Abstract

In today's travel environment the internet is a particular important source of external information effecting tourist destination choice process and therefore one of the concerns in this thesis. In recent years social media has also become gradually more and more used in marketing. Technological opportunities are continuing to increase and an amalgam of social media opportunities exists. Therefore, online marketing has never been more important however, tourism operators should design it to offer value. Furthermore, today's tourists are becoming more active and seeking interaction, it is therefore important to incorporate them in an online dialogue to enhance attraction and awareness.

The primary aim of this thesis is to investigate to what extend tourism operators can use social media to facilitate experience co-creation and sharing and what aspects of the Northern Jutland visitor experience should be promoted to attract more tourists and establish awareness of Northern Jutland. Through a case study of Northern Jutland, tourists' destination choice process and attitudes towards the Northern Jutland experience are examined and hence, the opportunities of technology for the tourism operators to engage tourists in co-creating their experiences to influence other potential tourists. The theoretical discussion in this thesis will take outset in updating the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process Model by Um and Crompton (1990), by introducing the elements which are relevant to the destination choice process today. Accordingly, the theories that supplement the model of experiences, co-creation, satisfaction, social media, and storytelling, all chosen based on their relevance to the research questions. To operationalise the destination choice process, a framework is developed and proposed in the end. The framework will help to form the analysis. The new elements that the author of this thesis has provided, along with the existing factors, will be analysed regarding the case of Northern Jutland. Particularly what the components comprise of and how they can have an impact on destination choice, attractiveness and awareness will be examined throughout the analysis.

The author of this thesis will follow the pragmatic research paradigm and a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative data which can give a detailed picture of the phenomenon of a destination choice process, as the full picture is more meaningful for this research than each of the data forms in isolation. Based on the research questions, the author of this thesis has to collect data which is in-depth and data in a broader and measuring form which will be semi-structured interviews, netnography and a survey.

The analysis will look at the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, which is the most recent technological addition, and analyse how tourism operators can apply the new technologies to facilitate a dialogue where tourists and locals share and co-create their experiences in a process of

promoting Northern Jutland. Furthermore, the physical tourist experience in Northern Jutland will also be a concern regarding tourist satisfaction of resources spent, nature experiences, service quality, the social environment, fun and leisure activities, efficiency and information in order to map what aspects of the promotion of the Northern Jutland visitor experience could be improved.

The author of this thesis came to the main conclusion that tourism operators in Northern Jutland can use the social media approaches, analysed in this thesis, to involve tourists and locals in a dialogue where they can co-create and share experiences, which would offer value for all involved. The result would be to attract more tourists by facilitating people's own representations of Northern Jutland and create online awareness of the offers and holiday possibilities present in Northern Jutland, found in the analysis.

Potentially, this thesis outcome could incite and support the tourism operators in implementing more technological initiatives prospectively and provide insights into what aspects to promote of the Northern Jutland experience.

Preface

The idea for this thesis was initially planted in my mind at a Tourism Conference in Aabybro, Northern Jutland, called "From Offline To Online". Here I became aware of the problems that the smaller tourism operators have such as time and finances to be present and active on online social media platforms and also their lack of practical capabilities for this and thereby motivation.

The idea first began to take form when I was contacted by Gunvor Riber Larsen who I was working with on a project in Aalborg Airport during the summer of 2014. The idea she suggested was that I could get access to the data that I helped collect in Aalborg Airport and use it as a data resource in my thesis. It was a large opportunity for me to get hands on a large amount of knowledge about tourists travelling to Northern Jutland which I appreciate. It was also beneficial for me to use the data as I was engaged in the data collection and thereby had an approach and perception of the data.

I would like to start with thanking The Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies for giving me the opportunity to work with the data from the survey of 739 travellers which I have been a part of collecting on behalf of the department and thereby leading me to work with my supervisor Gunvor Riber Larsen who I also owe a large thank to. She has been guiding me through the thesis work and she has always been helpful to me which I am grateful for. My conversations with her had a very de-stressing and calming influence during my writing period.

I would also like to say thank you to Peter, for encouraging and supporting me unwaveringly throughout my research. He has freed me from chores at home to enable me to work on my thesis throughout the 5, which seems to him long, months. So thank you!

Lastly, I will also like to say thank you to my mother, sister and friends, especially Christine, Åsa and Maarja who have also been supporting elements in my work and available to ask for advice.

Aalborg, May 2015

Charlotte Dalsgaard

Abbreviations and Explanations

A.CD: Appendix CD

AAL: Aalborg Airport

E-WOM: Electronic Word of Mouth

l: Line

ll: Lines

NJ: Northern Jutland

Tourism operators: The local providers in NJ e.g. the owners of the hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, cafés, shops, attractions etc. selling tourism products, services, experiences or working in the tourism industry in NJ and not the DMOs in NJ.

VA: Visit Argentina

VN: Visit Nordjylland

VS: Visit Scotland

WOM: Word of Mouth

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1 Introduction

Today, consumers are becoming more active and informed and they want to influence their experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B). The central idea of reinforcing destinations' and tourism operators' competiveness is to involve their visitors in co-creation of experiences where the consumer is an active agent in the production of values. In co-creation, customer involvement is essential for defining and designing the experience. Co-creation plays a central role in designing experiences that have a direct effect on satisfaction (Andrades and Dimanche 2014), trust and loyalty (Krishna and Dhaka 2013). Co-creation provides newer ways of doing business (Krishna and Dhaka 2013) though, co-creation lacks the integration of technology (Yüksel and Yanik 2014). The increasing use of the internet is changing the nature of customers' input into the co-creation process which may influence their perception of the whole service experience (Chathoth et al. 2013). The internet is a particular important source of external information about the opportunities for tourists in NJ and therefore one of the concerns in this thesis. The continuous developments in online and social media technology has allowed tourists to find details on different destinations, their facilities, services, availabilities, environments and prices, where tourism operators in NJ should also present their business. The possibility to go online and find travel information results in tourists having more choices than before and when the awareness of choices increases the tourism industry is becoming more competitive. Tourism operators now have the opportunity to connect with customers at many communication and experience touch points to influence visitor satisfaction, loyalty and WOM (Oliveira and Panyik 2015). WOM has long been recognised as an important external information source for destination choice (Gretzel and Yoo 2008) and travellers mostly use recommendations from friends, colleagues or relatives, the internet and their personal experience about a destination as sources of information for trip planning (European Commission 2013). WOM becomes digital when consumers share their hospitality and tourism opinions online which provides the tourists with access to E-WOM (Litvin et al. 2008). E-WOM influences the travel decision processes (Gretzel and Yoo 2008) as user-generated content is perceived to have higher credibility than commercial information sources (Korneliussen 2014).

Tourists' information search is not limited to the stages before travelling. Information about the travel arrangements and lodging is done before the travel but the decisions regarding entertainment and activities are mostly done throughout the trip through the internet and on the hotel or visitor centres. Furthermore, tourists are also likely to search for information after a trip. Part of the satisfaction is looking at pictures from the places the tourist visited and the tourist may read or engage in post-trip sharing online (Korneliussen 2014). The tourists participate in producing their holiday before, during and after their journey using time, effort and money to trade for value (Prebensen et al. 2014).

NordDanmarks EU kontor (2015) acknowledges that for NJ, tourism is an important industry and in general during the last years the industry has been slowly growing though, compared to other European countries Denmark is not in the competition of being an attractive destination. Since 2010 there has been a progression in the number of foreigners visiting Denmark however, the Danish tourists still make up for 57% of the overnight stays in NJ. NordDanmarks EU kontor (2015) further presents that today tourism in NJ is facing many international competitors which result in higher demands of development and marketing. NJ as a destination has a large quality in the form of the coastline and a large potential to become a leading European coastal destination resulting in growth in the future. However, this demands an effort to follow the new tourism trends and tourists' needs which has developed during the last years. In 2013 only 15% of the tourists were Germans or Norwegians which indicates that branding of NJ towards the European countries is too weak and needs to be considered to ensure growth in the years to come (NordDanmarks EU kontor 2015).

Communication has to go beyond classical advertisements. To enhance customer and tourism operator value, an active dialogue is needed. In this sense, it is not only the service that has to be customised, it is the communication (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer 2012). The interaction between information communication technologies and tourism destinations has transformed the nature of tourism products, processes, business and the competitive environment around them (Oliveira and Panyik 2015). New types of technologies will generate a whole range of new tourism experiences (Neuhofer et al. 2013). Responding to today's competitive environment, a challenge remains of how the tourism operators at the destinations should respond to it. Given the prevalence of social media among consumers, it is no longer enough for businesses in tourism to rely solely on traditional media for marketing (Leung et al. 2013). Developing new ways of promoting and attracting tourists are inevitable though, many smaller tourism operators do not have a lot of time and finances to do so. With this in mind, this thesis explores the opportunities for tourism operators to facilitate a dialogue where tourists and locals invest their resources in a value creation and co-creation process and furthermore, what aspects of NJ are relevant to promote. The author of this thesis seeks to propose ways of overcoming the abovementioned challenges with the prospect of enabling and motivating smaller tourism operators in NJ to involve the tourists in a co-creation of experience process to meet future demands and furthermore, give an insight into what aspects of the NJ experience to promote.

1.1 Research Questions

1: In relation to a destination choice process, how can tourism operators in Northern Jutland utilise social media to facilitate experience co-creation and experience sharing online to attract more tourists?

2: In relation to a destination choice process, what aspects of the Northern Jutland visitor experience are relevant to promote online to create awareness?

1.2 Northern Jutland

NJ is geographically located in the top of Denmark and has the enormous Limfjord going through the region and a large area of coastline which makes the nature remarkable. The region has a special light and more hours of sunshine than in the rest of Denmark. The landscape is described as beautiful and harsh, with endless white beaches, sand dunes, cliffs, heathland and forests according to Visit Denmark 2 (2015).

According to Trip Advisor 1 (2015) NJ has around 945 activities in total consisting of approximately 378 sights and landmarks, 71 places with nature and parks, 364 museums, 59 outdoor activities, 3 zoos and aquariums, 5 amusement parks, 275 opportunities for shopping, 10 fun and games places, 5 theatre and concerts places, 7 tours and activities, 3 boat tours and water sports, 5 spa and wellness places, 39 nightlife places, 3 casinos and gambling places. Furthermore, NJ has around 587 restaurants (Trip Advisor 2 2015), 87 hotels, 290 bed and breakfasts and inns and 156 other places to stay such as camping and Danhostel (Trip Advisor 3 2015). In 2014, 7,194,072 persons chose to have one or more overnight stay in NJ (Danmarks Statistik 2014).

2 Theory

2.1 Introducing the Chapter

This chapter will start with an outline of how the relevant theory can be used to answer the research questions in the analysis. The whole chapter will take point of departure in the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process Model by Um and Crompton (1990). The discussion will start out by introducing the relevant updates which are the theories that supplement the model about experiences, co-creation, satisfaction, social media, and storytelling, all chosen based on their relevance to the research questions. The discussion proceeds with an account for how the model by Um and Crompton (1990) can consist of a useful framework in this thesis. The result will be an updated suggestion of theory to study destination choice, filling gaps and extending prior studies, visualised in a theoretical framework in the end of this chapter.

2.2 Outline of Research Questions

Figure 1, in this section, illustrates which theories will be used to answer the research questions in the analysis and how they relate to each other.

In relation to a destination choice process, how can tourism operators in Northern Jutland utilise social media to facilitate experience co-creation and experience sharing online to attract more tourists?

Destination Choice + Co-creation of Experience Value + Social Media + Online Storytelling

In relation to a destination choice process, what aspects of the Northern Jutland visitor experience are relevant to promote online to create awareness?

Destination Choice + Satisfaction + Co-creation of Experience Value

Figure 1. Source: Author's own

2.3 Point of Departure

The Model of the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process, by Um and Crompton (1990), visualised in figure 2, will be the key element in the theoretical framework surrounding this thesis.
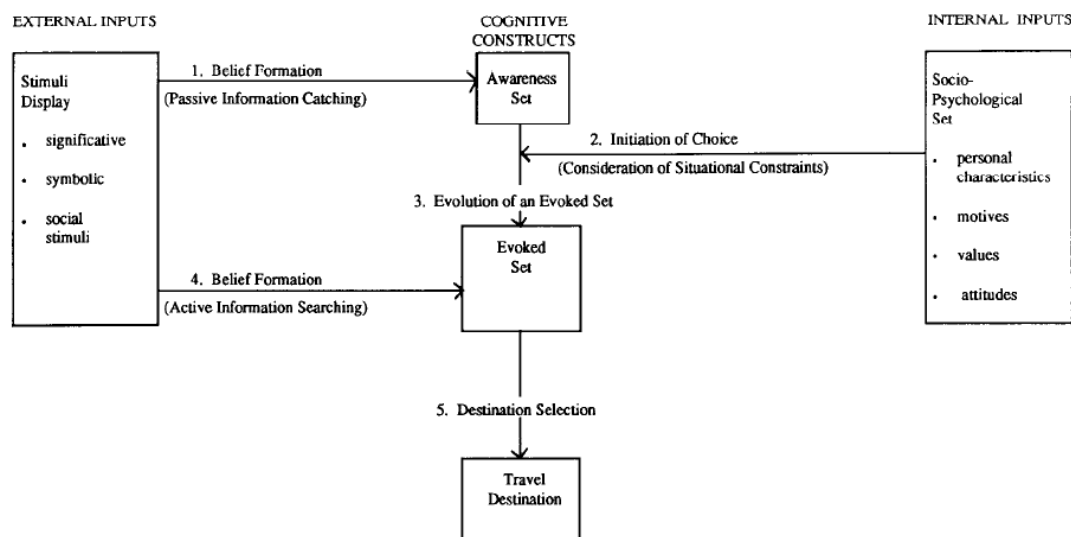
Figure 2. Source: (Um and Crompton 1990)

The model grasps what the author of this thesis finds as relevant basic factors applicable for the analysis, and illustrates tourists' destination choice process, or how it was viewed upon in 1990. Since the model was proposed, much has happened in the world, in leisure and tourism literature and technology, and the developments are essential to incorporate in the model. A lot points in the direction of the model being outdated thus, to be able to use it in the present situation of NJ new elements need to be incorporated in the model. Throughout this chapter the author of this thesis will discuss useful updates to answer the research questions.

2.4 Co-creation of Experiences

The concept of experiences was first introduced in academic literature by the publishing of the work by Pine and Gilmore (1999). Their work suggested that experiences are a source of value for the consumers and that companies stage experiences when they engage the customers and thereby make a connection in a personal and memorable way. Additionally, they claim that an experience is not sold unless people are paying for the experience. By this an experience occurs when a company intentionally constructs it to engage the customers. Even though people experience the same, the engagement of the customer in the experience means that customers rarely have the same experience. This is due to the fact that the experience is made from the interaction between the staged event and the individual's prior state of mind (Pine and Gilmore 1999). Acknowledging this idea Sundbo and Darmer (2010) also point out that the reason behind individual experiences is that the experience derives from the personal interaction with the experience and moreover, all customers engage differently, depending on their background, emotions,

interpretations and associations. When engaging the customer the experiences challenge the senses and mind of the customer (Sundbo and Darmer 2010).

The first generation of experiences proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) has been criticised for being too staged and commercial and therefore not suitable for today's tourists. Modern consumers want context-related, authentic experiences and to have more control. Binkhorst (2007) argues for the second generation experiences, based on **co-creation** between the tourism operator and the consumers to enable this. Pera (2014) locates third-generation communities where the distinctions between producers and consumers effectively disappear. Furthermore, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2003) state that the experience environment consists of three co-creators of value which is the tourism operator and its network, the consumer, and the consumer community. When creating positive and extraordinary experiences a **social dimension** is inevitable (Mossberg 2003). Pera (2014) and Rihova et al. (2014) talk about a tourist to tourist interaction approach in co-creation where Binkhorst (2007) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 B) talk about tourist to tourism operator interaction in co-creation. Buhalis (2000) states that a host to tourist interaction is an important component of the tourist experience, which is supported by Richards (2014) who argues for a host to guest interaction in co-creation. The thesis looks at all three approaches in answering the **research questions**.

The idea seen in Pine and Gilmore (1999) is according to Ek et al. (2008) turning the experience into a commodity. A consequence is that tourists to some degree have been reduced to passive spectators. Ek et al. (2008) in contradiction to Pine and Gilmore (1999) develop a dynamic model of how tourists actively, corporeally, technically and socially perform and produce places in manners that are not reduced to the script of the tourist industries. In order to catch the spatial and temporal dynamics of the tourist experience Ek et al. (2008) state that there should be a focus on **before**, **during** and **after** the experience. The author of this thesis believes that in tourism the classical division of before, during and after is long gone as technology improves. Korneliussen (2014) argues that it is an oversimplification to make a division of the stages, as information search can be done both, before, during and after the travel. In 2012, 53% of travellers used the internet in the holiday information search (European Commission 2013). Korneliussen (2014) argues that information search on the internet satisfies functional, hedonic, innovation, aesthetic and social needs and provides new experiences and value and the information search online will continue to increase before, during and after the travel. Furthermore, he states that the internet makes it possible to create more experience environments to facilitate co-creation of experience value and more forms of interaction between firms and consumers are being used to co-create experiences (Korneliussen 2014).

According to Ek et al. (2008) experiences take place in a social space and it is the sociality that makes them pleasurable. Furthermore, "*Tourists stretch the experience in time and space, document and develop experience activity, and find novel ways to communicate the experiences*" (Ek et al. 2008 134).

Such as Smed (2009) the idea of a time dimension is applied in this thesis, because as Smed (2009) argues "*the phases before, during and after an experience are actually interconnected parts of it, which all contribute to the processing of the experience and the experiences to come. The three phases in time are therefore related and play important roles in terms of understanding the experience*" (Smed 2009 133). Hence, the three phases are interrelated and tourists might compare present experiences with the former experiences, thinking about future activities may also affect the present moment (Lindberg et al. 2014).

The notion of a space dimension in this thesis is divided into an online and a physical space. The **first research question** will focus on a virtual space dimension where tourists, tourism operators and hosts can interact with each other online and the **second research question** will deal with a physical space in tourism, which is NJ, where tourists, tourism operators and hosts interact with each other physically.

2.5 Co-creation of Experience Value

Customers are gaining more power and control over tourism products such as experiences, which calls for that the organisations engage in a dialogue with them (Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009). Fortunately, as consumers are becoming more active and informed they want to interact with firms to co-create value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B). Emphasising this Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 A) argue that interaction is the basis of co-creation and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 B) and Dong et al. (2008) further state that the interactions that enable an individual customer to co-create unique experiences, thereby value, offer a new source of competitive advantage.

Co-creation is a process during which consumers take an active role and co-create value together with a tourism operator (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B). As suggested by Binkhorst (2007) experiences that enable consumers to participate, design and reflect add value to a consumer. Accordingly, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 B) propose that firms should create the basis for an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogue and create their own unique personalised experiences. In this value co-creation space, business managers cannot control how individuals co-construct their experiences but they have partial control over the experience environment and the networks they build to facilitate co-creation experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B). Piller et al. (2011) stress recognising customer co-creation as an active, creative and social process, based on collaboration between firms and customers (Piller et al. 2011). Co-creation transforms the market into a forum where dialogue can take place between the

consumer, the firm, the consumer communities and the networks of firms. Consumer to consumer communication and dialogue provides consumers with an alternative source of information and perspective (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B) and should be considered in the travel destination choice process and in answering the **research questions**.

Value for customers does not emerge only from one resource, the core product, but from the whole spectrum of supplier and customer interactions that support the success of the core resource (Grönroos 2011). The aim of this thesis to answer the **research questions** is therefore not to look at the tourism products in NJ in isolation but also the factors surrounding the experience which affect travel destination choices. The service-dominant logic of marketing acknowledges that tourists in the value creation and co-creation act as resource integrators (Prebensen et al. 2013). When the tourists participate in producing the experiences through their **involvement** and investment of their personal resources such as **time**, **money** and psychological **efforts**, which are required for consumer participation in value co-creation (Etgar 2008, Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer 2012), they compare the potential benefits and costs of co-creation activities. Prebensen et al. (2013) argue that resources such as time and effort spent in such co-creation situations are invested before, during and after the experience. In addition Prebensen et al. (2014) argue that tourists participate in producing their holiday before, during and after the journey through their time, effort and money. This is due to the fact that they feel it is a valued process because when they use resources and engagement, they produce an enjoyable moment of time. In the context of the destination choice model money, time and effort is only represented in the tourists' evaluation of their constraints before they choose a destination. Based on this, the author of this thesis acknowledges that these components of time, money and effort also need to be considered when dealing with the during and after stages of satisfaction which will determine whether to go again in a new destination choice process. Buhalis (2000) though argues that it is important for consumers to perceive prices as fair and good value for money, because dissatisfaction with this damages the destination's competitiveness.

Co-creation of experiences, considers consumer involvement and participation in the production of values and furthermore, tourist involvement will affect overall value perception positively (Prebensen et al. 2013). They advocate that *"Experience value is comprised of the benefits the tourist perceives from a journey and stay in a destination, including those assets or resources that the tourist, other tourists and the host bring to the process of co-creating experiences"* (Prebensen et al. 2013 244). Expanding on this idea, in order to answer the **research questions**, the destination choice framework needs to incorporate an **interaction** approach in the co-creation of experiences, as the consumer experience and its inherent value are created through social interaction (Lindberg et al. 2014). In order to answer research question **2** the updated

framework also needs to evaluate the benefits that the tourists get from visiting NJ, which will be analysed from a value and satisfaction perspective.

The social context in many experiences involves sharing and communicating with others who are having the same consumption experiences (Lindberg et al. 2014). Further explained, co-creating experiences during a holiday involves interaction with hosts and other tourists which results in increased or decreased value, (Prebensen et al. 2013) tourist satisfaction, and the perception of service quality (Mossberg 2007). **Service quality** is another important aspect of the experience value construct in tourism. Prebensen et al. (2013) acknowledge that service quality is the tourist's subjective assessment of the interaction with the host and how well the service needs have been met. Prebensen et al. (2014) point out that the service encounter is an exchange process of value between the customer and the service provider. Therefore, service quality is a large concern for the tourism operators, as it is performed during the holiday and cannot be worked on before and after and is in this way decisive for the experience.

Tourists visit places for a variety of reasons among other things enjoying the **nature** and surroundings are strong pull motivations for visiting certain places (Prebensen et al. 2013). Thus, nature and surrounding environments affect the perceived benefits of a journey. It should thereby be a concern in the destination choice framework and answering research question **2**. Throughout this chapter it will also be shown how natural surroundings are relevant regarding satisfaction and repeat visits. Though, when nature according to Prebensen et al. (2013) is expected by the tourists to be breathtakingly beautiful, and it conflicts in a disappointment, it can have a negative impact on the experience value.

Concluding, tourist experience value includes service quality, perception of the surrounding nature, other guests, and the tourist's resources, which include involvement, money, time, and effort and these value dimensions will have a direct, positive, and significant association with overall experience value (Prebensen et al. 2013) and is of concern to answer research question **2**.

The building blocks in creating profound consumer interaction in co-creating value are according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 A) **dialogue, access, transparency, and risk assessment**. Dialogue implies shared learning and communication between the two parties. In order to have a dialogue firms also need to give the tourists access and transparency to information which will enable the tourists' ability to make informed choices (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 A) which in this case reflects on destination choice. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 A) stress that risks associated with travelling can be financial, psychological, satisfaction, and time risks. These can influence destination choice because tourists carefully choose travel destination and risks may also be related to visits to mainstream destinations, as fellow tourists influence the destination atmosphere.

2.6 Satisfaction with the Tourist Experience

Satisfaction is, in this thesis, also incorporated in destination choice process and answering the research question **2**, as it has been pointed out that tourist satisfaction is significantly correlated with revisit intention as the higher the tourist satisfaction is, the higher the revisit intention is (Hui-Chuan and Hua 2014). As well as Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) this thesis understands tourist loyalty as the tourists' revisit and recommendation intentions. Shirazi and Som (2011) propose that tourists' positive experience of a tourism destination is important because it could produce repeat visitation as well as recommendations to other potential tourists. When improving the tourists' satisfaction with the destination it would heighten their intentions to communicate positive WOM (Prebensen et al. 2010). Füller and Matzler (2008) propose that customer satisfaction leads to positive WOM and repurchase intentions though, it is not the case when the tourist is a variety seeker. Yuksel et al. (2010) express that the strong relation between customer satisfaction and loyalty has led the maximisation of visitor satisfaction to become one of the primary objectives of destination managers. Yuksel et al. (2010) further argue that that greater levels of satisfaction results in increased likelihood of repeat visit and willingness to recommend the destination to others. Consequently, satisfaction assessment and WOM approaches should be a part of destination choice process and answering the **research questions**.

Stedman (2002) describes place satisfaction as a judgment of the perceived quality of the spatial setting. He adopts a three-component view of sense of place. The idea is that places include the physical setting, human activities that occur there, and human social and psychological processes which can be meanings and attachments rooted in the setting. He especially emphasises that sense of place is greatly socially constructed. Arnould and Price (1993) argue that customers need to be satisfied to be loyal customers but satisfied customers are not always loyal. Though, satisfaction may not be enough to create loyalty, conditions as a customer's time constraints, financial situation, effort perceptions, risk perceptions, or personal characteristics are also important (Flint et al. 2011). As mentioned above these factors will also be a part of the framework in this thesis considering destination choice.

Some authors (Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer 2012, Vega-Vazquez et al. 2013) have in resent works suggested that there is a link between co-creation and enhanced satisfaction with a service provider or product. Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) argue that the more the customers get involved in co-creation, the more value they feel which reflects on their satisfaction level and also enhance their intentions to re-purchase and make recommendations to their friends. Maunier and Camelis (2013) explain that tourism experience is thus characterised by interactions both with the physical and human environment which is valued by tourists and leads to satisfaction. It is therefore important to evaluate both

factors of the physical and human environment to answer research question **2**. Gallarza and Saura (2006) state that these factors can be grouped into categories shown in figure 3. The model made by Gallarza and Saura (2006), well grounded in research and knowledge, specifies a clear pattern which acknowledges that there is a bond between quality, value and satisfaction which generates loyalty as a final outcome of the process (Gallarza and Saura 2006). They expand on some of the ideas of researchers within construction of value, in order to establish a model containing measurements and explaining relationships between the components worth considering when evaluating the process of experiences in a "value-satisfaction-loyalty" chain.
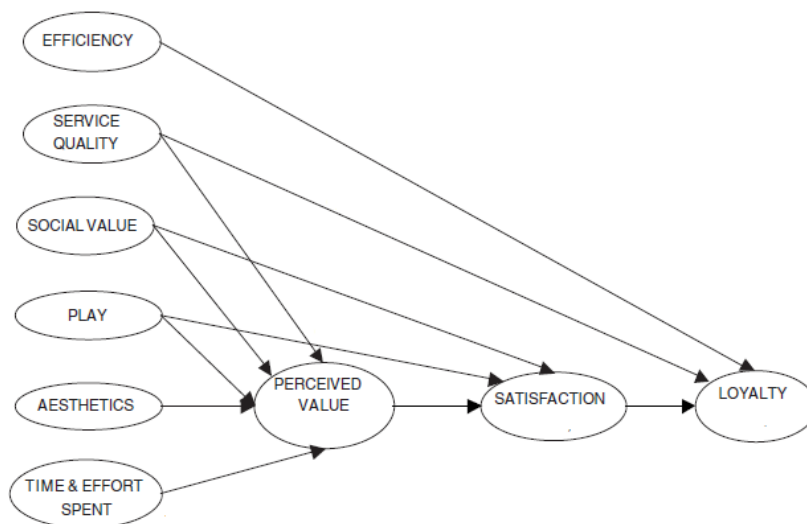

Figure 3. Source: (Gallarza and Saura 2006)

Poulsson and Kale (2004) outline that an experience gives the consumer one or more of the sensations and feelings of personal relevance which can be learning, novelty, surprise, and engagement and is thereby captivating for the tourist. The higher degree of engagement, the more intense an experience the tourist achieves. They define experiences as *"an engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of that encounter"* (Poulsson and Kale 2004 270). Prebensen et al. (2014) further agree that experiences appeal to the tourists high-order needs as novelty, excitement, enjoyment, prestige, socialising, and learning. These components need to be taken into consideration in answering research question **2** as they are affecting satisfaction and repeat visits to the destination. It can be argued that Gallarza and Saura's (2006) category **play** in order to affect value and satisfaction for the tourists visiting NJ needs to have a degree of novelty, excitement, enjoyment, socialising, and learning in order for the tourists to be satisfied with the trip activities and willing to revisit and recommend the destination to others. Serrato et al. (2010) found in their study that the factors which affect the tourists' evaluation process of a destination were among others, the

complementary elements of tourist supply such as the ability to participate in meaningful activities e.g. cultural events, concerts, art exhibitions, festivals, etc. This is therefore incorporated in this thesis' framework.

According to Gallarza and Saura (2006) play is an antecedent of perceived value and satisfaction is the behavioural consequence of perceived value, which brings loyalty attitude as the final outcome. When customers perceive fun while they are co-creating, they are more willing to spend more money (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer 2012). Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) argue that a way to positively affect customer satisfaction with the service provider, customer loyalty, and service expenditures is through co-creation. Furthermore, Yuksel et al. (2010) demonstrate that satisfaction with site attributes at a destination can enable the individual to perform activities, which in turn brings about the opportunities for other positive outcomes such as social interactions, skills testing, the achievement of personal goals, and the acquisition of memories. Dmitrovic et al. (2009) emphasise that satisfaction manifests itself in repurchase behaviour which leads to positive WOM argued by Füller and Matzler (2008).

Social interaction, mentioned above, is doubtless an important factor in experiences in NJ before, during and after a visit. Gallarza and Saura (2006) consider the social nature of the tourism experience by adding **social value** in their model as an intrinsic variable related to perceived value and satisfaction. Maunier and Camelis (2013) agree that social value, the perceived utility from interactions between people, may have an influence on satisfaction. As argued by Mossberg (2007) some products can be used as an entrance ticket to a social group where tourists can get a sense of community which can enhance value and satisfaction for the tourists. A community among participants create a sense of belonging to the group felt by the participants (Mossberg 2007) and Deng et al. (2010) say belonging to a certain group may enhance perceived value explored in answering research question **1**. Even though employees and locals' friendliness cannot be directly measured it is still a factor of concern (Echtner and Ritchie 2003). Serrato et al. (2010) argue that the most important variable that determines satisfaction of a trip is the hospitality and friendliness of people, followed by fair prices. As mentioned earlier Richards (2014) argues for a host to guest interaction in co-creation and acknowledges the social value in travelling. Tourism takes place in social contexts, in which interactions and shared experiences with other tourists form a crucial part of the service experience. Boswijk et al. (2007) argue that experiences occur during interactions in a setting, whether physical or not, between the individual and other people.

Interestingly, the findings of Gallarza and Saura (2006) showed that **efficiency** and **service quality** were the only components directly related to loyalty behaviour. Following Gallarza and Saura (2006) efficiency in this

thesis will be considered as available information, infrastructure, gastronomy at destination, shopping facilities, and lodging facilities at the destination all contributing to the tourists' loyalty.

Gallarza and Saura's (2006) model also proposes a relationship between **service quality** and value as Prebensen et al. (2013) mentioned above. This is supported by Krishna and Dhaka (2013) who says that customer satisfaction and service quality are considered as fundamental to determine customer loyalty. A tourist experiences various servicescapes, and the service encounters include a communication process between the host and guests that adds values to the process (Prebensen et al. 2013).

One factor affecting value of a tourist experience is the **aesthetics** of the destination such as the landscapes, the environments and the natural surroundings. The natural surroundings are relevant regarding satisfaction and repeat visit as it is a consequence of value that the tourists can get out of the environment. Prebensen et al. (2013) as quoted above, claim that enjoying the nature and surroundings are motivations for visiting certain places and therefore a component in answering research question **2**. Cracolici and Nijkamp (2008) express that a destination comprises of specific physical, natural, cultural and human resources, which can generate capabilities that become useful in creating and developing competitive advantages and should thereby be a concern in the destination choice framework. Bernini and Cagnone (2014) find that improving the leisure image of the destination can be an important issue for competiveness and destination attractiveness.

As well as Prebensen et al. (2014), mentioned above, Gallarza and Saura (2006) present that **time** and **effort** spent has an effect on value for tourists. They do not incorporate money as a component affecting value like Echeverri and Skålén (2011) propose value can never be reduced to monetary evaluation. However, as argued above money is, among other things, an important factor for tourists constraining factors in choosing a holiday. If the holiday does not correspond to value for money it can be deselected during another decision process. Furthermore, Bernini and Cagnone (2014) argue that high levels of satisfaction result in increased loyalty, greater tolerance of price and an enhanced reputation.

Loyalty is important in relation to NJ because acquiring new customers costs much than retaining an existing customer (Flint et al. 2011, Bechmann 2012). Consequently, satisfaction and its after-effects should be incorporated into the destination choice framework and answering research question **2** because it is essential for tourism operators to be aware of. Barutçu et al. (2011) state that tourists who are satisfied transfer their positive experiences to other tourists. Yoon and Uysal (2005) too find it important to look at tourist satisfaction as it influences the choice of destination and the decision to return. They further say that in order to improve satisfaction with travel experiences, destination managers must consider the pull

motivations, which are related to external sources, including destination attributes, which will be a concern in the analysis.

2.7 Social Media

Information technologies transform the ways in which tourism businesses produce, deliver and sell their products (Munar 2012). The expansion of information and communication technologies has resulted in the increased adoption of **social media** software by tourism organisations. It is allowing business to consumer communication and increasingly consumer to consumer communication and enhances collaboration and sharing of information online. In tourism, social media technologies have resulted in a variety of websites to share tourist experiences online. The interactive sites such as Trip Advisor displaying tourist generated content are highly popular and often perceived as more likely to provide reliable information than content posted by tourism organisations (Munar 2012). Furthermore, WOM recommendations from people that are trusted play a very important role in decision making (Bechmann 2012). In this way it can be used to answer research question **1**.

In the welter of various social media platforms this thesis has a focus on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **Snapchat**. The types are chosen on their basis of different capabilities, reach and customer segments.

The internet has provided consumers with an unlimited amount of information and the opportunity to share recommendations and criticism through various channels (Bechmann 2012), in this case social media. Through social media on the internet consumers can easily communicate with hundreds or thousands of other people about their experience and consumers often refer to social media posts by other consumers before they make a purchase decision (Lim et al. 2012). Social media are playing an increasingly important role as information sources for travellers, since travellers use social media in their online travel information search stage of the purchase decision-making process (Xiang and Gretzel 2010) and share information, opinions and travel experiences with others (Tussyadiah and Zach 2013).

Social media has impact before, during and after a journey (Messe Berlin 2014, Fotis et al. 2012). Cox et al. (2009) found that tourists look at user generated content in the information search of the travel planning process and let it act as an additional source of information, rather than as the only source of information. Cox et al. (2009) argue for a rising popularity of sites containing user generated content and the influence that they have in the trip planning behaviour of travellers. However, in contrast to most findings Cox et al. (2009) found that pure user generated content sites cannot be considered as credible or trustworthy as tourism websites due to the fact that users can create fake posts. Though, the findings were also that most people felt that tourism websites could be enhanced by incorporating functions to allow real travellers to

contribute to them and thereby minimise fake posted information as there would be some control of the information.

The idea in this thesis, to answer research question **1**, is to use social media as a way to co-create experiences between both tourism operators and tourists and tourist to tourist. Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) argue that technology empowers consumers to co-create their own tourism experiences and provides an experience environment where innovations in tourism can be based on the co-creation experience. Technological developments will make meaningful dialogues possible with each individual customer and it is vital for businesses to enter in a dialogue with consumers to co-create experiences and value together (Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009). Consumers that engage with their favourite brands using social media have stronger relationships compared with those who do not interact (Hudson 2014). Neuhofer et al. (2013) argue that through technology, experience co-creation is richer and offers higher value for tourists. When achieved it can lead to enhanced tourism experiences and competitive advantages. It will therefore be an element in answering research question **1**.

Shaw (2011) states that the developments of online communities make it easier for tourists to obtain information, develop relationships and make travel related decisions. E-WOM sources play an increasingly important role in the consumer decision making process and tourism purchase decisions (Litvin et al. 2008). Many tourism operators have also recognised the importance of including consumer generated content on their websites, usually in the form of testimonials (Xiang and Gretzel 2010) hence, consumer generated content on social media can significantly influence a destination image (Lim et al. 2012). Social electronic media such as Facebook has a possibility to influence tourism (Jacobsen and Munar 2012), and user generated content is quickly becoming the source for credible travel information (Munar and Gyimothy 2014) as it is real experiences revealed by real people (Leung et al. 2013). Hence, social media influences travel behaviour (Lange-Faria and Elliot 2012, Leung et al. 2013) it should be a part of the updated framework to help answer the research question **1**.

In the before, during and after stages of travelling, of the tourism experience consumption, a wide range of technologies have come into use for the tourists (Neuhofer et al. 2013). Social media can be used before, during and after the travel. As argued, before visiting a destination social media can have an effect on tourists' travel choice, the image formed and thereby expectation. Furthermore, Buhalis (2000) states that before visiting a destination tourists develop an image about destinations as well as a set of expectations. These are based on previous experience, WOM, press reports, advertising, which is known as the external inputs in the travel destination choice process, and in this case social media will be incorporated in the updated framework and in answering research question **1**.

Above 90% of all tourists who visit Denmark bring their mobile phone on the holiday making it a relevant media to include in a strategy, as it can be used to engage in social media and get digital tourist information (Midtjysk Turisme 2014). Today's travellers also expect digital experiences and access to information around the clock and use mobile phones to do more than research and book their travel. Tourists also use their mobile phones to plan entire holidays, research destinations while being on the road, purchase in-destination activities, and share their experiences with their friends and family (Revinate 2015). While being immersed in the tourism destination, mobile technologies can be used to enhance the experience as it offers instant access to information, videos or recommendation sites, which are relevant to the current location (Neuhofer et al. 2013). When the tourists are connected to social media applications, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat they can interact and share their experiences, photos and social activities during the trip. Mobile technologies allow for experiences to be enhanced, intensified and co-created anywhere and anytime concluded by Neuhofer et al. (2013). The individual tourist's experience is also shaped virtually after the experience by using social media.

As stated, this thesis will be looking at Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. These types are chosen based on their degree of sharing and co-creating experiences. The social media components will be integrated in the analysis of destination choice framework and will help answer research question **1**.

Facebook

Facebook has three forms of content platforms, which are the personal profile, the groups, and the company pages (Midtjysk Turisme 2014) and can be used on both mobile devices and the internet. Facebook is chosen as it is a platform where users can both share recommendations, upload pictures, and videos and has 1.44 billion monthly active users as of March, 2015 (Facebook Newsroom 2015). It is also important in this thesis as it is a medium where most tourists have a profile and furthermore, as it allows for communication before, during and after their visit (Midtjysk Turisme 2015).

Jacobsen and Munar (2012) argue that Facebook is a site, where users spend quite a lot time and therefore, even when tourists do not go on Facebook to find travel related information, the information is being passively consumed as pictures and posts on social media can result in awareness of tourism products and offerings. Though, it is hard to measure the exact effect that social media has on destination choice and perception however, tourists not only turn to the web for information but the information search also relates to sociability and social rewards in sharing of travel information (Jacobsen and Munar 2012).

Platforms such as Facebook can be approaches to co-creation of value (Zwass 2010) and will be a concern in answering research question **1**. This kind of co-creation with a high intensity of customer engagement

reduces the risk and complications for both consumers as well as operators, as customers can directly interact in a dialogue with operators (Krishna and Dhaka 2013). Jacobsen and Munar (2012) explain that social media such as Facebook may be beneficial to reduce risks and communicate benefits, as consumers assist each other in effectively making sense of information and sharing experiences. Social network sites such as Facebook are therefore increasingly employed by tourism organisations (Jacobsen and Munar 2012). According to a research survey, nearly 65% of the participants also found it helpful to post questions on a social media channel and receive answers from fellow consumers (Revinate 2015).

Instagram

Instagram is a community of more than 300 million users worldwide who capture and share their moments through pictures and videos (Instagram 2015). Using Instagram requires downloading an app on a mobile device or a tablet, as pictures and videos cannot be posted from a browser. In Instagram there is one platform opportunity which can be a personal or company profile. The profile has a small "bio" where the user can write a text about themselves or the business. The app makes it possible to search for other users or other users' pictures or videos by hash-tags #. Hash-tags increase the relevance of E-WOM and are a valuable tool to share tastes, attitudes, and experiences (Oliveira and Panyik 2015) and thereby relevant to incorporate in answering research question **1**. Clicking on a hash-tagged word below a photo or video shows all other photos or videos with this hash-tag from around the world and they become a piece of knowledge on the global sphere as argued by Oliveira and Panyik (2015). They further state that sharing a picture or video in Instagram, of a destination asset, has changed the way the world accesses destination information, and traveller-generated content affects the way a destination is communicated to the outside. Instagram is an example of the trend proposed by Prebensen et al. (2013) that nowadays tourists are motivated to express the importance of their experiences to others.

Snapchat

Snapchat is an app that can be downloaded to mobile devices and tablets which makes it possible to send snaps in the form of a chat, pictures or videos to other users. In 2014 Snapchat reached 100,000,000 active users (Socialstats 2015). The pictures and videos received can be viewed for maximum 10 seconds before they disappear again and the chats disappear after the conversation is closed. The pictures received on Snapchat can however be saved on the user's device by taking a screenshot of the picture and the sender gets a note when this is done. The users can draw or add text to the pictures and videos before sending them or add a filter, which is a special overlay for Snapchats such as temperature or speed.

It is also a tool to communicate through pictures and videos by sharing stories. Users can also add their content to their "story" allowing their friends to view it several times for 24 hours, shown in picture 1.

Furthermore, users are also able to experience "our stories" controlled by the Snapchat community at selected events using Snapchats from people to visualise some of the users' favourite places around the world shown in picture 2. "Our story" allows users who are at the same event location to co-create Snapchats to the same "story" by using a geofilter that can only be accessed in certain locations (Snapchat 2015).
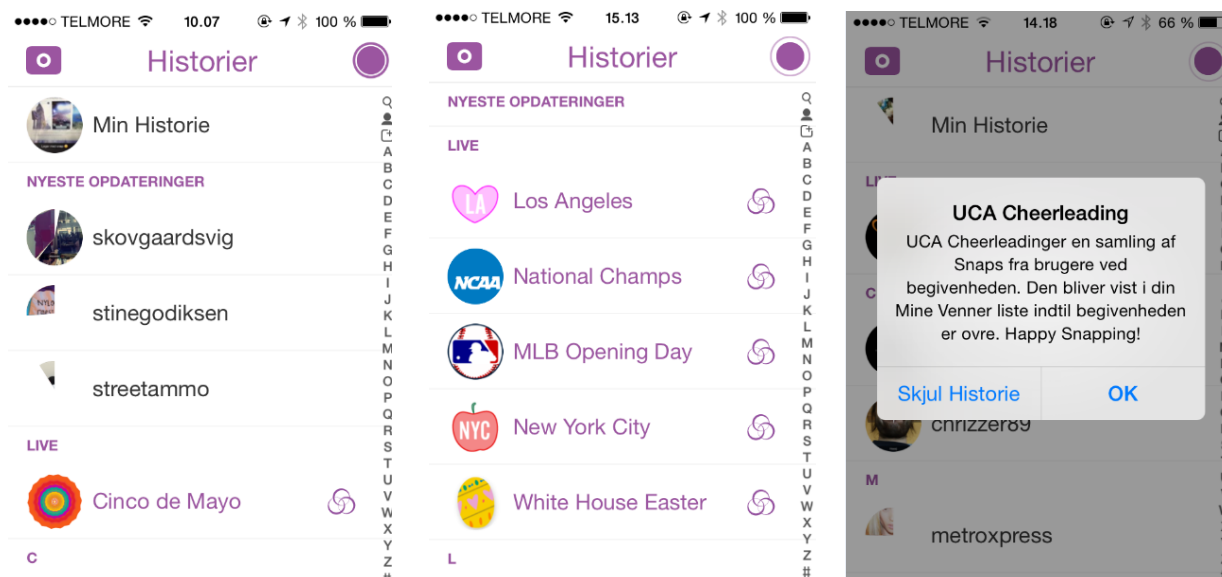
Picture 1. Source: Snapchat   Picture 2. Source: Snapchat   Picture 2. Continued

2.8 Storytelling

Fog et al. (2002) assert that storytelling is a communicative way to inform about the values of e.g. a destination in order for people to easily understand the values and get emotionally attached. Stories have an impact on the consumer's experience process as they communicate value that engage the tourists and influence their expectations through identification (Mathisen 2014). Therefore, the author of this thesis suggests storytelling to be a powerful component to integrate in destination choice framework and answering research question **1**. Today's tourists are opinion makers and storytellers with access to a lot of information communication technologies and act as co-creators (Oliveira and Panyik 2015) of destination images, in this case by social media. In general, the content shared on online communities is travel stories and experiences that are presented in a narrative format (Leung et al. 2013).

Before tourists decide on a holiday they are, according to (Mathisen 2014), exposed to stories through various media channels which can influence their perception of a destination. Storytelling will in this thesis be analysed with regards to a tourist to tourist, tourist to tourism operator and host to tourist interaction on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

It is easier to develop relations with tourists via stories than numbers and facts and storytelling is made to touch feelings and dreams (Fog et al. 2002). Storytelling therefore becomes a collective creative process that enables social interactions (Pera 2014). No matter how good the product is the consumer will always look for stories and experience value they can relate to. Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) argue for an emotional promotion using the local residents as a part of the experience that the place offers and furthermore, suggest that an effective way to present the identity characteristics of a place or product is through a story. Stories used by tourism firms can enhance the value for the tourists by involving them in the value creation process by the way of co-creating experience value (Mathisen 2014).

Telling stories are important because it involves associating places with stories and is the only way we can create meaning and make sense of the world (Fog et al. 2002). Furthermore, storytelling integrates rational and emotional levels, and moves people to action (Pera 2014) which can be action to choose NJ as destination, and storytelling should therefore be in the framework and a relevant part in answering research question **1**.

2.9 The Destination Choice Process

Throughout this chapter the author of this thesis has discussed useful updates to the Model of the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process, by Um and Crompton (1990) figure 4, to build a theoretical framework, which will guide the analysis in order to answer the research questions. The original model will be accounted for below and the updated proposed in the end.
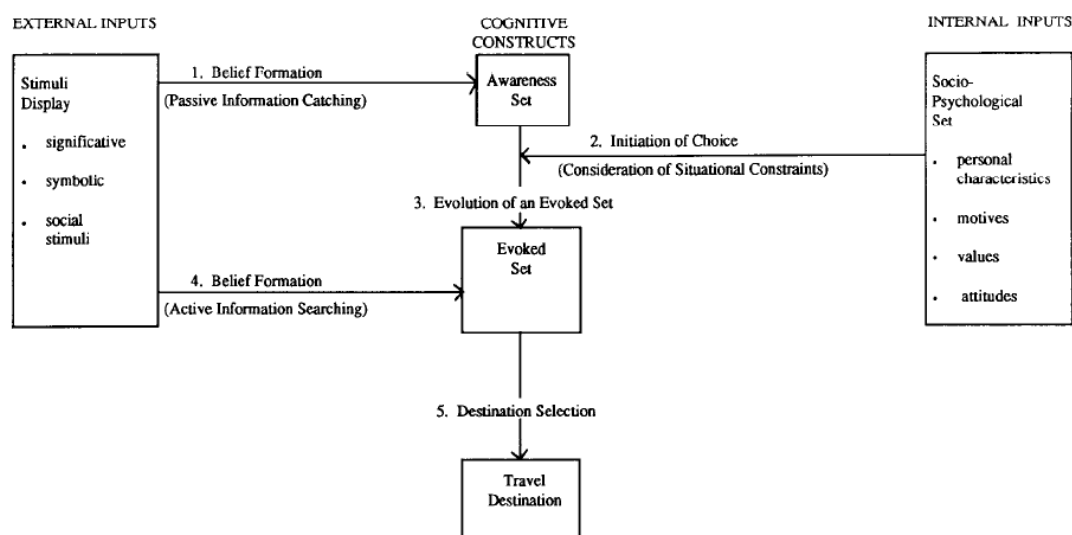

Figure 4. Source: (Um and Crompton 1990)

The model by Um and Crompton (1990), figure 4, considers five sets of processes. The processes are however re-evaluated in this thesis as it will be explained below.

The model composes three constructs which are an awareness set, an evoked set, and a travel destination selection. The components in the framework can be grouped in overall categories of **external inputs**, **internal inputs** and **cognitive constructs**.

As explained by Um and Crompton (1990) the external inputs consist of three types of stimuli termed significative, symbolic and social stimuli. **Significative stimuli** are obtained from actually visiting the destination, in this case NJ, and the evaluation made of the stimuli will be whether to revisit when the decision process of a new trip is initiated. **Symbolic stimuli** are promotional material from the travel industry in the form of pictures or texts. **Social stimuli** arise from the tourist's interaction with other people by face-to-face communicating direct or indirect travel experiences which in this context will be called WOM. Social stimuli are an important consideration as argued by Um and Crompton (1990), tourists act in accordance with their social groups' opinions.

Kerstetter and Cho (2004) write that the concept of familiarity is comprised of two dimensions. The indirect experience which is the acquired information such as social stimuli, and the direct tourism experience such as the number of times the individual previously visited a destination as significative stimuli. Familiarity has shown to generate a favourable image or positive affect toward a destination, enhance interest in travelling, and provide objective information on product attributes (Kerstetter and Cho 2004). They also found that types of sources used beside their own experience, was most likely the internet for information search. They do however argue that the internet is not used by tourists with greater levels of prior knowledge and familiarity with the destination.

The internal inputs consists of the travellers socio-psychological set combining four aspects of **motives**, **values**, **attitudes** and **personal characteristics** which are the socio-demographics such as lifestyle, personality and situational factors. Motives are related to need satisfaction and according to Um and Crompton (1990) they incorporate the motivations for travelling such as novelty, challenge, relaxation, learning and curiosity. Um and Crompton (1991) extend their work by stating that the need satisfaction dimension can be further specified by the dimensions called **active needs**, **passive needs**, and **intellectual needs** which is the tourists' attitude dimensions used as criteria for destination evaluation. Kim et al. (2012) go on to say that hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty are important components of the tourism experience and are likely to affect a person's memory. Morgan and Xu (2009) further confirm the importance of social motivations and state that a unique and memorable holiday experience is the result of a social interaction, either with the local culture or more likely with the group of friends or family tourists travel with.

One has to note that when tourists visit friends and family the situation might be different regarding the destination choice process as the tourists might not go through all the stages because there is a clear purpose of the destination choice. This will still be used in the analysis as a holiday visiting friends and family still can effect satisfaction perception of the destination and social and significative stimuli. Furthermore, as argued by Sundbo and Darmer (2010) tourists on holiday visit places, not so much for cultural learning and education, but simply for the pleasure of being together there and more intensely together.

The cognitive constructs in the model integrate all relevant external and internal inputs into the awareness and evoked set of destinations. The awareness set is the dream destination for the tourist and a desired place to visit without considering the situational constraints such as the travelability in terms of money, time, skills and health. In an earlier work Crompton (1977) proposed that destination choice is a function of the relationship between constraints such as money, time and skills and destination image (Um and Crompton 1990). The evoked set in the model is all the destinations which the traveller considers to be reasonable alternatives and have to evaluate before selecting the destination. During the evoked set stage the tourists consider their situational constraints and preferences for destinations which results in the final destination choice (Um and Crompton 1990). Final destination choice is driven by constraints and opportunities (Decrop 2010). External stimuli are a way to form beliefs about destination attributes, however the nature of those beliefs will vary according to the potential traveller's socio-psychological set (Um and Crompton 1990).

2.10 Expanded Theoretical Framework

The framework, shown in figure 5, proposed by the author of this thesis, is developed with components which suits today's travel environment and can be argued to have an effect on destination choice. The framework of factors affecting the present tourists' destination choice process is taking point of departure in the model by Um and Crompton (1990). In this thesis, the theoretical framework will guide the analysis in order to answer the research questions.

The author of this thesis acknowledges how the overall categories proposed by Um and Crompton (1990) of **external inputs**, **internal inputs** and **cognitive constructs** can be used in answering the research questions but also sees a lack in the model of new ways of analysing destination choice which is marked with a red highlight in the framework. The author of this thesis, from the original model, has deselected the five processes as she, on a basis of theory, does not believe that the processes are statically gone through today. However, as shown in the framework's light blue parts, this thesis argues that the tourists go through the processes of **situational constraints**, **active information searching** and **passive information**

catching continuously throughout the travel process as well as all the **internal** and **external components** influence the travel destination choice process **before**, **during** and **after**. Beside this the framework has been supplemented with **external factors** such as social media, storytelling and co-creation which are added as mostly external factors but can also be argued to have some internal elements within the processes. The destination attributes, meaningful activities during the visit, and repeat visits, which are categories affecting the destination choice, are placed in the middle of the framework as they comprise both external and internal influences. Satisfaction is placed as an internal input though it can be argued to be influenced to some degree by the external factors. The new components are by author of this thesis deemed necessary, on the basis of the theory, to incorporate in the process. Particularly what the components comprise of and how they can have an impact on destination choice will be examined throughout the analysis. The new components in the framework are placed in a non-numeric logic and not meant as an order as starting with the first component and ending with the last stated. The visualisation of the arrows shown in the framework should be seen as a circular process of factors affecting each other continuously. The parts in the framework are interconnected e.g. the internal inputs does not only have a significance on the evoked set but also how the tourists perceive the destination attributes, the activities during the visit and consequently their intention to revisit.

Throughout the analysis the components and process of the framework will be analysed with regards to NJ as the components in the framework cannot be looked at in isolation because they all contribute to tourists' destination choice. However, only the framework's updated components will be used to answer the research questions as these are relevant for the tourism operators in NJ to look at and can be affected by the tourism operators.
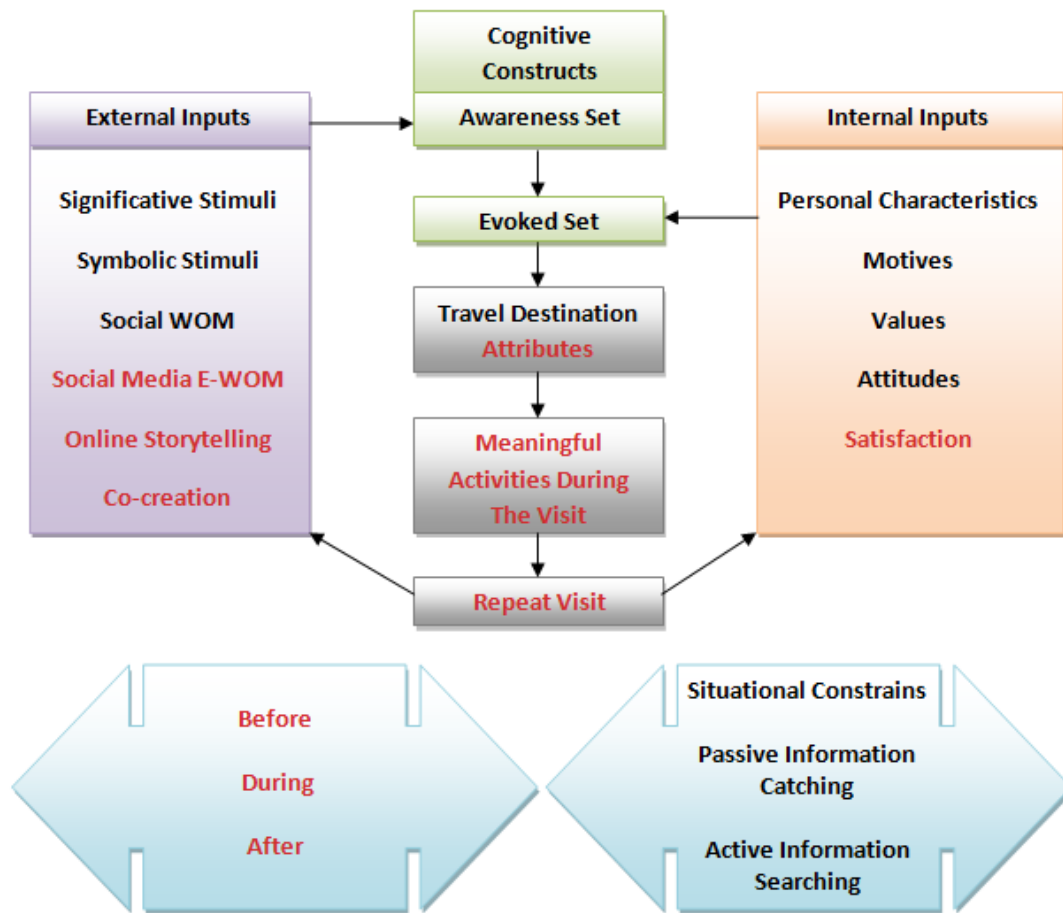
Figure 5. Source: Author's own

3 Methodology

This chapter will explain the paradigmatic set behind the thesis, i.e. the ontology and the epistemology adopted and the methodological approach applied in this thesis. The research design will be accounted for as well as collection of the quantitative and qualitative data and analysis method. An evaluation of the research is made in the end.

Based on the research questions, the author of this thesis has to collect information about both the tourists travelling to NJ, and how tourists share experiences to answer the questions satisfyingly. The answer thereby demands data which is in-depth and data in a broader and measuring form. The author of this thesis will therefore follow the pragmatic research paradigm and a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative data collection which can give a detailed picture of the phenomenon of the destination choice process as the full picture is more meaningful for this research than each of the data forms in isolation.

3.1 Philosophy of Science

Although philosophical ideas remain largely hidden throughout research they still influence the practice of the research and the selection of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods (Creswell 2009). A research paradigm addresses the philosophical dimension of the science. According to Wahyuni (2012), Jonker and Pennink (2010), Guba (1990), Guba and Lincoln (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (1994) a research paradigm is a set of fundamental assumptions and set of beliefs as to how the world is perceived, what the world exists of, and how the world is. This serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour and action of the researcher in answering the research questions. Creswell (2009) proposes four worldviews which is postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism, where this thesis employs the pragmatic approach. It is appropriate for this research because it, as argued by Creswell (2003), is real-world practice oriented, pluralistic and problem-centred which is needed in this thesis to answer the research questions as the author of this thesis has chosen to focus on a specific case, which is NJ. Furthermore, Powell (2001) states that *"To a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving"* (Powell 2001 884). Arguing that pragmatism concerns solutions to problems, this fits well with the intended research purpose which is, to find out how to affect destination choice processes to attract and enhance tourists awareness, to get results that can be used in the real world.

In this thesis pragmatism is followed as it enables to enlighten the phenomenon from different angles using multiple methods, in this case the interviewed persons, netnography and the survey. Furthermore,

pragmatism is not focused on one reality or one system of philosophy (Creswell 2009). Pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity and truth is what applies at the given time to address the research problem (Creswell 2003, Wahyuni 2012). Morgan (2007) underlines this by stressing that following the pragmatic approach, there is no problem with asserting that there is a single "real world" and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world. Consequently, this means that regarding the **ontological** question, *"What is the nature of the 'knowable'? Or, what is the nature of 'reality'?"* (Guba 1990 18) one can argue, that pragmatism invites to multiple ways of making sense of the world (Greene 2007). The important aspect is not to choose side but to develop methodology and procedures which can be used to study the world and get knowledge about it (Sohlberg and Sohlberg 2004). The view on reality is therefore a multiple view chosen to best achieve an answer to the research questions (Wahyuni 2012). Accordingly, in this thesis both data to uncover an objective reality and data to capture a social constructed reality will be used.

Epistemology is focused on the relationship between the knower (inquirer) and the known (knowable) (Guba 1990), or simplified the relationship between the researcher and the reality. As regards epistemology, the concern is how it is possible to acquire knowledge of the world. The epistemological beliefs are relevant and appropriate to use for the design and justification of one's research and answering the research questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). Pragmatism believes that objectivist and subjectivist perspectives are not mutually exclusive and that there is not a forced dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity (Wahyuni 2012, Morgan 2007). Thereby, the researcher in this thesis is both objective and subjective in the epistemological orientation of studying the research questions as the researcher views the quantitative data objectively and the qualitative data subjectively which will provide the research with various perspectives. The researcher in this thesis uses both qualitative and quantitative data which embraces subjective and objective points of view on the research questions as the quantitative will concentrate on description and explanation while the qualitative will concentrate on understanding and interpretation. At one point the knower and the known must be interactive in qualitative research, while at others the researcher must stand apart from what is being studied when doing quantitative research (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

3.2 Mixed Methods Research Design

The term mixed methods refer to the use of two or more methods in a research project using both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell et al. 2003, Greene 2007, Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010, Hall 2012, Johnson et al. 2007, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004) in this case qualitative semi-structured interviews, netnography and a quantitative survey. The flexibility to use both quantitative and qualitative

approaches seeks richer and deeper understandings of important aspects of a complex social world (Greene 2007, Wahyuni 2012) and allows the researcher to answer the research questions most effectively (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2009). Consequently, to better understand the research problem and attain in-depth knowledge this thesis will triangulate the broad numeric trends from quantitative research and use the detail of qualitative research (Creswell 2009). The combination of qualitative semi-structured interviews, netnography and a quantitative survey, in this case, allows for the strengths of each method to be combined in a complementary manner with the strengths of the other (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2009, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, Johnson et al. 2007). The largest reason for combining qualitative and quantitative methods in mixed research has been that using different methods allows the author of this thesis to draw conclusions that were not possible with one method only (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). Creswell et al. (2003) agree and say that all methods of data collection have limitations but the use of multiple methods can overcome some of the disadvantages of certain methods. A benefit of using multiple methods, in this thesis, is that the researcher gets both narrative and numeric data, which according to Lieber (2009) can grasp both the depth in cases and get a breadth of the sample, has representativeness of the population but also value of information.

This thesis applies the method of triangulation as it represents that the research problems are treated from different perspectives to give a more versatile illustration by the means of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Sohlberg and Sohlberg 2004, Olsen 2004, Johnson et al. 2007). The author of this thesis uses triangulation because it offers a greater confidence in the reasoning and interpretations to be made according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), which helps give a more comprehensive answer to the research questions.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions the author of this thesis includes both qualitative and quantitative data in what Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009) call a between-strategies mixed data collection process, which involves gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data using more than one data collection strategy. This is an approach also called triangulation, as mentioned above. The design comprehends of a secondary data collection of 739 responses to a survey distributed in AAL in June, July and August 2014 and a primary data collection of 3 semi-structured interviews conducted in February, March and April and netnography collected by the author of this thesis on three platforms over a five-month period that began in January 2015. The survey acts as a source of large numbers of respondents that produce information across a broad range of topics and the semi-structured interviews and netnography

act as sources that generate in-depth information about particular areas of interest (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2009). The data collection process is further explained in the sections below.

Semi-structured Interviews

The author of this thesis applied the method of semi-structured interviews for the collection of primary data. Semi-structured interviews use the approach of in-depth interviewing which involves asking open-ended questions, listening to and recording the answers and then following up with additional questions to gather information (Patton 1987). According to Kvale (2009) a qualitative interview tries to understand the world through the point of view of the interviewee and unfold the exact meaning which is connected with their experiences. Interviewing solicits detail and provides a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view (Patton 1987). This was the main idea of using interviews in this thesis, in order to get inside knowledge of the tourists' understandings and interpretations from their perspective. Furthermore, interviewing allows the interviewer to enter another person's world to understand their perspective, and it adds an inner perspective to outward behaviours. Therefore, the interview is a source of meaning and elaboration (Patton 1987) and an important method in this thesis. The structure of the interview with open-ended questions reveals how interviewees construct reality and think about situations (Yin 2009) which is beneficial for this research. The interview is an approach to create knowledge through a daily life conversation and the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale 2009). Each of the interviews should be seen as stories (Veal 1992) and it is the nature of these stories that is of interest for the author of this thesis.

The interviews were conducted on Skype which is a free communication service that provides a variety of communication options such as calling, seeing, messaging, and sharing among people (Janghorban et al. 2014, Deakin and Wakefield 2013). Skype interviewing can make a connection between the researcher and the interview participant with the option of using video (Deakin and Wakefield 2013). By using video calling the researcher has an opportunity to talk to the respondent but also to see them which makes it easier to take their viewpoint which is, as argued above, essential in this thesis.

Sampling

The participants for the semi-structured interviews were recruited through posts on an online media called www.couchsurfing.com. The initial idea was to find tourists who have been on a holiday in NJ and used AAL as a transit as it would match the survey criteria. The author of this thesis wrote a short description of the research and the reason for conducting interviews. The threat was posted in 3 groups which were especially focused on tourism in Denmark. The persons reading the threat were asked if they wanted to participate in the interview and could contact the researcher if they had an interest in participating. Since

the researcher did not get any answers, the strategy was evaluated along with the criteria for participating in the interview. The threats were deleted and the new text made was more specific and cordial in order to get answers from representative participants. The groups, which the threat was posted in, were expanded into 17 groups with broader categories of tourism possibilities and the criteria was changed into that the tourists should have been on a holiday in NJ, regardless of which transport mode they chose to get to the destination. The researcher now got replies from possible interviewees and found 3 of relevance. The sampling strategy is termed purposive sampling as it is designed to pick a small number of cases that will generate most information about a particular phenomenon (Bryman 2008). In this thesis purposive sampling is used to generate as much detail from a few cases to maximise the possibility of answering the research questions. The approach is driven by the desire to interview people who are relevant to the research questions. An example of purposive sampling in qualitative research is theoretical sampling (Bryman 2008). This research adopts the subset of the theoretical sampling method as it is an ongoing process of selecting interviewees and sampling interviews until the author of this thesis achieved a point of saturation. Theoretical saturation presupposes that the researcher carries on sampling until no new or relevant data emerges. This will be the process in this thesis and when using this approach the author of this thesis achieved theoretical saturation at an early stage (Bryman 2008) with 3 interviewees. Before the interview the author of this thesis made sure that the interview persons had at least a Facebook profile as it was a criterion for them to talk about social media in the interview and the background check on the interviewees found that they all had a Facebook profile.

Interview Guide

The interview guide (A.CD) which the researcher created for the thesis consists of 41 questions. In order to get as much data to answer the research questions it includes a brief introduction regarding the interviewees' trip to NJ, some questions about before the trip, and questions about the following topics of co-creation, satisfaction, storytelling, social media habits and destination choice process. The interview guide thereby took outset in the theories chosen for the investigation.

Bryman (2008) points out that when conducting a semi-structured interview the researcher has an interview guide with a list of specific questions on given topics. During the semi-structured interview the researcher may not exactly follow the interview guide, as in this case, adapt to the situation and ask additional questions (Bryman 2008). Thereby, the interviewer is still free to ask additional questions but with the focus of a particular predetermined subject (Patton 1987). The interview guide makes sure that the same information is obtained from the interviewees and serves as a checklist throughout the interview to ensure that the topics are covered in order to answer the research questions. The interviewer is required

to adapt the wording of the questions to the context of the interview (Patton 1987) and the interview guide was in this case accordingly updated and adapted to the person interviewed and not all questions were asked to all interviewees due to its relevance. A strength of the interview guide is that it makes sure that the researcher has decided how to best use the limited time available in an interview (Patton 1987) and in this case the interview guide served as a model for conducting the interviews in the most desirable way.

Interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	From	Residence	Purpose of Travel
N	Male	25	Singapore	Singapore	Study abroad in Denmark and visited NJ
S	Female	28	Romania	Austria	Often spends a holiday in NJ to visit mother
A	Male	27	Italy	Denmark	Often takes trips to NJ for a holiday

Figure 6. Source: Author's own

Critique of Interviews

Common problems of interviews are misunderstandings on the part of the interviewee (Bryman 2008). The researcher has to sense this and rephrase the question when needed as this was seen a couple of times. It was clear that the interviewees did not understand the question when they asked for further information or the researcher knew it from their answers. The researcher can try asking the participant again or elaborating on the questions (Bryman 2008) which was done. Also, it takes some minutes before the interviewees allow themselves to talk freely (Kvale 1996) which is also a factor the author of this thesis took into account by starting the interview by simple warm up questions of not immense importance for the whole analysis. Another problem can be the interview technique used which was Skype. There can be issues of varying internet connection and the author of this thesis experienced this with one interview. It was also experienced several times when the author of this thesis had made an appointment with a person for an interview that the interviewee did not log onto Skype. The distance between researcher and interviewee can make it easier for participant to drop out of the interview in the last minute without notice, as he/she feels less commitment to the process (Deakin and Wakefield 2013).

Netnography

In the collection of the primary data, the author of this thesis also used netnography. It is a qualitative method which draws together internet and ethnography (Kozinets et al. 2014). Netnography is developed to investigate and observe the naturally situated consumer interactions and behaviour of cultures and communities present on the internet (Kozinets 2002). Web-based research is becoming more widely used

in tourism research as more tourists become active in travel-related discussions in online communities and on sites such as Facebook. In particular, post-visit narratives provided on these online platforms offer a window into tourists' subjective travel experiences around the world (Mkono 2011) which can help the author of this thesis in the analysis. Resent technological advances, online and mobile platforms, make it possible for tourists to easily post and share content on multiple platforms. This communication can happen over different time periods, with a number of different contributors and in different formats such as textual, visual and audio (Kozinets et al. 2014). The author of this thesis has, in the process of writing the thesis, used a large amount of time to investigate online social media and to gather knowledge and study the interaction. In this thesis the studied settings are not tourists' private profiles but different tourism operators and DMO's Facebook pages, Instagram platforms and the Snapchat channels that were available. Since the first research question is about sharing and co-creating experiences online, conducting a netnographic analysis will help to get an overview of the methods of promotion already used online to promote NJ and to analyse how well the methods worked in practise to help propose suggestions for the tourism operators. Compared to traditional ethnography, netnography, has a non-participant observer format and it is argued that the minimisation of researcher-observer-effect is key strength (Mkono 2011). The researcher did not get involved in the dialogue online to keep the tourists' own voice and perspective and thereby gather data characterised by subjective and emotional aspects of the tourists' experiences providing deeper insights in online consumer behaviour. The author of this thesis observed and read informal conversations online and comments written either in English, Danish, German or French.

Sampling

In the netnographic sampling purposive sampling is used by the author of this thesis. The cases are chosen in a strategic way so that the sampling gets many different perspectives relevant to answering the research questions. The author of this thesis chose to sample in order to ensure that there is a variety in the resulting sample (Bryman 2008). This form of sampling does not lead to generalisations to a population (Bryman 2008) or is representative across populations (Kozinets 2002). Though, it is able to find data on a global scale as there are no physical boundaries.

As well as with the interview sampling, the author of this thesis in the netnography sampling uses a form of purposive sampling called theoretical sampling (Bryman 2008). This thesis research adopts the theoretical sampling method as it is an ongoing process of data collection where the author of this thesis collects, codes and analyses the data and then decides what data to collect next (Bryman 2008).

Critique of Netnography

Netnography, by the lack of face-to-face communication lacks oral and visual cues. When reading comments, the author of this thesis cannot hear the voice of the speaker whether he/she is sarcastic, is pausing or has a serious tone, and cannot see the speaker's facial expression and body language which could also reveal how the message should be understood. By the lack of this it is harder for the author of this thesis to be sure of the meaning in the sentences. Though, when collecting the data the researcher has read and reread the posts several times to get an overall evaluation of the content.

Another critique point is that the research area is fairly big when talking about social media sites and the author of this thesis will therefore only have time to cover an area of it. Furthermore, online sources are continually changing and new approaches are being developed at a rapid rate (Bryman 2008). Since the author of this thesis began collecting the netnography a lot have changed and the channels have developed, the data has been changing because more comments and likes are added to the pictures continuously. Therefore, the author of this thesis does not achieve a point of saturation where no new or relevant data emerges as the author could keep on exploring on Facebook, Instagram and keep receiving Snapchats and will therefore never reach a point of absolute truth, which is neither the purpose of this thesis.

Lastly, the people who posted the information used in this thesis did not give any consent for the use of their material. Though, as it is public discourse and any information published has been voluntarily made available on the internet, it can be used by the researcher and the need for the consent of the participants is avoided (Mkono 2011, Bryman 2008).

Survey

The survey design (A.CD) was developed by The Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies and will be used as secondary data in this thesis. It was conducted by Aalborg University in cooperation with AAL, VN, Vækstforum, and Aalborg Samarbejdet in order to investigate the international travellers departing at AAL, the purpose of their trip and their travel behaviour. The answers in the survey should generate knowledge about the tourists in order to see patterns to bring more international travellers through AAL. The survey results reveal data such as characteristics of travellers, preferences, motivations, and travel and transportation patterns.

The design of the survey took outset in an introductory remark explaining the purpose of the survey in order for the participants to be able to read about who conducted the survey and why. The information gathered from the survey can be divided into respondent characteristics, activities and

attitudes/motivation (Veal 1992) and the survey used in this thesis is structured as such. The design has 32 questions and begins with a category of personal questions, leading to journey questions, afterwards choice of destination questions, then airport questions and ending with motivational questions and further participation. The survey design consists of a variety of:

- Open-ended questions where the respondents write out their answers, e.g. Q7 "What was/is the final destination of your journey?"
- Closed questions where the participants can answer by ticking boxes, e.g. Q6 "How often do you travel by air on a yearly basis?" with the possibility of answering 0-4 return journeys, or 5-9 return journeys, or 10 or more return journeys
- Likert scales where the participant can answer "Agree, Partly agree, Don't know, Partly disagree, Disagree", e.g. Q27 "When I travel on holiday it is important for me just to travel somewhere, than to a specific destination"
- Ranking questions where the participant can rank 1-6, e.g. Q31 "This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland was motivated by..."

Sampling

The author of this thesis actively engaged in the collection of the data in AAL as she had applied to be a part of the data collection and was employed by The Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies during the period. The participants were found in AAL in June, July and August 2014. The persons were asked about their trip and selected if they had been travelling to NJ and lived outside the region on a daily basis. They were asked if they wanted to participate in what Veal (1992) calls an anonymous self-completion survey and 739 persons filled out the survey. The sample had 57% men and 43% women respondents from 7-80 years old. The sample of the participants travelled to NJ for all sort of reasons such as different forms of tourism, summer school, business trips, sport events, funerals, visiting friends and relatives, seasonal work, special events, concerts etc.

A probability sampling technique (Bryman 2008) was followed in collecting the quantitative data in the form of the survey. Probability sampling is a sampling method using random selection so that each unit in the population has a chance of being selected also referred to as a simple random sampling (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2009). It is argued that using this method has a result of a representative sample and keeps sampling errors at a minimum (Bryman 2008).

Critique of Survey

The survey had a thorough design but when dealing with people and when employing a self-completion survey mistakes can however occur.

One point, when asking people if they wanted to participate, was the fact that not all did wish to participate in the survey due to the participants beeing asked in a busy environment and some people had to catch their flight. This also resulted in that not all had time to answer the second page of the survey or some people missed the second page because they did not see it. Others told the researcher, that they thought, that there were too many questions and then skipped some. Another point was that some persons did not understand the ranking of 1-6, in Q31 and answered 6 or 1 in more than one category or answered X which made the answer invalid. Some of the answers in Q3,Q7,Q10,Q13 and Q20 were written with a poor handwriting which made it difficult to interpret. Furthermore, in Q7 some people when travelling home misunderstood the question and listed their home town or the hotel they stayed and not the city which was the purpose.

Concluding, the survey is used as a secondary data source as the data was collected with another purpose than this thesis. However, as it was collected an insignificant period of time before the thesis work began and covers relevant topics, it is highly relevant to use for the author of this thesis. Though, it has to be adapted to the purpose of this research. Therefore, only some of the information is relevant to use in this case. Furthermore, any data provided of this kind and volume is a value adding factor for this thesis and in order to answer the research questions, as data collection is rather time consuming (Lieber 2009).

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The author of this thesis uses a combination of a survey, semi-structured interviews and netnography where statistical techniques will be used to analyse the data generated from the survey and an interpretive approach to analyse the data generated from the semi-structured interviews and netnography. This analysis will be handled by analysing narrative data using a qualitative thematic data analysis and analysing numeric data statistically. The aim of the analysis is not to make two separate investigations of qualitative and quantitative findings but to integrate the two in the research process during the analysis phase.

Primary Qualitative Data Analysis

One component of the qualitative data, which is the audio recordings (A.CD) from the interviews, are prepared for the analysis by being practically processed into transcripts (A.CD). The transcripts were made in as much detail as possible to be able to quote the interviewees. The transcripts were then coded into overall themes such as satisfaction, social media, storytelling, co-creation, repeat visit, activities, and

destination choice process which were themes established a priori based on the theory. In order to get a structure for the analysis the researcher made a colour-coded highlighting in the transcripts. The different selected colours each correspond with the themes of the selected theoretical framework and would give the researcher an idea about which quotes and sections of the semi-structured interviews can be used to answer different parts of the research questions and hence make the analysis thorough.

The other component of the qualitative data which is the netnography is practically prepared for the analysis by being collected, directly copied, by the author of this thesis taking screenshots of the relevant posts and pictures online or on a mobile device. The method of data analysis, according to Bryman (2008), can be found in ethnographic content analysis. This is a reflexive method where the author of this thesis will move between sampling data, collecting data, coding data, analysing and interpreting data. The author of this thesis will look for themes, such as storytelling, experience sharing, co-creation, repeat visit, and destination choice process, in the data and thereby assign codes to the data and find the relevant cases belonging to the same category which in the analysis can be compared to the data from the other sources.

The data analysis is twofold as the author of this thesis, by using netnography, not only collects the data that is directly copied from the online communities, but also the data that is indirectly inscribed regarding the observations of the community, its members and their interactions (Kozinets 2002).

Secondary Quantitative Data Analysis

In order to be analysed, the numerical data, collected via the survey, was summarised into meaningful forms that are easy to overview and communicate. These forms are called descriptive statistics as the method includes a presentation of results through statistic and graphic displays to measure tendency (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2009). Practically, this means that firstly, the data from the survey were typed into Survey Xact and then the statistical data analysis would be through the ad hoc software Survey Xact, as it allows the researcher to view the data in tables and models and download it (A.CD).

The method used in the analysis in order to get an overview of the data is frequency tables (Bryman 2008). Frequency tables provide the number of people and the percentage belonging to each of the categories for the variable in question. This table has an additional function which displays it as a bar chart, showing the components relation to each other and on a scale of 100%. This visualisation will be employed through the analysis because it is straightforward to interpret and understand for the researcher and the reader. The figure shows the percentage of what the respondents said both in percent and number of people, shown in figure 7.

2. Gender:

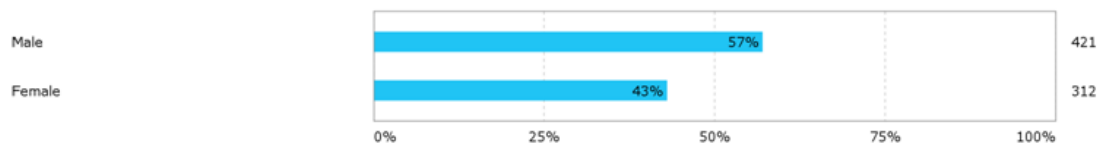|		
Male	57%	421
Female	43%	312

Figure 7. Source: Survey Xact

3.5 Evaluation of the Research

There are some aspects which should be taken into consideration by the author of this thesis. According to Bryman (2008) in order to measure and evaluate the research the author needs to be aware of whether the results of a thesis can be repeatable. Reliability in this thesis is the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated or made with a different sample of subjects. When doing social science this is very complex as when dealing with human beings the social situations are constantly in flux and replication cannot be guaranteed and is not very common (Bryman 2008). However, in order for another researcher to replicate the findings, the author of this thesis chose to detail spell out some of the procedures. These details about how the study was conducted are found in the methodology chapter and in the attachment of the interview guide, the recordings, and the transcriptions.

Furthermore, the researcher needs to be aware of the validity of the study which is the extent to which the collected data truly reflects the phenomenon being studied (Veal 1992). This means that validity concerns the issue of whether an indicator that is meant to gauge a concept really measures the concept. Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions. Though, the author of this thesis must be cautious when making general statements on the basis of the qualitative research findings alone as it relates only to the subjects whom were involved at the time the research was carried out (Veal 1992). However, the limitations of one method to some degree evens out the limitations of the other and the sampling procedure in this thesis and the number of participants in the quantitative data collection attempt to ensure that the overall research findings to some degree are generalisable. Triangulation, used in this thesis, can also add a degree of validity to the research as when using triangulation researchers seek to check the validity of their findings by cross-checking them with another method (Bryman 2003, Bryman 2008). In this thesis seen by, e.g. analysing netnographic cases and supporting with interview data.

When talking about Netnography in most qualitative consumer research, the concept of trustworthiness is used rather than validity, to describe the procedure (Kozinets 2002) as netnography is likely to generate honest and candid accounts because participants join the sphere of their own free will (Mkono 2011) which is also the case with the examples in this thesis.

4 Analysis

The framework, figure 5 proposed by the author of this thesis, will be unfolded in the analysis. The new elements that the author has provided, along with the existing factors, will be analysed regarding the case of NJ. Particularly what the components comprise of and how they can have an impact on destination choice, attractiveness and awareness will be examined throughout the analysis.

The first part of the chapter **4.1**-**4.7** will start out by a analysing the **internal input** part of the travel choice framework and the **physical tourist experience**, in NJ, where tourists, tourism operators and hosts interact with each other and the factors influencing **satisfaction** will be analysed. The analysis will disposition internal inputs, resources, nature experiences, service quality, the social environment, fun and leisure activities, efficiency and information in order to map what aspects of the **promotion** of the NJ visitor experience could be improved.

This next part of the chapter **4.8** will analyse the **external inputs** to tourists' destination choice as an introductory to understand the external environment tourists deal with passively and actively and to see how **significative**, **symbolic** and **social stimuli** are affecting destination choice of NJ. Section **4.9**-**4.12** of the chapter will analyse several cases on **social media** in terms of their ability to be used for tourism operators in NJ to help effect **co-creation** of experiences and facilitate tourist **experiences sharing** and **storytelling** online before, during and after the actual experience.

4.1 Internal Inputs

"People, who have been there they don't really experience the same things that you do" (N:ll.219-220). As expressed by the interviewee in the quote, experiences are individual and perceived differently. Leading back to the argument by Boswijk et al. (2007) who stated that experiences occur during interactions in a setting, whether physical or not, between the individual and other people however, in order to be meaningful for the tourist the experience also needs to ensure the personal element. Emphasising this Sundbo and Darmer (2010) argue that all customers engage differently, depending on their background, emotions, interpretations and associations. Furthermore, Um and Crompton (1990) argue that internal inputs such as motives, values, attitudes and personal characteristics affect the destination choice.

In the survey in AAL in question 9, 35% answered that they travelled to NJ on a holiday, 24% on business trips, 39% to visit friends and family, and 12% for other occasions, shown in figure 8. By this the largest motives to visit NJ was to visit friends and family or to go on a holiday.

9. What was the purpose of your journey to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

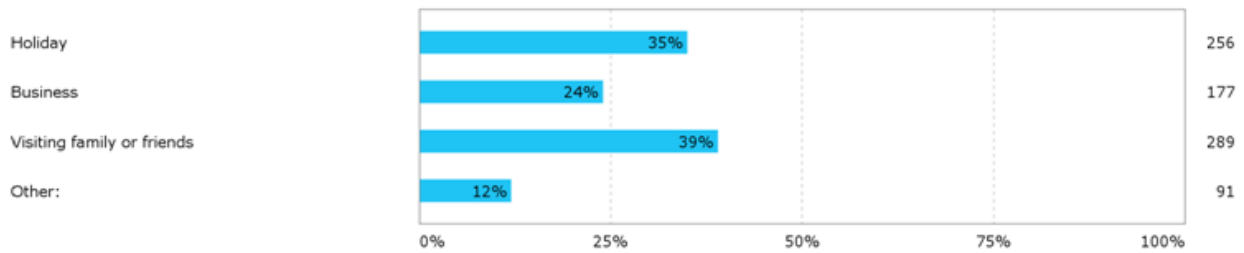|		
Holiday	35%	256
Business	24%	177
Visiting family or friends	39%	289
Other:	12%	91

Figure 8. Source: Survey Xact

Um and Crompton (1990) propose that the motivations for travelling are novelty, challenge, relaxation, learning and curiosity. When asked about their motivations for travelling to NJ, in question 31(2), 33% ranked "**Going to a place that is relaxing**" as the most important factor, shown in figure 9.

31. This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland is motivated by... (Please rank 1-6) - Going to a place that is relaxing

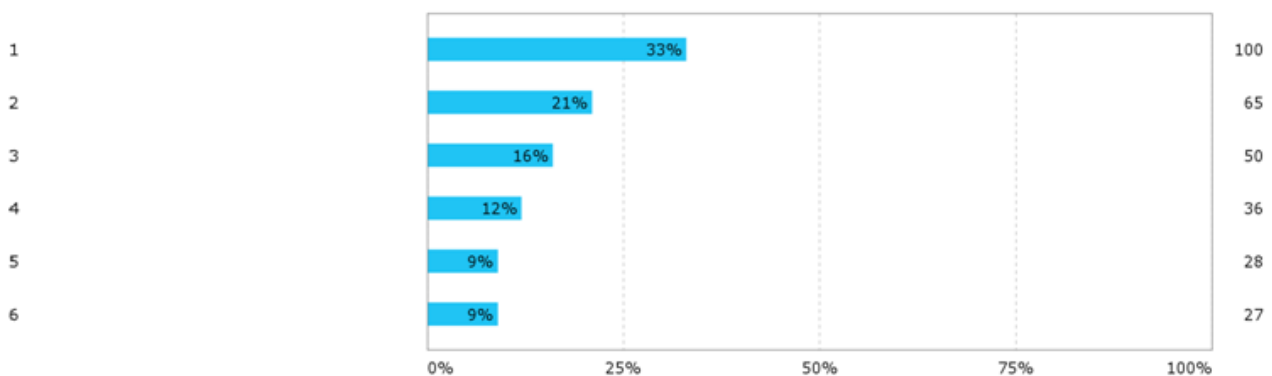|		
1	33%	100
2	21%	65
3	16%	50
4	12%	36
5	9%	28
6	9%	27

Figure 9. Source: Survey Xact

Considering relaxation interviewee N expressed that he values to be in a place that is quiet, and where he is far away from the urban cities, and can relax and enjoy the nature (N:ll.188-191). He states that NJ fits his needs as he can find quiet nature places with not so many tourists around "*The serenity it is amazing*" (N:ll.112-114). Interviewee A also sees the quietness as a benefit for his trips to NJ. He takes trips to NJ to go out in the nature and get a break away from stress "*I just stayed there in the middle of the nature for three days with, mainly I was just myself and a tent and a bike and it was great*" (A:ll.43-49). Interviewee S seeks other experiences in her holiday than N and A. NJ is too quiet for her (S:l.70, l.111) "*I think for young people with children it is a little quiet*" (S:l.92). However, when travelling she is attracted to learning about new cultures and is curios (S:ll.170-172) "*It is very important to meet the local culture...To have a good access to the culture in the country. To see how people think, how people are but also to visit some culturally interesting places*" (S:ll.34-39). Thereby by ensuring this kind of learning she would have a satisfying and meaningful experience argued by Boswijk et al. (2007). In the survey in AAL in question 31(1),

shown in figure 10, 16% of the participants ranked experiencing new cultures and places as the most important motivation for travelling to NJ, like interviewee S.

31. This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland is motivated by... (Please rank 1-6) - Experiencing new cultures and places

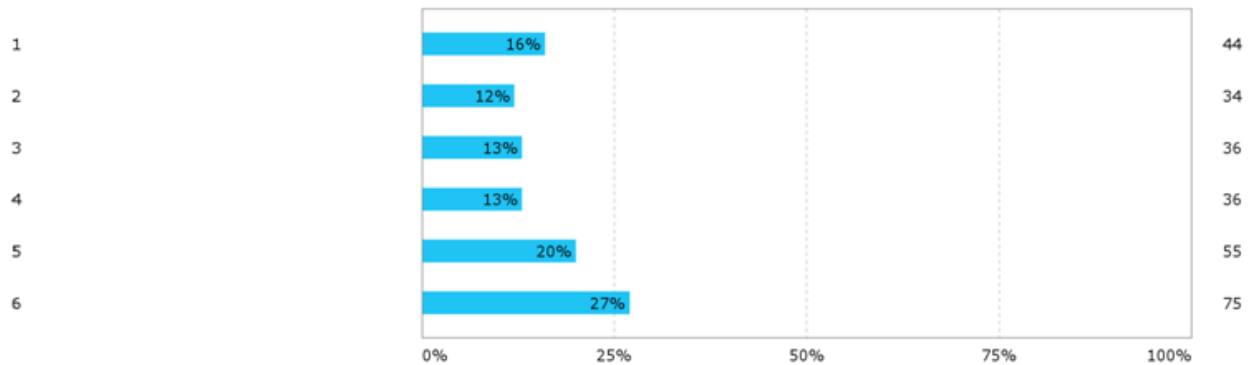| Rank	Percentage	Count
1	16%	44
2	12%	34
3	13%	36
4	13%	36
5	20%	55
6	27%	75

Figure 10. Source: Survey Xact

Though, 27% of the travellers expressed experiencing new cultures and places, as the least important motivation for travelling to NJ. From these figures, one can argue that the image and attitude towards NJ that the tourists have, is that they can relax but they are, from their answers about motivation, in doubt about whether they are able to experience new cultures in NJ.

Kim et al. (2012) outline that local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty are important components of the tourism experience and are likely to affect a person's memory. Interviewee N goes as far as saying that even though it is pleasurable for him to experience the quietness he also thinks it could be nice to meet some locals in NJ who could tell him about the history (N:ll.47-49) which gives him cultural and social motivations for travelling as well as interviewee S. Interviewee A also states that he uses couchsurfing a lot because it enables him to meet the people who live in NJ making travelling a different experience which is fantastic because he gets an understanding of the culture and the people (A:ll.34-39). Morgan and Xu (2009) state that a unique and memorable holiday experience is the result of a social interaction, either with the local culture or more likely with the group of friends or family tourists travel with. Interviewee N confirm this by stating that all the things that he did with his friends gave him a lot of nice memories that he shares with his friends about the trip (N:ll.211-212).

Furthermore, as stated in question 31(1) figure 10, most of the tourists' attitudes were that the least important motivation to visit NJ was on the basis of being able to experience new places NJ and in question 31(4) figure 11, the answers to the question "**This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland is motivated by specific sites at the destination**" are rather split between persons who think that it was a motivating factor.

This shows that the reason tourists travel to NJ is not because of specific sites and thereby one could argue that there is a lack in the tourists' knowledge about the sights.

31. This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland is motivated by... (Please rank 1-6) - Specific sites at the destination

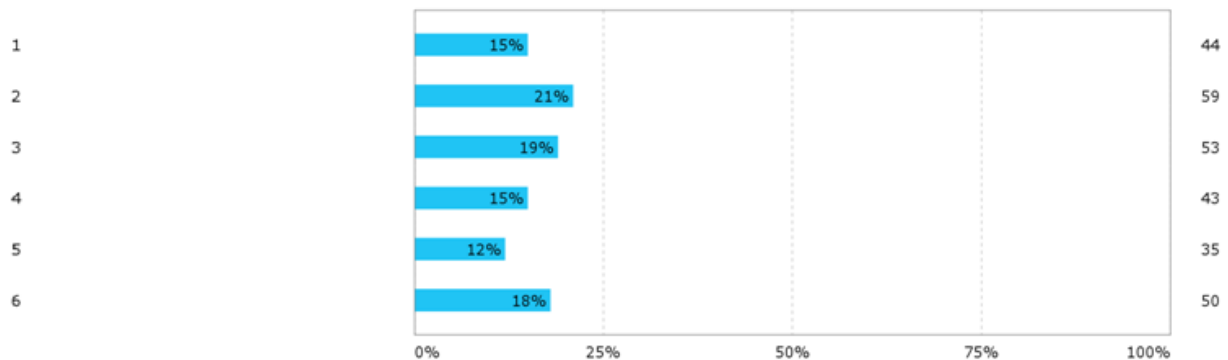| Rank	Percentage	Count
1	15%	44
2	21%	59
3	19%	53
4	15%	43
5	12%	35
6	18%	50

Figure 11. Source: Survey Xact

Although, it is very clear that when the tourists in general travel on a holiday their destination choice is based on specific characteristics as shown in question 27(2), figure 12. One can argue that the tourists might have had low awareness about the opportunities of sites at the destination and because of this did not think of it as a motivational factor. As interviewee A argues NJ has everything for a full holiday but you have to know it to see it "*I think that there is a lot of stuff. You just have to know it*" (A:ll.280-281). Consequently, the communication about NJ has been efficient in informing about the capability of relaxation in the destination but not the cultivation and stimulating places to visit.

27. When I travel on holiday... - 2. my choice of destination is based on destination specific characteristics

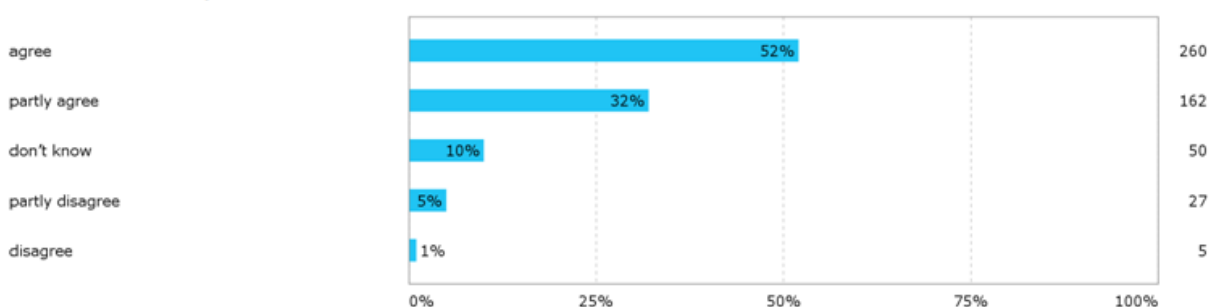| Response	Percentage	Count
agree	52%	260
partly agree	32%	162
don't know	10%	50
partly disagree	5%	27
disagree	1%	5

Figure 12. Source: Survey Xact

4.2 Tourists' Resources

Crompton (1977) proposed that destination choice is a function of the relationship between constraints such as money, time and skills and destination image (Um and Crompton 1990).

Found in the survey in AAL, question 27(4) figure 13, price of the tickets to a destination often decides the tourists' destination choice. 19% agrees and 51% partly agrees to this fact.

27. When I travel on holiday... - 4. my choice of destination is based on the price of the tickets

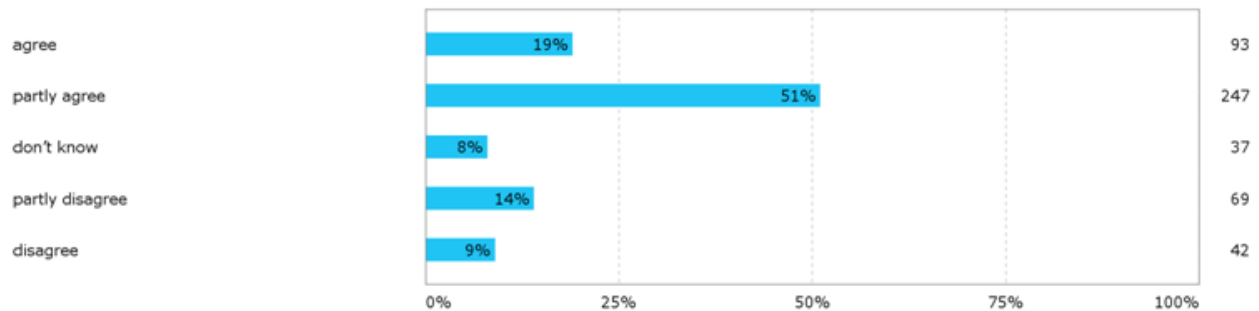|	Percentage	Count
agree	19%	93
partly agree	51%	247
don't know	8%	37
partly disagree	14%	69
disagree	9%	42

Figure 13. Source: Survey Xact

Furthermore, in question 27(3), figure 14, 17% agreed and 42% partly agreed to the fact that their choice of destination is based on how easy it is to travel to the destination. This shows that the tourists consider money and time as important factors when making travel plans.

27. When I travel on holiday... - 3. my choice of destination is based on how easy it is to travel to the destination

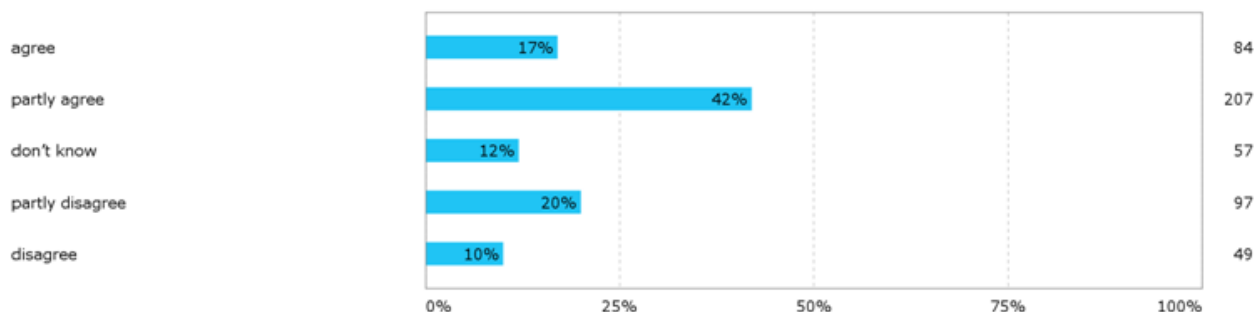|	Percentage	Count
agree	17%	84
partly agree	42%	207
don't know	12%	57
partly disagree	20%	97
disagree	10%	49

Figure 14. Source: Survey Xact

However, when choosing to fly to Aalborg convenience means more than money and time. As shown in figure 15, when answering question 22, 57% the participants answered that convenience was the reason why they choose to fly to Aalborg, compared to other transportation forms, followed by time and economic factors.

22. Why did you choose to fly to Aalborg/Northern Jutland through Aalborg Airport?

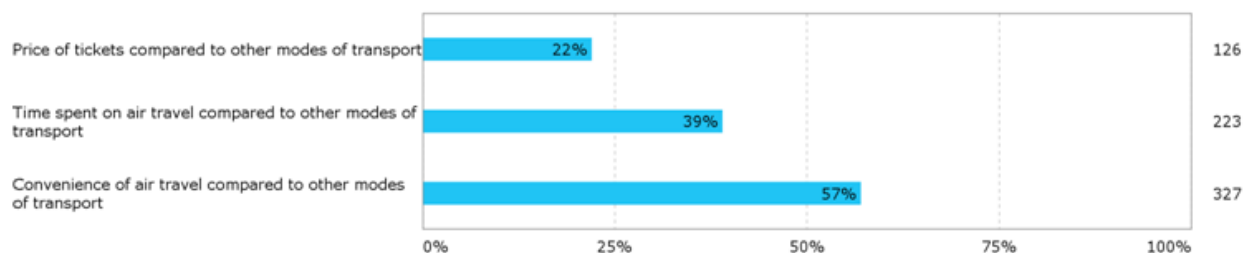|		
Price of tickets compared to other modes of transport	22%	126
Time spent on air travel compared to other modes of transport	39%	223
Convenience of air travel compared to other modes of transport	57%	327

Figure 15. Source: Survey Xact

When asked "**Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland**?", figure 16, only 4% stated that it was because of the price and also 4% answered because of good or cheap tickets to the region, whereas the main reason was 55% who answered that it was to visit family and friends.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Price	4%	21
Good or cheap tickets to the region	4%	23
Visiting family and friends	55%	318

Figure 16. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee S thinks Denmark is expensive for tourists (S:l.118) however, she still feels that it was worth her time, money and effort as she saw some really nice places (S:ll.88-89). Buhalis (2000) argues that it is important for consumers to perceive prices as fair and get value for money, because dissatisfaction damages the competitiveness of the destination. Interviewee A argued that he believes dining in NJ in general is a bit cheaper than in Aarhus (A:ll.227-230). Interviewee A further explains that he feels like he gets value for money in NJ, and that is why he visits over and over again and also brings his family when they visit him from Italy (A:ll.160-162). Interviewee N argues that NJ is very expensive to visit however, seeing the sights that he did during his trip, made it worth it, and offered him value for his money (N:ll.100-103). Decrop (2010) proposes that final destination choice is driven by constraints and opportunities, it is therefore important to communicate to potential tourists what they get out of spending their money in NJ, as otherwise the prices for some might result in deselecting NJ. During his trip interviewee N found out that he did not even have enough time in the region to see all that he wanted. During his trip he has not created a full overview of the cities but he saw enough to become inspired to go back to NJ (N:ll.105-109). This shows that the situational constraints are not limited to the before stage evaluation of travelling as

suggested by the model by Um and Crompton (1990) but also found in the during and after evaluation of the destination proposed in the framework by the author of this thesis which again can affect the next travel destination choice. Interviewee A often visits NJ but he never puts time aside to visit Funen and Sealand as much as he visits NJ (A:ll.268-273). One can argue that the destinations do not have enough appeal to him nor offer what he is looking for in a destination, or his knowledge about the destinations is too limited.

The time, effort and money the interviewees spend on their travel to NJ have a positive effect on the overall experience value which is confirmed by Prebensen et al. (2013) who argue that tourists involved spend resources, and time which are predictors of overall value. Gallarza and Saura (2006) present that time and effort spent has an effect on value for tourists which leads to satisfaction and consequently loyalty which is also the case with interviewee A, S and N. Based on their satisfying experiences the interviewees did not see the price in NJ as a constraining factor for their trips. This is also proposed by Bernini and Cagnone (2014) who argue that high levels of satisfaction result in increased loyalty, greater tolerance of prices and an enhanced reputation which can found by Dmitrovic et al. (2009) to manifest itself in repurchase behaviour and lead to positive WOM argued by (Füller and Matzler 2008).

4.3 Meaningful Nature Experiences

Bernini and Cagnone (2014) suggest a more tangible approach to destination choice which is the destination's natural surroundings, which are important in choosing a destination and particularly relevant to individual experiences. Interviewee A expresses that he would not like to go on a trip to Copenhagen because he is the kind of person who likes nature more than cities (A:ll.163-164). Interviewee N supports this by saying that Copenhagen and Aarhus are "too much city" for him because there is not a lot of nature. However, as a student he and his friends would also like to go to some bars during their trips. So to find the combination of city and nature they thought about NJ which has a good mixture of a lot of nature and a good party scene (N:ll.35-39) and they found information about this online (N:ll.66-67).

In the survey in AAL question 15, shown in figure 17, 10% chose NJ as a travel destination to experience nature, 20% to go to the beach, coast and sea, 1% because of trekking and 3% cycling.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

| Nature experiences | 10% | 60 |
| Beach, coast, sea | 20% | 115 |

| Trekking | 1% | | | | 8 |
| Cycling | 3% | | | | 16 |

Figure 17. Source: Survey Xact

These percentages become interesting when looking at the answers in question 16, shown in figure 18, where there is an increase in all the components. From 60 persons who chose NJ as a destination because of nature experiences, to 122 persons who had nature experiences during their stay in NJ, which is over twice as many persons. By this one can argue that when choosing NJ as a travel destination the tourists' image of NJ was not characterised by a place filled with nature experiences and the knowledge about nature-based attractions in NJ was limited and not affecting their travel choice. However, in the end nature experiences were a large part of their trips. Beach, coast and sea was a factor 20% considered in their choice and 34% turned out to swim in the sea or lakes in NJ which shows the seaside has an opportunity and potential to influence decision making if communicated to the tourists. Interviewee S was also not aware of whether the seaside was part of NJ, when she visited it, but she liked it a lot (S:l.28, ll.88-89). This shows a lack of information and attention to the seaside in NJ. Cycle trips also appeared to be an activity that many persons engaged in but did not see as a reason to travel to NJ. Interviewee A makes a compelling point when he says there are a lot of really beautiful places to reach by bike, including the Marguerit routes, but you have to be aware of their existence "*You can bike for months I think easily seeing really beautiful places. You just have to know it*" (A:ll.276-284). This shows that only 3% knew about the cycling routes before and chose NJ as a destination because of it, where 17% found out about the opportunities during their trip and decided to engage in it. Interviewee A further explains that by bike he can reach the sights of Denmark and the North West part of NJ which is one of his favourite places, and by biking he gets great experiences (A:ll.43-49). Interviewee S agrees and says that "*What I really like, you have made a lot of bike-routes so you can go by bike and you have a safe way to go by bike, to little villages or to visit places*" (S:ll.122-123) and her experience was that there were many great locations to bike (S:l.50). By communicating this as an experience, the number of 3% who chose NJ on the basis of its cycling opportunities could be enhanced as Bernini and Cagnone (2014) argue that improving the image of the destination can be an important issue for competiveness and destination attractiveness.

Trekking above 5 km and shorter walks showed to be the most overlooked term in the reasons for travelling to NJ. As mentioned above, 1% answered that it was one of their reasons to travel to NJ, while 45%, shown in figure 18, actually engaged in it during their stay which shows that the image of NJ as a good trekking destination is invalid and unsound and could be sold better to potential tourists as when arriving in NJ tourists explore this.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

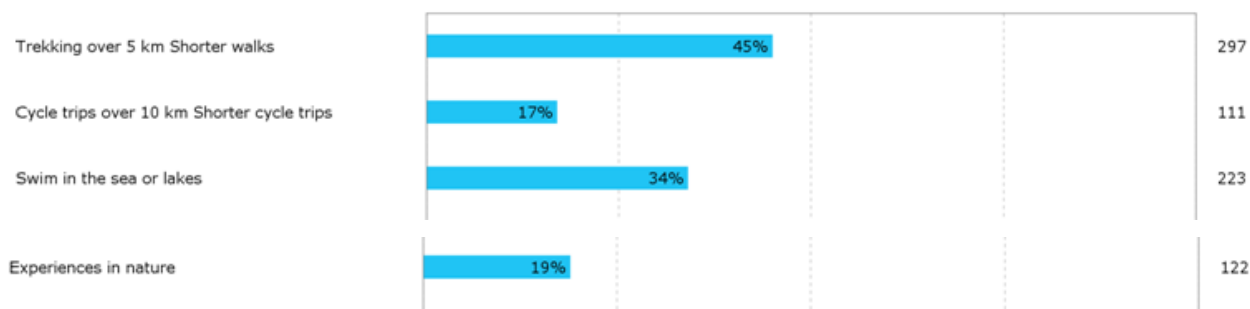|		
Trekking over 5 km Shorter walks	45%	297
Cycle trips over 10 km Shorter cycle trips	17%	111
Swim in the sea or lakes	34%	223
Experiences in nature	19%	122

Figure 18. Source: Survey Xact

As mentioned above, interviewee S is unsure about which parts of the nature actually belongs to NJ, and interviewee A also went to Læsø not knowing whether it was in NJ (A:ll.31-32). Cracolici and Nijkamp (2008) state that increasing attention towards the natural environment affect the competitiveness of a destination. This could also be the case with NJ since interviewee S does not know if the sights she sees are in NJ, and therefore she cannot pass on WOM about the places. Furthermore, she says that she likes the landscapes and the sea and she visited a place with a lot of sand close to the sea. She forgot the name, but that was really amazing (S:ll.123-128) which means that she would have a hard time finding the place again or advise others to go.

Prebensen et al. (2013) claim that enjoying the nature and surroundings are strong pull motivations for visiting certain places. Interviewee A describes NJ as really rough and mysterious and for him the nature is very intriguing. He really loves the nature in NJ (A:ll.20-22) and he continues stating that the first time he visited NJ and saw the wonderful nature, he just wanted more (A:ll.86-87). This shows that the nature and surrounding environments affected interviewee A's journey extensively. Interviewee N also sees the beauty in the nature in NJ and feels that the nature invites to just sit down and have a picnic (N:ll.56-59). He expresses that Skagen is one of the most beautiful places he has seen as it is quite rare to have waves in opposite direction crashing to one another and baby seals climbing up (N:ll.90-92). For the interviewees the nature in NJ is aesthetically stimulating and affects their perceived value of the trip and thereby their satisfaction with the trip. Interviewee N emphasises that in Skagen the discovering of the tip were the waves meet, the seals, the nature, the whole beauty of the place, amazing sights, and a rainbow in the sky made the whole experience really great (N:ll.28-33). Aesthetics like this, in a destination, is argued by Kim et al. (2012) to affect the memory. One can argue that the nature experiences are remembered by interviewee N, and his satisfaction with it can lead to a revisit. Interviewee A is a good example and affirms this. When he experiences the aesthetics of the destination such as the landscape, environment and

natural surroundings it leads to satisfaction and attracts him to go again (A:ll.51-52). The quietness and peace in nature is appealing to interviewee N (N:ll.113-114) and for Interviewee A the nature in NJ equals freedom and the more rough and beautiful it gets the better it is for him, and for everybody it would be (A:ll.68-70) he states. From the interviewees' statements it seems as if they are emotionally touched by the nature and as interviewee A describes he gets in contact with the raw and real thing. This is described by Boswijk et al. (2007) to ensure satisfying and meaningful experiences.

4.4 Service Quality

Prebensen et al. (2013) acknowledge the necessity of service quality for an enjoyable experience. When talking to the interviewees, interviewee S expressed contentment with the service level in NJ and that the people are friendly (S:ll.130-131). A shared view by the two other interviewees is that the service level in NJ is above average "…*they go out of their jobs code to assist you and help you and they go like an extra mile*" (N:ll.148-149). Interviewee A also expressed that towards foreigners people in NJ are really sweet also during the winter when they do not expect any tourists "*They try to find a solution for you*" (A:ll.233-240). The three interviewees argue that they are satisfied with the employees as they are courteous. Interviewee A comments that in general when he asks for information everybody speaks English, and that they are extremely helpful to him. This shows that interviewee A also looks actively for information during his trip which the framework proposes is not limited to the stages before travelling, although argued against by Um and Crompton (1990).

In Jutland, if interviewee A goes into an office and asks for information the employees always smile "*It doesn´t matter which kind of weather is outside or how many people there is in line, they are always smiling and always really really helpful*". He thinks is a bit different in Copenhagen but still there is much more smiling than anywhere else in Europe he has been (A:ll.202-210). Prebensen et al. (2013) argue that a service like this have a significant effect on the overall value and can determine the degree of involvement, resources, and time the tourist spend. Service quality has a direct effect on loyalty according to Gallarza and Saura (2006) and Bernini and Cagnone (2014). One can argue that since interviewee A is very satisfied with the service it is one of the reasons he returns twice or three times a year.

Additionally, interviewee N explains that the employees in NJ are very welcoming, kind and helpful towards him. He felt like a lost sheep with a lot of questions and the employees were nice and welcoming to guide him to the places he wanted to go, and even give him extra information (N:ll.139-142). By this experience of the service encounter, one can argue, that it affects interviewee N's value perception, which will in turn, strengthen his satisfaction and intentions to revisit and to recommend the destination to others as argued by Gallarza and Saura (2006). This is a view shared by Yoon and Uysal (2005) who too find it important to

look at tourist satisfaction as it influences the choice of destination, the decision to return and recommendations. Overall, the interviewees' perceptions of the services in NJ could also be passed on to potential tourists.

4.5 The Social Context

The social aspect can be argued to have a huge effect on travelling as mentioned by interviewee A who says that the company could change a holiday experience for him for the better or worse. He explains that when travelling, company is very important and he always says that it is better to live alone than live with people you do not like or trust (A:ll.53-56). This reveals how large a determinant company is for interviewee A when travelling. To the question "**What could change the experience for the better or worse?**" interviewee N, as interviewee A, also answered without doubt, that most the important aspect is the friends that he goes with. He further says that travelling with his friends makes the whole experience a lot different but he would also have liked to meet some locals in NJ that could tell him about NJ and interacting with them could have made the experience even better, he presents (N:ll.43-49). By this, social interaction would enhance his experience also argued by Lindberg et al. (2014). Later when interviewee N is asked about the important factors of a good holiday for him he again says that friends mean a lot, but so do the things that he wants to do, as he goes on a trip with an open mind (N:ll.53-54).

Interviewee A goes on to say that he did not have an image in mind of the Danish people when he arrived, and he thought that the Danes were so few, that they more or less would feel Danish in the same way. He reveals that he was totally wrong but that is something he discovered afterwards when he arrived and experienced the country and all the people (A:ll.93-98). This point about discovering the mentality of the people afterwards could be a factor to work on through E-WOM. In the survey in AAL, question 15, shown in figure 19, only 4% stated that they chose to travel to NJ on the basis of the population in NJ.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

The population in general   4%   25

Figure 19. Source: Survey Xact

From the point stated by interviewee A the people are part of the destination which is discovered afterwards and therefore not a factor in choosing the destination as shown in the answers of question 15. However, when asked "**What did you think about the people you met in Northern Jutland?**" interviewee A says that he has been in Copenhagen, in Southern Jutland, and in Aarhus and in general Danish people are extremely welcoming but in Jutland, he outlines, it is something special (A:ll.209-211). This shows that the

Danish people are a competitive advantage which could be advertised to impact the destination choice for tourists and effecting interviewee A's destination choice internally. Interviewee A continues that when he asks people in the street, even two o´clock in the night, they will always answer (A:ll.189-192) and if he and his friends, for instance, ask where there is a hostel people will follow them to show them, even if it is in completely the opposite direction "*So that´s kind of sweet and really nice*" (A:ll.213-215). Interviewee S also talks about a good relationship with the locals "*the local people, for me I think the right word is a Danish word like hyggelig*" (S:ll.105-106). This shows that people are an experience in itself as supported by Cracolici and Nijkamp (2008) who say that a destination comprise of physical, natural, cultural and human resources, which become useful to create and develop competitive advantage and thereby the social dimension can provide value to the tourists leading directly to satisfaction which affects loyalty also argued by Gallarza and Saura (2006). Interviewee S furthermore states that the online element in interacting with people before a trip and meeting up with them during the trip can make her connect with locals "*I know some couchsurfers from Denmark, so I was really connected to local people*" (S:ll.59-60). This shows that the before stage of social interaction is also relevant.

Concluding, according to the interviewees the locals in NJ are special people, open and friendly which could be presented to the outside world as interviewee A emphasizes, "*I have seen also sometimes in other destinations if you read something on travel blogs (…) they have personal stories of people of what happened when they meet locals. It can be interesting actually*" (A.ll.254-256). Furthermore, it can result in increased likelihood of repeat visit and a keen willingness to recommend the destination to others argued by Yuksel et al. (2010) and communicate positive WOM proposed by Prebensen et al. (2010).

The social context in experiences involves sharing and communicating with others (Lindberg et al. 2014). When interviewee S travels on holiday it is important for her to meet local people and see the local culture. Not just to visit the places with lot of tourists but to eat local food, hear the language, to see how people think, how people are (S:ll.34-37). This confirms that the interaction with local people is an important element of the trip. However, she mentions that other tourists do not offer her value but on the other hand she expresses that she did not meet any tourists in the little villages where her mother lives (S:ll.102-105). Interviewee N did meet other tourists and claimed it to offer him value "*…we met other international people and a lot of tourists (...) which is good*" (N:ll.40-41). He pursues and says that he talked to other tourists and met up in a bar or a club. He explains that "...*if you are a traveller. You go with like an open mind. I like to interact with people who are tourists in general they are pretty fine. Of cause they relate their experience and yeah it is great*" (N:ll.135-137). This shows that he is active in finding people to interact with and co-create experiences with during a holiday which according Prebensen et al. (2013) can result in

increased value not only for interviewee N but also for the others involved. Agreed by Rihova et al. (2014) that when tourists spend time with others in a social experience value is co-created.

Sundbo and Darmer (2010) explain that the social element in tourism is overshadowing as tourists on holiday visit places, not so much for cultural learning and education, but simply for the pleasure of being together and more intensely together. This is not the case for interviewee S who brings her children and husband along to visit her mother in NJ but she still wants to do a lot of things (S:ll.48-51) and get new experiences (S:ll.34-39). Also interviewee N says that the friends that you go with shape the experience but he also wants to like try the new things (N:ll.53-55) which implies that the social element is only one element in the tourists' value process effecting satisfaction and loyalty.

4.6 Meaningful Fun and Leisure Activities

Gallarza and Saura's (2006) category "play" contributes to determine value and satisfaction for the tourists visiting. Among other things they define play as the ability to enjoy pubs and bars in the area.

In question 15, figure 20, in the survey in AAL only 4% answered that they were considering travelling to NJ on the basis of the good nightlife in the NJ. Since only 22 out of 739 persons stated this it can be argued that it was not judged by the tourists to be special to do in NJ compared to other destinations.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

| Good nightlife | 4% | | | | | 22 |

Figure 20. Source: Survey Xact

However, in question 16, figure 21, 17% spent time to enjoy the nightlife during their trip to NJ. One can argue that either the business travellers, who also travelled to NJ, engaged in this in their free time and did not state it as a reason to travel to NJ or simply that the people who engaged in this did not know the possibilities for enjoying the nightlife in the area before travelling and first discovered it during their trip.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

| Enjoy the nightlife | 17% | | | | 113 |

Figure 21. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee N states that when travelling on holiday he likes to go out during the night (N:l.37) and in Aalborg he spent some time in the longest party street in Denmark which he thought had some quite nice bars, which were better than in Aarhus (N:ll.24-26) and nice clubs as well (N:ll.55-56). He also expresses that he had a really good experience connecting with the locals though there seemed to be a barrier at first "*I guess once Danish people they start drinking (..), it is really easy to talk. Everyone is pretty close together. You just got to break the barrier initially. I feel like Danish people are really friendly like especially and welcoming as well*" (N:ll.128-132). This is a view shared by interviewee A, who also had a nice time when visiting bars in NJ "*The more drunk people get here in Denmark, the more happier and welcoming they are actually they are almost like a brother to you*" (A:ll.211-212). Consequently, these activities cover the enjoyment and socialising needed for interviewee N and A, suggested by Prebensen et al. (2014), in order for the tourists to be satisfied with the trip and willing to revisit and recommend the destination to others.

When asked "**What did you think about the possibilities of fun and leisure activities in NJ?**" interviewee S answered that for her and for young people with children it is a little quiet in NJ. She goes on to say that she sees the Danish people when they spend their holidays by visiting Slettestrand or other places close to the sea, doing nothing all the day. She underlines that this is not what she wants to do as she likes more active holidays (S:ll.92-96).

In the survey, question 15 shown in figure 22, when asked why the tourists chose to travel to NJ 5% chose the option "child friendly" as an answer which shows, that among tourists, NJ is not considered as a destination welcoming families with children.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Child friendly	5%				28

Figure 22. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee S says, during the interview, that before her trip to NJ she looked online because, as she was with her family, she wanted to know what they could do with the children (S:ll.48-49). She later in the interview concludes that she might not be in the region at the right time because she could not find any information on the internet (S:ll.188-194). Interviewee N also says about the possibilities of fun and leisure activities in NJ that it is a little limited however, he is not sure that he visited enough places to experience those activities. He further suggests that it would be great if there were more opportunities to do water sport because for him the whole experience was just like nature, nature and more nature (N:ll.117-120). Interviewee S also looks for boat experiences (S:ll.49-51). When interviewee A is asked about the criteria

for NJ in order for him to come back he says that he thinks there are a lot of possibilities in NJ "*You can actually surf or windsurf on the west coast*" (A:ll.276-284) which shows that interviewee A has some knowledge of the area that the other interviewees do not which could indicate that the information of activities are communicated thoroughly to tourists coming from other parts of Denmark but not tourists living outside of Denmark.

As shown in figure 23, in question 15 only 3% chose to travel to NJ to engage in sailing and as shown in figure 24, 3% chose to engage in sailing in the destination and 3% engaged in other water sports such as kayak and canoe. By this one can say that the water based activities are either not very easy to find in NJ or there are not many activities to participate in for tourists.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Sailing	3%	15

Figure 23. Source: Survey Xact

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

Yacht sailing	3%	20
Other watersports, such as kayak or cano	3%	20

Figure 24. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee S expresses that she was once in an exhibition in Løgstør (S:l.99) and on a holiday, likes to hear the language, to have a good access to the culture in the country, to see how people think, how people are but also to visit some culturally interesting places (S:ll.34-38). Among other things in NJ she wanted to see the houses there and how they were built (S:ll.151-153). As shown in figure 25, tourists who answered the question "**Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland**?" 4% answered because of interesting cities, and 5% answered because of historical and cultural experiences.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Interesting cities	4%	24
Historical and cultural experiences	5%	30

Figure 25. Source: Survey Xact

In the following question 16, figure 26, answering what activities people engaged in 19% answered visit museums and exhibitions, visit historical attractions, buildings and monuments, and 21% answered visit cities. This shows that more people engaged in these activities, as interviewee S suggests are important, than found it as a reason to travel to NJ. Though, it likely became factors meaningful for the visit and providing reasons to revisit the destination.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

Visit museums and exhibitions Visit historical attractions, buildings and monuments	19%	124
Visit cities	21%	141
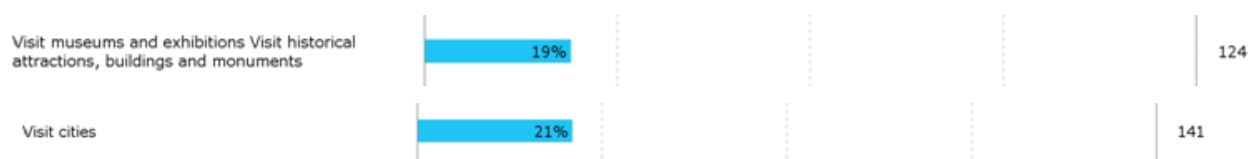
Figure 26. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee S also explains that she, when on a holiday, likes to listen to music and going to concerts (S:l.38). In the survey in AAL, question 16, figure 27, 14% of the visitors went to a concert, festival or similar.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

Go to concerts, festival s or other events	14%	93

Figure 27. Source: Survey Xact

In their study, Serrato et al. (2010) found that the factors that affect the tourists' evaluation process of a destination were among others, the complementary elements of tourist supply such as the ability to participate in meaningful activities such as cultural events, concerts, art exhibitions, festivals, etc.

Although interviewee S expressed a wish to go to concerts and festivals, she did not experience a lot outside in the smaller villages. She was thinking that it would be nice to see more festivals, more music and life in the streets. She was also looking for events online but could not find anything which she argues could be due to the season (S:ll.188-194). Interviewee N also expressed when he was asked "**If there were some criteria for NJ in order for you to come back on a holiday what would it be?**" that an event like a music festival would make him come back such as having a famous DJ playing in NJ like the Roskilde Festival (N:ll.198-199). He says that it would be amazing if NJ could host this. It would attract a lot of international travellers and the locals as well. He also feels that NJ is a destination with a good mix of locals with a lot of international people and students (N:ll.201-205). The interviewees demonstrate that festivals and concerts could be a good approach to attract tourists and that these, in a holiday, could provide value and

satisfaction for the tourists visiting NJ and willingness to revisit and recommend the destination to others. A special event such as a concert or festival is in the survey question 15, figure 28, one of the reasons 14% chose to travel to NJ. A small number of persons took their time to write on the survey what it was and 26 persons directly stated on the survey that they were going to Danacup in Hjørring, 5 persons went to Dronninglund Cup and 7 persons to the golf tournament Made in Denmark which also generated an extensive amount of business travellers working at the event.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Special event	14%	80

Figure 28. Source: Survey Xact

Found by Poulsson and Kale (2004) experiences need to be of personal relevance to the customer, and experiences in NJ to be captivating for the tourist need to have a degree of personal relevance in order for tourists to travel. In question 31(6) figure 29, 55% of the participants answer that the trip to NJ was motivated by being present for a business or private event which shows that special events can attract several tourists.

31. This trip to Aalborg/Northern Jutland is motivated by... (Please rank 1-6) - The need to be present (for business or private event)

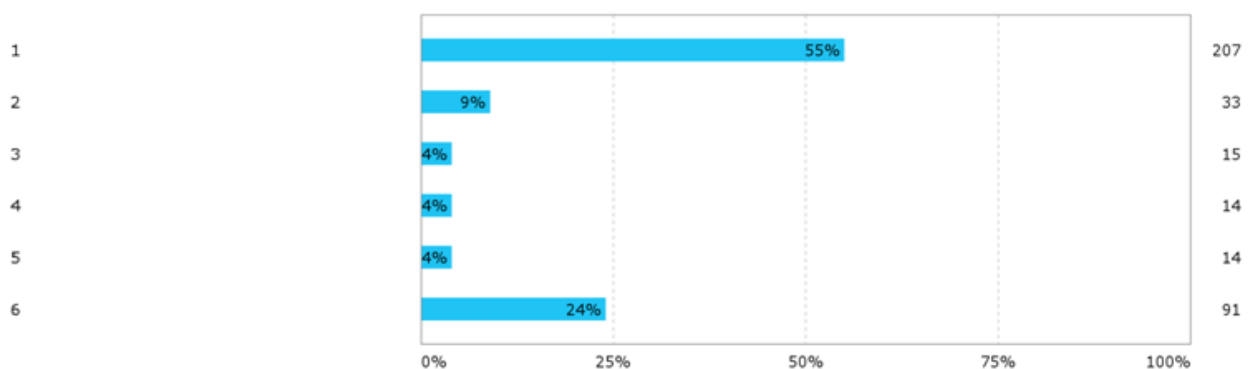|		
1	55%	207
2	9%	33
3	4%	15
4	4%	14
5	4%	14
6	24%	91

Figure 29. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee N also expresses that since the whole experience is nature filled it would be nice with more things to do like a theme park or such (N:ll.119-120). When asking in AAL, figure 30, only 30 persons chose NJ on the basis of theme parks, zoos, aquariums and other attractions.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Theme parks, zoos, aquariums and other attractions 5% 30

Figure 30. Source: Survey Xact

Again, when visiting 140 people engaged in these activities, shown in figure 31, and one can argue as well as interviewee N expresses, that the tourists did not know about the possibilities of theme parks, zoos, and aquariums in NJ before their visits, which could be promoted as part of the NJ experience.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

Visit themeparks and fun fairs 13% 82

Visit zoos and aquariums 9% 58

Figure 31. Source: Survey Xact

4.7 Efficiency and Information

Regarding the leisure activity of shopping, interviewee S thinks that everything is working well and the people are friendly if she goes in a shop and that she can find everything (S:ll.130-131). Interviewee N, like interviewee S, finds the shopping facilities in NJ satisfying and accessible (N:ll.57-58). In the survey in AAL a large difference is seen in people who believe shopping to be a factor in choosing the destination and consequently the ones who actually are experiencing this in the destination. Only 5% answered shopping to be a motivation to travel to NJ, shown in figure 32, and 33% engaged it shopping in the destination, shown in figure 33.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Shopping 5% 32

Figure 32. Source: Survey Xact

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?
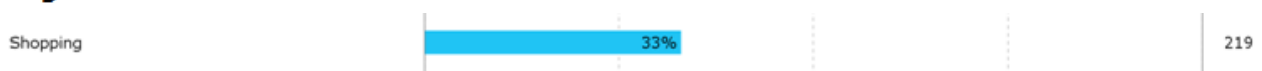
Shopping 33% 219

Figure 33. Source: Survey Xact

These figures show that a large amount of tourists found out during their visit in NJ that the shopping opportunities were sufficient, as stated by the interviewees, which by being endorsed along with the service level and the positive and helpful attitudes of the employees, stated above, could enhance the number of visitors in NJ along with loyalty after visiting the destination.

During a holiday, interviewee S expresses that food is very important for her and she likes to eat local food, to visit markets, to buy the food at local markets (S:ll.35-39). As shown in the figure 34, tourists who answered the question "**Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland**?" only 3% answered because of gastronomical experiences which shows a very low assessment and judgment of the food in NJ since only 16 of 739 persons stated this.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

| Gastronomical experiences | 3% | | | | 16 |

Figure 34. Source: Survey Xact

In the following question 16, as shown in figure 35, answering what activities they engaged in 43% answered to dine out. This shows that the awareness for the tourists of the food increased during their holiday and 284 persons chose to eat dinner in the restaurants or similar in NJ.

16. Which of the following activities did you engage in during your stay in the region?

| Dine out | | 43% | | | 284 |

Figure 35. Source: Survey Xact

Buhalis (2000) expresses that the degree of satisfaction will depend on the tourists' assessment of the overall experience of the destination compared to the anticipated expectations. Consequently, as almost no one had expectations of the food in NJ, one can argue that the satisfaction the 284 persons who went out to dine could be positive.

For the participants asked in the survey in AAL, figure 36, using a car was the most preferred transportation in the region as 72% of the answers were this.

26. How did you in general travel around the region? (tick all relevant boxes)?

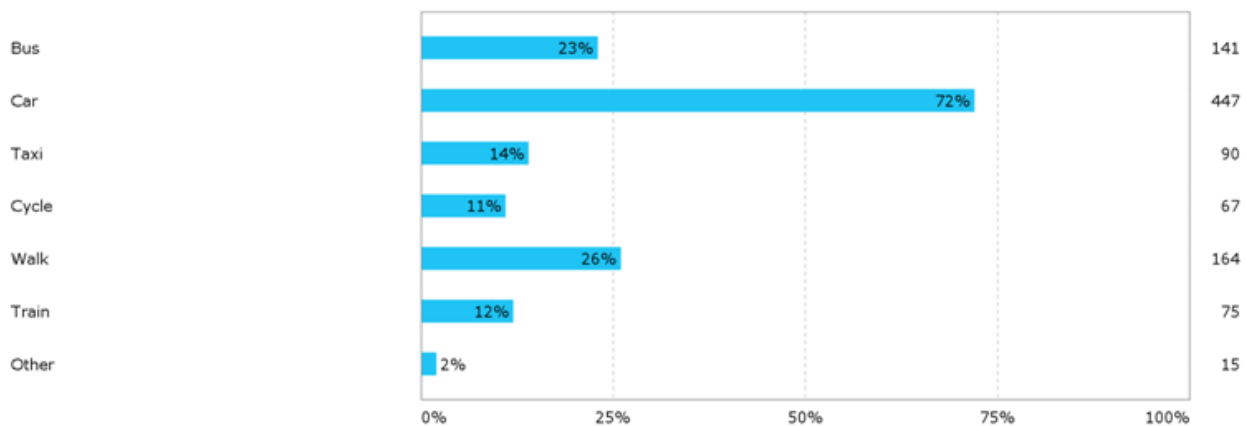| Mode	%	Count
Bus	23%	141
Car	72%	447
Taxi	14%	90
Cycle	11%	67
Walk	26%	164
Train	12%	75
Other	2%	15

Figure 36. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee S, in the interview, states that "*What it was for me it, was really hard to accept, that you really don't have public transport a lot, so you need a car and at that time I haven't got a driving license*" (S:ll.138-139). She goes on to say that there are some busses in NJ but she always has to look at a timetable and they are not going so often. Between Ranum, Viborg, and Næsborg there are not so much public transport and everyone is going by car (S:ll.138-142). Furthermore, when she is asked about her suggestions for improvements in the region she answers more public transport (S:l.185). On the other hand interviewee N feels that NJ is quite accessible for international travellers like him. He says that in general people would have a really good experience because it is convenient and everything in the destination is quite accessible through transport (N:ll.75-77). Interviewee A explains that he often uses public transportation in NJ on a holiday and he also walked and concludes that NJ is great facility wise (A:ll.175-177).

When asked about the accommodation choice, figure 37, 46% stayed with family and friends, 33% stayed in a hotel, and 17% rented privately which are the three most common types of accommodation.

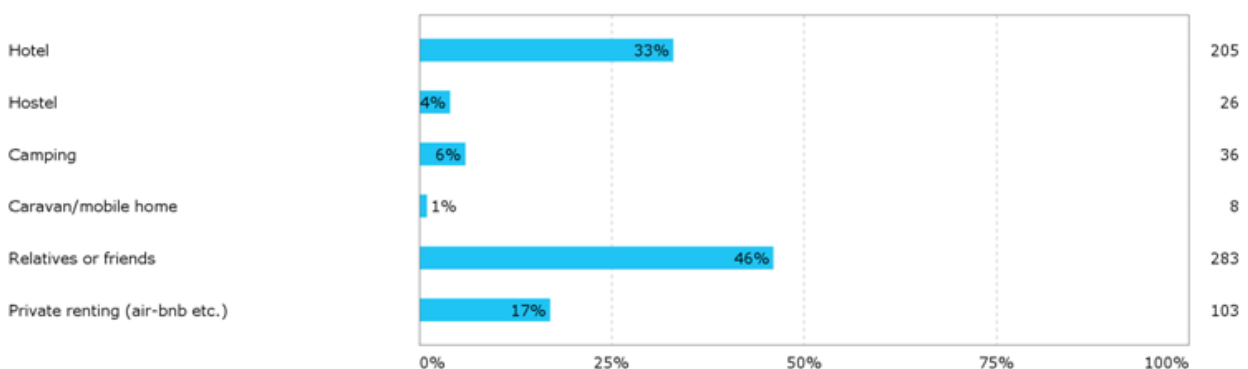## 21. What accommodation type did you use?

Type	%	Count
Hotel	33%	205
Hostel	4%	26
Camping	6%	36
Caravan/mobile home	1%	8
Relatives or friends	46%	283
Private renting (air-bnb etc.)	17%	103

Figure 37. Source: Survey Xact

Interviewee A puts forward that for a holiday in NJ "*...you have all the facilities you need so you have nice beds*" (A:l.171). He mostly uses couchsurfing and Danhostel on his trips but he thinks it is weird that he has to bring his own sheets for the bed. Once he stayed in a Danhostel which was more a camping place than a hostel and he camped outside in the middle of the winter which was extremely cold but a really nice experience (A:ll.123-128). Interviewee N is also satisfied with the accommodation he stayed in which was a small wooden house by the river. He says that "*It is quite a pretty sight*" (N:l19). Interviewee S on the other hand thinks that it is too expensive. When she is asked about some criteria for NJ, in order for her to come back on a holiday she says more simple camping opportunities close to the seaside and cheaper places where also young families with limited financial resources could stay in a tent. She says that she saw a lot of expensive apartments and houses rented by a lot of tourists from Germany but no other nationalities (S:ll.178-182). In the survey, shown in figure 38, only 5% answered that they chose to travel to NJ on the basis of good accommodation agreeing with interviewee S. Though disagreeing with interviewee A who says NJ has everything for a full holiday and the earlier mentioned Trip Advisor which stated that NJ has 87 hotels, 290 bed and breakfasts and inns and 156 other places to stay such as camping and Danhostel (Trip Advisor 3 2015). This also shows a lack of the accommodation promotion as an element which can be worked on and by this enhance tourists' satisfaction with their stay which could cause loyalty among tourists.

15. Why did you choose to travel to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?

Good accommodation	5%				27

Figure 38. Source: Survey Xact

When asked "**What do you think about the tourist information in Denmark in general?**" interviewee A answered that he used the offices which he found very easily and he also says that there is a lot of roadmaps in NJ. He once on a trip only used the road maps to get to the seaside and it was a nice experience for him (A:ll.218-225). Interviewee N responds to the question by saying that information in English in NJ is always very easy for him to find and that it is easy to converse with Danish people in English (N:ll.144-146). This is a factor enhancing his chance of revisiting the destination as proposed by Gallarza and Saura (2006).

Interviewee N further says that the only feedback he has is that the tourism operators in NJ could ask for feedback and which would be beneficial to them in order to make their service level excellent (N:ll.148-151). He says that it would be good if they had an evaluation form as he feels it is quite chill and relaxed (N:ll.94-95). By this, the places interviewee N visited missed an opportunity to co-create the experience

with him as he is willing to be part of a dialogue about his experience. Interviewee A explains that he has, in Danhostel, a few times filled out an evaluation form. Furthermore, he was very surprised when he was asked about his experience in a bus in NJ which he says is very nice (A:ll.147-153). Moreover, he was also asked for his e-mail address (A:l.155) which he also wrote down (A:l.157). By this interviewee A feels valued in the process and that he is contributing to the efficiency in NJ. By providing his e-mail it is also possible for the operator to contact interviewee A afterwards which could also provide value for them.

4.8 External Inputs

When asking the tourists in AAL, how they found their travel and destination information, the answers where that 33% got their information from earlier visits to the destination, 43% from the internet, 3% from brochures, 8% from a travel agent, and 9% from WOM, and 20% from "other", as shown in question 18 in the figure 39.
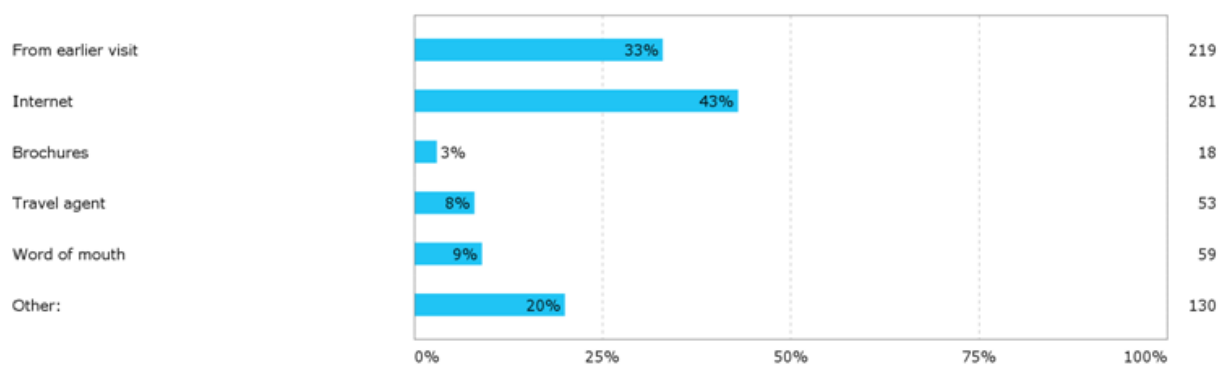
Figure 39. Source: Survey Xact

In the category "other" as an information source of travel and destination information, it was written on the survey by 4 persons that they used to live here, 2 were born here, 2 visitors got their information from family, 1 from friends, 1 from work and 1 from DSB. As only 11 out of 130 persons revealed what the "other" category is for them, analysing it would only be based on guessing and will therefore not be discussed further.

For the tourists in AAL the abovementioned figure 39 illustrates that the internet had the largest influence on finding travel and destination information. Significative stimuli which are from earlier visits were the second largest, social stimuli such as WOM were the third, information from a travel agent fourth, and the symbolic stimuli from brochures fifth most used. Kerstetter and Cho (2004) support the idea by their research, which found that individuals were most likely to have used the internet or their own experience

as source of travel information. They were least likely to have used conventions, magazines, travel agencies, and newspapers.

In question 17, 28% of the asked persons in the survey, as shown in figure 40, answered that they did not have any prior knowledge about NJ before choosing it as a destination and 72% answered that they did.

17. Did you have any prior knowledge about Aalborg/Northern Jutland before you chose this as your destination?
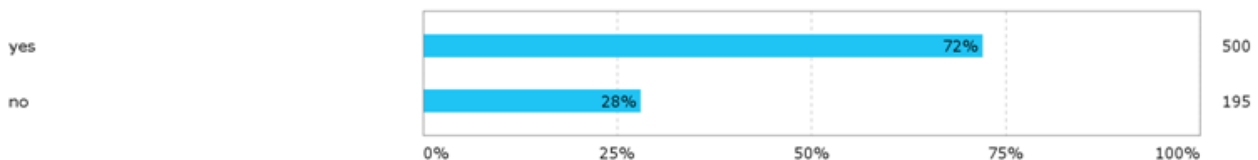
yes	72%	500
no	28%	195

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Figure 40. Source: Survey Xact

Even though as the abovementioned 28% of persons chose NJ as their destination without any prior knowledge about NJ, one can argue that in order for the tourists to choose NJ they would have to be exposed to some kind of stimuli promoting NJ in order to choose NJ. As explained by Um and Crompton (1990) people are exposed to external inputs which consist of three types of stimuli termed significative, symbolic and social stimuli whether active or passive learned. Kerstetter and Cho (2004) write that the concept of prior knowledge or as they put it familiarity, is comprised of two dimensions. The direct tourism experience and the indirect experience (acquired information). This consequently shows that the 28% must have received some kind of indirect acquired information to have NJ in the awareness set of destinations. It can be argued that by the use of the internet tourists go through passive information catching continuously which is also proposed in the framework by the author of this thesis.

Significative Stimuli

As the 33% of the persons in the survey, as mentioned above, interviewee S expresses that when travelling to NJ she relies on previous experiences as she often visits her mother in NJ (S:ll.6-7). During the interview with participant N he also expressed that he relies on significative stimuli as he argues that he would go back to NJ on the basis of all the good memories he got (N:ll.211-214, l.109). For interviewee A, who takes trips to NJ two or three times a year (A:ll.30-31) the significative stimuli are inevitable for his destination choice. Interviewee A says that after visiting a place and discovering the destination, if he likes it, next time he goes back he visits the more hidden places (A:ll.112-114) which shows that the more significative stimuli he gets, the more interested he gets in finding new areas in the destination. The interviewees are physically exposed to the travel destination and can all imagine another visit in NJ for a holiday (A:l.288, S:l.175,

N:l.207). By the significative stimuli obtained the three interviewees become a large source of information for other tourists and they can advocate going to the destination.

Besides the significative stimuli, Lindberg et al. (2014) and Buhalis (2000) acknowledges that a set of expectations, based on social stimuli and symbolic stimuli, influence the perceived image of a destination.

Social Stimuli

It is not a new discovery that WOM recommendations from friends and relatives are more trusted than advertisements and plays a role in decision making (Munar 2012, Cox et al. 2009, Jacobsen and Munar 2012, Fotis et al. 2012, Bechmann 2012). For interviewee S other people's opinions about a destination are very important "*I always ask other people. Because there are so many places to visit so I need some help were to go. So I always ask other people*" (S:ll.147-148). Interviewee N states that the opinions of other people are important to him as people's experiences influence others "*play a pretty large role because normally if you are organising a trip people would have different opinions (...) and usually it is people's experience that it would matter (...) So I guess it plays a large part, especially if (...) somebody have been to the place and they had a good experience then it influences the others*" (N:ll.160-165). For interviewee A, trust is an issue of listening to other people's opinions as it depends on how credible he perceives the person who shares the experience to be but in general he listens to other peoples' opinions (A:ll.247-250).

Interviewee A was told that NJ is filled with nice nature, is interesting, and special (A:ll.17-19) which formed his expectations about NJ and during his stay they were met "*I've actually just been surprised positively*" (A:l.243). Since the positive WOM of NJ and his experience were consistent he states "*I really loved it*" (A:l.21). Interviewee S gets social stimuli about NJ from her mother who tells her about NJ (S:ll.42-43) or what she hears from other people (S:l.46). It has an effect on her as she says it is very important when other people talk about a place (S: ll.156-157).

Interviewee A often talks to a lot of people about NJ and which places they should visit in NJ (A:ll.136-144) which also affect their choice of which places to visit, as they see him as an expert because he lives in Denmark (A:ll.132-140). Interviewee N is most often talking to people face-to-face to tell them about the northern part of Denmark, where they have to go to especially Skagen as it is one of the most beautiful places he has seen (N:ll.87-92). Interviewee S also likes talking to people to share her experiences. However, it is very limited what she tells about NJ compared to Aarhus and Copenhagen as she thinks that NJ is too quiet (S:ll.63-70). As shown above only 9% of the travellers in the survey got their travel information from WOM which shows that there is lack of people sharing their experiences.

Symbolic Stimuli

Some authors also point out that symbolic stimuli can have an effect on travel choice as tourists travel to see and photograph what they have already consumed in brochures, travel programmes and on TV series (Larsen 2006, Sundbo and Darmer 2010). This has also been a factor in the context regarding NJ by the Danish TV series "Badehotellet", "Ludvig og Julemanden" and the movie "Min søsters børn vælter Nordjylland". Interviewee S explains that she does not get symbolic stimuli about NJ in Vienna (S:l.56) but, as interviewee A lives in Denmark he tries to gather as much active symbolic stimuli as possible by reading the newspapers (A:ll.114-116), and the result is that he get inputs to visit again *"(…) I read also some articles that remind me that I should go back soon"* (A:ll.108-109). Thereby, interviewee A is influenced by the stimuli and he also says the newspapers have different kinds of information about NJ which for him is nice (A:ll.115-116). Only 3% in the survey, as mentioned above, used brochures for travel information and 43% used the internet which shows that the potential for NJ to position itself is larger online.

The Search

Before her trip to NJ interviewee S searched for information online to be prepared *"We looked online, we looked where you could bike, where you have good trips to bike. Or where you can go with the boat or what can you do with a child"* (S:ll.48-51). Interviewee N looked at Trip Advisor and in the Lonely Planet book about Denmark before to get an overview of what to see (N:ll.66-72). In the survey in AAL in question 28(2), 29% agreed and 36% answered partly agree to that they thought it was important to have done the planning of a trip in advance as shown in figure 41.

28. When I plan my trip… - 2. it is important for me to have done the planning in advance of the actual trip

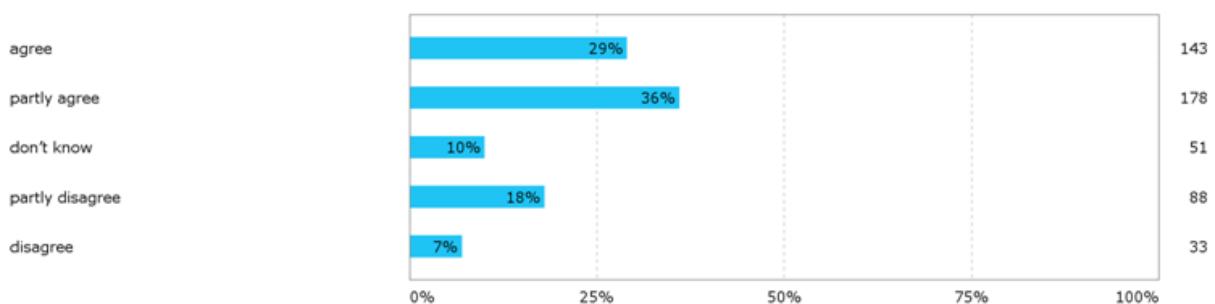|		
agree	29%	143
partly agree	36%	178
don't know	10%	51
partly disagree	18%	88
disagree	7%	33

Figure 41. Source: Survey Xact

Outside this view is interviewee A, who is attracted to the surprise in travelling. He does not do active information search before travelling (A:ll.99-101). Neither, does he like to plan a holiday too much in advance (A:ll.62-63) or look at pictures before because it will spoil the surprise he says (A: ll.75-77). To him, after the first visit, when the surprise is over, he starts reading about the place and gets somewhat nerdy

about the information search (A:ll.112-115). This confirms the proposed framework's assumption that active information search in not limited to the before stage. This rejects Kerstetter and Cho's (2004) theory, which propose that the internet is not used by tourists with greater levels of prior knowledge and familiarity with the destination. Furthermore, in the survey question 29(3), as shown in figure 42, 53% answered agree and 32% partly agree, to that fact that it is important not to only to be able to get information at home before travelling but also to and from the destination, which corresponds to interviewee A's view.
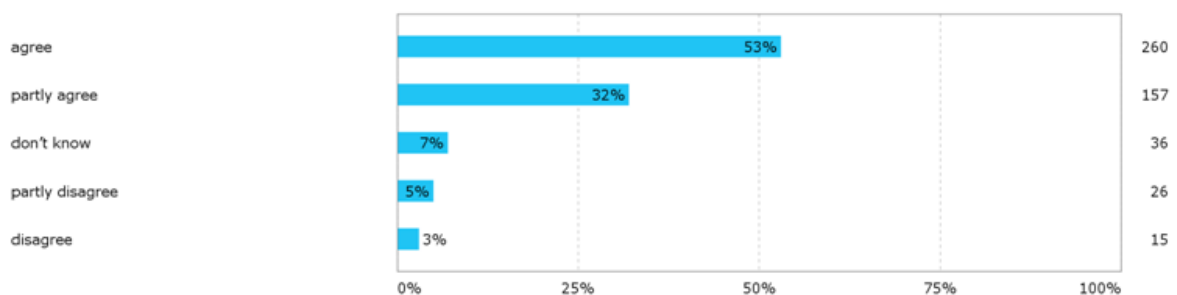
Figure 42. Source: Survey Xact

Although, in question 28(2) in the survey figure 41, when people are asked how they in general plan a trip they are more likely to answer according to their comfort zone, stating that it is important to plan ahead, though as shown in question 28(3), figure 43, 385 persons, stated it was also important to be somehow spontaneous during a trip. Interviewee N also plans his trips but furthermore states not to plan too much in advance in order to be spontaneous (N:ll.82-84).
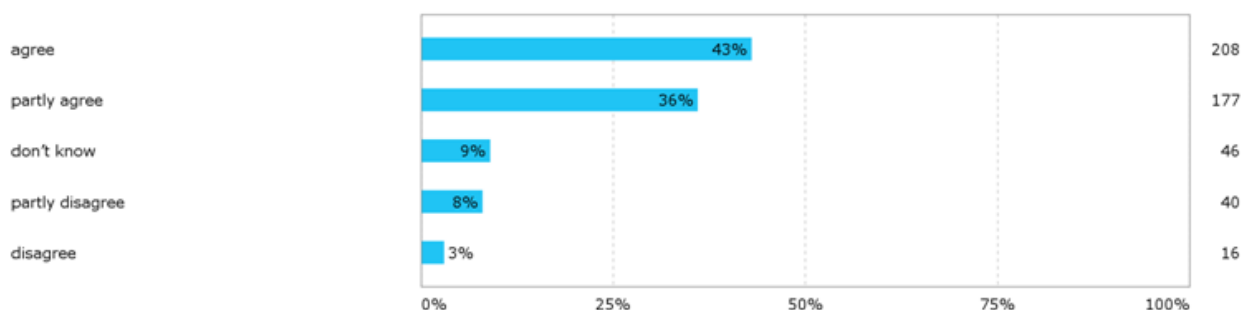

Figure 43. Source: Survey Xact

Furthermore, as shown in figure 44, question 28(1), 31% answered agree and 41% answered partly agree that they think it is important to have a lot of information about the place they travel to. This shows that most of the persons asked like to be informed about the place that they visit.

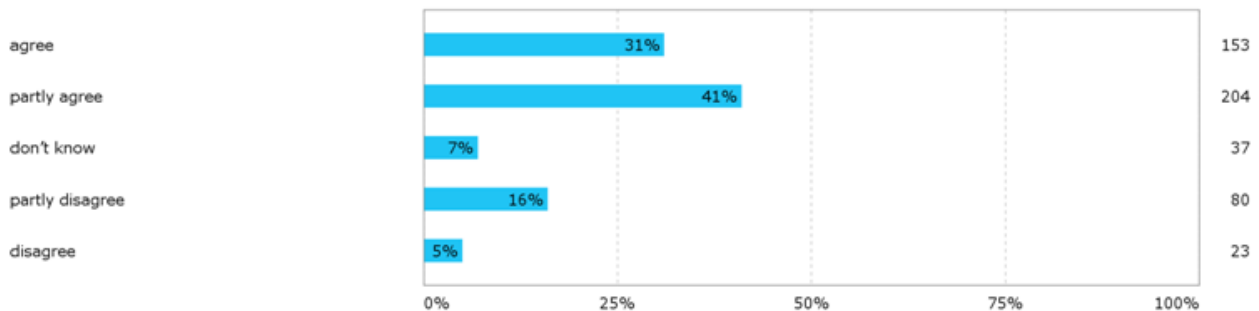## 28. When I plan my trip… - 1. it is important to me to have a lot of information about the place I travel to

Response	Percentage	Count
agree	31%	153
partly agree	41%	204
don't know	7%	37
partly disagree	16%	80
disagree	5%	23

Figure 44. Source: Survey Xact

However, figure 44 also shows that 103 persons feel like interviewee A (A:ll.112-115) and do not necessarily need a lot of information about the place they travel to beforehand. This stresses that the tourist' information search is not limited to the before stage of travelling argued in the framework, a conclusion also reached by Korneliussen (2014). Furthermore, as shown in figure 45, 21% chose NJ, as a holiday destination, based on no prior knowledge. One can argue that either the 21% travelled with someone who covered the information search or they simply found the travel information during the trip, which likely could be found online, as Korneliussen (2014) states, technology is making tourists more independent throughout their travel. It can be explained that by the use of the internet tourists go through active information searching continuously before, during and after the travel process also proposed in the framework and not just before the destination choice as argued by Um and Crompton (1990).

17. Did you have any prior knowledge about Aalborg/Northern Jutland before you chose this as your destination?
Crossed with: 9. What was the purpose of your journey to Aalborg/Northern Jutland?
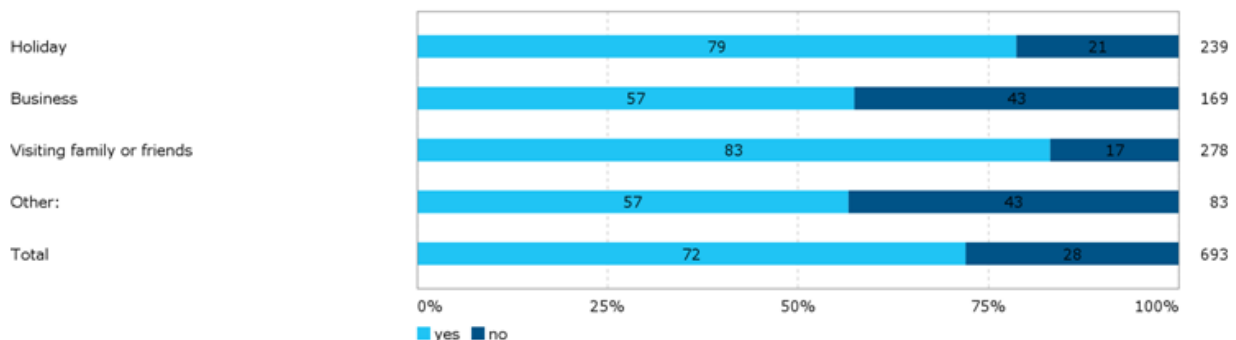
Purpose	yes	no	Total
Holiday	79	21	239
Business	57	43	169
Visiting family or friends	83	17	278
Other:	57	43	83
Total	72	28	693

Figure 45. Source: Survey Xact

4.9 Facebook Sharing and Co-creating Experiences

As pointed out above, WOM recommendations from friends and relatives are more trusted than advertisements and play a role in decision making. Recent research has proved an increasingly higher trust and credibility in travel information from other travellers online (E-WOM), than from websites and travel agents (Fotis et al. 2012, Lim et al. 2012, Lange-Faria and Elliot 2012, Messe Berlin 2014, Cox et al. 2009) which play an increasingly important role in the consumer decision making process and tourism purchase decisions (Litvin et al. 2008). Interviewee A is an active member of a lot of groups on Facebook for international people where he helps people with information about Denmark. He is often contacted on Facebook by friends of friends looking for advice about coming to Denmark and when they arrive they still ask him for his advice for e.g. places to visit. "*So I really share all this with a lot of people actually*" (A:ll.131-140). This shows that the information search is also done at the actual destination. Interviewee A becomes an ambassador for NJ and is considered a credible source of information for a lot of travellers. This kind of consumer to consumer communication and dialogue provides consumers an alternative source of information and perspective (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B) and online platforms for discussion can be helpful tools for tourists in their search, as mentioned earlier in question 18, the internet was the largest source of information for travel and destination information about NJ. Hjalager and Jensen (2012) also state that the internet has become a source of information used before, during and after holidays. Thereby, as tourists trust in other tourists is large and they mainly use the internet for information finding there is an opportunity for tourism operators in NJ to facilitate an online dialogue about their business by creating an online community on social media such as Facebook. Platforms such as Facebook can be approaches to co-create value according to Zwass (2010). Interviewee N expresses that when he shares pictures on Facebook and he gets the attention from friends who comment and tag, he feels that it is "*pretty nice*" (N:ll.87-88) which shows that the interaction he gets from posting offers him some sort of value. He further states that he could easily imagine sharing on social media as it would benefit a lot of travellers who have not been to the place (N:ll.181-182). By this social media is a way to co-create experiences where tourists create value not only for themselves and the tourism operator, but also for other tourists when they share their travel experiences in online social networks.

The high levels of internet use, the conventional WOM, combined with internal information from people's minds, and participation in Facebook are decisive factors for destination choice argued by Jacobsen and Munar (2012). Through the nethnographic methods employed, it is obvious that tourism operators' Facebook pages lacks consumer generated content. As consumers are becoming more active and informed they want to interact with tourism operators, locals and other tourists to co-create experiences according to Pera (2014), Rihova et al. (2014), Binkhorst (2007), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004 B), Buhalis (2000)

Richards (2014). On Ruths Hotel's Facebook page it appears that this kind of interaction is providing a good experience. In the example in picture 3 a tourist shares her picture taken near the hotel on the timeline. Ruths Hotel writes a comment thanking her for the post and the visitor replies by telling even more of her wonderful experience for others to read. Furthermore, another lady gets involved and writes a comment that she thinks that it is a lovely picture. By sharing her picture the tourist opens up for a dialogue and the E-WOM and in this case it has a very positive outcome for Ruths Hotel, the tourist and the persons reading the post which might be passively influenced by this dialogue.
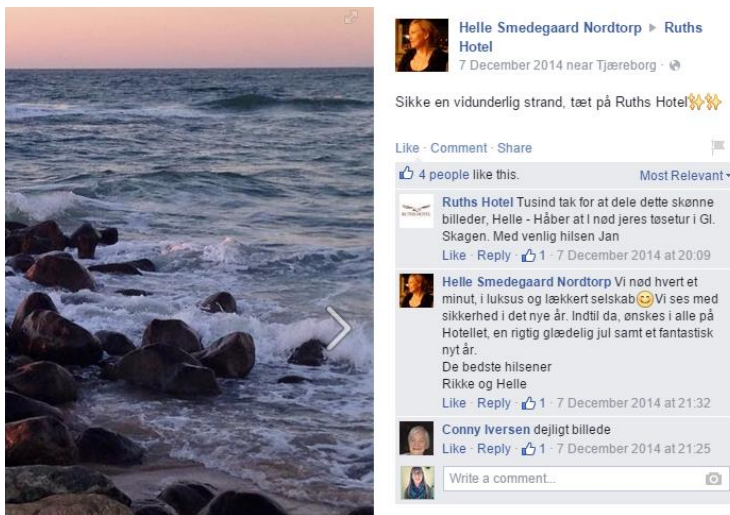
Picture 3. Source: Facebook

The effect of sharing such an experience makes the tourist look back at the experience, as she says "*We enjoyed every minute*..." Thereby as identified by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) the internet mediates tourism experiences as tourists use these social media sites to portray and relive their trips and can strengthen the commitment to the destination.

Still, it is limited how many tourists actually share their experiences online on the different tourism operators' Facebook timeline. Mostly, the content on the tourism operators Facebook pages are company provided content. On Aalborg Zoo's Facebook page there is, as shown in picture 4, pictures posted from one visitor who is very unsure whether to post her pictures on the timeline as she writes *"My son thinks that we should post it here"*. She is unsure where to share their great experience in the Zoo, as shown in the text, but she is very interested in sharing the experience though. By stating that her son thinks it is okay to post on the timeline she hides behind his statement. It can be interpreted that she does not want to share it on Aalborg Zoo's timeline, and it might keep others from sharing their experience if they feel that the timeline is only meant to be posts from the operator.
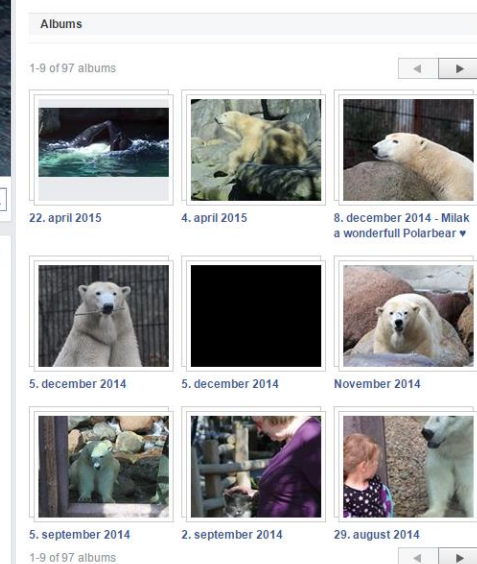
Picture 4. Source: Facebook

Some of Aalborg Zoo's visitors even feel that they have to make separate group on Facebook to share their experiences, as shown in picture 5, 643 persons from all over the world are gathered in a group where they post pictures of the polar bears in Aalborg Zoo. The group has 97 albums with photos and videos which are only consumer generated, shown in picture 6.
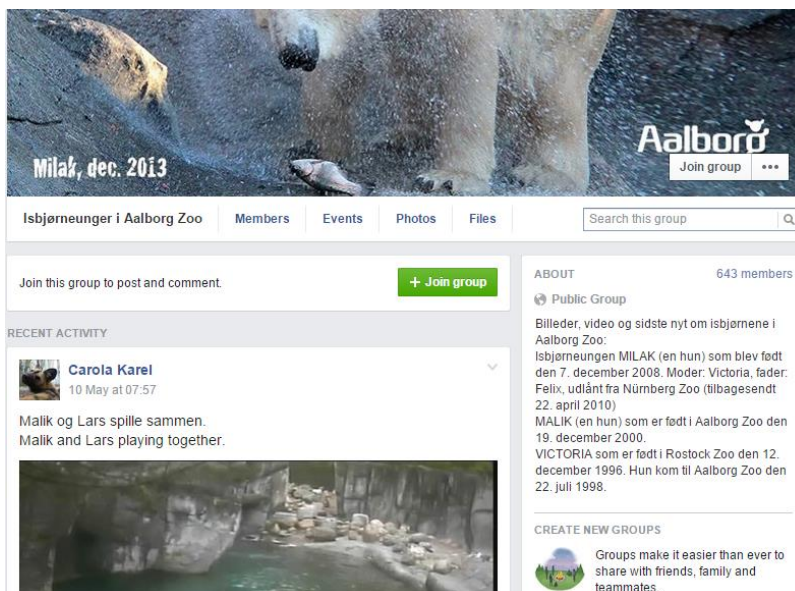
Picture 5. Source: Facebook   Picture 6. Source: Facebook

The pictures shared on the group start conversations between the participants in the group. They like and comment on each others' pictures and co-create their experiences despite different languages as shown in picture 7. These are examples of the fact that people are willing to share their experiences and like to

engage in a dialogue about their experiences on Facebook as it can create value and their dialogue offers an alternative source of information. The perspective becomes personal as it is other visitors who post and as shown in picture 8 it has a large effect on travel motivations as one woman says that now she has to visit the bear during Easter.

Picture 7. Source: Facebook

Picture 8. Source: Facebook

An example of an experience shared on Aalborg Zoo's timeline is picture 9, where a mother shares her kids' experience with the baby goats in Aalborg Zoo. Though, one can argue that the only reason she posts this is because Aalborg Zoo gives her an opportunity by posting pictures of the baby goats which affects her to share her own experience in the comment box. 4 persons have also chosen to share the post by Aalborg Zoo which shows willingness to be a part of a dialogue which should be exploited by Aalborg Zoo. Furthermore, Aalborg Zoo chooses not to take part of the dialogue in the comment box which results in victors not receiving maximal value as explained by Grönroos (2011) value for customers emerge only from the whole spectrum of supplier and customer interactions which calls for Aalborg Zoo to engage in a dialogue with the visitors.

Picture 9. Source: Facebook

Also, when Aalborg Zoo shares a video from a zookeeper of the polar bear, it gets 272 likes and 10 persons comment on it, as shown in picture 10, which makes it a co-creation of the experience between Aalborg Zoo and the visitors. A woman shares her experiences by posting a picture in the comment box of the polar bear saying that she also enjoyed the polar bear that day and a German woman shares her picture she has taken of the polar bear which is arriving in Aalborg Zoo. This stresses that visitors too want to be a part of generating the contents on the site. The first picture in the comment box got 7 likes and the second got 2 likes from other visitors however no one directly replied to the two photos. The author of this thesis argues that if the main picture was posted by a visitor, other visitors would be influenced to comment on it and co-create experiences in a visitor to visitor interaction as shown in picture 11 and 12.

Frank Orloff Thomsen

Kom nu Lars Isbjørn. Det er så sjovt i Aalborg Zoo og jeg er bare for lækker ♡

Like · Comment · Share

👍 272 people like this.   Most Relevant ▾

Write a comment...

Karen Richter Hansen Vi nød også synet af den smukke pige i dag ♡

Like · Reply · 👍 7 · 1 April at 14:09

Lilian Larsen Ham Lars er nu heldig - Malik er en dejlig dame. Vi glæder os til at møde ham 🙂
Like · Reply · 👍 5 · 1 April at 12:34

Aase Randi Krogh Og hvor er Malik dejlig.hun ligner Milak så meget hvad legene angår
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 1 April at 12:43

Annie Enevoldsen Dejlig dejlig, bare det var min
Like · Reply · 1 April at 14:06

Aase Randi Krogh Tak ilm.til alle
Like · Reply · 1 April at 12:45

Birte Darley Ja Malik er lækker og hold da op hvor hun hygger sig 😍
Like · Reply · 1 April at 13:04

Anita Borup Sigsgaard Her er isbjørnene altid det HELT store hit - ungerne kan stå i timevis og se på dem lege. 🧡
Like · Reply · 1 April at 20:08

Lotte Lykke Fantastisk flot arbejde at se, hvordan kranen på millimeter sætter bur med tung isbjørn ned på plads og hvor arbejder i alle godt sammen, så det går så kvikt som muligt at få ham installeret.

Og tillykke med ham 🙂
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 1 April at 16:42

Barbara Scheer Gute Reise Lars. Hoffentlich gefällt es Dir in Aalborg Zoo ♡

Like · Reply · 👍 2 · 1 April at 16:07

Rikke Østerbæk Eskesen Se Mette Østerbæk Eskesen ♡
Like · Reply · 1 April at 17:28

Write a comment...

Picture 10. Source: Facebook   Picture 10. Source: Continued

Picture 11 and 12 show pictures taken by visitors at Rubjerg Knude Fyr and shared on the visitors own timeline but with added location to a post, to tell people where they are taken and allowing others to view them when searching for Rubjerg Knude Fyr. In these cases the pictures are commented on by their friends and thereby the post is used to co-create experiences. Picture 11 only has positive comments but the visitor who posted picture 12 writes that the weather is cold and windy however, the people who comment on the picture share their positive views which makes the woman who posted the picture acknowledge that in better weather it could be a great experience to visit. Consequently, the sharing of different experiences turns the E-WOM around and makes it a positive conversation about Rubjerg Knude Fyr creating value for the place, the visitor and the conversation also develops into a visitor to local to dialogue. This can have an effect on the readers of the post. As concluded earlier in this chapter tourists' trust in other tourist's opinions is growing. The interviewees asked, also listen to and are influenced by other people's opinions because other peoples experiences matter and play a large part (N:ll.160-165) and also help to find out where to go in a destination (S:ll.147-148).

Picture 11. Source: Facebook   Picture 12. Source: Facebook

The visitors in the cases above make the tourism experience become a shared adventure that is co-created socially with the tourism operators, friends, followers and other tourists online.

As shown in picture 13, on VA's Facebook page there is a separate app for communication though, the app does not contain any consumer generated conversations or posts. It only to some degree succeeds in opening a dialogue as it is more a gathering of notes from VA which might as well be posted on their timeline.

Picture 13. Source: Facebook

Fårup Sommerland, on the other hand, has a separate app called "Our Fårup memories" for visitors to share their pictures as shown in picture 14.

Picture 14. Source: Facebook   Picture 15. Source: Facebook

In this app visitors can upload pictures on in the site and view each other's pictures as shown in picture 15. When the visitors click on the pictures in the app they can view the picture and see who took the picture as shown in picture 16. However, the pictures do not contain some text explanation or story attached to the picture which makes it impersonal and somehow irrelevant to other visitors as they cannot really relate to the experiences.

Picture 16. Source: Facebook

The app could be a good example of how to co-create experience sharing. However, it does not facilitate a dialogue as Fårup Sommerland does not engage in a conversation with the visitors and it does not draw other visitors' attention since no one hardly likes the pictures and no pictures have comments, and as argued above people like commenting on each other's pictures. By this it does not add value to the visitor's sharing experience and does not fulfil its whole purpose.

A rating of First Hotel Aalborg, shown in picture 17, does not lead to any conversation or co-creating of experience between the hotel, the visitor or the readers. It only generates 10 likes. A valid point is

therefore, that in order to open for a dialogue, the post has to be pictures taken by visitors with a text telling about the experience to get others to interact.

Picture 17. Source: Facebook

Fotis et al. (2012) describe that social media is predominately used in the post-trip stage for sharing experiences and photos with friends and other travellers which can be practised on Facebook as shown in the pictures above. Furthermore, Fotis et al. (2012) found that the during stage was the second most popular use of social media, shown in this thesis by Snapchat. Though, before visiting a destination, social media can also have an effect on tourists' travel choices as consumer generated content on social media can significantly influence a destination image (Lim et al. 2012) and thereby expectation. Interviewee S looked at pictures on Facebook before visiting Denmark (S:l.54) and Interviewee N saw some pictures of NJ on social media sites but later he forgot the names of the places and then looked at Google pictures for it (N:ll.79-80). This demonstrates that his mind is affected passively by pictures on social media which causes him later to actively search for the place he saw and include it in his travel planning. After his trip he evaluates that his stay lived up to his expectations (N:l.153). One can argue that the pictures passively consumed online, on social media such as Facebook had an effect on expectations and later choices regarding the holiday and not just regarding the awareness set suggested by the model by Um and Crompton (1990).

The before stage is relevant to have a focus on in this context, as mentioned above tourists travel to see and photograph what they have already consumed. By this suggestion and the case by interviewee N the author of this thesis acknowledges that it could be the same with social media pictures. Binkhorst (2007) supports this idea by stating that the final tourism experience is continuously determined by virtual and real experiences both before in the home environment when preparing the trip or reflecting upon it, and during the actual travel.

Tourists often incorporate both the past and the future into their experiences by comparing present experiences with former experiences and thinking about future activities which also affect the present

moment (Lindberg et al. 2014). Interviewee S visited Copenhagen twice before travelling to NJ and this formed her expectations of NJ. When she found out that the transportation opportunities are fewer than in Copenhagen and the houses are further apart, her stay in NJ did only to some degree live up to her expectations because of the differences (S:ll.136-138).

An example of the interconnection of the before, during and after, which Smed (2009) confirms will all contribute to the processing of the experience and the experiences to come, is shown in picture 18 which the social media helps to perform. A woman shares her and her daughters experience by posting a picture, in a comment on another picture on Aalborg Zoo's Facebook page, which says *"It was quite an experience that we will never forget. Now we look forward to saying Hi to the new bear Lars"*.
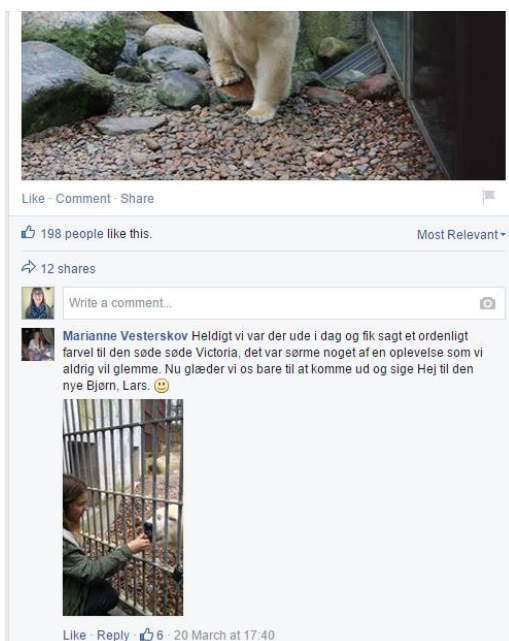
Picture 18. Source: Facebook

This proves that visitors incorporate past and future experiences and this can be shared on Facebook. This means, for the tourism operators in NJ that the after stage of the experience is also of importance and can be facilitated via social media and in this case help realise a new travel intention. By sharing experiences the visitors are becoming aware of their experiences which result in a desire to revisit as shown in picture 18. Thereby, as proposed in the framework, the destination choice process should also incorporate the after experience.

4.10 Instagram Sharing and Co-creating Experiences

As mentioned, co-creation is a process during which consumers take an active role in co-creating value together with a tourism operator (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 B) and tourists create value not only for

themselves and the operator, but also for other customers when they share their travel experiences in online social networks. This can affect travel destination choice as consumer generated content is perceived as trustworthy and candid as argued by Munar and Gyimothy (2014). VN, among other DMOs, has an Instagram profile. VN reposts the pictures of people who have visited NJ if they allow it by using the hash-tag #visitnordjylland as shown in picture 19. VS has the same strategy as shown in picture 20 by using the hash-tag #BrilliantMoments.

Picture 19. Source: Instagram   Picture 20. Source: Instagram

The hash-tag functions as permission to the DMO's to repost the picture and the unwritten rule is that the tourism operator gives credit to the person who took the picture by tagging the person and writing a proper thank you. When the tourists post a picture in Instagram with the hash-tag #BrilliantMoments and VS chooses to feature it on the profile value is co-created for all involved in the process. As shown in picture 21 the tourist who took the picture writes it is "*A big moment for me*" when he gets credit for the picture by VS. He furthermore writes personal thanks to everybody who comments and also thanks for all the likes. When VS shares the post and it gets comments and likes it brings value to the photographer but also value to the people who took part in the dialogue about the experience in a co-creating of value process where they could share their experience or thoughts. VS gets to repost a great picture promoting the destination but the comments by the tourists, who also have visited, also promote the destination "*It was magical*", "*A stunning, hauntingly beautiful place. One of my favourite places in Scotland*". The picture and the tourists' positive E-WOM and the tagging of other people help advertise Scotland and influence other tourists "*Well worth a visit... to see this*". The picture and the dialogue thereby is an inspiration to other tourists as underlined by Leung et al. (2013) consumers often see themselves in the reviews of others and understand the products based on the perception of their friends or fellow consumers.

Picture 21. Source: Instagram   Picture 21. Continued   Picture 21. Continued

Picture 21. Instagram   Picture 21. Continued   Picture 21. Continued

Another example of a dialogue between a tourist and VN where other tourists also participate is shown in picture 22. By re-posting the picture VN opens a conversation engaging the tourist who posted the picture. The tourist thanks for the repost and VN answers, which again makes her tell a little more and two other persons comment as well. One wishing to be there and one congratulates on the repost. By using pictures

from a tourists or locals on their profile VN has also found a natural and trustworthy way to stage NJ and become a credible information source as they use people's own representations of NJ. When VN shares a picture VN also engages in a conversation with the tourists which makes them able to share a unique personalised experience with others. The tourists help promote NJ by using the hash-tags, resulting in awareness of the destination by spreading to the tourists network but also random Instagram users can see the picture and form an image of the place or attraction.

Opposite this is picture 23 by Aalborg Kommune which has a comment stating that there are too many effects on the photo and it does not look natural, which diminish Aalborg Kommune's trustworthiness and therefore thus willingness to travel to see this as it becomes less authentic. Also noted by Bosque and Martin (2008) a preconceived image of a destination can influence expectations and if this image is wrong the tourist might be disappointed by arrival and as stated by Prebensen et al. (2013) a disappointment, can have a negative impact on the experience value. Consequently, it is important to have consistency with the expected image and the destination so Aalborg Kommune should not Photoshop pictures before posting as the tourists easily catch this and develop a negative attitude and thereby do not get attracted to the destination.

Picture 22. Source: Instagram   Picture 22. Continued   Picture 23. Source: Instagram

An example of where the repost does not work is Ruthshotel, picture 24. However, the repost is only the second of four tries. The repost has several flaws. There are no comments which mean that it does not open for a dialogue between the traveller and the hotel or other travellers to get valuable engagement. This could be because the text below the picture is too impersonal and does not really appeal to any

emotions and that there is no credit given by tagging the person who took the picture and furthermore there is no thanks and thereby no answer from the person. Besides this, shown in picture 25, Ruthshotel fails at informing about the repost since the "bio" of the page does not state that using the hahs-tag #ruthshotel will resolve in a repost as the examples of Visit Nordjylland and Visit Scotland shown in picture. By this the visitor was not aware that her picture would get reposted and might not give her consent.

Picture 24. Source: Instagram   Picture 25. Source: Instagram

Acknowledged before, technology can make meaningful dialogues possible and when businesses enter in a dialogue with consumers they can co-create experiences and value together (Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009). This way of engaging tourists to use the tourism operators' hash-tag can build a relation and create a sense of a community shown in picture 26 which says "...*get featured here and join a community of North Denmark explorers*" and picture 27 which states "...*share your experiences with other North Denmark explorers*". By using the hash-tag tourists are in a community with other tourists who share the same experience with whom they can interact and share advice with before, during and after a trip which can enhance the perceived value.

Picture 25. Source: Instagram   Picture 26. Source: Instagram

As shown by VN in the pictures 28, 29 and 30, this strategy of featuring tourists' pictures in Instagram can be used by a variety of tourism operators, shops and different attractions as promotional material. Moreover, it is also time efficient for the tourism operators because no time is spent to take the picture.

  Picture 28. Source: Instagram   Picture 29. Source: Instagram   Picture 30. Source: Instagram

Furthermore, by sharing the pictures from the tourists or locals in Instagram, tourism operators can display the beauty or interesting sides of a destination seen by tourists or locals viewpoints, which can inspire

other tourists to travel to the site and help form attitudes of the place e.g. child friendly, beautiful and captivating nature or interesting places to visit. The visual impression of a place means a lot to many travellers when they have to decide whether to travel to the destination or book their travel online (Visit Denmark 1 2015). Especially a comment on picture 31 proves a woman who gets inspired by this by asking a tagged friend if they should go there. When she sees the picture she gets a sudden urge to go there and have a picnic. Consequently, this strategy benefits VN as user-generated content is often perceived as more likely to provide reliable information than content posted by tourism organisations (Munar 2012) which in turn as shown in picture 31 can impact tourists' decision making. Sharing pictures from tourists gives extra credibility because it has a mixture of consumer generated content and tourism operator facilitated content which is, defined by Cox et al. (2009), the best solution. The picture also helps anticipation as one tourist writes that she thinks about it every 5 minutes and is excited to visit in 3 months with her friend who she tags in the post hence also creates E-WOM.
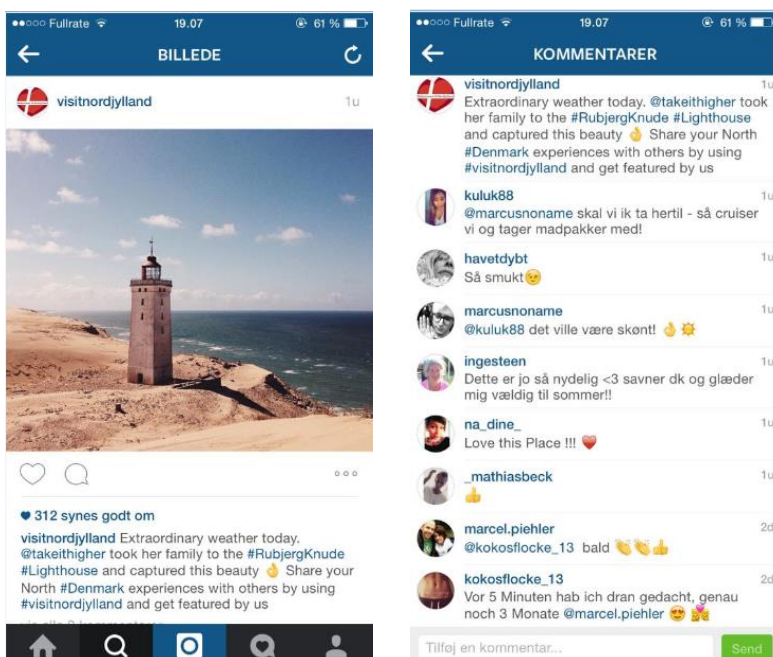
Picture 31. Source: Instagram   Picture 31. Continued

Posting and featuring pictures in Instagram and the interaction and dialogue it generates with tourists, can be used not only to attract new visitors by making a positive image, but also to reinforce the tourists' and locals commitment to the place by sharing experiences. In picture 32 a visitor tags her friend and writes "*do you remember?*" which brings her and accordingly her friend back to the experience. By this picture reposted by VN the experience is re-experienced and relived in the memory of the visitor which can be valuable for her and reinforce her connection with the memory and with the destination. As suggested by Binkhorst (2007) experiences that enable consumers to reflect add value to a consumer.
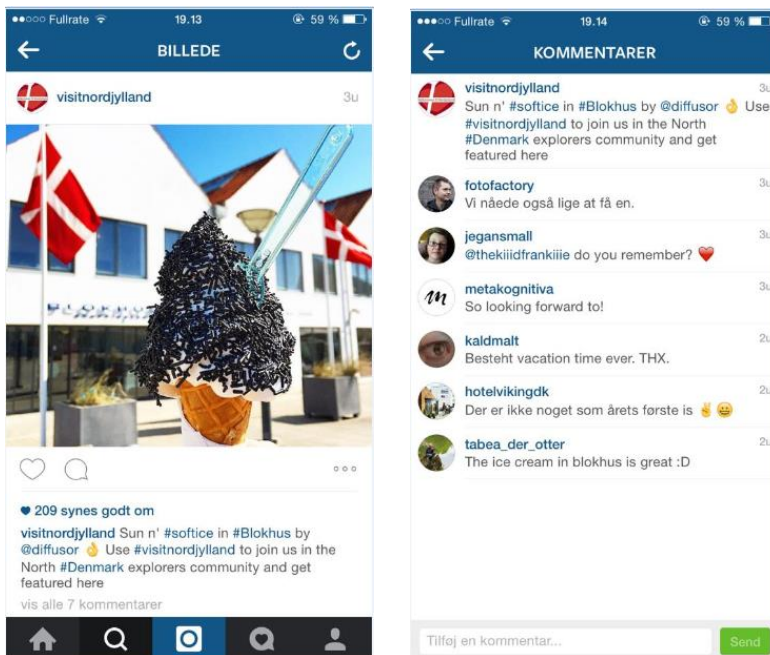
Picture 32. Source: Instagram   Picture 32. Continued

4.11 Snapchat Sharing and Co-creating Experiences

Given that Snapchat only functions on mobile devises or tablets and consists of pictures and videos taken in the moment, it is a social media which is applied during the tourists' travel experience. Snapchat has a focus on the present moment as users can send Snapchats instantly as the experience is experienced and their friends can view it. There are several approaches to Snapchat and several ways of how it can be used to co-create experiences and promote a destination by both sharing video and pictures. Some of the different Snapchat Stories are portraying: festivals, city life of Los Angeles, New York, Barbados, Sidney, London etc. sports events and game days, food festivals and food markets, national holidays, races, cultural and historical events, carnival, fashion shows, and dog shows. Some examples are shown in picture 33, 34 and 35.

Picture 33. Source: Snapchat   Picture 34. Source: Snapchat   Picture 35. Source: Snapchat
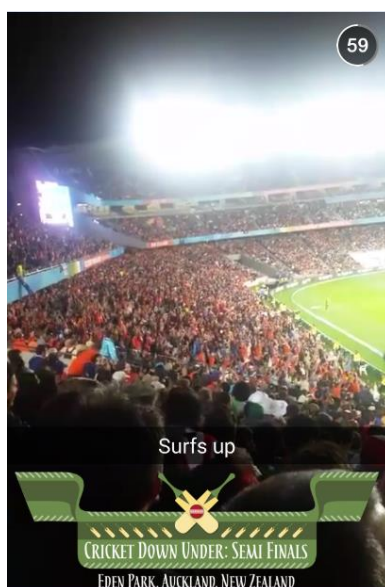
The examples above are administrated by the Snapchat team and the content is provided by people who have used the geofilter overlay for the Snapchats in certain locations. By this it becomes people's representations of destinations, sights or events around the world and turn into honest illustrations of the places. The Snapchats create awareness of the place, and a more natural, creative promotion of the place. Though, it can be difficult and costly to design a geofilter and it might take a long time to get approval for the geofilter as the Snapchat team's ability to process submissions is limited for now.

The Danish stand-up comedian Thomas Skov gets to travel as part of his job to make TV-programmes. On his Snapchat channel his friends can view his stories and wherever he goes he likes to experience as much new and add small video stories on his Snapchat. The screenshot of the video shown in picture 36 is from a visit in Tokyo. He is filming the streets filled with people while he tells where he is and about the place. The people who view it thereby form a picture of Tokyo, the culture and the people. The stand-up comedian acts as an endorser for Tokyo and can affect other people's opinions about a place.

Picture 36. Source: Snapchat

Picture 37. Source: Snapchat

Picture 38. Source: Snapchat

Other examples to use Snapchat to visually stage places is shown in picture 37 and 38 which is snapshots of videos in Snapchat Stories. Video 37 is a man in Washington D.C. filming the view from Key Bridge and telling people where he is. The snap also displays a filter with the temperature and by the combination of a blue sky and the view he shows from the bridge he is displaying Washington D.C in a positive way which could lead to enhance the viewers' interest in the destination. The experience is also shared during a trip by a real person as opposed to a company, which might also enhance value as viewers can relate to it. Picture 38 of the video shows a person pointing at Singapore and meanwhile tells the viewer about the position of the country which creates knowledge of Singapore through passive information catching and can affect the viewer's next travel plans.

Until now, Snapchat in Denmark is used by shops, musicians, clothing brands, celebrities, TV-channels, Festivals, a church, politicians, magazines, a football club, municipalities, radio stations, Funcenter, and Skagensmuseum has a channel. The Snapchat users voluntarily add the firms on Snapchat, and in this way it is not like other forms of advertising travellers are exposed to on e.g. Facebook and Instragram that they do not ask for.

A Danish newspaper, MetroXpress has created a Snapchat channel where the Story is used to send out news, asking questions and interacting with friends. MetroXpress asks the Snapchat friends to share their moments by sending Snapchats to MetroXpress of the experience in video or pictures. MetroXpress then takes a screenshot of the best Snapchats and reposts the picture or video into the Story allowing all other Snapchat friends to view it and thereby gives the viewers the opportunity to co-create their experiences with others. MetroXpress facilitates a meaningful dialogue as shown in picture 39 when asking friends on

the 4th of May to send Snapchats of the traditional lit candles in their windows. It brings out an informal communication between MetroXpress and their Snapchat friends and it happens in real-time and is a collaborative performance between the participants.

Picture 39. Source: Snapchat   Picture 40. Source: Instagram

The Danish stand-up comedian Thomas Skov, mentioned earlier, is making the social media channels that he uses interrelated. He uses Instagram to promote Snapchat as shown in picture 40. He builds new ways and environments for interaction and new types of experiences and sharing experiences.

Snapchat can serve another communicative purpose which can be seen in picture 41. As the musician Kato writes, he will use his channel to interact with the users by answering questions. He will be active on his Snapchat in one hour, where he will be answering questions from the users. The best questions will be reposted in his story with answers so all his friends can view them and thereby be a part of the process. He uses Snapchat to build relations with his friends and generates a lot of positive attention to himself. By reposting questions he also opens for co-creation of experiences by his friends on Snapchat as they can view others' experiences and be inspired by it.

Picture 41. Source: Facebook

4.12 Online Storytelling

Stories can play an important role in attracting attention to and creating the initial image in the mind of the tourists and as introduced by Lindberg et al. (2014). These stories may continue to influence tourists throughout their experiences. For tourism operators utilising new media such as Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat, as argued by Prebensen et al. (2010) brings forward authentic and exiting stories to help the tourists in their WOM practice. Thereby, storytelling is consumer value co-creation behaviour ex ante and ex post the stay (Pera 2014). Shown by the case of VS in picture 42 storytelling can be used when VS reposts tourists' pictures on Instagram with short stories which enhance the value for the tourists by involving them in co-creation of experiences.

The example by VS illustrates a personal way of making stories by featuring pictures from tourists or locals with short stories below, the stories are credible as they come from a DMO and the pictures are credible as they come from tourists or local people. The story is short and precise and inspiring to new tourists and opens for interaction as the picture has several comments and likes. The comments to the picture are people speaking highly of the place, tagging other people and especially one woman says "...*in the land of my heart, everything has a story*" which shows that she values the storytelling as it reminds her of why she loves the destination. Another comment is a man who says "*My bro took this well done brother*" which means that he also values the repost as it makes him proud. By this the tourists get to be a part of the storytelling and by providing the content on social media platforms, Bryon (2012) put forward that, the tourists become co-creators of the content of destination imaginaries. The stories in Instagram become a piece of knowledge and the traveller-generated content in combination with the story of the DMO positively affects the way a destination is communicated to the outside.

Picture 42. Source: Instagram   Picture 42. Continued   Picture 42. Continued

Picture 42. Continued

Consumer generated content from tourists and locals can work as storytelling to other tourists as Bryon (2012) notes, travellers become tourism storytellers themselves. On Læsø Saltsyderi's Facebook page a tourist from Connecticut shares her pictures from a visit with a describing story of how the salt is made shown in picture 43. The tourist, by sharing the experience and the trip-stories, enhances the value and her story makes one of her friends ask to bring back some salt for her also. It is obvious that this tourist produces the experience through her involvement and the investment of her personal resources such as time and effort to write the story and by answering to comments she involve others.

Picture 43. Source: Facebook   Picture 43. Continued

Furthermore, sharing pictures and memories, can drive travellers' towards fulfilling their desire to share experience and stories to co-create experiences with other tourists or locals. Interviewee N argues that storytelling is important as it makes the experience much better as people can relate to it (N:ll.173-175). He further states that he would engage in storytelling as it would definitely benefit a lot of travellers that have not previously been to the place. This makes the whole place a lot more interesting when using storytelling to share the adventures and the things that happened. He concludes that "*Storytelling makes the whole thing a lot more interesting and fun*" (N:ll.180-185). In this way storytelling can be used online to attract tourists. Interviewee S also thinks it is very important (S:ll.156-157) and could see herself engaging in storytelling on social media (S: l.164). Interviewee A could also easily see himself engaging it in (A:l.260). He states that marketing wise it is a good idea to have funny stories. Furthermore, he reveals that it can be very interesting to have personal stories and especially of what happens when people meet locals (A:ll.253-256). Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) insist on an emotional promotion using the local residents as a part of the experience that the place offers and furthermore, suggest that an effective way to present the identity characteristics of a place is through a story. Ringkøbing Fjord Turisme employs this idea by using local people to talk about their lives in videos as a way for tourists to get a close view of the local people in the area that they want to travel to (Visit Denmark 2014). Xiang and Gretzel (2010) propose that E-WOM such as testimonials on social media can be utilised to create positive image and WOM for destinations and businesses. Tourists and locals can also act as ambassadors via social media telling stories about their experiences to others and co-creating value furthermore, influencing destination choice.

A strategy on Snapchat can be, as shown in picture 44, where a tourist, in this case Arnold Schwarzenegger, sends Snapchats during his travels and state that in this way he can bring people with him and share the amazing things he sees. In this way Arnold acts as a personal travel guide for the people who views his stories and it becomes a sort of virtual sightseeing. In the Snapchat video he shares facts about all the bridges in Amsterdam and by this storytelling he promotes the site. He might also influence the way people perceive Amsterdam as said by Mathisen (2014), before tourists decide to visit a destination they are exposed to stories through various media channels which can influence their perception.

Picture 44. Source: Facebook

The examples of Snapchats mentioned above, of Tokyo, Washington D.C., Singapore and Amsterdam functions well as promotion for the places as argued. In the survey in AAL's question 31 only 9% of the persons ranked stories to be a motivating factor in choosing NJ as destination and 26% ranked it as the least important factor in the motivational process, shown in figure 46. This clearly shows that there should be worked on storytelling as a promotional tool to attract tourists to NJ as it seen by the interview person's statements an important factor.
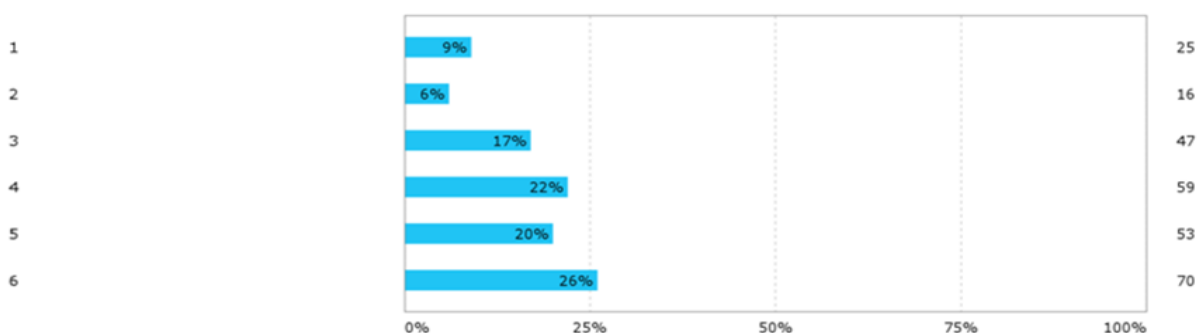

Figure 46. Source: Survey Xact

5 Conclusion

This thesis has confirmed the relevance of and the relationship between the new components in the framework, figure 5, proposed by the author of this thesis, and tourists' travel destination choice discussed throughout the analysis. The author of this thesis acknowledges that the tourists' internal inputs affect the travel destination choice and experiences are individual and perceived differently. Furthermore, depending on the stimuli in the external inputs, the tourists' destination choice process is also influenced, as shown in the analysis.

Addressing **research question 1**, the analysis showed that tourism operators in NJ can utilise social media to start a dialogue where tourists can share and co-create experiences before, during and after the travel with other tourists and locals. Tourists are willing to share their experiences and engage in a dialogue about their experiences across nationalities, which can function as a promotional tool to attract tourists if facilitated. The examples provided in the analysis justify that tourism operators in NJ can facilitate a process of co-creating and sharing experiences on Facebook about their business. The company page on Facebook, as it lacks consumer generated content, can be utilised as a tool to create a separate community where tourists can discuss, share and co-create experiences in tourist, local and tourism operator interaction. If the tourism operators in NJ create a community on their Facebookpage where the tourists can interact, they also facilitate a time efficient E-WOM, which is valuable as the consumer generated content from tourists and locals can work as storytelling to other tourists, which is helpful for tourism operators' promotion in attracting tourists. Tourism operators in NJ need to provide an online environment where tourists can share their stories with each other because people trust their network and other consumer's opinions more than tourism operators. Tourists create value not only for themselves and the tourism operator, but also for other tourists when they share their travel experiences online. This can in turn influence other people's travel motivations passively and benefit potential travellers by providing information. Furthermore, sharing experiences make the tourists relive their trips and can strengthen their commitment to the destination. Regarding Facebook, for an optimal co-creating experience, the dialogue should involve the tourism operator. The main point found was that in order to open for a dialogue which will influence tourists' travel choice, the post has to be a picture taken by the visitor with a small personal story attached about the experience in order to make the post relevant and get others to relate to the experience. By this, others will be influenced to share their comments and consequently act as resource integrators to co-create experiences together.

Instagram can open for sharing and co-create experiences in a dialogue between the tourism operators and a variety of people if the operator reposts tourists' experiences in their channel as shown in the analysis. If

the tourism operators create a hash-tag they can build a community for the visitors who share the same experience. When the tourists post a picture in Instagram with the hash-tag and the tourism operator choses to feature it on their profile value is co-created for all involved in the interaction process. When the tourism operator shares the post, and by the comments and likes it gets, it brings value to the photographer but also to the people who take part in the dialogue about the experience co-creating. By reposting a visitor's picture the tourism operator promotes the business in a natural and trustworthy way and the E-WOM it creates by the tagging of other people, and comments by the tourists, who have visited, also influence the attractiveness of a place and inspire others to go. Found in the analysis, regarding Instagram, in order to open for a dialogue the "bio" should display a hash-tag and when reposting the picture the tourism operator should credit the person who took the picture by tagging the person and writing a proper thank you. Furthermore, featuring pictures from tourists or locals with a short storytelling below can be perceived as authentic and a personal way of promotion. The stories are credible as they come from a DMO and the pictures are credible as they come from tourists or locals which consequently affect the way a destination is communicated to attract potential tourists positively.

A Snapchat channel can be beneficial for tourism operators to affect people's opinions about a place and lead to enhance the viewers' interest by passive information catching. It can be used as a channel to build relations, interaction and new types of experiences and sharing experiences. The "Story" can be used to send out news, ask/answer questions or to repost pictures from visitors allowing all other Snapchat friends to view it and thereby gives the viewers the opportunity to co-create their experiences with others. A strategy on Snapchat can be employed by the tourism operator, by utilising storytelling in sending Snapchats to promote the business. Stories can play an important role in attracting attention to and creating the initial image in the mind of the tourists which can influence their perception argued for in the analysis.

Addressing **research question 1**, the author of this thesis in the investigation found that tourists' awareness of NJ experiences is highly narrow. The tourists mainly use the internet for holiday information finding hence the tourism operators should choose this as an entrance since it forms tourists' perception of NJ. The tourists' general view on NJ is that it is a relaxing destination and has an appealing quietness and pleasant ambiance. The tourists' attitudes towards NJ, found in the analysis, were that NJ does not offer cultural experiences though, experiencing and learning about the local culture was found to have an effect on the trip's value. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the tourists' motivation to travel to NJ is not influenced by specific sites, but specific characteristics in general were found as a factor tourists consider in the destination choice. Consequently, the communication about NJ has been efficient to state the capability of

relaxation in the destination but not the culture and stimulation sights to visit which is relevant to communicate.

The analysis showed several shortcomings of promotion of the possibilities of experiences in NJ both before and during the visit. Particularly when talking about fun and leisure activities, the nightlife, roughness and beauty of the nature, outdoor activities, museums, exhibitions, historical attractions, interesting cities, shopping, gastronomy, theme parks, zoos, aquariums, child friendly experiences and accommodation opportunities in NJ the tourists' knowledge and awareness were very limited. Hence not affecting the tourists' travel choice and moreover, the components were neither found as motivating factors to visit NJ. Although, it was clear in the analysis that the some of the tourists during their visit discovered the activities and engaged in such which affected their satisfaction of NJ in a positive way, while others never became aware of the possibilities. Concluding, the attributes and possibilities, mentioned above, could be communicated more thoroughly to potential tourists online and promoted to create awareness. As when arriving in NJ tourists firstly discovered these and thereby it was not factors in the tourists' choice to travel to NJ which showed a limited awareness and online promotion of this.

Explained in the analysis, when tourists travel on holiday the price of the tickets and how easy it is to travel to the destination are part of the destination choice. However, when choosing to fly to Aalborg convenience means more than money and time to the tourists. NJ is viewed as an expensive destination but is evaluated by the tourists during and after experiencing the destination as returning value for money. Though as final destination choice is driven by constraints and opportunities, it is therefore important to make potential tourists aware of what they get out of spending their time and money in NJ, online as otherwise the prices and lack of awareness about NJ, mentioned above, for some might result in deselecting NJ. In order to impact the destination choice process it is therefore crucial for tourism operators to promote this and make tourists aware of the possibilities mentioned above. Besides this the locals' and the employees' positive and helpful mentality were seen as a very special and unique experience in NJ providing value which is relevant to promote as it is a competitive advantage which could be advertised online and by the awareness it could impact the destination choice for tourists. Furthermore, promoting special events, especially music and sports events online, could be a good approach to attract the attention of several tourists as shown in the analysis.

Consequently, tourism operators can use the social media approaches to attract more tourists by facilitating people's own representations of NJ and create awareness of the relevant offers present in NJ online.

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7 Appendix CD

Interview Guide

Interview Transcripts

Audio Recordings

Survey Design

Survey Data - Survey Xact