense and the tendency for self-deprecation. This type of humor can be referred to so-called “grey area” with the note that the use of it must be moderate. The reason for such deprecations is that the choice of such type of humor can point to deep unresolved issues within the individual, since: “It also involves the use of humor as a form of defensive denial, to hide one’s underlying negative feelings or avoid dealing constructively with problems.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 211).

To sum up, I would like to say that it is useful to make oneself familiar with the emotional applications of humor for the purpose of self-awareness and introspection before the tour as

well as to gain the overall understanding of ones' condition, worldview, and coping mechanisms.

2.3.3 Cognitive role

Last but not least come cognitive functions. In the realm of cognitive roles, like social ones, where humor can be seen and used as a tool, here the application of humor can also be deemed as an instrument with a differentiating feature that this tool is rather a “home-made” aid (and thus can change from individual to individual) and rather lies in the realm of praxeology. It is used not to directly influence the other party, or to get a better understanding of oneself, but rather to create and combine the ideas, to wrap a meaning, so to say, in some sort of shell - the messenger needs to create, or better to say, “to pack” the information into the box called “humor”:

“To produce humor, an individual needs to mentally process information coming from the environment or from memory, playing with ideas, words, or actions in a creative way, and thereby generating witty verbal utterance or a comical nonverbal action that is perceived by others to be funny.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 6);

and the recipient later has to “unpack” it, in order to fully experience and appreciate it: “In the reception of humor, we take in information (something someone says or does, or something we read) through our eyes and ears, process the meaning of this information, and appraise it as non-serious, playful, and humorous.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 6). Thus, the cognitive role describes humor in making and allows us to answer the question of how humor is created and perceived, as well as its influence.

To describe the process of “creation” of humor, scholars use the concept called “schema” which works as “a dynamic mental representation that enables us to build mental models of the world.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 85). The primal idea of those models is to help the brain to map the world around: “Schemas describe the general characteristics of an object or event and contain variables or slots that can assume different values in particular instances.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 86). Thus, it will be logical to continue that the application of different schemas allows the brain to process the information faster, since “[t]he variables often contain default values that represent the prototypical characteristic of the object or event.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 86). In application to bus guided tours (which are relevant to this study), for example, the general schema will contain a description of some tour in a bus, in a company with other

people, probably from different countries; happening in an unfamiliar environment; in addition there will be a driver and a guide in the bus; the guide will be providing information about the area the bus is driving through. This schema contains numerous variables such as the type of the tour (in the city, countryside, etc.); the type of the bus (color, length, size, etc.); the setting inside the bus (the color, the placement and number of seats, number of guests, etc.); but by and large it will be a tour, in a bus, with a company of strangers and a guide. However, there is a place for incongruity, if, for instance, we introduce one of the variables that does not quite fit in the overall picture – for instance there was a minibar and a disco set-up in the bus, or a rock star walks into the bus; this will be a “punch line” which “does not fit with the schema, causing us to search for another schema that will make better sense.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 87). Probably it will not be a guided tour then, but rather a disco club on wheels rocking some heavy metal music? This incongruity blends two schemas together: “The second script does not completely replace the first one, however, and so the two are activated simultaneously.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 87). The source, thus, of created amusement is in the attempt to blend two seemingly incompatible sets into one and to try to make sense of it: “This simultaneous activation of two incompatible scripts is the essence of humorous incongruity and is experienced as enjoyable and amusing.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 87). This schematic description of appearance of absurdity is suitable for creation of different types of humor: “Different schema-based theories provide somewhat different accounts of these processes, and some also attempt to account for non-joke– related humor, such as conversational witticisms and unintentional humor, as well as jokes.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 87). The important take here is that it is the incongruity that causes the amusement, and overall, there can be two types of them: the “incongruity between an expected value and the perceived value of a variable within a single schema (as in the weight judgment paradigm), and incongruity between two different schemas (as occurs in most jokes).” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 88).

In the perception department of humor, there are two sub-sections: written and oral. For the written type of humor (which is not usually applicable in the bus guiding settings) it is worth mentioning that scholars find a direct correlation between the amount of mental capacity spent on understanding the joke and the amusement it generates, that is, “the easier a joke was to understand, the funnier it was rated to be.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 88); as well as the importance of time: “[T]he more quickly participants were able to identify paragraphs as being jokes, the funnier they found them to be.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 88). As for the humor in

conversations, (which is more common in guiding), a good example of how it works can be found in the use of irony. Irony defined as “a figure of speech that communicates the opposite of what is said.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 98); and it can be understood as both – the way to create humor or to complain. During my guiding experience when I was greeting my guests at the bus, I would specifically find people who were obviously freezing (and it was not so hard to do it, since usually my guiding took place in winter and the temperature was -20 degrees Celsius on an average day) and would greet them with a happy smile: ‘Welcome to the winter wonderland!’; ‘I am so happy to see you here on this wonderful, sunny, and warm-warm day!’; ‘We have an amazing sunny weather today, and we have so much great things to show you!’ Or, if it was not so cold, or a lot of people were coming to the bus, and I did not have time for the long greetings, I would usually say: ‘Hello, hello, and welcome! It is so good that you’ve decided to come here now, in the summer!’ Now, sometimes it was causing confusion among the guests, but it is an inevitable part when one tries to “warm-up” the public before the tour, but by and large I must say that the reaction was positive, from restrained smiles to outright laughter. Plus, it was a possibility to make an initial contact with newcomers, and together with the fact that I was usually wearing snickers regardless of weather conditions, it was a great topic-starter for conversations about life in the Arctic, how people survive the cold and Polar Night, which usually continued well into the trip and was a great help for me for finding topics to discuss, as well as a means of engaging with my guests and making their experience more personal. The mechanics of irony and what it takes for the brain to process it and understand is pretty interesting. In the “default” setting we lean to the “obvious” meaning of information we try to perceive:

“When we are attempting to understand the meaning of something another person says during a conversation, we are initially guided by the “graded salience principle,” which dictates that salient meanings (i.e., the more conventional, common, familiar, or prototypical meanings) are always activated first.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 98).

The tricky part about the irony is that “salient meanings” do not usually make sense:

“To understand the ironic statement, the listener first activates its salient (literal) meaning, but, since this does not make sense in the context, must then activate an “unmarked” interpretation (the “implicature”), and both of these meanings remain activated in order for them to be compared.” (Martin R. , 2007, pp. 98-99).

This disparity, as it has been stated before, is a root cause for joy and a building block for perception of the present reality as comedy: “The incongruity between the two activated meanings causes the irony to be humorous.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 99).

Finally, I would also like to briefly mention that humor has an impact not only on the recipients of it, but on the “producer” of humor as well, and touch upon two points of mind when it comes to humor – memory and creativity. When it comes to creativity, some authors suggest that humor and creativity have an inextricable connection: “Indeed, many creativity researchers consider humor to be essentially a type of creativity.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 100); and point on directly proportional relationship: “Thus, individuals with a greater sense of humor also tend to be more creative in other areas.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 100). But the question here is what comes first: does the excessive creativity lead to hilarity or does the exposure to positive emotions evoked by humor lead to improved inventiveness? Turns out that humor comes first: “there is evidence that exposure to humor can enhance creative thinking, and that this effect is likely mediated by the positive emotion (i.e., mirth) associated with humor.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103). Thus, for the guides working with tourists it will be beneficial to be not only “producers” of laugh and mirth for tourists, but also be on the receiving end of humor and experience positive emotions themselves. As for the memory compartment, the influence of humor here is versatile in nature. Firstly, it can have impact on concentration: “humor may enhance attention to stimuli due to the novelty and surprise involved in humorous incongruity.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103); secondly, it can improve remembrance: “humorous material may be rehearsed more than non-humorous material, resulting in increased retention.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103); and finally, humor can influence the ability of getting back some memories: “humor may affect retrieval strategies, biasing subjects to retrieve humorous material before non-humorous material.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103). All those features of humor are vital to keep in mind for those who are about to start guiding, because it gives guides a powerful tool to affect tourists’ experience and make out of his or her tour one unforgettable journey that guests will remember for years to come.

2.4 Summary of the review

In this section I would like to present the overview as well as justify the choice of theory for my research project.

In order to have interesting and productive tours for both the guests and guides, filled with humor and positive emotions it is important to take into consideration both sides – the guide and the tourists.

The guide can take on different roles throughout the tour, shifting between leadership and mediatory spheres. In order to be able of doing so, he or she must possess a particular set of personality traits to operate in aforementioned spheres. One of the ideas of guiding is to facilitate the experience creation for the tourists and help them to enjoy their tour and overall have a good time, but it can be quite a challenging task, since the tourists themselves can have various backgrounds as well as personal preferences and reasons for travelling.

The humor itself can have a various range of applications and operate in different realms, and so, if a guide wants to employ humor on tour (professionally or semiprofessionally), it pays to understand humor functions in social, emotional, and cognitive realms.

When it comes to humor, guests' background is important as well, so the guide, in a sense of a broadcaster of information, might have a good understanding of expectations, of his or her role in the current setting and of timing for the use of humor as well. Before starting the tour, the guide must ask himself or herself such questions as: Who are my guests? Where do they come from? What type of background (e.g., social, educational, and estimated income-related) do they have? To what estimated age group do they belong? Do they travel alone or with a family? And so on since this information about guests will help to choose the type of humor to deliver. It is important to keep in mind that the sense of humor can be quite subjective, in a sense, and also the implementation of it can have different levels. Humor can be place-related, and thus it is important to know the reasons and usual ways of travelling of people in a particular group. Humor can be perception-related, where people of different age and background can understand and interpret the joke in quite a different way, and so it is essential in order to have all the participants stay on the same wavelength.

Thus, I build my literature review in a logical sequence – starting from the motivation of people for travelling and ending with the topic of influence of humor on peoples' cognition.

When it comes to the topic of humor in tourism, in a broader sense, one can say that humor is appropriate anywhere – as an icebreaker, warmer-up or just a way to be on the same wavelength with a particular person or the whole group, it just depends on the type of humor being used. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the ability to make a joke at

any given moment, especially if a guide has found himself or herself in some inconvenient situation: “Indeed, the ability to deny any serious intentions, even to oneself, is part of what makes humor so effective in many types of social interaction.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 117).

Thus, I believe, humor has good chances in tourism settings, and I will discuss its possible applications in the coming chapters.

3 Methodology and Methods

There are different ways of collecting and studying data, as well as ways of thinking and looking at the world. Some studies can be affected by the authors' prerequisites, while others are not. This chapter covers the questions of data collection as well as how the researcher goes about finding the truth, but first and foremost a distinction must be made between methodology and methods. Methods can be seen as: “the specific practical measures and tools employed to access or create data through different forms of interaction with those we are studying” (Barbour, 2008, p. 15); while methodology refers to “the more general discussion about the assumptions underpinning different methods and the implications, challenges and limitations of choices for the process of conducting research and its ultimate products.” (Barbour, 2008, p. 15). Thereby let me start from this discussion.

3.1 Methodology

There can be different perspectives to look from as well as separate ways to look at the world around us, not to mention to study it. Those ways and perspectives can rely heavily on researchers' own worldview as well as on his or her own ways of thinking, solving problems, and finding the truth. Indeed: “Beneath any given research design and choice of methods lies a researcher's (often implicit) understanding of the nature of the world and how it should be studied.” (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 1).

The idea that it is researchers' own background, and his or her personal worldview can have influence on ones' methodological perspectives and the choice of methods is not a disadvantage but rather the feature that can be accepted in a positive light of navigation beam, since in application to social science (unlike in physical and biological sciences, for instance, where the truth is fastened to formulas) there is no universal image of right and wrong, and the very concept of truth is subject to change; thus researchers' personal way to look at things will influence and propel his or her studies in a particular direction; or, in a words of Moses and Knutsen (2012): “These underlying priors provide researchers with the philosophical ballast necessary to address important questions concerning the nature of truth, certainty and objectivity in a given project.” (p. 1).

To get the overview of different research approaches, it is worth bringing up the notion of “Paradigms”, which can be labeled as:

“a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107);

or, to put it simply, it can be seen as a set of “Basic Belief Systems Based on Ontological, Epistemological, and Methodological Assumptions.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107).

Those stated assumptions operate in three basic questions:

1. The “Ontological question”, that asks: “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108); or in a words of Moses and Knutsen (2012), ontology refers to the “study of being” (p. 4)
2. The “Epistemological question” which sounds as: “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). As Moses and Knutsen (2012) have pointed out, when speaking about Epistemology: “What is knowledge?” is the basic question of epistemology.” (p. 4).
3. The “Methodological question”, asking: “How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes ca be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108); and thus it utilize the “ways in which we acquire knowledge.” (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 4).

And can include but are definitely not limited to:

The “Positivism”, which “denotes the “received view” that has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108).

The “Postpositivism”, which “represents efforts of the past few decades to respond in a limited way (that is, while remaining within essentially the same set of basic beliefs) to the most problematic criticisms of positivism.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

The “Critical theory”, which can be understood as “a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms, including additionally (but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, and participatory inquiry.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

And last but not least the “Constructivism”, which is essentially “an alternative paradigm whose breakaway assumption is the move from ontological realism to ontological relativism.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

When it comes to the research methods, there can be distinguished quantitative and qualitative methods along with “deductive”, “inductive” and “abductive” approaches in reflective or reflexive research. Let me first start from those approaches:

In an “inductive” approach, the researcher “proceeds from a number of single cases and assumes that a connection that has been observed in all these is also generally valid.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 3). Thus, this approach allows the researcher to project the observed truth on the whole population: “The method, as it were, distills a general rule from a set of observations; what comes out then becomes merely a concentrate of what is already included in the observations themselves.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 3); though this approach has its weak point, precisely because it “involves a risky leap from a collection of single facts to a general truth.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 3).

In a “deductive” approach, the researcher “proceeds from a general rule and asserts that this rule explains a single case.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 3). Thus, here we move from the majority, and assert that what is true for most people or cases, is also true for the single case or person. This approach may seem as more favorable since it is “less risky – at the price of seeming to presuppose what is to be explained: that the general rule always holds true, hence also in current case.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 3), yet it is lacking in, probably, the most crucial area of “underlying patterns and tendencies, which makes the model flat, bordering on the empty.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4).

Finally yet, importantly there is an “abductive” approach, where the “single case is interpreted from a hypothetic overarching pattern, which, if it were true, explains the case in question.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4); and promotes further research to support the findings: “The interpretation should then be strengthened by new observations (new cases).” (Alvesson

& Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4). And thus, all in all, it has (and uses) parts of the previous two approaches: “The method has some characteristics of both induction and deduction.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4), with important distinctive feature that in abductive approach the aim, among many others, is to comprehend the connections. Indeed: “The difference is, in other words, that it includes understanding as well.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4).

After choosing the approach, a researcher is faced with the dilemma of methods. There are two primal methods, when it comes to the social science – the qualitative and quantitative methods. The most important difference between those two is of the nature that quantitative research method “can make visible and unpick the mechanisms which link particular variables, by looking at the explanations, or accounts, provided by those involved.” (Barbour, 2008, p. 11); while quantitative method “excels at identifying statistically significant relationships between variables, such as social class and health status, and frequently produces diagrams which show the distribution and strength of this association for people located at different points on the social class spectrum.” (Barbour, 2008, p. 11).

Even though qualitative method can be seen as most suitable in the social science, since firstly it allows to study such abstract ideas as the way of thinking of representatives, unlike solid, mere numbers: “By employing qualitative methods it is possible to study how people understand concepts.” (Barbour, 2008, p. 12); and secondly, it defines the placement of researcher: “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3), and promotes better access to, as well as clearer understanding of, studied data and phenomenon: “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3); when it comes to discussion of application of different research methods and paradigms, it is imperative to keep in mind that it is possible to use both of them in various ways of combinations, or, as it has been stated by Guba and Lincoln (1994), “both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm.” (p. 105).

It is also worth mentioning the importance of reflexivity in a research project. Reflexivity per se denotes the notion of interconnection between the knowledge that is being produced and

the producer him or herself; or in the words of Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009): “in literature there are different uses of reflexivity or reflection which typically draw attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer.” (p. 8); and thus the reflective research can be defined as the research that has: “two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9). The “interpretation” refers to the fact that: “all references – trivial and non-trivial – to empirical data are the results of interpretation.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9); meaning that: “measurements, observations, the statements of interview subjects, and the study of secondary data such as statistics or archival data have an unequivocal or unproblematic relationship to anything outside the empirical material is rejected on principle.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9). As for the reflection, this element “turns attention ‘inwards’ towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature, of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9). The benefits of the reflective research in social science is in the nature of improved value of outcome: “Systematic reflection on several different levels can endow the interpretation with a quality that makes empirical research of value.” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9).

In application to this particular research project, as it demands the collection and interpretation of peoples’ behavior, ideas, and views on a particular topic, I see it more suitable to employ qualitative research methods, with abductive approach, and look at the settings from a naturalistic point of view, relying by this on the knowledge that is “generated by sensual perception, such as observation and direct experience.” (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 8); and discuss findings with the elements of reflexivity. The notion of reflexivity is vital here, since, according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009), the “[i]nterpretation rather than the representation of reality on the basis of collected data then becomes the central element.” (p. 12).

When discussing various research methods, as well as related to them questions of production and use of data, it is essential to include the topic of ethical considerations while conducting the research project, which will be discussed further on.

3.1.1 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations raise an important question that one must keep in mind when conducting any research, or, as Bailey (2007) put it: “Ethical considerations permeate every aspect of the field research process, from selecting the research topic to disseminating the results.” (p. 15). By and large, those considerations can include but are not limited to the questions of:

The “Informed Consent”, which is: “a basic ethical tenet of all research involving human subjects, including sociological research. Sociologists do not involve a human being as a participant in research without the informed consent of the participant or the participant’s legally authorized representative, except as otherwise specified in these Ethical Standards.” (American Sociological Association, 2018, p. 12). It is important to stress the importance of understandability, when obtaining informed consent: “When discussing informed consent, and in any written materials, researchers should use language that is understandable to the participants in the research.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 17); as well as the procedure: “Only after the potential participant understands each of the items in an informed consent document and agrees to participate can the research begin.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 17).

The “Deception”, describing the fact that “when people are not told they are participating in a study, are misled about the purpose or details of the research, or are not aware of the correct identity or status of the researcher.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 20). American Sociological Association in its Code of Ethics clearly states that: “Sociologists do not deceive research participants about significant aspects of the research that would affect their willingness to participate, such as physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences.” (American Sociological Association, 2018, p. 14).

The “Confidentiality”, which refers to the necessity to “inform those in the study whether the research is anonymous, confidential, or neither.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 24). The importance of confidentiality plays an important role when communicating with research participants, as well as in handling gained information after all. The American Sociological Association, in their Code of Ethics, states that the role of confidentiality is to “ensure the integrity of research and the open communication with research participants, and to protect sensitive information obtained in research, teaching, practice, and service.” (American Sociological Association, 2018, p. 10).

When dealing with ethical considerations in relation to my research project, first and foremost I have consulted with NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data and was following their guidelines. I registered a notification form with NSD and received assessment in October, 2021. All the previously stated questions of ethical considerations, such as “Informed Consent”, “Deception”, and “Confidentiality” have been resolved by creating the “Information letter” with the use of template from NSD website as well as the “Consent form”.

In the information letter I have described thoroughly the scope and purpose of the project by accessible and easy to understand language, to eliminate any ambiguity and/or misunderstanding, since, as it was stated by Bailey (2007): “Informed consent documents are not the place to practice one’s scholarly vocabulary.” (p. 17). In addition, to avoid any type of deception, I have described in the information letter why I am contacting this particular person, who exactly bears the responsibility for this research project, how the interview will be conducted, and what type of questions will be asked. I did not provided the interview guide I was going to use, directly to my participants, since the interview was supposed to be in the form of a dialogue and storytelling, with the reliance on the participants’ reflections and attitude towards the humor overall. It was important for me to see the way of thinking, discussing and overall the view of my participants towards humor in the guiding work, and thus answers could not be prepared in advance. But keeping in mind the possibility of deception, even if unintentional, I have included the examples of questions that I were going to ask in the information letter, so if a participant decided that they are far away from this subject, or have no interest in talking about it, or have any other circumstances that can prevent them from expressing their opinion on the given subject, they could opt out from the interview before the start. In the information letter I have also resolved the question of confidentiality, by describing the process of collecting, using and storing of personal data, as well as the ways of accessing any information provided by the participant (including the interviews themselves) for the purpose of changing or deleting any part of it.

In the information letter, as well as right before and immediately after the interview, I was reminding my participants that all participation is voluntarily, the collected information will be anonymized excluding the possibility to track the informants, there will be no connection between the respondent and the provided information in the thesis, all conducted interviews will be deleted after the end of the project, and that they can cancel their participation and request to erase any information provided in the interview at any time when they see it

suitable for them, without any consequences. Since most of my participants were people with whom I was personally familiar with, through working with the same cruise boats or studying at the same university, it was crucial to stress that their refusal to participate in the interview or their sudden change of mind about the participation will not affect our personal relationship, and they are absolutely in their right to opt out of interview whenever they please. I have received explicit consent in the written form from each participant. All documents, including the interview guide, the information letter as well as the consent form, have been attached in the Appendix of my thesis.

3.2 Methods

Coming to the “Methods” part, I will move from the general overview of different approaches and will focus in this chapter on specific ways my research has been conducted and tools that have been used to achieve it, since, according to Killion and Fisher (2018), the “methods” part of the research project is utilized to: “account for the more specific decisions related to such particulars as the site and settings for such interactions, the likely flow of questions and topics throughout the interview, the maintenance of a conversational style and so on.” (p. 19).

For the purpose of this research project, qualitative methods have been employed and interviews have been conducted. But before getting to the description of it, first and foremost I would like to define my position in this research project.

3.2.1 Researcher’s position and area of study

My introduction to the guiding profession began in my first year of studies for my Bachelor of Arctic Adventure Tourism. Being an international student, I decided that in addition to education, it will be worthwhile to also get some experience of a working life, and of course, to amplify my knowledge, this future work must be in tourism sector. Now, I must say that the studying programs, especially those related to tourism, match the location of my university perfectly, and there are a lot of opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and practice their craft in numerous private businesses in the Alta area. As a matter of fact, I consider Alta the best place for studying, partly thanks to the relatively small size of the city, with limited distractions for students (in the form of bars and clubs); but mostly because of the surrounding nature, which always calls for an adventure, and a safe environment to practice one’s skills.

For the tourism students there are plenty of possibilities to practice freshly learned skills, as Alta is an attractive touristic destination with good tourism infrastructure in the form of many small and middle-sized companies working with different tourist attractions ranging from simple guided tours to dogsledding across snow-covered plateau, for independent travelers arriving to town on their own, as well as for tour groups coming with cruise ships to Alta harbor, and there is always steady demand for part-time workers. The place of my choice was a company that works with cruise boats and takes tourists on the guided tours aimed at different purposes – city tours, historic tours, hunting Northern Lights tours, and so on. The great advantage of this job is that the company also provides the introduction course for the future guides, so those who are worried about their guiding abilities are given the opportunity to study the craft of guiding in details as well as to practice it in a safe environment with the company employers and fellow guides to be.

After starting in my guiding profession, I discovered that it was quite boring (especially for myself) to take one group after another for a city tour guiding and repeat the same information about the city each time. On top of that, my first few trips to hunt the Northern Lights with my guests were quite a disaster, since the average length of the driving was considerably higher (by comparison with city tours, where on average the guide speaks all in all about one hour) and I often ran out of topics and stories to tell while we were still on the half way to the destination. And, of course, those shortcomings were not acceptable for my guests, for me, and for my employer; so I began to experiment with different formats of guiding starting from different types of storytelling and up to simply telling jokes, related to the trip. I discovered that there was good feedback from my guests: they were laughing and clapping during the trip, when I played mini stand-up comedies in the darkness of the bus, running on the icy roads of Arctic, as we were chasing elusive Aurora Borealis; in the end of the tour, receiving praise and thank you words; as well as written feedback forms collected by my employer. Plus, as I got more and more tours, I was meeting more and more of my fellow guides, and often, when waiting for our guests on the pier, we were exchanging our jokes and funny stories, which made me think about the importance of humor and personified approach in guiding.

As time went by and I gained more experience in guiding, I became ingrained in my views about the importance of humor in the guiding, but when I turned to literature – there was not so much research that has been done on this topic, which made me question the validity of my views on the application of humor as well as my personal approach to the work. Undeniably,

there are plenty of books about positive psychology, the humor overall, the work of guides, but it seems that they exist separately, in their own parallel universes, and that there is a lack of connection between those topics.

Application of humor in the guiding work has been the point of my interest throughout all my working and studying years so far, and now, after getting my Bachelor's degree in Arctic Adventure Tourism, and being in the process of completing the Master's degree in Tourism, as well as after working as a guide for four years while studying, I decided to conduct the research of implementation of humor into this challenging, yet fascinating profession that gave me lots of great moments and wonderful memories. I think that my extensive experience as well as relevant education will form good basis for my research. As Bochner in his article "It's About Time: Narrative and the Divided Self" stated: "Yet, it is rare, indeed, to find a productive scholar whose work is unconnected to his or her personal history." (Bochner, 1997, p. 433).

3.2.2 Data collection and sampling method

For the purpose of this research project, I have conducted interviews with ten guides, five of whom were men and five were women, with the median age range between 20 and 50 years old. Half of the guides have had previous work experience as a guide, and for half of them the current job was their first job in guiding. I did not specify this information in my findings, and decided not to reveal the gender and age of my participants as I see it irrelevant to my studies. The same goes for their nationality – by the nature of work and study environment, I can assume that all my participants came from different countries (hence "international students"), but it is only my assumption, as I did not directly collect this information due to the fact that despite the possibility of variation in humor appreciation based on national characteristics, this might be less relevant in terms of working context between the guide and guests, who come from various backgrounds as well. The initial sampling technique was "purposive samples", which in essence is the type of sampling where: "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population." (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 52); as opposite to the "probability sampling", that is usually employed to "select a sample from a larger population in such a way that the sample is representative of the population from which it was drawn." (Bailey, 2007, p. 63). The purposive sampling was useful for me due to the fact that the majority of my interviewees were people who I was personally familiar with by studying at the same university or working

for the same company as a guide, and thus, already on initial stage I was able, based on my knowledge and opinion, to make a selection of participants with varying degrees of extraversion and introversion, distinct appreciation of humor, and non-identical work ethics. In addition, I involved some other participants after I started interviews, when my interviewees referenced me to other guides, as they found the topic of my studies quite interesting to explore. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) call this approach the “Snowball Sampling”, where: “The method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest.” (p. 141).

The interviews have been conducted in person, through Skype, Zoom or other means of communication that was preferable for my participants, and have lasted between 20 and 80 minutes, as I intended them as dialogs, encouraging participants to delve into storytelling, which essentially formed semi-structured interviews, with a varied number of questions. Thus, my interview guide attached in the Appendix, was only a guideline for me, and not a strict set of questions to ask my participants.

The questions covered the nature of the participant’s work experience as a guide, if he or she uses humor while guiding, the choice of the type of humor and its place in time of guiding, the motives for using humor and its themes, if using of humor happens consciously or spontaneously and unexpected in a way, the influence of humor on the overall guests’ satisfaction, the influence of humor on tipping the guide, the role of humor as a tool to ease the work of the guide or a tool of getting attention, the possibility to use humor to cover the guide’s mistakes and shortcomings, the guide’s personal views on humor and its use in workplaces, the ease and appropriateness of implementing humor, if the guide himself or herself had an experience of being on the receiving end of humor when travelling. I will talk about the questions and the interview guide in the next chapter, but for now let me focus on the length of the interviews.

The variation in the length of the interviews was important in the phenomenological sense, since first and foremost I was interested in peoples’ own views, opinions about, and applications of humor, and the utilization of phenomenology was very suitable for this particular task, considering the fact that it is “a term that points to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actors’ own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to

be.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 30). Indeed, it is the perceived reality of each and every particular guide on the matter of implementation of humor, their opinions and experiences of using it with guests that is the matter of my study in this research project.

Moving to the varied number of questions, which accounted for the semi-structured interviews, I would like to mention that it is the conversations and storytelling of my participants, their personal beliefs, feelings and experience with using humor and their guests’ reaction to it that were of the main interest to me as a researcher, and not plain facts. As Bailey (2007), writing about semi structured interviews put it: “The flow of the interview, rather than the order in a guide, determines when and how a question is asked.” (p. 100). Of course, there can be some difficulties in connection with such a method, like the inability to ask all prepared questions or even more – the interview itself taking a completely different direction, out of the area of interests of the researcher, and producing an enormous amount of information, but at the same time the main point of this approach as well as the main advantage is in the ability of the researcher to have a look from the participants’ point of view and see the world through their eyes. Or in the words of Brinkmann and Kvale (2015): “A semistructured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects’ own perspectives.” (p. 31).

The advantages of this approach from a phenomenological point of view can include but are not limited to such factors as:

The “Life world”, because: “The topic of qualitative research interviews is the interviewee’s lived everyday world.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32). Indeed, the topic of interest in my research project is implementation of different humor techniques, and its effect on the guides’ work life.

The “Meaning”, since: “The interview seeks to understand the meaning of central themes of the subjects’ lived world.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32). The point of my interest is how guides adapt humor in their workflow and what meaning they put into their work, how important it is for them.

The “Descriptive”, due to the fact that: “The qualitative interviewer encourages the subjects to describe as precisely as possible what they experience and feel and how they act.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). It is the personal experience of guides about the use of

humor, their feelings and thoughts about it that are the key components of interest for this study.

The “Specificity”, for the reason that: “Descriptions of specific situations and actions are elicited, not general opinions.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). I was particularly interested in the specific ways of the application of humor by guides, as well as how and in what time spaces they implemented it, and what their thoughts were about employing humor afterwards.

The “Deliberate naivete”, on the grounds that: “The interviewer exhibits openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having readymade categories and schemes of interpretation.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). This openness and welcoming state of mind of the interviewer is a very important prerequisite for new information as well as explanation of new meanings and phenomena. I was not limiting my participants in the time for their expressions and storytelling, and that is why there is such a wide range of length between different interviews.

The “Focus”, in the interest of: “The interview is focused on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standard questions, nor entirely “nondirective”.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34). In some interviews, as they were progressing, I found myself paraphrasing particular questions to fit in a dialog flow. I found that with my participants the best approach was when I was asking one important, main question, and let them speak freely on the subject, slightly adjusting the flow and vector of conversation by additional, open-ended questions, maneuvering the interview in the area of humor application in their work life.

The “Change”, when: “In the course of an interview, subjects can change their descriptions of, and attitudes toward, a theme.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34). On numerous occasions I was given feedback about the topic of my research from my participants, who were stating that they never thought so deeply about the role of humor in their work before, but now, after contemplating it during the interview they had more interest to explore the effects humor brings to the work settings.

The “Interpersonal situation”, on the grounds that: “The research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between two people.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 35). It is truly hard to determine the price of information produced by personal experience, and I must say that no experience and information that I received was

alike. Learning about different opinions firsthand can help to generate viable knowledge that can be applicable in the real world.

And last but not least “Positive experience”, where: “A well-conducted research interview may be a rare and enriching experience for the subject, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 35). Indeed, when given the opportunity to contemplate, I found that my participants were more talkative towards the end of the interview, by comparison with the beginning.

All in all, I saw the interviews as a time well spent for both – the interviewees and the interviewer.

3.2.3 Interview guide

When creating the interview guide, I was trying to build it in a way that will allow me to have a steady flow of discussion with my participants, in a sense that the next question was a continuation, or at least had something in common with the previous one. Undeniably, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) state that: “The interviewer’s questions should be brief and simple.” (p. 160); but when testing my interview guide I found out that short questions led to short answers and overall decreased enthusiasm of the speakers, which forced me to change my interview guide, include additional questions for the same theme, increase the length of some questions, as well as change some questions into open-ended ones, for the purpose that this type of question “prompts the extended sharing of information.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 102). Indeed, as Bailey (2007) stated: “very short questions can also be vague, which can in turn lead to poor responses.” (p. 103).

I also found “follow-up” questions, in a notion that “[s]ubjects’ answers may be extended through the curious, persistent, and critical attitude of the interviewer.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 161); of particular interest, as they allowed me to explain and paraphrase some statements in the idea to invite my participants for deeper and more thorough discussion. I must also add that some follow-up questions were emerging in the very process of the interviews as a way to support the flow of conversation, and were not pre-planned, nor included into interview guide.

Speaking about the content of the interview guide, I have divided it in four main parts: the “Experience” part, which was playing the role of introduction of the interview and allowed me to get to know my participants better and set the tone of the interview. Also, in the

introduction I was asking my participants if they have been (or currently are) using humor in their work (since judging from the existing literature, as well as from my personal experience, I assumed that there will be some guides who do not use humor in guiding), and thus the answer for this question was determining the flow of the interview. If the participant replied “yes” to the question about humor, I proceeded to the next chapter which I named “preparation and choice of humor”, where we were discussing such questions as how this particular guide prepares for the tour, in a sense whether he or she rehashes or remembers some jokes and funny stories for his or her future guests, and if the variables in the guests’ background (such as age, race, gender, etc.) affect the type of humor the guide is about to use. After covering this topic, I proceeded to the “Use of humor”, where we were discussing in details the way of applying humor into guiding work. The “use of humor” part was the longest, as well as the most important part information-wise, since here my participants have been given complete freedom in describing, as well as contemplating and ruminating about previous experiences, which led some of them to change their opinion about humor in a sense of importance in a guides’ work. Last but not least part of the interview has been named “In case of answer “no” (and continue after “yes”)”. This was the part I was prepared to skip right to, if some participants were to answer “no” to the question in the beginning (whether he or she has been (or currently is) using humor in guiding work). It was a safe buffer, if it turned out that the guide does not like to use humor in the work settings with guests, since I was sampling my participants as guides who work with tourists, and not whether they use humor or not. In fact, it would be beneficial for this research project if some of the guides were opposed to the idea of using humor during their work, and it would bring more validity to the current studies, but as I have finished all the interviews, I must say that there has not been a single guide who would not like to take the opportunity and tell a joke or two to his or her guests.

All in all, my interview guide consists of 41 questions, and one can see that some questions (that are always neighboring) play the role of additional, follow-up, or specifying questions. My respondents accepted questions with enthusiasm and were eager to share their stories, covering on their own and without my prompting them three-four questions I have prepared for them. The complete interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

3.2.4 Analyzing data

There are different ways and approaches that may be used to sort and analyze gathered data when it comes to social science.

Considering that the topic of my studies is quite straightforward, in a way that I am interested in a particular subject, the implementation of which can potentially affect the workflow of a guide, I have built my interview guide in such a way that it will allow categorization in a sense that the experiences of the guides and information about their use of humor they provide will gradually unfold, which further facilitated the process of analyzing the collected data in a way that the data had been sorted into three main themes:

1. The guides' relation to humor (sense of humor)
2. How the guides choose what type of humor they are going to use on the tour (as a marker of conscious or unconscious reliance on humor in the work settings)
3. How the guides were applying humor during the tour, as well as the result of it (the process as well as the results of application)

Also during the interviews, I was trying not to interrupt the flow of speech of my participants, and the interview guide was more of a vector that showed where I wanted the discussion to steer rather than being a solid compound of fast questions. This allowed me to lead back and forward conversations and ask for clarifications, as well as gain new information and acquire new meanings, as interview progressed. All those techniques allowed my participants to delve into their experiences, to keep the information they provided theme-related, to ask again and clarify the information to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. In a way that process facilitated, as Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) call it, the interpretation “as you go” where “considerable parts of the analysis are “pushed forward” into the interview situation itself.” (p. 216).

During the transcription process, specifically of particularly long interviews, I have employed the technique of “Meaning condensation” where “[l]ong statements are compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 231). This allowed for the clear transition of meaning without ambiguities and cluttering text.

When it came to interpretation, first and foremost, I was looking at what my participants wanted to say and which meanings they wanted to imply. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015)

pointed out, during the interpretation process: “The interpreter goes beyond what is directly said to work out structures and relations of meanings not immediately apparent in a text.” (p. 235). Also, my personal experience as a guide has played a role in bringing Hermeneutical approach of understanding through which “we form an expectation about the unknown from what we already know.” (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 186).

This approach to analyze the data has been undertaken in four steps:

The first step was the so-called “Naïve reading”, during which “[t]he text is read several times in order to grasp its meaning as a whole.” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 149). Thus, I have read transcribed interviews back and forth multiple times, to grasp the understanding the overall meaning of what my participants wanted to say to me.

The second step involved “Structural analysis”, which in a nutshell is a “methodical instance of interpretation” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 149), and includes in itself the process of creating themes from the text, where the theme is “a thread of meaning that penetrates text parts, either all or just a few.” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 149), and later making “questions to the text and gather sections of the text that answer those questions” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 149), for the purpose of creating, as Lindsen and Norberg call it, “meaning units” which are then “read through and reflected on against the background of the naïve understanding” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 150). Since I have pushed the process of analyzing the body of the interview, by dividing my interview guide in specific themes, the process of structural analysis appeared then easier, with insignificant increase in workload when my participants were unconsciously mixing themes by adding, expanding, or reflecting on information they have already given during the interview.

The third step was “Comprehensive understanding” during which “[t]he main themes, themes and sub-themes are summarized and reflected on in relation to the research question and the context of the study, i.e. the field of human life investigated.” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 150). Thus, the text has been read through one more time for a better understanding as well as for the purpose of comparing it with the previous understanding. As Lindseth and Norberg (2004), describing the way of this process, point out: “The text is read again as a whole with the naïve understanding and the validated themes in mind, and with an as open a mind as possible.” (p. 150). The notion of being open-minded is important here, as it allows for new thoughts and ideas to emerge during comprehension process, permitting the unpacking

process of new understandings. In addition, during this process the connection with possible and existing literature creates and grows, as one can try to employ his or her “imagination and think of associations with relevant literature.” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 150). Indeed, during the process of understanding the data from the interviews, I have widened and strengthened the reference list of literature that has been used for this research project, especially in the realm of humor application in social settings.

Last but not least is reporting the results, which must be “formulated in everyday language as close to lived experience as possible” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 151). The importance of plain and acceptable language plays to the fact that it is important to convey the information about events and experiences that happened in real life, so it will be easier to learn from, as well as apply to, the real life as well; or in the words of Lindseth and Norberg (2004): “When we try to express the meaning of lived experience we therefore use everyday language rather than abstract well-defined scientific language” (p. 151).

All in all, the idea and rationale for using Hermeneutical interpretation is that this approach allows for research and understanding of life events in the light of comparison between the “norm” and what actually happened; especially considering the fact that the use, or better to say the application of humor in the work settings deviates from the “norm” in most of professions. As Moses and Knutsen in their book “Ways of Knowing” stated: “In hermeneutic studies, the comparisons are often implicit, but the contrast between particular events and general norms helps us to understand the event as something more than just particular, or local.” (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 250).

My personal work experience as a guide has definitely affected the process of analyzing as well as discussing the data and findings, and thus I have included autoethnography in my research project as well.

3.2.5 Validity, reliability, and generalizability

Questions of evaluation criteria in a qualitative research can be a topic of various discussions, with no definitive answer, as it has been pointed out by Corbin and Strauss (2008): “Quality in qualitative research is something that we recognize when we see it; however, explaining what it is or how to achieve it is much more difficult.” (p. 297). However, there can be

distinguished three main pillars, or better to say questions, that must be answered, in order to assess the quality of the research conducted.

Those questions are as follows:

“Validity”, which attributes to: “studying or measuring that which one intended to study or measure.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 179).

“Reliability”, which touches on the “consistency of findings over time” (Bailey, 2007, pp. 179-180).

“Generalizability” that points to “applicability of the results to the population from which the sample was drawn.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 180).

I have addressed the question of validity of my studies in the form of “Internal validity”, which is “a term that refers to the correspondence between what is reported and the social phenomena under study.” (Bailey, 2007, p. 181). The fact that guides on tours use humor in one way or another, with conscious or unconscious assessment, is hard to deny, since guiding involves storytelling and conversations (and other interactions) with guests, and one can not separate humor (or attempts at humorous remarks) in conversations, and with my research project I uncovered it and made an attempt to bring to light and explain the “machinery” of it, and how the application of humor can affect the workflow of guides; as in Bailey (2007) words: “The researcher achieves internal validity when he or she produces an accurate representation of the setting.” (p. 181).

The question of reliability has been addressed by selecting participants in equal relation in connecting to the gender – 50% of my participants were men, and 50% were women, as well as the work experience – 50% of respondents have had work experience as a guide, and for the other 50% their current guiding position was the first in their lives; with the average age brackets from 19 to 35 years old, and two participants who were between 40 and 50 years old as a control group, which proved lack of disparity in generated knowledge. Thus, the issue of reliability, as described by Bailey (2007) where “a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researches” (p. 281), I consider addressed and I believe that my studies can be emulated with the same findings if done one more time by other scholars.

Taking into account the wide-spread possibilities and universality of applications of humor in the daily life as well as in work settings I consider the notion of generalizability of created results, whether they can be “transferable to other subjects, contexts, and situations” (Bailey, 2007, p. 295), addressed, in a way that those results can be to a greater or lesser extent applied to similar settings and conditions.

3.2.6 Limitations

Since “guiding” is a general name for a wide range of jobs, including but not limited to the city tour guiding, wilderness guiding, bus guiding, and so on, this research project is limited to the tour bus guiding and the use of humor on bus tours. It is possible to apply the findings in other aspects of guiding work, but only in general sense and taking into account current settings, as there is not always a place for humor, and in wilderness guiding, for instance, the questions of safety trumps good mood, as well as in the dark tourism – there is not so much to laugh about. However, the universal understanding that application of humor can improve the quality of tour is always welcome, and guides should take any opportunity to make their guests feel good.

3.2.7 Challenges

There were no particular challenges involved during collecting and analyzing the data, since I was personally acquainted with almost all of my participants. One of the difficulties I can recall was in the field of finding and connecting the relevant literature, as the topic of humor in tourism settings is underdeveloped and underexplored and consequently there is a lack of information in humor-guiding profession. But the biggest problem, as it appeared later, after I had conducted interviews and gathered all the data, was the limitation in the volume of my thesis, since, as I discovered, humor possesses an important role in guiding, and all my participants were keen to talk endlessly about their experience, providing priceless information, so I ended up with the enormous amount of knowledge that does not fit the scope of Master thesis. Looking back, I can say that my interview guide might have been too extensive, with a lot of questions, and as a result, I have gathered much more information than I could practically use in this research project.

4 Findings

In this chapter I present the data I have gathered from ten interviews. The findings are divided by three subchapters in accordance with the way the interview guide is built, with logical ascension of importance and progression of the tour, by describing firstly the guides' personal relation to humor, providing by this the insight into the question of acceptance and importance of humor to the guide, and by proxy the possibility of using humor by the guide (since it is logical to assume that those who are negative or indifferent towards being the recipients of humor are quite unlikely to use it themselves); secondly the process of choosing (if there is any) of humor for a particular trip and/or a particular audience; and thirdly the mechanism of using humor and how it affects the workflow and the guide himself or herself.

It is important to mention that guiding is a job of conscious choice, as has been reported by all the participants, through which they are looking to spend more time outdoors, to socialize and meet new people, to get work experience which is relevant to their education, to learn about nature and culture of their place of current residence, to promote the region, to network, and get additional income, to name some of those.

To the question about their work experience as a guide, out of ten respondents five replied that they had previous experience as a guide, and five had no experience in this field; but all of them stated that they had been provided with necessary training before beginning the guiding job regardless of their previous experience. In addition, all respondents stated that they have been pleased with their experience in Alta and that they would like to continue guiding in the future.

When I asked my respondents if they used humor in their work, all guides replied affirmatively.

4.1 The role of humor for a guide

Before proceeding to the questions about the place and role of humor in the guiding work, it is important to have a look at, and get an understanding of the guides' personal relation to humor, as variations in responses could explain potential controversies and disagreements in the processes of selecting and applying humor among different guides.

The findings revealed that all the guides who participated in this study rated themselves as individuals with a relatively good sense of humor, and when they were asked the question

“Can you say that you have a good sense of humor – on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest)?”, the self-reported range was between “3” and “5” with the majority leaning to “4”; though some guides stated that they might have rated themselves lower than they think they deserve, as they are aware that they possess a sense of humor which is unique, very specific and not suitable for “mass consumption”. This is how one of the guides explained it:

“I give myself a four. I'm inclined to say three, but I don't think it truly reflects my abilities to apply humor. The reason is not that I'm humorless, it's just that my humor is really different from that of a lot of other people. Sometimes I can say things that I think are really funny, and yes, sometimes people laugh, but sometimes my jokes just don't go through... It's not that they are not funny, the point is that sometimes they can hurt people's feelings, even though I'm not an offensive person.” (Guide 8).

Even though the self-reported sense of humor was relatively high throughout the group, it seems that most of the guides who took part in this research project tend to see humor as something intrinsically linked to personality, rather than a separate tool they can use to affect their workflow or personal wellbeing while preparing for the tour, because when presented with the question whether they rely on humor to elevate their own mood before the tour, the majority of the guides replied that they tend not to think about humor or funny stories that happened with them before, and rather prefer to stay grounded and think about preparation for the trip, regardless of how they feel in that particular moment. Here is how one of the guides explained it:

“I am usually pretty good at just kind of slapping on a happy face, no matter how miserable I am inside. And so, I don't really like telling myself funny stories or anything to kind of get in the mood. I just kind of like: “alright, well, this is now work time, and I'm gonna cry inside, if I need to”, and just try to fake it until I make it.” (Guide 5).

The majority of guides also agreed that if they were in the position of tourists themselves, they would like their guide to use humor and tell funny stories, emphasizing, at the same time, the importance of interpersonal connection between guide and guests through other means of guiding, such as personal stories and experience of a particular guide, improvisation and involvement, as well as reliable facts and information about the place in question.

4.2 Humor selection process

When talking about the importance of humor in guiding work, my respondents were united in the thought that humor plays an important role in interaction with guests, and it can help to facilitate engagement, emotional connection, involvement of guests, and work as a stress aid, to name some of those; thus, respondents reported that during the trip they use humor quite often and overall tend to “spread across” the humor throughout the whole tour, taking advantage of the possibilities that present themselves along the way (in other words relying on the situational humor), as well as presenting to the audience anecdotes and funny stories that were crafted and tested in advance. Some guides noted specifically the hidden value of implementing humor in the beginning as well as in the end of the tour:

“I think the most often I tried to make jokes was at the very beginning and at the very end, when I did the safety briefing and thank you summary. That's when I tried to use humor the most, to kind of wake people up, as well as lift their spirits and make their trip memorable.” (Guide 4).

While trying to estimate the amount of humor, used in a single trip in relation to the informational facts about the place they were visiting with guests, some guides reported 30/70 correlation where 70% of the time spent on the trip was devoted to the factual information, and 30% of the time – on jokes and laughter.

This study has also revealed that the majority of guides (60% of respondents) tend to choose the type of humor and jokes they are going to use on tour in advance; even in case of situational humor, where it is hard to predict the object or event that can produce laughter, guides tend to filter jokes and tune-down humor in order to achieve controlled outcome. This is how it was explained by one of the guides: “I try to prepare and test my jokes in advance, because I want to feel secure and safe to use that kind of humor, any humor.” (Guide 3).

Thus, to achieve it, all the guides, as it has been reported, take the advantage of the possibility to engage with their guests right before the trip starts, to get the grasp of the particular guest's preferences as well as the overall group's mood, spirit and expectations. The tools can vary ranging from interpersonal connection, as one of the guides put it: “At the beginning I choose to try to get to know them and listen to them mostly, to hear them share information about themselves” (Guide 7), to trying to size up the whole group at once:

“Often, I’ll measure the group with the use of my welcome speech. As you know, when we get people on the bus you grab the microphone and say: ‘Welcome to the bus. Here’s the rules about the bus’, that sort of thing. So, I’ll use that as a way to gauge my audience. If I say with a happy and energetic voice: ‘Hey everybody!’, and people are like - ‘meeeeeh’, then I think ‘okay’, now we have a problem. But if I get smiles and waves and you know, the two funny people from you know, wherever Cotswold’s in England are all excited in the back, then I’m like ‘Okay!’, now we have a fun group here. I will also try to put a little bit of humor into the speech about safety instructions, because people never listen to the safety instructions. If you make it funny, then people will at least listen. I mean more people will. So, I usually take windows as an emergency exit for this example, saying: ‘The windows in the bus can be used as emergency exits. In case of emergency, you can break out the windows with the red hammer located right near the windows. Now, I know that when we arrive, you are gonna be really excited to see the Husky dogs, but please, do not use the windows. The doors are okay, and everybody will get their turn to get out of the bus.’ And again, by this I try to check and see how people react. If they are like - ‘I don’t understand, why we would break them?’ – well, then we just will move on.” (Guide 8).

Answering the question if race, age and/or gender play a role in what type of jokes guides are going to tell their guests, most of the respondents (70%) replied affirmatively, acknowledging the fact that it is important to adjust humor in accordance with the country of origin of tourists and make it age- and gender-appropriate. The incentive of such vital changes, as my respondents pointed out, is not only to avoid the use of inappropriate or offensive jokes, but also to improve humor delivery, matching humor with the guests’ country of origin, as well as adjusting the workflow of the guide himself or herself. One of the guides, discussing the importance of flexibility of humor stated that:

“I have also noticed that different people relate differently based on their age. So, in a sense I can say that when I’m guiding people that are older than me, it’s a little bit more of a performance, while when I’m guiding people that are my age or younger than me, it is a little bit more of a conversation.” (Guide 5).

This study also showed that most of the guides agree on the idea that feedback from guests, on the fact what type of humor is used and which jokes are introduced during the tour is quite

important, though there were some variations in opinions, where younger and less experienced guides were sticking to the idea that it is crucial to be attentive to the feedback of the group after each and every joke, and always make sure if people were laughing, clapping, or in other ways were expressing their gratitude, approval and happiness, while more mature and experienced guides were stating that there can be different ways and approaches to make the tour delightful and unforgettable:

“My job as a guide, is not to be funny. My job as a guide is to engage and delight the people that are with me. So, if I try humor, and they go - ‘That is not engaging and delighting for us’, I have two choices. I can say: ‘Well, it will, eventually, and you guys are going to enjoy it!’ Or I can go: ‘Okay then let's go this way instead’. Because I don't have to be funny. I don't have to tell jokes and try to be funny. I have a lot of different things that I can do. Sometimes I have groups who are: ‘Cut with the funny stuff, just tell us about Alta. What's wrong with you!’. And then I'm like, okay, great. Let's hear some information about Alta.” (Guide 8).

Nevertheless, if a particular type of humor or a specific joke was unsuccessful, the majority of guides reported that they prefer to move on with guiding and switch to the next topic, as opposite to the attempts to cover up a failed attempt at using humor.

Speaking about the possibility of involvement of guests on tour into the guiding process and stories that the guide tells to his or her guests, opinions divided evenly between “for” and “against”. The rationale for the guests’ involvement describes the fact that it will help to facilitate connection between the guide and the guests: “I believe, that by doing that, you can connect with your guests better” (Guide 2). While advocates of the opposing view were stating that it can be quite hard to get people to reply, and persuading them can backfire in a way that all the group can go silent and the question the guide has asked can be ultimately left unanswered, which will make it difficult to continue with the initial topic. The root problem of it, as some guides see it, lies in human psychology when some individuals can be worried about peer pressure, and can have, in a way “stage fright” (since usually there are more than 30 people on one bus). And thus, even if the question was fine, and surely there can be a lot of people on the bus who definitely know the answer, in the majority of cases those people will prefer to remain silent, just not to draw the attention of their peers to themselves. Some respondents believe that a suitable solution to this problem can be explored, when a guide suddenly finds himself or herself in the middle of making an attempt to engage guests by

asking the questions, and this solution consists of switching to multiple-choice question with the sprinkle of humor:

“Some way to find your way around this situation is a multiple-choice question, where you can say: ‘Okay, we are gonna vote “A”, “B”, or “C”. This little red hummer near the window is....

A: To make your neighbor shut up.

B: To break the window in case of emergency.

C:’

So you know, and then people laugh and they go: ‘Ha-ha, Okay, well’, you know, and now they are part of this process, because it's not an open ended question.” (Guide 8).

To conclude, I would like to say that my respondents have demonstrated a high level of awareness about the ways that humor can affect the ongoing trip, as well as openness to humor and readiness to employ it on different stages of a trip and for various reasons.

4.3 Humor application process

In this chapter I demonstrate how guides approach the question of what type of humor to use while guiding, how humor can influence the flow of a trip, and whether or not guides make conscious adjustments to the process of implementation of humor.

First and foremost, the guides reported that there is no particular preference whether to employ humor in the beginning, the middle, or in the end of the trip, as they believe that in each and every stage of the tour humor can facilitate different roles, and guides tend to look at the particular situation and think of what needs to be done at the exact moment when making the decision of whether to insert humor into the situation or not.

The guides almost unanimously (more than 90%) agreed on the fact that the implementation of humor into guiding work has a positive effect on the overall guests’ satisfaction improving the feedback and tipping experience. Among many positive aspects that humor can bring to the guests, my respondents specifically highlighted that humor can ease stress and anxiety some tourists can experience, bring feelings of happiness, validation, engagement, and overall put guests at ease and build connection between the guide and the guests. One of the guides explained it in this way:

“Humor can be helpful. Probably more for me, rather than for tourists, because they're not that interested in me as a guide, and humor is a good example for those people too to see that I am a usual person, and I am not stiff, or overly serious about every particular thing. They can see that I want them to have a good time, and we're gonna joke, because that's just how we get through the day.” (Guide 7).

Having stated that, some of the guides noted that the influence of humor on guests in some way is like the work of stepping motor, where the introduction of humor improves the overall guests' happiness by one point, though it can be difficult sometimes to establish cause and effect relationship:

“Because if you had happy people who were feeling funny when they got on the bus, then they will feel validated, because they will feel like ‘wow!’, you know, ‘hey, this is my sense of humor! This guy shares that and I feel really good about that!’. If you had people who were neutral and they enjoy the humor along with everything else, then they'll feel a little better. If you had people who were neutral to negative, and they stayed neutral to negative, that is in many ways because many people get to a point where they hold themselves stuck in those conditions, and that's why working as a guide can be a challenging process, because human psychology and human behavior is so complicated and we are not just, you know, BF Skinner route conditioned response kind of stuff, where we give you a condition and you respond. Because sometimes we may get in the system, and we will respond in a way that you're not expecting us to mess with you. Sometimes we will say: ‘I am not going to play this game!’, you know, and so it's very difficult to get a cause-and-effect relationship. But so, with people who are willing to be moved, humor is a very effective tool for moving people.” (Guide 8).

In addition, the opinions of respondents were also divided on the topic whether it is appropriate for a guide to use humor as a way to cover up the fact that he or she is lacking some particular knowledge about the area. The majority of guides voted for the use of humor in the moments of absence of valid information to be provided for the guests, explaining it by the fact that humor can be employed in diversion tactics, where a guide through humor would switch the topic to the more familiar one, will employ storytelling techniques to “kill the time” (and these stories can also be informational), or will try to relate through humor with the guests; yet specifying that it is important for a guide to be truthful with his or her guests

and admit, at some stage or another, that he or she does not know the answer to their initial question, because it will show the reliability of a guide and possibly work as validation tactic:

“I do that because I always want them to know that they're in good hands and it is not a problem that I am not the expert. So I am turning that around and presenting it as their question is very unique and special. I am usually telling them that in the six, seven years I've been doing this work, I haven't had that question yet. And it makes people feel better about it, like people be like, ‘oh my gosh, she's never gotten that and all the time she's tour guided?’. It is pretty useful tactic, I must say.” (Guide 5).

Adherents of the statement that humor should not be used as a tool to hide guides' personal lack of knowledge were mostly concerned that the very fact of realization for them that they do not know something about the area of work, while in the process of guiding, can throw them off balance, and instead of humorous comeback they can begin to stress and worry about their incompetency; thus they would rather prefer to be well prepared for the trip in advance, to avoid such causes, or skip some topics they are not sure about.

Humor on tours can be employed by guides to fulfill specific tasks. Those tasks can include, but are not limited to:

Self-disclosure tactic

According to R. Martin (2007) the role of humor in “Self-disclosure”, means that “[b]y making a humorous remark about certain attitudes, feelings, or opinions, we can reveal something about ourselves in a way that allows us to deny it if it is not well received.” (p. 117).

Replying to the question of whether humor can help the guide to maintain the curtain of privacy of personal life and avoid such slippery topics as politics and personal views, when guests start to ask such questions, the majority of the guides replied that humor can definitely help them in deflecting and steering the conversation they do not want to take part in the other way, while at the same time allowing the guide to maintain professionalism and keep guests satisfied. In some cases, as the guides recalled, positive attitude was enough: “And I'll smile and nod to people who have one political preferences, just the same as I will smile and nod to the people who have opposite political preferences, because my job is not to talk politics.” (Guide 5).

While some guides pointed to the fact that they do not mind revealing their background and some other personal information and by and large those guides insisted that by doing so they facilitated connection and bonded with their guests quicker and easier.

Social probing tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), “Social Probing” happens when “by observing whether or not others respond with laughter or reciprocate with similar humorous comments, we can ascertain whether they share similar views.” (p. 117).

In some instances, humor can be a good tool for probing the audience and testing the waters, so to say. Nevertheless, answering the question if they relied on humor by making different jokes to see how people react, for the purpose of choosing a particular style of humor for the current audience, the opinions of the respondents against doing so prevailed. The guides explained that they tend not to test different styles of humor with their guests, partially because they have a concrete set of jokes that have been proved to work correctly with any type of travelers they encounter, and partially due to the fact that in the beginning of the tour they try to focus on the essential things like providing necessary information about the trip, safety instructions, and overall getting to know their guests. The only testing that the guides perform on their audience is whether the overall use of humor with this group is suitable or not, but not for the purpose of adjusting styles: “I do make an evaluation of the group, but it is only for the purpose to understand how much humor I should put in the trip, not to determine the type of humor.” (Guide 3).

Norm violation tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), the use of humor in “Norm Violation” means that:

“[B]y using obscenities or other types of shocking language in a humorous manner, one is able to violate social norms in a way that reduces the likelihood that others will take offence, since everyone knows that humor is not to be taken seriously.” (p. 118).

The respondents were also careful in employing humor for testing boundaries and social norms. Discussing the question if they have ever used offensive or immoral words, ideas or sarcasm in a humorous manner, guides decided to stick to the opinion that it is a slippery road to follow, and it is very easy to make a mistake and hurt people instead of entertaining them, and thus it is better to avoid such tactics. Reflecting about the audience, one of the guides

pointed out: "... But this isn't really a comedy audience. It's a bus full of people who you really don't know, and they want to be in a safe place." (Guide 8).

Decommitment tactic

R. Martin (2007), states that humor as "Decommitment" means that "[b]y using humor to indicate that the proposed or past action was intended as a joke and was therefore not meant to be taken seriously, one can save face by "decommitting" oneself from the action." (p. 119).

Decommitment tactic also proved to be not so popular in the guides' community. Replying to the question formulated as follows: "*Have you used humor as a way to escape the consequences for doing or not doing something? Namely, making a joke about a broken promise: for example, telling the guests that we are going to see Northern Lights, and if there is no show, say 'well guys, it seems today Lady Aurora is very shy to come to us'.*", the guides stated that they prefer not to use humor in such a way, and instead employ other emotional tools like empathy and engagement. The rationale for it is in the realm, as it has been stated by many guides, where many guests have spent a lot of money on the trip and can be already very disappointed and sad, and thus humor in this situation can bring more harm than help to make the situation better. Many guides noted that in the similar situation they would rather use other emotional tools such as empathy, validation of the guests' feelings, and the overall guide's involvement:

"I have found that Northern Lights is very personal to a lot of people. And if there is a problem with the visibility of the Northern Lights on tour, I try to emphasize that they, as guests, have done everything correctly. And I kind of spill it out very clearly by telling them: 'You know what, the Northern Lights are only visible X percent of times. You are doing everything you can do. You came to (wherever we're guiding), which is the correct thing, you came during the winter, which is the correct thing, you are staying out and you're going on tours, which is the correct thing. You're doing so good!'" (Guide 5).

Yet, some guides do not completely rule out the possibility of introducing the humor in those moments, but only if they can get a clue that their guests are fine with it: "Usually, if you're using humor, in that sense, because there's like an expectation that hasn't been met, then they'll be the ones to initiate humor, in which point, you know, they're already not so unhappy". (Guide 1).

Social Norms and Control tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), humor can be employed in “Social Norms and Control” where “[b]y using irony, teasing, sarcasm, or satire to make fun of certain attitudes, behaviors, or personality traits, members of a group can communicate implicit expectations and rules concerning the kinds of behavior that are considered acceptable within the group.” (p. 119).

Some types of humor can be employed for the purposes of controlling the group or the situation, where by making jokes and humorous remarks, as well as with the use of irony, teasing, sarcasm and/or satire a guide can try to alter or completely change the disorderly behavior of particular individuals on tour. Such behavior can include but is not limited to occasions when one of the guests speaks loudly on the phone in the bus, disturbing the flow of the tour, or makes racist remarks towards any group. When presented with this problem, almost all the guides replied that they either have never been in this situation, or they prefer to deal with such difficulties by other means and not through humor. This is how one of the guides explained it:

“This is really a delicate thing, because if you have somebody, for example, that's doing something like that and you want them to stop, it helps to get the best people to want them to stop. But if you use humor and you make them kind of the subject of a joke or humor, then you might just make them angrier or make the situation worse” (Guide 1).

Status and Hierarchy maintenance tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), “Status and Hierarchy Maintenance” means that:

“The role of humor in controlling behavior and enforcing social norms also implies that it can be used by individuals to reinforce their own status in a group hierarchy. For example, you are more likely to crack jokes and amuse others in a group in which you are the leader or have a position of dominance than in a group in which you have lower status and less power than others.” (p. 120).

This study has also revealed that in relation to the use of humor the roles can be often reversed, as guides almost unanimously stated that they had an experience when not the guides, but the guests themselves were coming to the guide and telling them jokes and funny stories. Yet almost unanimously, again, the guides pointed out that probably it was not so

much about the status and hierarchy, but rather about trust and interpersonal connection; and the best thing a guide can do in this situation is to be attentive to their feelings and reward this type of behavior, because sometimes people need to be able to talk with someone:

“Because when someone comes up to the guide, to me for example, and they want to tell some stories, there's underneath that, there are some things that are going on, and you are someone who has been decided to be a good person and they want to share part of their life with you. Whether or not that part of their life is interesting, in a way that's a gift, because they're giving me the gift of saying ‘I find you to be a valuable person, and I would like to open up and share something personal with you’.” (Guide 8).

In addition, many guides pointed out the importance of good cooperation with the bus driver, as they often experienced that the bus driver can take the initiative of humor performance and start to entertain the public or join in tandem with guide.

The question of who performs the humor on tour proved to be many-sided and diverse, and not just about status and hierarchy maintenance, as this will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Group Identity and Cohesion tactic

In accordance with R. Martin (2007), “Group Identity and Cohesion” describes the fact that: “Although humor can be used to reinforce status differences between people, it can also be a way of enhancing cohesion and a sense of group identity.” (p. 122).

Humor can also facilitate relationships between the guides. When asked “*Have you relied on humor and jokes to build the sense of belongingness and connection with other guides?*” 90% of respondents replied positively. Among many useful things humor can bring a lot to interaction between the guides e.g. as mentioned during the interviews the ease of getting to know people, networking, getting new ideas and learning new jokes, enjoying backstage humor and the feelings of relief and relaxation.

Some guides also pointed out that introducing humor into communication between the guides had positive influence on their guests as well:

“I think it's just the most fun when you are genuinely having fun and just like laughing with your coworkers, because then your guests see that and they see that relationship and then that rubs off on them and they're able to be more playful and more relaxed.” (Guide 5).

Yet, lots of guides stressed the fact that the type of humor they were using among each other and the type humor they presented their guests with were quite different, and they prefer not to mix it.

Discourse management tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), the “Discourse Management” means that “[h]umor can also be used to initiate conversations in situations in which there is little shared knowledge between the participants (e.g., strangers).” (p. 123).

Half of the guides who responded to the question “*Have you used humor as a topic starter when you first meet your guests?*” decided to take advantage of first-time meeting opportunity and to start the tour with humor. They explained it by the fact that for the purposes of making a good first impression as well as for the improved attention of particular guests and the groups’ mood overall, it is important to entertain guests and make them involved in the trip from the very first moments. It is also important, as it has been specifically stated by one of the guides, to not let out any of the guests:

“... normally it is when you're standing in front of the bus and taking their tickets, so you have a 3 to 15 second window, and so you have one shot to make them feel at least slightly welcome. And you get that shot with everybody over and over and over again, including, if I'm saying something to you that there's people standing behind you that are also hearing that, so there's kind of an obligation to say something to every person who comes by, because if, for example Mrs. Johnson is standing in front of you, and I go: ‘Hey, welcome to summer holiday again!’ And I do not do that with you then you're like “I heard some kind of a nice comment. Why does she get one and I don't?”, so you kind of have an obligation, if you decided to do that, you must offer something friendly to everybody.” (Guide 8).

While those who preferred not to introduce humor on the initial stage stated that they see every tour as a developing project, where first things go first. So, for instance, the priority for

a guide is to provide essential information and ensure that everyone is safe and has all the key information, etc.; and only after all necessary steps have been taken, then humor, as a non-essential part, can be introduced into the trip.

To implement those mentioned tactics guides put emphasis on communication skills and stated that even though when guiding in the bus it is usually impossible for a guide to see the reaction of guests, as well as guests can hardly see the guide, the voice and change of intonation play an important role in humor delivery: “You cannot just recite jokes, because it's a combination of many different ways of expression, I think, and voice is just one of them.” (Guide 6).

To conclude, the majority of respondents see the application of humor in guiding in a positive light and acknowledge that humor on tour can help to get their guests more involved in the trip and pay more attention to the guide, facilitate better connection between the guide and the guests, and overall improve the experience of the guests as well as for the guides to have more positive trips and thus feel less tired, feel motivated and energized. Humor also brings a sense of satisfaction to the guides' work when they see their guests happy and having a good time. One of the guides specifically pointed out the possibility of reduced complaints due to application of humor on tour:

“Also, maybe to prevent them from complaining. If they're unhappy about some really small thing, then it feels smaller, if the rest of the experience is nice and the guide is funny. If the guide is nice, then they don't want to come to the guide and complain because it feels like they have a real relationship with me.” (Guide 9).

Answering the question “*In your opinion, what is the most challenging part of being the guide in Alta?*”, guides mentioned such things as the general difficulties that can arise in the workflow with people, building personal rapport, the weather, worries about the safety of the guests, logistics issues, other things outside of the guides' control that can go wrong, keeping track on details, feeling of being not good enough, a need to learn piles of new information about the area and fear of running out of topics to talk about in the bus, micromanagement, dealing with people's negative reactions and unreasonable expectations.

5 Discussion

Humor is an important part of a human life and a handy instrument in the midst of tumultuous times and unforeseen challenges that life can throw at us: “The ability to see the funny or absurd side of life is a useful antidote to misfortune and makes us more resilient. It helps us cope with stress, relieves tension, and can make bad situations seem less threatening.” (Martin P. , 2005, p. 64). The beauty of humor is not only in the fact that it can make us feel good and ease diverse complications of life or events, but also in its versatility of applications: “[H]umor in the workplace is correlated with better working relationships, greater job satisfaction and increased productivity” (Martin P. , 2005, p. 65), as well as in its foolproof application: “Like sleep, humor is safe and pleasant to use” (Martin P. , 2005, p. 65), though last one is debatable and I will touch on this topic in the coming chapters.

The findings from my data collection show that the majority of guides are well aware that the application of humor on tours plays a vital role in interaction with guests by facilitating engagement, emotional connection, involvement as well as improving the guests’ perception of tour by boosting their mood and wellbeing while on trip and working as a stress aid for the guide, to name some of those; and that guides devote to humor quite significant (about 30% of the overall time, according to my respondents) part of the trip. Those findings correlate with the existing literature, in which scholars highlight positive aspects of implementation of humor in social settings: “Humor is a social lubricant which can help to forge relationships and strengthen existing ones.” (Martin P. , 2005, p. 65); state that it can particularly improve the experience of participants by “making them feeling more involved, engaged and connected to the context and presenter through the puns, jokes, stories and activities.” (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 70); as well as cite the examples of the variety of application of humor: “[H]umor provided to promote destinations as well as humor to assist the delivery of safety messages and humor to add excitement at tourism attractions and activities.” (Pearce & Pabel, 2014, p. 22); and overall perceived advantages of introducing jokes on tours: “The frame of using humor in a tourism activity is mostly based on the idea that it lightens the atmosphere and lets people know that they are in for a good time.” (Pabel, 2017, p. 89).

Yet some scholars remind us that it is not all universally good with humor: “Humour [sic] is in fact associated with lies and when we joke, we take liberties with the truth, use duplicity and dissimulation.” (Turnsek, Zupančič, & Pavlakovič, 2019, p. 108).

So, is the humor good or bad, and how it can help international students in their guiding jobs? The truth, as usual, can be found in the middle, and in the following chapters I will dive deeper into the discussion about the implementation of humor on guided tours by firstly starting from the overview of the notion of relationship between the guide and humor, touching on general topics of humor in the workplace overall and guiding in particular. I will then look closely at the ways, tools, and consequences of implementing humor in the guiding work on the different stages of the trip – in the beginning, middle, and in the end.

5.1 Guide and humor

Approaching the question of relationship between the guide and humor it is important to take a pause and draw the line between internal and external realms.

First, let me start with the internal domain, to which one can relate guides' sense of humor in the meaning of humor appreciation, how he or she perceives humor and what type of humor is the guide's favorite.

This case can be considered in a plain and straightforward way, as there is only one person – the guide – who plays the main role and bears the sole responsibility about how he or she feels about it, and the discussion about humor appreciation will mostly revolve around the guide's personality traits. In fact, some scholars suggest that the very sense of humor can be seen as a personality trait: “[S]ense of humor may be viewed as a personality trait (or, more accurately, a set of loosely related traits), referring to consistent tendencies to perceive, enjoy, or create humor in one's daily life.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 191). In this light it is important to point out that all guides that have participated in my research project have given themselves quite high scores in the self-assessment of sense of humor, rating themselves in the range between “3” and “5”, with the majority giving themselves “4” on a one-to-five scale, when replying if they think they have a good sense of humor. Plus, the majority of respondents also confirmed that they would enjoy a guide with a good sense of humor, if they ever found themselves in a position of a tourist, and they would like to hear jokes and funny stories. Proving by this that those who choose a guiding job are usually people who also enjoy and appreciate humor. Thus, providing that the sense of humor can be linked to “a set of loosely related traits” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 191), those traits then must be in the realm of facilitation of one's ease of social interactions (which will be useful in guiding), and thus, can include in parts, but are not limited to extraversion, openness and agreeableness. Consequently, the “presence” of a sense of humor then can indirectly prove the existence of other traits that are

important for a guide's work, e.g. "Enthusiasm", which, according to Pond (1993): "Perhaps the single most important characteristic of successful guides is passion, both for the subject matter and the travelers." (p. 105); and "An outgoing and affable nature", because: "As guides are in the business of meeting, welcoming, and working for strangers, it is essential that they be approachable, open, and comfortable in many types of situations and with a wide range of personalities." (Pond, 1993, p. 105); to name some of those. Consequently, we can draw the first indirect confirmation that the presence of a good sense of humor (as an addition to, or standalone personality trait) is an overall positive element for a successful guiding work, and thus, students who would like to improve their performance as guides, should pay attention to, and work on their attitude and sense of humor.

Moving over to the external realm of relationship between the guide and humor, we can relate how the guide employs humor and which tactics he or she uses in humor delivery.

Guides who were taking participation in my interviews highlighted the importance of humor in a way that it helps people to bond and build emotional connection. It also facilitates engagement and involvement, works as a stress aid and amplifies the already positive emotions the guide and their guests are getting from the trip. However, when shifting the spotlight of humor from the guide to his or her guests, one should be careful in application of humor while guiding for the very simple, but nevertheless important reason: since guests who arrive with cruise ships and take guided tours are usually coming from different countries and thus have a different background, there is a high probability that not all passengers will "get" a joke. As it stated by some researches: "[H]umor may be difficult to manage in tourism contexts, especially when the audience is heterogeneous and members vary not just in their nationality but in their age, gender, religious and cultural sensitivities and basic personality styles." (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 7).

I would suggest that usually it is a sign of poor judgment from the guide's side about his or her guests when there is a weak reaction on the implemented humor because, speaking from my experience, generally guests want the guide to succeed because they came to enjoy their journey, and actually it is not quite hard to amuse them, thus, if humor seems inappropriate and people overall can not (or prefer not to) understand the jokes, it is usually the indicator of a poor judgment call from the guide's side. I would argue that it should not be a surprise that before meeting his or her guests, a particular guide should prepare by gathering all the possible information about them – the country of origin (and/or main residence), the age

group, dominant gender and reason for travelling. Of course, it is not possible to sort the guests with one particular background into a single bus for the sake of better performance, but knowing the dominant traits of the passengers at any given moment can help to search for best possible humor. And thus, the idea of testing the audience with some “safe” humor to determine desires and preferences of particular group can arise.

Hence the benefits of humor, from a standpoint of emotional realm, can be applied as a litmus test for guides. I will come back to this topic later, when discussing the implementation of humor on tours in the beginning of trips.

Other types of benefits humor can provide when employed on tours are in the realm of entertainment and social purposes, where humor can be used to alter the experience of time on a long-distance driving, for example, from one city to another as well as to manage social interactions. As Levine pointed out, that “paying attention to the passing of time changes our perceptions; time is said to pass more slowly when we become aware of it” (Levine, 1997, as cited in Pearce, Filep, & Ross, 2011, p. 65). It is no surprise that monotonous driving can be exhausting for guests, thus, implementing humor through the storytelling can help us to save tourists from the boredom of gazing at flashing landscapes through the window, and immerse them into the stories on a personal level. The useful thing about humor here is that anybody can find something particular to relate to, inside almost any joke. In the best case scenario, a story or a joke told by the guide will be so exciting that tourists will forget (even for a moment) where they are, and will be totally consumed by the guide’s monologue. This condition, when one is unaware of the surrounding environment and completely immersed into the process (whatever it happened to be) is the best state for the guide. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this condition “the flow”, in which a particular person “becomes so involved, so absorbed in an activity that nothing else would seem to be salient at the time” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, as cited in Pearce, Filep, & Ross, 2011, p. 82). In addition, the benefits of consciously implementing humor in guiding tactics, when through the use of humor the guide can try to achieve some agendas, should also be taken into account: “The strategic use of humour becomes most beneficial and tourists are likely to be more mindful of and engrossed with the positive emotions associated with their experience.” (Turnsek, Zupančič, & Pavlakovič, 2019, p. 106).

Hence the benefits of humor for a guide in entertainment and social realms can be seen here. This topic will be discussed in detail in the chapter devoted to the use of humor during the trip.

Finally, humor, according to my respondents, is useful for a guide in the end of the trip as well, for purposes that it can help elevate the guests' mood, leave them with good feelings and by and large help to avoid possible complains. In this sense, humor can be a tool of positive distraction: "Because it inherently involves incongruity and multiple interpretations, humor provides a way for the individual to shift perspective on a stressful situation, reappraising it from a new and less threatening point of view." (Martin R. , 2007, p. 19); as well as a possible instrument in self-deprecation play of guide:

"By making fun of the stupidity, incompetence, laziness, or other failings of the people who frustrate, irritate, and annoy them and thwart their progress toward their goals, individuals are able to minimize the feelings of distress that this others might cause, and derive some pleasure at their expense." (Martin R. , 2007, pp. 19-20),

though this tactic must be implemented with caution, because of easy availability and a high price of mistake, the guide can make when he or she unintentionally offends somebody. Last but not least, the process of creating the "feeling good" state about the trip can also be linked to the cognitive realm of implementation of humor, where, as it was discussed by R. Martin (2007), humor can facilitate memory retention process: "[H]umor serves as a sort of mnemonic technique or memory aid, causing greater elaboration of information and therefore enhancing its transfer and storage in long-term memory." (p. 104); as well as the process of selecting information when recalled: "[H]umorous information is recalled better than non-humorous information when both are presented in the same context." (Martin R. , 2007, pp. 104-105), which gives me reason to suggest that one of the benefits of implementing humor on tours, particularly in the end of the tour, in this case, is that improved satisfaction of guests, and their tendency to remember mostly good things about their trip can work in favor of a guide in terms of good feedback from the guests (and thus facilitate promotion, lead to an increase in salary or help build a better overall employer's opinion about a particular guide), increased amount of tips, and positive advertisement in the form of word of mouth when travelers share their experience with their friends and families.

Hence humor here, being employed in the cognitive realm, can help a guide to improve his or her own image and presentability as well as income and reputation. I will discuss in detail this way of implementing humor in the last chapter devoted to the topic of using humor by guides in the end of the trip.

Having drawn the overview of possible implementations of humor, I would like to state that in my opinion, humor provides a certain value for the guide in two realms: it has intrinsic value for the guide in the idea of personality traits, and it has extrinsic value, as a tool that can be applied in various realms, which a guide can use to facilitate, control and enhance the experience of his or her guests. In the coming chapters I will look closely at how guides can use this tool and at what outcomes such usage can create.

5.2 Employing humor into guiding work

Various people with diverse background and worldview can have dissimilar opinions about humor, respond to it differently, and overall have distinct (and even conflicting, in some cases) sense of humor. When discussing the topic of humor in tourism overall, and in the guiding job in particular, one must be careful in expressing the idea of blind assumption that anything that seems funny and good for the guide is good for their guests, and that humor should be applied in the formula: the more – the better. Of course, it is hard to overestimate the importance and positive influence of humor in social settings, yet it is also important to keep in mind that humor is not only a tool that can be consciously applied in particular events, but that it can be the product of unconsciousness as well: “It is important to note that when we speak of humor being “used” for particular purposes, this does not mean that individuals are always consciously aware of these functions or are using it in a volitional, strategic manner.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 117); and thus, there can be a danger to “overflow” guests with humor. As one guide pointed out:

“You must be very mindful about the fact that you can not be funny all the time, when you are on a tour with people, because they will stop believing you if everything you say is funny, and then pretty soon you will lose your place as an expert or a trusted person. So you have to be really careful about it.” (Guide 8).

This concern correlates with scholars who point out that “humor should be used to illustrate important concepts and not background or peripheral material.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 105).

Thus, one must be aware of different ways and timeframes of implementing humor into the work, as well as of different types of humor itself, so any humorous attempt must be precisely timed and professionally delivered. Those attempts can be of various nature, and sometimes it is possible to make it through questions (even rhetorical, to catch the attention) or unique and unusual information, to name some of those, in the beginning, the middle, or at the end of the tour. In addition, as Pabel (2017) pointed out: “There is humor about tourists, humor provided for tourists and humor created and perceived by tourists themselves.” (p. 86). Thus, to be successful in humor delivery and to be able to use humor for the benefit of oneself, a guide must be able to recognize and adapt to various types of humor as well as to various social settings in accordance with what type of social role on tour he or she is playing at the exact moment, whether it is a leadership or a mentoring role.

There should be a natural progression in humor application and appreciation, as well as in its delivery, in connection with the flow of trip, so it will be logical to start from the beginning.

5.2.1 Before the tour

As it stated above, the interviewed guides have ascribed to humor various benefits in the form of improved interaction with guests, facilitation of engagement, emotional connection, improved involvement of guests, and stress aid, to name some of those; and overall all of them are positive signs, but a problem can arise from the fact that people with different background can take humor in different ways. There are lots of variables that can affect perception of a particular joke. Let us take gender differences as just one example. Some studies suggest clear distinction in appreciation of humor depending on the recipient’s gender: “[M]en are more likely to appreciate sexual humor than women” (Terry and Estel, 1974, as cited in Palmer, 1994, p. 68) and: “[M]en’s humor is more aggressive whereas women prefer ‘absurd’ humor” (Chapman and Gadfield, 1976, as cited in Palmer, 1994, p. 68). Thus, it can be wise for a guide to gauge his or her audience for the dominantly present gender in order to calibrate and carefully craft the repertoire of jokes, and my research has shown that the majority of guides are mindful of such issues, which by the way concern other factors besides gender. The societal and cultural backgrounds can also play a significant role when choosing the type of humor: “[I]n general people prefer jokes that are aimed at some group of which they are not members, or feel no empathy with” (La Fave, 1972, as cited in Palmer, 1994, p. 68). Hence the vital importance of “learning” about guests before the tour. However this “learning process”, as I see it, should not be simply about the process of gathering preliminary

information, but should rather be performed in the presence of guests, with the very use of humor itself, as it will bring additional benefits, but still, applied carefully and in moderation, of course.

The majority of my respondents agreed on the idea that it is necessary to choose the style of humor in advance, but parted ways when it came to the particular course of action to learn about the guests' preferences. Some guides suggested that it is necessary to be a "receiver" of information, and let the tourists set the tone, so to say. As one of the guides put it: "At the beginning I choose to try to get to know them and listen to them mostly, to hear them share information about themselves." (Guide 7); while other guides insisted on proactive approach, which has been summarised by one of them in the following words:

"Often, I'll measure the group with the use of a welcome speech. As you know, when we get people on the bus you grab the microphone and say: 'Welcome to the bus. Here's the rules about the bus', that sort of thing. So, I'll use that as a way to gauge my audience. If I say with a happy and energetic voice: 'Hey everybody!' and people are like – 'meeeeh', then I think 'okay', now we have a problem. But if I get smiles and waves and you know, the two funny people from you know, wherever Cotswold's in England are all excited in the back, then I like 'Okay!', now we have a fun group here." (Guide 8).

Those two examples describe the two polar approaches.

Let us start with learning about the guests' preferences. The way I see it, the direct type of approach (especially with the help of humor) as in the example with Guide 8 can produce better engagement from the guests' side "forcing" them to interact in some way or another, and even if they choose to respond with silence to some of the guide's jokes, it still counts as a response and the guide can adjust his or her humor accordingly; as opposite to the tactic described by Guide 7, who, by allowing the guests to be initiators and choose what type of information they are comfortable to share, limits his or her ability to maneuver as well as the amount of overall information he or she can get about the guests.

In addition, some jokes can serve multiple purposes: they can be used to get the attention of the public, help to retain information, and check if this type of humor is appropriate for this particular audience; as one of guides mentioned:

“I will also try to put a little bit of humor into the speech about safety instructions, because people never listen to the safety instructions. If you make it funny, then people will at least listen. I mean more people will. So, I usually take windows as emergency exits for this example, saying: ‘The windows in the bus can be used as emergency exits. In case of emergency, you can break out the windows with the red hammer located right near the windows. Now, I know that when we arrive, you are gonna be really excited to see the Husky dogs, but please, do not use the windows. The doors are okay, and everybody will get their turn to get out of the bus’. And again, by this I try to check and see how people react. If they are like - ‘I don’t understand, why we would break them?’ – well, then we just will move on.” (Guide 8).

The importance of humor in creating attention as well as information retention has been noted by some scholars: “[H]umor may enhance attention to stimuli due to the novelty and surprise involved in humorous incongruity.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103); and: “[H]umor may affect retrieval strategies, biasing subjects to retrieve humorous material before nonhumorous material.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103); as well as:

“There is an ample evidence supporting the benefits of instructional humour [sic], including increased attention and interest, information retention and learning speed, more productive learning environment, a more positive image of the instructor, more efficient acquisition of linguistic and cultural competencies, an increased conversational involvement, enhanced cultural awareness and more stimulated critical thinking.” (Takovski, 2021, p. 1).

Secondly, those mentioned “passive” and “active” ways of engagement, as I see them, with the guests, for the purpose of gathering information can be linked to the personality of a particular guide, set particular expectations in the group, and by and large predict the overall pace of the tour. Keeping in mind the relation of humor to personality traits, as it was noted by R. Martin (2007), in discussion about emotional part of humor: “[S]ense of humor may be viewed as a personality trait (or, more accurately, a set of loosely related traits), referring to consistent tendencies to perceive, enjoy, or create humor in one’s daily life.” (p. 191), and connecting it with the work of Pond (1993), where she was talking about specific personality traits of a guide: “Most people have a fairly well-defined image of the ideal tour guide: outgoing, affable, well-informed, enthusiastic.” (p. 104), we can draw a conclusion that if a

sense of humor can be linked to extraversion, guides who struggle to employ humor and choose passive ways of obtaining information about the guests, especially in the beginning of the tour, can have more difficulties in performing the role of a guide. And thus, the very ability or inability to use humor as a litmus test with guests can be a stress test for the guide him or herself, and can help the guide to be mindful about their own personality, as it can be a case that some guides can feel quite confident in a safe space of their home, but struggle in the field with guests.

And finally, the social role of humor can come in handy for learning about the guests, as well as improving (or at least testing) their mood even before they board the bus. As P. Martin (2005) noted: "Humor is a social lubricant which can help to forge relationships and strengthen existing ones." (p. 65); and thus my personal favorite tactic of studying my guests was by employing humor with the use of incongruity, which as it was stated before, works on the notion that "something amuses us because it does not match up with what we expect things of that kind to be, or because it is out of place in the setting in which we find it." (Morreall, 1983, p. 299); or in other words: "Something amuses us if it somehow violates our picture of the way things are supposed to be, and if we enjoy this violation." (Morreall, 1983, p. 299), into my work when I was meeting them in front of the bus. It was happening this way: as I was supposed to collect tickets, and my guests were coming from the cruise ship not one by one, but rather in big groups, there was often quite a queue at the bus. Now, let me remind you that it all was taking place in the winter, and freezing temperatures down to -25 degrees Celsius were a norm, so, as I was collecting tickets, I was greeting my new guests with a happy and energetic voice: "Welcome to the summer!"; or "What a glorious day in the Arctic!" (especially, when a snow storm was raging); or "Welcome to the winter wonderland"; or "I am so glad that you have chosen to come here, to the south!"; or "It is so warm today!" (when it was actually -20°C). By this, I was able to draw the first picture about the kind of group I was having now with me, because many people actually laughed and some of them even "played in" my jokes, by agreeing and amplifying, and some of them replied in a way that "it ain't summer at all" or "it is not funny, I can't feel my fingers", to which I replied that I have prepared for them a very warm and comfortable bus, with an amazing driver, and that we will be happy to show them Alta city with the warmth and comfort of their home. And from this moment, as the queue was moving further and those who were "complaining" were boarding the bus, sometimes the bus driver will take the initiative and continue to appease the unsatisfied guests with humor and increase the happiness of those

who were already enjoying it. The idea of all this performance was to, first of all, force myself into the proactive mode (as opposite to reactive), put myself into the leadership position, make guests feel seen and welcome (as I was greeting each and every guest, not always with humor, though, as I was limited in time and needed to take the tickets and put all my guests in the bus as soon as possible), try to involve bus driver (as he plays an important role, and I will elaborate on it a little bit later), set the tone for the tour and see how guests react to the basic humor and how much of them want to be involved, as, and this I have learned much later into my practice, those guests who enjoy to be involved into the jokes and like to interact with the guide, are the great help for guide on tour.

Thus, the possible benefits of using humor by a guide can be seen in three different areas:

1. Humor can help to facilitate direct approach in learning about the guests' preferences, by helping the guide to be in a position of initiator and by proxy preparing him/her and his/her guests that he/she will be the leader on this tour.
2. By the way of engagement with guests, the tour guide can become mindful about his or her own abilities and see what he or she needs to change in psychological make-up.
3. With the use of humor the guide can not only learn about his or her guests, but also improve the mood and set the expectations for the coming trip, as well as engage additional parties.

It is also worth noting that guides who took participation in the interviews, reported that before the tour they do not rely on humor for the self-amusement purposes, trying to remember jokes and funny stories in order to elevate their own mood and ease worry, and prefer instead to focus on the coming tour and the routine, though studies suggest that the application of humor can play a positive role in stress reduction: “[T]he production of humor may be an effective stress-reducer for both high- and low-humor subjects.” (Newman & Stone, 1996, p. 106), as well as: “Amusement even has medical benefits - because the person with a good sense of humor is less inclined toward negative emotions, he or she is less susceptible to stress and all the ailments brought on by stress.” (Morreall, 1983, p. 303). So, the question remains whether my participants have never tried this approach in their work, and thus are unaware of potentially positive results, or they are quite comfortable in their role of being a guide and have no need in it, though the latter can be debatable as among my

participants there were both experienced guides and those who were doing this job for the first time in their lives, so they were logically not supposed to possess all the necessary skills and/or coping mechanisms. This notion can be one of the reasons for calling for future research on the topic of humor and tourism overall and the application of humor on tours in particular.

5.2.2 During the tour

The application of humor during the tour can serve its own purposes, even though different guides can have various approaches to humor as well as different opinions about the implementations of humor on tour. Some studies suggest the overall practical influence of humor ascribing particularly that: “the improved rapport, teamwork, and creativity resulting from humorous interactions will not only make for a more enjoyable work environment but will also translate into greater productivity and a better bottom line for the company.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 360). In addition, it is particularly worth pointing out that employment of humor can serve greatly for the leaders: “Given its capacity to cultivate a range of positive outcomes in the workplace, humor has been recognized as a valuable tool for leadership purposes.” (Karakowsky, Podolsky, & Elangovan, 2020, p. 170). Now, the explicit statement about the benefits that humor brings to the leadership sphere are of great importance here, since it can help to build a connection between humor and guiding work, as according to Cohen (1985): “The two lines of origin of the modern tourist guide are the pathfinder and the mentor. These are the antecedents, respectively, of the leadership and the mediatory spheres in the guide's role.” (p. 5), and thus to understand better the mechanics of humor application.

As Cohen (1985) states, there can be different components that are inherent in the role of a guide: “Since each has an inner and outer directed aspect, four major components of the role are distinguished: the instrumental, social, interactionary, and communicative.” (p. 5).

Similarly, I believe that there can be numerous ways of applying humor and the variety of jobs humor can get done in connection with those roles; so I will focus only on a number of those that I have personally encountered in my practice as a guide.

Self-disclosure tactic

Humor can be employed by a guide for self-disclosure functions, which has been explained by R. Martin (2007) in words: “By making a humorous remark about certain attitudes, feelings, or opinions, we can reveal something about ourselves in a way that allows us to deny

it if it is not well received.” (p. 117). The majority of the guides who took part in the interview process agreed that employing humor on tours helps them to maintain the curtain of privacy of their personal life and to avoid such slippery topics as politics and personal world views as well as helps them to deflect and steer away from the conversation they do not want to take a part in, while simultaneously allowing them to maintain professionalism and keeping their guests satisfied. From my point of view, it is an essential feature of humor for guiding work because often guides can find themselves in a vulnerable position. What I mean by that is that guides, while working with people, are supposed to be sociable by nature: “As guides are in the business of meeting, welcoming, and working for strangers, it is essential that they be approachable, open, and comfortable in many types of situations and with a wide range of personalities.” (Pond, 1993, p. 105), often balancing between different players: “[T]he guide’s role relates to his function as a middleman between his party and the local population, sites and institutions, as well as touristic facilities.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 13). On top of that, the distinction of travelers’ age can put additional weight:

“Senior citizens, who travel in groups more often than do other age groups, were more likely to see a guide in a social capacity, as “companion,” “leader,” or “caretaker of details, situations and personalities.” Younger students responded most often by saying that the guide’s purpose was to teach”. (Pond, 1993, p. 66).

Thus, any possibility to employ humor, or at least hide behind a smile, is vital here. As one of the guides stated: “And I’ll smile and nod to people who have one political preferences, just the same as I will smile and nod to the people who have opposite political preferences, because my job is not to talk politics.” (Guide 5)

In this instance humor can help a guide to balance the requirements to be sociable, approachable and polite with each and every guest, perform his or her direct role or roles as a guide, while at the same time feel safe and keep personal information and beliefs intact.

Social probing tactic

As it has been stated by R. Martin (2007), one of the applications of humor can be “Social Probing”, where: “by observing whether or not others respond with laughter or reciprocate with similar humorous comments, we can ascertain whether they share similar views.” (p. 117). It can be seen as a useful tactic for a guide to implement during the trip, from my point of view, yet the majority of my respondents stated that they do not rely on jokes for the

purpose of testing and adjusting the style of humor for a particular audience. The rationale for it is that in the beginning of any tour guides usually test their audience for the possibility of using humor overall, but they see no need in going deeper into the subject as they usually have very limited time on tour and have to go through other routines such as giving safety instructions and providing the information about the tour for their guests, and thus, by and large, as my respondents stated, they have a particular set of jokes that have already proved to be successful. So here we can see the potential for implementing this tactic, as it can provide the guide with vital information about his or her group as it will allow the guide to: “probe beliefs and attitudes regarding wide variety of issues, such as political and religious views and attitudes toward people of different ethnicities, nationalities, occupations, or gender.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 118), since on the tour there can be people of various age, background and the purpose of travel, but this information seems inapplicable due to the lack of time during city tours.

In this instance there is a potential for using humor to get more information about the group the guide is currently working with, but it will be irrelevant due to the relatively short trips, if we are talking about city tours. I assume that there is a possibility that it can be different for multiday trips.

Norm violation tactic

According to R. Martin (2007), humor can be employed in “Norm Violation”, where:

“[B]y using obscenities or other types of shocking language in a humorous manner, one is able to violate social norms in a way that reduces the likelihood that others will take offence, since everyone knows that humor is not to be taken seriously.” (p. 118).

Now here it really depends on the context, and yes, it can be seen as a controversial tactic. On the one hand, guides are supposed to take on a leadership role overall and particularly the “Instrumental Component”, which refers to the guides’ “responsibility for the smooth accomplishment of the tour as an ongoing social enterprise.” (Knebel, 1960:120, as cited in Cohen, 1985, p. 11), which can be quite hard when it comes to the question of assertion of authority: “Being at the top is lonely. You are in charge of a coach-load of clients, and to keep your authority you have to keep a certain distance.” (Collins, 2000, p. 99), and thus all of it requires a lot of confidence from a guide, which according to Pond (1993) particularly “enables guides to carry out their duties assertively and effectively, to put people at ease, and

to help create enjoyable experiences.” (p. 105). However, on the other hand guides must approach this task with maximum consciousness not to hurt someone’s feelings, and the type of humor that will allow the guide to manoeuvre in such situations can come quite handy. Yet the guides I have interviewed were united in the idea that it is a dangerous road to follow for a guide, because in such circumstances it is quite easy to make a mistake and offend their audience. As one of the guides stated: “... But this isn't really a comedy audience. It's a bus full of people who you really don't know, and they want to be in a safe place.” (Guide 8).

This points to the idea that by and large guides prefer to operate in a familiar (regarding to humor) environment and play it safe, so to say, by not testing any boundaries and preferring other, non-humorous ways.

Thus, the conclusion here is that guides tend to avoid questionable types of humor that can lead to unforeseen challenges and conclusions.

Decommitment tactic

One of the possible uses of humor can be for the purposes of cancelling or avoiding responsibility for things that have been said or done, or promises that have not been delivered. In accordance with R. Martin (2007), “Decommitment” refers to the way where: “By using humor to indicate that the proposed or past action was intended as a joke and was therefore not meant to be taken seriously, one can save face by “decommitting” oneself from the action.” (p. 119). And while such a tactic can be overall assessed as appropriate and beneficial for both parties – the guide and the guests, in the numerous examples when the guide wished he or she has never done or said something he or she has already did, for a number of reasons, such as a misunderstanding between the guide and his or her guests, unmatched expectations/empty promises, events that lie beyond guides’ control (natural/political phenomenon), my findings tell quite the opposite, as the majority of interviewed guides while answering the question whether they have used humor to escape consequences for doing or not doing something (e.g. employing humor to cover a broken promise), stated that they do not use humor in such a way, and rather than covering mistakes and shortcomings of the trip with humor, they prefer to employ other emotional tools like empathy and engagement, reasoning their choice by the fact that in such circumstances many guests, who have spent lots of money on the trip can be quite disappointed and sad because of the shortcomings (usually the major ones) and humor in this situation can bring more harm than help to make a situation

better. It is an interesting notion, and the choice of tactic can originate, as I am convinced, in the belief system and work ethics of a particular guide. If we look at the work of a guide, he or she is constantly operating in one of the many roles inherent to this profession, as it has been mentioned earlier, and often change them to suit a particular event or occurrence while on the trip, and by this playing a particular character in front of his or her guests, as it has been noted by Pine and Gilmore (1999), who was discussing conventional vision to customer-worker relationship: “Whenever employees work in front of customers, an act of theatre occurs.” (p. 105). Here it becomes even more intriguing because now it is not only about tourists but about the guide him or herself, as guides have various types of emotional tools at hand, the very choice of a particular tool can say a lot about the guide. Let me take Northern Lights tours as just one example. Discussing emotional work of guides on tours Heimtun (2016) stated:

“Through emotional labour [sic] they engaged with tourists who expected that seeing the Northern Lights would fill them with feelings of joy, happiness, excitement and awe, but also, potentially, disappointment and distress if there was a no-show or if the lights were faded.” (p. 230).

If we take the last part, and think how a particular guide can cope with disappointment with guides, there can be different routes a guide can take: he or she can employ humor or empathy, for instance, which are quite different approaches. With humor, as I see it, a guide has a possibility to abstract from the problem and to disengage, or better to say to shield him or herself from a commitment (if a guide, for example, had promised that Northern Lights will appear, but due to the weather there was no show), by employing humor as some sort of gasket: “Humour [sic], it seems, has the potential to be a mediator between the “objective authenticity” and the staged nature of the tourism product.” (Turnsek, Zupančič, & Pavlakovič, 2019, p. 107); but choosing empathy, a guide must be diving deeper, so to say, and making accent “on the notion of ‘perspective-taking’, or identification with the other” (Tucker, 2016, p. 33); and soothing, in some sense, guests, and relieving them from disappointment.

Thus, while decommitment can be a valuable tool and can help a guide to avoid unpleasant situations and to save his or her face, the very use of this tactic can be quite telling and reveal a lot about the approach to work of a particular guide, and by proxy can help him or her to reflect on their own work ethics and see from the side the weak spots in the way the guide

socializes with the guests – does he or she try to shield and protect them from unpleasantness, or is willing provide emotional support.

Social Norms and Control tactic

Humor can also be used for the purposes of controlling a group of people or a particular situation. As R. Martin (2007), pointed out: “By using irony, teasing, sarcasm, or satire to make fun of certain attitudes, behaviors, or personality traits, members of a group can communicate implicit expectations and rules concerning the kinds of behavior that are considered acceptable within the group.” (p. 119). Yet it is another questionable tactic, as guides who were interviewed replied that they had never relied on such features of humor, either because they had never encountered instances of unruly behavior from their guests, or if they did – they preferred to deal with such inconveniences by other means, and not through humor. I believe in the potential of such use of humor, since the means of control can be seen not only to restrict some behavior of tourists, but also serve as a way of communication and invitation to interaction as well as a way to involve guests in the controlled environment: “Humor as expressed in the controlled laugh or smile may serve as a means of communication, signaling the intent and nature of the communicating parties.” (Stephenson, 1951, p. 570). Thus, demonstration of what is appropriate in the current setting by a guide can serve as an invitation for the guests to be involved, and this can ease the fear of guests of being seen as inappropriate in some way or form. Let us not forget that a guide often works with people of different backgrounds, and in a tour group there can be people of different origins as well as of different generations, which can be a significant factor, since:

“The age of travelers weighed significantly in the evaluation of a guide’s role. Senior citizens, who travel in groups more often than do other age groups, were more likely to see a guide in a social capacity, as “companion,” “leader,” or “caretaker of details, situations and personalities.” Younger students responded most often by saying that the guide’s purpose was to teach”. (Pond, 1993, p. 66)

and by the means of control induced by humor, a guide can induce more flexibility for him or herself and move between different social roles, as well as “lead” his group in a social sense and show to his or her group how they should see the guide at any given moment.

Thus the conclusion here is that humor as a way of control of the group can be seen not so much as a way of actual control in the conventional meaning of this word, but rather as a tool

that can help the guide to steer his party in a socially controlled way, show the guests what is appropriate at the moment (and thus, give them the possibility of being involved in a social play) and “guide” their vision and understanding of the guide himself or herself at any given moment in accordance with the role the guide is currently operating in.

Status and Hierarchy maintenance tactic

Sometimes humor can be used for the purposes of reinforcement of one’s social status:

“The role of humor in controlling behavior and enforcing social norms also implies that it can be used by individuals to reinforce their own status in a group hierarchy.

For example, you are more likely to crack jokes and amuse others in a group in which you are the leader or have a position of dominance than in a group in which you have lower status and less power than others.” (Martin R., 2007, p. 120).

Thus, with the introduction of humor on tour, a guide can try to “elevate” or better to say, to define his or her status, and to become comfortable in a particular role that suits the particular moment. If we turn to the work of Cohen and his classification of guides’ roles, we can find that the “social component” of the “leadership role” is closely related to the use of humor on tour: “The guide is supposed to keep his party in good humor and in high morale through pleasant demeanor and occasionally jocular behavior.” (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). Yet guides I have interviewed, always unanimously stated that they do not see the expression of humor as a show of “power”, and when guests themselves approach the guide to tell jokes and funny stories, guides see it as a sign of trust and interpersonal connection and choose to “play in” by being attentive and reward such behavior, as opposed to competing with their guests for “power”. As one of the guides put it:

“Because when someone comes up to the guide, to me for example, and they want to tell some stories, there's underneath that, there are some things that are going on, and you are someone who has been decided to be a good person and they want to share part of their life with you. Whether or not that part of their life is interesting, in a way that's a gift, because they're giving me the gift of saying ‘I find you to be a valuable person, And I would like to open up and share something personal with you’.” (Guide 8)

Thus, like with “decommitment”, while being a valuable tool for a guide to reinforce his leadership role, the main idea here is that the very choice of using humor in such a way or not, as well as the ability of a guide to exchange the roles with his or her guests can say a lot about the guides’ personality and work ethic, which – if guide is being mindful about – can serve him or her greatly in self-development.

Group Identity and Cohesion tactic

Facilitating relationships between the guides is another work that can be done by humor, which refers to, as it has been named by R. Martin (2007): “Group Identity and Cohesion”, where: “Although humor can be used to reinforce status differences between people, it can also be a way of enhancing cohesion and a sense of group identity.” (p. 122). Most of the guides I interviewed stated that they have relied on humor and jokes to build the sense of belongingness and connection when interacting with other guides, mentioned particularly such benefits of employing humor as ease of getting to know people, networking, getting new ideas and learning new jokes, enjoying backstage humor and the feelings of relief and relaxation. All those benefits align with the literature where scholars number benefits of using of humor in the workplace: “[E]mployee humor is associated with enhanced work performance, satisfaction, workgroup cohesion, health, and coping effectiveness, as well as decreased burnout, stress, and work withdrawal.” (Mesmer-Magnus, Glew, & Viswesvaran, 2012, p. 155); together with: “At the level of the individual, humor is seen as a tool for gaining control over stress levels and relationships with fellow employees” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 361). Interestingly enough, the use of humor as a group identity can also be seen as one of the specific types of humor in tourism settings: “There is humor about tourists, humor provided for tourists and humor created and perceived by tourists themselves.” (Pabel, 2017, p. 86), and this notion can reinforce the connection within the group of guides and help them build better relationships with each other as well as feel more involved and secure, by the idea that they belong to a particular “cast” or “band” by practicing a particular style of humor, as: “Insiders, who share a common social identity, can often take liberties that others cannot.” (Terrion & Ashforth, 2002, p. 69).

Thus, the application of humor as well as the division of it for being only guide-related (guide-spoken) can help guides in their socializing and networking with fellow coworkers. The notion of being able to share specific in-group jokes can help new guides build the sense of safety and belongingness.

Discourse management tactic

Last but not least is the general function of humor as a topic starter in any social setting, which relates, according to R. Martin (2007), to “Discourse Management”, where: “Humor can also be used to initiate conversations in situations in which there is little shared knowledge between the participants (e.g. strangers).” (p. 123). It can be applied to both situations – the beginning of the tour, where a guide is just making the first contact with the guests, as well as during the tour when it is necessary to switch to a different topic or new encounters with new parties emerge. Only half of my respondents see the use of humor in such a way. Those who apply humor as a topic starter in the beginning of the tour expressed opinions that it can help them in the process of making first impression, get as well as improve attention of particular guests and group overall, and work as entertainment as well as a tool of involvement of guests. While those who do not prefer to start with humor, stated that they would rather focus on tour preparation routine by providing their guests with all the necessary information, and only when all obligatory steps have been made – they would introduce humor. This disparity is akin to decommitment and norm violation use of humor, which shows more about the work ethic of a particular guide, and what he or she considers more appropriate. Undeniably, high work morale and focus on the routine can be desirable traits of any guide, but so is the occasional stepping away from the well-walked path and allowing some degree of freedom and uncertainty with the use of humor, as it can elevate the guide in the eyes of his or her guests: “Emotional perception of sincerity is highly connected with positive spirit and state of mind, which can be evoked by using humour” (Turnsek, Zupančič, & Pavlakovič, 2019, p. 107); as well as generate the overall likability of the guide, because: “In general, we tend to be attracted to people who display a sense of humor.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 132).

Thus, the use of humor as a conversation starter can help a guide to make a good first impression and appear more likeable. Still, the very application of humor will vastly depend on the guide’s personal work ethic and morale.

To draw the line, I would like to state that there are indeed numerous functions of humor that can help a guide in his or her work. Those functions lie in the social realm, where, among many others, humor helps guides to demonstrate approachability, likability and politeness; set

and test social boundaries; decommit from promises and avoid potentially unpleasant situations; control the direction and flow of conversations; set the boundaries and serve as a tool of reinforcement of the guide's leadership role. It builds the sense of belongingness and connection with other guides; and helps a guide to get to know his or her guests better. But it is only one realm that points to the "outside". The "inside" work is of the idea that humor can help a guide to understand his or her own work ethic better by being mindful of how he or she actually employs humor on tour and which chances with humor he or she takes, a guide can make judgments about, as well as adjustments to, his own personality and style of work.

The idea of decommitment through humor can be of interest here to demonstrate such a duality:

In my practice as a guide, when I was with my guests on trips "Hunting Northern Lights", we usually drove quite far away from the city to a place with better conditions regarding cloud coverage and light pollution for enjoyable gazing of Northern Lights. Usually those trips took about 40 – 120 minutes driving and my primal concern was to keep my guests' expectations consistently high. On the way to the location, I would usually tell them all about the Lady Aurora as a natural phenomenon, raising my guests' expectations and after that, if there was still time, I usually went to the folklore and beliefs of people of the past about this phenomenon, for instance, that Northern Lights were considered quite dangerous and evil by people of the past:

"Thought to be the souls of the dead, the Sámi believed you shouldn't talk about the Northern Lights. It was also dangerous to tease them by waving, whistling or singing under them, as this would alert the lights to your presence. If you caught their attention, the lights could reach down and carry you up into the sky." (Hurtigruten Group, n.d.).

Those stories raised curiosity of my guests. Thus, we arrived at the destination with high hopes and curious to meet the mystical Lady Aurora, and if the conditions on the place were not good enough (caused by the change of weather or other factors beyond guides' control), it was no wonder that many tourists would be quite dissatisfied, to say the least. Now, it is important to mention here that during my presentation there were usually two or three guests who would ask me if I was sure that we would see the Northern Lights upon arrival, and frankly I loved it when people asked me this question because firstly it was proof that people

had been paying attention to presentation so far – I was always telling my guests, when dwelling on the scientific facts about Northern Lights that there was literally nothing a man could do to affect their appearance, but at the same time I purposefully failed to mention that it was still possible to predict it, like the weather forecast, and everybody at any moment (even right in the bus) could download Aurora Borealis forecast app on their phone. I did it because it would be unfair towards my guests – they had bought the trip 3-6 months (and some even a year) in advance, but the forecast was usually valid for 5-7 days, so there was no opportunity for them to know if they would meet Lady Aurora when they made a decision to go on trip. Plus, the target group I (and many international students in Alta city) work with are customers of cruise boats who are on their 7+ days voyage from South to North of Norway and the tour “Hunting Northern Lights” is one among many tours and activities that are included in the package those people purchase. Secondly, this approach made it possible for me to (while guiding and telling scientific facts) add humor into my work and “build a back door” for me, so to say, if there would be no Northern Lights upon arrival. So, when asked if I was sure that there would be Lady Aurora waiting for us when we arrived, I always answered that just before we had taken off from the pier, I made a call to Lady Aurora and she promised me that she would be waiting for us when we arrived. This answer was always very popular and successful because of two main reasons: first – it was light and humorous and welcomed warmly when given during the “scientific” presentation of the phenomenon (in a sense it was like a breath of fresh air right at the time when people started to feel tired of physical and chemical components of explanation of the nature of Northern Lights); and second – it was quite memorable (since it sounded quite ridiculous) and in case when we arrived and there were indeed no Northern Lights, and people began to ask and complain where the Northern Lights were and why they could not see them, I always replied that it was quite strange to my understanding, telling them: ‘I did call Lady Aurora, and she picked up the phone and promised to come to us..... well, it seems that she became quite a shy lady recently.... I will go and phone her again, and while I do it, you guys can enjoy yourself in a warm lavoo around the fire place with cake and hot chocolate.’ This usually gave me somewhere from 20 till 40 minutes and during that time either the Northern Lights came out or the guests quite frankly forgot about the Northern Lights while socializing in a warm tent. Because, let us not forget, many of them came from cities and towns, and the experience of an open fire, Saami lavoo, -20 degrees Celsius in combination with a homemade cake and a cup of hot chocolate was an adventure by itself, and it was much less incentive for them to complain about the missing Northern Lights afterwards.

Now, in this example one can see that with the use of “decommitment” I shielded myself from dissatisfaction of my guests, but did not employ any other emotional tools like empathy or engagement to make my guests feel better, and from here, the two types of benefits can be mentioned. The first one is that I disengaged from my promise about delivering the experience of the Northern Lights and protected myself from guests expressing any disappointment by shifting the blame away from me. This is a direct benefit. The indirect, though, is that by mere reflection and understanding that I choose to disengage, deflect, and protect myself, as opposed to engagement and helping my guests with their feelings of dissatisfaction, I can now make judgement about my own work style and personality traits. And this is the duality of benefits of humor application.

5.2.3 After the tour

There can also be a place for humor after the tour, or better to say after the primal part, in the very end of the trip, when the bus with guests is heading back to the cruise ship.

As mentioned by some of the guides, humor before and right after the trip brings such advantages as getting the attention of the guests and improving their mood. On top of that, the use of humor also makes it possible to make the tour memorable and to reduce the number of potential complaints. The effect of humor on improved attention and memory has been discussed by R. Martin (2007): “[H]umor may enhance attention to stimuli due to the novelty and surprise involved in humorous incongruity.” (p. 103); as well as: “[H]umorous material may be rehearsed more than nonhumorous material, resulting in increased retention.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 103); while in the complaints department it has been pointed out that: “numerous studies suggest that various components of humor can affect several features of mental health either by reducing problems once they have occurred or by reducing the perceived threat of negative life events” (Galloway & Cropley, 1999, p. 306). Now, humor here can help a guide in the process of moderation of the perceived negativity of life events that could occur during the trip by means of jokes and funny stories shared with the group at the very end of the tour.

For example, in my practice as a guide, I have a couple of go-to stories to tell my guests on the way back to the pier, perfectly timed to end at the very moment of arriving back to the cruise ship so that I could leave my guests in an elevated mood and hopefully make them forget about possible negative events or other shortcomings that could have occurred during the trip.

One of those stories helps me to achieve such results by switching the attention and occupying their minds with thoughts about a mouse. It goes as follows:

‘The city of Alta, ladies and gentlemen, is a fascinating place to live, and even though some can think that living above the Arctic circle can be quite challenging in terms of weather conditions and some darkness periods, as you can see there are lots of things that can compensate for it greatly. Some can say that it is hard to live during the polar night, but darkness is actually a great thing, because when the snow comes in December, covering the earth with a fluffy white blanket, the magic of millions magical sparkles turns this place into the winter wonderland! Can you imagine – you are on your way home from school or work, it is cold and dark around you, but right above your head there is a galaxy of millions of stars on a spanless black canvas... You turn around the corner, and suddenly the moon appears, lighting your way with millions of snowflakes along the road as if it brings all the stars to your feet. There is silence around, and as you continue your way, you suddenly see the hint of greenish light in the sky. You don’t pay attention to it, as you think it is probably an illusion, but moment by moment the light becomes brighter and brighter until the whole sky bursts into flames of green, red and blue colors as mysterious Lady Aurora begins her magnificent dance. Actually, it is much better to enjoy the Northern Lights from the top of the mountain, and not from the streets of the city, and as a matter of fact I have an interesting story that happened with me, which I would like to share with you. It happened a couple of months ago, when I was getting ready for my exams. As you probably know, writing a paper can be an exciting and thrilling task, but nevertheless there always comes a moment when you want to take a break and go somewhere to unwind. That’s exactly how I felt, so I decided to go hiking to the top of the mountain. Now, you can probably ask what exam paper I was writing that it drew me to the top of the mountain, but the explanation actually is that being on the summit is the best idea if one wants to see and enjoy the Northern lights. In fact, here in Norway we have all the amenities for such trips, as on many mountain tops around the country there are free-access public cabins where one can spend a night. And we have a couple of those in Alta as well. The one I chose to stay in, didn’t resemble a cottage house, but rather an oversized tent, covered with wood and moss for insulation. But nevertheless, it contained all the necessary equipment like beds for four people, a table, a fire place, and an axe, jigsaw, and other tools to make woods for the fireplace. So, I hiked the mountain and reached the cabin in the evening. That day it was a clear sky, and I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the view of the Northern Lights was amazing that night. So I had a great time, and made a lot of photos for

my collections, and when the show ended, I decided to make my bed and go to sleep. Thanks to the fire place, it was really warm and cozy in the cabin, so I fell asleep quite fast, but in the middle of the night I was woken up by a strange noise. It was like someone was knocking on the door – knock-knock-knock ... At first, I thought that I was dreaming, and it was all the tricks of my imagination, so I easily fell asleep again. But after some time I woke up again because of this noise – knock-knock on the door. No, I was thinking, I am dreaming.... But then again – knock-knock! Now, I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that I was completely, alone, on the top of the mountain, with no people around in a 10-kilometer distance, there are no wild animals in the Alta area, no bears, no wolves, and I also do not believe in ghosts or zombies. Half dreaming I decided to wait a little and see if it was true that I was hearing this noise or it was just in my dreams.... There was no sound for a long time, and as I started to calm down and settle in the thought that it was truly my imagination, I started slowly drifting to the dreamland... And suddenly even louder – knock-knock!

Now, ladies and gentlemen, all my sleepiness vanished in a blink of an eye, I had no desire to sleep at all, and instead I sat up in the bed and started to look around. In the corner, I found an axe that I used to chop the wood. I grabbed the axe, and it became my best friend for the whole night. So, I was lying in bed with the axe, and maybe because of this freshly acquainted friend, or because it was in the middle of the night, but I started to feel more and more sleepy, and on top of that the knocking finally came to end, whether somebody got tired of scaring me or lost his interest in the search of pray.... Anyway, I started to drift to sleep again. You know, it is a fantastic feeling to hug an axe in bed, and it is really calming. So slowly but surely I fell asleep again... But after some time it started again – knock-knock! Well, that was not a joke anymore. I completely woke up, and sat up in my bed. I also heard some movements behind the door, but I decided not to go out and ask if it (whatever it was outside) wanted to come in, figuring that if you are the one who is knocking in the door, you also should ask the permission to come. As I was sitting in bed and waiting, suddenly, I heard some movements around, and that somebody started to knock on the walls of the cabin instead of the door. Knock-knock. I decided to wait. Then again some knocking on the door. Knock-knock. I waited. And suddenly, ladies and gentlemen, suddenly, the door moved, ever so slightly, and I heard like somebody was inside the cabin already! With shaking hands, I grabbed the torch from the table and started to look around. I was shining the light all around the room, but I could not see anyone. And suddenly I heard a rustle near my bed... I directed the lantern on the floor.... And you would not believe me, ladies and gentlemen, it was a

mouse! It was a little mouse that, as it appeared, was living in the cabin! It turned out that this mouse was hibernating in the cabin, but when I came in the evening and started a fireplace, it became quite warm inside, so the mouse woke up and decided that it was time to eat something. As it was moving inside the walls and eating on the wood, or something, it was producing those knocking sounds that woke me up during the night.

It is interesting, as it appeared, that it was quite a famous mouse, because it was scaring fellow-hikers throughout the whole winter. There is a guest book in the cabin, ladies and gentlemen, where guests can leave thank you notes for the builders of this cabin, and in this book there were a lot of lines where people were writing how this tiny mouse was scaring them all night long. A funny fact, this mouse is still alive. I hiked the mountain last week, and I paid a visit to this mouse, and I fed it, so it could continue scaring the travelers. So if you decide to come to Alta next time and would like to meet this famous mouse, just call me, and I will show you the road to this cabin. Well, we have arrived back to the pier, home sweet home, or as some prefer – ship sweet ship. Thank you for your attention, and thank you for coming to Alta! And I hope to see you next season, when we will go hiking together and visit this famous mouse’.

Having such a story in the end of the trip proved to be quite beneficial, as I usually had only positive reaction of guests, and there were no complaints. Plus, finishing on a positive note was allowing me to change, to some extent, the perception of the whole trip, so when my guests reminisced about their journey they would have positive memories. Indeed: “[T]he recall of humorous material appears to be at the expense of memory for nonhumorous information presented at the same time.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 105).

Thus, the benefits for the guides of employing humor at the end of the tour can be seen in its ability of selectively enchanting memory and improving the perception, by this, of overall experience.

6 Conclusion

As it has been stated in the beginning, the rationale of writing this thesis was to explore the question of how humor can help international students working as guides to improve their job. The lack of literature and research on the topic of humor in tourism, which has been mentioned by a number of scholars, stated that: “the extensive literature on the topic of humour [sic] in general has not been comprehensively tapped by tourism researchers.” (Pearce, 2009, p. 627); and that “research on humour [sic] and its value for tourism experiences only started to emerge in the early 2000s, making it a relatively new area of research with many unexplored aspects that warrant further investigation.” (Pabel, 2019, p. 1); as well as overall the idea of humor in the workplaces: “very little psychological research of any kind has been conducted on the general topic of humor in the workplace.” (Martin R. , 2007, p. 361); along with my personal work experience as a guide, worked as a catalyst to undertake such research.

The findings and discussion have demonstrated that guides by and large see clear benefits of implementation of humor on tours, and that humor does help them in bettering their work, but this process of “bettering” can be a product of different natures. Building on the idea that there are different types of humor in tourism settings: “There is humor about tourists, humor provided for tourists and humor created and perceived by tourists themselves.” (Pabel, 2017, p. 86), there has been created and proved the assumption that in fact humor can work in two realms – the external, affecting the guests’ experience; and internal, affecting the guide, and thus it has intrinsic and extrinsic values.

The extrinsic value of humor proved to better the work of the guide by facilitating guests’ engagement, bonding, emotional connection and involvement, function as an ice-breaker in the beginning of the trip, work as a stress aid and amplify the already positive emotions the guests are getting from their travel, and overall work in the realms of overall entertainment and satisfaction, as guides facilitate tourists’ experience: “Through selected role performance on a predesigned matched stage, the guides deliver intentional positive impressions to the tourists in order to make them satisfied.” (Zhu & Xu, 2021, p. 9).

The intrinsic value of humor operates in the realm of the guide’s approach to work and self-reflection. Being employed for the benefits of the guide, humor can help him or her in the various areas such as facilitation of direct approach and learning about the guest’s

preferences, establishing and demonstrating hierarchy, maintaining the control of the group and serving as a tool for social direction, balancing and showing sociability and approachability. It can also help to avoid unpleasant situations and responsibility for any failed promises, to socialize and network with fellow guides as well as help the guide to maintain the curtain of privacy of his or her personal life. It must be particularly mentioned that humor possesses a feature of being a litmus test and helping the guide of being mindful about himself or herself, since the presence or lack of a sense of humor can point on some features of the guide's personality: "sense of humor may be viewed as a personality trait (or, more accurately, a set of loosely related traits), referring to consistent tendencies to perceive, enjoy, or create humor in one's daily life." (Martin R. , 2007, p. 191).

Even though humor proved to be a diverse instrument in a guide's toolbox: "Thus, the judicious use of humor may be an important social skill in itself and may also contribute to other social competencies, such as the ability to initiate social interactions, provide emotional support, and manage conflict." (Yip & Martin, 2006, p. 1203), that can be consciously employed by a guide with the help of various tactics: "The strategic use of humour [sic] becomes most beneficial and tourists are likely to be more mindful of and engrossed with the positive emotions associated with their experience." (Turnsek, Zupančič, & Pavlakovič, 2019, p. 106), some of which can be uniquely humor-reliant: "The function of decommitment is humor-specific, insofar as the ambiguous status of the humorous utterance is not shared by other types of communicative situations" (Attardo, 1993, p. 555), yet, speaking about the implementation of humor on tour it is also important to be aware of its "unseen side" as well: "It is important to note that when we speak of humor being "used" for particular purposes, this does not mean that individuals are always consciously aware of these functions or are using it in a volitional, strategic manner." (Martin R. , 2007, p. 117), and thus, any attempt to implement humor must be made with caution, because firstly it can be easy to "overload" the public with humorous attempts, and thus fail in delivering; and secondly, not all people perceive humor in the same manner:

"Defining humor as an outcome rather than a stimulus (i.e., a humor attempt) is important because the same stimulus may seem humorous to one person but not to another. The consequences of humor therefore depend on the psychological appraisal and emotional reaction of those perceiving (or not perceiving) humor rather than the stimulus per se." (McGraw, Warren, & Kan, 2015, p. 1154)

and thus feedback from the guests, as well as the guide's overall awareness and social intelligence are here of a great importance:

“Although the use of humor in tour situations is a variable largely related to the personality of the tour guide, I did find that it can be more functional in some situations than others, and therefore might also in part be influenced by the structure of the situation.” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 457).

To conclude, I would like to state, that based on my findings as well as the literature provided, overall in the question of applying humor the answer can't be simply right or wrong, as any guide must implement humor into the work as he or she sees it fit.

In contemplation about further research on the topic of humor in tourism, I believe that it is a fertile ground and tourism industry can benefit greatly from findings in this area. I believe that if we put some emphasis on humor and include positive psychology in the training programs for guides, we can improve their awareness of this subject, ensure the appropriate use of it, and, as a consequence, increase tourists' satisfaction.

As an afterword, based on the knowledge derived from the interviews I conducted as well as from my personal experience, it is always a good idea to end any tour (and by extension any work, whether physical or mental, like the research project on humor) on the positive note, so here I would love to present you with a hand-written portrait of the famous mouse that was scaring tourists on endless amounts of nights. I took a picture of the public guest book left in the cabin on top of the mountain. The author of the drawing is unknown.

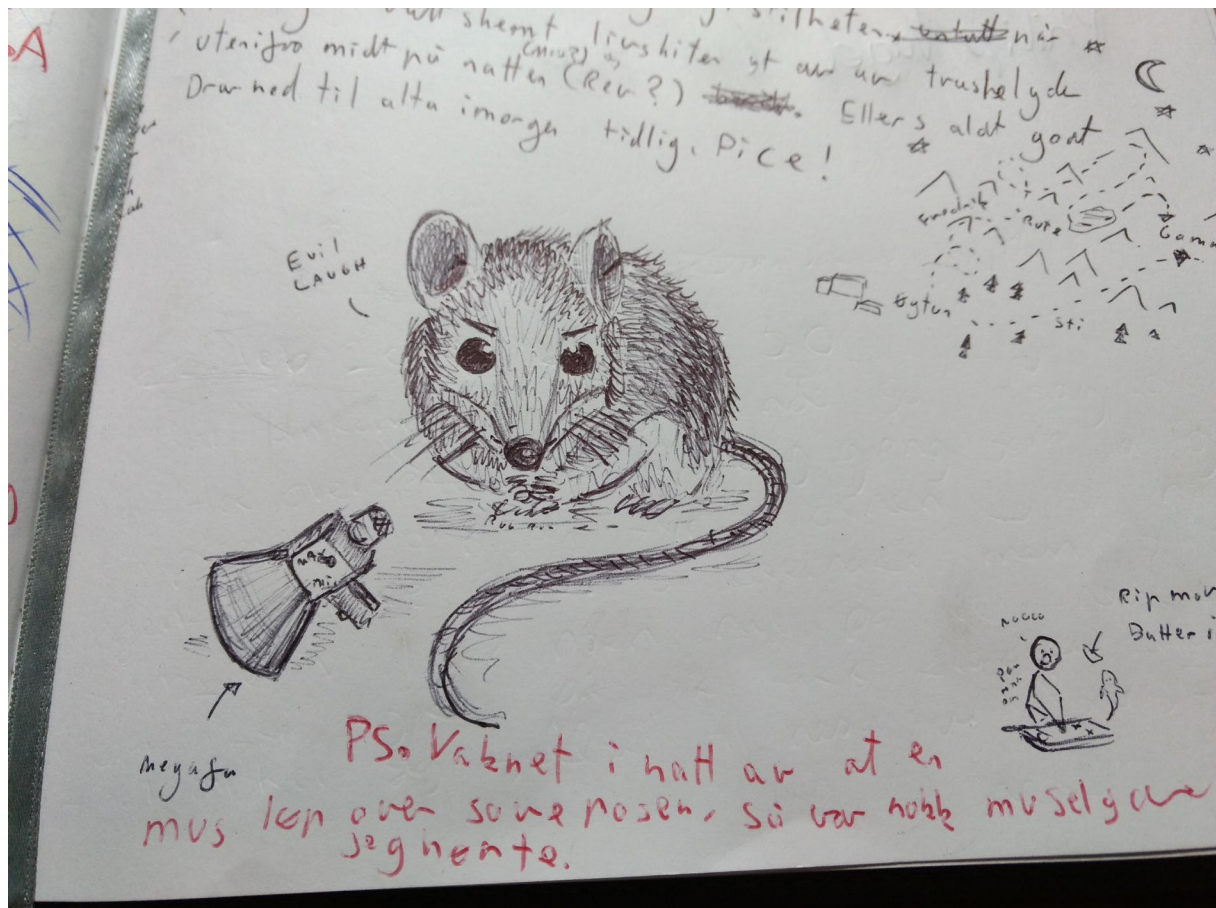


Figure 2: Photo of a page of a public guestbook in a public holiday cabin. On photo: the handwritten drawing of a mouse made by visitors of a cabin. The author of the drawing: Unknown. Photo by: Maksim Zakharov, 2019

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Appendix 1: Information letter NSD

Are you interested in taking part in the research project "Laughing through the unknown: Implementing humor into guiding work by international students in Alta, Norway"?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to interview current or former guides who have been working with cruise ships in Alta, Norway. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the use of humor in guiding job, and apply this information for writing Master Thesis.

The aim, is to answer the question: "How the use of humor can help international students in their job as guides."

Who is responsible for the research project?

UiT The Arctic University of Norway is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You have been, or currently are working as a guide with cruise ships in Alta

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve an interview (approximately 45 minutes) through Teams/Skype/Zoom (whatever option is more suitable for you), the questions on the interview will be in the area of using humor in guiding work, your personal experience and opinion about it. The audio part of the interview will be recorded for the purpose of transcription.

Examples of questions:

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (being 1 absolutely not important and 5 absolutely necessary) how important do you think humor is, in the guiding job?
- Does race, age and/or gender play a role in what type of jokes you are going to tell to your guests?
- In your personal opinion, should guides use humor and tell jokes to their guests, or should they stick to the facts and focus on providing necessary information about the place they are visiting/driving through?

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy — how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this informational letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with the data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Only the student who is working with this project will have access to the personal data
- Your name and contact details will be replaced with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.
- All the codes will be deleted as soon as transcription is completed.

It will be not possible to recognize participants and their answers in the publication (Master Thesis)

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on 01.09.2022. The collected data will be stored in anonymous form.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with UiT The Arctic University of Norway, NSD — The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The student: Maksim Zakharov, e-mail: mza015@post.uit.no Phone: +4740577207
- Supervisor: Kari Jæger, e-mail: kari.jager@uit.no Phone: +4778450424
- Our Data Protection Officer: Joakim Bakkevold, e-mail: personvernombud@uit.no Phone: 776 46 322
- NSD — The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Appendix 2: NSD Assessment

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

Assessment

Reference number

598973

Project title

Laughing through the unknown: Implementing humor into guiding work by international students in Alta, Norway. Interviews with guides

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

UiT Norges Arktiske Universitet / Fakultet for humaniora, samfunnsvitenskap og lærerutdanning / Institutt for reiseliv og nordlige studier

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

Kari Jæger, kari.jager@uit.no, tlf: +4778450424

Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

Maksim Zakharov, mza015@post.uit.no, tlf: 40577207

Project period

01.11.2021 - 01.11.2022

Assessment (1)

29.10.2021 - Assessed

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 29.10.2021. Behandlingen kan starte.

DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG

Det er obligatorisk for studenter å dele meldeskjemaet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Det gjøres ved å trykke på "Del prosjekt" i meldeskjemaet. Om prosjektansvarlig ikke svarer på invitasjonen innen en uke må han/hun inviteres på nytt.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 1.11.2022.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål

dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet

lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-utmeldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-enderinger-i-meldeskjema> Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Kontaktperson hos NSD: Lisa Lie Bjordal

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Appendix 3: Consent form

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project "Laughing through the unknown: Implementing humor into guiding work by international students in Alta, Norway" and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in the interview through Teams/Skype/Zoom

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 01.09.2022

(Signed by a participant, date)

Appendix 4: Interview guide

Interview guide

1. Experience

- Why did you decide to work as a guide? (Have you tried to find another type of job, or was guiding your main goal?)
- Have you had previous experience/education in this field? (What was your previous occupation before you came to study in Alta?)
- How did you find out about the possibility to work as a guide?
- Have you been provided with any training before start working as a guide? (Was there anything about humor?)
- On a scale from 1 to 5 (being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest) can you say that you have a good sense of humor?
- Do you use humor when guiding? (Yes/No)

In case of the answer “Yes”

2. Preparation and choice of humor

- In your opinion, how important is humor in the guiding job?
- During an average trip, how often do you use humor in your work? Do you usually try to use humor on more than one occasion during a single trip? (How often are you trying to make a joke during the same tour?)
- If you think about the whole trip, how much time of the whole trip do you devote to telling jokes and funny stories?

- Do you choose the type of jokes you are going to tell your guests before the tour, or do you tend to improvise on the go?
- Do you try to engage with your audience and study the preferences of your guests before the trip? For example, use small talk when they are waiting for the bus or while they are getting on the bus and finding their seats.
- Does race, age and/or gender play a role in what type of jokes you are going to tell your guests? And overall how are you interacting with them?
- Are you sensitive to the feedback of your guests to the way you use humor? If they are laughing, clapping or respond in silence?
- If a joke was unsuccessful, do you then try to “cover up” a “bad” joke with a new portion of humor?
- When telling jokes and funny stories, do you try to engage your guests in your stories? For example, by asking rhetorical questions, as a preface to a funny story (e.g. “have you had this happened to you?”, “can you believe what happened?”, “do you think I decided to do it?”, “guess what I have found?” etc.)

3. Use of humor

- Do you tend to use humor during particular parts of the trip – for example in the beginning as a warm-up; or in the end to leave the guests on a positive note? Or do you just make jokes when you have the best opportunity without much consideration in what stage the tour is?
- Have you noticed if the use of humor affected the overall guests’ satisfaction, and/or tips? Have you had any feedback from your guests about your humor?
- Have you yourself used humor as a cover-up to the fact that you were lacking in knowledge about a particular place, and telling a joke or a funny story was a way to “kill the time” and as a pleasant distraction for your guests?
- If there was a moment when guests were asking about you and your private life or your personal world views, were your answers plain and honest or were you telling them about yourself in a humorous manner and telling funny stories instead of facts? (Self-Disclosure)

- Have you relied on humor for probing your audience? For example, in the beginning of the tour you are making different kind of jokes to see how people react, so you could choose the appropriate type of humor for your audience. (Social Probing)
- When telling jokes and funny stories, have you ever tried to use some offensive or immoral words or ideas in a humorous manner? Sarcasm? To make the joke more spicy so to say. (Norm Violation)
- Have you used humor as a way to escape the consequences for doing or not doing something? For example, making a joke about a broken promise: e.g. telling guests that we are going to see Northern Lights, and if there was no show, say “well guys, it seems today Lady Aurora is very shy to come to us” (decommitment)
- Have you tried to take the control of the group/situation by using jokes or humorous remarks? In other words, have you relied on irony, teasing, sarcasm or satire to make fun of something or somebody in your group in order to change their behavior? For example, if you could not get the attention of the group – people were on the phone, or were distracted in any other way, and you needed to take back the attention of your guests. Or there was one guest who was always in his/her phone during the trip and who inconveniencing by this the other members of tour. (Social Norms and Control)
- Have you had guests on your tour who were taking initiative and were starting to tell their funny stories? (Status and Hierarchy Maintenance)
- Have you relied on humor and jokes to build a sense of belongingness and connection with other guides? For example, making jokes on the pier while waiting for your group near the bus as a way to start a conversation with other guides? (Group Identity and Cohesion)
- Have you used humor as a topic starter when you first meet your guests? For example, witty comments about the weather on the pier – it’s a beautiful day in the arctic / can you believe it’s almost summer! (when -20); greeting guests with jokes. (Discourse Management)
- Is there any moment during your tour when you use humor just for the sake of it? For example, at the end of the tour, when everything has already been said and done, you decide to entertain your guests with a funny story? Or on a long-

distance driving, when hunting northern lights, and when you have plenty of time? (Social Play)

- Do you use communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal) such as vocal variety, gestures, etc. to improve your humor delivery?
- What do you usually do in case of failed humor or jokes? Do you try to cover it up with the new portion of humor or do you just move on to the next subject?
- How do you feel after using humor and telling jokes during the trip? Are you exhausted or energized?
- In your opinion, what are the most important aspects humor can be used for in guiding?
- To conclude, can you say that humor is something you apply consciously, or it just happens “on the go”?

In case of the answer “No” (and continue after “Yes”)

- Do you try to engage with your customers in any other non-humorous way to improve their experience?
- Do you rely on humor for self-amusement or as a way to relax and be in a better mood before the tour? (In other words, do you tend to remember funny jokes and stories before the trip?)
- In your opinion, overall, should guides use humor and tell jokes to their guests, or should they stick to the facts and focus on providing necessary information about the place they are visiting?
- If you find yourself in a position of a tourist, would you like your guide to tell jokes and funny stories, or would you want him or her to stick to the facts? (because, for example, you came to learn about the place, and not for the comedy). For you personally, what is the perfect tour?
- In your opinion, what is the most challenging part of being a guide in Alta?
- Was there a change in your approach to work / way of guiding in the beginning and after some time you have been working as a guide? What has improved?
- Are you going to practice guiding after your studies?

