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Perception of whaling
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Image of Norway

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TITLE: "Whales and whale meat dining opportunities in destination image perception"

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Abstract

The current study aimed to have an overlook of people's online expressions of their attitudes and perceptions towards whaling in Norway and of their views on whale meat as a traditional culinary experience, and whether those insights impact Norwegian destination image, as little research has formerly been done in this area. The decision-making process in traveling to the country is significantly influenced by the knowledge or the lack of it, values and available information about the destination. Norway is a unique example, where whale-watching, and whale preservation co-exist along with whaling. Norwegians do refer to whale hunt as a coastal tradition, however, throughout the world this tradition is found to have no place to exist in the modern era. As a result, the theme of whales' symbolism turned out to be extremely significant for studying whale and whaling perceptions. As whaling itself was strongly criticised and in the eyes of potential tourists it did not add to the cultural mosaic of Norway, the whale meat on the other hand was named as traditional and unique culinary experience. However, there is no evidence that this affects tourism in Norway, or to which extent. Research was conducted utilising Netnographic research method. Archival data was collected online and fieldnotes produced and researcher's interpretation of the results was presented. The observations demonstrated that Norway is not as "popular" whaling country as two others, Iceland and Japan; it was also found that many people are not even aware of ongoing whaling in Norway. Additionally, there is a major concern about environmental issues and battles, concerning oil-drilling, plastic pollution and industrial overfishing, which in their turn affect well-being of the whales. Limitations and challenges were highlighted. Future research could be conducted in quantitative method. The study contributes to the understanding of the Norwegian whaling perception internationally and the role of whales in the environment protection battles. **KEYWORDS:** whaling, whale meat, Norwegian tradition, environmental values, destination image

Foreword

The current Master's thesis is written at The Norwegian School of Hotel Management at the University of Stavanger, Norway. The research was conducted online. The purpose of the research was to explore whether Norwegian ongoing whaling and whale meat dining opportunities influence people's perception of Norway and whether they add to its coastal culture.

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Chapter I - Introduction

Background

The ocean and the sea are such a big part of Norway, as well as its traditions and culture. The ocean is not just the water, it is an entire eco-system with its own species. To talk about Norway and its attractiveness, one must not forget a main part of its image – coastal culture. Can a part of this culture – whaling tradition – make any difference in the perception of Norway as a tourist destination? Additionally, Norway is a unique example of a country being a nation which hunts whales and consumes whale-meat, whereas whale-watching today is an important part of its tourism industry. Also, Norway is an immensely attractive destination by its mesmerising nature, outdoor activities and wildlife. However, with the rising concern for environmental values, whaling and whale-meat intake are one of the sensitive and complex subjects throughout the globe, which makes it difficult to gain a clear understanding. “Few creatures carry more emotion...than whales; and few issues arouse as much passion as whaling” (as cited in Hammond, 2006 p.54, as cited in Higham, Bejder, & Williams, 2014, p. 1). These emotions among potential tourists and local communities often lead to contradictory views on whales regarding to their identity and their role in humans’ lives (Higham, Bejder, & Williams, 2014).

In the current study, by utilising netnographic method, researcher makes an attempt to examine people’s online expressions regarding ongoing whaling in Norway and whale meat consumption experiences, and to throw some light on a present yet very sensitive issue. In particular, the focus lays on the importance of Norwegian coastal culture as well as discourses that reflect people’s opinions and their struggles to overcome contradictions between experiencing destination and whaling in Norway. By examining these expressions, a better understanding of travellers’ causal attitudes towards whales and Norway’s coastal traditions are gained.

Purpose of the Study, Research Questions and Significance of the Study

Norway is a beautiful country and a very naturally attractive destination. It is also a nature-based destination, with a focus on activities in nature and an atmosphere in one with the nature. This is as well consistent with the marketing efforts of Norway. However, the aim of this thesis is to explore if this attractiveness remains despite Norwegian ongoing whaling and whale meat dining opportunities. However, this topic involves animals and cetaceans in particular. Attitudes towards animals are a complex matter and involves values, emotions and knowledge. Hence, the goal was also to gain more understanding whether such awareness, affections and values impact perceptions of Norway, and/or to which extent. Due to sensitivity of this thesis subject, the internet looks as an optimal platform for studying people's expressions freely.

This study's purpose is to investigate whether Norwegian traditional whaling and its whale-meat dining opportunities add to the cultural picture of Norway and make people want to experience this. The main research question will include the following main themes: 1) Norway's destination image, 2) Perceptions towards whales, 3) Views towards whaling in Norway and its dining opportunities 4) Information about Norwegian whaling as a part of coastal culture, and 5) Impact of whaling in Norway on its destination image.

Norwegian whaling is a small-scale commercial hunt, harvesting minke whales. The minke whale is the most abundant species of baleen whale, with a world population of hundreds of thousands, maybe as much as a million. Recently, most whales killed for commercial purposes have been minkes. In the North Atlantic about 600 a year have been taken by Norway under objection to the moratorium and about 30 to 40 by Iceland under special permit. Japan annually takes about 450 minke whales in the Southern Ocean and about 150 in the North Pacific under special permit. The permitted quotas have not been met by Norway. So, as it can be seen these catches are quite small compared to the estimated numbers of whales and are unlikely to have

an impact on populations (Hammond, 2006). However, according to Higham and Lusseau (2007, p. 575) tourists/potential tourists may respond to the whaling activities of countries such as Iceland and Norway in one of at least three ways: “(1) whaling and whale watching coexist without one adversely affecting the other; (2) whaling, whether it be commercial or in the name of science or sustainable harvest, is offensive and upsetting and erodes the capacity and therefore viability of whale-watching operators; and (3) whaling, for example, in terms of traditional coastal culture and indigenous rights to harvest, is a valid manifestation of local culture (which may enhance tourist interests in the destination)”. It has been of the researcher’s interest to explore the possible tourists’ responses to the whaling in the era of increased environmental values, because within the context of tourism, it has been noted that the values tourists hold can affect their choice and attitudes towards destination (Kim, Borges, & Chon, 2006).

Overview of the Thesis Structure

The current work consists of the following chapters: Introduction, Review of the related literature, Methodology, Findings, Discussion which is a part also providing further research suggestions and limitations, and Conclusion.

The aim of the literature review chapter is to examine in a neutral way the historical aspect of Norwegian whaling and provide the descriptions and insights of the modern whale hunting. Additionally, the chapter provides the conceptualisation of the destination image and the process of its formation. The research question is also related to whale-meat dining experiences, which leads the researcher to examine literature related to underlying whale perceptions and views about whale meat gastronomic experiences. The topic of meat-eating is discussed because the researcher considers it a relevant part of tourism experience – food and the dining opportunities.

The chapter of Method follows Literature Review chapter and discusses the selected method of netnography, its main advantages on the early stages of research and the benefits of studying the perceptions without interaction with the communities. The process of data generation and the importance of reflexivity in netnography is also debated in the Method part. The thesis then continues with a presentation of the findings, a discussion of them, as well as presentation of the limitations of the study. The study is finished with conclusion, that sums up the results of the research and suggestions for future research.

Chapter II - Review of Related Literature

The aims of this research were to explore the following aspects: 1) destination image and the process of its formation, 2) perceptions towards whales, 3) whale-meat dining opportunities, 4) information about Norwegian whaling as a part of coastal culture. Additionally, the main purpose of a literature review is to explore the relevant previous researches and to recognise the most important discoveries which relate to this thesis's research question. Thus, the chapter outlines literature that is significant to the research question, which is "whether Norwegian traditional whaling and its whale-meat dining opportunities influence its destination image perception".

The literature review chapter of this thesis starts with defining the destination image (DI) concept as well as environmental values interwoven with DI perception. However, the current research question is also related to the Norwegian coastal whaling and whale-meat dining experiences. In order to get an overview of the two parts of the research question, and in addition to gain more understanding in the studied problem, the researcher also examines literature related to underlying whale perceptions, historical whale hunting in Norway, whale-meat gastronomic opportunities. The topic of meat-eating is brought up because the researcher considers it a relevant part of tourism experience – food and the dining opportunities. Additionally, a comprehensive overviewing of the variety of the attitudes towards whales, both in Norway and internationally, makes it possible to obtain more understanding of tourists/potential tourists on their meat-eating perceptions and behaviour while making a traveling decision or already on tour.

Defining Destination Image

Currently, with travel and tourism industry evolving at a rapid rate and with high competition within it, every travel destination has an interest of potential tourists gaining a positive image about it. The modern marketers are immensely focused on the power of the impact of the travel

destination on the destination image itself. Stepchenkova and Mills (2010) emphasise that defining destination image is challenging, and the construct of DI is often subjectively evaluated. However, the far-reaching research has as well led to an understanding of the high practical importance for destination marketing and branding. Several authors (Pike & Ryan, 2004; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010) highlight the significance and power of destination marketing organizations (DMOs), that are responsible for controlling, creating and managing the perceptions, or images, that potential tourists gain about the destination; in addition, these organisations are the ones to oversee the damages to the reputation of a destination and to repair them after the harmful events.

Research paper by Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Stepchenkova and Mills (2010) refer to numerous previous studies on defining destination image and its formation, providing with the range of the contexts within which the DI was determined. Gunn (1972), Mayo (1973) and Hunt (1975) are mentioned by Stepchenkova and Mills (2010, p. 576) as the first researchers who introduced destination image referring to tourism context.

Despite the rising interest towards the DI in the 70s, the important role of image has been already recognised by the academic society since the middle of the 20th century (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) , for example, in the works of Boulding (1956) and Martineau (1958). As cited in Baloglu & McCleary (1999, p. 871), Boulding and Martineau are the academics who proposed that human behaviour is rather affected by an image than an objective reality. Additionally, Boulding's research (as cited in Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010, p. 576) has proposed that potential travellers make the journey decisions based on their perceptions and assumptions rather than facts. Stepchenkova & Mills (ibid.) continue stating that a big range of factors are significant regarding people's image about a certain destination as well as their travelling decisions: "motivations, interests, cultural background, emotional state and even self-image".

Returning to the introduction of DI research, Gallarza, Saura, and García (2002, p. 60) also cite Hunt (1971), who has given the following definition to the destination image as “impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside”. Das, Sharma, Mohapatra, and Sarkar (2007, p. 104) cite Fakeye and Crompton (1991), who determine tourist destination image as the mental construct generated by the potential tourists based on only a small selection among the immense amount of impressions and perceptions; additionally describing DI as the totality of personal beliefs and views. In other words, image can be defined as a product of people’s minds. Crompton’s (1979) definition of the DI has become the most widely used: “an image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination” (as cited in Gallarza et al., 2002, p. 60). This definition focuses on the individual impressions and beliefs, not considering a larger group of potential tourists. However, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, p. 2) additionally referring to Pearce (1982), imply that despite the individually held images and perceptions, there are also common mental pictures, stereotypes, that are held by large groups of people. As well as, F. Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977) in an earlier research describe a destination image “as the expression of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place” (as cited in Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 872; Gallarza et al., 2002, p. 60). Likewise, Baloglu & McCleary (1999, p. 872) also note a very important concept of the image which is also viewed by Oxenfeldt (1974) and Dichter (1985) as a sum of impressions of the individual traits, but as containing both cognitive and affective/emotional aspects, authors additionally highlight the importance of the formation of the total image from the individual judgement.

Additionally, there has been achieved a consensus throughout the academic world that emotional assessments are in fact dependant on cognitive evaluations of the objects, what's more, the affective reactions are shaped as a consequence of the psychological reactions (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Meaning, that despite the difference between the two responses,

they are undoubtedly interrelated. Baloglu and Bringer's study (1997) itself additionally concludes the distinctive affective images of the travel destinations and their starting point for overall destinations images.

An analysis paper by S. Pike (2002) notes that the cognitive component is the most prevalent subject to study rather than the affective one. However, studying only cognitive component may be problematic, because it does not cover the complexity of destination image and because "the meaning of a place is not entirely determined by the physical properties of that place", (Ward and Russell (1981) cited in Baloglu & Brinberg (1997, p. 11). In addition, previous DI studies observed the complexity of the image concept and its attributes and it has led to multiple definitions of DI, as well as diversity of conceptualisation of the DI construct (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

Moreover, Gartner (1994, p. 193) as cited in Prebensen (2007, p. 749) applies the following components within image theory on tourist image formation: "(1) Cognitive: internally accepted picture of destination attributes, (2) Affective: motives—what to be obtained from the object (destination), and (3) Conative: actions and behaviour after cognitive and affective evaluations". The importance of conative component is not surprising because the process of selecting a destination starts with information and knowledge gathering, however ends with the decision based on that collected knowledge (Gartner, 1994). The conative image is also highlighted by Pike and Ryan (2004), where the authors describe it as an intent and an action resulting from emotions (further mention in Figure 2), information and knowledge accumulated, also as a probability of the selecting a destination. Conation refers to image formation and can be called as destination preference, as well as "an attitude resulting from an explicit comparison process by which one destination is chosen over the other" (Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007, p. 184).

According to Lin et al. (2007), the cognitive component includes the knowledge, awareness and beliefs and usually contains tangible characteristics of a destination. The affective component of DI is the feelings a person holds about a destination, these feelings may have different nature: positive, negative or neutral. Pike and Ryan (2004, p. 334) refer to the study by Ward and Russell (1981) who analysed 105 common adjectives used to describe environments and developed an affective responsive grid, shown in Figure 1.

The hypothesis is that all eight adjectives are representing four various scales: arousing – sleepy, pleasant – unpleasant, relaxing – distressing, exciting – gloomy, however, they are all interdependent and represent a model of affect. In other words, “sleepy” as a measurement on its own but also a combination of “relaxed” and “gloomy”. The model has been of a great use within tourism destination studies and demonstrated the possibility of destination perceptions application (Pike & Ryan, 2004).

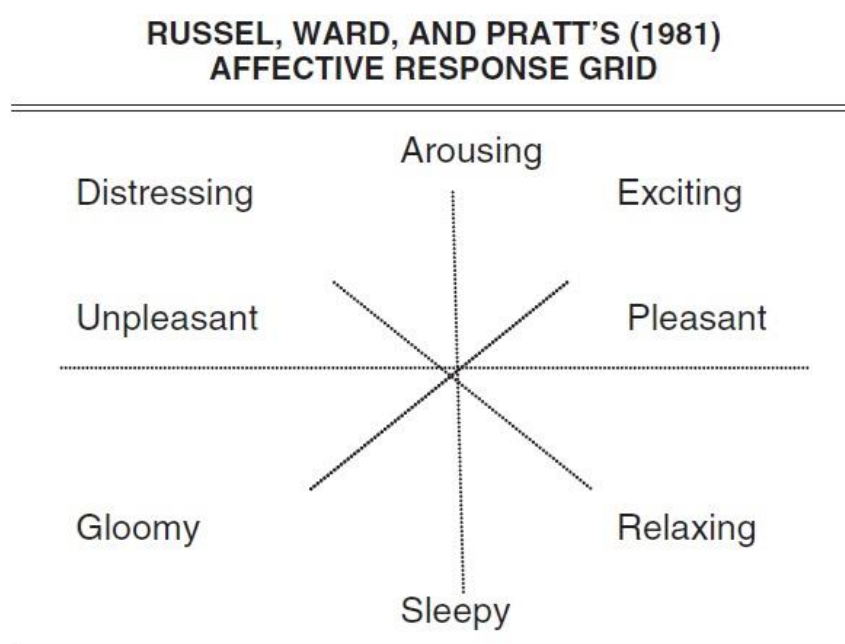


Figure 1. Affective Response Grid (Pike & Ryan, 2004)

Furthermore, by examining the role of the affective and cognitive aspects of the DI construct, Lin et al. (2007) in the attempt to conceptualise it, the researchers lead to the definition of DI together with all of the previously discussed components – “attribute-based and holistic components, including functional (cognitive) and emotional (affective) characteristics” (Lin et al., 2007, p. 190). Lin and colleagues (2007, p. 183) propose the definition of the DI based on the previous studies’ results and confirm this definition by their own research, emphasising additionally the importance of certain image components for specific destination types (i.e., natural, developed, and theme park) and the process of the overall image formation. The findings highlight how valuable an overall image is in shaping tourist decisions; though, as mentioned depending on the type of destination, detected results were caused by different image components (Lin et al., 2007).

By reason of this main significant finding of the study, that provides a profounder comprehension of the DI construct complexity, multidimensionality and the varying significance of cognitive and affective components between the destination types, the proposed definition applied in this thesis is: “Destination image is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions individuals have of attributes, and/or activities available at a destination and is the formation of overall mental pictures (imagery) of that destination” (see Figure 2) (Lin et al., 2007, p. 183).

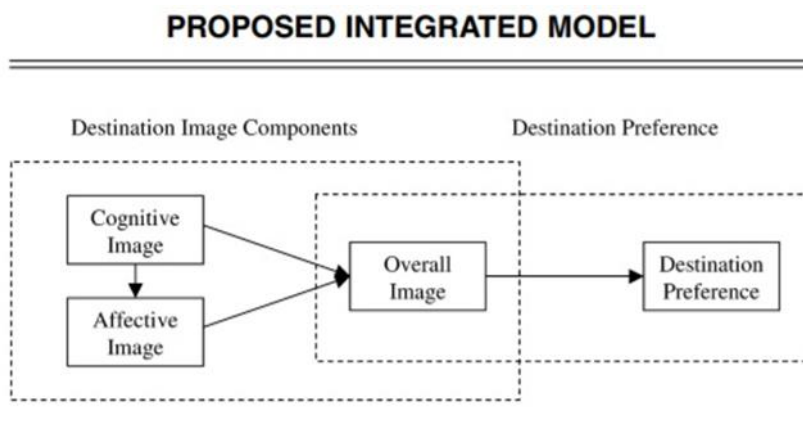


Figure 2. Proposed Integrated Model (Lin et al., 2007)

The model suggests that “(a) the components of destination image (cognitive image and affective image) and overall destination image are antecedents of tourists’ destination preferences, (b) cognitive image has a significant indirect effect on overall destination image through affective image, and (c) the model of the components of destination image differs across different types of destinations” (Lin et al., 2007, p. 191). Hence, future attempts to understand tourist decision making should take into consideration the complexity of destination image and the varying importance of cognitive and affective image components across destination types.

Destination Image within Environmental Values

Higham and Lusseau (2007) postulate that it is the values that tourists or potential tourists hold that sustain their travel motivations and therefore a comprehension of cultural and environmental values may be of high significance whether tourists accept whaling practices or view even whale-watching as well wildlife interfering.

Also, Kim et al. (2006, p. 958) refer to Muller (1991) and Crick-Furman and Prentice (2000) where they note that within the context of tourism, tourists and potential tourists’ values have an influence on their destination preferences and vacation activity selection.

Additionally, Gnoth (1997) concludes that both affective (emotional) and cognitive aspects must be considered when tourism motivations and choices are discussed. He additionally emphasises that “the formation of values and their role in motivation formation leads to an understanding of how values and subsequent attitudes express both inner- or self-directed motivations and outer-directed values. Inner- or self-directed values contain predominantly emotional drives, while outer-directed values are mainly cognitive in nature” (Gnoth, 1997, p. 284). However, the researcher also points out that values are dependent on particular situations, which suggests that some unknown events or surroundings may trigger the importance of certain values (as cited in Kim et al., 2006, p. 958).

Furthermore, tourists’ perceptions and destination views are central for deeper comprehension of their intentional behaviour. The present study also attempts to address the issue of travellers’ (both potential and already travelled) attitudes towards whale-hunt in Norway, which might affect their travel choices and Norway’s destination image. It is the tourists’ values that reinforce their travel motivations (Higham & Lusseau, 2007), as previously mentioned, and with rising environmental concerns and values for animals’ well-being, destinations must not only care for the positive image, but the integrity of the experiences they offer (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, as cited in Esparon, Stoeckl, Farr, & Larson, 2015, p. 707).

Therefore, it was found relevant to discuss the impact of environmental values on the destination image in the current study. Exploration of the cultural and environmental values is very likely to provide deeper understanding for potential acceptance of whale hunt and whale-watching to the countries that continue whaling. “Values are regarded as the deepest of the four manifestations of culture (Hofstede, 2005), as they are the basis on which attitudes, cognition, emotions, and behaviour evolve (Hills, 2002)”, as cited in Li and Cai (2011, p. 473). In other words, values play a significant role in predetermination of human behaviour. Higham and Lusseau (2007, p. 555) quote Rokeach (1968) defining values as “centrally held and enduring

beliefs that guide actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence.” Meaning that values might be the source for all travel decisions and tourists’ behaviours. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, p. 551, as cited in Higham & Carr, 2002) furthermore determine five crucial dimensions of values, stating that “values are concepts or beliefs, relate to desirable end states or behaviours, transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behaviours and events, and are ordered by relative importance”. Therefore, confirming that values are the foundation upon which behaviours are shaped and restricted.

A very important note made by Lawson and colleagues (1996), as cited in Higham and Carr (2002, p. 278) says that values are not the same as attitudes because “values work at a higher level of abstraction and are deeper seated, more pervasive influences on behaviour”. In other words, values do impact the attitudes that tourists may hold towards specific objects and situations, as well as their expectations, decision making, purchase choices, and visitor behaviour (Higham & Lusseau, 2007). Similar observations were made by Esparon et al. (2015) where environmental values were found to be the most important features that evoked the attraction at the destination. The authors also note that the degradation of the environmental values was the main repellent factor and a determinant of lower visitation (Esparon et al., 2015). Furthermore, one of the most widely used environmental value constructs may be the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale. According to Kim and colleagues (2006), the NEP scale was originally developed by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) for the purpose of assessing people’s essential relation to nature. This development was initially inspired by Pirages and Ehrlich’s (1974) explanation of Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP), the paradigm that describes the anti-environmental drive of Western industrialised society (Kim et al., 2006). Additionally, Milbrath (1984) describe DSP as a traditional worldview, which had been developed as societies developed themselves by utilising the nature for their own benefits, where according to him

NEP with its pro-environmental worldview might be slowly replacing traditional DSP. According to him, NEP refers to the value of nature for the purpose of the nature itself and not as an endless source of resources for economic profits (Milbrath, 1984). Consequently, the development of the New Paradigm provides a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between humans and the planet.

Although ambiguous, the scale has been agreed upon as the most significant indicator of a complex construct of environmental values, as well as related attitudes and behaviours (Kim et al., 2006). The original scale consisted of 12 Likert-type items and focused on beliefs about humanity's relationships to nature and the potential obstacles of the society's development. Later, the scale has been revised and now consists of 15 items (Kim et al., 2006). Kim et al. (2006) accentuate that throughout the years of studying, the correlation between the environmental values and environmentally mindful behaviour, measured by this scale, confirms to be positive. Meaning that pro-environmental views generally lead to environmentally conscious actions. However, Kim et al. (2006) note that the pro-environmental orientation might not always be a good enough basis of the environmentally friendly behaviour, it is also because different types of tourists have different values levels.

Additionally, Silverberg, Backman, and Backman (1996) note that in a tourism context, NEP scale was used for measuring the levels of the environmental values among tourists/potential tourists in order to define different types of tourists (as cited in Kim et al., 2006, p. 959). While information about values is essential, it is equally useful and important to determine which values are dominant and do satisfy the tourists/potential tourists. Higham and Carr (2002) highlight the complexity of values influencing tourists generally and ecotourists, which includes personal and cultural values and environmental attitudes, however, this complexity is beneficial for the profounder understanding of various tourism motivations and decisions. Additionally, analysis by Esparon et al. (2015) indicates the variance among the travellers and

within their values and changes in values, providing an example of indigenous people who are impacted in a larger negative scale over travel decisions than their non-indigenous travel mates. It can be explained by various level of values towards the land and connection to land and country: it is widely acknowledged that Indigenous people have deep connections to “country” (Esparon et al., 2015).

In a context of the current study, there are also several categories of people’s views depending on their environmental, cultural or personal values:

- People against whaling, but love Norway and traveling to Norway or traveling in general,
- People against whaling and boycotting Norway and nor traveling to Norway, nor any other country continuing whale-hunt,
- People are not aware of on-going whaling in Norway,
- People are interested in traditional coastal whaling and whale-meat consumption culture in Norway,
- People longing for more knowledge, awareness and learning – whale-safari visitors,
- People against whale-watching, against disturbing the wildlife,
- Local whalers seeing whales as source of income and food.

This thesis does not aim to measure the levels of the various values of the tourists/potential tourists, rather than to explore their differences and their impact on the views, image, attitudes and travels decisions. Many travellers that come to Norway are attracted by its original natural beauty, therefore, experiencing nature and wildlife is an important element of their trips. Consequentially, awareness and recognition of the environmentally sensitive views of most of these visitors is of high significance, because it indicated how important these values are to

them and they might influence their future decision in case of destination environmental practices fluctuation (Orams, 2001).

On the other hand, the study by Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016), where they study whether tourists' purchase decisions are influenced by eco certifications and whether a niche market exists that values eco certifications, confirms the complexity of the values concept in tourism context and provides with following conclusions: eco certification does not have a demand effect on all tourists. However, the finding additionally indicates the existence of a niche segment that sincerely care for eco certification and take it into consideration when making a travel decision. According to the authors, this finding is consistent with previous research (Dolnicar, Crouch, & Long, 2008) that identifies these tourists as generally higher educated, more aware and of higher selflessness and caring for environment and nature motivations (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). Moreover, learning, knowledge and awareness are the factors being highlighted when referring to environmental-friendly values among altruistic tourists. The combined use of actual observed purchase behaviour and objective knowledge has proven to be very useful in identifying the fraction of people who genuinely pay attention to eco certification (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). These finding are consistent with numerous previous studies (Constantine, 1999; Duffus & Dearden, 1990; Forestell & Kaufman, 1990), which describe environmentally caring tourists as higher educated and with advanced levels of knowledge and awareness and always prone to learning (as cited in Orams, 2001).

Whales and Whaling in Norway

Historical Context for Norwegian Whaling

Today there are only three countries that continue commercial whaling: Norway, Iceland and Japan. Norwegian whale hunt has been a tradition for over a thousand years, first written mention of whaling dates back as early as in the 9th century, the Vikings period. Whaling is referred to as a longstanding cultural coastal tradition (Halverson, 2004). Until the 1860s,

Norwegian whaling was limited to right whales and sperm whales, hunted close to the coastline. 'Modern whaling' picked out the fin whales (blue, fin, sei, minke, humpback and Bryde whales) that are faster moving and sink when dead (Tinch, Phang, & Mathieu, 2011).

Many nations were involved in whale hunting back in the 15th and 16th centuries, including Americans, Danish, Dutch, Germans and British. However, the change had happened in the 1860s and it was Norway that played a significant role and developed explosive harpoon grenade and the steam powered whaling vessel making the whaling "efficient" and allowing the whalers to sail further away from the coast for hunting (Halverson, 2004).

There were different methods to kill whales, some places on the west coast of Norway they used the deadly bacteria to take whales' lives and this had been practiced almost until the previous century. Northern Norway, including the islands of Svalbard and Jan Mayen have been the centres of whaling for centuries. Additionally, the first phase of 'modern whaling' located on the Finnmark Hunt was achieved from land stations in Northern Norway. However, local fishermen longed for whale's conservation in the coastal waters of Nordland, Finnmark and Troms, therefore that hunt was stopped after 1904. The centre of the hunt then moved to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland, the Hebrides and Ireland, and western Norway from about 1915; hunts also existed in various other parts of the world (Tinch et al., 2011).

Afterwards, the whale population was reduced severely, as over a million whales were killed in the Antarctic between 1928 and 1968 (Higham & Lusseau, 2008). Historically, until the oil was discovered in the USA in 1850s, the whale products were widely utilised for oil made from the whales' blubber, which was used for fuel, candles and lamp oil. Often, especially in the North American region the meat was not even consumed and wasted into the waters, and whales were hunted purely for their blubbers (Bjørndal & Conrad, 1998; Tinch et al., 2011; Tjernshaugen, 2018). However, with the development of artificial and synthetic oil, the use of whale oil was no longer necessary. Nevertheless, hunting continued, and after the Second World War,

commercial whaling in Norwegian waters had a new focus on whaling for meat: it was perceived as ‘a gift’ from the ocean itself and in the 1950s and 1960s became an attractive substitute to other meat (Tinch et al., 2011). That catch of all other available whale species was paused in the end of 60s and since then Norwegian whaling targeted only minke whales for meat in their local waters (Altherr, O’Connell, Fisher, & Luber, 2016).

So, as previously described, the global competition for whale oil in the early 20th century was strong, therefore, some urgent need for regulation of whale stocks had appeared and after the Second World War in 1946, Norway and 14 other whaling nations (Altherr et al., 2016) decided on the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), whose initial purpose was to conserve whale stocks for future whaling (Halverson, 2004). However, the hunt continued for decades and the violations of IWC regulations led to declining whale populations, which finally brought on a moratorium on whaling for commercial purposes in 1982, which came into effect in 1986. Prior to the adoption of the commercial whaling moratorium, Norway killed approximately 2,000 minke whales per year (Tinch et al., 2011). However, as permitted by Article V of the ICRW, Norway lodged a formal objection to the moratorium excepting itself from the provision's effect and later after a few years from whaling ban. Three countries – Japan, Iceland and Norway - appealed the moratorium meaning that whales were still as essential natural resource to them and there should be a sustainable and acceptable option to this prohibition. Till today, the whaling countries did not succeed in replacing the moratorium with any other system than hunting quotas (Tjernshaugen, 2018).

In 1993 Norway resumed its whale hunting. The Norwegian government established their decision to resume whaling onto following beliefs; it can be sustainable with no risk of extinction, that the minke whales stocks are plentiful, and that it is important to maintain a stable fish population (Bjørndal & Conrad, 1998). Additionally, whaling was presented as a long-time tradition of coastal communities (Tjernshaugen, 2018).

Whaling Management Today

The minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) is the only species of whale that is allowed to be hunted in Norway. The minke whale is the smallest of the baleen whales in the fin whale groups and its habitat is in fact all the oceans. In the northern waters, the minke whales are dark on their backs with a lighter, almost whitish belly. The minke whales are up to 10 meters long, the females are slightly longer than the males. They weigh 5000-8000 kg and live for at least thirty years. The migration pattern of minke whales is similar to that of the Blue whales. Their diet is very adaptable and includes everything from plankton and crustaceans to krill and fish such as herring, mackerel and cod. The minke whales are very fast animals that can speed up short distances, and they usually have no visible blow. They are very difficult to observe because they are immensely streamlined and visible on the surface for only short moments each time they come up to breathe (Øien, 2019).

Its meat is used for human consumption and is served at the restaurants for culinary experiences. The whale harvest is strictly regulated by quotas developed by the Norwegian Government and the Scientific Committee in the IWC and monitored carefully by the Institute of Marine Research, Norway. The catch is closely watched and DNA samples of minke whales are collected, analysed and stored at the national DNA register. This is found to be the most effective way to follow up the legal catch within the quota. The long-term goal is for the population to be managed at a level of 60% of the original stock. The total quota for 2017 was 999 animals, which is consistent to the annual base quota for the new quota period 2016–2020, with the addition of outstanding quota for 2016. In 2017, 432 minke whales were caught by the total quota of 829. All animals were captured in the North Atlantic stock area. In the Jan Mayen area, no whales of the quota of 170 animals were caught due to the challenging fishing conditions in this area. According to the Norwegian Marine Institute (as cited in Tinch et al., 2011), the current catch is no threat to the minke whales' stocks in the North Atlantic. It used

to be up to 30 vessels participating in commercial whale hunt, however in 2018 it was only 11 fishing ships. This can be reasoned by the low demands for whale meat, as well as the impact of younger fishermen choosing not to participate in whaling (Tinch et al., 2011).

Moreover, the catch is regulated by a licensing scheme. The whale hunting season continues from the beginning of April to the end of August, with some extensions into September. The hunt is carried out from small fishing boats which are approximately 20 metres long on average, which makes them better equipped for minke whaling (Tinch et al., 2011). Each of the boats is armed with a harpoon gun mounted on the bow, which is meant to kill the animal quickly. After the whale has been observed, the boat approaches towards the spot, where the whale is expected to breath. The whale is harpooned and in most cases the grenade detonates. The whale is then pulled alongside the boat and is checked for signs of life. With 20% of whales death does not occur immediately, and in the cases if whale is still alive, a rifle is used to fire shots to the whale's brain until the apparent death happens. The average time to death reported by the government in 2002 (last published data) was 2 minutes. The carcass is then lifted on board the vessel for flensing (the removal of the skin and the blubber) and the meat is refrigerated on board and brought to shore within three weeks (as per regulations) for processing and packaging. There is no longer a market for the blubber which used to be utilised for oil and not it is simply removed and disposed of (Tinch et al., 2011).

As mentioned, many of the vessels are relatively small, and the catching takes place primarily in coastal areas, especially from the Vestfjorden / Vesterålen to Finnmark, Bjørnøya and Spitsbergen (Svalbard). Nowadays the Norwegian whalers hunt two different whale populations, and the most important is the north-east Atlantic stock in the North Sea, along the Norwegian coast, in the Barents Sea and at Svalbard (see the Figure 3). In recent years, the catch has been about 600 animals annually and the meat yield of 700–900 tonnes. The first-

hand value of the total harvest amounts to approximately 21–28 million Norwegian krone annually (Øien, 2019).

It is worth mentioning, that the latest estimate is 89,600 minke whales, based on counting in the period 2008–2013. The evaluation of the population provides with the same numbers that the previous two counting periods did, which indicates that the whale stocks are stable. This latest estimate was approved by the IWC's Scientific Committee in 2015. The quota for 2019 is raised to 1278 minke whale from 2018 quota of 1108 whales in the Northeast Atlantic and 170 animals by Jan Mayen, which yielded first hand value of approximately 17.5 million Norwegian krone in 2018 (Øien, 2019).

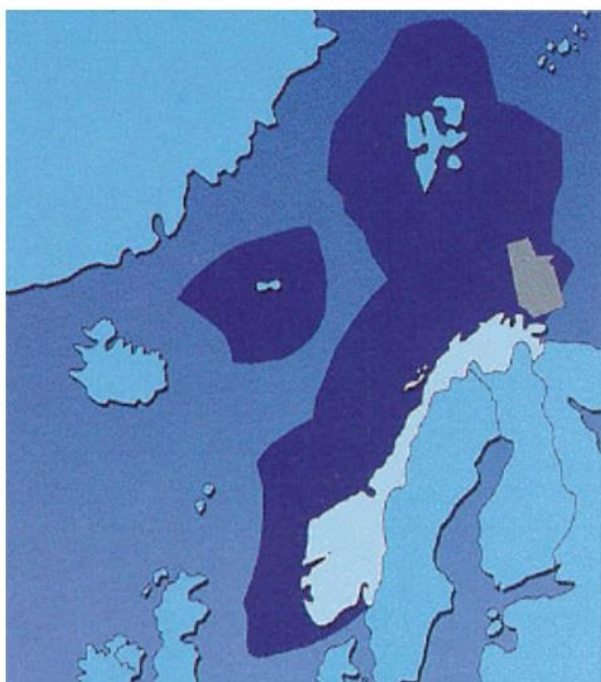


Figure 3. Norwegian whaling area marked navy blue (Tinch et al., 2011)

Current Aspects of Whaling in Norway

The ongoing whaling in Norway has been a centre of the world's attention for decades. After Norway permitted commercial whaling again in 1993, strong international critique arose and organisations like IWC, WWF, Sea Shepard and Greenpeace engaged themselves into debates

and actions against whaling in Norway. There were threats of economic sanctions from non-whaling countries and threats to boycott the Winter Olympic Games that were scheduled for Lillehammer, Norway, in 1994 (Bjørndal & Conrad, 1998).

However, according to Halverson (2004), there are in fact three legitimate explanations that Norway can provide the world with justifying the resuming of whaling back in 1993 which complies with international law. The first one is that IWC has no legal prosecution right for binding Norway to the moratorium. Second, Norway did not violate rights of any international stakeholder. And third, the continuation of whaling did not violate customary international law. Thus, the proposed legal sanctions against Norway apparently have no legal foundation. Additionally, legal experts note that Norway is doing nothing wrong and Norway's continuing whaling practice is on solid legal ground; there is no 'IWC police'. After the anti-whaling moratorium in 1982, Norway entered a reservation and University of Sydney Associate Professor Ed Couzens, an expert in international whaling law, said Norway's conduct and actions were flawless. "That reservation gives Norway perfect right to consider itself not bound by the moratorium," he said (O'Connor, 2018).

Due to the complexity of the continuation of whaling, there is a range of perceptions of whaling in the world and within Norway, among people, locals and among whalers.

The IWC distinguishes between three forms of whaling according to the purposes the hunt is carried out for: commercial, scientific or aboriginal. The International Whaling Commission recognises aboriginal subsistence whaling to be dissimilar from commercial whaling, and these two broad categories of whaling are subject to different management approaches and debates.

According to Reeves (2002) citing Donovan (1982) aboriginal subsistence whaling was defined in 1981 by the IWC's ad hoc Technical Committee Working Group on Development of Management Principles and Guidelines for Subsistence Catches of Whales by Indigenous

People, as whaling ‘for purposes of local aboriginal consumption carried out by or on behalf of aboriginal, indigenous or native peoples who share strong community, familial, social and cultural ties related to a continuing traditional dependence on whaling and on the use of whales’. Four countries and IWC members continue aboriginal subsistence whale harvest today: Denmark (Greenland), Russia (Chukotka), St Vincent and the Grenadines (Bequia) and the United States (Alaska and also potentially a resumption of hunts previously undertaken by the Makah Tribe of Washington State) ("Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling," 2018). The IWC does not, however, provide the definition of ‘commercial’ whaling, hence any whaling that does not fall within the definition of aboriginal subsistence or is unrelated to scientific research is commercial (Holt, 1985; Reeves, 2002).

In Norway the whaling is not aboriginal, however it is assumed as an original and unique tradition for the small local communities along the Norwegian coast line, where whaling had been conducted for many generations (Todal, 2018). Norway does often refer to *tradition* in justifying its continuation of commercial whaling. Although tradition is used as a justification for whaling by whalers, it is not widely accepted, as the history of whaling is not a satisfactory condition to continue whale hunting (Corkeron, 2014).

However, Norwegian whaling is described as small-type coastal whaling, driven by families, whose prime income comes from fishing and the whalers are in fact fishermen, their boats are equipped for both whaling and fishing (Kramvig, Kristoffersen, & Førde, 2016; Tjernshaugen, 2018; Todal, 2018). Todal (2018) shares with the readers a story of one fisherman family from Fedje, a remote island in Nordhordland region of Hordaland county in Norway with a population of 587 people and the traditional economic activity of the island inhabitants is fishing. The fisherman highlights that the year of 2017 might be his last year of whaling, due to the low demands for whale meat. He mentions that there used to be 11 whaling boats at the Fedje island alone back at 1957, nowadays there is only one vessel in Fedje – his 20-meter-long

“Olavson” boat - conducting whale hunt. The whaling has been a traditional craft on the island for approximately hundred years. The income from whaling is an additional income to fishing. However, it is considered to be more stable because of the whales’ sizes. The minimum price for a kilo of whale meat at land is 34 Norwegian kroner, the average whale yields around 1200 kilos of meat, additionally fishermen get paid per hour if the meat they deliver is cleansed and packaged. Moreover, the whale hunt is very demanding and dangerous: papers to fill out, scientific monitoring and the minke whales are the fastest animals in the ocean which makes the hunt more time-consuming and more difficult to spot the whale (Tjernshaugen, 2018; Todal, 2018). Despite such challenges, and the whaling being perceived as relatively insignificant economic sector in Norway, it has been vital to small and isolated communities like Fedje, where almost the entire population of these communities is somehow involved in whaling (Ris, 1993).

According to the report by Tinch et al. (2011) the value of whale hunting is a small portion of the total value of fisheries; the gross income from whaling is only 0.18% of gross fisheries income. In terms of the entire whaling process – natural resource, participating vessels and human resources – Norway’s whaling industry is a small-scale coastal industry at a currently low-point state. The harvests are below quotas, and fewer than 20 vessels in total take part in the annual hunt.

Symbolism of Whales

“The majestic aspects of whales - their size; the apparent intelligence of some whales; the songs of others - led to rediscovery of the old iconography - whales as magnificent in their own right” (Corkeron, 2014, p. 1).

Being concerned with the views of Norway as a country that keeps on whaling, it is beneficial to explore and understand how whales appear in people’s perceptions in numerous ways. The whaling is still ongoing and whale meat is still on the menus; at the same time whales have

been described as the most beautiful, intelligent and sentient creatures, as well as they have been referred to as symbol of a new environment-caring (considerate) era, as a fight symbol in the war for saving the planet and the ocean, and also involving questions of territorial rights by environmental organisations, fishermen and local communities. The whale is transformed from an object of historical searching and hunting to one of visually searching and observing (Kramvig et al., 2016).

Here is another example of the today's perception of whales:

Whales are nature in its grandest form. They inspire awe, because they're magnificent, massive, beautiful, powerful, and mysterious. Like giant sequoias but mammals - like us, except on a prehistoric, mythological, global scale. Everything about them is huge - their size, their sounds, their range, their strength, their history.

They are ancient, like living dinosaurs, managing so far to survive every planetary disaster or human-caused threat...But they are gentle, inquisitive, intuitive, forgiving, and sentient. More highly evolved than we are in ways that are obvious...

They have unique political, social, and cultural significance...They've become a symbol of our hopes for human survival...and for the conservation of nature. They inspired the "Save the Whales" movement, which fundamentally is about the struggle between short-term human greed and the diversity and richness of life for generations to come.

If we can't save the whales, what hope is there for the rest of us? (Reynolds, 2013).

'Giants of the sea' or 'the rulers of the ocean' have become an important reference throughout the tourism whale-watching offers (Kramvig et al., 2016)

Furthermore, Todal (2018) recalls that because of the American invention of underwater microphones and recording systems in the 60s, whale sound communication was discovered, and this was the turning point towards whales gaining yet another perception for themselves. As a fantastic mythical creature from fairy-tales (Ris, 1993), whales would even represent the planet Earth in space: The Song of the Humpack Whale was recorded and sent on board of the American Voyager-probe in 1977 together with the recordings of various human languages (Ris, 1993; Todal, 2018).

A major feature of the current save-the-whale movement is the creation of an image of the whale sharing desirable human characteristics (Kramvig et al., 2016; Kristoffersen, Norum, & Kramvig, 2016; Ris, 1993; Todal, 2018). Mediating human qualities and personhood onto whales raises a moral obligation towards the ‘others like humans’ (Kristoffersen et al., 2016; Ris, 1993). It contrasts with the views and values of those who see non-human things as resources for human use (as for food or clothing, for example), as it used to be with the perceptions as well. However, accepting that whales and other animals have their forms of personhood leads to questions about the human exceptionalism and whether people should let go off it (Kristoffersen et al., 2016). With these human-like behaviours and mythical qualities, whales are no longer a food source for the local fishermen, they have gained an immense symbolic significance for millions of people around the globe, regardless of whether these people have ever seen a whale in real life (Kristoffersen et al., 2016).

The ‘super whale’ has become a totem, gained symbolic meaning of a sacred animal and gathered together the supporters of the animal rights; this key-symbolism of the whale also reinforces the common opposition to those mentioned above who see these animals as a food source. Thus, the question is whether it is morally acceptable to keep on whaling irrespective of the motive, leading to intense debate (Ris, 1993).

Fishermen's Views on Whales and Whaling

Todal (2018) describes fishermen's whale hunt preparations as being a careful process and their paying attention to every routine. Nowadays, the fishermen are insecure whether there is ever going to be more hunting trips. They note that the anti-whaling war is not so intense; the threat to their long-time tradition is no longer from the international organisations but the change in people's values and attitudes which is expressed with the low demand for whale meat. However, fishermen are certain that their knowledge of the whales' behavioural patterns is extremely valuable, though now challenged by scientific views on the whale as a sea mammal (Kramvig et al., 2016).

For herring and cod fishermen, the whale is perceived as a companion of the sea and a co-hunter species (Kramvig et al., 2016). Where there is a whale, there is also fish to catch. Fishermen also note that whaling hunts these days are nothing like they were back in the 19th century, including the executing of an animal. The men tell that they do care and feel troubled if the whale does not have an instant death, however, it is their livelihood and they do what they must do. They add that modern whaling is within acceptable quotas and processes compared to the old days. The fishermen are fascinated by the whales and as previously mentions, find companions in them. They, however, are very proud of their profession and the opportunity to be the keepers of an old coastal traditions that may soon be ceased (Todal, 2018). A Norwegian documentary about the whale hunt tradition also emphasises the pride and the passion of this profession (NorskHval, 2016).

Additionally, it is globally discussed that maybe indigenous people and small communities fishermen could substitute their whaling practises and incomes with whale-watching profits, where many fishermen's responses were that they were being robbed of their tradition (Ris, 1993). Today whaling is practiced to maintain a stable fish population, as well as to produce whale meat for consumption (Higham & Lusseau, 2007) .

Meat-consumption as a Tourist Experience

Understanding the variety of attitudes towards animals is beneficial for comprehension of people's food and particularly meat-eating behaviours (Mkono, 2015). One of the recent proposed scales of human attitudes, towards animals includes two main motivational aspects: affect, which stands for people's emotional reactions and views towards whales, and utility, which describes the people's perceptions of animals as a useful value, as a resource (Serpell, 2004, as cited in Mkono, 2015). Serpell (2004) highlights that the animals that are behaviourally and cognitively resembling to humans have a tendency to trigger more emotions than those distant to people. So, Mkono (2015) concludes, that views towards certain types of meat vary according to the perceptions of the animals the meat comes from.

Furthermore, Bulliet (2005) as cited in Mkono (2015) discusses that by distancing themselves from 'the source of food', people have less affection towards those animals. However, the author adds that nowadays there is a contradiction within the society; it is not as simple to stop eating meat or animal products, however, when people become aware of the means the meat has been harvested, it shakes up their emotions.

Additionally, attitudes towards animals and demands for meat or any other food depend on the people's individual backgrounds, including religious beliefs, age and upbringing, as well as cultural and environmental values (Knight, Vrij, Cherryman, & Nunkoosing, 2004; Mkono, 2015). One can also assume that meat-consumption itself is indicator of the attitudes towards animals; eating an animal - means the animal had to die to become an individual's food.

The meat-consumption and the contradictions about it are a complex issue:

The influences on human-animal relations therefore vary with context, so that tourist behaviours in relation to their interaction with animals can only be fully understood when the combination of elements of their individual and collective circumstances are factored

in. The issues presented in the current discussion therefore are not a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, but represent instead an acknowledgement of the different standpoints, opinions, experiences and worldviews which operate in any human-animal interaction and, more specifically, in situations where tourists consume meat while traveling. (Mkono, 2015, p. 215)

Regarding food consumption in general, it is a big part of a tourist experience. Both strangeness and familiarity are categories of food interpretation while traveling (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Cohen and Avieli (2004) refer to Fischler (1988), who distinguishes the “neophobic” and “neophylic” tendencies in taste in the sociology of food; both of these dimensions are found among people – disliking newness leads to the preference of the familiar food, and/or liking novelty tends to cause unfamiliar food and dishes choices. These categories are biological, however, traveling food choices are additionally a cultural phenomenon (Cohen & Avieli, 2004)

According to Cohen (2004), while traveling tourists are more open to try new food and are more willing to take bigger risks than in their everyday life. The journey may provoke tourists’ ‘neophylic’ tendencies, motivating them to try novel and strange dishes and beverage, however, the author (Cohen, 2004) adds that even the novelty seekers may be repelled by the local culinary offer and not eager to try local food, if it contradicts their cultural values.

Strange foods are often being described as a rare and once in a lifetime chance. Desire to try unfamiliar foods and the interest for newness is noted to be a push factor for some travellers to try local food at destinations (Sengel et al., 2015). Dining experiences at local restaurants is also accepted to be a way of social and cultural interaction since it gives clues about local ways of living, manners, geography, economy and related cues (Sengel et al., 2015). Thus, it is clear that local food choices are influenced by demographical, motivational, cultural and psychological factors.

Whale Meat Consumption in Norway

Demand for whale meat is generally low, and so the public demand for whale meat in Norway has been decreasing for over a decade now (Groves, 2018; O'Connor, 2018; Palmer, 2017; Tjernshaugen, 2018; Todal, 2018). The regular Norwegian consumes less than a pound of whale meat per year, and according to the survey they perceive whale meat as a product of distant past (Palmer, 2014). Additionally, Kristoffersen et al. (2016) provide an example of a newly opening attempt of one place for selling whale burgers in Andenes, Northern Norway, this attempt was not welcomed and moreover the locals raised a question of serving whale meat at the same place as conducting the whale-watching trips. Additionally, many Norwegians describe whale meat as an ordinary meal in their homes back in the days, while chicken and beef were much more rare experiences. Whilst nowadays, whale meat is referred to as an occasional but specialty and delicacy food, "best enjoyed in a good summer day" ("Hval på menyen," 2010).

Whaling remains part of Norway's national heritage and is supported by most political parties (Berglund, 2017). Low demand for whale meat in Norway has raised Norwegian government's concerns to rebuild the market for whale products and led to it spending even more money on marketing campaigns (Berglund, 2017; Palmer, 2017). The reasons for the Norwegian government's continuous subsidising and support for whale meat are complex, however, they include the fact that key stakeholders in the whaling industry have influential partners in the government. There is also a promotion statement by the government, that whaling is a natural way to improve commercial fish catches (Perry, 2015). Several campaigns have been launched in order to encourage the public to consume more whale meat particularly targeting the youngsters presenting whale meat as a tasty and healthy type of meat (see Figure 4) (Groves, 2018; O'Connor, 2018). It can be seen on the screenshot that whale meat is promoted as a healthy option for the grilling season [translated from Norwegian by the researcher]. Various trendy whale recipes can be found on the campaign's website and on YouTube, where whale

meat is presented as a versatile delicacy in cooking videos. The meat is also named as sustainable, environmentally friendly and compared as ‘better for the planet’ than that of the regular food farming industry ("En unik råvare," 2019).

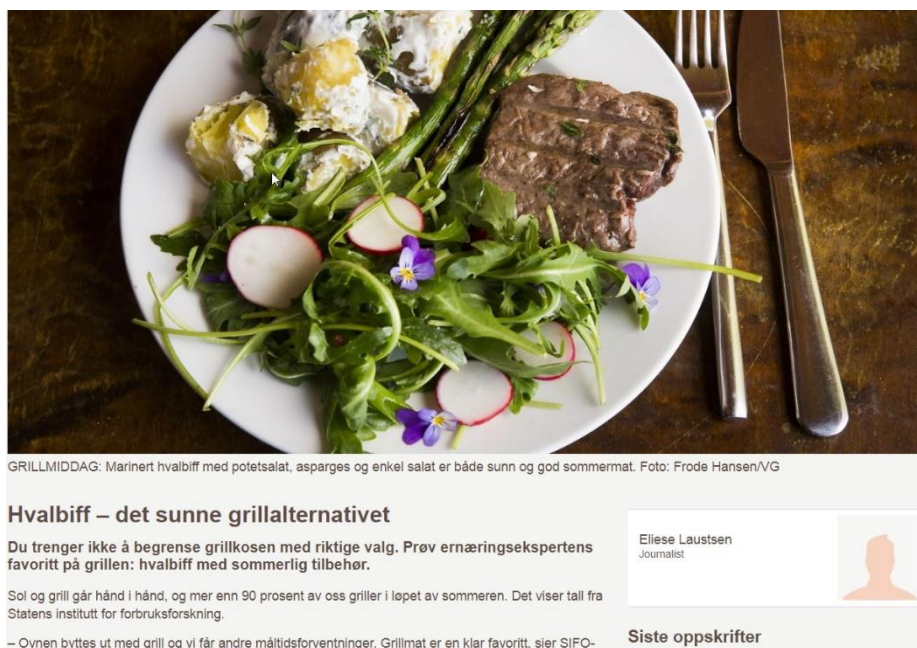


Figure 4. Screenshot of a recipe webpage Godt.no (Laustsen, 2013)

The international demand is as well low; when whalers do not get to sell meat within Norway, they need to try and export it. However, whalers themselves say it is extremely challenging to export whale meat due to the ban and its unique characteristics (Todal, 2018). The whalers hope to export the remaining meat to Japan – where there is still demand for whale meat as it is a unique part of Japanese cuisine. However, prices for whale meat in Japan have also been on the decline for two decades, and Japan has also rejected Norwegian whale shipments in the past due to the meat’s high concentration with mercury, dioxin and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), toxic chemicals that persist in the environment and accumulate in the food chain (Palmer, 2017).

During the whaling season from April to August, fresh whale meat is widely available in Norway in the supermarkets, fishing shops, food halls and in several restaurants. Whale meat is mainly served and cooked as steaks, and as a smoked whale snack.

Chapter III - Method

Research Design

Typically, destination image studies are conducted by quantitative structured methods (e.g. Likert scale or semantic differential scale) (Prebensen, 2007), however, it can be beneficial to employ the qualitative techniques, during the early stage of image research, as unstructured methods are expected to provide with the variety of actual images among tourists/potential tourists (Cave, Ryan, & Panakera, 2003).

As the researcher does not seek to provide a clear answer for the research questions, but rather to explore the variety and complexity of people's online expressions towards whaling in Norway and its whale meat eating opportunities, the qualitative method was chosen to be the most appropriate. The method utilised for the current research is netnography (internet ethnography) and is built on a non-participant online observation. This provides the researcher with a unique opportunity to explore, evaluate, understand and interpret the culture of the people being studied without visual or oral contact. Additionally, Costello, McDermott, and Wallace (2017, p. 6) cite Alavi, Ahuja, and Medury (2010, p. 88) who believed that passively monitoring online community ensures that "the analysis is conducted in the natural context of the community and thus is free from the bias which may arise through the involvement of the researcher or experimental research setting." Also, Costello et al. (2017) highlight that sometimes participants are pushed away by sensitive topic, which is avoidable by netnographic observation. This is as well right for the present study of perception on whaling in Norway. In life, people are all different, with various values, backgrounds and views, they might not share many things in common, however, Internet turned out to be the platform that led the strangers together for mutual interests, forming communities, sharing views and expressing opinions freely. Internet and networks as well as they reflect and reveal individuals' experiences and

their attitudes, they are themselves unique social phenomenon that advances the new ways of social communication, interaction and expression (Kozinets, 2015).

Kozinets (2015, p. 86) defines netnography as “a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through electronic networks.” de Valck, van Bruggen, and Wierenga (2009, p. 197) offered a further definition:

a written account resulting from fieldwork studying the culture and communities that emerge from online, computer-mediated, or internet-based communications...where both the fieldwork and the textual account are informed by the qualitative methods utilised in consumer research, cultural anthropology, and cultural studies (as cited in Costello et al., 2017, p. 2).

Adapted from ethnography, netnography in its turn is a methodology that studies people’s behaviours, opinions, views and motives throughout online communities. It is helpful to collect additional insights into cultures of these communities without researcher’s interference in a case of non-participatory netnography. Compared to traditional qualitative methods, netnography is faster and cheaper, as well as it provides access to the masses of data (Kozinets, 2015).

According to Kozinets (2015), netnographic research includes several steps, see Figure 5. Same steps were applied by the researcher. The research consisted of archival data collected from the posts and comments on the Internet, and additionally the researcher’s fieldnotes – reflexive and observational notes.

Initially, the researcher intended to conduct the personal interviews in addition to the netnographic research. The managers of Arctandria restaurant in Tromsø and Rorbua Restaurant in Oslo were contacted, as well as Tromsø Friluftssenteret, however, they have either

declined or not responded to interview requests. Therefore, the researcher utilised the available resources.

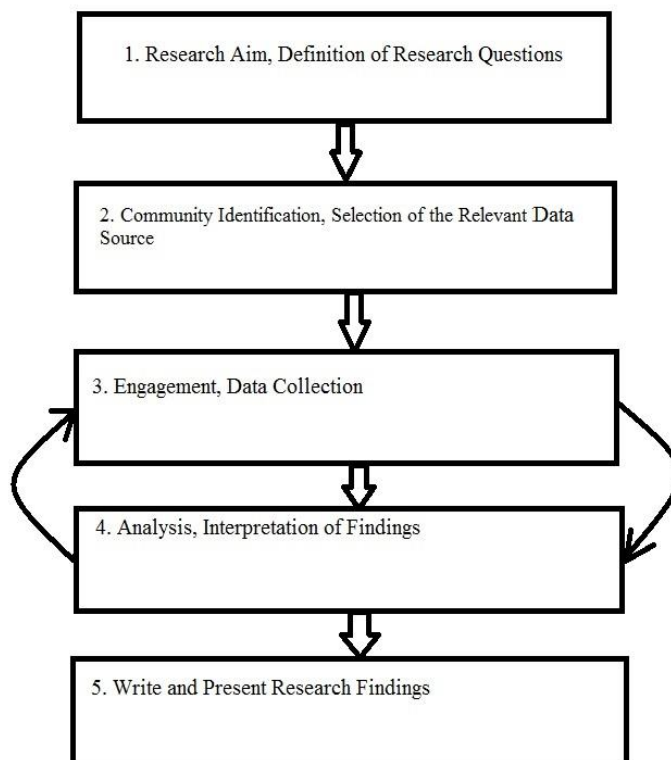


Figure 5. Stages of Netnographic Research (Kozinets, 2015)

Data Generation

Data generation process took place during March and April of 2019. Netnographic data in particular archival data was sought out by research questions as the source for keywords. The researcher made an attempt to come up with many synonyms for the key-words, which might better describe the online environment and communication. Keywords in both English and Norwegian were used in order to obtain deeper understanding of the research problem. Search engine was utilised such as Google (<http://www.google.com>), as well as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) groups of the restaurants, TripAdvisor (<http://www.tripadvisor.com>) and hashtags (#) for Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com>) At

the stage of searching for data, one of the main tasks was considered to be the researcher's personal "tuning" for data sources, which is a personal perception that the data is able to yield information on the research question.

Following variations of key-words related to the study area were entered: "whaling", "whaling hunt", "whales", "hvalfangst", "hval", "traditional whaling", "whaling in Norway", "Norwegian coastal culture", "norsk kystkultur", "aboriginal whaling", "whale meat", "hvalkjøtt", "hvalkjøtt på menyen", "dining on whale meat", "Norway attractiveness", "whale management", "whale rights", "restauranter som serverer hvalkjøtt".

Researcher did not interact with the communities while gathering the data, preferring people's personal expressions related to the studied problem. It has also been observed that search for sites of data and for data was endless. So, it was important to decide on the period when the data collection had to end. Additionally, given that the data was already publicly available, and no personal interviews or information were requested, individual consents were not sought out. There is no identifying personal information provided, except people's online nicknames.

The archival data was narrowed down (see Figure 6), as it was found to be most relevant – related to the research focus and questions, active – recent communications, substantial – mass of communicators and discourses, rich in data – offering more detailed or descriptively rich data (e.g. photos, thread of communications, etc.).

Platform	Comments/Reviews	Figure
Instagram Post 1	179, 190 reactions 1250 comments	Figure 8
Instagram Post 2	172, 000 reactions 2012 comments	Figure 11
Instagram Post 3	762 reactions 3 comments	Figure 9
Instagram Post 4	1116 reactions 37 comments	Figure 7
TripAdvisor Arctandria Restaurant	331 reactions 153 written reviews	Figure 13

Tripadvisor Rorbua Restaurant	939 reactions 395 written reviews	Figure 12
Facebook Post Myklebust Hvalprodukter	811 reactions 90 comments	Figure 10

Figure 6. Archival Data Analysed

Reflective Data

Reflective data in a type of fieldnotes was produced as the result of research practices such as questing for data and downloading archives of interactions and communications and photos. In the current reflective fieldnotes, researcher recorded her own observations regarding the comments online and the personal emotions while working on this project.

Archival data was stored as screenshots in a Word document in order to produce reflective notes; then printed out followed by originally jotting down the first immediate thoughts that occurred while taking the screenshots, and then typing up more extensive notes as the times goes on. Additionally, the researcher carried a notebook and a set of post-it notes for documenting all the relevant thoughts, reflections and ideas regarding the data.

Also, it is obvious that the sensitivity of this study might have an impact on the researcher. The topic was selected by researcher's pure curiosity and inspired by the Management of Natural Resources subject at the University of Stavanger, therefore, it was no previous interaction with the research problem themes. However, the emotions did occur while conducting the research and studying various webpages, photos and comments. The friends and acquaintances circle of the researcher possesses pro-whaling views, which in fact provided the researcher with some different insights into the problem and provoked the determination to explore more. Yet, the researcher hoped to remain unbiased and open-minded during the research process and the presentation of the results. After the finalisation of all the fieldnotes both digital and written, a review of the notes was done to identify the essence of each comment and presenting the results.

Chapter IV - Results

The main research question included the following main themes: 1) Norway's destination image, 2) Perceptions towards whales, 3) Views towards whaling in Norway and its dining opportunities 4) Information about Norwegian whaling as a part of coastal culture, and 5) Impact of whaling in Norway on its destination image. Therefore, in the finding these themes are presented along with the quotations gathered by researcher. Additionally, the results had been drawn by using reflective notes. Due to the emotional side of the topic, the themes are also interwoven, as many comments express perceptions on a few aspects at the same time.

Whales' Symbolism



Figure 7. Screenshot of the Instagram post by Styngvi

“Whales are climate warriors! 🐋🌍 Whales are most valuable to the world in the ocean where they prevent species over-population, regulate food systems and actually combat climate change. ▪Whales act like carbon sinks. By being massive

creatures that dive deep depths, migrate, poop and die in the oceans, they increase marine primary production as well as biodiversity...This mechanism is called the Whale Pump and it's extremely important for the health and balance of the ocean. ... ▪The Minister of Fisheries in Iceland has recently approved the continued hunting of fin whales and minke whales until 2023. He made the decision alone, without any vote nor public consultation and based his decision on a biased economical report widely criticized. If you are in the Reykjavík area I'd love to see you at the protest against whaling in Iceland that will be held this coming Sunday (24.03.2019) at Austurvöllur at 12PM. We will be insisting that the government stop this anti-environmental, unethical, barbaric, toxic and completely unnecessary activity! 🐳” (Styngvi, 2019)

The symbolism of whales has been highlighted online by many people. One of the posts by Styngvi (2019), which was very informative and descriptive, refers to whales as climate warriors, defines them as the creatures who protect our oceans, hence, our planet; they are climate change indicators and regulators of eco-systems and, therefore, it is not right to hunt whales. The post mentions the continuation of the whale hunt in Iceland and encouraging people to protest “anti-environmental” practices, as whaling is called. This post did not receive a lot of comments, however, in the comments that have been posted almost everybody highlighted the importance of knowledge about whales and their role on this planet:

“Hugely important that we know that these beautiful animals are part of precious eco system! Beautiful illustration!” by Arkberries (2019).

“Thank you for sharing the info. I didn't know a lot of that. Especially preventing species overpopulation, although it makes sense. Education is the most important tool we have” by Simplytangledbeads (2019).

“I didn’t know whales were so important, of course every animal is, they are all part of an ecosystem” by Arcanumra (2019).

Another interesting observation are postings that indicate that boycotting the whaling countries seems like a non-constructive option (comments to Instagram post 1, see figure 8):

“...or I go to those countries to see the whales and create alternative economic value. It is hard to boycott because so much appreciation comes from seeing these incredible creatures in the wild. Which in its turn creates more advocates for their protection. Definitely don’t eat whale meat while there. I would go to the root cause of the demand for whale meat and encourage Icelanders/Norwegians to not eat whale meat. That may be better than preventing global education through travel. In none of these countries tourism is a major industry and therefore all the boycotts in the world won’t materially affect them” by Sibelsham (2019).

“We shouldn’t be whaling...but there is also plastic pollution, the plastic we purchase is also going into ocean killing these animals. Instead of boycotting traveling, we should take responsibility” by Danielle_under_the_sun (2019).

Whale watching is found to be as the promotion of educational experiences, as well as conservational, where visitors can learn and see more of whales and ensure their welfare.

There were found numerous references to whales such as “human-like creature”, “intelligent”, “happy”, “sentient”, “majestic”, “social”, etc. These descriptions seem to decrease the distance between human and whales. Examples are the following comments published on Instagram answering the post by Paulnicklen (2019), a wildlife photographer (see Figure 8):

“The most impressive intelligent surprising and majestic animals on planet earth”
by Dreambig1gxx (2019).

“What marvellous mammals!” by Sonypd (2019).

“They have a language and social structure...they are curious, playful, intelligent”
by Kelly_mctaggart (2019).

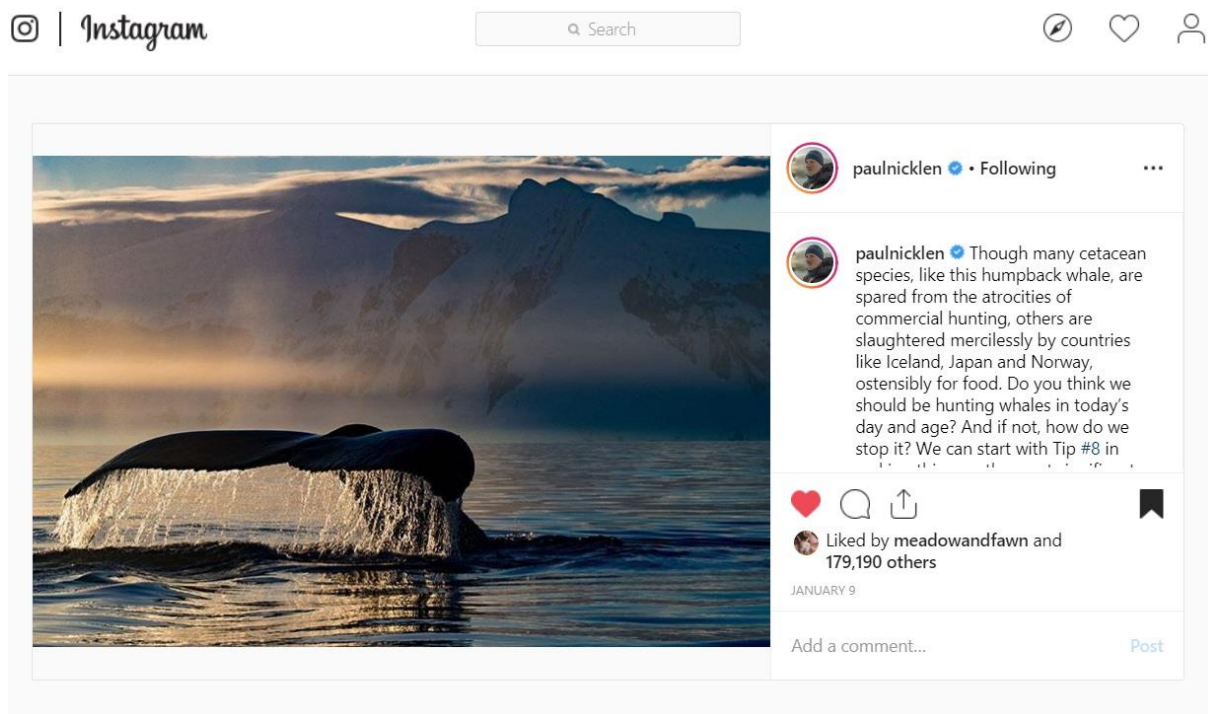


Figure 8. Screenshot of the Instagram post by Paulnicklen

When there is little distance and a lot of attachment, the emotions become involved, and whales become to be perceived above humans.

“Beautiful enigmatic beings, our brains are too small to understand them BUT I am sure good hearts are big enough to protect them” by Puracalura (2019)

“These whales are curious, sweet creatures. I have been guided at a very close range in a storm. They are kinder and smarter than humans. Who can eat them?” by Susan_richards_de_wit (2019).

Whales do cause emotions and make people reflect in their personalities. It was not particularly clear from the comments why people have such strong feelings towards whales; however, they

were clearly there. It is observed that whales are perceived as mystic creatures, as well as environmental symbol and the indicator of the planet's health. It was seen also among people who have never encountered whales. Whales' symbolism seems to connect people together.

Whaling Traditions, Boycotts and Image of Norway

Referring back to the Instagram photo 1 (see figure 8), there is a following text by the author

Paulnicklen (2019):

“Though many cetacean species, like this humpback whale, are spared from the atrocities of commercial hunting, others are slaughtered mercilessly by countries like Iceland, Japan and Norway, ostensibly for food. Do you think we should be hunting whales in today's day and age? And if not, how do we stop it? We can start with Tip [#8](#) in making this year the most significant for our oceans: boycott tourism in Iceland. A single person's decision to not travel to Iceland until its government ends commercial whaling may seem insignificant. But, when countless others around the world follow, it can become an unstoppable force to help our oceans battle their biggest predator – us. [#19for2019#StopTheHunt #TurningTheTide](#)”.

It is observed that by raising attention towards ongoing commercial countries, the author mentions all three countries including Norway, however, he only encourages to stop traveling to Iceland, not Norway, not Japan. Why it is so, remains unknown. Though, it becomes clearer further on, that Norway does not appear as much as the other two whaling nations in the discussions, debates and media. When searching for [#icelandwhaling](#) on Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com>), 180 publications appear and people do mention that they would not travel to Iceland until this country enters the 21st century, meaning it is not acceptable to hunt whales in the modern era. While searching for [#japanwhaling](#), 239 publication occur, while [#norwegianwhaling](#) search yields only 9 publications.

“Hey Japan hey Iceland. This trade is barbaric and antiquated. You DO NOT NEED to do this. My tourism dollars will never go to countries that support whaling. Maybe we should start an anti tourism campaign? Make a list of countries that cultivate and consume these products and use this as a way to pressure local communities to stop supporting this” by Althennatattoo (2019).

Norway was not even mentioned: it is either not mentioned by people at all or they were never aware of the ongoing whaling in Norway, or they could not even imagine Norway could still hunt whales:

“Both Iceland and Japan won’t be seeing me until they make a change. And it is painful because I would love to visit both places” by Art_by_di (2019).

“Norway has such mesmerising nature and landscapes, you would think they care more about this majestic animals..where they are actually the worse..hard to understand and definitely unacceptable” by Phatez.bym19le (2019).

“I was not aware that Iceland and Norway had a whaling industry..I definitely won’t be traveling to Iceland..I am taking it off my list” by Kelly_mctaggart (2019).

The last comment also shows that for some reason people decide not to go to Iceland or Japan, but whether they would still go to Norway, remains unknown. No one mentions Norway in their lists. There seem to be the lack of awareness of Norwegian continuing whaling:

“I had no idea Norway is STILL whaling. What is their excuse to such devastation?!! There is absolutely no reason for this terrible, preventative nonsense. It is heartbreaking that some countries are so ignorant” by Rosieblue.dh (2019).

“So crazy. Never knew that...and even Norway” by Kikobleur24 (2019).

Norway generally is seen as modern and a “caring” (as caring for nature) country and whaling practices do not seem to be consistent with that image.

Only one person among thousands of comments questioned the author’s call to only boycott Iceland:

“Why ask us only to boycott tourism in Iceland? Should we not boycott Japan and Norway too if they are commercially hunting whales? I would certainly not visit any of them” by Dalekarnat (2019).

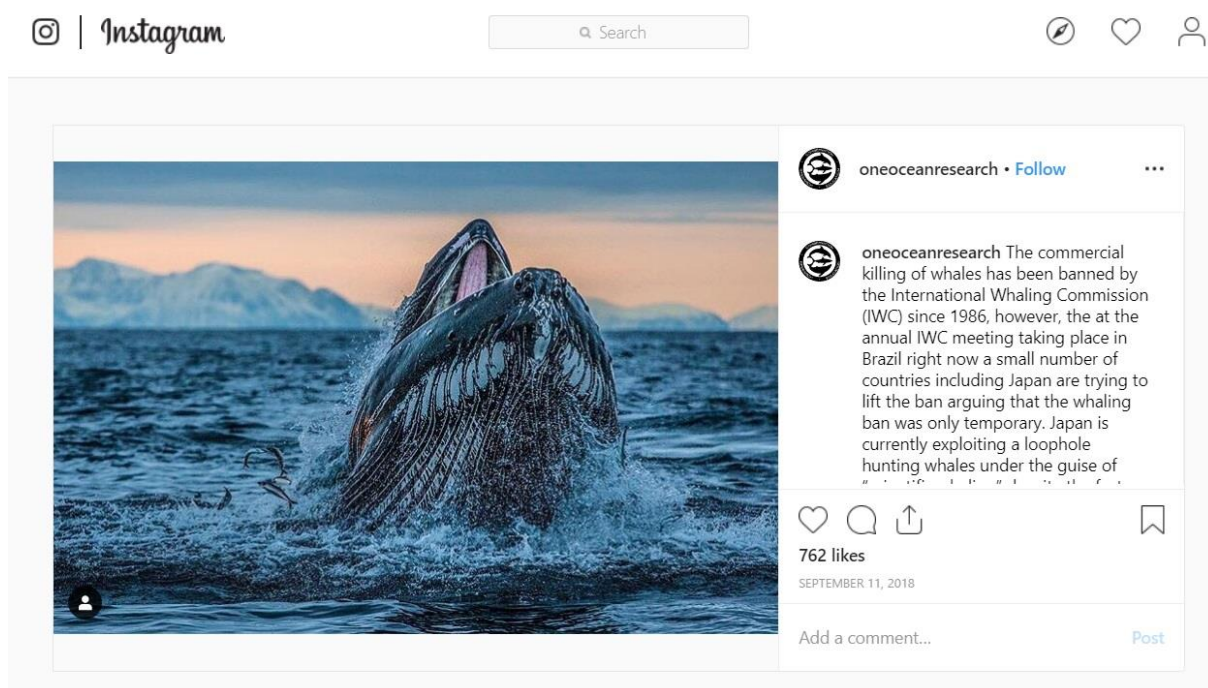


Figure 9. Screenshot of the Instagram post by Oneoceanresearch

“The commercial killing of whales has been banned by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) since 1986, however, the at the annual IWC meeting taking place in Brazil right now a small number of countries including Japan are trying to lift the ban arguing that the whaling ban was only temporary. Japan is currently exploiting a loophole hunting whales under the guise of “scientific whaling” despite

the fact that this meat is sold to a very small market of consumers and there are non-lethal research methods available. A few years ago Australia took Japan to court over the issue and the International court of Justice ruled Japan's whaling was not for purposes of scientific research as required by Article VIII of the International Convention and ordered Japan to immediately cease whaling operations in the Antarctic (Clapham 2015). Iceland also continues to hunt whales exporting the meat to Japan despite the fact that 81% of Icelanders have never tried whale meat, and the whale watching industry is valued at \$20M meaning that the very same whales tourists are going to see could be killed in the same waters. When surveyed most whale watching tourists did not support whaling and did not think whaling and whale watching could coexist, and 31% were unaware of Iceland's whaling but clam in prior knowledge would not have affected their choice of destination (Bertulli 2014). Commercial harvest for these highly intelligent, ecologically important, social creatures has no place in the 21st century, as most populations are still depleted in comparison to historical baselines. Please join [@SeaLegacy](#) in calling upon the Iceland to [#StopIcelandWhaling](#), today is the last day to sign their petition. Help us get over 200,000 signatures and send a strong message to Iceland and other whaling countries that these animals are [#WorthMoreAlive](#)

Photo by [@paulnicklen](#) [#Whaling](#) [#CommericalWhaling](#)
[#SaveTheWhales#MarineConservation](#) [@blakethompsonphoto](#)"

(Oneoceanresearch, 2018)

Another post (Oneoceanresearch, 2018) about whaling countries, which provides numerous data about ongoing whaling, however, is only mentioning Japan and Iceland and calling to stop Icelandic whaling. The reason why even the experts leave out Norway from the list of

commercial whale hunters is unclear. This post did not gain much attention, providing with some valuable insights:

“It’s the horrible truth...strange how many people focus on Japan and Iceland and not a lot of people know about whaling in Norway. Good on you making people aware! To boycott travel will be sad though, because these are such beautiful countries to explore and (I hope!) a lot of tourism businesses aren’t supporting whaling either” by Lifetime_dreamers (2018).

This single comment itself though collected 51 reactions, which only proves that there is lack of awareness about Norwegian whale hunting and it is hard to boycott such a beautiful country.

Another big discussion concerns inhuman and barbaric tradition and disgusting practice. The whaling tradition is found to be outdated and to have no justification to be carried on. It is even compared to slavery of people which used to be considered normal in old days, but no one can imagine to be doing this nowadays. The reflections are quite affective and expressive. They are also full of adjectives regarding whales, only confirming once again the intelligent and majestic views about these mammals.

“It’s 2019 and this still happens!” by Environmental.ly (2019).

“Heartbreaking! Why can’t these cruel inhumane traditions be left in the barbaric past where they belong to?” by Earthconscioushuman (2019).

“Whaling is barbaric – we know now that they are smart and extremely social creatures – hacking them with pieces on beaches and harpooning them in open water is a disgusting practice and not shits should be given about the preservation of traditions, given that our understanding of what we are doing is cruel” by Letsgetreadytoramble (2019).

“Just because practices are tribal, indigenous and traditional doesn’t mean they have to exist forever. Especially when we are killing amazingly intelligent being just because we can” by Lorebritka (2019).

“Stop referring to the past, it literally has no relevance in the world today. Female genital mutilation is also a tradition amongst tribes, human sacrifice was a tradition too. But these kinds of traditions don’t belong in todays world” by Emmaxdeatin (2019).

As it is observed through these examples, the whaling is found to be a wrong action to carry on. Additionally, people refer to the whaling as a tradition that has no future and should not exist in present time either. Also, people are not aware that minke whales are not endangered, however, it does not seem of importance that Norway hunts non-endangered species, as whaling is generally perceived as wrong.

“It is not that they hunt non-endangered species, I don’t think there should be a whaling industry at all, there is no need for it. We have already domesticated animals for meat...we don’t use stone tools anymore...we don’t slave people anymore..it seems that hunting down the creature is ok because we have always done it” by Kelly_mctaggart (2019).

“Endangered or not, we do not need whale meat to survive...times are different now, people need to change a practice that is causing a problem and improve their ways not to hold on to their ego” by Dreameatlivelovelaugh (2019).

It seems not understandable to people why the hunting must be continued while humans have established the food industry and domesticated animals as a food source, why there should be a reason to hunt wild animals. There is, however, not much scientific knowledge in the people’s comments, but mostly emotions and attitudes, which seem to be affecting their judgments.

Many people highlight the beauty of Norway and a disappointment of its whaling traditions. However, there is no clear answer whether these people would not travel to Norway, except those who explicitly express so:

“Although, I wish to see both Norway and Iceland, I will defer until these countries make things right” by Roseofsharon23 (2019).

“Not going to Iceland, Norway or Japan, all places I had thought to travel to at some stage, but won’t consider it while the slaughter whales” by Jenikoopz (2019).

There were no direct comments of whaling perceived as a part of a coastal culture, except Norwegians themselves, such as those regarding the Facebook post (MyklebustHvalprodukter, 2017), see figure 10.

Myklebust Hvalprodukter is a Norwegian company selling whale meat of their own harvest. The photo of Myklebust Hvalprodukter on Facebook (MyklebustHvalprodukter, 2017), where they shared the photos from their recent whaling trip showing the vessel and the catch, which collected 90 comments. This caused long debates, which were both pro- and antiwhaling discourses among Norwegians. However, the comment of one person that highlighted the traditional side of whaling gained the most positive reactions - 23.

“Flott båt og flott mannskap som skaffer nydelig mat til folk flest” by Roald Harbak (2017), great boat and great crew which provide wonderful food to many people [translated by researcher].

“Utmerket mat som blir høstet av naturens overskudd” by Amund Nilssen (2017), excellent food that is harvested by the surplus of nature [translated by researcher]

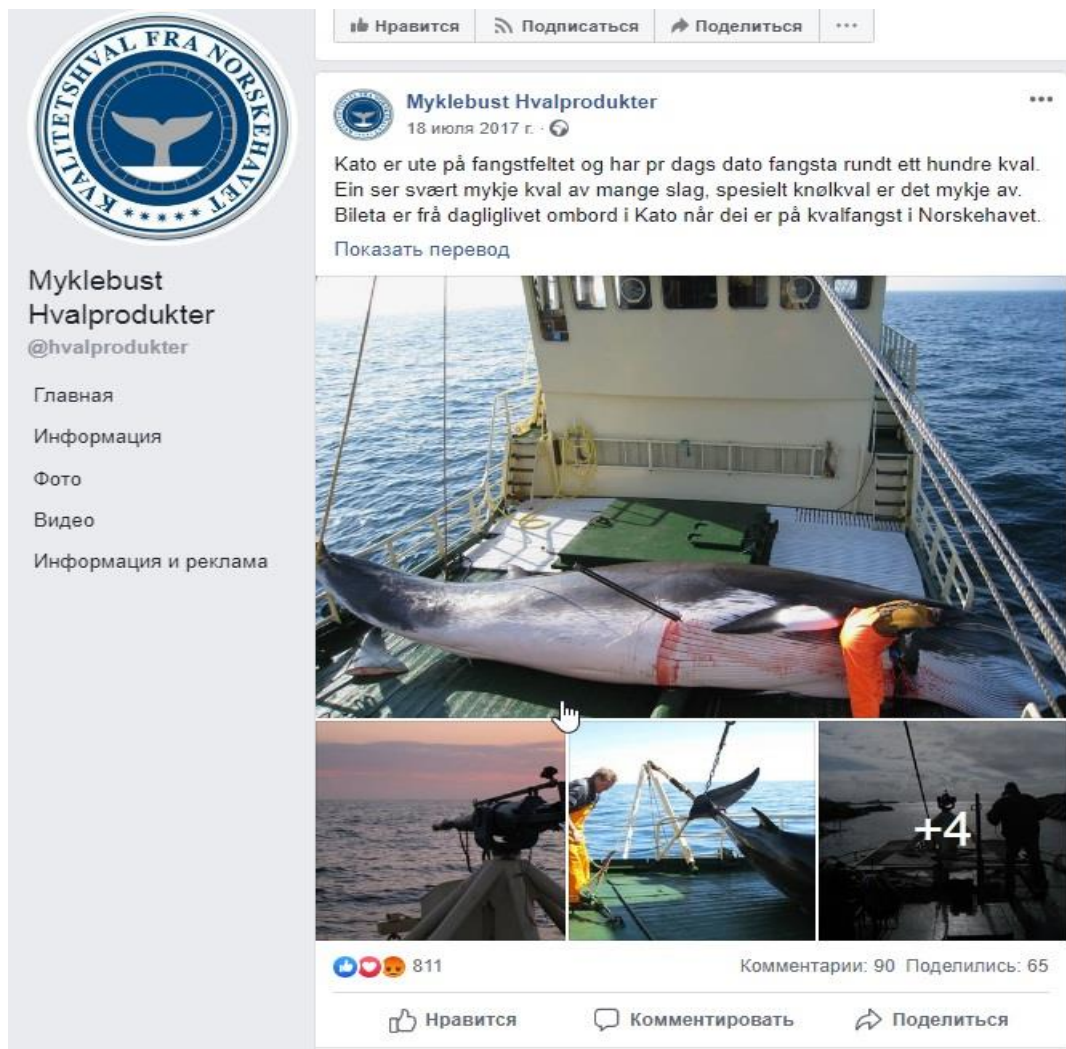


Figure 10. Screenshot of Facebook post by Myklebust Hvalprodukter.

“Flinke folk, god mat” by Helge Gloppen (2017), good people, good food [translated by researcher].

“Saying to Norway to stop killing whales, it is like saying to us – stop killing deer” by Hesjtag (2019)

“Flotte bilder av en bærekraftig høsting” by Hans Olaf Evensen Borg (2017) , great photos of sustainable harvest [translated by researcher]

The Facebook post (Myklebust Hvalprodukter, 2017) itself gained 780 approval reactions, 24 great likes and only 7 to the rest of dissatisfied responses, which shows that harvest is generally

approved by Norwegians, whale meat is seen as an ordinary food source and the fishermen profession is honoured. Another very important point was made by one person Endre Hagen, his views reflect the existing perception of whales:

“Hvaler har ganske sosiale liv og de kan utvikle innviklete kulturelle samfunn og hvis man dreper bare noen hvaler i det fellesskapet, så kan den kunnskapen de har der gå tapt. Men er mennesket så intelligent da? Vi klarer ikke å gjøre de enkleste ting, å ikke ødelegge planeten, så er vi så smart?” by Endre Hagen (2017), whales have quite social life and they can develop complex cultural societies and if we kill only a few whales in that community, then the knowledge they gained inside their society is lost. Does it make men intelligent then? We are unable to do the simplest things, not to destroy the planet, so are we so smart? [translated by researcher].

Completely human-like social characteristics of whales are emphasised, those that bring whales closer to humans and/or even above, and therefore make it unethical to take their lives. It is also observed that the people referring to whales as a food source, do not really reflect on their social characteristics.

There are found other issues that people mention which are worth to be concerned about than whaling itself: unsustainable fishing in the ocean which leads to imbalance in the ecosystem and to extinction of certain fish species; global warming that causes behavioural changes among the ocean wildlife and their migration patterns; plastic pollution and last but not least - oil drilling.

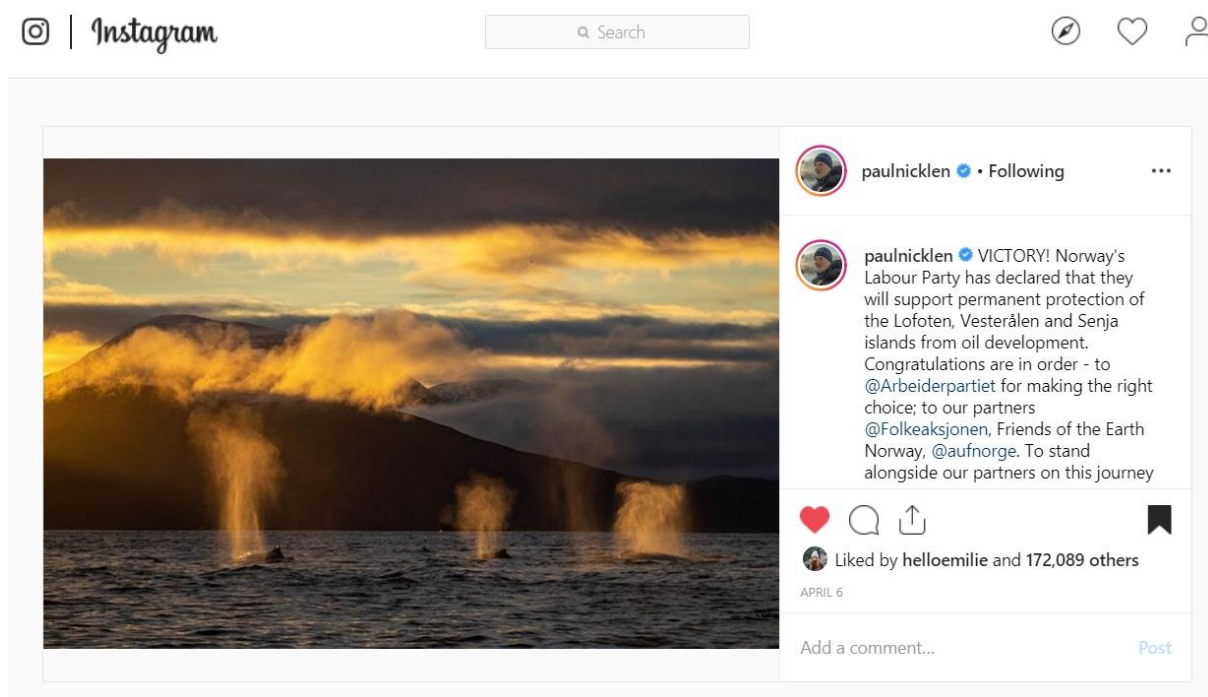


Figure 11. Screenshot of Instagram post by Paulnicklen

“VICTORY! Norway's Labour Party has declared that they will support permanent protection of the Lofoten, Vesterålen and Senja islands from oil development. Congratulations are in order - to [@Arbeiderpartiet](#) for making the right choice; to our partners [@Folkeaksjonen](#), Friends of the Earth Norway, [@aufnorge](#). To stand alongside our partners on this journey has been an incredible privilege and we appreciate the years of hard work you have put into achieving this outcome. And thank you to our loyal [@sealegacy](#) [#Tide](#) members and supporters and to all of my friends and followers who helped us reach our goal of 50,000 signatures yesterday. All of this is what it means to be a community.” (Paulnicklen, 2019)

The post by Paulnicklen (2019) about Norwegian Labour Party’s decision to protect Lofoten, Vesterålen and Senja islands areas in the Northern Norway from oil development gained high popularity and collected thousands of comments. The majority highlights the importance of healthy oceans for the whale’s well-being. Norway’s ‘caring image’ is raised and Norway’s actions are praised, Norwegian values are claimed worthy to follow for everyone.

“Hooray for Norway! We need this throughout the world” by Kay_bagwell_photography (2019).

“Norway is enhancing my belief in humanity” by Fulyailbey (2019).

“Amazing news. The world should follow Norway’s values” by Gemmafly (2019).

“Thank you Norway! I know it’s a big sacrifice to not take advantage of, but I hope you will reap the rewards of all the benefits that come with healthy rich environment, for your future generations” by Maybirdcarbajal (2019).

“Fantastic news! Thank you people of Norway!” by Kemaserjan (2019).

“Another reason Norway is the happiest people. We celebrate them for making the right choices” by Anca_sira (2019).

The happy expressions about the right Norwegian values seem to be drawn by the lack of the awareness, as no one mentions the existence of ongoing whaling. Only 5 people out of 2000 questioned why only protecting from oil-drill, why not banning whaling as well.

“Maybe Norwegian Labour Party would also support a permanent ban on whaling. Norway continues to commercially hunt minke whales” by Water_man1111 (2019).

“Norwegian minke whale hunt is on decline and has been for the past decades. Domestic consumption of whale meat rates as very low and the tiny market that exists internationally is saturated by other nations that still allow whaling. I believe Norwegian whaling is a history within the next 10-12 years even without a ban. Currently there are more important fights that require out attention” by Hesjtag (2019).

“Good news. Hopefully it is a start of a more considered approach to their impact on eco-system, specifically their ongoing commercial whaling industry” by Jameshamilton1 (2019).

“Isn’t Norway still hunting whales?” by Laurajdavies26 (2019).

“When will they stop whaling though?” by Scott.willing (2019).

While Norwegian image is uplifted for protecting the ocean, no general awareness about Norwegian whaling is observed, but the acknowledgment of other important battles to fight is clearly present.

Whale Meat Dining

Rorbua is a restaurant in Oslo city centre serving traditional Norwegian cuisine. There are 939 reviews including 395 written reviews on the restaurant page on TripAdvisor ("Rorbua ", 2019), and it is highly recommended for authentic taste of Norway.

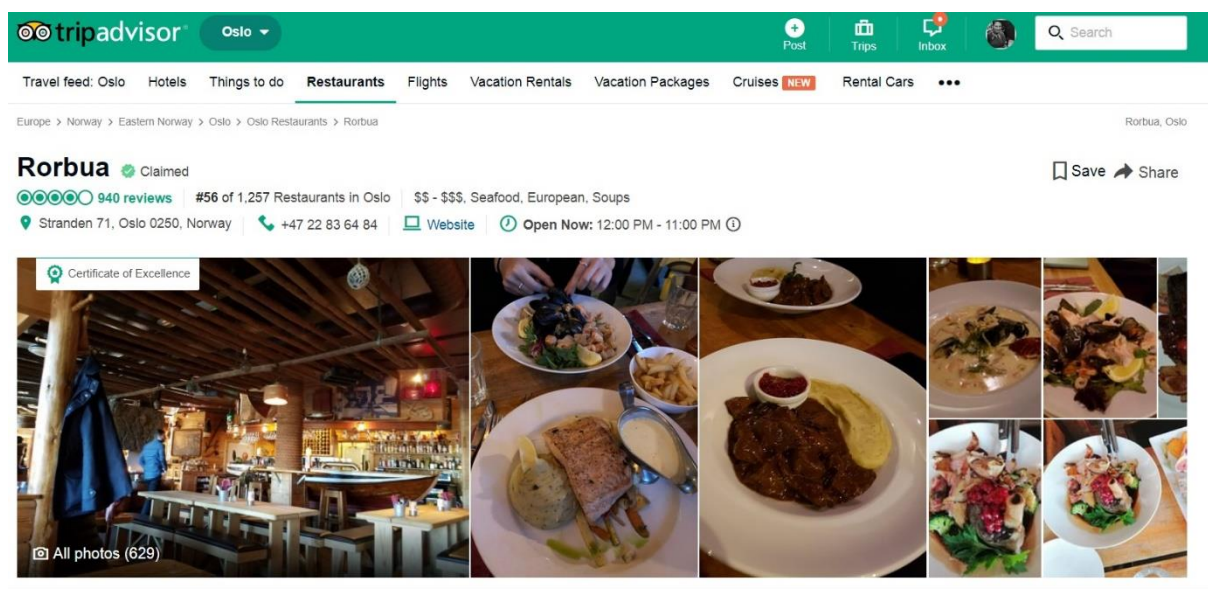


Figure 12. Screenshot of Rorbua Restaurant TripAdvisor page

“Just try the whale steak! The restraint is a bit pricey but the food is outstanding and delicious. I’d definitely recommend the whale steak for everyone who likes steaks, its taste is quite original, it is neither fish, nor meat” by Alexander K (2016).

“Exceptional! The dishes were peculiar and all based on products one could only find in Norway, which isn't a common feature amongst restaurants of the same level in Oslo. I tasted whale and reindeer roasts, which were as good as they are uncommon, as well as the various fish preparations they serve locally. Even the desserts were amazing! Overall, I have to say I've had a spotless experience, at a fair price” by Felice C (2019).

“Authentic reasonably priced Norwegian dinner. Close to our hotel, in search of authentic traditional options, this place was great. We got the Norwegian platter which was fantastic. Never had whale before but it was delicious. Staff was very nice and friendly. Would definitely recommend” by Nightcrawler1986 (2019).

“Fantastic taste of Norway. I came here on my first day in Oslo. Located along the harbour it's a lovely walk from National Theatre station. I ate the taste of Norway (try reindeer, whale and deer) and it was delicious! Saw a lot of locals as well as groups. I loved the interior and the staff were very attentive, I highly recommend this place” by EllieChapman13 (2018).

“Visited on the culinary tour! We stopped here for lunch on the culinary tour and it was amazing. I only wish I had found it earlier in my holiday because I would have been back. A tremendous selection of fish including shark and whale. I also loved the atmosphere and the boat shaped bar” by Carole R (2017).

“Try whale! Rustique place where you can actually have whale! So fun to try new things. I can really recommend the starter plate with little things of different

Norwegian specialties, share one for two persons or you won't make it through the main course!" by Resgladajag (2017).

Only 2 reviews from 395 mentioned that they were disturbed or surprised by whale meat on the menu. These people never mentioned that this fact made them to leave the establishment, in fact they enjoyed their dining time and recommended the place for an authentic experience.

"It's cosy and nicely decorated, with a lot of wood. My wife chose the reindeersteak, I went for the reindeer and moose stew, and we were both happy with what we got. You can also eat whale here, which attracts a lot of people. We, however, refuse to eat whale meat, even if it is from a non-protected and common species. Desert was nicely presented and tasted very good. Waitresses were friendly, so we had a very nice evening" by KoenDT (2017).

"Average. The place looks nice, the vegan waiter is very nice, although this place is understaffed for the size. They serve whale,.. well not ok but still legal. Food is average, it taste at least something,.." by Udos711 (2016).

Another place with the local cuisine is Arctandria restaurant in Tromsø ("Arctandria Restaurant," 2019), which is very popular among tourists coming to town. It has 331 reviews including 153 written reviews, and only 7 among those had "a reaction" on whale meat, however, no one left the restaurant, rather noted that if you do not accept whaling, there are some other options on the menu.

"This is authentic Norwegian cuisine. Do not go if you are not adventurous. Having said that there was a very nice risotto on the menu that was vegetarian. We had seal and whale (yup you read that right). The menu is very eclectic. Service is great" by Hindugoddess (2019).

“We had the Skarven platter with samples of 8 different appetizers, enough for two bites each, so we shared the one platter between the two of us. For entrees, we got the cod trilogy and whale steak. It was interesting to taste the differently matured cod. Regardless of one's position on whaling, we had to try the unique regional cuisine. The whale steak was so richly dark that it seemed rare, but it tasted like a delicately grilled beef steak. We closed with three desserts: chocolate fondant (their most popular dessert), fruits of the Arctic (beets in ~5 ways), and milk kefir foam with berries. I enjoyed the kefir most, very fresh after such a heavy dinner.”
Maryellensteves (2019).

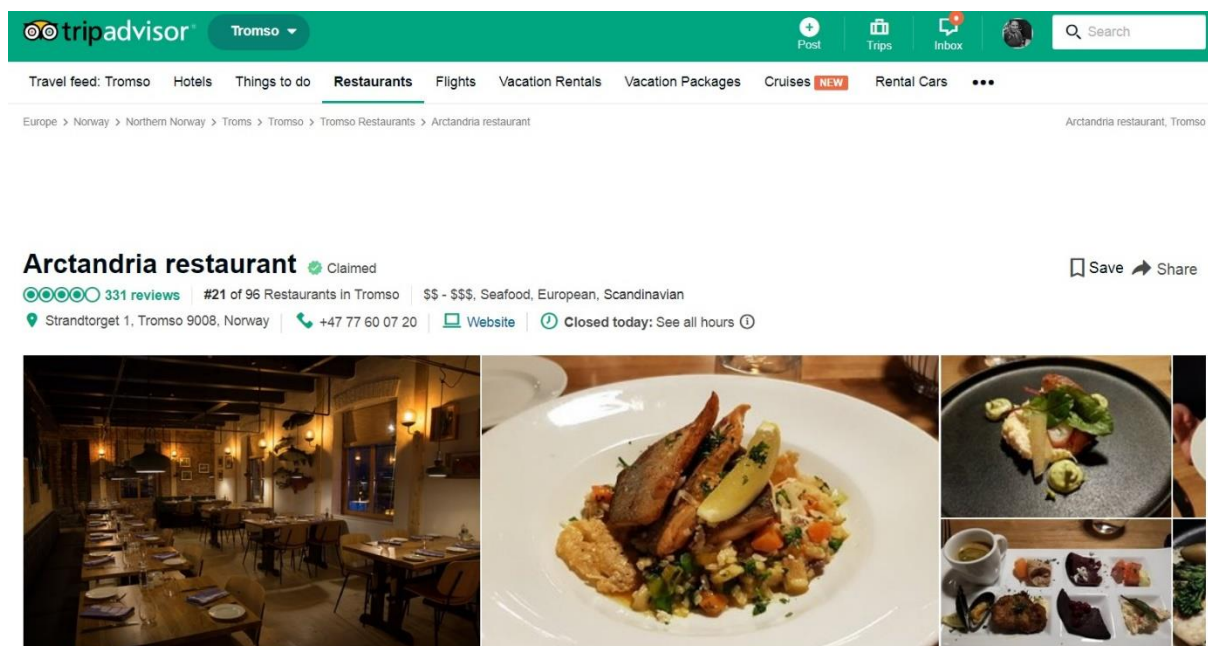


Figure 13. Screenshot of Arctandria Restaurant TripAdvisor page

“Very nice evening. Had dinner with my daughter. As starter we had mussels. Nice, but small quantity to be honest. As main we had reindeer. That was fantastic. It is a fish restaurant but would recommend it. They also serve whale. As we are against whale fishing we subtracted one star even we recognise it is locally accepted”
Versteje (2018).

“DO NOT EAT WHALE! Let me take this hit for everyone and save you the horror of eating whale meat. It is grotesque, disgusting. This is not the restaurant's fault!! I quite liked this place. We tried 3 appetizers, all great. My friend ordered the reindeer/grouse dish and it was the best meal any of us had in Tromso. Of course, I only had a taste because I ordered the whale steak. As soon as it was put in front of me I said "I can't eat this"; but I forced myself to eat it. I'll sum up the experience thusly: when the waitress came to take our plates, I pointed at mine and asked "Do people generally like this??" to which she chuckled and said "Well... I don't like it". Please take heed!” by Lizafred (2018).

It is unknown whether tourists were aware of the opportunity of dining on whale meat and it was the attraction they were seeking for, or their initial intention, or they made a decision to try whale meat while being already in Norway. Some of the tourists however mention in their reviews that they chose the restaurant because of the recommendations online. It is worth noting that only whale meat rose the questions among tourists, no one questioned the meat of moose or a reindeer, which leads to more questions which animals are “fine” to consume and which are not and whether it has anything to do with humanising the whales.

Some reviews highlight that they were surprised that whale did not taste like fish, but more like an ordinary beef; this only confirms the lack of overall knowledge.

No one among the TripAdvisor reviewers justified their whale meat choices compared to Instagram. It has been observed that some people seem to be in a guilty position and justify the reasons why they tried whale meat, such as a unique opportunity, once in a lifetime experience of local food in Norway, despite one's views on whales.

Some tourists by posting their whale meat dish photos on their Instagram accounts (e.g. Behradeats, 2017) apologise for tasting the whale meat, acknowledging “I never thought I

would”, “I never will again”, “But you only live once”, see Figure 14, only confirming that whales affect people’s emotions. In other words, there is no justification - eating whale is wrong despite the motives. Even non-vegetarian people may choose not to eat whale meat, which only confirms the strength of whale symbolism.



Figure 14. Screenshot of the Instagram user post

The restaurants serving whale meat are referred to as traditional and authentic. Several other particular words were utilised to describe tourists’ whale meat dining experiences: “Norwegian speciality”, “unusual and rare”, “interesting”, “uncommon”, “peculiar”, “not easily available elsewhere”, “authentic”, “only found in Norway”, “classic Norwegian”, “taste of Norway”, “celebration of Norwegian tradition”, “Norwegian heritage”, “culinary experience”.

It can be assumed that people choosing to dine in this type of establishments, are more open and accepting of whale meat and perceive it as a traditional taste of Norway. The same type of

people is also the ones that compare different restaurants and enjoy uploading photos of their meals.

Many comments reflect on how a western and modern country as Norway can still practise the apparently barbaric whale hunts. There supposedly is no need for whale meat to be consumed in order to survive. There is already a food industry and domesticated animals, which is just yet another ethical issue. It is also believed that as long as there is demand on whale meat, there will be the hunt, and it is not the countries that should be boycotted but the establishments promoting and selling whale meat.

“Maybe before boycotting tourism in the entire countries, it would be interesting to simply boycott restaurants or shops selling whale. I went to Northern Norway last year, and frankly, I was shocked a few times while looking for the restaurants on the web, I read tourist reviews like “fantastic”, “I finally tasted whale meat”...well to begin with, do not “taste” and do not spend money in the places where it is cooked/sold” by Virmunz (2019).

When it is searched for #whalemeat on Instagram, 3281 photos appear, according to the marked locations, the photos are either taken in Norway, Iceland or Japan. Most of the photos designed are very nice and look like a culinary experience, the people behind the international profiles are travellers and “foodies”, seemingly more open to new tastes, see Figure 15.

The hashtag of #hvalkjøtt which means “whale meat” in Norwegian generates 961 photos (<http://www.instagram.com>). The photos and the descriptions of these photos are associated with family summertime and grilling season among Norwegians. It is connected to outside activities, leisure time and anticipations of delicious dinner, which is grilled whale meat, see Figure 16.



Figure 15. Screenshot of Instagram whale meat hashtag

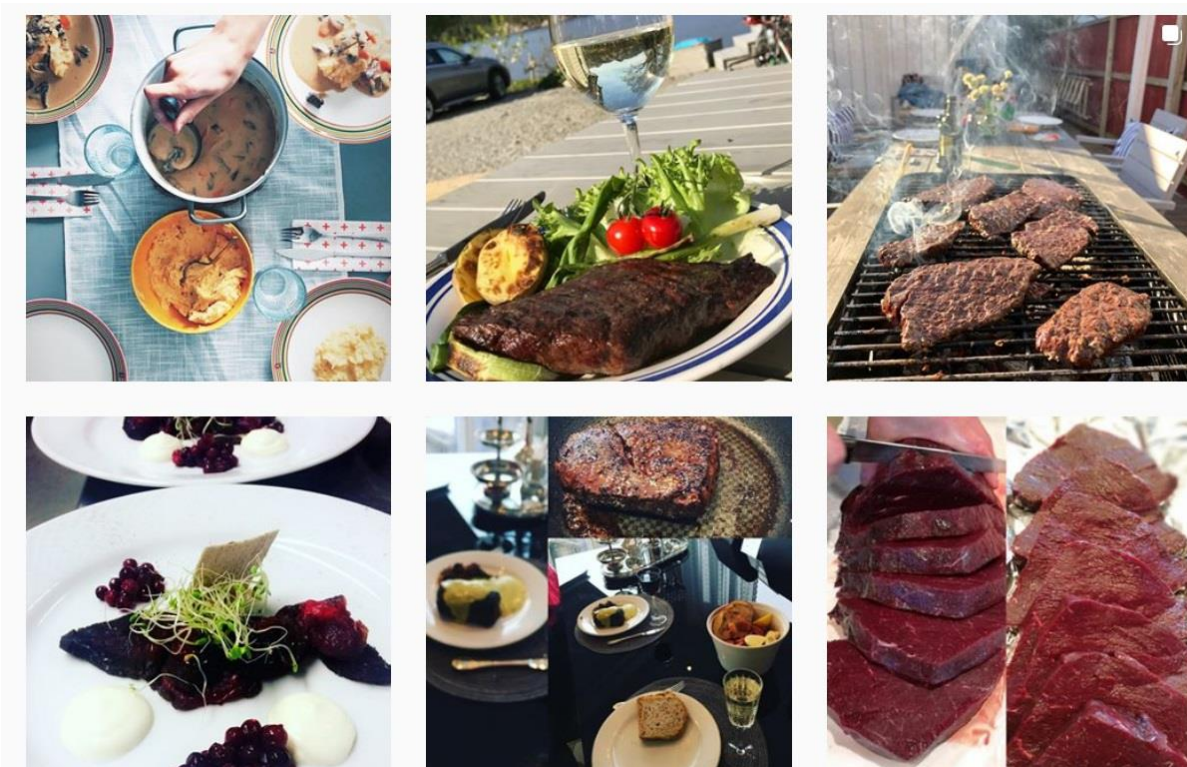


Figure 16. Screenshot of Instagram hvalkjøtt hashtag

People posting their whale meat culinary experiences do receive some rare comments of disgrace and how people should be ashamed of posting something so horrendous. Those particular comments come from vegans.

There are definitely different types of people regarding their attitudes towards whale meat:

- ordinary Norwegians, mostly from Northern Norway, associating whale meat with summer season enjoyment;
- the tourists who visited Norway, gave a try to the whale meat, liked it and encouraged others to tasting Norwegian traditional meal;
- the tourists who visited Norway, tried whale meat and felt guilty, or hesitated and never tried;
- those who never visited Norway and never tried whale meat, even the thought of trying it is disgusting to them and repelling (these were mostly those who had never been to Norway and just express their opinions online).

One general impression is that attitudes towards whale meat dining vary greatly, and are mostly related to personal attitudes and tastes.

Chapter V - Discussion

Findings Consistent with Previous Studies

Within the discourses there were located various dilemmas linked to whaling and whale-meat consumption. This helped to acknowledge the complex nature of people's attitudes towards countries practicing whaling and whales themselves. Particularly, tourists point out the struggles of whether it is a right thing to eat an animal, they thought they would never eat it, or generally they care about admiring the wildlife, but being on a journey brings a once in a lifetime opportunity of a culinary experience. These struggles are also highlighted by Mkono (2015), and are common for people traveling to rare destinations with authentic cuisine. It was not clear, however, how tourists dealt with these contradictory emotions. It has been observed that in Tromsø there were more tourists than in Oslo highlighting the existence of whale meat on the menus, perhaps, that by default people who chose to visit Northern Norway are more fond of natural experience and nature itself, willing to try more. Among reviews to the Oslo Restaurant Rorbua there were hardly any comments towards them serving whale meat. One can only speculate that the tourists coming to Oslo are often those who do not get to experience a lot of nature and are distant from the image of whaling; but they also are trying traditional novelty tastes.

People do not tend to discuss the meat-eating unless they do comment on the restaurant webpage, or they are genuine food enthusiasts. The majority of discourses are about irrelevant tradition and such cruelty towards humans-like creatures. Which is consistent with the numerous previous studies (Kramvig et al., 2016; Kristoffersen et al., 2016; Tjernshaugen, 2018; Todal, 2018), describing the symbolism of whales and their mysticism. There is another important aspect of the concerns towards whales besides the whaling itself – their well-being in the oceans. Not drilling oil at the whales' big habitats and the plastic pollution are big concerns. On the photos about approving non-oil territories, everyone was “cheering for

Norway” for making the right decision, which only influenced positively Norway’s image, and their continuing whaling seemed insignificant.

Views of people in general differ from those of whalers of Norway as described in literature review. In this case, to the tourists a cultural tradition as whaling seems to be more repellent than attractive, to the fishermen it is different. According to Tjernshaugen (2018) and Todal (2018), the fishermen recall that there were occasions when tourists participated in the hunting trips, while now no one cannot possibly imagine organised trips like this. The fishermen sons choose not to participate in whaling; tradition stops to exist when it is not practised. It seems there is a niche market for those interested in small coastal traditions, mostly among Norwegians themselves. However, generally on a big scale whaling does not add to the cultural mosaic of Norway. Contrary, whale meat is not initially an attraction factor to visit to Norway, but according to those who chose to dine on whale meat, do recommend it to try as an outstanding taste of Norway. However, these people seem to be exactly the niche, that initially are keen on trying all new and exotic and traditional to the place of destination.

As free as it is possible to express yourself online, it carries another side of these manifestations – emotions. This makes it challenging for researcher to draw conclusions. There are definitely emotions involved because whales are being equated with people which decreases the distance between humans and animals and increases the attachment (Mkono, 2015). It has been observed that there are two main types of emotions within the whaling discourses – anti-whaling extremists and the genuine whale lovers. It is consistent with the previous research (J. Higham & Neves, 2015; Kramvig et al., 2016), where authors highlight the difference between the extreme anti-whaling individuals, often with limited knowledge and those who care for whales well-being and for spreading the awareness of the current issues. The current discussion involves many emotions and, therefore, makes it a complex issue to investigate. Feelings and emotions are somewhat caused by certain stakeholders, others come with the strong internal

and external values and views. Additionally, campaigns and advertising do cause emotional response by promoting the bloody photos, which is unavoidable. The researcher did not choose the way of dealing with these expressed emotions, rather choosing to handle this topic with the awareness of these affections being out there.

Many anti-whaling views come from the false information that all of the whale species are endangered. It seems from the information presented that knowledge may not be related to the attitudes and that if attitude change is the aim of environmental education campaign, then the use of knowledge might be misleading. Even the experts themselves are misleading by publishing incorrect facts, or inconsistent information. For instance, when the facts about minke whales not being endangered are presented, people's attitude towards whaling generally do not change, because they do mean that whales should not be hunted and harmed in any way. This could be due to several different reason, such as environmental reaction, personal views and attitudes, etc. This is where emotions play a significant role in destination image formation, but so do values. There is an obvious disagreement among people whether non-endangered species can still be hunted or none of the animal-hunt is sustainable anymore and, therefore, must be stopped. It is also highlighted by Ris (1993) that the argument against whaling can no longer be based on preventing the extinction, so a different rationale is required, such a rationale is a "new world moral and ethical standards". Perhaps, this is the time for new traditions to be established.

Often people even with little or limited knowledge have their views and assumptions about whaling; and many are not aware of ongoing whaling in Norway, those who are aware on the other hand do not know about the way whaling is carried out in Norway and its strict regulations. Learning and knowledge are critical. It was, therefore, emphasised by many, that one does not simply choose to boycott the countries, but to go places and constructively learn from the travel and spread awareness. However, it is important to remember that it does not

necessarily mean that the gained knowledge will change the decisions towards whaling or countries continuing whaling. The dissimilarities towards whaling are due to cultural differences together with varying geographical distance to a certain destination, which possibly cause significant variations in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards that destination (Prebensen, 2007). Thus, regarding the destination management, it is important to examine the differences between images among people from different nations representing different cultures, in order to understand potential tourists' images of a place and in choosing the right names and attributes for the goal market.

As further observation regarding the expressed emotions, it is discussed through the literature review that the process of destination image formation includes a number of affective aspects. Much of environmental attitude literature has focused on the cognitive bases of attitudes even though the environmental education literature acknowledges, that information – the cognitive component of the image – are not sufficient to produce changes in attitudes and thus behaviour. In other words, even when people know and are aware, it does not guarantee that they change their behaviour. The final destination image is the product of people's mind and according to Stepchenkova and Morrison (2006), potential travellers make their journey decisions based on assumptions and perceptions, rather than facts.

Norway does market itself as a destination for magnificent nature experiences such as fjords, Northern lights and endless opportunities for outdoor activities during both summer and winter. When it is searched for the best places to observe whales, Norway is not even on the list of the top 15 destinations. Neither does Norway promote whale-watching. The reason for this is unknown. It can be speculated that it is due to the government's interest into continuing whaling and whale-watching does not seem a substitute for that. Possibly, as a suggestion it is worth looking at promoting photo-opportunities with whales and the Nordic nature while on whale safari trips, since it is not promoted as particular destination for whale watching. As previously

mentioned, whale watching is promoted for the rising of knowledge and environmental awareness, in other words for educational purposes in relation to whales; due to this message behind the whale safaris it makes it illogical to draw attention to whaling and tourism boycotting in this country. This is consistent with Beaumont's (1998) notes that boycotting traveling might be misleading and withdrawing information, that otherwise could have been gained via whale-watching, (as cited in J. Higham & Carr, 2002), as also previously discussed.

Although future research is required to gain more complete understanding of perception of Norwegian whaling practice, the findings indicate that whaling is not approved as a tradition to hold onto and does not add to the cultural mosaic of Norway, however, there is no direct evidence, whether it influences people's decision of traveling to Norway by a longer extent.

New Findings

When talking of whaling in Instagram, it is observed that the focus of the whaling discourses is Japan and Iceland, and somehow not Norway. The absence of Norway in whaling discussions has been a researcher's finding. According to Kozinets (2015, p. 191), "the absence of something researcher hoped to find is also a presence". It is as important to note that the expected findings were not there as it is to record results that were never expected to be found. The fieldnotes became the place where the lack of data turned into data. The reason why Norway is generally not in the scene when commercial whaling is discussed remains unknown, but it could be speculated that this is due to the fact that Norway claims its harvest to be sustainable, strictly regulated by quotas and hunting only minke whales, which are not near to be extinct. Another reason could be that Japan hunts in the Southern Ocean, where the population of minke whales remains unknown and not studied, so Japanese mean they pursue whaling for scientific reasons only, which according to several sources is not entirely true. The reason could be the high population of Japan compared to Norway or Iceland, with 127 million versus 5,2 million and 380,000 people respectively. In Iceland, on the other hand, it is allowed

to hunt fin whales, which are endangered. This makes Norway sort of to “stand out” as the “kinder one” compared to the other two whaling nations. Perhaps, this could be the reason people expressing strong feelings of anger and boycott towards Japan and Iceland, both to their tourism and their products, however, Norway remains rarely mentioned in those discussions. Which obviously does not have an impact on Norwegian destination image.

It is a basic and, perhaps significant, finding in this thesis that emotions can go both ways – both oppose and encourage traveling to a destination. Emotions have both personal and individual aspect, not least when posting comments on the Internet. People were willing to try whale meat as a traditional food served in restaurants, and even though voicing reservations, they found it as rare and significant experience. Hence, it cannot be assumed a priori that emotions will detract from a destination image, even when criticism is involved. As noted, before, destination images are complex issues.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There was no participation from the researcher’s side, therefore, no co-creation of data, but an intended bias-free data collection. However, the debates and the results above indicate the need for further investigation of possibly people’s backgrounds, as it was discussed how cultural values shape people’s attitudes. In the current study this information was not always available, as some of people’s profiles are closed for strangers. This could be achieved by another alternative for a netnographic method – participatory netnography - the researcher can select the participative method in order to gain depth behind human’s expressions, possibly receiving more detailed explanations and gaining the knowledge of the people’s backgrounds and their stands of environmental values, which can be helpful to draw more clear conclusions. Another option in addition to netnography can be the interviews with the key-informants, such as restaurant managers; this was the initial plan for the current research, however, all the contacted

persons in the industry either denied the interview or ignored the researcher, therefore the available resources were utilised.

Moreover, further research can be suggested, as for example an experiment with two groups of tourists, where one group can have 'a treatment' - a scenario including the commercial whaling, and comparing the results to the control group – no whaling, and observe if this anyhow impacts the image of Norway. Additionally, the methods can be combined - unstructured and explorative techniques via open-ended questions can be used successfully in destination image measurement along with quantitative techniques for further testing statistical aspects of the content (Prebensen, 2007) - whether the researcher would like to investigate the degree of whaling influence on Norway's image.

It is worth noting, that the necessity for further research may cease to exist in case of complete cessation of whaling in Norway. However, instead new research can be necessary for studying the role of whale-watching for the local communities, possibly fishermen and for the whales, if this is going to be the case.

Besides the "emotional" challenge, researcher has also faced the challenge of data analysis; when everything is archived and accessible especially in the case of textual data, that can be treated as both observational and as archival data - what to inscribe in the fieldnotes was challenging.

Another important aspect of the current research is the importance of the internet role which yielded endless opportunities for research. The data collection seemed endless. Internet is very communicative and reflective way of people's view and attitudes in its manifestations, as well as spreading their awareness. The exchange of information happens much easier than by traditional means, hence providing opportunities of expressing one's views and engaging in ambiguous discussions.

Chapter VI - Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth adding that the problem of whales and whaling perceptions among tourists is especially relevant for Norway, where whaling (commercial but with long traditions) and whale-watching exist simultaneously. The questions of whether continuation of whaling activity could be damaging to the tourism industry in Norway, or not, leaves an opportunity for future research. The extent to which whaling affects tourism of Norway remains unclear, however, it is not perceived by the world as a coastal tradition to preserve and does not add a cultural value. Perceptions of the whale meat dining, on the other hand, contradict some of those attitudes above, and are called as authentic Norwegian culinary experiences.

Norway remains a beautiful and attractive country in the eyes of tourists/potential tourists. Travelers often come for all the various natural experiences of Norway and are in fact unaware of ongoing whale hunts. It also seems that for Norway itself the continuation of whaling is also a matter of national sovereignty; the right to hold onto own traditions and “the attitude it's not going to be told by any other state how to manage environmental affairs” (O'Connor, 2018).

While whale-watching may have the potential to raise environmental awareness and knowledge about whales and their habitats (J. Higham & Neves, 2015) and additionally, an opportunity for the fishermen to shift their whaling income into income from whaling-safaris, it can be argued that with time even this type of tourism is likely to turn into production-consumption tendency. The questions are rising that how far and how long it will go before it as well as whaling becomes ethically incorrect, meaning that whale watching can be disturbing and damaging for the whales. It remains unclear what the return is of abandoning whaling all together for local communities and how big the impact can be; whale-watching trips in Norway are often just additional to the trips ‘fully-packed’ with northern lights chasing, dog sledging and hiking. Neither is it clear, whether whaling has a potential to remain a part of coastal culture, or it is a tradition that Norway has to let go off. The continuing whaling has been debated throughout

the social media, but there is no evidence that it prevents some tourists from visiting Norway, yet the ethical dilemmas are present.

This study contributes to tourism research in Norway by 1) raising awareness of the perception of whaling and whales globally, 2) highlights the history and importance of whaling for the small coastal communities, and 3) gives suggestion for further research. It also contributes to the use of netnography as a research tool, where it can be shown that attitudes and postings vary greatly down to individual level for the challenging and emotional issue of how whale perceptions relate to destination images.

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