

Department of Tourism & Northern Studies

**The Image of Norway as a Tourist Destination
Presented in Russian Travel Blogs.**

Ekaterina Klimova

Master thesis in Tourism August 2015

UiT

The Arctic University of Norway

Abstract

The decision-making process in purchasing a tourist product or destination is significantly influenced by the available information about it. One of the most popular information sources used by modern tourists in order to get a better idea about a particular destination is a travel blog, a new type of media aimed to help tourists to share their travel experiences with others. Thus, the information presented by travel bloggers plays a significant role in destination image formation and should be considered by destination marketers.

The present master thesis is aimed to define the image of Norway as a tourist destination presented in Russian travel blogs. For analysis there are selected Russian bloggers who describe their post travel experience in Norway. With the use of content analysis the information found in the blogs is divided into five main themes. Each theme represents the most popular discussion topics by the bloggers.

The analysis defines Russian tourists traveling to Norway as a minority group of Russian travelers. Although, at the same time the analyzed bloggers demonstrate several commonly mentioned characteristics of Russian tourists. There are made also interesting observations concerning the processes of tourism consumption and image formation based on the examples from the analyzed blogs.

The study contributes to the development of destination image of Norway and better understanding of modern Russian tourists.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 Background of the study.....	6
1.2 Significance of the study.....	8
1.3 Thesis outline.....	8
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 The definition of destination image.....	10
2.3 Image formation.....	12
2.4 The role of culture in tourist experiences.....	14
2.5 Blogosphere and its power in destination image formation.....	15
2.6 Russian tourist market.....	18
2.7 Russian tourists in Scandinavia.....	20
2.8 The Internet and social media use in Russia.....	21
2.9 Russian travel blogs.....	23
2.10 Conclusion.....	24
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY.....	25
3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Research design.....	25
3.3 Research questions.....	26
3.4 Qualitative research.....	26
3.5 Sampling and data source.....	27
3.6 Data collection.....	28
3.7 Data source.....	28
3.8 Data analysis.....	35
3.9 Content analysis.....	36
3.10 Conclusion.....	37
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS.....	38
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 The information about the selected bloggers.....	38
4.3 Word frequency test.....	41

4.4 Natural environment theme.....	44
4.5 Social environment theme.....	49
4.6 Cultural environment theme.....	51
4.7 Industrial environment theme.....	55
4.8 Tourist facilities theme.....	57
4.9 Conclusion.....	60
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION.....	61
5.1 Introduction.....	61
5.2 Russian tourist bloggers experiences of Norway and reviewed literature...	61
5.3 Image formation, literature and tourism.....	63
5.4 Tourism consumption and destination image.....	65
5.5 Conclusion.....	66
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....	67
REFERENCES.....	70

Acknowledgements

This Master's thesis is a part of a two-year program of Master Studies in Tourism, University of Tromsø, Finnmark Faculty. Writing this Master's thesis was an interesting and challenging experience. I was very curious to conduct a research on Russian tourists traveling to Norway. Considering a great number of Russians choosing Scandinavian countries for visiting, there is very little research done on this topic.

I would like to thank my family and friends who patiently supported me from the very beginning of the research.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Young-Sook Lee, for her wise guidance, valuable suggestions and inspiring conversations.

August, 2015, Alta

Ekaterina Klimova

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

At the present moment, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Every year the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) publishes statistics and analyses, which prove this statement by demonstrating the steady growth in the number of tourist arrivals. Tourists are constantly opening new travel destinations and purposes inspired by friends and family members, mass media, social media, marketing campaigns and other information sources. Travel information has never been as easy to access as it is nowadays. Such availability of information makes it very simple for tourists to choose the “perfect” destination and plan their trips in detail.

Norway is a relatively new travel destination, which has not yet reached the highest positions in the tourist arrivals lists issued yearly by the UNWTO. According to the UNWTO report for 2014, Norway was not even included in the list of the top fifty countries for the highest numbers of tourist arrivals. Though the destination of Norway can be found in the list of International Tourism Receipts, it is only listed in forty-fifth place in 2014 (UNWTO 2015).

Every country positioning itself as a tourist destination purportedly has its own destination brand and the brand strategy. On the Visit Norway web site, a report identifies four main attractions upon which the travel brand of Norway is based:

- 1) Spectacular fjords, coast and natural phenomena;
- 2) Fresh seafood and coastal specialties;
- 3) Nature based activities
- 4) Thriving coastal culture (fishing, seafaring).

According to Visit Norway (2012), the brand values of destination Norway are fresh (healthy, clean and refreshing), real (natural, authentic and rough), adventurous (surprising, undiscovered and varied) and open-mindedness (liberal, open and informal) (Visit Norway 2012).

From the Visit Norway report it is clear that the main focus of the marketing campaign of tourism in Norway is natural beauty and phenomena and the harmonious interactions between people and nature. Amongst the tourist information about Norway presented on Visit Norway, there are several environmental certifications, which assure environment friendly holidays (Visit Norway 2012).

In addition to natural beauties, the official Norwegian travel guide attracts tourists' attention to the history of Norway (Vikings), culture – the Sami people, the oldest culture in

Norway, and stave churches, the important part of the European cultural heritage and, of course, the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo (Visit Norway 2012).

The sun and beach destinations, such as, Turkey, Spain and Greece, attract tourists who wish to spend a relaxed holiday enjoying the beach, nightlife and restaurants. In contrast to these destinations, Norway is seeking different tourists. The target group is explorers, who are looking forward to exploring new places and who want to broaden their horizons, experience different nature, culture, local life style and traditions. These travelers are active and curious. They are well-educated tourists who are technological savvy and travel without children. This is the image of the target group of tourists described in the brand platform for the destination of Norway (Visit Norway 2012).

This research seeks to examine the image of Norway as a tourist destination presented in travel blogs written by Russian tourists. To date, a majority of Russian tourists prefer travelling to warm-weather destinations. Turkey is the most popular destination among travellers from Russia (Chernega 2012).

The number of Russian tourists choosing Norway as a destination for a holiday is relatively small according to the data presented by the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation (Federal Agency for Tourism 2014). However, Russian tourists are in ninth place in the “Norwegian and Foreign Hotel Guests Nights” list against another fifteen countries with 6% growth rate for the 2011- 2013 years period (Innovation Norway 2013). This fact demonstrates that Russian tourists are one of the biggest tourist groups travelling to Norway and that makes this group important to the Norwegian tourism industry.

As information sources, travel blogs written by Russian tourists who had already visited Norway were chosen for this study. In their blogs, they shared their travel experiences with the auditorium of the blogs’ readers. The choice of blogs as a data source was justified by their extreme popularity among Internet users nowadays. By reading a travel blog and perceiving the destination image described there, potential tourists form their own destination image, which may influence their purchase decisions for future holidays.

1.2 Significance of the study

As a developing tourism destination, Norway needs to discover new tourist markets and explore the existing ones in order to find ways to attract higher numbers of visitors. The Russian tourist market has great potential for Norway. Russia is one of Norway’s neighboring countries, which make that transportation issues easier for travelers; especially, those

Russians who live in the Northwestern regions of Russia, which are the closest to Norway. Finland, a comparable example of another Northern Europe country, receives tourists from Russia, thus, demonstrating that Russian tourists are interested in more than sun and beach destinations. In fact, Finland is one of the top destinations for Russian travellers, who yearly demonstrate their loyalty to this Northern Europe destination (Federal Agency for Tourism 2014).

Nevertheless, Norway does not demonstrate similar success among tourists from Russia in spite of the fact that Norway and Finland are close neighbors. This makes it very interesting to do research on the relationships between the Russian tourist market and the tourist destination of Norway. This study's objective though was not to investigate the reason for such a difference between the attractiveness of Finland and Norway amongst Russian tourists. The main focus of this research was to concentrate on examining Russian tourists' perceptions of and interests in Norway. It is important to find out what the main attractions for this target group were so that marketing campaigns oriented to Russian tourists can be more focused and effective. Thus, the results of this study could be beneficial for those who work in the tourism industry and who are directly able to cooperate with Russian tourists.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis is organized into six chapters.

The Introduction chapter, this chapter, presented the background of the study and its significance for tourism industry development with reference to relevant theories in tourism studies. The chapter also introduced the research aim, focus and main research questions.

The literature review chapter provides an overview of the significant literature, which was analyzed in order to form the theoretical perspectives of the research that informs this thesis. The most important findings in the academic literature are presented in this chapter. The chapter starts by outlining the main definitions and formation of destination image. In order to conduct research on destination image, it is necessary to become acquainted with the basic mechanisms of its formation. The influence of culture, defined as one of the formation factors, is also considered in the literature chapter. The main tendencies of the Russian tourist markets are also presented. Knowing the main characteristics of this particular tourist group is crucial for this research study. Moreover, the literature review chapter reflects on the tendencies in Russian travel blogs and the blogosphere in general as found in analyzed literature sources.

The methodology chapter begins with a description of the research design used for collecting and analyzing the data. This research study was based on the use of a qualitative research method and content analysis. The choice of the research method and analysis is further explained in this chapter. The main data sources, the blog platforms LiveJournal.com and Tour Blogger.ru are also discussed. The last part of the chapter concentrates on the actual analysis conducted during the research.

The findings chapter presents the main results of the analysis performed on the Russian travel blogs. Word frequency tests and content analysis involving the use of NVIVO software are outlined. The analysis of the results is classified into several categories for better understanding of the findings that are therein presented.

The discussion chapter contextualizes the results presented in the findings chapter. This contextualization is based on the theoretical frameworks from the literature review chapter. The findings of the research are compared to the theories discussed in the literature review literature and a number of interesting observations are discussed.

The conclusion chapter summarizes the main research points and findings of the research. Recommendations for further studies on corresponding topics are provided.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary aim of a literature review is to identify the most important and related findings of previous research that corresponds to a researcher's current research question. Subsequently, this chapter overviews literature that is significant to the current research. That question is "what image of Norway is presented in Russian travel blogs written by tourists who have already visited the country?". To contextualize this research question, first the chapter considers the main definitions of destination image and related components. The research question also relates to mechanisms of destination image formation.

Thus, the chapter examines different theories describing the formation process. One of the formation process factors, cultural background is discussed in a more detailed fashion as the research is focused on a group of tourists of a particular nationality.

When researching the image formed by Russian tourists, it is relevant to analyze what has already been written about them, their preferences, peculiarities, demands, etc. Such an analysis offers insights into understanding Russian tourists' negative and positive evaluations of travel experiences in Norway. After the discussion of this analysis, the characteristics of blogs and their functions are presented. Knowing how blogs operate and to what laws modern blogospheres submit is essential for this research. Additionally, relevant research articles specifically describing Russian travel bloggers are presented in case the Russian blogosphere has any significant peculiar qualities. It is important to be aware of any specific characteristics of the Russian travel bloggers in order to provide reliable research findings. Finally, the chapter summary is presented.

2.2 The Definition of destination image

Nowadays, with high competition in the tourism industry, every travel destination is concerned about potential tourists having a positive image about a destination. The importance of image has been acknowledged by academics since the 1950s (Baloglu and McCleary 1999), for example, in the works of Boulding (1956) and Martineau (1958). These authors concluded that human behavior depends mostly on what image tourists have about the place albeit that the objective reality that surrounds tourist' images is less significant (Baloglu and McCleary 1999). In 1975, Hunt analyzed the role of image for development of tourism and confirmed its importance. Hunt's research was supported by other researchers who agreed on image being one of the dominant elements in tourism studies (Hosany, Ekinici et al. 2006).

Hunt (1971) defined destination image as impressions that people have about a place where they do not live permanently (cited in (Gallarza, Saura et al. 2002).

Modern tourism markets are significantly interested in the influence of destination image. The fact is that: a tourist destination does not exist unless there are tourists somewhere in the world who are aware of this destination and who have formed a specific image about it (Pike and Ryan 2004). In his research, Mayo (1975) emphasizes that it is not that critical whether an image gives an accurate representation of a destination. The most important thing is the existence of this image in an individual's mind. In the process of consumption, the formed image can make a travelling experience more valuable and pleasing. After consumption takes place, a destination's image is re-constructed as tourists relive experiences with the help of memories, souvenirs, etc. (Jenkins 1999).

Since the 1970-s, destination image research soon became one of the most prevalent areas of research in tourism studies (Pike 2002). In addition to recognizing the role of destination image for tourism marketing, further studies identified the influence of destination image on decision-making and sales of products and services to tourists (Jenkins 1999).

Pike undertook research in order to provide market specialists with information relevant to ensuring more effective tourism industry development. He essayed to collect all that had been written on the topic of destination image since the 1970-s. He collected 142 papers dated from 1973 till 2000. The most highly mentioned destination among them was North America (58 papers). UK and Europe together were mentioned in 45 papers. In the articles, the majority of researchers concentrated exclusively on one destination without discussing competing ones (Pike 2002).

The first research on image was based on the fact that the world is a psychological and one-sided embracement of objective reality that exists in individuals' minds (Myers, 1968, cited in (Baloglu and McCleary 1999). Meaning that people see the world around them not exactly as it is but through their minds influenced by a variety of factors. In 1975, Tuan defined destination image as something formed by the human mind in isolation from the physical environment that this image describes (Baloglu and McCleary 1999). In other words, image is a product of human minds.

The most commonly used and cited definition of destination image belongs to Crompton (1979): "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has about a destination" (cited in (Jenkins 1999). This definition concentrates on the individual. It does not discuss a group of tourists united by nationality attachment. As a consequence, in this research, Lawson and Baud-Bovy's (1997) definition of destination image as the

manifestation of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices, emotions and thoughts that an individual or a group of individuals have about the destination is applied (Jenkins 1999).

In addition to the previously described elements of destination image, Metelaka (1981) includes expectations. According to Metelaka, image can be also described as expectations concerning a place that exist either voluntarily or with the help of suggestions before the actual experience of being in this place (Metelaka, 1981, cited in (Andersen, Prentice et al. 1997).

2.3 Image formation

There are a number of factors that influence destination image formation. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) describe two major forces of image formation: stimulus factors and personal factors. The stimulus factors are the external pull factors, which emanate from physical objects and previous experiences. The personal factors are push factors, which depend on social and psychological characteristics of the perceiver (Baloglu and McCleary 1999).

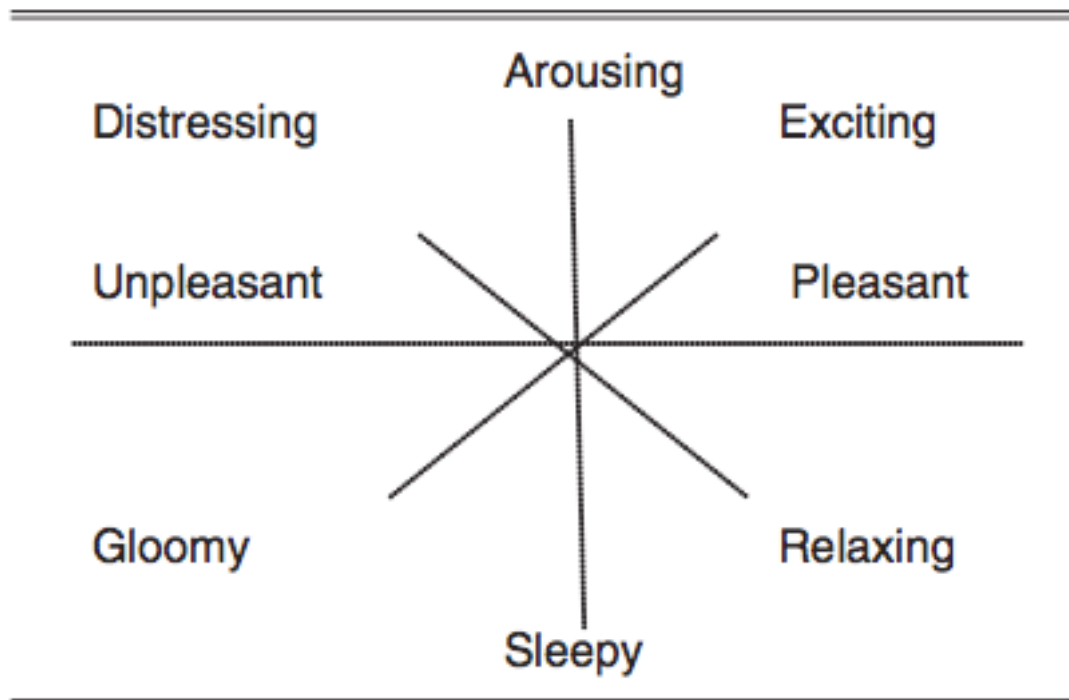
In the situation in which previous experiences do not exist and tourists have never been to the place they are planning to visit, researchers identify other influencing factors, such as, tourist motivation, socio-demographics and various information sources. Tourist motivation and socio-demographics belong to consumer characteristics (personal push factors) while information sources refer to stimulus factors (Baloglu and McCleary 1999).

A great number of studies, for example, Lawson and Band-Bovy (1977), support the view that destination image can be defined as a multidimensional construct consisting of two main dimensions: cognitive and affective (Hosany, Ekinci et al. 2006). The cognitive or perceptual dimension is signified by beliefs or knowledge about a destination and its characteristics (Baloglu and McCleary 1999). Cognition may or may not have originated from past travel experiences. It can be organic or induced (Pike and Ryan 2004). The affective dimension refers to feelings that a potential tourist has with regard to a destination and his or her attachment to it (Baloglu and McCleary 1999). Affect can be favorable, unfavorable or neutral.

The affective factor is a more recent destination image research focus. Initially, academic attention focused on cognition, more recently attention on affect in image studies has burgeoned. Amongst the affect domain image studies, it was estimated that the English language comprises several hundreds words which affectively describe a place. Russel, Ward and Pratt (1981) analyzed 105 English adjectives and developed a response grid consisting of

eight adjective dimensions: arousing, exciting, pleasant, relaxing, sleepy, gloomy, unpleasant, distressing (See Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1
RUSSEL, WARD, AND PRATT'S (1981)
AFFECTIVE RESPONSE GRID**



The use of these scales also has become very popular in destination image studies (Pike and Ryan 2004).

An image is considered to be a result of both cognitive and affective factors. Cognitive evaluation of a destination precedes affective evaluation because first people process information about a place; afterwards image formation is influenced by personality – the affective dimension (Baloglu and McCleary 1999).

Several authors acknowledge one more forming factor – the conative one. The conative factor is equivalent to behavior since it is the intent or action component. Intent means the likelihood of brand purchase (Howard and Sheth 1969 cited in (Pike and Ryan 2004)). Thus, conation may be considered as the likelihood of visiting a destination within a certain time period (Pike and Ryan 2004).

Having discussed the definitions and the main formation factors of destination image, the discussion goes further to one more factor, which requires deeper examination. Due to the fact that the current research is concentrated on the tourists from a certain country (Russia), a

review of the role of culture in forming destination image and tourist experiences follows.

2.4 The role of culture in tourist experiences

This thesis is based on a proposition that Russian tourists may have their own unique image of Norway. This section reviews relevant role of cultural background in image formation literature.

Since childhood every person develops certain ways of thinking, feeling and behavior patterns. The process of development is influenced and formed by family and neighborhood, school, youth groups, universities, workplace and living community. All these elements of social environment help an individual to perceive culture. Culture is a collective phenomenon that is learned and shared with other people who live in the same social environment. Every social environment is unique and forms its own culture (Hofstede, Hofstede et al. 2010).

Social environments as nations are not an exception. Every nation has its own values, beliefs or its own culture. National cultures differ in many aspects and dimensions, which are studied by scientists from disciplines, such as, sociology, anthropology, social psychology and others (Pizam, Pine et al. 1997). Culture is a multicomponent notion and it is a difficult task to conduct cross-cultural research. Such research is often criticized by academics. Nevertheless, cross-cultural studies are very popular in tourism (Frias, Rodrigues et al. 2012).

According to a number of researchers, cultural studies should be able to provide data useful to practitioners. For example, in what way does consumer evaluation of service quality depend on cultural background (Crotts and Pizam 2003). Knowledge about the role of cultural background is vital for tourism industry (Frias, Rodrigues et al. 2012). Deeper understanding of cultural features can make it easier for tourism to decide whether to make its products and marketing in a standard way for all potential tourists regardless of their country of origin or to adapt the product and marketing campaigns to each national market (You et al., 2001, cited in (Frias, Rodrigues et al. 2012)).

There are several researchers, who have studied and confirmed the connection between the destination image formation and cultural background. Bonn, Joseph and Dai (2005) in their research about domestic and international tourism criticized the traditional approach of tourism companies to use the same destination image to attract tourists regardless of their cultural background or country of origin. This way of creating a destination image is considered to be limited. It does not take into concern the fact that different cultural and nationalistic backgrounds may result in multiple interpretations, aesthetic preferences, or judgments, thus influencing the formation of multiple destination images. Comparing

domestic and international tourists in USA these researchers found differences in environmental image perception and evaluating service quality proving the importance of taking cultural background into consideration (Bonn, Joseph et al. 2005).

MacKay and Fesenmaier (2000) concluded that different cultures demonstrate different aesthetic preferences and different interpretations of symbols, which influence people's total image evaluation and perception of promotional images, for example, water. The two researchers pointed to a lack of research on variations that tourists from different countries may have concerning social interaction and tourist attractions, such as, activities, cultural/heritage images, ethnic groups, natural scenery. According to MacKay and Fesenmaier, any multinational tourist research should include knowledge and understanding of tourists' origins and their destination image evaluation patterns. They also noted that image perception and attractiveness may differ across cultures (MacKay and Fesenmaier 2000).

Plangmarn, Mujtaba, Pirani (2012) confirmed that cultural differences in value orientations and social behavior patterns have direct influences on tourist holiday experiences. In order to provide a positive tourist experience and satisfaction, tourism facilities should be able to respond effectively to culturally different tourists. The three researchers emphasized the importance of acknowledging the relationship between tourist's characteristics, cultural values and travel motivation as the three variables, when combined together, can provide strong attributes that could be used in the development of the tourism strategy (Plangmarn, Mujtaba et al. 2012).

Thus, the proposition that Russian tourists may have different ways of forming destination images has a foundation. According to the previously mentioned research findings, cultural differences in image formation are possible and worth considering.

2.5 Blogosphere and its power in destination image formation

One of the most powerful factors in the purchase of a tourist product or a destination is the information about it (Molina, Gomez et al. 2010). The research that informs this thesis is based on the analysis of one information source that has recently become very significant – travel blogs.

What is a blog? Blogs represent a type of media which is used by individuals and organizations to share opinions or information concerning different topics (Pühringer and Taylor 2008). Blood defines blogs as the compilation and construction of relative links, commentaries, observations and filtering of relevant web content by a blogger or a website author (Blood, 2002 cited in (Pudliner 2007)). Bloggers build relationships by sharing online

links in order to create social alliances and share information that they are blogging with potential readers (Blood, 2002 cited in (Pudliner 2007)).

In 1999, this new online media became noticeably popular. It has been referred to as democracy guardians, an exclusive way of bottom-up news production and building a community and finally a marvelous way to self-construction via blogging (Hookway 2008). Blogging has quickly become a global phenomenon. According to Blog Pulse and Technocrati reports the number of blogs from 2004 till 2011 has increased from 3 million to 164 million (Trenor, 2011 cited in (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012)).

Blogs can be formed as links with information fragments or as journals. Technological opportunities for bloggers are constantly developing. While blogging, website authors can use different kinds of multi-media materials. They can put pictures, videos and music into content and make it easier for readers or followers to quickly perceive information. The first blogs were set up to comment and reflect on current events, while nowadays bloggers are free to discuss everything including their personal experience of past events, for example, travel experiences (Pudliner 2007). One of the main principles of blogs is sharing a common interest. People express themselves and share their experiences with other people who are interested in discussion topics (Pudliner 2007).

The impact of this new type of media for the tourism industry is substantive. For example, the Austrian National Tourist Office conducted online research about German tourists in Austria and came to conclusion that 25 per cent of them look for travel information online (Pühringer and Taylor 2008). This intimates the potential influence of bloggers on tourists and their travel decisions. The creation of blogging has given people a limitless opportunity to share travel experiences with others (Pudliner 2007). Blogs relevant to this research are travel blogs and are defined as forums and individual entries where planned, current or past travel are discussed. Usually travel blogs represent a kind of personal online diary where travellers describe or report their experiences to friends and families. As personal diaries may vary dramatically, the same is true of blogs. There are great differences in content, themes, styles of writing, personal opinions and cultural nuances. Nevertheless, travel blogs can be a great source of information for people planning a holiday trip (Pühringer and Taylor 2008). The main themes in travel blogs are general descriptions of destinations, such as climate, cuisine, transport, attractions, or region-specific stereotypes (Carson, 2008; Pan et al., 2007; Wenger, 2008; cited in Schmallegger and Carson, 2008, cited in (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012)). Blogs provide rich narratives that contain details of experiences of multiple guests, and subsequently provide a great deal of useful information to blog readers (Zehrer et

al., 2011, (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012)

Travel blogs can be compared to digital story-telling. Earlier travelling was considered a luxury available only for few people. In order to read a story about traveling people had to purchase those stories published in the form of brochures, monologues, newspaper accounts, novellas, novels, sketches and painting (Pudliner 2007). Now all these information sources can be obtained from travel blogs. But the purpose of blogging is not only story-telling. There are other purposes that bloggers are trying to attain. Among them, are identity construction, life documenting, information sharing, communication, entertainment, rewards and social networking (Bosangit, 2011 cited in (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012).

The travel website TripAdvisor is an example of how which successful social networking in tourism can function. TripAdvisor gives people an opportunity to create a social network within its site. On its home page we can find the following information:

“Plan and have your perfect trip with TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site. Browse over 170 million candid reviews, opinions, and photos of hotels, restaurants, attractions, and more - all by travelers like you. You'll also find low airfares, free travel guides, worldwide vacation rental listings, popular forums with advice about virtually every destination, and more. No wonder so many travelers make TripAdvisor their first stop before every trip” (TripAdvisor 2015).

Tripadvisor.com has become not only one of the most popular places to tell about your trip adventure, but at the same for most of people it is the number one resource to look up for any kind of information they might need while travelling. Its popularity is explained by a phenomenon of online interpersonal influence (Senecal & Nantel, 2004 cited in (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008). This influence is based on one of the fundamental principles of consumer behavior, which presumes the ability of consumers' to powerfully influence each other. They talk to each other, they follow each other and form a powerful word-of-mouth communication process (Dichter, 1966; Haywood, 1989 cited in (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008). The phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication has been described in details by Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008). Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan stress the marketing value of this way of electronic communication (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008).

Since the 1960s, marketing specialists have researched on word-of-mouth (Arndt, 1967; Dichter, 1966; Engel, Kegerreis, & Blackwell, 1969 cited in (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008). Initially word-of-mouth was defined as only a face-to-face communication between people with no commercial interest discussing companies and products (Arndt, 1967; Carl, 2006 cited in (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008).

With the passage of time, this definition ceased to cover the whole process of face-to-face communication. Subsequently, word-of-mouth has been redefined as “the communication between consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence” (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008, p. 459). This type of communication is recognized as a very influential one for the tourism industry. Modern technologies made it possible for interpersonal communication to spread itself enormously rapidly (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008).

Having become one of the most popular forms of online consumer opinion platforms, blogging is likely to have a continuing influence on word-of-mouth communication (Wenger, 2008 cited in (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012). The power of a blog story can influence a substantial number of future visitors, positioning the destination in question in their minds (Woodside et al., 2007). Banyai and Glover (2012) pointed out the growing recognition that blogs can affect consumer decisions and destination images, and even reshape the communication networks previously dominated by traditional information suppliers (cited in (Bosangit, Dulnuan et al. 2012).

The tourism industry should be very well aware of both positive and negative impacts of electronic communication between consumers. If tourists who visited a particular destination were dissatisfied, negative word-of-mouth over the Internet is guaranteed. Unenthusiastic reviews about a tourism product published online on one of the popular travel blogs may lead to a downturn for the product (Litvin, Goldsmith et al. 2008).

That is why it is very important for travel destinations to have a positive image in such a powerful information resource as travel blogs. In order to evaluate the effect of its product the tourism industry need to include blogs, which give a broad picture of tourists' opinions. Moreover the influence of bloggers described earlier shows that it is very important for the tourism industry to follow what is written and discussed in blogs. Besides, the data gathered in blogs gives destination marketers a clear picture of what tourists want, what they would want to see and what makes them dissatisfied with the travelling experience.

2.6 Russian tourist market

Comprehensive analysis and deeper understanding of the Russian tourist market is acknowledged by several researchers as an effective way to attract Russian tourists to a particular destination (Choi, Tkachenko et al. 2011). Before starting the research reported in this thesis, it was important to determine what had already been known about the Russian tourist market.

In the yearly report of the UNWTO for 2015, the Russian Federation is fifth in the list of “Top Spenders in international tourism”. During 2014, Russian tourists spent US\$50.4 billion. Due to the falling ruble (UNWTO), this number is slightly lower than the result for 2013 when the tourists from Russia spent US\$53.5 billion on holiday. Regardless, Russian tourists are still one of the biggest outbound travel markets in the world (UNWTO 2015).

Which countries attract travellers from Russia? According to Chernega (2012), the most popular destination for Russian tourists travelling abroad is Turkey. In Turkey, Russians rank first on the list of foreign tourists. In second position are German tourists. In spite of all-inclusive options, Turkish hosts prefer Russian tourists because they spend much more money there (Chernega 2012). The famous all-inclusive in Turkey makes it easier for inexperienced Russian tourists who are afraid of unknown (Kozak and Martin 2012). The second most popular destination for Russians is Spain. Following Spain are France, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Greece, Cyprus (Chernega 2012).

According to the data published by the European Travel Commission in 2013, Russia has shown itself as an increasingly important market with further growth registered in most European destinations. The number of Russian visitors to Europe has doubled between 2009 and 2013. In 2013, the highest visitation growth was reported in Greece, Iceland, Slovakia, Romania and Serbia. As for Northern Europe, in 2013, Russian tourist arrivals totaled 1.8 million, representing only 5.6% of Russian arrivals to Europe (European Tourism Commission 2013).

When choosing a travel destination, Russians are looking for a holiday place with the following characteristics: outstanding scenic beauty, historical and cultural attractions, a good choice of restaurants, comfortable accommodations, and transportation services (Choi, Tkachenko et al. 2011). Due to visa restrictions in several countries, Russians try to find the least difficult destinations in relation to visas (Kozak and Martin 2012). The price factor is also important in making a travel decision (Choi, Tkachenko et al. 2011). Furthermore Russians have a tendency to head for destinations famous for shopping, such as Dubai, Paris, London and Hong-Kong. The result of such shopping tours is usually a lot of extra baggage on Russian airlines. Tourists from Russia do not only purchase clothes and other things in shops, they also tend to buy property in destinations, such as, Spain. There are a lot of real estate magazines published for Russian tourists (Swarbrooke and Horner 2007).

Russian tourists prefer travelling abroad to domestic tourism. Going abroad is considered to be more predictable and safer in terms of service quality and friendly, helpful staff. Leaving their own country for a holiday is a kind of escape from stressful daily life and

difficult economic situations at home. Besides Russians are curious to see the world and meet other cultures. That is why it is not very typical for them to stay loyal to one destination for long. Having visited one place, they want to explore something else (Kozak and Martin 2012).

As a consequence of the economic crisis, presently, there is a reduction in number of Russians travelling abroad. For example, a forecast for Finland, one of the most popular northern destinations for Russians, in 2015, the number of tourists from Russia will be 15-17% lower. Finland is not the only European country that will receive lower visitation by Russian tourists. At the end of 2014, Russian tour operators had lost 50% of their clients and it is impossible to predict the future situation (Tass 2014).

Characteristics of Russian tourists include openness, sometimes too trustful, optimism and recklessness. They prefer to get things cheap or for free albeit they enjoy spending holidays in style. Health activities are not that popular because health is not yet high priority in Russia. Senior generations prefer intellectual ways of spending holiday time instead of sun and beach, passive relaxation. On the other hand, younger people prefer active ways of spending their time (Belova 2014).

Atilgan, Akinci, and Aksoy (2003) analyzed the expectations and perceptions of service quality by Russian tourists. In comparison to German tourists who prefer staying closer to city centers, the analysis showed that Russians tend to choose holiday resorts placed along the coastal line. In terms of expectations to service quality the most important dimensions were: service delivery on promises, willingness to help, trust, and confidence during the travel experience (Atilgan, Akinci et al. 2003).

Russians prefer destinations with nice climate, picturesque landscape, tasty food and drinks. This group of tourists is adventurous, meaning that they like to have the freedom to explore, the opportunity to shop, venture out on excursions, interact with the local people, learn about another country and culture, enjoy the nightlife, or just relax on the beach. But at the same time they feel themselves more comfortable with a Russian-speaking guide and help with trip organization (Kozak and Martin 2012).

2.7 Russian tourists in Scandinavia

Finland is the absolute leader in number of Russian visitors among Scandinavian countries. Two-fifths of foreign tourists in Finland are Russians. Due to easier visa-procedures, comfortable transport facilities (3.5 hours by train from St. Petersburg to Helsinki) and a lot of positive travel experience shared by others, Finland remains very

popular among Russian visitors (Weaver 2012).

The high interest of Russian tourists to Finland caused a lot of discussions in Finnish newspapers. Gurova and Ratilainen conducted research on how the image of Russian tourists changed over the last twenty years (1990 – 2013). They concluded that having started from the image of irritating tourists from the East, Russians became a very attractive consumer group for Finnish business people. Russian tourists used to be described, as tourists causing troubles, like fake visas, illegal alcohol sale, prostitution and other negative consequences. However, with the later formation of the wealthy middle class in Russia, this negative image dramatically changed. Finnish tour operators and business people discovered new Russian tourists who liked to spend a lot of money on shopping - purchasing expensive brands and enjoying luxurious ways of spending their holiday time (Gurova and Ratilainen 2015). Russians particularly enjoy shopping possibilities in Finland to purchase designer clothes. They expect high quality of service and are ready to pay for it (Weaver 2012).

The other major attraction for Russians in Finland is nature settings. Visitors like to rent cabins in picturesque, rural regions of the country and visit spa-centers, water parks, skiing centers, fishing and relaxing with the family on lakeshores and enjoy the safety of cities (Weaver 2012), (Suvilehto and Borg 2001).

Currently, Norway is further away from other Scandinavian countries in the list of the top visited countries by Russian tourists. The results for the 2014 period presented by the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation follow. In the list of the fifty most visited countries by Russian tourists, Finland took the thirteenth place with 379,242 tourists; Sweden took the fortieth place with 44,052 tourists. The amount of Russian tourists visiting Norway in 2014 was so low that the country was not included in the list (Federal Agency for Tourism 2014).

2.8 The Internet and social media use in Russia

According to statistical data, Russia is one of the countries with the highest number of Internet users. In 2014, the number of Internet users in Russia reached 84,437,793 with 10% year growth. This places the Russian Federation in the sixth place in the world in terms of Internet engagement among population (Internet Live Stats 2014). In this section, the main characteristics of Internet and social media usage by Russian users is outlined.

A national culture is considered to be one of the factors influencing the use of social media. Gretzel, Kang and Lee analyzed this influence using the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980) and the distinction between high- and low context cultures by Hall (1976)

(Gretzel, Kang et al. 2008). Consistent with the Hofstede, model the Russian Federation belongs to countries with low levels of individualism, high levels of uncertainty avoidance, high power distance, low levels of masculinity and long-term orientation (The Hofstede Centre). As for Hall's distinction between the low- and high context communication styles, Russia belongs to high context cultures (Ardichvili, Maurer et al. 2006). In collectivist cultures, the results of Gretzel, Kang and Lee's research demonstrate that group values and the opinions of others are important. People in such cultures rely more on personal referral sources when making a purchase decision. Networking and consumer-to-consumer interactivity are more important than self-portrayal and self-presentation as in individualistic cultures. Countries with high level of uncertainty avoidance prefer to seek information from sources with high credibility. High power distance cultures are more likely to use interactive websites, which include consumer reviews and interactivity features (Gretzel, Kang et al. 2008).

In high context countries, people rely more on the context of non-verbal actions and the environmental setting to convey meaning. Therefore, these people tend to prefer communication media with high media-richness, such as face-to-face communication or phone calls. While in low-context culture more the written words, such as, online discussion board and e-mails, are more preferable (Ardichvili, Maurer et al. 2006).

Based on these theories, it can be assumed that Russians prefer to get information from highly reliable sources, primarily, personal referral ones. The opinions of others are considered when making a purchase decision. Additionally, they prefer verbal interpersonal to non-verbal communication.

Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides (2011) conducted a study on the impact of social media on holiday travel planning by the Russian and Former Soviet Union Republics markets (Fotis, Buhalis et al. 2011). The researchers found that Russian tourists predominantly use social media during the post-trip stage in order to share experiences and photos with others. Before holidays, Russian travellers also use social media as the source of ideas for destination choice, information on excursions, accommodation, activities and the like but to a lesser extent compared to the "after holiday" stage. Among the holiday related information sources, friends and relatives are the most reliable for the Russian tourists. The information from other travellers in various websites is the second most trustworthy (Fotis, Buhalis et al. 2011). These research findings confirm the above-mentioned assumptions about Russians' preferences for information sources. The findings also demonstrated that Russian travellers are eager to use travel blogs information although not in the first instance.

2.9 Russian travel blogs

Travelling abroad became accessible for Russians not so long time ago. Earlier, traveling out of the country was possible only for a few numbers of privileged people. Thus, to travel abroad was a very desired activity. Later travelling became much more accessible for everyone, but because of economic reasons, travel remains a sign of social class (Kozak and Martin 2012).

Holidays spent in Spain, France or Turkey differentiate a person from other social classes. In a travel experiences, Russians tend to show and inform others that they have visited this or that destination by presenting pictures, sharing souvenirs or just mentioning it in a conversation. Internet forums have become an important platform to share travel experiences and demonstrate status. The content of discussions about summer holidays provides illuminating material for studying not only preferences of the middle class, but also the economic conditions, life values and identifying characteristics of a social class (Fenko 2007).

Virtual communities where people discuss their travel experience is a secular salon when fashion and tendencies are brought up. Here we can see the norms accepted in this kind of society. To see who belongs to the group and who is an outsider. The main purpose of these forums is to share memories and experiences, to tell something that is not written in tourist brochures; something that could help future tourists to be informed about a new place, to choose a good hotel, to plan a trip itinerary or not to miss any interesting tourist sights. Forum users always try to warn others about possible problems they could face while traveling to destinations (Fenko 2007).

Though Russian tourists like to discuss traditions, culture and character of local population, more often these discussions are not written with ethnographic interest but with judgments and antipathy. They almost do not often mention hospitality and friendliness of locals. Presence of authenticity is not yet the highest priority among Russian tourists. Nevertheless, they engage in discussions and criticize when authenticity is simulated (Fenko 2007).

The main topics of discussions identified by Fenko (2007) include: attitude to Russians abroad, demonstration of social status, local traditions, and behaviour as well as life norms. Travel bloggers also tend to give recommendations concerning the “right” way of spending a holiday. Not expectedly, these topics get most response from blogs readers. (Fenko 2007).

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter relevant literature has been reviewed regarding definitions of destination image and different approaches to understanding this area of study. Further, the mechanisms of image formation were outlined. Among the factors that form a destination image, special attention was given to the cultural background of tourists. Several researchers confirmed that this factor has an important influence on image formation.

As this Master level research is focused on analysis of blogs content, the mechanisms of blogospheres were described. Both blogosphere in general and, specifically, those relating to Russian travel bloggers were reviewed. The latter demonstrated some special features.

The Russian tourist market was reviewed in the final part of this chapter. The most popular destinations and types of travel by Russian tourists were identified. An analysis of the Russian tourist market in Scandinavian countries (Norway and Finland) provided further information regarding which type of Russian tourists are interested in Northern Europe destinations, the reviews contained in this chapter assisted in identifying specific research questions to be addressed in this thesis.

The next chapter will present the research design and methods chosen for this Masters research study.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methods chosen for the research conducted and reported in this thesis. First, the chapter starts with the description of the research design. Theoretical concepts used in the current research are subsequently explained. Next, explanations of sampling and data analysis are given. Finally, issues of validity and reliability are discussed.

3.2 Research design

Research designs outline the plan that can be used to collect and analyze data. Both data collection and analysis are performed in order to address the main questions of research. Thus, research designs usually depend on the questions that the research is trying to answer ((Bhattacharjee 2012), (Punch 2005)). Based on the research questions, a research design defines:

- 1) which strategy should be followed;
- 2) within what framework;
- 3) who and what will be studied;
- 4) which tools and procedures should be applied to collect and analyze the data (Punch 2005).

The aim of the research reported in this thesis was to find out what image Norway as a travel destination has in Russian travel blogs that describe post-travel experiences. In other words, the main task is to discover and describe how Russian tourists see and interpret Norway and its tourism facilities. The described research was exploratory nature. The data for this research was gathered from travel blogs texts (secondary data). This led to choosing a qualitative research method with content analysis as the analytical tool.

The focus of the research was to understand and interpret blog texts as feedback on travel experiences. Quality and richness of the gathered data is one of the main criterion of interpretivism, the framework or the theoretical perspective selected for this Master's level research (Phillimore and Goodson 2004).

Theoretical perspectives build upon the specific theory of knowledge defining how we know what we know – epistemology (Crotty 1998). What kind of epistemological theory defined this research? The main idea of this thesis is based on the assumption that Russian tourists may have unique and specific views, judgments, requirements and evaluations concerning tourism experience in Norway due to their cultural features that differ them from

other tourists. The epistemological theory, which mostly corresponds to this point of view, is called cultural relativism.

Cultural relativism proclaims respect for other cultures and values systems, and awareness of a multitude of different lifestyles and cultural perspectives ((Baghramian 2004); (Fernandez 2001)). The current thesis holds the same principles. The aim of this study is to find out in what way Russian tourists perceive Norway as a destination and what kind of image they form while travelling within Norway. Revealing peculiarities of perceptions and image formation have potential to help those who work with this group of tourists either in marketing or at the check-in desks of hotel reception areas.

3.3 Research questions

This research was a qualitative study aimed at exploring the image of Norway as a tourist destination presented in the texts of travel blogs written by the Russian tourists describing their post travel experiences. The main focus of the study was to define the destination image of Norway. The research questions of the study were:

- 1) What image of Norway as a travel destination is presented in Russian travel blogs describing post-travelling experiences?
- 2) What are the negative and positive evaluations of Norway travel experience as shown in blogs content?
- 3) Who are the Russian tourists choosing Norway as a holiday destination? Are there any features, which are common to the analyzed bloggers?
- 4) What are the recommendations that can be given from the research findings to tourism marketers in Norway in order to attract Russian tourists and provide more customized service?

3.4 Qualitative research

Lack of structured surveys and quantification made researchers consider qualitative methods to be unscientific, exploratory and generally an inferior approach in studying social life. Qualitative research does not have room for statistical investigation, generalization and prediction. That is why many researchers use qualitative research methods only to gather material for further progression of quantitative research (Phillimore and Goodson 2004).

Currently this tendency is changing. Qualitative research has been increasingly recognized as being valuable both in tourism studies and other social science disciplines.

Qualitative research is described as a distinctive research strategy (Phillimore and Goodson 2004).

Qualitative methods are used to gather data about activities, events, occurrences and behaviors. Within social contexts, it is used to search for understanding of actions, problems and processes. Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding the world from the perspective of its participants. Social life is viewed as the result of interaction and interpretation (Phillimore and Goodson 2004). So does the research reported in this thesis. The focus of the research was to understand the image of Norway through the eyes of Russian tourists or, in other words, from their perspective as participants. To comprehend the way Russian tourists see Norway and the way they perceive this country as a destination would be difficult to approach using quantification. Qualitative methods are more appropriate for such research, because qualitative methods are useful in understanding the meaning of human actions, specifically, the meaning Russian tourists put into blog texts.

Qualitative data involves empirical information about the world but not in the form of numbers but in the form of words (Punch 2005). Personal experience materials published in travel blogs represent the qualitative data of this Master's level thesis. In this thesis, travel blogs are a kind of diary for travellers where they record the most important details and moments of their trips. Hence, the choice of qualitative methods for this thesis' research is justified.

3.5 Sampling and data source

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting objects for observations. The purpose of sampling is to select a set of elements from a population so that descriptions of those elements precisely represent the total population from where elements are selected (Babbie 2011).

The type of sampling chosen for this thesis' research is purposive selection. Purposive sampling selects each element for a definite purpose. It usually involves studying a subset or a limited group of a population (Engel and Schutt 2010). Purposive sampling is a non-probability type of selection. The researcher is not interested in sampling research participants randomly. All the samples are chosen in a strategic way and are relevant to the research questions (Bryman 2012). Engel and Schutt (2005) describe a purposive sample as a key informant survey (Engel and Schutt 2010).

In this thesis, the subset is Russian travel bloggers who visited Norway and described their trip in a blog text. All the bloggers were found by searching on Google using the phrases "trip to Norway", "travel blog Norway" typed using Russian language. Most of the found

samples of this study are placed on the blog platform *Livejournal.com*, one of the most popular blog platforms in Russia. The only criteria of sampling were the nationality of a blogger (Russian) and the description of travelling experiences in Norway in a blog article. All the samples were selected with regard to the main research target - to reveal Russian tourists' perception of Norway via travel blog texts as information sources.

3.6 Data collection

In the process of sampling, 33 bloggers were selected. This equates to 230 blog articles that mention or describe trips to Norway. All the articles are written in Russian language. Most of them contained pictures taken during the trips to Norway. The blog articles collected for the research describe travel stories, which included some personal details. The bloggers also described to readers how the trip was arranged, the choice of transport, hotel prices as well as a lot of practical details. Most stories concentrated on the travel destination describing its nature, climate, historical details and so on. In order to answer the questions about the image of Norway among Russian tourists, interviewing was also considered. However, the option to investigate travel blogs prevailed in the present research. This choice is based on the popularity of blogs among tourists and also the ease of accessibility of this type of information.

3.7 Data source

In this Master's level study, data were taken from travel blogs. The choice of blogs for the study is explained by the ability of blogs to reveal tourists' interpretations of services, experiences and products. Moreover, blogs are used to express impressions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings that are very useful for a researcher in social sciences (Banyai and Glover 2012). Such this information adds to understanding the image of a country described by a travel blogger.

The number of the bloggers chosen for this study was 33. The number of the articles written by those bloggers and selected for analysis was 230. Approximately half of the bloggers chose to put their trip story into one single article. The other half preferred to split their travel experience into several articles each describing, for example, one particular day of a trip or a place visited or any other specific topic that the bloggers chose to present in details. Sixty-seven percent of bloggers posted their articles on the blog platform Live Journal.com. Twenty-four percent were individual blogs. Nine percent of bloggers were found on the blog platform for travel bloggers – Tour Blogger.ru.

The community-publishing platform, LiveJournal, (livejournal.com) has existed since 1999 creating possibilities for users to express and share interests, to socialize and meet new friends. LiveJournal offers a user-friendly interface with services based on individual needs. Functioning as both a blogging and social networking platform, LiveJournal is very popular in Russia. It hosts the majority of the national blogosphere. More than 80 bloggers from the list of the 100 best Russian bloggers are publishing here. In every country, LiveJournal tends to have a unique personality demonstrating some peculiar features. For example, LiveJournal in the U.K. is more for entertainment purposes (LiveJournal 2015).

TourBlogger.ru is a travel community led by several Russian tourist agencies united by a chain “TBG. Tourist Brands”. On their homepage, tourists can purchase a travel tour, communicate with each other on a forum, find a fellow traveller, share trip pictures and also write a travel blog (Corporation TBG 2014). Tourist blogs are arranged in alphabetic order by names of visited countries. There were 118 bloggers who published blog entries about Norway on TourBlogger.ru. This makes Norway the second most popular Scandinavian destination on this blog platform. The most popular Scandinavian travel destination among the TourBlogger.ru users was Finland (129 blogger entries), while Sweden (54 blog entries) and Denmark (36 blog entries) were far less attractive for them. The most common visited destinations described on TourBlogger.ru were Italy (521 blog entries), Greece (454 blog entries) and Spain (404 blog entries) (Corporation TBG 2014).

The last source for this research’s data was blogs held by individuals. All in all, there were 8 individual blogs included in this research. Each of those blogs belonged to one person or to a couple writing in a co-productive way and, which contained some information about the authors. Usually, author information was a short story about travel experiences of the blogger and some words about his or her occupation.

The study selected those Russian travel bloggers, who described travel experience in Norway. All the used travel blogs were written in the Russian language. Blog texts were followed by response comments. By commenting, blog readers ask questions, evaluate the presented information, share their own travel experience and express their travel decision making regarding Norway as a destination.

Table 1. The List of selected bloggers.

Blogger №/Number of articles	Links to Bloggers' Articles
Blogger 1 (1)	http://omnesolum.livejournal.com/117401.html
Blogger 2 (1)	http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/norvegiya-krasivaya-i-neznakomaya.html
Blogger 3 (1)	http://nimhane.livejournal.com/9718.html
Blogger 4 (32)	http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/105597.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/107899.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/22960.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/29347.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/107302.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/122534.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/78870.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/102665.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/101755.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/101071.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/136218.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/107623.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/102270.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/70097.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/22365.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/68764.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/23657.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/23966.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/68405.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/70706.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/119556.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/119955.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/104635.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/70263.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/69081.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/72992.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/106936.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/69285.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/21965.html http://kukuksumushu.livejournal.com/73870.html
Blogger 5 (3)	http://mary-kudinova.com/norway_part_1/ http://mary-kudinova.com/norway_part_2/ http://mary-kudinova.com/norway_part_3/
Blogger 6 (20)	http://neoguru.livejournal.com/976070.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/983431.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/982126.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/973805.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/983083.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/981572.html

	http://neoguru.livejournal.com/980089.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/972965.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/982544.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/982311.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/974140.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/979414.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/975743.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/980378.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/978970.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/976673.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/983942.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/678979.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/982890.html http://neoguru.livejournal.com/973908.html
Blogger 7 (26)	http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/363516.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/352922.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/352532.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/352382.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/351830.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/352120.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/351657.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/340152.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/272111.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/386303.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/377416.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/385828.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/372804.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/371531.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/370670.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/369806.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/363542.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/362920.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/362500.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/362260.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/362226.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/360837.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/361982.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/357700.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/356119.html http://oksa-sun.livejournal.com/353539.html
Blogger 8 (5)	http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4345 http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4364 http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4292 http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4431 http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4396
Blogger 9 (5)	http://victorganin.livejournal.com/1672.html http://victorganin.livejournal.com/2030.html http://victorganin.livejournal.com/2149.html

	http://victorganin.livejournal.com/2364.html http://victorganin.livejournal.com/2694.html http://victorganin.livejournal.com/3066.html
Blogger 10 (10)	http://stepan.ru/po-stranam/europe/norway/velosipedny-e-marshruty-norvegii/ http://stepan.ru/po-stranam/europe/norway/vizy/ http://stepan.ru/po-stranam/europe/norway/nochyovki/ http://stepan.ru/archive/nachalo-velosipednogo-puteshestviya-po/ http://stepan.ru/archive/den-2-chast-1-vokrug-kirkenesa/ http://stepan.ru/archive/den-2-chast-2-kirkenes-i-doroga-vdol-f/ http://stepan.ru/archive/den-3-problemy-na-puti-dovadsyo/ http://stepan.ru/archive/den-4-chast-1-utrennyaya-progulka-po-vads/ http://stepan.ru/po-stranam/europe/norway/eda/ http://stepan.ru/po-stranam/europe/norway/finansy/
Blogger 11 (2)	http://rasshivaev.livejournal.com/118245.html http://rasshivaev.livejournal.com/142604.html
Blogger 12 (5)	http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/lesja-malenkaya-no-fantasticheskaya-tserkov.html http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/norvezhskie-stavkirki-okonchanie.html http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/olesunn-zakatnyi-i-dozhdlyvi-takzhe-pro-izbushki-17-veka.html http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/norvezhskii-e-vostorgi-aktivnogo-otdykha-chast-3-ya-volshebnye-otkrytiya-malenkoi-norvegii.html http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/rasskaz-o-tom-kak-my-okhotilis-na-ovtsebykov-oni-na-nas.html
Blogger 13 (27)	http://unis.livejournal.com/310771.html http://unis.livejournal.com/314290.html http://unis.livejournal.com/314413.html http://unis.livejournal.com/309283.html http://unis.livejournal.com/308582.html http://unis.livejournal.com/308927.html http://unis.livejournal.com/315914.html http://unis.livejournal.com/313001.html http://unis.livejournal.com/318601.html http://unis.livejournal.com/311249.html http://unis.livejournal.com/312073.html http://unis.livejournal.com/320708.html http://unis.livejournal.com/321314.html http://unis.livejournal.com/317121.html

	http://unis.livejournal.com/309115.html http://unis.livejournal.com/317719.html http://unis.livejournal.com/311576.html http://unis.livejournal.com/316794.html http://unis.livejournal.com/307792.html http://unis.livejournal.com/308211.html http://unis.livejournal.com/308453.html http://unis.livejournal.com/307331.html http://unis.livejournal.com/322620.html http://unis.livejournal.com/307630.html http://unis.livejournal.com/313800.html http://unis.livejournal.com/301983.html http://unis.livejournal.com/310354.html
Blogger 14 (8)	http://st-magic.livejournal.com/42630.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/42389.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/42204.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/43154.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/41332.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/41604.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/41818.html http://st-magic.livejournal.com/42762.html
Blogger 15 (2)	http://gavailer.livejournal.com/276332.html http://gavailer.livejournal.com/275968.html
Blogger 16 (1)	http://one-in.livejournal.com/144719.html
Blogger 17 (12)	http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/736.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/854.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/1139.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/1296.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/1537.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/1928.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/2946.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/3297.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/3582.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/3628.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/3908.html http://sergeydolya.livejournal.com/4236.html
Blogger 18 (2)	http://serj-pereverzev.livejournal.com/103621.html http://serj-pereverzev.livejournal.com/103031.html
Blogger 19 (35)	http://arissston.livejournal.com/214345.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/76008.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/202430.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/203031.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/202955.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/204159.html

	http://arissston.livejournal.com/203758.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/204380.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/205974.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/205562.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/206258.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/207068.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/206803.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/207525.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/207688.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/208596.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/209940.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/209103.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/211308.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/210337.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/210841.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/212780.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/212188.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/212594.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/213867.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/214637.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/215981.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/215652.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/209367.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/217068.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/202737.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/216805.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/77158.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/76862.html http://arissston.livejournal.com/208219.html
Blogger 20 (10)	http://jazztour.livejournal.com/112226.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/109541.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/1111780.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/1111140.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/111874.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/108693.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/108017.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/108244.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/108349.html http://jazztour.livejournal.com/109714.html
Blogger 21 (11)	http://dewald.livejournal.com/174217.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/175513.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/179039.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/177441.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/177241.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/179444.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/176245.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/180733.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/182225.html

	http://dewald.livejournal.com/179719.html http://dewald.livejournal.com/174907.html
Blogger 22 (1)	http://ontheedge.ru/mesta/avtomobilnoe-puteshestvie-k-mysu-nordkap-norvegiya/
Blogger 23 (1)	http://www.tourblogger.ru/blog/kogda-malo-deneg-oni-edut-v-norvegiyu.html
Blogger 24 (1)	http://vova-91.livejournal.com/6094757.html
Blogger 25 (1)	http://satorifoto.livejournal.com/16771.html
Blogger 26 (1)	http://tatiana-gayduk.livejournal.com/6064.html
Blogger 27 (1)	http://www.edemdarom.ru/norvegiya/
Blogger 28 (1)	http://blog.tripplan.ru/norvegiya-fordy-i-vodopady/
Blogger 29 (1)	http://ru-travel.livejournal.com/27560801.html
Blogger 30 (1)	http://xoma-edet.ru/shvetsiya-norvegiya/
Blogger 31 (1)	http://marinamironova.com/norway-fishing
Blogger 32 (1)	http://www.dimaxblog.ru/skala-trolltunga-v-norvegi/
Blogger 33 (1)	http://www.ostrel.ru/archives/4275

3.8 Data analysis

The purpose of data analysis in qualitative research is to manage words, language and the meaning behind them. The aim of this process is to describe and understand social life of the research targeted population or group. The difficulty of this process is the amount of empirical data, as texts, with multiple meanings. The point of data analysis is to organize and reduce the empirical data gathered into themes. Themes in their turn are transformed into descriptions, models and theories (Walker and Myrick 2006). In this thesis data was organized by employing NVIVO. NVIVO software is often used for qualitative analysis. NVIVO helps researchers to manage, shape and make sense of unstructured information by offering tools for classifying, sorting and arranging data. The data analysis itself remains the responsibility of the researcher. However NVIVO provides more time to analyze materials and to organize evidence-based conclusions (QSRInternational 2015). NVIVO also assists in coding - the analysis process which involves grouping and labeling of data in the process of making it more manageable both for display and to provide answers to the research questions (Grbich 2013).

In most cases qualitative data analysis is conducted by three main components or stages: reduction of data, display of data and drawing conclusions or verifications. A more detailed description of the analysis process includes five stages or techniques. The initial stage is documentation of the data and the process of data collection. The second stage is organization of the data into concepts. The following one is connection of the data to show how one concept may influence another. The fourth stage is about corroborating of data by evaluating

alternative explanations, disconfirming evidence, and searching for negative cases. The final stage is reporting the findings (Grbich 2013). Content analysis was employed to analyze the data for the present study.

3.9 Content analysis

Content analysis is a research method usually applied to study textual or non-statistical data. It can be media messages, interview, transcripts, discussion boards in virtual communities and, as for this reported research, travel diaries or blogs (Stepchenkova, Kirilenko et al. 2009).

Content analysis analyzes material, in a systematic way (Finn, Elliott-White et al. 2000). It examines for patterns and structures, singles out the most important features, develops categories and puts them into perceptible constructs in order to reach text meaning (Vitouladiti 2014). Content analysis is a quantitative way of analyzing qualitative data (Finn, Elliott-White et al. 2000).

Content analysis can be also applied to study photographic media. For studying tourist photography, content analysis provides an empirical foundation for comparing and opposing appearances within large amounts of data. For analysis, pictures are categorized according to the particular interests of the researcher and the data set used in the research. Pictures can also be organized around a focal theme that includes not only the main subject of the photo, but also its essential identifying properties (Albers and James 1988).

Since the early 1920s, the method of content analysis has been. It has been actively used in areas, such as, political science, psychology and communications. The use of content analysis in tourism has been limited despite its rich potential to reveal issues associated with visitors' perceptions (Stepchenkova, Kirilenko et al. 2009). However, there are several researchers in tourism, who use this method. They usually apply it to rich textual data and content gathered with the help of open-ended questions, promotional material, personal interviews, etc. (Vitouladiti 2014).

The main research questions of the current study are focused on the image of Norway among Russian tourists. In order to answer these questions, first of all, it was necessary to find out what bloggers were describing in the blog texts. Whether it was cultural tourism they were focusing on or was it mostly nature description. Thus with the help of content analysis, all the data was categorized and coded. First data was categorized into four main categories and afterwards sub-categories were formed. The word frequency test was also performed as

the part of the analysis. The content analysis of travel blog texts enabled this research to identify, which topics were most important for travel bloggers to reflect upon.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodological approach applied to the research that informs this thesis presented was presented. The chapter started by outlining the research design, which defined the main research characteristics. The research was described as exploratory based on the nature of the research questions associated with this thesis. The framework or the theoretical perspective of the current research was identified as interpretivism. For its epistemological approach, the study was based on the idea of cultural relativism.

The data for the research was collected from the popular blog platform Livejournal.com. All the blog texts represented a story written by Russian tourists describing their travel experience in Norway.

The analysis of the data was based on content analysis. The following chapter presents the finding of the content analysis.

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of travel blogs' contents written by Russian tourists about their travel experiences in Norway. The chapter starts with information about the bloggers, such as, gender, the accommodation they stayed in, time of travelling, type of transport, etc. Having examined the blogs' content and identified the most described topics, five themes were classified by content analysis. Each theme contains several sub-categories. The results of word frequency search in blog texts were also presented and interpreted.

4.2 The information about the selected bloggers

In spite of the fact that bloggers are talking about their personal travel experiences, they prefer not to provide open access to personal information. Demographic data, such as age, place of living, employment and family status were available only in few travel blogs used for the research. Besides there is no guarantee that the available data was accurate and trustworthy since as long as both blog platforms (LiveJournal.com and TourBlogger.ru) and the individual blogs do not require verity checking of personal data that bloggers choose to share on their profiles.

The only available demographic data in all the cases was gender. It was estimated that 63% of blogs were written by men, 30% by female authors, and 6% of blog articles were written by couples (co-production). The gender information was either taken from the bloggers profiles or calculated from blog texts with the help of verb endings (in Russian language gender can be defined by verb endings).

Every blogger provided information about the places they visited. The most popular destinations amongst the analyzed blogs were Oslo, Bergen, the Lofoten Islands, Geirangerfjord, Preikestolen, North Cape, Ålesund, Flåm, Tromsø, Lysefjord, Trondheim, Stavanger and Bodø (listed in order of popularity). According to the information found in blog texts, most of the bloggers stayed in camping cottages (36% bloggers). Hotels were the second most popular type of accommodation (33% bloggers). Only a few bloggers stayed in guesthouses and hostels. The bloggers travelling to Lofoten Islands also mentioned rorbu - small houses for fishermen, which are rented to tourists.

The most popular transport used by bloggers within the country was a rented car. Other mentioned means of transportation were buses, trains (the Flåm railroad), bicycles, cruise ships and boats. One of the trips was performed by hitchhiking.

The most popular time of visiting Norway among the analyzed bloggers was August. Thirty percent of bloggers travelled in this month. The next most popular months were July (24% bloggers) and June (18% bloggers). Seventy-two percent of bloggers preferred to travel to Norway during summer. Two bloggers mentioned that they travelled in summer period and two were travelled in autumn without specifying the month. Spring months, March and May, were mentioned only twice by different bloggers.

Eleven bloggers (33%) were travelling alone. Most of the single travellers were men (9 bloggers) and just two female travellers. Five bloggers travelled in a group. Two bloggers travelled with a partner. Four bloggers travelled with a friend. The information about the rest of the 11 bloggers was not clear. There was no information about whether they were travelling with a family, with friends or as a couple. They only used personal pronouns “we”, “us” and there were no pictures provided, which could have revealed this information.

There was no mention of accompanying in the blogs. Based on included blog texts, Norway was not reported as a popular destination for travelling with children among Russian tourists.

The main content of the investigated blogs was texts, photographs and, in some cases, maps with the trip route. Several bloggers posted links to web pages containing information considered to be useful for blog readers, for example, booking websites, tourist information websites, homepages of visited hotels, restaurants, and the like.

The content analysis of the blog texts commenced with a word frequency test in order to gain insight into the most discussed concepts.

Table 2. Selected bloggers.

Blog ger №	Source	Gender	Transport	Accommodation	Traveled with...	Time of travelli ng
1	Live Journal	male	car	camping	alone	summer
2	Tour Blogge r	male	bus	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	autumn
3	Live Journal	female	bus	guest house, hostel	couple	summer
4	Live Journal	male	car	<i>no information</i>	alone	all year round
5	Private	female	bicycle	camping	group	summer
6	Live	male	bicycle,	camping, hotel	group	summer

	Journal		train			
7	Live Journal	female	car, train	hotel, guesthouse	group	summer
8	Private	female	boat	hotel	alone	summer, autumn
9	Live Journal	male	ship, car	camping	group	summer
10	Private	male	bicycle	camping	<i>no information</i>	summer
11	Live Journal	male	car	camping	couple	spring
12	Tour Blogger	female	car	camping	couple	spring, summer
13	Live Journal	male	car, train	hotel, rorbu, guesthouse	group	summer
14	Live Journal	male	<i>no information</i>	hotel	<i>no information</i>	autumn
15	Live Journal	male	<i>no information</i>	hostel	<i>no information</i>	spring
16	Live Journal	male	car	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	summer
17	Live Journal	male	car	hotel	couple	summer
18	Live Journal	male	car	hotel	couple	autumn
19	Live Journal	male	train, car	camping	couple	summer
20	Live Journal	male	ship, bus	rorbu	group	summer
21	Live Journal	male	car	hotel, rorbu	<i>no information</i>	summer
22	Private	male	car	hotel, camping	group	summer
23	Private	male	car	camping	couple	spring, summer
24	Live Journal	male	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>
25	Live Journal	male	bicycle	camping	couple	summer
26	Life Journal	female	boat, bicycle	<i>no information</i>	couple	summer
27	Private	female	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>
28	Live Journal	female	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	couple	spring
29	Live	male	bus	<i>no information</i>	<i>no</i>	spring

	Journal				<i>information</i>	
30	Private	male /female	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	couple	summer
31	Private	female	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>
32	Private	male	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	summer
33	Live Journal	female	bus, plane, train, ship	hotels	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>

4.3 Word frequency test

The word frequency test was conducted as a part the content analysis with the help of NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis. The test revealed the most frequently used words in the blog texts sampled for the current research. The words, which were not meaningful for the destination image analysis, such as, auxiliary words, were put into the stop-words-list and not taken into consideration. For further analysis only meaningful keywords were used, which described tourism facilities or visited places. The most commonly used keywords or phrases were combined into nine categories. The frequency test revealed the most discussed topics in the travel blogs used for this research. The results of the word frequency test are presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Word frequency test results.

Catergories Frequency Rank	Cities, places	Weather	Food & drinks	Transportation	Nature/scenery	Accomodation	Costs	Toirists' attitude to culture	Most frequently used adjectives
1.	Oslo (228)	Weather (189)	Fish (135)	Car (370)	Mountains (373)	Hotel (183)	Price (139)	Houses (325)	Good (121)
2.	Lofoten Islands (195)	Sun (100)	Restaurant (80)	Ferryboat (176)	Fjord (293)	Camping (106)	Money (65)	Trolls (147)	Interesting (116)
3.	Bergen (191)	Sunny (100)	Food (40)	Bridge (100)	Views (240)	Tent (44)	Expensive (50)	Museums (95)	Beautiful (148)

4.	Tromsø (93)	Rain (67)	Beer (36)	Train (81)	Waterfall (93)	Rorb u (21)	Cheaper (22)	Churches (74)	Beauty (74)
5.	North Cape (88)	Snow (62)	Breakfast (28)	Bus (81)	Nature (65)		To save money (17)	Shop (62)	Wonderful (38)
6.	Geiranger (64)	Clouds (51)	Café (33)	Tunnel (81)	Sea (60)			Fishing (41)	Pleasure (33)
7.	Flåm (31)	Wind (39)	Coffee (27)	Bicycle (51)	Lake (53)			Hiking (38)	Comfortable (33)
8.	Stavanger (29)	Fog (23)	Tasty (22)	Ship (50)	Landscape (39)			Tourist attraction (36)	Peaceful (33)
9.	Svolver (23)	Temperature (21)	Meat (15)	Airport (46)	River (30)			Vikings (27)	Kind (17)
10.	Vadsø (18)	Warm (16)	Salmon (14)	Parking (30)	Park (28)			Cemetery (26)	Cozy (14)
11.	Fjordcamp (16)		Dessert (12)	On foot (23)	Deer (25)			Ski (25)	Happiness (12)
12.	Kirkenes (15)		Menu (11)	Plane (19)	Glacier (21)			Monuments (15)	Joy (11)
13.	Narvik (14)		Soup (11)	Hitchhiking (13)	Beach (20)			Sculptures (13)	
14.	Ålesund (11)			Railroad (11)	Northern lights (18)			Swimming pool (10)	

According to the results of frequency test, Oslo was mentioned most by Russian tourists bloggers with Lofoten Islands and Bergen being the next frequent places. That being said, Lofoten Islands and Bergen were more often described by the bloggers in detail, while Oslo was sometimes just named as the starting point of the journey and did not get the same level of attention.

Over half the bloggers were travelling by car and the frequency of “car” word confirms this. Additionally, several bloggers paid attention to the cars that Norwegians and other tourists used.

In descriptions of the natural environment of Norway, the three most frequently named nature attractions were mountains (373), fjords (293) and waterfalls (93). The bloggers talked about “views” approximately 240 times. Northern lights, one of the marketed symbols of Norway, were not mentioned very often. This may be explained by the fact that 72% bloggers were travelling in summer period.

Weather was very frequently mentioned by the bloggers as evidenced in the test results.

Houses were placed into the category of tourists’ attractions and received a large frequency usage (325). Russian travel bloggers often paid attention to the local houses describing them not as functional buildings, but as tourist attractions and part of the scenery. Other commonly mentioned tourists attractions were museums, churches and cemeteries. Due to the fact that Norwegian cemeteries are very different from the Russian ones, several tourists described them in their blogs as a cultural attraction. Among the most frequently mentioned tourists activities were fishing and hiking. The word “shop” was often found in blogs texts, although in most cases, the bloggers were not talking about their shopping, but just mentioning shops when describing cities and local prices.

As for the costs category, the word “price” was frequently used albeit that such frequency can not say anything about the country image because it is common for tourists to talk about the price levels in travel destinations. Price issues will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Hotels (183) were more frequently mentioned than camping (106) and tents (44) in spite of the fact that most bloggers camped with hotels being the second preferred place of accommodation. These numbers may be explained by bloggers’ complaints about hotel prices in Norway and lack of hotels in the tourist season.

Describing the Norwegian cuisine, the Russian tourists mentioned fish (135) in the first place describing fish markets, the quality of the Norwegian fish and restaurants’ fish dishes. The high use frequency of the word “fish” can also be explained by several bloggers talking about fishing. The word “restaurant” was mentioned in travel blogs 80 times, though some bloggers were talking about high prices in the Norwegian restaurants and recommended their readers to bring their own food on a trip to Norway.

Content analysis identified five themes that summarize the data about travel experiences in Norway as posted in the Russian travel blogs. The identified themes embrace the most important and explicit travel aspects discussed in those blogs. Each theme had several sub-categories that were used to obtain more detailed analysis and findings. For all the themes, the percentage of bloggers mentioning them was calculated. The number of the bloggers talking

about a specific theme was counted and the percentage calculation was made taking the total number of bloggers (33) as 100%. See the table below.

Table 4. Frequencies of the identified themes from the analyzed blog texts.

Category	Subcategory	Bloggers (%)
Natural Environment		
	Nature-based attractions	51%
	Weather	58%
Social Environment		
	Local people	45%
	Lifestyle observed by tourists	60%
Cultural Environment		
	Museums	18%
	Churches/ Cemeteries	25%/ 15%
	Symbols of Norway	63%
	Norwegian Famous People	18%
Economy and Industry Environment		
	Roads and Tunnels	48%
	Industrial Tourism	27%
	Prices	58%
Tourists Facilities		
	Accommodation	48%
	Food (Restaurants/Cafes)	67%
	Tourist Activities	53%
	Service	44%
	Transport	68%

4.4 Natural environment theme

Natural environment theme embraces all the aspects discussed in the blog texts related to the perception of nature by bloggers during their trips. The theme is divided into two sub-

categories: nature-based tourists attractions and weather. Both these topics were broadly addressed by the Russian travel bloggers, who were selected for this research.

Nature-based attractions

Defining the image of Norway as a tourist destination most Russian bloggers talked about its natural beauty:

“It is an incredibly beautiful country...Not sure if there is any other country in the world that is so beautiful” (Blogger 12);

“Norway is something. It is one of the most beautiful countries in the world” (Blogger 13);

“Norway is a paradise for landscapes photographers and nature lovers. It feels like this country is a huge nature reserve with incredible mountains, lakes, hills and waterfalls” (Blogger 1).

“The main trip impression: the severe northern nature is amazing” (Blogger 16).

Talking about Norwegian nature the Russian bloggers used a lot of strong epithets such as absolutely amazing (vegetation), extraordinarily picturesque (mountain river), breathtaking (landscapes), gorgeous (Dalsnibba), unbelievable beautiful (country), unearthly (beauty), astonishing (beauty), etc. The bloggers described all the nature attractions seen on their trip to Norway with no exceptions. Mountains, glaciers, mountain rivers, lakes, fjords, waterfalls, the sea and the ocean, vegetation, fish, birds, animals (reindeer, lamas, sheep, musk oxen), northern lights and landscapes in general received a lot of attention and compliments. All these nature-related elements were presented by the bloggers in a very flattering way. At the same time, the bloggers were trying to show the power and the severity of this northern nature and how fragile people are to it in comparison:

“It was my first time on a glacier and the power of it is impressive” (Blogger 19);

(about Preikestolen) “In any weather this mountain makes a proper impression. And the lack of any movement restrictions are going to shock you when you find yourself on it.” (Blogger 19);

“Looking down you understand that no helmet or flak jacket are going to save you if you get into this water mess. We started thinking about the fragility of a human body” (Blogger 17);

“Severe beauty around...On the left you see the rocks...on the right you see the ocean which looks a little bit more friendly when the weather is nice” (Blogger 21)”.

Telling the story about the fishing tour close to the Maelstrom whirlpool, the blogger tries to express the danger of this nature phenomenon and the anxiety experienced when there:

“On our way Fred was telling us some geographical facts.

– This is the island we call Værøya, to the right is the island called Mosken. And even more to the right is Maelstrøm.

– What is it to the right?

– Well, Maelstrøm, Maelstream. Whirlpool, have not you heard?

– Eh..., heard. And even read. And may we ask you a question?

– Of course!

– You know, we are new to the sea (?the sea beginners)...But something tells us that we are going to the right now, well.. to Maelstrøm.

– Exactly.

– And...why?

– It is a better biting there.

After this dialogue we felt a bit uncomfortable. On the one hand, our captain was sure he is doing everything right. On the other hand, the famous lines written by Edgar Poe inopportunely popped up in my head” (Blogger 21).

Further, the blogger cited the fearsome description of Maelstrøm written by Edgar Poe in his short story "A Descent into the Maelström" and mentioned the accidents that happened here to the Japanese tourists.

This type of perception of nature can be compared to awe. The travellers both admired the beautiful northern nature and at the same time they defined it as severe.

Demonstrating the power of nature, the bloggers spoke of its ability to dazzle travelers by its beauty. Often the tourists mentioned that they were absolutely enraptured and could almost not move while facing and observing the next astonishing piece of nature. Describing their emotions while admiring nature in Norway, bloggers named a feeling of detachment from the rest of the world. Norwegian nature was also described as something completely different from other destinations, as something unearthly:

“This place changes your idea of nature and its beauty. Here everything is different, unusual and even a little bit unreal” (Blogger 10);

“Norway charms...everything that happens to you stops being interesting. Information vacuum. Everything becomes not important” (Blogger 17);

“The beauty of this place captures and charms” (Blogger 24).

The word “extraordinary” is often used for defining local nature.

Several bloggers said that they found it difficult to describe some of the natural attractions and recommend readers to visit Norway and see its nature with their own eyes:

“I can not explain it with words...A full range of feelings is possible to get only by being here” (Blogger 13).

All the blogs were filled with a lot of pictures to demonstrate nature and in some descriptions of nature bloggers choose photographs over words.

Some bloggers described the phenomenon of nature as a very quick shift in landscapes. They even compared it with moving from one climatic zone to another one and found this shift very fascinating. Norwegian nature was also described as exhibiting pristine landscapes without human interference. Bloggers perceived the Norwegian sceneries to be very peaceful and sometimes even deserted. For example, narrating a story of meeting reindeer, bloggers mentioned how freely and impudently these animals behaved as if there were no people around them. Writing about meeting muks-oxen a blogger built the image of a wayward animal protecting its family from random tourists. The whole image of Norwegian nature appeared to be the same: untouched by humans and wayward.

Comparing the perception of nature in Northern Norway (Lofoten Islands, Tromsø, Alta; Karasjok) and in Western Norway (Bergen, Stavanger), the former appeared to be associated with a severe image of nature fighting for survival in the conditions of harsh climate, while the latter was associated with an image of nature as peaceful and idyllic.

Summing up the perception of nature in Norway nature, it must be noted that the Russian travel bloggers perceived the nature of Norway as something unique and extraordinary. They considered nature in Norway to be absolutely worth visiting and recommended it to their readers. They also warned readers to treat this nature with respect and be aware of its power and severity.

Weather

The weather conditions were often mentioned by the bloggers as an important factor capable of significantly influencing a travel experience. The weather experienced by the tourists during their trips to Norway was evaluated in a neutral, positive and negative way. Travellers described rainy weather in Bergen and Oslo, strong winds in Northern Norway, fog at North Cape and absolutely unpredictable changeable weather around the whole country. Often disappointments that took place during the trip were connected with weather. At the same time, some bloggers highly appreciated the chilly Norwegian climate as an opportunity to escape from the hot and stifling summer weather at home.

The quick and unpredictable changing weather in Norway was mentioned by eight bloggers. This phenomenon did not generate a negative interpretation. The bloggers presented it just as one of the characteristic features of Norway:

“Norwegian weather is like a mirage and it can change five times per day” (Blogger 20).

One of the bloggers interpreted the weather’s unpredictability in the following way:

“First I would like to warn everyone who is planning a trip to Norway. If early in the morning the weather is bad, it means nothing. Everything changes very quickly there. So it is not worth sitting and waiting for the sun” (Blogger 19).

Nevertheless, there are seven bloggers who blamed the weather for ruining their plans and preventing them from enjoying some of the natural attractions. They described the bad weather conditions as “disappointing”, “sad”, “annoying” and “uncomfortable”:

“Imagine, what a meanness, during the whole trip to Kirkenes, the wind was blowing right in my face” (Blogger 10);

“It started to rain heavily and our plans to go on an elk safari were finally ruined. No tourists risked going in such bad weather” (Blogger 12);

“The weather did not smile for hiking in the local mountains. In this situation, the only thing left was to take a nap” (Blogger 20)“;

The weather disappointed us very much. It was raining and everything was covered with fog” (Blogger 9).

At the same time, some of the bloggers were not influenced by the bad weather and took it for granted as the part Norway experience:
“Bergen met us with drizzling raining, but in a couple of days we got used to it” (Blogger 2);

“Bad weather was not the reason to stop looking for adventures” (Blogger 8).

Two bloggers even named the weather as the significant part of forming the image and unique atmosphere of Norway:

“Fog and clouds created the atmosphere of the Norway that was in my imagination before the trip” (Blogger 13);

“But raining in fiords...is beautiful in its own way. We were not disappointed” (Blogger 20).”

The weather became one of the important elements of the whole image of Norway as a tourist destination. In spite of the fact that the weather is quite unstable in Norway, the bloggers do not discourage blogs readers from travelling there. They portrayed the weather as

one of the country's inherent features that travellers have to deal with and suggested to potential tourists to be well prepared for it.

An interesting feature noticed in the weather descriptions in the Russian travel blogs was personification. As in Russian literature, especially poetry, weather often is written using the traits of human character and behaviour. The same was seen in the travel blogs. Weather “feels sorry” for travellers and “favors” them, but sometimes “does not smile at all”; clouds were “chasing” the tourist and “playing hide and seek”; the sky “frowns and talks”.

4.5 Social environment theme

Local people

Willingness to help was one of the common features bloggers used to describe locals. Several bloggers shared their stories of having some kind of trouble and received help from passing locals.

Politeness of locals was also mentioned by bloggers, in particular, on the road. Norwegian drivers were portrayed as very polite and eager to help people. Other mentioned features included the philosophical attitude of Norwegians to their cold climate, a love of sport and coffee, a sense of practicality in spite of general wealth, good skills in English and a lack of emotions.

Lifestyle Observed by Tourists

In reading the blog texts, it becomes clear that the lifestyle of the local population and locals themselves received a lot of attention from the Russian travellers. Bloggers were eager to share their perception of how locals lived, what transport they chose, what kind of houses they had and how big their families were with readers.

High standard of living

The high standard of living in Norway was mentioned by the bloggers in different contexts. They discuss high scholarships, social guaranties, good and effective infrastructure. Blogger 9 observed several computers in a very good state thrown away to the garbage. According to him, in Russia such computers would still be used:

“It is very typical for Norway to throw away such things” (Blogger 9).

Blogger 19 shared pictures from student dormitories surprised by their high standard and obviously comparing it with the lower standard at home:

“Imagine a student dormitory. Imagined? And now compare it the Norwegian understanding of how a student room should look. Yes, it is a student room. Yes, for one person” (Blogger 19).

Some bloggers made conclusions about the high salaries that locals received by judging the level of prices:

“As I understood, everyone on Norway is rather rich. Real estate prices are very high and every Norwegian family has at least one house” (Blogger 6).

Norwegian houses

In talking about the good standards of living the bloggers noticed that it was difficult to find poorly maintained houses in Norway. Russian bloggers were impressed with the excellent condition Norwegians keep their houses in:

“Locals love their houses. Everything is made in a perfect way here” (Blogger 19);

“There is a special atmosphere among these houses. We admired private houses in Bergen with their accurate lawns and fences (Blogger 28);

The devotion of locals to flowers was also noticed:

“Every Norwegian house looks like a botanical garden. Every residential district reminds you of a flower garden” (Blogger 21);

“Everything is clean and taken care of. Houses are decorated with flowers in a lovely way. Must be good to live in these houses (Blogger 26).

The impression that the local houses made on the bloggers is completely positive.

Atmosphere in Norway

The bloggers defined Norwegian houses and districts as nice and cute. Most of them even use affectionate diminutive suffixes in such words as “house”, “fence”, “yard”, “lawn”, “flowers”.

The atmosphere in Norwegian towns was also described in a very positive way. Norway was described as a cozy and safe country with a very relaxed mood:

“Everything is nice and calm” (Blogger 10);

“We arrived here to enjoy the beauty and tune into the calm atmosphere of Norway. People live calm and steadily here” (Blogger 19);

“Cities are small and quite” (Blogger 9);

“Everything is cute and homey” (Blogger 20);

“Everything is quiet in Norway. Happy people live here” (Blogger 4).

Some bloggers mentioned the lack of fences and locks on post boxes:

“Fences do not exist here” (Blogger 20 about Northern Norway).

They explained this fact to the readers by identifying the high level of safety in Norway: *“They do not build fences here. Everything is safe here” (Blogger 19).*

Sport

Russian bloggers defined Norwegians as a very sporty nation. They emphasized the fact that from early childhood Norwegians were used to being very active in different types of sport, for example, hiking, skiing and kayaking. Bloggers made this conclusion after meeting local families on mountain paths, getting acquainted with Norwegians who took part in different sport competitions or simply saw locals travelling with sport equipment.

Bicycles, boats and electric cars.

Norway is a cycling country according to Russian bloggers. Some bloggers concluded this from seeing many locals of different ages on bicycles; others paid attention to the infrastructure provided for cycling activities. Blogger noticed that boats and yachts were another traditional type of transport preferred by locals:

“Norwegians prefer to have a private boat instead of a private car. I guess it is in their genes as seafarers” (Blogger 14).

4.6 Cultural environment theme

Museums

Only a few bloggers (18%, 6 bloggers) wrote about visiting museums during their trip to Norway. The museums mentioned in the blogs were Lofotr Vikingmuseum in Lofoten, Sunnmøre Museum in Ålesund, Polar Museum in Tromsø, Nobel Peace Center and the Ski Museum in Oslo and Tirpitz Museum in Alta. Sunnmøre Museum was described by Blogger 5 as a miracle. The blogger was fascinated by the fact that this folk museum included historical buildings dated to 1600 -1700. Visitors were allowed to only take pictures but also to go inside the old houses without any restrictions. The last fact was greatly appreciated by this blogger:

“Everything is made for people here. You can touch and move everything. You are also allowed to take pictures and video” (Blogger 5).

Lofotr Vikinmuseum was visited by Blogger 13, who labeled the museum for the specially interested. Moreover, the blogger considered the entrance tickets to be overpriced.

“Personally for me the museum was so so. It is not worthy, 120 NOK they ask for the entrance ticket. A short 20-minutes movie and the chance to put on a chain armor are the only advantages here» (Blogger 13).

The Polar Museum in Tromsø made a very good impression on Blogger 20. The museum was described by this blogger as one of the best museums in Norway. Norway was also considered to be a country with a lot of good museums worth visiting.

«I like the museums of this kind: not a big one, a stylized museum about people and their way of life. These museums are alive, authentic and not pompous at all» (Blogger 20).

Tirpitz war museum in Alta, which was devoted to the battleship Tirpitz was mentioned by Blogger 4. There was not any personal evaluation of this museum presented in the blog. The only information given about the Tirpitz museum was a short description of what visitors can see there. Starting with the short introduction to the Noble Price tradition, Blogger 26 told about visiting the Noble Price Center museum. The blog readers were informed that the museum was a very expensive one with regard to both entrance tickets and souvenirs. Except for the information about the prices, the blogger did not give any description of what tourists could see there. The Ski Museum in Oslo was highly recommended for visitation by Blogger 7, regardless of whether visitors had good skiing skills or not. The positive experience for this blogger was based upon the terrific views of the surrounding landscapes, the museum itself and opportunity to ski and watch others skiing.

Churches and cemeteries

Norwegian churches, cathedrals and cemeteries were the tourist attractions that generated both curiosity and admiration amongst the bloggers. Nine bloggers (27%) described their experience of both visiting and simply passing by churches in Norway. In total 14 Norwegian churches were described both briefly and in detail.

Table 5. The list of Norwegian churches visited by the Russian bloggers.

	Name	City (County)	Blogger
1.	The Molde Cathedral	Molde (Møre and Romsdal)	Blogger 6
2.	Svolvær Church	Vågan (Lofoten Islands)	Blogger 7
3.	Vadsø Church	Vadsø (Finnmark)	Blogger 10
4.	Lesja Church	Lesja (Oppland)	Blogger 12
5.	Kinsarvik Church	Ullensvang (Hardanger)	Blogger 12
6.	Røldal Stave Church	Odda (Hordaland)	Blogger 12
7.	Heddal Stave Church	Heddal (Notodden)	Blogger 12

8.	Lom Stave Church	Lom (Oppland)	Bloggers 12, 19
9.	Vinje Church	Vinje (Telemark)	Blogger 13
10.	The Lofoten Cathedral	Vågan (Lofoten Islands)	Blogger 13
12.	Urnes Stave Church	Luster (Sogn and Fjordane)	Blogger 16
13.	St. Mary's Church	Bergen (Hordaland)	Blogger 17
14.	Borgund Stave Church	Lærdal (Sogn and Fjordane)	Blogger 19
15.	The Arctic Cathedral	Tromsø (Troms)	Blogger 20

In writing about the Norwegian churches, bloggers mentioned their age or just described them as “*the oldest church in town*” (St. Mary's Church); “*the most ancient example*” (Urnes Stave Church); “*one the oldest churches*” (Borgund Stave Church) and so on. The age of churches was as a rule mentioned first in the description so it appears to be an important factor for the traveller bloggers. In describing the old churches, the bloggers used more enthusiastic epithets than when talking about modern churches as, for example, the Arctic Cathedral in Tromsø or Vadsø Church.

About Arctic Cathedral (built in 1965):

«Besides the beautiful stained glass window there was nothing fascinating for me there, but the stained glass in the sunlight was very beautiful. Worth visiting only for this.»

Blogger 20.

About Vadsø Church (built in 1958):

“The curious detail about this church is its unusual orientation towards east instead of traditional orientation from north to south. As I understand the facade of the church is supposed to remind you about ices and icebergs.”

Blogger 10.

About Lesja Church (built in 1749):

“We were completely shocked when we entered the church. See for yourself...Beautifully decorated walls and ceiling, stunning chandeliers and, as an apotheosis, carved iconostasis with figures of saints instead of icons....I could not stop taking pictures. Enjoy...”. Blogger 12.

About Borgund Church (built in 1130):

“There is one place in Norway that is impossible to drive past. This is the famous Borgund Stave Church. This church is a national treasure and perhaps the international one as well.” Blogger 19

About Lom Stave Church (built in 1157):

“Inside the church you can hear mysterious and frightening music...It creates the atmosphere. Lom Church is famous for the biggest number of church paintings in Norway. The architecture is incredibly elegant. The gorgeous church and the infernal landscape of incredible beauty.»
Blogger 19.

In several blogs, the description of churches was followed by the description of church cemeteries. Five bloggers (15%) wrote about Norwegian cemeteries. In most cases, the described cemeteries were not the main attractions for the tourists. The bloggers were either visiting churches or accidentally came up on the cemeteries.

The exception is Blogger 6 who devoted an entire blog article to sharing pictures of a cemetery with readers. The blogger’s intention was to show how a Norwegian cemetery looked.

Blogger 7 mentioned cemeteries several times while presenting details of the trip. Cemeteries were shown as a rich source of cultural information about Norway. The way cemeteries were organized and taken care of was one significant cultural feature, which differentiates countries. Norwegian cemeteries were presented by the blogger as “bright, quiet and cozy”, “it’s pleasant to be here; everything is taken care of, interesting to walk and examine”. In comparison, Russian cemeteries were presented as “trashy, gloomy, depressed mood and with bad energy”.

Both Blogger 7 and Blogger 12 presented cemeteries as the source of demographical information. By examining the dates on the graves, bloggers made conclusions about the lifespan of the local population.

Travelling around the Lofoten Islands Blogger 11 describes cemeteries as an important detail of these severe landscapes.

The presence of the Soviet war graves in Norway was another factor, which attracted Russian tourists to Norwegian cemeteries. Blogger 7 and Blogger 13 mentioned visiting Soviet graves.

Other cultural symbols of Norway

With regard to the cultural heritage of Norway, Russian bloggers also mention:

- *the Vigeland Park* in Oslo (Bloggers 14 and 19);

- *Bryggen* in Bergen as the symbol of the Hanseatic heritage (Blogger 28);
- *Hurtigruten cruise ship* (Blogger 20);
- *Traditional Norwegian sweaters* (Blogger 17);
- *The Oslo Opera House* (Blogger 19);
- *Norwegian folklore characters*;
- *Vikings*.

Folklore characters were frequently described in blog texts. Special attention was given to trolls. Blogger 12 and Blogger 19 described Huldra, a female folklore character, though only in connection with the Norwegian waterfall Kjosfossen. During the tourist season, travellers who arrive at the train station near the famous waterfall, see an actress dressed as Huldra dancing and singing for them. In the main, most of the attention among bloggers is given to trolls. There is 39% bloggers mentioning them. Bloggers defined trolls as the symbol of Norway and were amused by the signboards warning travellers about the presence of these creatures.

Vikings were quite often mentioned by Russian bloggers (54% bloggers). However, they did not demonstrate any special interest in this historical period of Norway. In most cases, bloggers simply defined Norway as the country of Vikings without going into historical details.

In some blog texts (18% bloggers), the names of famous Norwegian people appeared, for example, Edvard Grieg, Gunnar Berge, Edvard Munch, Roald Amundsen and Fridtjof Nansen, Henrik Ibsen, Ole Einar Bjørndalen, although, none of them was mentioned more than twice. The bloggers usually talked about famous Norwegians in relation to the memorials devoted to them.

4.7 Price and industry environment theme

Prices

Over half of the bloggers (58%) mentioned price issues in their trip stories. Only two of these bloggers did not define price levels in Norway as a great challenge for travellers. For these two, if a tourist knows how and where to spend money then it is not a problem. The rest considered prices to be a very serious challenge that can stop people from travelling. In the blogs, Norway was defined as a “terribly expensive”, “the most expensive”, “probably one of the most expensive”, “very expensive”, “quiet expensive”, “hellishly expensive”, “brutally expensive”, “unfairly expensive” country. Bloggers described their experience of prices in

Norway in the following way: “unpleasantly surprised”, “shocked”, “did not expect that high level”, “upset with prices” and even “we got robbed”. One blogger shared with the readers that for three years his family could not afford the trip to Norway because of the price level.

Twelve of the nineteen bloggers, who talked about high prices in Norway, followed on with recommendations regarding how to spend less and how to get prepared for the expenses. The trip to Norway was depicted as an adventure that requires a serious financial support, the avoidance of luxuries, and a smart and well-planned approach to spending money. Blog readers were recommended to choose camping as the cheapest accommodation, to avoid shopping and to take food with them on the trip in order to avoid restaurants, cafes and fast food.

Industrial tourism

Industrial sightseeing includes visits to operational companies and industrial heritage. Industrial tourism subjects offer visitors to experience industry products, production processes, application, and historical backgrounds (Otgaar, van den Berg, Berger, Feng, 2010).

Twenty-seven percent of bloggers mentioned industrial tourist attractions. The most popular industrial or rather transport attraction mentioned by bloggers was the Flåm railroad (four bloggers described this travel experience). The main focus for tourists concentrated on observation of the landscapes from train windows. The other industrial attraction mentioned by several bloggers was lighthouses in Stavanger, Andenes and Tromsø. Similar to the railroad, the lighthouses were mostly associated with getting panoramic views.

All the other mentioned attractions of industrial character were individual cases. Blogger 13 shared his experience of the accidently found junkyard and expressed his surprise over how cars that were in such a good stand could be left by their owners. Blogger 4 devoted two articles to the airshow in Bodø describing it using a lot of pictures and details of the show’s organization.

Blogger 19 found it “very interesting and fascinating” to take a trip on a ferry boat and gave a very detailed description of the whole ferry boat travelling procedure.

Blogger 20 considered the ship museum Polstjerna to be an underestimated tourist attraction and recommended the readers to visit it.

Tunnels and roads

Many bloggers travelled within Norway visiting several cities and places either by the Flåm railroad or in most cases by car. As a consequence, roads, tunnels and bridges became a well-represented topic in the studied travel blogs.

One of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of Norwegians roads was their being “picturesque”. The bloggers talk about the phenomenon of “a tourist road” – one of the Norwegian attractions, which makes tourists stop their cars and take pictures along the road. However, some bloggers complained about roads being too narrow and a one lane E-6 road, which make it very difficult to find a place for parking along the road in order to take some pictures or made overtaking and driving a little faster to reach more places somewhat difficult. When it comes to Northern Norway, bloggers named one more road danger – reindeer.

In general, the Russian blog tourists were very satisfied with the quality of Norwegian roads especially when compared with the quality of Russian roads. The quality of the Norwegian infrastructure was highly valued by the travel bloggers.

The most popular road tourist attractions mentioned by the bloggers was the Atlantic road. The pictures taken of this road are widespread in Russian social networks and have made this road a famous and desired Norwegian tourist attraction. However, one blogger commented that the Atlantic road as overestimated attraction.

The Norwegian tunnels were also described as a tourist attraction by several bloggers. They wrote that tunnels in Norway are everywhere, which caused a cultural shock for those who had not experienced this before:

“In my country a tunnel is a special event. Here tunnels are everywhere” (Blogger 19);

4.8 Tourism facilities theme

Tourism facilities are the most important elements that build the base of a travel experience. These are the places where tourists stay, buy the food that they eat, and the activities they take part into while being away from their home country. If any of these and any other elements of tourism infrastructure appear to be disappointing, the whole experience can be ruined or at least seriously damaged. This is why it is very important for tourism industry specialists to be aware of the level of satisfaction their guests gain from all tourist facilities.

Accommodation

The most discussed types of accommodation in the travel blogs were camping and hotels. Tourists considered camping cottages to be the best option for Norway because of their prices. Hotels were evaluated as too expensive and overrated especially in small places. Very few hotels and a lack of competition were perceived to lead to very high prices. Several bloggers also commented on the lack of available hotel rooms in tourist season regardless of city size. Bloggers recommended booking a room in advance to avoid not having any accommodation or spending too much money on expensive accommodation. One of the bloggers noted the inconvenience connected with a lack of prices on Norwegian hotels' websites. Evaluating the quality of the local hotels, the bloggers were quiet satisfied with these especially when they took into account the diversity and quality of hotel breakfast meals.

The most popular advice to readers given by bloggers concerning accommodation in Norway was to travel in a group of friends or families of 4-8 people in order to rent a camping house, which usually accommodates 4 people. For those who go to Norway for fishing, a rorbu, a fisherman house, was identified as the best solution for accommodation in Lofoten Islands because of good price, good quality and great views.

Food

In spite of the fact that bloggers talked about expensive prices in Norway and advised readers to save money by avoiding going to restaurants, cafes and fast food restaurants, there were still many restaurant and café reviews in the analyzed blogs. Bloggers were fascinated with the cozy and unique interior, with tasty fish cream soups, the opportunity to try whale and reindeer meat for the first time, delicious Norwegian desserts with cloudberry and carrot cakes. At the same time every restaurant review was followed with comments on high prices.

Fish food has received a lot of attention in travel blogs describing food experiences in Norway. Bloggers commented on its high quality, freshness and regretted that at home the fish did not taste that good. Bloggers ordered fish meals in restaurants, visited the fish market in Bergen and arranged fishing tours:

“Fish is a gastronomic treasure of Norway” (Blogger 28).

Describing the local drinking culture, bloggers noted that Norwegians love tea and coffee and have a great choice of these drinks in cafes, bars or restaurants. Some mentioned that the support provided by Norwegians to their local beer deserves respect.

Tourist activities

The main tourists activity described in the blogs was sightseeing, which has already been partially considered in the natural environment section of this chapter. Judging by blog contents, sightseeing is one of the main purposes tourists head to Norway. Some tourists mentioned hiking but usually they only hiked in order to reach a good point for taking in the views and readers were advised to be well prepared for hiking in Norway considering changeable weather conditions. The lack of safety fences in the mountains in popular tourists places was found surprising by several bloggers. However they noticed that without fences tourists moved more cautiously.

In addition to sightseeing, some bloggers wrote about visiting skiing resorts and going to Norway for cold surfing. However, both these activities were singular cases mentioned just once.

Service

The bloggers in general were satisfied with the level service experienced in the Norwegian tourist industry. The only complaint was connected with the tourist information office in Flåm, where the blogger did not get help regarding a hotel, tickets, and maps or was treated in an unfriendly manner by staff members.

In all the other cases mentioned, the level of service and friendliness of tourism workers was highly rated. Tourists describe workers as “nice”, “friendly”, “attentive”, “sympathetic”, “nice and unobtrusive” and “smiling”.

Transport

According to several bloggers, the best way of travelling in Norway is to rent a car. Bloggers described this type of transport as: “the most optimal”, “the most convenient” and “the best way of travelling”. The advantages of travelling by car were first of all the opportunity to sightsee at the travellers’ own paces, with independence, and the ability to make their own route. Travelling by bicycle also was reported as having similar advantages although it demands good physical fitness and it is significantly slower than driving a car. Nevertheless, several bloggers preferred to ride a bicycle. They mentioned a very good infrastructure for bicycle tourists in Norway: the marked cycling routes, the availability of good bicycle lanes and convenient conditions for taking bicycles on a public transport.

There were not many discussions about public transport in Norway in the blogs. A few travelers who visited Oslo, mentioned that the system of public transport there was very convenient though very expensive.

Several bloggers described their fascination concerning the picturesque railroads in Norway:

“My childhood dream had finally come true. I was travelling by train and watching the fjords” (Blogger 25);

“Everything is done in such a way that you are watching the views and forget the expenses” (Blogger 19).

Two bloggers had travelled on the Hurtigruten. First, of all them mentioned the expensive prices of travelling on this famous cruise. But having described in detail the level of quality, service and the picturesque route, both came to conclusion that the expenses were that high for that kind of tourist product.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, blog contents written by Russian tourists who had travelled to Norway were analyzed. The blog texts were examined using content analysis.

Blog content was divided into five major topics or themes: the natural environment theme, the cultural environment theme, the social environment theme, the price and industry environment theme, and finally the tourist facilities theme. All these themes represented the most discussed topics by the bloggers. Each theme was further split into several sub-categories, which were described in detail with illustrating examples taken from blog texts. The content analysis helped to structure the blog texts in order to better understand their content and to identify the main issues discussed by the bloggers. The next chapter discusses the findings from the analysis within the overall research context.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the analysis of the research data are discussed in light of the theoretical framework. The literature review established the idea of the possible influence of culture on tourist experiences and destination image formation. The research for this thesis describes the image formation of Norway as a tourist destination by Russian tourists. The Russian tourists involved in this study were Russian bloggers who had visited Norway and had described their experience in blog texts. The contents of these blog texts were analyzed. Five main themes were identified. The emergent themes embedded in blogger descriptions and to which readers' attention are drawn: 1) Nature Environment, 2) Social Environment, 3) Cultural Environment, 4) Economy and Industry Environment, and 5) Tourist Facilities. Each theme had several subcategories, which provided further definition to the content of each of the themes.

In this chapter, three key points organize the discussion. First, the observed differences and similarities between the findings of Russian tourist bloggers and research reported in the literature review. Second, cognitive and affective components of image formation mechanisms and connections with literature and tourism. Third and finally, the connection between tourism consumption and destination image formation.

5.2 Russian tourist bloggers experiences of Norway and reviewed literature

According to the literature review, Russians mostly head to sun and beach destinations, specifically, Turkey, Spain, Italy and other warm countries, and spend holidays along the coastlines. Russians tourists are reported to belong to the tourist segment, which enjoys comfort, friendly service and great food and drink facilities while on a holiday. As noted in several studies, shopping is another important travel purpose for tourists from Russia. This influences them to choose destinations with good shopping facilities and appropriate prices ((Swarbrooke and Horner 2007, Choi, Tkachenko et al. 2011, Chernega 2012)

However, the bloggers analyzed in this research prefer camping for holiday accommodation. The majority of them travel by a rented car. There is almost no mentioning of shopping tours. Few of the bloggers described visiting luxurious spa and restaurants or staying at expensive hotels. Subsequently, based on this Master's level research, the Russian tourists who travel to Norway differ from the tourists described in research presented in the literature review chapter. Most of the Russian tourists in this study travel to Norway in order to explore the famous fjords, mountains and waterfalls. These tourists experience bad weather

and dangerous water currents; struggle with new, challenging activities, such as hiking; and look for ways to spend less money, such as, buying food in supermarkets. Norway is a destination for enthusiastic Russians, who are ready for adventure. This is the country that the Russian travellers choose to enjoy an untouched and severe nature. The weather conditions received a lot of attention in blogs. Although the weather description was not always positive, bloggers demonstrated to their readers that the landscapes were worth it. In the blogs, a lot of pictures are posted in front of landscapes. In those photos, bloggers or their companions are pictured staring at the landscapes or watching into the distance with a thoughtful face expression. This gives the readers an impression that Norway is the place where a traveller can escape from the hectic routine of everyday life and civilization. The pictures of the fairytale forests and houses only serve to strengthen this image.

The cultural heritage attractions were also popular amongst the tourists from Russia. Norwegian stave churches and cemeteries gained a lot of interest judging by the analyzed blogs texts. Russians were attracted by the cultural traditions, which were different from their own. They described the architecture of the local churches, the cemeteries and memorial inscriptions on the gravestones. Several bloggers described visiting the Norwegian cemeteries and shared their thoughts concerning the huge difference between Russian cemetery traditions.

In the blogs analyzed, museums were not the most frequently described tourist attraction. The bloggers appeared to be more attracted to Norwegian houses and the way these houses conjoined with landscapes. The image of the country as very cozy with nice houses is identified in the majority of the blogs. The bloggers concentrated readers' attention on how soundly the houses were built, as well as how well maintained the churches and found, Russians are eager to meet other cultures and communicate with the locals (Kozak and Martin, 2012). This Master's level research demonstrates these characteristics. In the blogs, often mention was made regarding bloggers' observations of the local lifestyle and the locals themselves. The bloggers described Norwegians as a very sporting nation. They also mentioned how helpful and friendly the local population was to tourists. Several bloggers described in detail communication processes with locals. In spite of the findings presented in Fenko's research (2007), the studied bloggers do not focus on presenting the locals in a negative way and do not judge them or their life style (Fenko 2007).

As noted in the literature review, bloggers fill their texts with a lot of practical information. They describe accommodation facilities and transport, the prices and food quality in restaurants and local cafes, as well as the level of service provided. The Russian

blog readers perceived Norway as a destination with fresh and good quality food, friendly and attentive service and great transport facilities. As for the accommodation facilities, the bloggers mostly discussed camping possibilities. For the Russian travel bloggers, this situates Norway as the country of camping holidays rather than the destination of luxurious hotels.

Using different phrases and epithets, the bloggers often reminded readers how expensive Norway was. The mention of high price levels in chosen holiday destinations was meant more as a warning to potential travellers rather than a demonstration of social status and income level.

Overall, the studied blog sites confirm some earlier research as well as contest some. Russian bloggers who have travelled to Norway appear to be a different market compared to their counterparts who choose warmer, shopping-intensive destinations. Further, the Russian market to Norway in its current state reflects a degree of travel as a social status symbol (Fenko 2007). The Russian bloggers show a significant degree of interest in local cultures and architecture, further supporting the status symbol theory.

5.3 Image formation, literature and tourism

The second interesting observation made in the analysis process was that bloggers refer to classical literature. When describing their travel experience two bloggers associate the observed nature in association with literary works.

In the first example, Blogger 4 describes the cloud on the top of the mountain with the line from the poem, written by the famous Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov, "The Cliff". In the second example Blogger 21 on the way to Maelstrøm recalls the description of the famous water current written by the American writer, Edgar Poe, in his short story "A Descent into the Maelström".

Formation of the tourism experience is a very complex and diversified process that can be influenced by many different factors. In the above-mentioned cases the literary competence of the bloggers became one of these forming factors. This makes it possible to observe the connection between the literature and tourism. Getting into the situation or the backgrounds that somehow remind them of any particular literary work, tourists start perceiving their travel experience through the literature prism. Often people explore something new with the help of associations from the past experiences. In these situations the past experience is the literature read by the bloggers before the travel experience took place.

The connection between literature and tourism is widely discussed by researchers. They observe tourists exploring the world described in literature, finding the locations they read

about in fiction and trying to correlate fictional locations with reality (Robinson and Anderson 2002).

Associations with earlier read literature may also take place in order to strengthen the effect of the travel experience. For example, there were several bloggers who compared the Norwegian landscapes with the landscapes described in fairytales. Comparing the actually observed nature with the fairytale one makes the experience even more special and memorable. With these associations, travellers create a fairytale atmosphere around themselves.

The same phenomenon can be observed in the example with Edgar Poe's short story and the Maelstrøm. By recalling the formidable description of the water current given in the literature, the blogger transfers the emotions described in the short story to the actual situation of tourism experience consumption. Probably without the existing association, the perception of the Maelstrøm water current would be quite different and not that emotional for the blogger.

It is interesting to trace the formation process of the destination image here. The tourist, Blogger 21, finds himself near a certain nature phenomenon. This awakes the memories of Edgar Poe's book, which describes the phenomenon in a specific way. This is, according to the literature review, the cognitive dimension of the formation process based on the previous knowledge about the destination. This knowledge (cognition) causes the certain feelings (fear, anxiety), which also become a part of the image formation. This is the affective dimension based on the feelings a tourist has about the destination. In the described situation with Maelstrom, these two dimensions take place almost simultaneously forming the particular destination image of Norway as the country with magnificent and even dangerous nature. The cognitive and affective dimensions get dissolved in the process of actual consumption, though cognition still slightly precedes affect as it was stated in the literature review by Baloglu and McCleary (1999) (Baloglu and McCleary 1999).

There is a similar process in the episode with Blogger 4 and the poem "The Cliff". The blogger observes a cloud on the cliff of the mountain and this scene reminds him of the famous poem's lines:

*By a cliff a golden cloud once lingered;
On his breast it slept, but, rising early,
Off it gently rushed across the pearly
Blue of sky, a tiny thing and winged.*

(Chertovy Kulichki Inc 1996).

Mikhail Lermontov's poem "The Cliff" is traditionally studied and learnt by heart at school in Russia. So it is quite obvious that the blogger recalls this poem's lines when he sees the corresponding nature scene. The emerged association between the nature scene and the poem creates a more romantic and poetic atmosphere in the tourism consumption process. The cognitive and affective dimensions get dissolved again in order to form a particular destination image influenced by the previously read literature. Though in this example cognition and affect are so closely intertwined that they appear more as a unified process than two different dimensions, which follow each other as described in the literature review.

The close interconnection between the cognitive and affective dimensions provide an interesting topic for discussion in future research on the process of tourist destination consumption and image formation.

5.4 Tourism consumption and destination image

The third point for discussion is also connected with literature but in a different way. In the analyzed blogs, the description of Norwegian nature and weather is significant. The bloggers share a lot of pictures of nature and weather conditions and use several figures of speech to strengthen their narration. One of the most commonly used figures of speech is the personification of nature as already mentioned in the findings chapter. Describing the phenomena of nature as human beings turns out to be a typical practice for Russian travellers.

As it has been said earlier, this is explained best by the reference to Russian literature and in which the process of personification appears quite often. Personification aims to create more vivid images as well as to stimulate readers' imagination. Many famous Russian poets and writers use this figure of speech in their literary works, which are studied at school starting from the first grade. Obviously, Russians get so accustomed to nature personification that they start using this literary technique in their own narrations.

Influenced by the Russian literature traditions where nature phenomena often get human traits, the travel bloggers may first perceive the nature in a personalized way and later transform this perception into narration. The personification of nature helps them to create more lyrical and poetic narration. This method of story telling can make the blog texts easier and more interesting for readers to perceive reminding them of related literary works. Moreover, this way of sharing tourist experiences may strengthen and diversify blog readers' perceptions.

This observation confirms the important role of culture in the processes of tourist destination consumption and image formation discussed earlier in this thesis. In the literature

review chapter, there were several studies, which either assumed or confirmed the existing connection between culture and tourist experience. According to these studies, tourists, who belong to one particular culture, are going to demonstrate similar features in the processes of tourism consumption. The examples of nature personification found in several blogs texts serve to confirm the above-mentioned theory. Though it cannot be said for sure that this feature belongs specifically to Russian tourists until similar research on other nations is conducted.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted three poignant research findings, which required a further discussion. The first point was the observed differences and similarities between the studied Russian tourists in this study and the Russian tourists presented in the literature review. The related discussion demonstrated that the Russian tourists travelling to Norway differed from the typical image of Russian tourists presented in extant literature. However, there were also some similarities between these two tourist groups. It may also partially explain why Norway is not the most popular destination for Russians. Probably the group of Russian tourists interested in Norway as a travel destination differs from the majority of Russian tourists who choose other countries.

The second point was associated with image formation mechanisms, specifically, with its cognitive and affective components. The discussion here was based on examples found in the blogs texts that demonstrate the connection between literature and tourism. In this discussion, an assumption was made that cognitive and affective dimensions of image formation may perform not only as different components preceding each other but also appear as equal parts of a unified process, which takes place during the actual consumption of a tourism destination.

The last final point for further discussion of the research analysis was the affirmation of existing connections between tourism consumption and destination image formation. In the analyzed Russian blogs texts, this affirmation was evidenced in the frequently observed use of the personification of nature and weather.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

The experience of international tourism involves people from one culture interacting with, that is, meeting, experiencing and perceiving people of another culture. Tourism industry stakeholders seek to manage this cultural interaction in the most successful way. In the present thesis, the international tourism interaction that was studied was between people with a Russian culture, represented by Russian tourists, and the Norwegian culture and its peoples, at the tourist destination. The aim of the study was to define the image of Norway among Russian tourists. The research was conducted using Russian travel blogs written by Russian tourists who had already visited Norway.

In the study process, a literature review of related extant literature was conducted, in order to gather definitions of destination image as well as to determine the processes of destination image formation, the role of culture in tourist experiences, the role of travel blogs in destination image formation, as well as the characteristics of the Russian tourist market and Russian blogs. Review of the literature relating to these topics was necessary to gain a better understanding of the studied subject.

For the actual research, thirty-three Russian travel blogs were analyzed as a secondary data. These blogs were selected using purposive sampling of the Google-search system. The number of blog articles analyzed was two hundred and thirty. Most of these blogs were published on one of the most popular Russian blog platforms – LiveJournal.com. In addition to this blog platform, there were also several bloggers taken from the TourBlogger.ru platform as well as some individual travel bloggers' sites. In all selected blogs, blog authors described a travel experience in Norway. The study employed a qualitative research method. The selected blogs were analyzed using content analysis and NVIVO software. NVIVO assisted in the conduct of the content analysis of the blog data.

Travel blogs were chosen as a data source for several reasons. First, blogs are one of the most easily accessible data sources in comparison, for example, to interviews or survey polls. Moreover, at the present moment as a part of social media, blogs play a significant role in forming public opinion on different issues including choice of holiday destinations.

However, this type of data source has several limitations. Firstly, blogs do not provide complete demographic information about its authors. Secondly, there is no guarantee that the provided information is accurate due to an absence of data verification on the analyzed blog platforms. Blogging is a story-telling process and there is always a possibility that some significant parts of a tourism experience can be omitted or, to the contrary, embellished in the

blog narration. Subsequently, for any further studies of the destination image of Norway amongst Russian tourists, it is recommended that other research data sources are used.

The research findings reported in this thesis revealed the most popular places visited by the Russian bloggers, the most popular types of accommodation chosen, as well as, transportation and times of travelling to Norway. The gender characteristics of the analyzed bloggers were also reported in the findings chapter. The research that informs this thesis revealed that most bloggers were male travellers. None of the bloggers mentioned being accompanied by children on their trip to Norway. Subsequently, in this research, Norway as a destination for Russian tourists appealed to travelers without children, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.

The content analysis identified that the most discussed topics in the blogs were the beauties of nature and the description of weather, the observed lifestyle of local people, price issues and cultural symbols of Norway, such as stave churches, trolls and museums. Natural sceneries received the most positive evaluations in blogs. Bloggers also supported their detailed nature descriptions with a lot of images in order to impress the blog readers even more. Weather conditions were frequently mentioned with regard to its quick changeability and the weather's subsequent influence on travel experiences.

Russian tourists demonstrated a special interest in local Norwegian homes, which were described as a significant part of landscapes. Several bloggers mentioned the accuracy of architecture and interiors of houses. The famous Norwegian stave churches, as well as, the cemeteries were often described in the analyzed blogs. This interest emanated from observed cultural differences. The churches and cemeteries description were always followed with a lot of images in order to demonstrate the visual difference. A lot of attention was dedicated to observations of local Norwegian lifestyle, which confirms the interest of Russian tourists in meeting different cultures mentioned in the literature review.

The bloggers positively evaluated the service and the organization of tourist facilities. However, the price levels were negatively evaluated in most of the travel blog articles. Bloggers were concerned with this problem and considered the high prices were a potential factor that could stop travelers from visiting Norway as a destination.

The discussion chapter focused on three key points presented in the research findings. The first point concentrated on the differences and similarities between the characteristics of Russian travelers described in the literature review chapter and the research findings that informed this thesis. This research demonstrated that Russian tourists, who choose Norway as a holiday destination belonged to a minority group of Russian travelers, who were not

presented in relevant literature sources to any extent. These travelers belonged to an explorer type of tourist, who was not interested in active shopping or comfortable hotels. Although, at the same time, the Russian tourists, who traveled to Norway, demonstrated an interest in local culture, architecture and lifestyle, which were some of the commonly mentioned characteristics of Russian tourists in academic literature.

Two other discussion points were associated with classic literature but in different ways. The first association was linked to Russian tourists mentioning literary text elements to describe Norwegian phenomena. The description of nature in blog narrations was linked to literature associations, which the bloggers had perceived while experiencing a particular nature phenomenon. Both cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image formation happened simultaneously in situations with literature associations.

The final discussion point concentrated on cases of personification of nature evident in the Russian travel blogs that were analyzed. This interesting phenomenon is closely connected with the traditions of Russian classic literature where the personification of nature is often used to strengthen narration.

Further studies of the destination image of Norway, should be conducted with other groups of tourists, for example, Germans or tourists from Asia, in order to compare the results of those studies with this study as well as with extant literature.

REFERENCES

Albers, P. C. and W. R. James (1988). "Travel Photography. A Methodological Approach." Annals of Tourism Research 15: 134-158.

Andersen, V., et al. (1997). "Imagery of Denmark among visitors to Danish fine arts exhibitions in Scotland." Tourism Management 18(7): 11.

Ardichvili, A., et al. (2006). "Cultural Influences on Knowledge Sharing Through Online Communities of Practic." Journal of Knowledge Management 10(1): 99-107.

Atilgan, E., et al. (2003). "Mapping Service Quality in the Tourism Industry." Managing Service Quality: An Iternational Journal 13(5): 412-422.

Babbie, E. (2011). The Basics of Social Research. Belmont, Wadsworth

Baghramian, M. (2004). Relativism. London, Routledge.

Baloglu, S. and K. W. McClearly (1999). "A Model Of Destination Image Formation." Annals of Tourism Research 26(4): 868-897.

Banyai, M. and T. D. Glover (2012). "Evaluating Research Methods on Travel Blogs." Journal of Travel Research 51(3): 267-277.

Belova, J. (2014) Comparative characteristics of the national characteristics of tourists from Europe, Africa and Asia ("Сравнительная характеристика национальных особенностей туристов из Европы, Африки и Азии") Молодой Ученый 11(70): 190-193.

Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices. University of South Florida, Scholar Commons.

Bonn, M. A., et al. (2005). "International versus Domestic Visitors: An Examination of Destination Image Perceptions." Journal of Travel Research 43(3): 294-301.

Bosangit, C., et al. (2012). "Using travel blogs to examine the postconsumption behavior of tourists." Journal of Vacation Marketing 18(3): 207-219.

Bryman, A. (2012). Social Research Methods. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Chernega, A. (2012). "Where Russians prefer to spend their holiday." Retrieved 27 November, 2014, from <http://www.euromag.ru/catalogs/stat/18745.html>.

Chertovy Kulichki Inc (1996). "The Cliff." Retrieved 5 August, 2015, from http://www.kulichki.com/poems/Poets/ml/Eng/ml_3.html.

Choi, J. G., et al. (2011). "On the Destination Image of Korea by Russian Tourists." Tourism Management 32(1): 193-194.

Corporation TBG, L. (2014). "TourBlogger.ru." Retrieved 10 January, 2014, from <http://www.tourblogger.ru/>.

Corporation TBG, L. (2014). "Tourists Blogs." Retrieved 10 January 2014, from <http://www.tourblogger.ru/blogs>.

Crotts, J. and A. Pizam (2003). "The Effect of National Culture on Consumers' Evaluation of Travel Services." Tourism, Culture and Communication 4: 17-28.

Crotty, M. (1998). "Chapter One Introduction: the research process." The Foundations of Social Research: 1-17.

Engel, R. J. and R. K. Schutt (2010). Fundamentals of Social Work Research. Los Angeles, Sage Publications.

European Tourism Commission (2013). European Tourism 2013- Trends and Prospects. Quarterly Report. Retrieved 10 January, 2014, from <http://www.etc-corporate.org>.

Federal Agency for Tourism (2014). Most Popular Destinations for Citizens of the Russian Federation Traveling Abroad. Retrieved 5 August, 2014, from

<http://www.russiatourism.ru/en/contents/statistika/statistical-indicators-of-mutual-trips-by-citizens-of-the-russian-federation-and-citizens-of-foreign-states/>

Fenko, A. (2007) "Tourism as an indicator of social status" ("Туризм как показатель социального статуса"). Sociological Studies (Социологические исследования) (2): 125-131.

Fernandez, J. W. (2001). "Cultural Relativism, Anthropology " International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences: 3110-3113.

Finn, M., et al. (2000). Tourism and Leisure Research. Methods: Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation. Essex, Pearson Education.

Fotis, J., et al. (2011). "Social Media Impact on Holiday Travel Planning: The Case of the Russian and the FSU Markets." International Journal of Online Marketing 1(3): 1-19.

Frias, D. M., et al. (2012). "The Formation of a Tourist Destination's Image via Information Sources: the Moderating Effect of Culture." International Journal of Tourism Research 14(5): 437-450.

Gallarza, M. G., et al. (2002). "Destination Image Towards A Conceptual Framework." Annals of Tourism Research 29(1): 56-78.

Grbich, C. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction. Los Angeles, Sage Publications.

Gretzel, U., et al. (2008). "Differences in Consumer-Generated Media Adoption and Use: A Cross-National Perspective." Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing 17(1-2): 99-120.

Gurova, O. and S. Ratilainen (2015). ""Eastern Tourist": A Review of Images of Russian Consumers in Finnish Media." Journal of Economic Sociology 16(3): 26-45.

Hofstede, G., et al. (2010). Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind., Geert Hofstede BV.

Hookway, N. (2008). "'Entering The Blogosphere":Some Strategies For Using Blogs In Social Research." Qualitative Research 8(1): 91-113.

Hosany, S., et al. (2006). "Destination image and destination personality: An application of branding theories to tourism places." Journal of Business Research 59(5): 638-642.

Innovation Norway (2013). Key Figures for Norwegian Travel and Tourism 2013. Retrieved 7 August, from http://www.innovasjon Norge.no/Global/Reiseliv/Key_figures2013.pdf

Internet Live Stats (2014). "Internet Users by Country (2014)." Retrieved 17 July, 2015, from <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/>.

Jenkins, O. H. (1999). "Understanding and Measuring Tourist Destination Image." International Journal of Tourism Research 1(1): 1-15.

Kozak, M. and D. Martin (2012). "Tourism Life Cycle and Sustainability Analysis: Profit-focused Strategies for Mature Destinations." Tourism Management 33(1): 188-194.

Litvin, S. W., et al. (2008). "Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management." Tourism Management 29(3): 458-468.

LiveJournal (2015). "LiveJournal. About the Magazine." Retrieved 8 January, 2015, from <http://www.livejournal.com/magazine/about>.

MacKay, K. J. and D. R. Fesenmaier (2000). "An Exploration of Cross-Cultural Destination Image Assessment." Journal of Travel Research 38(4): 417-423.

Molina, A., et al. (2010). "Tourism Marketing Information and Destination Image Management." African Journal of Business Management 4(5): 722-728.

Phillimore, J. and L. Goodson (2004). Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies. London, Routledge.

Pike, S. (2002). "Destination Image Analysis: A Review of 142 Papers from 1973-20." Tourism Management 23(5): 541-549.

Pike, S. and C. Ryan (2004). "Destination Positioning Analysis through a Comparison of Cognitive, Affective, and Conative Perceptions." Journal of Travel Research 42(4): 333-342.

Pizam, A., et al. (1997). "Nationality vs Industry Cultures: Which Has a Greater Effect on Managerial Behavior." International Journal of Hospitality Management 16(2): 127-145.

Plangmarn, A., et al. (2012). "Cultural Value and Travel Motivation of European Tourists." The Journal of Applied Business Research 28(6): 1295-1304.

Pudliner, B. A. (2007). "Alternative Literature and Tourist Experience: Travel and Tourist Weblogs." Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change 5(1).

Pühringer, S. and A. Taylor (2008). "A Practitioner's Report on Blogs As a Potential Source of Destination Marketing Intelligence." Journal of Vacation Marketing 14(2).

Punch, K. F. (2005). Introduction to Social Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. London, SAGE Publications Ltd.

QSRInternational (2015). "Products." Retrieved 15 March, 2015, from <http://www.qsrinternational.com/products.aspx>.

Robinson, M. and H. C. Anderson (2002). Literature and Tourism. Essays in the Reading and Writing of Tourism. Cornwall, Thomson Learning.

Stepchenkova, S., et al. (2009). "Facilitating Content Analysis in Tourism Research." Journal of Travel Research 47(4): 454-469.

Suvilehto, K. and P. Borg (2001). "Russian Tourists Visiting Finland." Annals of Tourism Research 28(2): 500-503.

Swarbrooke, J. and S. Horner (2007). Consumer Behavior in Tourism Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Tass (2014). Next year Finland expects the decline in the flow of Russian tourists about 30% in comparison to 2013” (“На Новый год в Финляндии ожидают падение турпотока из РФ на 30% по сравнению с 2013 годом.”) Retrieved 17 December, 2014, from <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/1648241>.

The Hofstede Centre. "Russia." Retrieved 1 August, 2015, from <http://geert-hofstede.com/russia.html>.

TripAdvisor (2015). "Trip Advisor." Retrieved 25 November, 2014, from <http://www.tripadvisor.com/>.

UNWTO (2015). World Tourism Barometer. Statistical Annex. UNWTO.org. 13. Retrieved 5 August, 2015, from http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom15_01_january_excerpt_1.pdf

Visit Norway (2012). Brand Platform for Norway as a Tourist Destination. Retrieved 1 August, 2015, from http://visitnorway.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Brand_Platform_Norway_tourist_destination.pdf

Vitouladiti, O. (2014). "Content Analysis as a Research Tool for Marketing, Management and Development Strategies in Tourism." Procedia Economics and Finance 9: 278-287.

Walker, D. and F. Myrick (2006). "Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Process and Procedure." Qualitative Health Research 16(4): 547-559.

Weaver, F. (2012). "Friendly Russian Invasion in Finland." Retrieved 8 September, 2014, from <http://finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=256201&nodeid=37598&culture=en-US>.