

Transforming a Norwegian Landscape into an Iconic Tourist Attraction:

The Trolltunga Experience

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Image: Trolltunga, Norway. Opplev Odda ®



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Abstract

Trolltunga; one of Norway's iconic tourist attractions, has experienced an exponential increase in visitation from only a few, to thousands of visitors. Famous for its viewpoint cliff, reaching the cliff, however, is coupled to a total nine-hour hiking journey. It has been argued a person depicted on the edge of a dangerous cliff confronted with his mortality, is not regarded unique to our time. Such images do seem to generate a rather strong interest to today's traveler. Trolltunga not only appeals to experienced hikers but also draws in large groups of "first time" and less experienced visitors. Tourist attractions as Trolltunga are of key importance to tourist destinations as they attract high tourist flows. Sustaining positive experiences at such sites and developing a better understanding of the tourist experience is imperative for destinations. This study has aimed to develop a better understanding by means of exploring the tourist experience at Trolltunga. From a *dynamic* perspective, the visual experience by means of sightseeing and the physical experience of hiking have been analyzed. This paper presents unique insights of 139 tourists' experiences and viewpoints. On-site data sources include in-person interviews, observations, and photographic collections. Results have shown hiking was mainly experienced negative in terms of challenging and too long with feelings of fear and frustration. Sightseeing however, was experienced as sublime. This paper argues it is not the physical, but the visual as the central and positive aspect of the experience, and main driver of visitation. Results of this study agree with previous works in the literature, arguing for "the centrality of the visual" in tourism. This paper provides practical managerial implications based on study results and discussions.

Keywords: Tourist Experience, Iconic Tourist Attraction, Landscape, Visualism, Performance, Sightseeing, and Hiking.

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Introduction

The tourist experience is regarded the core “product” in the travel and tourism sector (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). The travel and tourism sector has developed rapidly and is a highly dynamic industry. The dynamism is marked by the changing profile, and tourists’ use of information and communications technologies (UNWTO, 2015). There is an increased demand among individuals for unique experiences, unusual places and activities (Scott, Laws & Boksberger, 2009). Tourists increasingly want to “experience something” (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). With a trend towards urbanization, nature has proved an interesting stage for inspiration, aspiration and spectacle. Nature has for many become an aesthetic luxury (Wilson, 1992). In the search for unique places and experiences, the “sublime” has seemed to be gaining ground; relating to a strong appreciation of the power and grandeur of nature (Cosgrove, 1998; Sternberg, 1997; Bell & Lyall, 2002). Tourism literature has identified a growing appeal and preference for nature as the post-modern expression. As a result, nature based tourism has flourished (Uriely, 1997).

Trolltunga; iconic nature attraction in Norway, has experienced an exponential increase in visitation within a four-year time span from just a few hundred to a yearly 70.000 visitors in 2015. The viewpoint cliff at Trolltunga known as the “Trolls’ Tongue” is reached by a nine-hour hiking journey bridging a twenty-kilometer distance. Reaching the viewpoint cliff is not a mere stroll, but a hike through different terrains and weather conditions climbing rocks and stairs on the way. Those who make it to the viewpoint cliff, stand on the narrow cliff gloriously overlooking the lake located 900 meters below. Once this moment is framed, the taken photographs are soon shared by tourists throughout social media platforms as part of the experience. Trolltunga has developed a strong virtual presence by shared photographs captured and shared by tourists at the site. As a result, Trolltunga has developed into a popular tourist attraction.

This paper has been inspired by the examination of how tourists shape particular sites and how activities become scripted in certain locations. In examining the latter, this study has particularly focused on exploring the visual aspect of the tourist experience. Tourism literature has argued that the visual is the central and the main aspect of the tourist experience (Urry, 2002; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Bell & Lyall, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Due to the importance of the visual, this paper has analyzed the visual experience of tourists “gazing” by means of the activity of *sightseeing*; referring to —the visual experience of — “sight seeing”. However as noted in contemporary tourism theory, reducing tourism to mere visual experiences alone has been criticized. Contemporary tourism theory argues for additional “performance” related aspects as part of the tourist experience. The resulting “performance turn” as identified in literature argues for complementing the study of the static visual gaze with additional active activities including bodily, physical aspects. The performance turn suggests that the doings of tourism are physical or corporeal (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov & Mansfeldt, 2008; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

In line with the contemporary tourism theory, this paper has empirically explored the tourist experience from a *dynamic* perspective by analyzing both visual and physical aspects of the tourist experience and performance related aspects. Performance in this study mainly refers to the physical aspect of the tourist experience. In this approach, the interaction between “place” and “performance” as suggested by Coleman and Crang (2002) have been explored.

As applied within the context of Trolltunga, this paper has explored the *visual* aspect of the tourist experience by exploring the tourists’ experience of sightseeing at Trolltunga. In studying sightseeing, this research has applied a performance-based approach by exploring visual activities of photography and image sharing as part of sightseeing. The *physical* aspect of the tourist experience has been studied by tourists’ activity of hiking. Moreover, in

developing a holistic insight, viewpoints on Trolltunga, pre- and post-experience aspects including expectations, further travel plans and sharing intentions have been analyzed.

The objective of this study has been to empirically explore the tourist experience as gained by tourists at iconic tourist attraction Trolltunga from a dynamic perspective. The main purpose of this research is developing a better understanding of the tourists' experiences at popular natural attractions as Trolltunga. The key for the tourism sector and research is developing a better understanding of the contemporary tourist experience at popular natural attractions and sustaining positive experiences. The importance lies in defining the central aspects of the tourist experience, what makes up for a positive experience and developing an understanding of the appeal of such popular natural sites. Tourism scholars have been invited to incorporate notions of both the visual, as active, physical aspects in the discussion and analysis of visitors' experiences on visitation (Reis & Shelton, 2011). It is argued a performance-based approach to exploring tourists and their experiences, provides ground for a more inclusive approach into the new millennium (Crouch, 2000). Based on contemporary literature and the context of this research, the following main research objectives have been stated:

- Exploring the experience gained by tourists at Trolltunga, by means of:
 - Exploring the visual experience of sightseeing
 - Exploring the physical experience of hiking
 - Providing insight into general viewpoints regarding the site Trolltunga
 - Proving insight into the tourist at Trolltunga

In line with the stated objectives, the following research questions have been defined:

- What is the tourists' experience of sightseeing and hiking at Trolltunga?
- What is the tourists' viewpoint regarding the site Trolltunga?
- What characterizes the tourist visiting Trolltunga?

In building on Chhetri, Arrowsmith, and Jackson this study has implemented the generic term “experience” to cover a wide range of subjective meanings and interpretations including experiences and encounters, resulting in feelings, moods and emotions of individuals moving through the landscape (Chhetri, Arrowsmith & Jackson, 2004). The latter experience perspective is applicable to analyzing hiking experiences, as stated by Chhetri et al. (2004). Data collection has been loosely based on the established theoretical framework “experienced landscape”. The experienced landscape as proposed by Hull and Stewart (1995) functions as a basis for analyzing individuals whilst hiking in nature (Chhetri et al., 2004).

At Trolltunga, tourists have been empirically observed and interviewed in-person and on-site during peak-season July 2015. Established tourism theory has functioned as a basis for systematic semi-qualitative and empirical exploration of observable and measurable phenomena at the site. Developing insight into the tourist experience from a contemporary perspective at popular iconic nature attractions is relevant to the tourism sector and research. Research on tourist experiences support a better understanding; in particular, what is considered positive or negative during visitation (Mossberg, 2007). A better understanding of what is central to the experience and what is regarded most positive and negative is valuable for the tourism sector in facilitating the grounds for new experiences to develop, and sustaining unique experiences (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal, 2014). This research has aimed to contribute to the development of new insights as relevant to current tourism research, and a source for practical insights as useful for the tourism sector. However theoretically based, this paper proposes a set of managerial implications. *Managerial implications* refer to information as derived from empirical research relevant to the tourism sector in developing insights and making practical decisions (Jaworski, 2011). Managerial implications are to be of particular relevance and interest to destinations and nature attractions within a Norwegian destination context.

Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to provide a theoretical basis and framework for exploring the tourist experience from a dynamic perspective, as relevant in the context of Trolltunga. Based on theory, a research model is presented in this section.

The Tourist

In defining the tourist, Cohen (1979) stated “the tourist” does not exist as a type. The tourist can be regarded a voluntary visitor to a place outside the area of location with recreational motives (Cohen, 1979). This study has implemented the generic term “tourist” in building on the notion of Jacobsen stating that the term tourist can be used as a common denominator for several more or less connected symbolic actions away from home (Steenjacobsen, 2001). Tourists “gaze” at objects and sites of interest and travel to particular places of interest. Nature can be consumed through the screen, however in order to be in awe of its beauty, one has to see for oneself. It is only then we know what it is *really* like (Urry, 2002). Bell & Lyall have identified the “gaze collector”; an individual who adds up the “experience of having seen” to one’s “gaze collection” (Bell & Lyall, 2002). Tourists have been regarded increasingly independent and in control, as “producers” rather than consumers. The contemporary tourist is actively engaged in the creation of, and the tourist experience itself (Ek et al., 2008). The contemporary tourist has been increasingly characterized as “independent traveler” developing his or her own experiences. The independent tourist creates a sense of independence, along with an enhanced identity (Shephard, 2003; Caruana & Crane, 2011).

Tourist Attractions: Landscape Features

Tourist attractions have been characterized with the reference to the resources on which they are based and or the visitor experience they can offer. Visitor attractions have been associated the main reasons for visiting destinations and considered arenas for unique

experiences (Jensen, 2014). Tourist attractions by nature simply become attractions if under the “gaze” of tourists (Lovelock, 2004). Attractions can be created by the tourists themselves with the aim of raising the aesthetics of an area. Tourists may develop increased attention of objects or artifacts that may be perceived appealing to other tourists (Hallin & Mykletun, 2006). Some attractions are landscape features. A landscape is constructed from a number of constituent parts possessing unique features and characteristics. The scene is composed of a combination of parts within the landscape and seen as a whole (Bell, 2012). In characterizing landscapes, within the context of Europe one can make the distinction between the beautiful, the picturesque and the sublime (Greer, Donnelly & Rickly, 2008; Zaring, 1977; Jacobsen & Tømmervik, 2016). The beautiful is perceived well formed, balanced and aesthetically pleasing (Lothian, 1999). The beautiful is characterized neat, clear, harmonious and self-contained (Schönle, 2000). The picturesque is agreeable in pictures (McGillivray, 2008). The sublime is characterized threatening, wild and uncontrollable. The sublime relates to a feeling of awe and reverence (Schönle, 2000). Burke (1998) outlined the sublime as a passionate response to an object, resulting in astonishment, terror, and dread (Burke, 1998). Kant (Immanuel) noted the pleasurable side of the sublime, in such that the individuals mind can be both attracted as repelled by an object. The sublime is sometimes experienced positive to such extent, that it prompts “nature worship” (Belk & Costa 1998). In such cases, nature is regarded a force that, much like a sublime experience, supplies a blend of pleasure and fear (Canniford & Shankar, 2013). The overall emotion in relation to the sublime can as opposed to a feeling of overwhelming pleasure or joy, become an unpleasurable feeling of distress (Schönle, 2000). Bell and Lyall have developed the concept of the “modern sublime”; referring to observation platforms designed in order to facilitate possible dramatic “modern sublime” experiences (Bell & Lyall, 2002). Gibson in pointing towards observations platforms posed the theory of “affordances”. An affordance relates to the qualities of an

object or environment that communicate certain opportunities for involvement and activities. Objects and environments that communicate such affordances are perceived particularly attractive (Gibson, 2014). The overall sense of a place and the emotions as provoked result in a collection of subjective qualities experienced and expressed by people. Perceived qualities depend on the features as part of a place. In expressing the aesthetics of a place, the overall sense of a place depends on the combination of the whole as opposed to its individual parts (Bell, 2012).

The Tourist Experience

It is agreed in academia that an experience is based on an individual perception developed in the context of various interactions and resources (Prebensen et al., 2014). A perception is defined as to become aware of something through the senses, a way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted (Perception, n.d.). Perception (via MacLeod) can be defined as the process by which things; events and relationships become phenomenally here, now and real. In taking notice of an image as available to the eye, empiricist philosophers have been concerned with the inverted image problem; experience (Braustein, 2014). A perception can be analyzed as the perceptual quality of the experiences aroused (Hochberg, 1956). Through active engagement, a perception becomes a collection of information about the place. A perception is derived from the active engagement with the environment, as the activity of walking which works from one vista to another moving around an object of interest (Gibson, 2014). Experiences and perceptions are characterized as subjective, intangible, continuous and highly personal phenomena (O'Dell, 2007; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Experiences are recognized as complicated psychological processes (Selstad, 2007; Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie, 2010). An experience is referred to as the moment-by-moment lived experience or the evaluated experience. The evaluated experience is often the main focus in research, based on a person who is engaged in an occurrence physically,

emotionally, spiritually and or intellectually (Gram, 2005). The tourist experience can be regarded a distinct, important and exceptional phenomenon distinguishing itself from frequent leisure activities (Cohen 1979; MacCannell, 1976). The tourist experience is regarded different from everyday experiences (Graburn & Barthel-Bouchier, 2001; Vogt, 1976). The tourist experience is dynamic as emerging from the interaction with the environment (Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998). Experiences, memories, and emotions as derived from an experience are specifically related to a place (Morgan et al., 2010). A leisure experience is subjective and can be interpreted by studying and observing an individual involved in the experience and the specific settings where the actual experience takes place (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006).

The visual experience. In cultures with high developed technologies, nature can be regarded a place where one can indulge its dreams in (re) establishing contact with the “origins of life” (Bell & Lyall, 2002). Visualizations of nature can be consumed through the screen, however in order to be in awe of its beauty, one has to go and see for oneself. It is only *then* we know what it is really like (Urry, 2002). “Visual experiences are essential in current tourism and sight impressions have been a significant topic in tourism research” (Steenjacobson, 2001, p. 100). The tourism industry can provide a structure in which tourists can view, experience and interact with nature (Higgins, 1996). The tourism sector can to various degrees control the formation of the tourist experience and the ways by which tourists come to understand and make sense out of what they see, and with what they interact (Markwell, 2001). Tourism literature has been dominated by “visualism” arguing for the centrality of the visual in tourism (Crawshaw & Urry, 1997; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). The tourist is strongly associated with eyesight and visual impressions (Jacobsen, 2004). From a mere visual perspective, tourists are at the scene gazing, however, not actually part of it (Urry, 2002). Urry and Larsen in later literature have reframed the visual and the gaze, arguing for

the importance of additional aspects as part of the visual. A landscape is not merely a place gazed upon, but provides a multitude of activities (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Additional aspects of the visual experience. Recent tourism literature has critiqued the separation between man and nature in reducing tourism to be merely visual experiences (Urry & Larsen, 2011). As derived from this critique new visual registers have been created through incorporating the concept of “performance”. In performance, spectators become active performers in places and spaces experiencing the environment by means of different styles and practices in extending the gaze. A landscape is not only a place gazed upon but provides a multitude of activities as part of the experience, as photography and image making (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Photography and electronic media reconfigure the landscape in which tourism occurs (Crouch, Jackson & Thompson, 2005). A growing body of research has aimed to capture the active, experiential aspects of tourism (Rakić & Chambers, 2011). There is evidence the increasingly active role of the contemporary tourist is supported in tourism research. Crouch et al. have pointed towards the role of digitization and photography as part of traveling and exploring. A contemporary tourist navigates on journeys through screens and scenery (Crouch et al., 2005). The “performance turn” in tourism builds on the active participant involved in physical, intellectual and cognitive activities (Ek et al., 2008). Urry and Larsen argue for the importance of active experiences in incorporating additional aspects as part of the visual tourist experience (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Experiences in natural environments are essentially about the engagement of an individual with the site. As part of the engagement with nature, besides the visual experience as derived from sight, other aspects are involved. Tourists are never merely perils of eyes (Edensor, 2006).

The physical experience. In going beyond the visual, individuals engage, encounter and grasp the world through a process of embodiment (Crouch, 2000). In social science, an increased attention has been given to the individual as the active player, in both everyday

practices as leisure. This perspective is informed by a discussion of the phenomena of performance and active embodiment, denoting the way in which an individual makes sense of the world. In performance, vision and the body interact. Separating the physical and mental has been critiqued as they are connected. This particularly applies to hiking in mountains; considerably playgrounds for a multitude of “soft” and “hard” adventure activities (Crouch, 2002). Bell and Lyall argue for a consolidation of the body in relation to physically energetic practices (Bell & Lyall, 2002). Several studies have aimed to unify perception and action (Turvey, 1977). The embodied approach has gained increased attention. As for actual bodily activity, David Leem started experimenting with visual kinaesthesia, part of the sensing of bodily movement (Lishman & Lee, 1973). The bodily movement has been analyzed through literal bodily action in a landscape. Embodied experiences are studied by proposing a multi-sensory hypothesis as based on the importance of the relationship between the sensory bodily experience, the mind and the landscape (Shepard, 2002). Csikszentmihaiyi has focused on the interaction and balance between the body and the environment. The proposed theory of “flow” relates to an individual’s skill level or capacity to the level of challenge posed to that individual when engaged in an intrinsically motivated activity (Csikszentmihaiyi, 1997). Bell developed the concept of “rediscovered sublime” referring to a modern movement and its emphasis on form and function of landscapes (Bell, 2012).

In exploring tourist experiences from a contemporary and dynamic perspective including active aspects of performance, an experiential approach can function as a basis for developing a better understanding. The experiential approach studies tourist experiences through an interactive process with the environment as based on “place” and “performance” (Coleman & Crang, 2002). The experiential approach is one of four standard approaches in research used to develop a better understanding of tourist experiences in including both the visual as embodied aspects. Both the activity and as what is seen and gazed upon, shape the

final outcome of the experience. The outcome is based on the active interaction between the individual and the landscape and can be mainly seen as “change” (Zube, Sell & Taylor, 1982).

Exploring the visual and the physical experience. The contemporary tourism theory of the “Tourist Gaze 3.0” (via Urry & Larsen) is based on the classic theory of “The Tourist Gaze” (via Urry). The reconfigured tourist gaze 3.0, in line with its predecessor the tourist gaze, regards the visual to be central of the experience. However, the tourist gaze 3.0 includes additional aspects of performance as part of the visual experience by means of several activities. Tourists are studied based on how they organize “gazes”, constructing and mobilizing places that tourists remember. Sightseeing and landscapes are not pleasing on their own; only once put into a visual and spatial order as framed (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Studying physical experiences can be based on studying the tourist experience by means of hiking through a multiphase perspective, as argued by Borrie & Roggenbuck (2001) and Clawson & Knetsch (2013). Hull and Stewart (1995) developed the theoretical concept of “experienced landscape” as applicable to studying hiking experiences and encounters in nature-based settings (Chhetri et al., 2004). An experienced landscape is derived from the “encountered landscape” including the views, objects, and people. Sequence, as part of the encountered landscape, refers to encountering the landscape in different phases by hiking (Hull & Stewart, 1995). An experienced landscape results in a set of feelings, thoughts and emotions as expressed by the individual (Chhetri et al., 2004).

Research Model

In exploring the tourist experience in the context of Trolltunga two main aspects sightseeing and hiking have been chosen as the main focus in empirical analysis. The research model as presented in Figure 1 has functioned as a basis for this research.

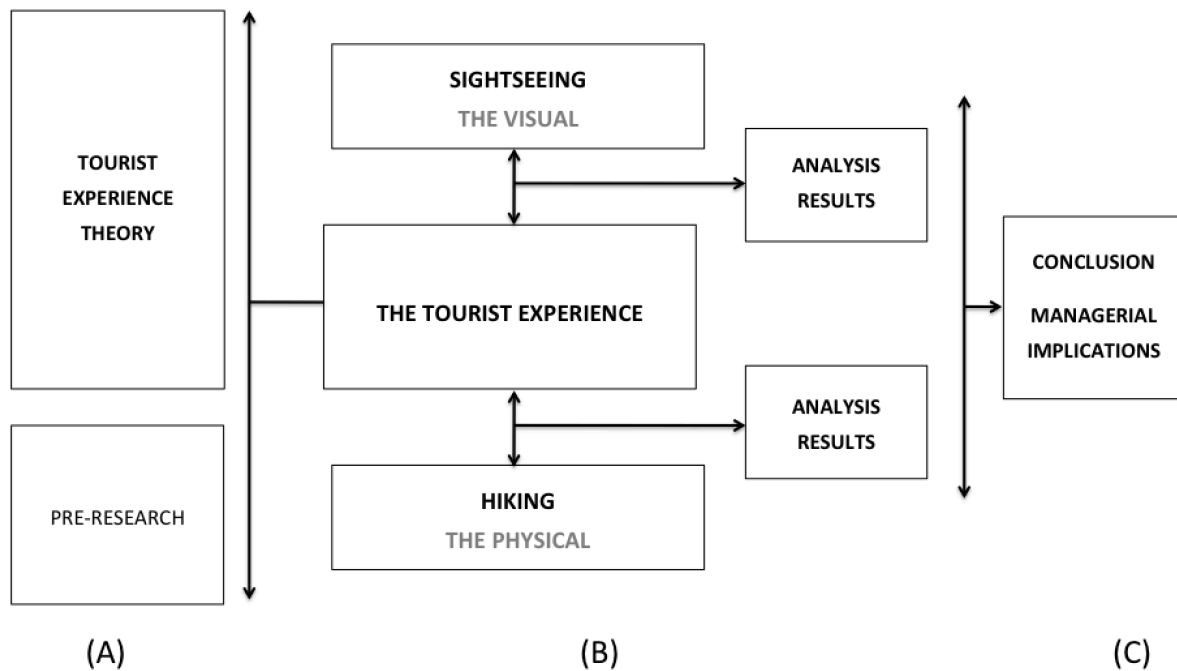


Figure 1. Research model for empirical exploration of the tourist experience at Trolltunga.

This research has been based on (A) pre-research and theory as related to exploring the tourist experience in the context of Trolltunga. The latter has provided a foundation for the analysis of the on-site tourist experience (B) as mainly explored by means of the visual experience of sightseeing and the physical experience of hiking at the site. The resulting tourists' experiences as derived from sightseeing and hiking have been measured as subjective qualities expressed by individual expressions, viewpoints, and perceptions. The main results as obtained from on-site data collection have been analyzed and categorized in either positive or negative experiences. The main results have been discussed which have led to (C) the conclusion and managerial implications. Furthermore, limitations and future research as part of the research have been presented.

Supplementary to the research model, notions of tourists' viewpoints regarding the site Trolltunga have been explored. Moreover, additional activities as part of the tourist experience of sightseeing including photography, image sharing, and post experience travel intentions have been analyzed. Due to the main focus on sightseeing and hiking in analyzing the on-site experience, additional aspects have not been included in the research model.

Research Methodology

This study with the aim of developing a better understanding of the tourist experience at Trolltunga as based on empirical analysis has implemented an exploratory case study design. *Exploratory* in this study refers to an investigation of a situation, which provides insights to the researcher. Developing a better understanding of a matter is best achieved by the implementation of a case study design. Case studies provide details of particular cases, allowing researchers to create or build new theories as well as reshape current theories to complex cases and new situations (Neuman, 2011). Tourist experiences are contextual, and therefore best studied in a case study design (Björk, 2014). As suited for case study designs a qualitative method is best applied in order to develop an overall better understanding (Neuman, 2011). Data, as derived from qualitative methods, gives the researcher the particular chance to apprehend both language and behavior (Morehouse, 1994). This study has aimed to establish a pattern based on the categorization of behavior, viewpoints and perceptions related to the tourist experience. A larger sample size was required in order to achieve the latter. Due to the larger sample size needed and limitation in time, a semi-qualitative method was regarded most effective and efficient in the case of Trolltunga.

Data collection

On-site data collection was implemented in this study. On-site data collection prevents the loss of important data between the actual on-site experience and its representation captured later. Larsen argues on-site measurement provides a more valid measure than recall methods (Larsen, 2007). Real-life experiences and observations are considered appropriate for gaining rich data (Prebensen et al., 2011). Even though the tourist experience goes beyond the actual site itself, the tourists' interaction with the environment and therefore the experience mainly develops on-site (Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2015).

Data has been collected on-site at Trolltunga throughout weekdays and weekends as in

different weather conditions including sunny and rainy days. The chosen timeframe of data collection was the summer season, July 2015; being the peak season for visiting Trolltunga.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 include information about the site, hike, and set-up of the study.



Figure 2. Location of Trolltunga, Norway (UT.no, 2016).

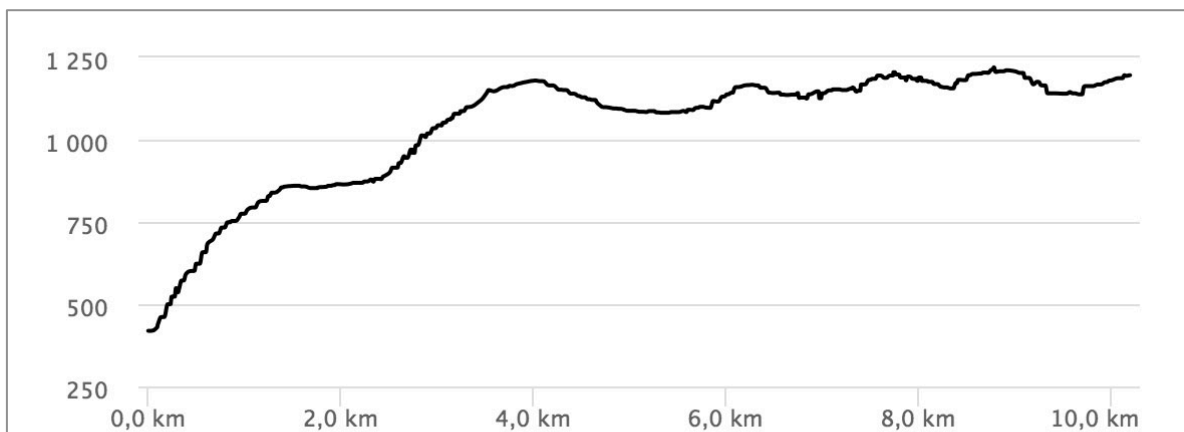


Figure 3. The hiking track and distance to the viewpoint cliff, Trolltunga (UT.no, 2016).



Figure 4. The data collection set up and location at the study site Trolltunga, Norway.

Photograph was taken by a researcher.

Sampling procedure

The aim was to establish a varied sample of domestic and international tourists, of a minimum 130 participants in capturing sufficient variance. Local residents were not included in the sample. In studying tourists' experiences and attractions in Norway local residents should be omitted (inhabitants of the municipalities where the attractions are situated) (Vittersø, Vorkinn, Vistad & Vaagland, 2000). Participants for the sample have been chosen randomly at the study site. Participants were visitors, namely tourists who had just finished their nine-hour hike at the site. All tourists were personally approached at the end of the hike by the researchers and asked whether they wanted to participate in the study. Not all tourists wanted to participate due to an indicated lack of time. Data collection has been conducted for two weeks throughout weekdays and weekends, during the summer season 2015 (end of June and beginning of July). The latter has been implemented aimed at acquiring a varied and representative sample.

Measurements

Neuman (2011) stated, "As researchers, we are encouraged to employ observation skills that allow us to examine something from multiple points of view" (p. 164). In improving examination, triangulation enhances the strength of research and data collection. Triangulation can be based on implementing multiple types of measurement (taking multiple measurements to cover all possible views), observers, theory (different theoretical views to plan and analyze data) or methods in combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (Neuman, 2011). This study has applied triangulation by means of multiple observers and multiple measurement methods including interviews and observations.

Interviews. In order to capture the nuances of the tourist experience, this study has chosen in-person interviews as the main data collection method. Tourists are interviewed at the end of the 20-kilometre hike at Trolltunga. The researchers have made use of seating benches and

tables as present at the site for conducting the interviews. Interviews were conducted in-person with a focus on each individual tourist. According to Larsen (2007), experiences refer to highly complex psychological processes and can, therefore, be considered a psychological phenomenon based in and originating from the individual tourist or visitor (Larsen, 2007). The latter implies the suitability for an individual in-person approach. The conducted interviews in this study were based on semi-structured questions. In order to capture the essential parts of the tourists' experience, participants were asked to briefly express their experiences and perceptions during the interview based on a set of pre-defined questions. Research by Kim and Fesenmaier (2015) supports that if we want to understand an experience we need to capture those essential aspects of emotion within touristic settings (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). The interview questions in this study were open-ended as opposed to closed multiple-choice items. An open-ended approach enables individuals to describe their experiences freely (Borrie, 1998). Recording participants own words reflect the real state of mind of the individual (Jacobsen & Dann, 2003). Interpreting expressions of the individual tourist, as derived from interviews orally or in writing, results in a better understanding of the experience in adopting a tourist perspective (Caru & Cova, 2009; Clawson & Knetsch, 2013). Expressions refer to the individuals' articulations, formulations, and representations of their own experience (Bruner, 1986).

In-person interviews are a proposed method for developing a better understanding of the tourist experience, allowing the researcher to better understand personal matters and seek clarification (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Jordan, Gibson & Phillimore, 2004). As in-person interviews allow participants to respond freely, it is argued participants more accurately report about their experience as it unfolds, less influenced by bias and pre-assumed relationships (Borrie, 1998).

In developing insight into additional viewpoints including viewpoints on the site

Trolltunga, insight into the visitor profile and related aspects of the experience, a semi-structured interview approach was applied. Semi-structured interviews are arguably the best method of choice in order to analyze participants' perceptions on several matters. Semi-structured personal interviews allow the researcher to gather descriptive data (Neuman, 2011).

In building on relevant theory, interview items as developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) in studying tourists' viewpoints on tourist destinations which have been successfully implemented in various studies, have been used as a basis for the development of question items for interviews in the context of Trolltunga. Question items as developed by Echtner and Ritchie include:

How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting destination (x)? (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

The developed question items as developed by Echtner and Ritchie have been changed in to the context of Trolltunga, resulting in interview items including:

How would you describe the landscape the hike brought you into?

Observations. This study has additionally collected data as derived from observations. Researchers can, besides what the tourist expresses, strengthen empirical validity by including observations in developing a better insight into what it is the individual actually does (Stewart, 1998). Tourism implies studying both mental and behavioral phenomena (Larsen & Mossberg, 2007). Studying mental and behavioral phenomena using multiple method data collection or triangulation provides information in varied forms of evidence and a large volume of information, resulting in data with great diversity (Creswell, 2014). Multiple method data collection strengthens the validity of data collection (Neuman, 2011). In implementing a multiple method approaches through conducting observations and interviews, this study has aimed to improve validity by implementing triangulation. All data has been systematically collected by a minimum of two researchers. The method of analyzing the

collected data is outlined in the successive section.

Observation items as proposed by Hull and Stewart (1995) have been used in this research. In studying the landscape encountered and experienced while hiking, the view, the people, and the objects as present in the landscape have been analyzed (Hull & Stewart, 1995). The latter items functioned as a basis in order to take into account relevant aspects as part of the tourists' experience of hiking and sightseeing at the site Trolltunga.

Data Analysis

Data has been analyzed as outlined in this section.

Interviews. Both sightseeing and the activity of hiking have resulted in a set of perceptions, feelings and thoughts as based tourists' subjective qualities expressed as derived from experiences at the site. In analysis results can either be categorized positive or negative as suggested by Chettri et al. (2004) in studying hiking experiences in natural environments. Komppula (2006) stated, "the expected outcome of an experience is based on expectations of feelings and emotions" (p. 147). There is evidence that emotional reactions represent the common core of human response to all types of environments (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974; Chettri et al., 2014). Feelings of affinity and thoughts for nature are key in analyzing experiences in natural environments. Collected data derived from interviews can be analyzed for patterns and categorized in either positive or negative outcomes (Chettri et al, 2002). This study has analyzed for positive and negative patterns, as suggested by Chettri et al. (2002). NVivo was used as the analysis tool in supporting effective categorization of responses, scanning for themes and patterns across all interviews in finding key adjectives expressed. Key analyzed adjectives of positive and negative perceptions were entered into SPSS 22.0 as nominal data of either positive or negative as for demographical data. The latter helped to define frequencies and correlating percentages due to the large sample for qualitative analysis and any possible differences between domestic and international tourists.

Observations. Field observations have been reviewed and discussed each day as part of data collection. The most salient observations were discussed and noted down each consecutive day. Observations have been grouped into categories during data collection at the site and after data collection off-site aiming to establish a pattern of tourists' behavior. Cohen argued touristic behavior reflects stable and clearly identifiable patterns (Cohen, 1972).

Results and Analysis

This section outlines and discusses the obtained sample, the main results, managerial implications and, limitations and future research.

The Obtained Sample

Not all tourists were willing to participate in the study, mainly due to lack of time. Even though tourists were tired after hiking nine hours at Trolltunga, the response rate is high. Due to the on-site personal approach, there were, however, fewer opportunities to "hide". Tourists willing to participate were interviewed and observed at the site by a minimum of two researchers. The tourists who made up the sample as derived from convenience sampling at the site consisted of a total [$n = 139$] participants who had just completed a hike at Trolltunga. The sample is described according to gender, age, country of residence, education, occupation, activity type, travel type, transport type, accommodation type and travel companions(s). In addition, insight into visitation drivers is included.

- Gender: In all, sixty-five percent of the participants were men and 35% were female.
- Age: The sample mean age was 28 years old, ranging from 18 to 40. With a standard deviation of 8 [$SD = 8$] the age included a kurtosis of .4 and a skewness of .2.
- Country of residence: The obtained sample consisted of 62% international tourists (foreign residence) and 34% domestic tourists (holding residence in Norway). Most participants were domestic as they resided in Norway (34%), followed by tourists from Sweden (12%), Germany (12%), Netherlands (6%), Canada (5%), United

Kingdom (4%), United States (4%), Belgium (3%), Finland (2%), Switzerland (2%), France (2%), Slovakia (2%), Poland (1%), Denmark (1%), Spain (1%), Austria (1%), Latvia (1%), Brazil (1%), Australia (1%), Argentina (1%), New Zealand (1%) and Romania (1%).

- Education: Participants in the study were generally highly educated individuals; most had obtained a bachelor degree (31%). Following degrees included a master degree (25%), secondary education (28%), a Ph.D. degree (3%) and primary education (3%).
- Occupation: Participants occupied a total of 30 different occupations. The largest group was comprised of students (41%). Following occupations included engineers (7%), teachers (5%), managers (4%) and researchers (2%).
- Activity type: Even though Trolltunga offers guided hikes and Via Ferrata (protected climbing) at the site, most participants in the sample commenced on a self-guided hike (98%). The choice of self-guide hiking lies in line with general visitation at Trolltunga.
- Travel type: Visitation was overall self-planned (95% of total participants) as opposed to organized by a travel agent (4%). Most were first-time visitors (90%).
- Transport type: Tourists mainly traveled to Trolltunga by private car (58%) or rental car (19%). Other transportation types as used included public transport (12%), hitchhiking (3%) and the use of a taxi (1%).
- Accommodation: As for accommodation, the most popular accommodation choice included the use a tent (65%). Further, most frequent accommodation choices included the use of a cabin (13%) and hotel (10%). The use of caravan (4%), B&B (4%) and friends and family (4%) was the least frequent used accommodation type.

- Travel companion(s): Most participants traveled in the companionship of others (96%); either as a pair (48%), in a group of three (21%) or four (23%). Few came alone (4%) or in groups larger than five (4%).
- Visitation driver: However not all participants gave an answer to their driver of visitation, the most often noted visitation driver was visiting Trolltunga as based on its visual appeal, of which participants indicated to be incentivized by the picture of Trolltunga they had seen online on social media (frequency of 60). Participants expressed Trolltunga to be regarded a must-see attraction most frequent (frequency of 22). Further expressions include participants perceiving Trolltunga a once in a lifetime experience (frequency of 18) or bucket list attraction (frequency of 12). Some participants indicated that by visiting Trolltunga, they would have something to brag about (frequency of 4). Further drivers included visiting Trolltunga as part of visiting friends and family (frequency of 10), hiking (frequency of 5), recommended by others (frequency of 4), fun (frequency of 2) or as part of a camping trip (frequency of 2). For some Trolltunga was merely a coincidental visit (frequency of 4).

Representativeness of the obtained sample. Based on the judgment of destination managers, Trolltunga site-owners and workers at the site, the obtained sample could be regarded a representative sample of the main tourists visiting Trolltunga during the summer season of 2015. The obtained sample of this study as based on country of residence, correlates with incoming tourists to Norway. As analyzed by Visit Norway Germans, Danes, Swedes, Dutch and guests from the United States are among the most frequent tourists in Norway. Further common countries include United Kingdom, Canada, Spain, France, Russia, China, and Japan (Visit Norway, 2016). Norwegians often spent their holidays within Norway, creating a large inbound tourism flow. Inbound tourism is popular, based on the finding Norwegian tourists accounted for 74% of all the guest nights in Norway in 2013. Tourist

arrivals and activity in Norway are based on measuring the number of tourist arrivals at hotels as the unit of measurement (Visit Norway, 2016). Domestic Norwegian tourists, as well as the most frequent incoming foreign tourists, were obtained in the sample of this research, increasing representativeness.

Main Results

This section describes the most salient study findings as derived from interviews and observations at the study site Trolltunga. The results section starts with an outline of the observed tourists' behavior at the site. These findings are followed by the outcomes of the tourists' visual experience of sightseeing and physical activity of hiking. Moreover, additional relevant aspects as part of the tourist experience are presented. Additional aspects include tourists' expectations, viewpoints on Trolltunga, further travel plans and sharing intentions by social media platforms. As there was no clear difference analyzed in experiences, ratings or expressions of domestic Norwegian as compared to international tourists, results present outcomes of domestic and international tourists as one single unit.

Tourists have been observed at Trolltunga during a two-week timeframe. Many tourists have been observed photographing the landscape. Even though Trolltunga offers various scenic lookout points, the main interest was the viewpoint cliff as shown in Figure 5.

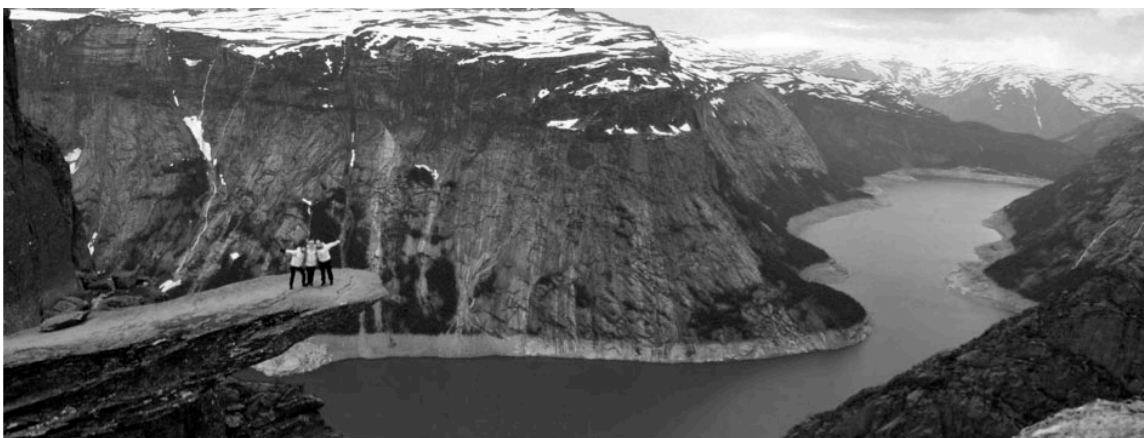


Figure 5. The viewpoint cliff, Trolltunga. Photograph was taken by a researcher.

At the viewpoint cliff, a long queue of tourists was observed. Tourists waited for the opportunity to walk on the cliff and capture a picture as standing or sitting on its edge. Generally, tourists did not start their return hike before having taken a photograph of themselves alone, or with their travel companions on the viewpoint cliff. Once this moment was captured, hiking became a hasty return. Tourists, as observed at the viewpoint cliff, are shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Tourists at the viewpoint cliff, Trolltunga. Photographs were taken by a researcher.

Most tourists have been observed hiking in a hurried manner, in particular during the return hike down. Hiking, in general, has been observed goal-oriented aimed at reaching the viewpoint cliff. A difference has been observed between the preparedness of tourists regarding footwear and hiking gear as suitable for a nine-hour hike. Many tourists were not well prepared as observed hiking without suitable clothing and shoes. Most of these tourists included first time and inexperienced hikers. In addition, these tourists had often not taken with them sufficient food and or drinks for the nine-hour hike. Tourists often carried with

them photography equipment. Further site observations included littering along the hiking track.

In exploring the tourist experience, the visual experience of sightseeing and physical activity of hiking as the main focus of this study, are presented.

Sightseeing whilst hiking at Trolltunga proved a highly positive experience. Participants were asked to express their experience of sightseeing by answering question item 1:

1. How have you experienced the landscape the hike brought you into?

In response to question item 1 responses [$n = 123$] as based on counting of positive and negative analysis of tourists' expressions, results have shown sightseeing was mainly perceived a positive experience (82%) and by some negative experience (6%). The outcome of the experience of sightseeing is visualized in Figure 7.

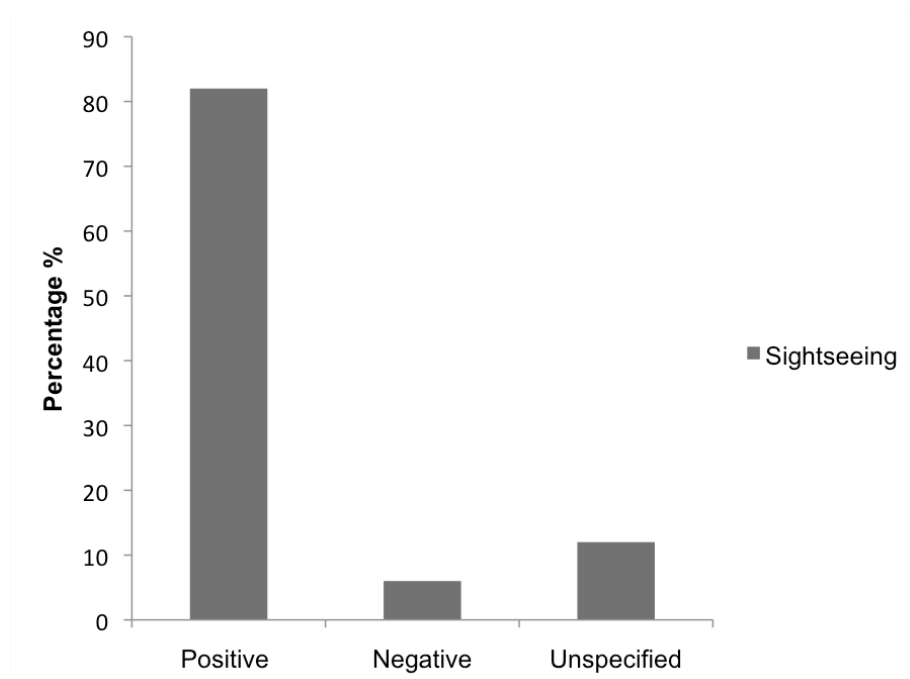


Figure 7. Overview of positive and negative sightseeing experiences.

Positive experiences were most often related to the notion of the viewpoint cliff in combination with the landscape. Analysis of the narratives with resulting frequent adjectives noted particular fit into three main categories of perceived landscape types of the beautiful,

the picturesque and the sublime. Derived from the analysis of qualitative expressions by means of counting; most participants perceived Trolltunga in terms of the sublime (61%). Further notions correlated with the beautiful (32%) and the picturesque (1%). The sublime (61%) was based on 26 counted unique adjectives. Ten most frequent noted perceptions in response to their thoughts on the landscape in line with notions of the sublime included: Amazing (14%), unique (11%), impressive (6%), majestic (3%), incomparable (3%), scary (3%), breathtaking (2%), one of a kind (2%), wild (1%) and raw nature (1%). A total of 44 counts (32%) were in line with the landscape as experienced beautiful. These notions included six unique perceptions including: Beautiful (27%), scenic (1%), unreal (1%), perfect (1%), classic Norwegian nature (1%) and natural (1%). Lastly, a single perception like a painting (1%) could be categorized picturesque.

In developing a better understanding of the experience of sightseeing, participants were asked about how they felt in relation to the landscape by means of question item 2:

2. How do you feel in relation to the landscape?

In response to question item 2 as part of the total positive analyzed scores, participants indicated to feel “very attracted” (34%) towards the landscape. The following most frequent stated feelings and emotions included: Feeling small in relation to the landscape (10%), emotionally engaged (6%), a feeling of awe (4%), moved (4%), relaxed (mind) (4%), relaxed (soul) (4%), proud (2%), overwhelmed (2%), one with nature (2%), humbled (2%), amazed (2%) and excited (2%).

As for negative experiences, a total 47 negative feelings were counted. Negative feelings included: Worried about the nature (30%), scared (in relation to the landscape) (23%), angry about the perceived rubbish (21%), irritated about seeing rubbish (13%), disappointed about seeing rubbish (9%), upset about seeing rubbish (4%) or sad about damage done to the nature (4%). Rubbish was experienced the main disturbing factor as part of the

experience of sightseeing. However disturbing, sightseeing as based on the landscape and the cliff Trolltunga was experienced highly positive. Responses that capture the most frequent experiences as based on the experience of sightseeing are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1.

Most frequent noted experiences based on sightseeing

Participant	Experience
Male, age 35, Norway	Very nice sightseeing, beautiful. I have enjoyed the view. I took a lot of pictures
Male, age 27, Netherlands	The landscape silenced my mind. Thrilled with adrenaline
Male, age 38, Sweden	Amazing view, Trolltunga is scary
Male, age 53, Sweden	Tired legs, the scenery is beautiful wherever you go
Female, age 18, Norway	Very Beautiful, dramatic, love nature, I get moved by it. Trolltunga really stands out in some way
Female, age 25, Norway	Overwhelming, moving emotionally. I felt humbled by the views
Female, age 23, Switzerland	Majestic, Indescribable. I am attracted to big spaces and here there are still some wild parts
Male, age 31, Poland	Untouched nature, a lot of rocks, very raw
Female, age 30, New Zealand	Really steep, these steep cliffs make it unique
Male, age 19, Germany	Amazing view, the feeling was great, especially on the top
Male, age 27, United States	I have not seen anything like this in America, it was striking empty, and the glaciers around
Female, age 25, United Kingdom	Tranquil, peaceful. I loved it. I felt so relaxed up there

Note. Participants are characterized as based on country of residence, gender, and age. Experiences include the viewpoints as based on narratives of the participants.

In developing a better understanding of the tourists' physical experience hiking at the site Trolltunga, participants were asked to express their experience of hiking by means of question item 3:

3. How have you experienced the activity of hiking?

As based on the outcomes in response to question item 3, hiking was experienced more negative than positive. This finding is based on analysis of categorizing and counting positive and negative expressions, resulting in more negative hiking experiences (56%) than positive experiences (44%). The balance of the outcome is visualized in Figure 8.

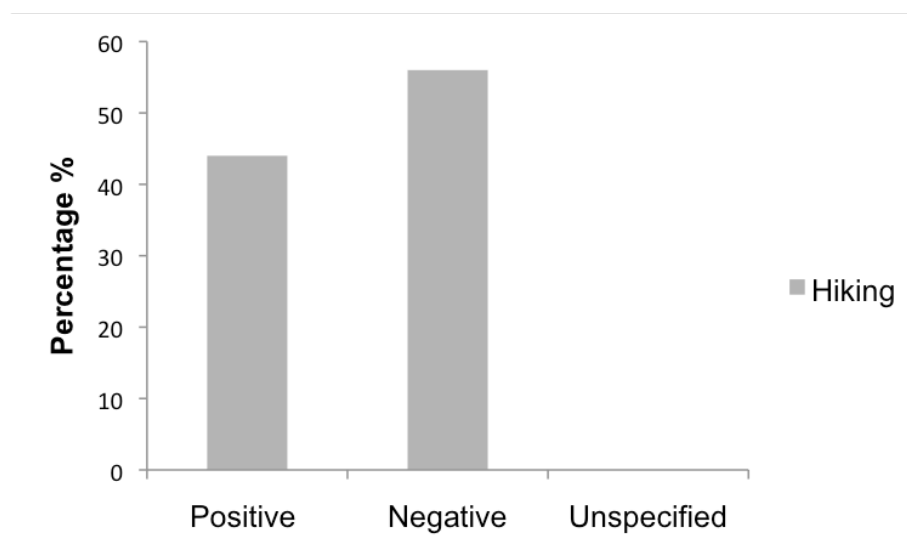


Figure 8. Overview of positive and negative hiking experiences.

Overall, in analyzing the difference between the experience of hiking and the experience of sightseeing, hiking was perceived a more negative experience than sightseeing. The balance of perceived positive and negative experiences as derived from hiking and sightseeing is visualized in the overview as presented in Figure 9.

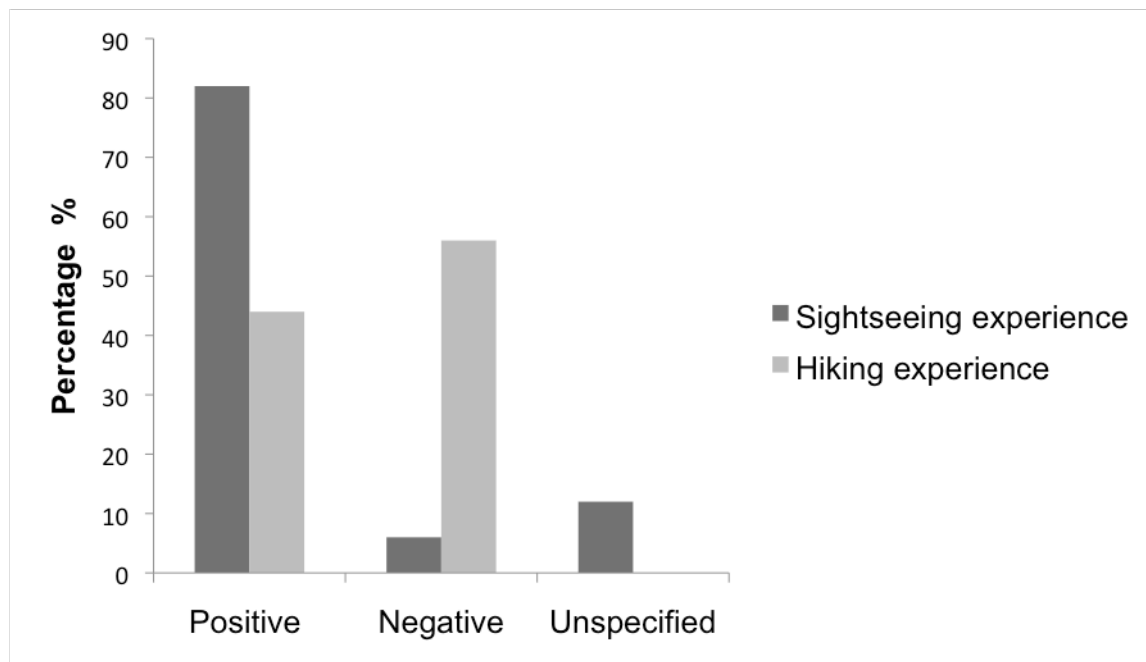


Figure 9. Overview of positive and negative experiences of hiking and sightseeing.

In developing a better understanding of the negative hiking experiences (56% of total) participants' viewpoints of hiking were mainly based on perceiving the hike challenging (54%). Further hiking experiences included similar notions of tough (10%) and too long (10%). Most frequent "positive" hiking experiences (44% of total) included having experienced hiking either: Ok (20%), diverse (10%), relaxing (20%) or safe (20%). In developing a better insight into the experience of hiking, participants were asked how they felt in relation the hiking experience, by answering question item 4:

4. How do you feel about hiking at Trolltunga?

In response to question item 4, participants noted both positive as negative feelings as a result of hiking. Feelings, as derived from hiking, however, were mainly perceived negative. Most frequent expressed feelings included frustration (60%) and unsafe (30%). Some participants experienced the hike relaxing (10%). Responses that capture the most frequent notions on experiences as based on hiking at Trolltunga are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2.

Most frequent noted experiences based on hiking

Participant	Experience
Male, age 26, Lithuania	The hike was both relaxing and frustrating, I ran back down the last hill
Male, age 23, Latvia	It was physically challenging, there were too many people on the tongue, and got lost a few times
Female, age 25, Brazil	I was scared I would not make it, that is was too challenging. I was feeling pain, I was afraid it was too much. But now, I realize I can do it
Male, age 25, Netherlands	It was challenging, especially after two hikes (Preikestolen and Kjerag)
Male, age 27, United States	It was ok, Trolltunga was worth the hike. It was well-marked, good trail work done
Female, age 26, Sweden	Challenging, not everyone can do it
Female, age 34, Finland	Quite muddy, the first part was the hardest
Female, age 28, Germany	Hard to walk on the mud, the stones make it easier
Male, age 39, Norway	Challenging, I was afraid of height, but I beat the fear
Male, age 23, Canada	It was painful, I was angry yesterday
Female, age 28, Norway	It was challenging, diverse with the snow and water. But I got to take some really good photos
Male, age 22, Canada	Generally muddy, going back was a hard, long hike

Note. Participants are characterized by gender, age, and country of residence. Experiences include the viewpoints as based on narratives expressed by the participants.

In developing a better understanding of the tourist experience at Trolltunga, participants were asked whether the experience was in line with their expectations by the following question:

5. Was the experience as you expected it to be?

Viewpoints capturing the most frequent noted expectations are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.

Most frequent noted viewpoints based on expectations

Participant	Expectation
Male, age 27, Ireland	The hike more difficult, but the view more than expected
Male, age 25, Denmark	Harder hike and more beautiful than expected
Male, age 23, Latvia	Harder than expected, I was not to prepared for the conditions
Female, age 22, Lithuania	There was more snow than expected, interesting how weather was changing
Male, age 25, Canada	No expectations, but was surprised that it was so tough
Male, age 22, Canada	Did not think the hike would be so long
Male, age 32, Norway	Harder than expected
Female, age 38, Iran	I did not really know what to expect. It is my first hike ever
Male, age 20, France	Better experience than expected
Male, age 25, Norway	As expected
Male, age 53, Sweden	Longer to walk than expected
Female, age 25, United Kingdom	Tranquil, peaceful. I loved it. I felt so relaxed up there

Note. Participants are characterized by gender, age, and country of residence. Expectations include the viewpoints as based on narratives expressed by the participants.

Participants generally experienced the hike to be harder and longer than expected and sightseeing was better than expected. In developing a better understanding of the experience at the site Trolltunga, participants were asked to answer question item 6:

6. What is your viewpoint on the site Trolltunga?

The most frequent analyzed types of responses to question item 6 are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4.

Most frequent noted viewpoints regarding site Trolltunga

Participants	Viewpoints on Trolltunga
Female, age 26, Brazil:	One of the best experiences
Male, age 28, Sweden:	Worth to go. Great experience
Male, age 47, Sweden:	Fantastic experience, happy to be back down
Female, age 27, Norway:	Amazing view, once in a lifetime experience
Female, age 24, United States:	Worth every step
Male, age 26, Ukraine:	Great experience, spectacular view. Happy to have seen everything
Female, age 23, Switzerland:	Once in a lifetime only experience
Male, age 23, Norway:	Challenging trip to a fine nature experience
Female, age 28, Switzerland:	Amazing but very tiring
Female, age 28, Poland:	Challenging at first, but amazing, the best so far
Female, age 38, Iran:	Fantastic, a ten, but I would like more sun and not so much rain, it was cold
Female, age 23, Switzerland:	Hard, freezing, but worth it

Note. Participants are characterized by gender, age, and country of residence. Viewpoints include the viewpoints as based on narratives expressed by the participants.

In developing a better insight into the viewpoints and experiences after having been at the site, participants were asked to rate Trolltunga on a scale ranging from 1 – 10. The majority of the total of participants [$n = 124$] gave a sufficient mark. The highest mark on the scale was rated most frequent. The ratings were sufficient with an average nine [$M = 9$, with a range of four as based on the minimum rating of six and a maximum rating of ten]. Figure 10 outlines the spread of ratings as given by participants, based on the perceptions of the site Trolltunga.

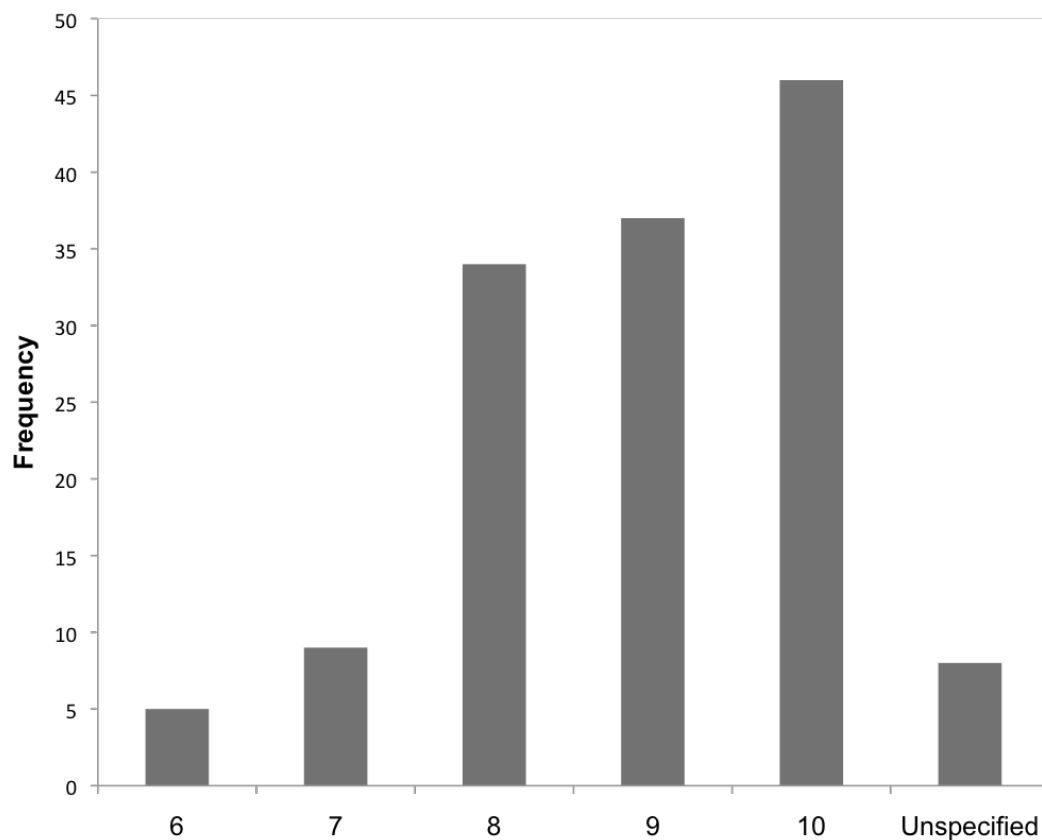


Figure 10. Overview viewpoints on site visitation Trolltunga

Additionally, as part of the post-experience participants were asked what they had planned after their visit to Trolltunga by the question item:

8. What are you planning to do in Norway after Trolltunga?

Most frequent travel plans as indicated by participants included visiting other visually appealing attractions as similar to the Trolltunga. Most frequent noted travel plans of participants are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5.

Most frequent noted travel plans after Trolltunga visitation.

Participant	Travel plan
Female, age 26, Sweden	Preikestolen is next
Female, age 28, Germany	I would like to go to Kjerag
Female, age 29, Sweden	I have already seen Preikestolen, aiming for Kjerag next
Male, age 22, Norway	I have visited most sites. Trolltunga is a good trademark for Norway and central as part of the three big hikes including Preikestolen and Kjerag
Male, age 23, Norway	We were on Kjerag, now going to Jotunheimen
Male, age 47, Sweden	I was thinking Jotunheimen and Galdhøpiggen
Male, age 19, Germany	I would like to see Kjerag and Preikestolen if possible
Female, age 31, Spain	Preikestolen and Kjerag
Male, age 35, Norway	Not sure. I have already been to Preikestolen and Kjerag, now I have seen the big three
Male, age 25, Germany	I have been to Jotunheimen, after that I will travel to Bergen, continue to Preikestolen and back to Oslo
Male, age 26, Ukraine	Kjerag and Preikestolen, I want to hitchhike southern coast
Male, age 25, Belgium	Preikestolen and Hardangerfjord.

Note. Participants are characterized by gender, age, and country of residence. Travel plans include the viewpoints as based on narratives expressed by participants.

In exploring the importance of the experience and the visual aspect as part of the tourist experience at Trolltunga, participants were asked if and whether they were planning to

share their experience with anyone after visitation by question item 7.

7. Would you share your experience about your trip to Trolltunga with others and if so, how would you communicate this?

Nearly all participants [$n = 132$] stated strong sharing intention of their experiences (90%), of which most (83%) participants indicated to want to share their experience soon after visitation by means of social media. The most frequent used social media platform included Facebook. Participants making use of social media indicated to specifically plan to share images of the experience (49%). Further, frequent sharing types included by means of stories and images (39%), image and video (4%), stories and video (3%), stories alone (3%) or a combination of stories, images and video (2%). Tourists sharing intentions by the use of social media platforms are presented in Figure 11.

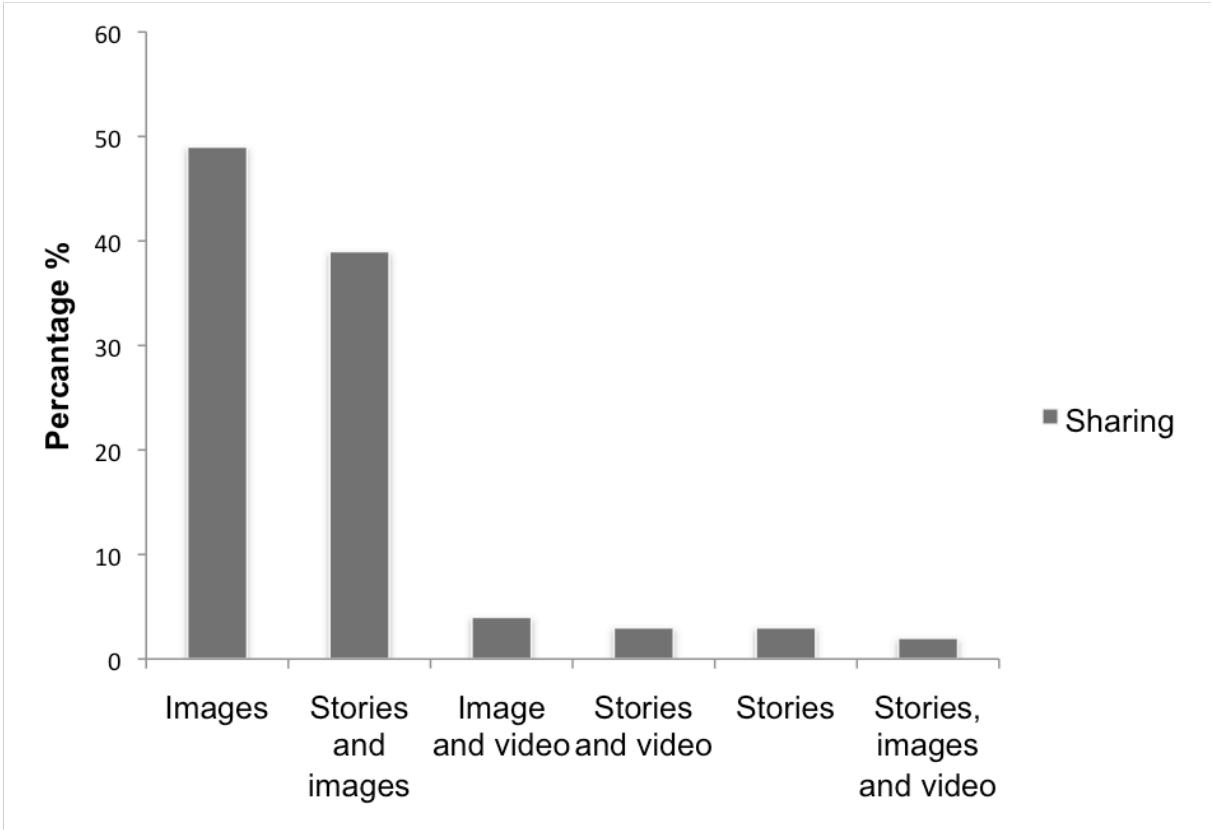


Figure 11. Sharing intentions of experiences by social media platforms.

Discussion

This study has aimed to empirically explore the tourist experience as gained by tourists at iconic nature attraction Trolltunga. In providing a better understanding of what is central to the experience and the experiences gained, this section has discussed the results as derived from identifying the tourist and exploring the experiences of sightseeing and hiking. Additionally, relevant aspects of the experience at the site Trolltunga have been discussed.

The tourist. Results have shown tourists at Trolltunga were mainly independent. As part of the pre- travel to site phase; tourists generally come and plan their trip to Trolltunga on their own as inspired by social media, travel to the site by a private car and make use of their own tent as accommodation. Most tourists come to Trolltunga for self-guided hikes. As based on the results, tourists as identified at Trolltunga seem to be in line with earlier identified tourists in literature, namely the “independent traveler”. Independent travelers are characterized as actively engaged in the creation of their own experiences (Ek et al., 2008; Caruana & Crane, 2011; Shepherd, 2003).

After having finished the hike, tourists had clear post-travel plans of visiting the next attraction as part of their self-planned travel itineraries. These attractions most often included similar popular tourist attractions like Trolltunga, including Kjerag and Preikestolen as located in Norway. As tourists were strongly focused on the visual aspects during the on-site experience at Trolltunga, results indicate the tourists as studied at Trolltunga correlate with the identified gaze collector as identified by Bell and Lyall. The gaze collector is an individual who adds the experience of looking to one’s “gaze collection”. The gaze collector wants to be able to look, and submit to memory, the experience of “having looked” (Bell & Lyall, 2002).

The visual experience. As shown in the results, the visual aspect of the experience by means of sightseeing at Trolltunga has been experienced highly positive and emotionally

charged. Results have shown tourists were mainly interested in the landscape and the viewpoint cliff. In noting tourists' strong interest for the natural environment, results appeared to reconcile with conceptualizations of the post-modern tourist experience. Post-modernism argues for the importance and the search for the "real" in natural environments (via MacCannel). The latter points towards the growing appeal of a natural authentic approach to tourism including the preference for nature as post-modern expression (Uriely, 1997).

The viewpoints of Trolltunga's landscape and viewpoint cliff as derived from sightseeing have been expressed by as unique, impressive, majestic, incomparable, scary, breathtaking, one of a kind, wild and raw nature. These viewpoints appeared to be in line with characterizations of the sublime in previous studies of Greer et al. (2008), Zaring (1977), and, Jacobsen and Tømmervik (2016). The landscape Trolltunga and its viewpoint cliff have resulted in positive emotional responses including feelings of smallness in relation to the landscape, emotional engagement, a feeling of awe, moved, relaxed in terms of either mind or soul, proud, overwhelmed, feeling one with nature, humbled and amazed. The resulting strong emotions as expressed by tourists, strengthens the notion of the sublime. As noted in previous literature the sublime leads to emotionally engaged experiences, feeling small in relation to the landscape and experiencing a degree of fear (Schönle, 2000). Besides the appeal of the landscape, tourists at Trolltunga had a particular interest in the viewpoint cliff. This finding can besides based on the grounds of its visual appeal, potentially be explained by the opportunity to stand or sit on its edge as faced with the individuals own "mortality". Results seem to correlate with the findings in the literature of Bell and Lyall noting the "modern sublime". The modern sublime points to observation platforms, which arguably facilitate possible dramatic "modern sublime" experiences (Bell, 2012). Similarly, Gibson noted an object or environment that communicates certain opportunities to do certain things have an increased appeal (Gibson, 2014). Besides positive notions, the landscape and viewpoint cliff

Trolltunga has been experienced “scary” with resulting feelings of fear. As stated by Gibson; possible injury, life or death as communicated by objects and environments, can strengthen the perceived appeal. Examples of such appealing places of danger include viewpoint cliffs and platforms in Norway (Gibson, 2014).

Trolltunga and the viewpoint cliff have been experienced in accordance with the sublime. However, as a threat to the sublime negative feelings and emotions have been expressed including worry, anger, irritation, disappointment, distress and sadness. These negative feelings have been mainly expressed by tourists as a result of perceived rubbish at the site. Results indicate tourists expect Trolltunga to be a pristine landscape. In a pristine landscape, rubbish and waste as perceived at the site result in distressing and negative emotions. Rubbish and waste, of course do not belong in such a landscape. Furthermore, a number of tourists experienced “other” people negatively during sightseeing. However due to the popularity of the site Trolltunga, crowding in terms of other tourists was often an expected result as indicated by participants. Negative experiences as part of sightseeing were mainly a result of encountering rubbish and waste at the site.

Since Trolltunga has been experienced in line with the sublime, results seem to correlate with the theory of Bell (2012) stating that in the case of a strongly unified landscape; distorting elements are not dominant enough to upset the overall effect (Bell, 2012). However, the perceived rubbish and waste at Trolltunga has evoked negative emotions to such extent, that increased littering will most likely pose a serious threat to the sublime and are therefore important to take into account in sustaining positive experiences at the site.

Additional aspects of the visual experience. It has been argued one has to allow the practices and activities as part of the visual experience into the discussion. The performance turn in tourism argues the active participative aspects of experiences are of key importance to the engagement with places and activities (Coleman & Crang, 2002). As part of the visual

experience of sightseeing at Trolltunga in terms of performance, results have shown photography to be an additional important activity as part of sightseeing. As shown in the results section, a long waiting line of tourists was observed at the viewpoint cliff. As the hike to the viewpoint cliff was coupled to a nine-hour hike, spending time waiting in line in order to take a photograph on the cliff can be considered a “sacrifice”. Results further indicated nearly all participants had the intention of sharing their captured images on social media platforms soon after visitation. Photography at the site facilitated the online sharing of images through social media platforms. As the sharing of images and photography was a post-experience activity conducted by most tourists at the site, results seem to correlate with previous work in the literature of the tourist gaze 3.0 as developed by Urry and Larsen. The tourist gaze 3.0 argues for the centrality of the visual in tourism and points towards the importance of additional performance-related activities that extend the gaze. Photography and digitization and embodied performances are an important part of the visual and the contemporary gaze. Sightseeing of landscapes is not pleasing on its own; only once put into a visual and spatial order as a framed (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

The physical experience. Results have shown hiking has not been experienced positively by the majority of tourists. Chettri et al. (2004) argued people in urban environments tend to avoid challenging slopes, terrains, and obtrusive objects. Hiking visitors, on the other hand, prefer challenging and diverse slopes seeking to explore the wilderness and scenic views (Chettri et al., 2004). Results of this study, however, seem to deviate from this notion as the challenge and diverse slopes at coupled to hiking at Trolltunga were not perceived positive by the majority of tourists. This deviation could have resulted from the unanticipated challenge as posed by the hike as apparently beyond the tourists’ physical capability. Hiking was experienced too challenging and too far, with resulting emotions of fear and frustration. Many tourists as identified at the site were inexperienced hikers. Coming from urban environments,

these tourists simply become “hiking visitors” in the context of Trolltunga. For quite a number of tourists, the hike to Trolltunga had been the first hike in their life.

Csikszentmihalyi (1987) argues for the importance of finding the right balance between physical challenges and skills. However, as experienced hikers did experience the hike more positively than inexperienced and first-time hikers, the majority had not expressed strong positive experiences of the hiking activity either. In addition, most tourists did not indicate a strong interest in the physical activity of hiking. Only seven percent of participants indicated to have traveled to Trolltunga for the purpose of hiking.

The majority of tourists experienced the hike as “too long”. Most tourists had the general expectation the hike to be shorter than the actual hike was. Results have shown hiking at the site was goal oriented aimed at the viewpoint cliff. The goal-oriented hiking approach was notable among tourists. When the viewpoint was reached and captured on camera, hiking became a hasty return. The latter findings correlate with previous work in the literature by Gyomthy and Mykletun indicating that individuals increasingly manage lives as goal-oriented projects (Gyomthy & Mykletun, 2004). Even though the hike was an average nine-hour hiking journey, both the hike up as the hike down was observed with an attempted bodily acceleration, resulting in accidents at the site. Results seem to be in line with the speeding encounters of landscapes as notified by Bell and Lyall in the “accelerated sublime”. As stated by Bell and Lyall (2002) the fact that tourist can travel to sites more quickly, often means they also want to experience those sites more quickly. Their bodies are hurled faster than ever before (Bell & Lyall, 2002).

The physical activity of hiking had been mainly experienced negatively, and only experienced positively by a small minority of tourists. Hiking has been experienced positive in terms of; ok, diverse, relaxing and safe. The achievement of having completed a demanding hike might have contributed to the perceived positive experience as part of the

experience of hiking. As noted by Filep and Pearce, the achievement of completing a walk and conquering fear can be empowering (Filep & Pearce, 2013).

Trolltunga visitation. Visitation to the site Trolltunga in general terms was regarded “worth every step”, a “once in a lifetime” experience and, “one of the best experiences”. Results of this study show tourists perceive Trolltunga a must-see, bucket list attraction. The overall ratings of the site were high with an average nine as rated on a zero to ten scale. Trolltunga visitation was often part of a larger travel itinerary in visiting multiple iconic nature attractions. As sightseeing was coupled to a challenging and frustrating hike, the visual appeal of the site, however, was strong enough to develop highly positive experiences in terms of the sublime. Results of this study agree with the previous notions as found in the literature (via Bell and Lyall) that nature tourism as (physical) kinaesthetic experience- ... trekked across – is still dependent on the glorious vista (Bell & Lyall, 2002).

Conclusion

One would assume a tourist must to some extent enjoy the activity of hiking for commencing on a 22-kilometre, nine-hour hike through challenging terrains at a site as Trolltunga. Results of this study have shown hiking has been experienced enjoyable by some, however by the majority negative in terms of challenging and too far with expressed feelings of fear and frustration. Hiking has been observed as goal-oriented; focused on the way up, and followed by a hasty return after having captured the famous viewpoint cliff. For few tourists hiking is a driver for visitation. This study has found the visual aspect to be the central aspect of the tourist experience and to a lesser degree the physical embodied aspect as coupled to the activity of hiking. The landscape and the viewpoint cliff at Trolltunga as part of sightseeing have been experienced in terms of the sublime. Results have shown the tourists’ experience at Trolltunga is mainly positively influenced by the visual experience of sightseeing. This study argues the visual aspect to be central to the tourist experience, and results have shown the

visual is the main driver of visitation. Research findings correlate with the theoretical notion of the centrality of the visual in tourism and are in line with the contemporary theory of the tourist gaze 3.0. As developed by Urry and Larsen, the tourist gaze 3.0 notes the importance of the visual, and additional dynamic aspects including photography. Tourists plan to visit multiple visually appealing and popular attractions as part of their journeys and can be identified as gaze collectors. The gaze collector as identified in the literature of Bell and Lyall is mainly interested in visual experiences. Unique and positive experiences become those accelerating from one vista to the other, adding up to the collection of “gazes”, enabling the “thrill” of the experience of having seen (Bell & Lyall, 2002).

Managerial Implications

Tourists perceive Trolltunga a must-see, bucket list nature attraction. Experienced in terms of the sublime, the landscape, and the viewpoint cliff are highly appealing in the eyes of the visitor. Trolltunga is mainly created from the outside, as tourists actively raise the awareness of the site Trolltunga by sharing taken photographs on social media platforms as part of their post-experience. Due to its strong visual impact and appeal, Trolltunga has experienced exponential increase in tourist flows. The increased tourist flow to Trolltunga creates both challenges as opportunities. Besides of importance to the destination, tourists at Trolltunga continue their journey to other regions as they travel to similar appealing attractions they “must-see” and want to tick-off on their bucket list.

Trolltunga appeals to hiking enthusiasts, however particularly draws in a larger ‘new’ group of tourists including first time and less experienced hikers. These tourists are relatively “new” to hiking and natural environments, and are not well prepared for long hikes. As sightseeing at Trolltunga is however coupled to a nine-hour hike, an increased number of safety issues are likely to arise. Moreover, as tourists spent relatively long time hiking and no services are developed near the track, increased rubbish and waste will pose a serious threat to

the appeal of the site.

As results indicate the physical activity of hiking was experienced more negative as positive and in general of little importance by most, (paid) services can be developed at the site in order to ease the physical effort of hiking and reduce the time spent at the site. Making the hike less of challenge and reducing the time spent hiking at Trolltunga can be achieved by developing and offering more accelerative means of movement. The latter can reduce current negative environmental impacts of hiking, including waste and trash as developed along the hiking track. Reducing the time spent hiking at the site can improve safety issues and tourist flow. The hiking track can be adjusted and improved, or additional means of transportation as part of the hike can be developed. Limiting the time spent at the site by the development of services can provide the needed means for maintenance, in sustaining the visual appeal of the site.

Limitations and Future Research

A case study, as chosen for this study, can find or develop interesting hypotheses but cannot test a hypothesis. “Case studies cannot be used as confirming or disconfirming evidence in the test of a particular theory because case studies are isolated events that lack the comparative information necessary to rule out alternative explanations” (Stanovich, 2013, p. 55). In order to rule out other explanations, the findings have to be compared to other findings. The data collected should rule out some explanations (Stanovich, 2013). Further limitations to this study include the limitation in available time for data collection. If taken more time as the set timeframe of this study being two weeks, participants would have been given the opportunity to further elaborate and express their experiences and viewpoints. This would have resulted in richer qualitative data. Due to the limited timeframe, expressions and viewpoints as collected from participants in the study, have resulted in rather short responses. This study suggests the development of a deeper understanding of the physical effort as

coupled to sightseeing in appealing natural environments as Trolltunga within a Norwegian context. Potential can lie in understanding the effect of reduced the physical activity of hiking on the overall experience and its perceived uniqueness. Furthermore, this study has noted social media plays an important role as part of the tourists' pre- and post-experience and has led to an increased popularity of the site. Trolltunga has gained its popularity from the outside by means of social media as tourists share and communicate their experiences and photographs by social media platforms and are inspired to visit the site by means of these platforms. With increased use of information and communication channels, the role and potential of social media for iconic tourist attractions as Trolltunga can be further explored.

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Appendices

List of questions prepared for interviews

Appendix A:

- Gender:
- Age:
- Country of residence:
- Education:
- Occupation:
- Activity type:
- Travel type:
- Transport type:
- Accommodation:
- Travel companion(s):
- Visitation driver:

1. How have you experienced the landscape the hike brought you into?
2. How do you feel in relation to the landscape?
3. How have you experienced the activity of hiking?
4. How do you feel about hiking at Trolltunga?
5. Was the experience as you expected it to be?
6. What is your viewpoint on the site Trolltunga?
7. Would you share your experience about your trip to Trolltunga with others and if so, how would you communicate this?
8. What are you planning to do in Norway after Trolltunga?