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**WHICH FACTORS INFLUENCE TOURISTS TO CHOOSE
NORTHERN NORWAY AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION?**

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Abstract

Travel and tourism in Norway generate 4.3% of GDP and 7 out of 100 jobs. In 2018, tourists made 16 million overnight stays in Northern Norway alone, resulting in an expenditure of over 14 billion Norwegian Krone. Fjords, mountains, and natural phenomena are the main reasons for tourists to visit Norway. However, these are the destination features and we do not know what might be other antecedents driving tourists to Norway. We tackled this gap in knowledge by applying the extended version of the theory of planned behavior. During fall 2019, by surveying 106 tourists visiting Northern Norway we tested the conceptual model which included six independent variables (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness, E-WOM) and one dependent variable (behavioral intentions). The results show that attitude, perceived behavioral control and destination uniqueness have a significant impact on tourists' behavioral intention to visit Northern Norway. The rest of the six variables did not have significant influence over the tourists' intentions. Our findings can support the Norwegian tourism industry by providing information on which factors are important to concentrate to facilitate a further increase in the number of future visitors.

Keywords: tourism; theory of planned behavior; tourists' behavioral intentions; self-congruity; destination uniqueness; E-WOM.

Table of Contents

List of tables.....	iv
List of figures.....	v
List of appendixes.....	vi
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical perspective.....	4
2.1 TPB.....	4
2.1.1 Behavioral intentions.....	5
2.1.2 Attitude.....	6
2.1.3 Subjective norms.....	7
2.1.4 Perceived behavioral control.....	8
2.2 Self-congruity.....	9
2.3 Destination uniqueness.....	10
2.4 Electronic word of mouth.....	11
2.5 Proposed research model.....	12
3. Methodology.....	14
3.1 Research design.....	14
3.2 Questionnaire development.....	15
3.3 Data collection and sample selection.....	15
3.4 Sample.....	16
3.5 Questionnaire items.....	17
4. Analysis and discussion.....	22
4.1 Measure validation.....	22
4.2 Correlation analysis.....	26
5.3 Hypothesis testing.....	27
5. Conclusion, Implications, limitations and future research suggestions.....	32
5.1 Conclusion.....	32
5.2 Implications.....	33
5.3 Limitations and future research suggestions.....	35
References.....	37
Appendixes.....	45

List of tables

Table 1: Summary of the respondents	16
Table 2: Rotated components matrix	23
Table 3: Correlation matrix	26
Table 4: Simple linear regression analysis	27
Table 5: Multiple linear regression analysis for the research model	29

List of figures

Figure 1: Proposed research model..... 13

Figure 2: Results from the six hypotheses31

List of appendixes

Appendix 1: Survey	45
Appendix 2: Rotated Component Matrix	48
Appendix 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test	50

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in the world. It creates jobs, drives exports, and boosts prosperity all around the world. In their report on the economic impact of tourism in 2018, the World Travel and Tourism Council stated that the tourism sector accounts for over 10% of global GDP and generates more than 300 million jobs (Innovation Norway, 2018; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018).

Tourism increased in Norway over the past decade. This increase has a positive effect on the country's economy. Specifically, travel and tourism in Norway generate 4.3% of GDP and 7 out of 100 jobs. According to Innovation Norway, in 2018, tourists in Norway made almost 104 million overnight stays and spent almost 128 billion Norwegian Krone. Norway is divided into five major administrative regions. These regions are- Northern Norway; Trøndelag; Western Norway; Southern Norway; and Eastern Norway. According to the Innovation Norway (2018) tourists are most satisfied with holidays in Northern Norway (Finnmark, Troms, and Nordland) and Trøndelag. This is also reflected in numbers- 16 million overnight stays made in Northern Norway, resulting in an expenditure of over 14 billion Norwegian Krone (Innovation Norway, 2018).

Fjords, mountains and natural phenomena, such as Northern Lights, are the most common association's tourists hold of Norway. In 2018, 19% of tourists visiting Norway stated that the range of available activities is the main reason why they would recommend to their friends and family members to travel to Norway (Innovation Norway, 2018). But is it all about the destination itself; or can there be some other factors influencing the tourists' behavioral intentions and driving them to Northern Norway? To our knowledge, no study had been conducted, which would clearly identify the antecedents of visiting Northern Norway. Thus, the main research question of our study is *which factors influence tourists to choose Northern Norway as a travel destination?* More precisely, our objectives are to (1) based on literature identify factors, which can possibly influence tourists' intentions to visit Northern Norway within the next three years; (2) empirically test the correlation of these factors and tourists' intentions to visit Northern Norway; and (3) to determine which of these factors are the most significant drivers of tourists' intentions to visit Northern Norway.

To address the gap in knowledge, we started by searching the literature to find the most suitable theoretical framework. Soon we found out that during the past few years, the theory on the decisionmaking process has grown significantly (Seow, Choong, Moorthy, & Chan, 2017;

Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Still, no single unifying theory had been built to explain the decisionmaking (Seow et al., 2017). Thus, we used the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which seems the most powerful model for predicting behavioral intentions and extended it further.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, Icek, 1985) evolved from a well-known theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Both of these theories had been tested in a variety of contexts (Cooke, Dahdah, Norman, & French, 2016). TPB proposes that the most important determinant of behavior is an individual's intention to perform the behavior (Cooke et al., 2016). Ajzen (1991) suggested that the intention is shaped by the attitude towards the behavior, social norms, and perceived behavioral control over the behavior (Seow et al., 2017). Attitudes are an individual's evaluation of performing the behavior. These evaluations can be positive or negative. Subjective norms include the norms within a specific group of people and an individual's perceptions of approval or disapproval of their behavior by the group members. Perceived behavioral control is the individual's perceptions of the control he or she holds over the internal and external barriers for behaving in a certain manner (Cooke et al., 2016).

By applying the theory to various topics and settings, scholars have demonstrated the power of TPB to make predictions and explanations on individual behavior (Al-Rafee & Cronan, 2006; Gati, Landman, Davidovitch, Asulin-Peretz, & Gadassi, 2010; Hiemstra, Otten, van Schayck, & Engels, 2012; MacKay & Campbell, 2004).

Still, some of the scholars have stated that the TPB cannot explain enough of the variance in behavioural intentions. These researchers suggested that we require additional variables to increase the predictive utility of this theory (Chien, Yen, & Hoang, 2012). By taking their suggestion into account and reviewing the literature, we identified three additional variables that can be used, alongside attitudes toward behavior, social norms and perceived behavioral, to predict behavioral intentions of tourists coming to Northern Norway. These variables are self-congruity, destination uniqueness and electronic word of mouth.

In tourism literature, there is a lack of research which would incorporate the self-congruity into TBP. According to the theory of self-congruity individual's behavior is significantly influenced by his or her self-congruity. Self-congruity results from a psychological comparison of the self to product image (Sirgy et al., 1997). Sirgy (2000) stated that self-congruity is the extent to which destination image and tourist's self-image match. Stronger the match, more likely

tourists are to hold favorable attitudes towards the destination. Favorable attitudes, ultimately, lead to an increased likelihood of actually visiting the place (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

When branding tourist destinations, marketers focus on creating their unique brand image. Image is the set of meanings using, which people remember, relate and describe an object (Chon, 1990; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). The positive image is formed based on strong, favorable and unique associations that tourists hold. These associations help tourists distinguish the brand from others (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011) and have a significant effect on tourists' behavioral intentions (Chen, Wasti, & Triandis, 2007; Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, 2011). Based on an interview with the industry experts, we identified several attributes of Northern Norway, which are unique to it. We believe perceptions of these unique attributes will significantly influence tourists' intentions to visit Northern Norway within the next three years. These attributes are as follows: spectacular scenery, northern lights, possibilities for unique experiences, and possibilities for outdoor activities throughout the whole year.

As the last independent variable, we identified the electronic version of word of mouth (E-WOM). According to Litvin et al. (2008), E-WOM includes "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" (as cited in Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012, p. 593). In the past few decades, E-WOM spread internationally, became more accessible and even more effective than WOM (as cited in Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012, p. 593). It has a significant impact on the tourism decisionmaking process (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015), as tourists often perceive E-WOM to be more trustworthy, up-to-date, and enjoyable than information provided by companies (Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011).

We measured the relationship between six dependent (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness, E-WOM) and one independent (behavioral intention) variables. This thesis presents the findings of our study.

The rest of the manuscript is organized as follows. Firstly, we offer a focused theoretical background of the main concepts and theories. Based on the literature we develop the hypothesis. Next, we describe the overall research model and the methodology, which is followed by results, analysis, and discussion. Lastly, we describe the implications and limitations of the study, as well as the recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical perspective

2.1 TPB

Throughout the past few decades, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) has become an important framework for predicting and explaining behavior (Steinmetz, Knappstein, Ajzen, Schmidt, & Kabst, 2016). TPB has a strong predictive utility and it has been employed in a wide range of social behavior studies (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA). TRA relies on personal determinants and social surroundings to explain the formation of an individual's intentions. According to this theory, the intention is the function of attitude and subjective norms (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010). These motivational factors indicate how strong is the willingness of people to try and how hard they will try to behave in a certain manner. Still, most of the behaviors, to some degree, depend on non-motivational factors, such as the presence of time, money, cooperation and skills (Ajzen, I., 1991). In order to incorporate these non-motivational factors, Ajzen (1991) introduced TPB, which is a more sophisticated version of TRA (Han et al., 2010).

According to this theory, the main predictor of the behavior is intention (Ajzen, I., 1991; Bianchi, Milberg, & Cúneo, 2017). The intention itself can be affected by basic variables, such as- attitude towards the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Steinmetz, 2016). Attitude towards the behavior is defined as a level to which individuals have a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior. Subjective norm is related to the perceived social pressure, in regard to perform or not perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control is related to the level of perceived difficulty or ease to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, I., 1991). The more favorable the person's attitude, the stronger the subjective norms and the greater the perceived control over the behavior, the stronger will be person's intention to perform the behavior (Rise, Sheeran, & Hukkelberg, 2010).

TPB is a relevant framework for understanding travelers' intentions to visit the destinations (Bianchi et al., 2017). Thus, it had been widely applied to explain consumers' decision-making processes (Lam T. &., 2006). For example, Lam and Hsu (2006) applied TPB to predict Taiwanese Tourists' behavioral intentions to choose Hong Kong as a travel destination. They

found that TPB fitted their model and past behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control had a direct influence on intention. Sparks and Pan (2009) tested TPB to investigate potential Chinese outbound tourists' attitudes toward international travel and the use of information sources. Their study showed that social influences and perceived behavioral control were stronger predictors than attitude. They also found that television programs were important sources for Chinese people to choose their travel destinations (Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009). Earlier in his study, Sparks (2006) aimed to detect potential wine tourists' intentions towards a wine-based vacation in Australia. He concluded destination attractiveness to be better predictor of emotional attitude than behavioral intention (Sparks, B., 2007).

A number of past researches have stated that the TPB model fails to explain the variance in behavioural intentions. They suggested that we require additional variables to increase the predictive utility of this theory (Chien et al., 2012). These researchers have used self-identity (Fekadu & Kraft, 2001; Hassandra et al., 2011; Rise et al., 2010; Sparks, P. & Guthrie, 1998; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999); destination image (Kim, J., Ahn, & Song, 2017; Qu et al., 2011); word of mouth (WOM) (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

2.1.1 Behavioral intentions

The central factor that the theory of planned behavior, as well as the theory of reasoned action, is created to investigate is the individual's behavioral intention. Intentions capture motivational factors influencing how hard people are willing to try to perform the behavior (Ajzen, I., 1991).

As mentioned earlier, behavioral intentions are formed based on the combination of three factors: attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. This is the core structure of the TPB model (Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009). The intention is a strong predictor of whether a certain behavior will take place or not (Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009). But these findings claim that the intention-behavior correlation is stronger when the prediction is made for voluntary behavior. Additional factors that influence the intention-behavior dynamics are- the degree of correspondence between the measure of intention and the measure of behavior; the temporal stability of behavior; and the degree to which the behavior is planned (Norberg, Horne, & Horne, 2007). Moreover, according to Bamberg (2003) for the intention to lead to behavior

individuals need to have opportunities (Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2003). In other words, when there is an opportunity to act, the intention results in behavior (Lam & Hsu, 2006); or as Ajzen (1991) stated, “the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance” (Ajzen, I., 1991, p. 181).

Other scholars argue that there are some factors that influence behavior independently of intentions. For example, according to O’Keefe (2002), Bentel and Speckart (1979) and Quellette and Wood (1998) such factors are- routinization of behavior and the effects of heuristic processing or information selectivity (as cited in Norberg et al., 2007).

2.1.2 Attitude

According to the TPB model, attitude is individuals’ positive or negative feelings to behave in a certain manner (Ajzen, I., 1991, p. 181). It is a tendency, created by experience and learning, in order to respond with some degree of unfavourableness or favourableness to the object (Fishbein, 2011). According to Kotler and Keller (2011) attitudes shape minds and make people like or dislike an object (Kotler & Keller, 2011)

In the tourism context, attitudes are tourists’ feelings or predispositions towards a travel destination (Lam & Hsu, 2006). According to Mohsin (2005), increased demand and consumption processes in tourism and hospitality are influenced by the attitudes of the buyers (Mohsin, 2005).

Several studies have found a strong relationship between attitudes and destination visit intentions (Duarte Alonso, Sakellarios, & Pritchard, 2015; Han et al., 2010; Quintal, Thomas, & Phau, 2015). On the other hand, Lam (2006) and Sparks (2009) concluded that attitudes do not have a direct impact on behavioral intention (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2008) expectancy-value model, attitudes develop from the beliefs that people have about the object. People form their beliefs about an object, by associating various attributes with it. These attributes could be objects, characteristics, or even events (Ajzen, I., 1991). In the case of Northern Norway’s example, tourists could perceive

visiting Northern Norway as a place where they enjoy spectacular scenery, northern lights and experience different outdoor activities throughout the year.

Attitude is a function of behavioral beliefs, which can be formed by observation, secondary information, or through an inferential process (Bianchi et al., 2017). It can be estimated by multiplying the strength of each salient beliefs by subjective evaluation of its attribute (Ajzen, I., 1991), and then summing up the products for the total set of beliefs (Lam T. &, 2006). An Individual tends to have a favorable attitude when the consequences are positively evaluated, and he/she is likely to enjoy the particular behavior (Han et al., 2010). As a result, positive attitudes will influence intentions to perform the behavior (Ajzen, I., 1991). Based on this reasoning we suggest the following hypotheses:

H1: Attitude has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.1.3 Subjective norms

Subjective norms represent a perceived social pressure to behave in a certain manner (Ajzen, I., 1991). The social environment can pose a strong impact on people's intentions and actions. Most frequently this impact is captured by the concept of the social norm, which refers to what is acceptable, or allowable in a specific group or society (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). "Social norms are rules and standards that are understood by members of a group and that guide or restrict social behavior without the force of laws" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 152). These norms emerge out of interaction with or simple observations of others (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). These "others" might be those with whom individuals interact, such as family members, friends, co-workers, etc. They can also be people who individuals admire and aspire to imitate, such as superiors at work, celebrities and other popular figures in media (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, Morgan, & Ranchhod, 2009). These people form so-called "reference groups", whose approval or disapproval is important to people.

In their work, French and Raven (1959) stated that others may influence our behavior because they own one or more types of power over us. These powers might be- the reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power. Reward and coercive

power require rewards to encourage conformity and sanctions for nonconformity. Legitimate, expert and referent powers, on the other hand, do not require reward or punishment in order to produce compliance (French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959). At the same time, Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) assume that perceived social pressure can influence behavior even when no rewards or punishments are expected (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

According to the TBP, when the subjective norm is favorable, individuals' intention to perform a behavior is stronger (Ajzen, I., 1991). This relationship is acknowledged in marketing and tourism literature. Multiple researchers claim that travelers feel social pressure to travel if they believe that important referents will approve or disapprove of their travel behavior (Bianchi et al., 2017; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks, B., 2007; Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009).

Thus, we expect that the reference groups of tourists will influence their intentions to visit Northern Norway:

H2: Subjective norm has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.1.4 Perceived behavioral control

In TPB, another predictor of intentions is perceived behavioral control. This is the perceived ease or difficulty of behaving in a certain manner. Perceived behavioral control is a function of control beliefs which refers to the individual's perception of the presence or absence of the resources (Han et al., 2010). These resources can be skills and abilities, availability or lack of time, money and other resources and etc. The perceptions of the behavioral control the stronger will be the person's intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, I., 1991).

According to Middleton (2009), conversion of the tourists' intentions into action is restricted by the lack of money, time, climate and even family life cycle (Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009). Whether these barriers are present may vary according to occupation, income, age, lifestyle, and other characteristics.

Previous research about tourists' destination choice revealed a significant and positive effect of perceived behavioral control on the travelers' behavioral intentions (Bianchi et al., 2017; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks, B. & Pan, 2009). Findings imply that when tourists hold little control

over the visit of a certain destination, their behavioral intention will be lower to fulfill the intended act, despite their positive attitude and subjective norms (Han et al., 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2006). Based on the literature we hypothesize the following:

H3: Perceived behavioral control has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.2 Self-congruity

Destinations are products or brands, which contain a variety of tangible and intangible attributes. To create a unique identity for these places, marketers often focus on building distinctive personalities for them (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Ramkissoon (2011) refers to this as a destination image and describes it as an attitudinal concept, which consists of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that tourists hold of a destination (Ramkissoon et al., 2011).

According to the self-congruity theory consumer's behavior to some extent is determined by self-congruity. Self-congruity results from a psychological comparison of the consumer's self-concept and product-user image (Sirgy et al., 1997). In tourism, self-congruity is the extent to which destination image and tourist's self-image match. Stronger the match, more likely tourists are to hold favorable attitudes towards the destination. Favorable attitudes, ultimately, lead to an increased likelihood of actually visiting the place (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Sirgy (2000) proposed that in order to understand the concept of self-congruity, we first need to understand the self-concept. The self-concept has four different dimensions: actual, ideal, social and ideal social self (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Actual self-concept refers to how tourist sees himself or herself; ideal self-concept is to how tourist would like to see himself or herself; social self-image describes how tourist perceives others see him or her; and ideal social self-image defines how tourist would like to be perceived by others (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

In tourism literature, there is a lack of research which would incorporate the self-congruity into TBP. Still, some researchers have done so and suggest that self-congruity is an important variable in the tourists' decision-making process (e.g. Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007; Murphy,

Benckendorff, & Moscardo, 2007; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Based on this argumentation, we hypothesize the following:

H4: Self-congruity has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.3 Destination uniqueness

As mentioned earlier, when branding tourist destinations, marketers focus on creating their unique brand image. Image is the set of meanings using, which people remember, relate and describe an object (Chon, 1990; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). The positive image is formed based on strong, favorable and unique associations that tourists hold. These associations help tourists distinguish the brand from others (Qu et al., 2011) and have a significant effect on tourists' behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2007; Ramkissoon et al., 2011).

According to Echtner and Ritchie (1993), the overall destination image can be conceptualized and measured by the combination of various concepts. These concepts are attribute-based and holistic components. Each of these components contains functional (tangible) and psychological (abstract) characteristics. Moreover, Echtner (1993) further suggested that images of destinations can be based on "common" (which are often functional) or "unique" (which are often psychological) features (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Past research, has found that uniqueness is an important reason why travelers choose their travel destinations (Qu et al., 2011).

Based on an interview with the industry experts, we identified several attributes of Northern Norway, which are unique to it. These attributes are as follows: spectacular scenery, northern lights, possibilities for unique experiences, and possibilities for outdoor activities throughout the whole year. Consistent brand elements strengthen each other and aim to unite the whole process of image formation, which in turn leads to the uniqueness and strength of brand identity (Cai, 2002). Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H5: Destination uniqueness has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.4 E-WOM

Word of mouth (WOM) is informal recommendations among the customers, which have a strong influence on consumers' behavior. It is interactive and fast. It also misses the commercial purposes. WOM can be positive or negative that is accordingly encouraging or discouraging brand choice (East, Hammond, & Lomax, 2008). There is an interesting circular relationship between WOM and attitudes. Recommendations coming from the family members, friends and acquaintances can serve as important factors to build a positive attitude towards the destination image (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001). On the other hand, when travelers have favorable experiences about their vacation destination, they are more likely to promote the destination with their WOM and encourage potential tourists to visit it (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

After the introduction of the Internet, WOM expanded to electronic word of mouth (E-WOM). Thus, person-to-person life conversations became a conversation over the Internet. According to Litvin et al. (2008), E-WOM is "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" (as cited in Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012, p. 593). In the past few decades, E-WOM spread internationally, became more accessible and even more effective than WOM (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Moreover, the Internet facilitates the multi-directional interaction-business to consumer; consumer to business; and consumer to consumer (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

E-WOM was found to have a significant impact on the tourism decisionmaking process (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015). This is due to the fact that tourists often perceive E-WOM to be more trustworthy, up-to-date, and enjoyable than information provided by companies (Ye et al., 2011).

Jalivand (2012) found that together with subjective norms and perceived behavioral control E-WOM has a positive, direct and significant effect on attitude toward visiting Isfahan (Jalilvand, 2012). Another research by Zarrad and Debabi (2015), revealed that E-WOM is positively related to tourists' future travel intentions towards visiting Tunisia (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015). Miao (2015) claimed that there is a medium positive relationship between E-WOM and attitude towards tourists' intention to travel and specifically visit Thailand (Miao, 2015).

Based on the theory, we hypothesize:

H6: E-WOM has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

2.5 Proposed research model

The purpose of this thesis is to determine tourists' behavioral intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years. The main research question is *which factors influence tourists to choose Northern Norway as a travel destination?*

Taking the research question and the hypothesis into consideration, a theoretical framework (presented in Figure #1) is proposed.

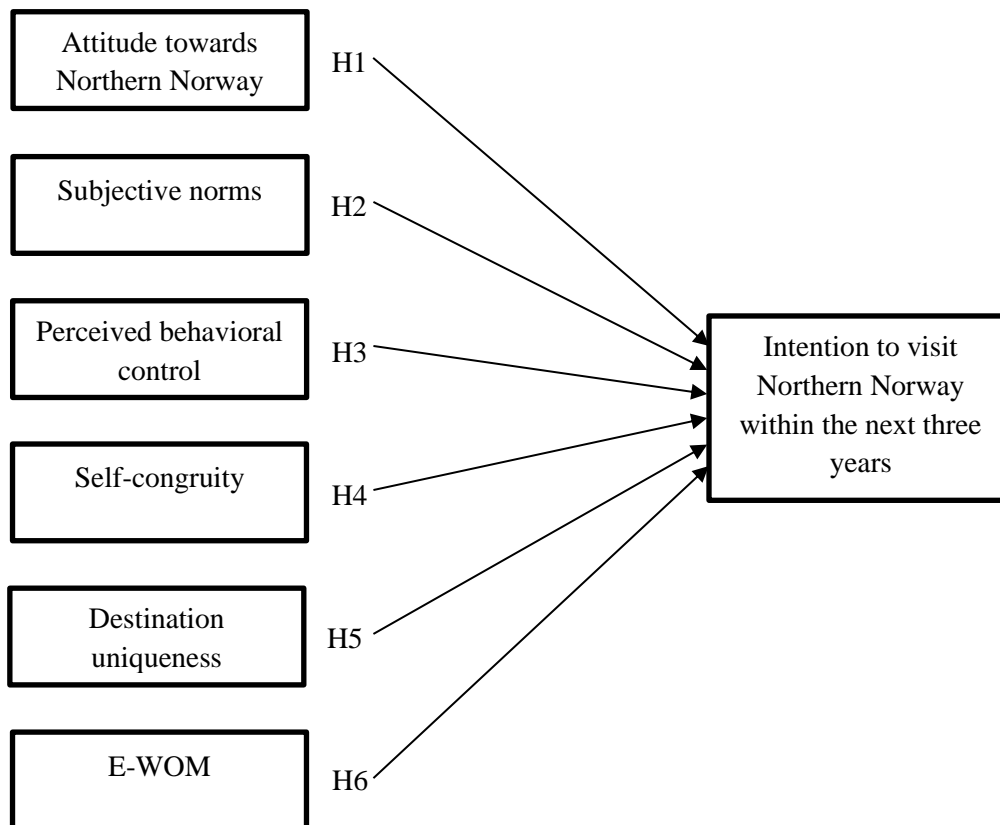


Figure 1: Proposed research model

To our knowledge, scholars have never used TPB (Ajzen, 1991) to determine what are the tourists' intentions for visiting Northern Norway. By applying the TPB we suppose that the following factors influence tourists' intentions for visiting the Northern Norway: (1) Tourists attitudes towards the Northern Norway; (2) Tourists supposition of what important others think and approve their visit to Northern Norway; (3) Tourists' beliefs whether they have enough resources and possibilities to visit the Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

To further expand the TPB we added three additional independent variables. These are- self-congruity; destination uniqueness and electronic word our mouth.

Thus, we propose- there will be a direct positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

Research design is a framework for conducting marketing research. It contains procedures that are important to define the structure of the project. Conclusive research aims to describe phenomena, test hypothesis and examine specific relationships. It is formal, is based on a large sample, can be applied in any purpose, and requires quantitative analysis (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Thus, we choose conclusive research to test our hypothesis. Descriptive research design, which is one of the methods of conclusive research is relevant for our study. A descriptive research design is structured, requires specific research questions and hypotheses. It can be cross-sectional and longitudinal (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). We choose a cross-sectional design because it allows to collect information from any given sample only once and it matches our research.

In order to identify the unique features of Northern Norway (which we later used in our survey) we conducted several interviews with the industry experts. These experts worked at the administration of the cruise ship companies. Based on this interview we concluded that Northern Norway has four main unique features. These features are- spectacular scenery, northern lights, possibilities for unique experiences, and possibilities for outdoor activities throughout the whole year.

The target population of this study is the visitors of Northern Norway. For the data collection, we used the survey. Surveys are very effective methods of collecting data from a large number of people (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). The survey has been conducted at Hurtigruten Cruise ships, MS Kong Harald and MS Spitsbergen, at Bodø Luftfartsmuseum.

We then measured the relationship between six dependent (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness, E-WOM) and one independent (behavioral intention) variables. Our survey also contained the control variables, such as- age; gender; country of residence; education; duration of stay in Northern Norway; and the number of previous visits and their trip companion(s).

3.2 Questionnaire development

To collect the data, we used a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 32 questions. It was built in “Google Forms”. Questions had been modified from several questionnaires created by various researchers (Bianchi et al., 2017; Han et al., 2010; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Kim, D. J. & Hwang, 2012; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Miao, 2015; Qu et al., 2011; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). These questions have been used in a variety of tourism studies, where their construct validity has been demonstrated (Bianchi et al., 2017).

The first 25 questions asked respondents about the independent variables (attitudes; subjective norms; perceived behavioral control; self-congruity; perceptions on destination uniqueness; and E-WOM). These questions were measured using the 5-point Likert scale, with neutral mid-point. The second part, which consisted of 4 questions, asked about demographics (age; gender; the level of education and country of residence). The last 3 questions were informational (number of previous visits; duration of the stay; trip companion(s)). These last seven questions had multiple-choice or open-ended answers. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix #1.

3.3 Data collection and sample selection

We collected the data face-to-face on Hurtigruten Cruise ships, MS Kong Harald, MS Spitsbergen, and Bodø Luftfartsmuseum. Hurtigruten is Norway’s leading exploration travel company, which offers tourists beautiful sea voyages across the coast of Norway. Bodø Luftfartsmuseum is Norwegian national aviation museum, the largest aviation museum in Scandinavia. Both destinations are very attractive for tourists. Because of convenience reasons, we used the pen and paper method rather than online.

The criterion of participation was that tourists should have been international or Norwegian coming from outside of Northern Norway. The questionnaire was administered in English and all the respondents were informed about the confidentiality of their answers.

The data collection took three weeks in total.

3.4 Sample

In total, we collected the answers of 106 respondents. Out of these, 63 were male (59.43%) and 43- female (40,57%). Age varied between 17 and 79. The age range was equally distributed with almost half of the respondents being between 17 to 40 years old (46.23)% and another half-between 41 to 79 years old (53.77). Out of 106 respondents, 76 (71,70%) had higher education, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree, where a bachelor's degree was dominating (38.68%). The sample consisted of 21 different nationalities. The majority of them were from the United Kingdom (16.4%), Norway (14.15%) and Germany (14.15%). Only a small portion (4.42%) of the respondents were from the Eastern European countries and Asia. The rest were coming from some other Western European countries, the USA and Australia.

More than half of the respondents (58.49%) had never been in Northern Norway before. The returning visitors were mainly from Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The stay duration of 75.5% of the tourists was between one and two weeks. Only 13 (12,26%) tourists traveled alone; 49.06%- with their partners; and the rest were accompanied by family members, relatives, and friends.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1: Summary of the respondents

Classification	Variable	Sample number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63	59.43
	Female	43	40.57
Country of residence	Australia	6	5.66
	Austria	2	1.89
	Belarus	1	0.94
	Belgium	5	4.72
	Canada	2	1.89
	Denmark	2	1.89
	UK	17	16.04
	France	5	4.72
	Germany	15	14.15
	Iceland	1	0.94
	India	1	0.94
	Ireland	1	0.94
	Italy	5	4.72
	Netherlands	4	3.77

	Norway	15	14.15
	Poland	2	1.89
	Spain	3	2.83
	Sweden	5	4.72
	Switzerland	7	6.60
	Taiwan	1	0.94
	USA	6	5.66
Age	17-28	19	17.92
	29-38	28	26.42
	39-48	10	9.43
	49-58	17	16.04
	59 and older	32	30.19
Education	High school	15	14.15
	Professional certificate	13	12.26
	Bachelor's degree	41	38.68
	Master's degree	26	24.53
	Doctoral degree	9	8.49
	Other	2	1.89
Duration of stays	Under 1 week	41	38.68
	1-2 week	60	56.6
	Longer than 2 weeks	5	4.7
Number of previous visits	0	62	58.5
	1-2 times	22	20.75
	3-4 times	4	3.77
	More than 5 times	18	16.98
Trip companion(s)	None	13	12.26
	Partner	52	49.06
	Family member/relative	25	23.58
	Friend(s)	16	15.1
The total amount per classification		106	

3.5 Questionnaire items

The survey questionnaire uses existing valid measures from previous literature about TPB, self-concept, destination image and electronic word of mouth (Bianchi et al., 2017). The measures were slightly modified in accordance of the study (Han et al., 2010). The measurements of these study have been used in a different variety of tourism and other relevant studies, where the validity of these constructs have been demonstrated (Bianchi et al., 2017). Questionnaire contained several separate sections. Items assessing attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and intentions with respect to visiting Northern Norway were grouped together (Hrubes, Ajzen, & Daigle, 2001). Statements measuring self-congruity, destination uniqueness and electronic word of mouth were grouped together. For all these items behavioral

intention was visiting Northern Norway within the next 3 years. Additionally, there were demographic questions about age, gender, education, country of residence and informational questions in regards with past and current behavior such as number of previous visits, duration of stay and trip companion(s). All the independent variables and dependent variable were assessed by five-point Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). For demographic and informational questions were used multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

Intention

Dependent variable in this study, intention towards visiting Northern Norway within the next three years was adapted from Lam and Hsu (2006) and Han (2010). Three statements were used to measure behavioral intention with five point Likert-scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) such as:

“I want to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

“I will try to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Han et al., 2010).

“I intend to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Our research aimed short and long-haul travellers. Three year time frame was chosen due to flexibility for both of the target groups (Bianchi et al., 2017).

Attitude

Attitude which defines tourists' feelings and beliefs towards Northern Norway, was constructed based on Lam and Hsu (2006) and Bianchi (2017). Four statements were measured by five-point Likert-scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1):

“I think visiting Northern Norway is enjoyable” (Bianchi et al., 2017).

“I think visiting Northern Norway is fun” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

“I think visiting Northern Norway is pleasant” (Bianchi et al., 2017).

“I think visiting Northern Norway is exciting” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Subjective norm

Subjective norm was measured by three-item scale, indicating how tourists perceived important referents' normative influence towards their traveling in Northern Norway. Questions were taken and modified from previous studies and measured by five-point Likert-scale:

“Most people I know would choose Northern Norway as their travel destination” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

“People who are important to me would want me to visit Northern Norway” (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

“People who are important to me would approve of my visit to Northern Norway” (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Perceived Behavioural control

Perceived behavioural control as a non-volitional factor, was measured by three assertions adopted from Hurbes and Ajzen (2001) and Han and Hsu (2010) with strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) evaluation:

“If I wanted to, I could easily visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Hrubes, Ajzen, & Daigle, 2001).

“It is mostly my decision to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Han et al., 2010).

“I have enough resources to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” (Han et al., 2010).

Self-congruity

Measuring the self-congruity unites two methods of self-image congruence which includes "participants' perceptions of destination visit image and participants' perception of their self-image" (Sirgy & Su, 2000 P.350) in tourism studies. Respondents were first asked to think about the northern Norway as it was the person and to consider the personality characteristics of theirs and Northern Norway. After to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011):

“The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I see myself“ (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

“I am quite similar to the personality of Northern Norway” (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

“The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I would like to see myself “ (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

“I would like to be perceived similar to the personality of Northern Norway” (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

Out of the four self-concept dimensions (actual, ideal, social and social ideal self-image) (Sirgy & Su, 2000) we only measured actual and ideal self-image. As it was suggested by Sirgy and Su (2000) five-point Likert-scale was used for measuring self-congruity.

Destination uniqueness

Destination uniqueness was measured by using three-item scale which demonstrated tourists' agreement or disagreement of unique attributes of Northern Norway. We used measures of Qu and Kim (2011) and Kim and Ahn (2017):

“Northern Norway has spectacular scenery” (Qu et al., 2011).

“Northern Norway enables the opportunity to gain unique experiences throughout the whole year” (Kim, J. et al., 2017).

“Northern Norway has the best location to see northern lights” (Qu et al., 2011).

“Northern Norway has unique possibilities for different outdoor activities” (Qu et al., 2011).

E-WOM

Including the concept of E-WOM in the study, leads to find out if other tourists' personal experiences has impact on tourists' destination choice. The respondents had to answer four statements with a five-point Likert scale:

“Before I choose my travel destination, I always read other tourists online travel reviews and comments” (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

“To choose my travel destination, I often consult with other tourists online who have previously travelled there” (Miao, 2015).

“To be confident that I choose the right travel destination, I often read other tourists online travel reviews and comments” (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

“To make my final decision about the travel destination, I continuously research updated information online” (Miao, 2015).

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 Measure validation

For testing factor structure of the measures of intention, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness and electronic word of mouth, we conducted exploratory factor analysis. Additionally, we conducted Cronbach's alpha analysis to check the internal reliability of each variable.

Factor analysis is used to determine how different items are related to one another. Each factor represents several variables and sometimes factors are more effective in various study outcomes (Salkind & Frey, 2019). In factor analysis, the dimensions are ranged consecutively, and they are independent of each other.

Factor loading was done based on measurements of each variable. For extraction, we used the principal components method and for rotation, varimax rotation. Extraction results of the first factor are strongest, the next factor results second strongest and so on. The strength of the factors is the result of the algorithm used in the extraction (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013).

According to our factor analysis, our measures were spread over the five factors (Appendix #2). In our KMO and Bartlett's test, Kaiser-Meier-Olkin's indicator was 0.803, which shows how adequate correlations are for factor analysis (Appendix #3). Generally, a value above 0.7 is considered adequate (Meyers et al., 2013). Most variables correlated strongly with the first and second factors. For constructing the final rotated component matrix, four variables were removed, because of the low factor loading and a cross-loading with another factor. These two items were subjective norm's measure (1): "Most people I know would choose Northern Norway as their travel destination" which had factor loading 0.454, perceived behavioral control's measure (2): "It is mostly my decision to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years" with factor loading 0.583 but high cross-loading on factor four (0.414). After removing these two variables we removed two more variable measures: Destination uniqueness measure (3) "Northern Norway has the best location to see northern lights" which had high cross-loading with factor two (0.534) and attitudes measure (4) "I think visiting Northern Norway is exciting" which was found with strong cross-loading with factor one (0.448).

The final rotated components matrix is presented in Table 2.

In the final test, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and destination uniqueness loaded under the first factor and explained 35.498% of the total variance, Self-congruity, was loaded under the second factor and explained 13.345% of the total variance. E-WOM was loaded under the third factor, explained 9.678% of the total variance. The intention was loaded under the fourth factor, explained 8.071% of the total variance. The attitude was loaded under the fifth factor and explained 6.281% of the total variance.

The intention was loaded under factor four. Factor loadings for intention varied between 0.873 and 0.949 and the total value Cronbach's alpha was 0.938. The attitude was loaded under the factor five. Factor loadings for attitude varied between 0.695 and 0.877 and total value Cronbach's alpha were 0.831. The subjective norm was loaded under factor one. Factor loadings for subjective norm varied between 0.577 and 0.741 and the total value Cronbach's alpha was 0.804. Perceived behavioral control was loaded under factor one. Factor loadings for PBC varied between 0.680 and 0.691 and the total value Cronbach's alpha was 0.847. Self-congruity loaded under factor two. Factor loadings for self-congruity varied between 0.727 and 0.828 and the total value Cronbach's alpha were 0.862. Destination uniqueness was loaded under factor one. Factor loadings for destination uniqueness varied between 0.575 and 0.754 and total value Cronbach's alpha was 0.755. EWOM was loaded under factor three. Factor loadings for E-WOM varied between 0.746 and 0.899 and the total value Cronbach's alpha was 0.856.

The reliability of the scale depends on the average correlation among the used variables. It is measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and its value should be higher than 0.70 (Easterby-Smith, 2015).

Table 2: Rotated components matrix

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Intention					
“I want to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”				0.873	
“I will try to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”				0.924	
				0.919	

“I intend to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”					
Attitude “I think visiting Northern Norway is enjoyable” “I think visiting Northern Norway is fun” “I think visiting Northern Norway is pleasant”					0.695 0.779 0.877
Subjective norm “People who are important to me would want me to visit Northern Norway” “People who are important to me would approve of my visit to Northern Norway”	0.577 0.741				
Perceived behavioral control “If I wanted to, I could easily visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years” “I have enough resources to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”	0.680 0.691				
Self-congruity “The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I see myself” “I am quite similar to the personality of Northern Norway” “The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I would like to see myself” “I would like to be perceived similar to the personality of Northern Norway”		0.727 0.828 0.818 0.773			

Destination uniqueness					
“Northern Norway has spectacular scenery”	0.575				
“Northern Norway enables the opportunity to gain unique experiences throughout the whole year”	0.754				
“Northern Norway has unique possibilities for different outdoor activities	0.754				
Electronic word of mouth					
“Before I choose my travel destination, I always read other tourists online travel reviews and comments”			0.839		
“To choose my travel destination, I often consult with other tourists online who have previously traveled there”			0.804		
“To be confident that I choose the right travel destination, I often read other tourists online travel reviews and comments”			0.899		
“To make my final decision about the travel destination, I continuously research updated information online”			0.746		
Explained variance %	35.498	13.345	9.768	8.071	6.281

In our research, the principal components analysis and Cronbach’s alpha analysis showed that objectives under each concept have high validity and internal reliability. An exploratory principal components analysis, every variable is associated with each factor (Meyers et al., 2013). Our analysis revealed five factors, which are different from our theoretical framework, where we proposed seven variables. It means that some of the statements in the survey could have similar meanings. But all the measures we have been taken from previous researchers with a low level of modifications in accordance with our research and, and that can strengthen the reliability of our measures.

4.2 Correlation analysis

Before conducting the regression analysis, we checked the correlation between the variables. We used the Pearson correlation coefficient r to determine the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables.

Table 3: Correlation matrix

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Intention	1						
2	Attitude	0.30**	1					
3	Subjective Norm	0.29**	0.39**	1				
4	PBC	0.44**	0.46**	0.64**	1			
5	Self-congruity	0.29**	0.40**	0.55**	0.61**	1		
6	Destination uniqueness	0.25*	0.52**	0.55**	0.67**	0.42**	1	
7	E- WOM	0.04	0.20*	0.29**	0.18	0.20*	0.25**	1

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level**

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level**

$N = 106$

A value of correlation 0.2 shows that there is a positive correlation, but it is a weak and likely insignificant. Consequently, if the correlation is varying between 0.3, 0.4, 0.5 it means that correlation is moderate, not very strong but we can say that variables relate to one another. And if correlation is higher than 0.6 that there is a strong relationship among the variables (Salkind & Frey, 2019).

In our example correlation coefficients varied between 0.29** and 0.67** which indicated that there were sufficiently high correlations among the variables, and they had a high enough level of discriminant validity. There was only one variable, EWOM, that had low, or no correlations

with other variables. Our correlation matrix shows that attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity and destination uniqueness have a strong correlation with the dependent variable intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years. There is much higher positive inter-correlation between attitude, subjective norm, PBC, self-congruity and destination uniqueness, even higher between subjective norms, PBC, self-congruity and Destination uniqueness and between PBC self-congruity and destination uniqueness.

The highest correlation was between perceived behavioral control and destination uniqueness 0.67**, between Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control 0.64 **. There were no correlations exceeding 0.70, this indicates that there would not be a problem to proceed with multiple linear regression analysis, because none of the predictor variables were multicollinear. High correlation among Intention and other independent variables, that there would be a high level of intention for tourists to visit Northern Norway based attitude, subjective norms, PBC, self-congruity and destination uniqueness, except the electronic word of mouth.

5.3 Hypothesis testing

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted in order to determine the predictive power of each independent variable towards the dependent variable. Results from the simple linear regression analysis are demonstrated in table 4.

Table 4: Simple linear regression analysis

Concept	β	t	<i>Sig.</i>	R^2
Attitude	0.30	3.16	0.00	0.09
Subjective Norm	0.29	3.06	0.00	0.08
Perceived behavioural control	0.44	4.95	0.00	0.19
Self-congruity	0.29	3.05	0.00	0.08
Destination uniqueness	0.25	2.59	0.01	0,06
Electronic word of mouth	0,04	0,43	0,65	0,01

The analysis shows that the theory of planned behaviour's variables, attitude ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 3.16$, $p = 0.00$), Subjective norm ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 3.06$, $p = 0.00$) and perceived behavioural control ($\beta = 0.44$, $t = 4.95$, $p = 0.00$) had significant contribution on intention. Also, our extended variables self-congruity ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 3.05$, $p = 0.00$) and destination uniqueness ($\beta = 0.25$, $t = 2.59$, $p = 0.01$) had statistically significant effect on intention. Only Electronic word of mouth ($\beta = 0.04$, $t = 0.43$, $p = 0.65$) did not have a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the outcome. According to these results, we can conclude that five variables individually out of six, have the strong explanatory ability on tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.

For testing our hypothesis, we conducted multiple linear regression analysis, where more than one predictor variables are predicting a particular outcome of the dependent variable. In other words, two and more predictor variables in combination would predict outcome better, than one independent variable do it alone (Salkind & Frey, 2019). In our case, we have six independent variables and one dependent variable. Squared multiple correlation R^2 is the measure, which defines the quality of the regression analysis. It shows how much variance of the dependent variable can be explained by predictors and it varies between 0 and 1 (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

In multiple regression analyses, each value of the different variables can be converted into a standardized scale, such as β weights, to compare them easily (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In our example, since we want to find out each independent variable's contribution to the dependent variable, we will use a standardized coefficient beta. The statistically significant contribution of each variable is explained by significance level p , which should be less than 0.05. In multiple linear regression analysis most important is to avoid multicollinearity, strong relationships between independent variables. We can measure it by VIF value, which should be below 10 (Meyers et al., 2013).

For the testing hypothesis, we used our proposed research model. The intention was used as a dependent variable. Coefficients from the multiple linear regression analysis are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Multiple linear regression analysis for the research model

Dependent variable	R^2	<i>Adjusted R²</i>	<i>Sig</i>	
Intention	0.22	0.17	0.00	
Independent variables	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Attitude	0.16	1.51	0.03	1.461
Subjective norm	0.02	0.20	0.85	1.967
Perceived behavioural control	0.45	3.08	0.00	2.651
Self-congruity	0.01	0.07	0.94	1.748
Destination uniqueness	0.15	1.11	0.04	2.131
Electronic word of mouth	0.04	0.43	0.66	1.120

Our model shows that R square is 0,22, which means that only 22% of intention variance can be explained by these sets of variables, but the model is significant, with p value 0,00. VIF value for all the variables was high bellow 10, which means that in our model we do not have multicollinearity.

Hypothesis 1 stated that “attitude has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. Our findings ($\beta = 0.16$, $t=1.51$, $p=0.03$) show that attitude has a positive influence on intention and is statistically significant. Based on this we can conclude that hypothesis 1 is accepted. Tourists’ attitude has a strong influence on tourists’ intention to visit northern Norway. In his study Han, (2010) understanding customer’s intention to stay green hotel, found that attitude had a significant effect over the intention. But in contrast to his study Lam and Shu, (2006) revealed that the effect of attitude on behavioral intention was not significant.

Hypothesis 2 stated that “Subjective norm has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. Subjective norm did not have a significant impact on intention ($\beta = 0.02$, $t=0.20$, $p=0.85$). Based on these results Hypothesis 2 was rejected. There are no strong relationships between subjective norm and tourists’ intention to visit northern Norway. Subjective norm had almost the same correlation with intention as attitude 0,29, but the high correlation with other independent variables, especially with perceived behavioral control (0.64**). It explains that there could be a problem with multicollinearity. As we mentioned above, multicollinearity exists when the correlation exceeds 0,7. In our case, this

correlation measure is very close to the threshold point, so it can be one of the reasons because in the simple linear regression analysis subjective norm significantly contributed to predicting intention. Our results were different from Lam and Hsu, (2006) who investigated the greatest direct impact of subjective norms on Chinese tourists' intention to visit Hong Kong.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that “perceived behavioral control has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. Based on our results Perceived behavioral control among other variables had the highest level of significant contribution on intention ($\beta = 0.45$, $t = 3.08$, $p = 0.00$). Hypothesis 3 was supported by our regression model. Tourists of Northern Norway revealed a high control level over their behavior and it was totally depending on them whether to visit or not Northern Norway. Our results are consistent with previous research. For example, Sparks and Pan, (2009) get the same results who found that perceived behavioral control was a significant predictor of Chinese outbound tourists' intention to visit Australia.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that “Self-congruity has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. Self-congruity did not have a significant effect on intention ($\beta = 0.01$, $t = 0.07$, $p = 0.94$) and the hypothesis was not supported. The hypothesis was created to find out if tourists’ self-identity was congruent with Northern Norway and if this congruence led them to visit Northern Norway. As a subjective norm, Self-congruity highly correlated with other independent variables, and as an individual predictor had a strong predictive power of intention. We can assume that self-congruity influences tourists’ intentions to visit Northern Norway, but not with other variables, or it can be used as a predictor of attitude or subjective norms in future research. Our results did not support the findings of Usakli and Baloglu, (2011), who found that self-congruity was significant predictor of tourists' motivation to visit destinations.

Hypothesis 5 postulated that “Destination uniqueness has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. Results revealed a significant impact on intention ($\beta = 1.15$, $t = 1.11$, $p = 0.04$) and this hypothesis has been accepted. Tourists pay great attention to destination uniqueness and unique possibilities and experiences what this destination offers them. In their research Kim and Ahn, (2017) found that a unique destination image had a significant influence on tourists’ attitudes, and therefore attitude affected significantly on travelers' intentions.

Hypothesis 6 stated that “E-WOM has a positive influence on tourists’ intention to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years”. The analysis showed that there was no significant effect on Intention ($\beta = 0.04$, $t=0.43$, $p=0.66$). Electronic word of mouth was the only variable that had a low correlation with other variables and no correlation with intention. Also, it was the only variable that did not have significant variance in predicting intention in simple linear regression analysis. Therefore, this hypothesis has been rejected. Jallilvand, (2012) also found that E-WOM has a direct effect on attitude, but an indirect effect on tourists' intention to visit Isfahan (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

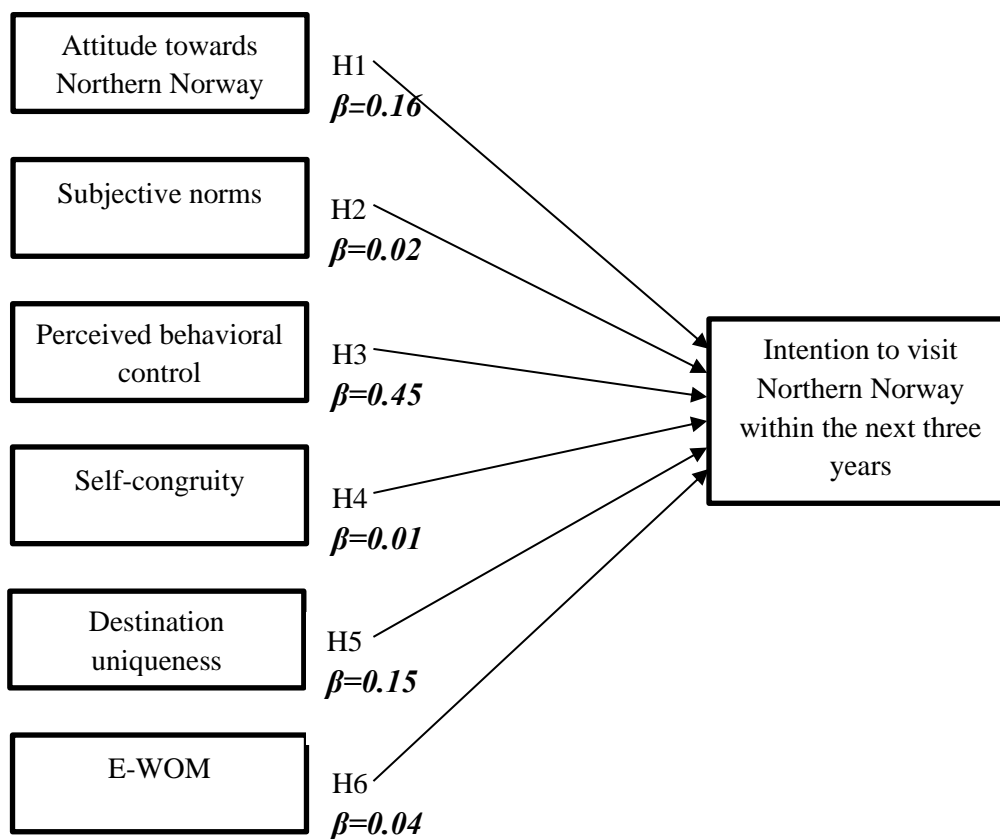


Figure 2: Results from the six hypotheses

Based on our analysis research showed that three out of six hypotheses were confirmed according to the findings of the multiple linear regression analysis. Research showed that a 22% variance of intention can be explained by independent variables. We found that tourists’ attitudes, perceived behavioral control and destination uniqueness have a significant effect on their intention to visit Northern Norway within the next three years.

5. Conclusion, Implications, limitations and future research suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

Travel and tourism are some of the world's largest economic sectors. It accounts for 4.3% of Norway's GDP (Innovation Norway, 2018). Studying the decisionmaking process of tourists is very important for further development of the Norwegian travel and tourism industry. Specifically, finding out what leads the tourists to choose Norway and especially Northern Norway as their travel destinations is vital. Thus, the purpose of this research is to determine tourists' behavioral intention to visit Northern Norway within the next three years. We proposed the following research question- *which factors influence tourists to choose Northern Norway as a travel destination?*

Based on existing literature we delineated our conceptual model and developed six hypotheses.

We used the theory of planned behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991) (Ajzen, I., 1991) and added self-congruity, destination uniqueness and electronic word of mouth to further expand its predictive utility. According to our model tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway is influenced by their attitude towards Northern Norway, subjective norm and perceived control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness, perceived behavioral control and electronic word of mouth. We collected the data through a self-administered questionnaire, which we constructed by modifying the questions from the previous studies. It contained 31 questions in total, 25 was for testing hypothesis, 4 was demographic and 3 informational. Questions were evaluated by five-point Likert-scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". 106 responses were collected face-to-face at Hurtigruten Cruise ships, MS Kong Harald, MS Spitsbergen, and Bodø Luftfartsmuseum. 59.43% of the respondents were men and 40.57% were women. Age varied between 17 and 79 and they were the residents of 21 different nationalities. 71.7% of the tourists had higher education and 41.5% of them had visited Northern Norway before. The stay duration of 75.5% of the tourists was between one and two weeks and 49.06% traveled with partners.

We analyzed the data using the statistical software package SPSS Statistics. For testing our research model, first, we conducted exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression analysis. Simple linear regression analysis showed that all the independent variables except the E-WOM (attitudes, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, self-congruity, destination uniqueness), independently had a significant impact on intention. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test our six hypotheses. This analysis revealed that tourists, who had a favorable attitude towards Northern Norway, a high level of perceived control over behavior and a high perception of Northern Norway's unique destination attributes, had a higher intention to visit Northern Norway again within the next 3 years.

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this is one of the first studies, which tried to investigate tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway by using Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, I., 1991). By integrating new variables in TPB, this study revealed that destination uniqueness together with attitudes and perceived behavioral control have a significant effect on intention. Uniqueness is one of the most important factors that tourists prioritize while choosing their travel destination. Our findings can support the Norwegian tourism industry by providing information on which factors are important to concentrate to facilitate a further increase in the number of future visitors.

5.2 Implications

According to the annual report of Innovation Norway (Innovation Norway, 2018), recently Norway has experienced a strong increase in foreign tourists. This reflects positively on the Norwegian economy. In order to attract even more tourists, further research is needed that will tackle the various challenges of tourism in Norway and specifically in Northern Norway.

Based on our study, destination uniqueness was found as one of the major predictors of tourists' intention to visit Northern Norway. This is an important insight as it can be used by the tourism policymakers and tourism managers to build more unique destination associations of Northern

Norway and convert tourists rotation from summer when there is a high tourist concentration (Innovation Norway, 2018) to the place, that is attractive for the tourists throughout the year.

Furthermore, tourists in Northern Norway mostly had favorable attitudes towards Northern Norway. Thus, most of them expressed a high level of willingness to visit northern Norway again. It means that once the tourist visits Northern Norway, there is a higher possibility he or she will come back. 41.5% of our visitors had visited Northern Norway before. Therefore, we can assume that there would be the highest chance to revisit the destination if tourists once visited it. Destination marketers and tourism policymakers should work on building potential tourists' favorable attitudes, by advertising Northern Norway's spectacular landscapes, historical places, and the opportunities for the unique experiences throughout the year.

In our research, we found that there was a very low number of tourists from the Eastern European countries and Asia (4.42% in total). Matching this we also found that perceived behavioral control is the most significant influencer of traveler's intentions to visit Northern Norway. Thus, we can assume that the low number of Eastern European and Asian tourists is due to their low perceived behavioral control. To tackle this challenge, the tourism administration of Northern Norway could try to attract budget airline companies that would offer tourists lower prices on flights. This would open the door to Northern Norway to people coming from Eastern Europe and Asia (and possibly from some other regions of the world too).

Furthermore, our research has a theoretical contribution. As mentioned earlier, we extended the TPB by adding other variables. By doing so we increased its predictive utility.

5.3 Limitations and future research suggestions

Our research demonstrated a good fit between the theory of planned behavior and studying behavioral intentions of tourists visiting Northern Norway. Even though we uncovered several significant findings there is room for improvement.

TPB has been validated in various behavioral studies but in these studies travel intentions have got relatively lower attention (Lam & Hsu, 2006). We found that out of three original variables of the theory of planned behavior (attitudes; subjective norms; and perceived behavioral control) subjective norms had been found as not capable of predicting behavioral intentions. Our study aimed the tourists visiting Northern Norway during the time when the study was conducted. Researchers should further study subjective norms as predictors of behavioral intentions in the context of the tourism industry. They can conduct their studies during the different seasons (as the segment of tourists might vary. For example, younger people traveling during the summer and older during the colder periods or vice versa), in other cities or even other regions of Norway.

Moreover, our study was done using the questionnaire in English. Since our respondents were from various countries, having the questionnaire only in English acted as an obstacle for many of them. This should have influenced the representativeness of our sample, as only those who spoke fluent English and felt comfortable filling in a questionnaire in English were used. Future research can address this limitation, by using the questionnaires in Norwegian, German, French, Russian and some Asian languages.

Another issue related to our sample is that we recruited Norwegian, as well as international respondents. The travel behaviors of these two groups can vary significantly. It would be a good idea, for future studies, to make a distinction between these two groups of visitors. Furthermore, the sample size was small and addressing this issue could increase the reliability of our findings.

Our added variable- self-congruity had no positive positive effect on intention. Still, it highly correlated with attitudes and subjective norms. Future research can observe the relationship between self-congruity and these two variables.

Lastly, intentions declared in hypothetical scenarios and actual behavior are two very different things. According to Azjen and Icek (2015) events occurring between the

assessment of intentions and actual behavior can generate changes in intentions (Ajzen, Icek, 2015). Thus, conducting a longitudinal study that would measure not only intentions but also actual behavior, would generate wider and more reliable insights into the phenomenon.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Survey

12/2/2019

A survey about determining tourists' behavioral intentions to visit Northern Norway

A survey about determining tourists' behavioral intentions to visit Northern Norway

Dear Respondent,

We are conducting a survey for our master's thesis at Nord University. The purpose of this research is to find out what factors influence tourists' to choose Northern Norway as their travel destination. For collecting data, we would like to request your assistance to respond to this questionnaire and it might take about 5 minutes. All your information will be confidential, and your participation will remain strictly anonymous.

Please contact us for further questions: nchunashvili25@gmail.com / zinok474@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and wish you a great vacation.

Best Regards,
Nia Chunashvili , Isuf Taho

* Required

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will try to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I intend to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think visiting Northern Norway is enjoyable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think visiting Northern Norway is fun.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think visiting Northern Norway is pleasant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think visiting Northern Norway is exciting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people I know would choose Northern Norway as their travel destination.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who are important to me would want me to visit Northern Norway.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who are important to me would approve of my visit to Northern Norway.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I wanted to, I could easily visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is mostly my decision to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have enough resources to visit Northern Norway within the next 3 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12/2/2019

A survey about determining tourists' behavioral intentions to visit Northern Norway

2. Please Think about Northern Norway as it was a person. Consider the personality characteristics of Northern Norway and yourself. Indicate your level of agreement to the following statements: *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am quite similar to the personality of Northern Norway.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The personality of Northern Norway is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to be perceived similar to the personality of Northern Norway.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Northern Norway has spectacular scenery.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Northern Norway enables the opportunity to gain unique experiences throughout the whole year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Northern Norway has the best location to see northern lights.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Northern Norway has unique possibilities for different outdoor activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before i choose my travel destination, I often read other tourists' online travel reviews and comments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To choose my travel destination, I often consult with other tourists online who have previously traveled there.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To be confident that I choose the right travel destination, I often read other tourists' online travel reviews and comments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To make the final decision about my travel destination, I continuously research updated information online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Age *

4. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other

12/2/2019

A survey about determining tourists' behavioral intentions to visit Northern Norway

5. Country of residence *


6. Education **Mark only one oval.*

- High school
- Professional certificate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Other

7. Duration of your stay in Northern Norway *

8. Number of your previous visits to Northern Norway *

9. Your trip companion(s) *

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Appendix 2: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Destuniq.4	.710				
Destuniq.2	.705	.408			
Subj.Norm3	.702				
PBC3	.678				
PBC1	.642				
PBC2	.583			.414	
Subj.Norm2	.536				
Subj.Norm1	.454				
Attitude3		.813			
Attitude2		.760			
Attitude1		.729			
Attitude4		.673			
Destuniq.3		.567			
Destuniq.1	.429	.528			
selfcong.2			.830		
selfcong.3			.814		
selfcong.4			.781		
selfcong.1			.711		
Intention2				.941	
Intention3				.903	
Intention1				.864	
EWOM3					.897
EWOM1					.841

EWOM2					.801
EWOM4					.725

Appendix 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.803
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1513.062
	df	210
	Sig.	.000