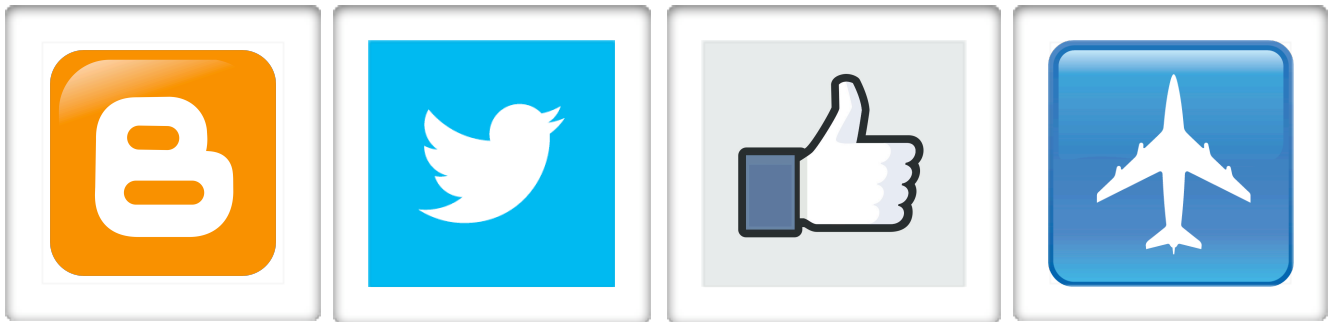# Would you go to the end of the world, because I Tweet you so?

Defining qualities of an effective social media endorser for promoting a tourist destination.

Master´s Thesis
Evgenia Egorova

Abstract

Due to the development of new technologies, a monologue in marketing communication and promotion is now replaced by an on-going dialogue between the customers and the destination and more importantly, between the customers themselves. Modern tourists are becoming media and advertisers as they post their reviews and create electronic word of mouth, available for many more than only the traditional circle of relatives and friends. The more becomes the role of those who are perceived as online opinion leaders and who are endorsing or recommending products and services to the other users of social networks.

This study is aimed at identifying the marketers' perspective on the role and the essential qualities of a good social media influencer in promoting a remote tourist destination. Two thematic networks based on the review of the existing literature and two thematic networks based on the data gained from 13 interviews with the marketers who are working with promotion of Norway are presented. Analysis of these thematic networks shows that, in addition to several qualities already described in previous research, marketers identify new qualities of social media influencers, as well as that their perception of these influencers differs from the one found in the literature. Themes like working with social media influencers and challenges are also discussed. As such the study contributes to a better understanding of the process of engaging social media influencers in destination marketing and promotion.

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Chapter I Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale of the study

The digital revolution made it possible for people to connect, communicate and interact with each on a totally different level. Modern times and modern technologies brought up modern tourists, who are defined as Travellers 2.0, meaning that they are actively using what the so-called Web 2.0 technologies have to offer (Parra-López et al. 2011). They are connected and are using web actively, as well as all the social media that appeared due to the technological development. Videoblogs, microblogs, maps, geo-tagging, travel forums and communities are not only used to get information, but also to post personal recommendations, and share experiences.

In 2006 "Time" magazine named "You" as the person of the year, stressing the importance and the influence that one single person is gaining in the modern world due to the development of the new technologies – the Web 2.0 technologies that allow every person to be a co-creator of the Internet content (Grossman, 2006). Already in 2000, the journalist of the New York Times, Lisa Guersney (2000) summarised this development in the title of her article: "Suddenly, Everybody's An Expert". Social networks are growing in numbers every day, hour and minute; and these numbers are impressive. Social Network Facebook has reached one billion members registered by September the 14th 2012. This is more than the whole population of Europe plus Russia and the Middle East.

The role of the market research, marketers, and advertising companies has been altered by the appearance of the Web 2.0 technologies. Nowadays travel information is created and spread by ordinary travellers alongside with the official information from a destination's marketing department. The traditional marketing paradigm, where promotion-related information about a product (a tourist destination) almost ultimately was created and controlled by a marketing organisation, changed dramatically. Many questions appear as a result of this development, but the most important thing is that

the very way to study the travellers behaviour and destination marketing practices will never be the same (Volo, 2012).

Moreover, the users are going more often to the semi-closed platforms to get information and to share information. As the experts would say "The web is dead. Long live Internet!" Nowadays it is more the question of getting information, than browsing in search for information (Anderson & Wolff, 2010). The fact that a travel blogger has more than 50 million followers suggests that a lot of people are interested in reading what he or she has to say. The role of those who are followed by many and whose advice and expertise are highly appreciated becomes more and more important.

Opinions and recommendations of nearest friends and relatives traditionally played a significant role. We perceive the information communicated by our friends and relatives as more credible, trustworthy and honest, as we know that they are giving us a piece of advice in order to help and not because they are paid to do so as opposed to travel or destination marketers. The impact of this information is considerable, online travel reviews are gaining influence on many aspects of travel. Online information communicated by the means of online social media or social networks is now said to be the most influential factor when choosing a tourism destination (Parra-López et al. 2011, Chung & Buhalis, 2008).

The development of the Internet and the Web 2.0 technologies allowed us to access the opinions and advice in all spheres of our lives including travelling from total strangers: bloggers, travel forum members, etc. (Pan & Crotts 2011; Volo, 2011). The most important change is the appearance of "a new set of influencers, people in one's social graph, representing all of their relationships, including those established in social networks" (Buhler, 2011: p. 1). The arrival of the Web 2.0 technologies made it possible for Social Media Influencer to appear – new class of independent third party endorsers, who can influence and shape opinions and attitudes by the means of the content they create in the social media (Freberg et al. 2011).

Although the number of articles and books on tourism and social media is growing, some of the researches point out that there is a certain shortage of studies that show

how the travellers are using and creating social media (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012). Gretzel (2012) points out "very little is known about who actually take advantage of the opportunities provided by Web 2.0 and in what ways" (Gretzel 2012: p. 167).

In this study I would like to examine the link between destination marketing and endorsement in social media. Further this study attempts to show how social media and in particular some influential users of the social media can contribute to promoting a tourist destination and what are the roles and specific qualities of an influential social media endorser.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The overall aim of this study is twofold: *to identify the qualities of a good endorser in social media as well as his/her role in promotion of a tourist destination.*

In order to achieve the aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To get a better understanding of social media and their use in promoting a tourist destination.
- To gain an understanding of the subject of endorsement and endorsement in social media in order to identify the main characteristics and issues related to the subject.
- To identify the meanings of the experts concerning the characteristics and the issues of the use of social media endorsers in order to provide new and deeper data.
- To identify the qualities that are crucial for social media endorsement to become an effective marketing tool in destination marketing.
- To get a better understanding of he role that a social media endorser plays in promoting a destination

1.3 Research Plan

I have used two different methods to collect information. First of all, a certain amount of literature was reviewed on the topics that are crucial for the theme of this study. The literature review concentrate specifically on the following topics: destination marketing

in the times of social media, consumer behaviour, and endorsement in tourism context and social-media influencers. Secondly, a number of experts were interviewed in order to gain more profound data and new information about the subject of defining the key influencers in social media and engaging them in the process of destination marketing.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews with in total 17 participants were held in the period 23.04 – 07.05.2013. Eleven phone interviews were held with the persons responsible for Social Media and PR activities at the Innovation Norway's foreign offices. Press-coordinators from the Scandinavian Tourist Boards (hereinafter STB) in Japan and China were interviewed by e-mail only. The experts who were chosen for these interviews work actively with different social media in the countries where they are located daily, as well as they participate in the process of choosing the best social media endorsers to promote Norway.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

This chapter presents background and rationale of the study. The chapter gives an introduction why I assume this particular study question is important, as well as list the goals and aims of the research and gives an overview of the research plan.

Chapter two begins with an introduction into marketing in the times of new technologies. The definitions of the web 2.0 technologies and social media and a summary of how the social medias are used in tourism contexts are also given. Finally the chapter presents how the process of destination marketing and promotion is influenced by the increase use of social media. *Chapter three* is dedicated to the topic of endorsement in social media and tourism. The chapter starts with introduction to the principle of endorsement and the concept of celebrity endorsement in destination marketing. Further more the chapter discusses endorsement in Social medias and the concept of Social media influencer/ endorser, as well as characteristics of the endorsers in off-line and online activities. Finally the chapter illustrates the importance of social influencer for marketing a tourist destination and give a summary of all the qualities that an influential social media endorser is likely to have based on the literature review. *Chapter four* presents the type of the research that was being undertaken, as well as the methods that were used to collect primary data. The chapter provides reasons for

choosing these particular methods to solve the research question. Further more the chapter presents limitations to literature sources and primary data. Finally, the chapter presents two thematic networks based on the literature review. Analysis of the primary data is presented in the *chapter fifth*. The chapter presents two thematic networks that are based on the findings from the primary data. Discussion is presented in the *chapter six*. *Chapter seven* provides with the general conclusion and recommendations, as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter II Marketing, Destination and Social Media

"Many tourism businesses seem to forget
that travellers very often will be looking
for other customers´ experiences"
(Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009: p. 563)

2.1 Marketing in the times of new technologies

2.1.1 Traditional marketing VS new marketing

Traditionally the marketing was all about 4 Ps: product, price, place and promotion. All 4 Ps were controlled by the producers or by the other agents hired to do a certain amount of work. This view on marketing strategy formulated by Jerome McCarthy in the sixties worked then, but as technologies, society and communication develop, so does the significance of traditional marketing mix. Day and Montgomery formulated the following four changes of the contemporary marketing environment in 1999:

1. demanding empowered customers,
2. the connected knowledge economy,
3. globalizing markets,
4. adaptive organizations.

(Day and Montgomery in Cooper & Hall, 2008: p. 83)

These changes influenced and altered the traditional marketing paradigm. The digital revolution that brought same brands to different corners of the world, made it possible for so many people to connect and exchange information and compare prices for the same services by one click, this revolution contributed to the dramatic changes in the way the marketing is done nowadays. Some claim that there is only 1 P left - product, as promotion, place and price have basically died (Skibsted Ideation, 2011). This means, that by the use of the modern technologies and by involving empowered customers more and more in the process of marketing, one can reach better results, than by holding on to the 4 Ps. The power of traditional marketers has decreased drastically,

while the power of the technology and connected customers has increased (Thevenot, 2007).

Tourism marketing has also faced changes with the arrival of the Internet as well as the development of information technologies. Nowadays the essential components of contemporary tourism marketing are website marketing and search engine marketing. Many of the Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO) have integrated distribution platforms to their websites to facilitate distribution for all providers of the destination (Gretzel& Fesenmaier, 2009). Yet, there are still challenges when it comes to integrating of the new technologies, implementing new marketing approaches, innovation in Web marketing (Ibid).

The bigger challenge of today's marketing of tourism is development of the Web 2.0 technologies, which give voice to the consumers and enable them to generate their own content and distribute by the means of the social networks. The result of this development is that the most expensive marketing campaigns might "be undermined by the consumer reviews and blogs" (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009: p. 562). Contemporary tourists, post-tourists are "demanding, empowered and knowledgeable travellers" (Cooper & Hall, 2008: p.83).

The empowered customers who have access to more information than ever and who can connect with the other by the use of the digital media signify that the times of the social-media marketing have arrived. According to Birch (2011) the marketing paradigm has shifted from the 4 Ps paradigm via 21st century marketing to the Social media paradigm.

Table 1. Marketing Paradigm Shift (Birch)

Classic Marketing	21st Century Marketing	Social Media Marketing
Product	Experience	Relevance
Price	Exchange	Revenue
Place	Everyplace	Reach
Promotion	Evangelism	Reputation

Source: Adapted from Shao et al. (2011: p. 90).

The research question of this dissertation is concentrating on the new ways to promote a tourist destination, where modern technologies created possibilities for consumers to generate and distribute travel content online and hence motivate the others to visit a tourist destination. This is why I would like to concentrate on the changes that have happened particularly in the sphere of promotion.

In the traditional marketing communication paradigm it was all up to destinations and their agents (advertising agency, marketing research and public relations firm) to decide what kind of information about a destination should be presented in advertisement, media and later on – on-line. In the 21st century it is all about consumer to consumer - what the tourists are conveying. In the table the term "Evangelism" is used, underlining the fact that consumers are becoming company's or destination's disciples: they are advertising by "liking" company's page on Facebook and sharing your news and market message and product information with their friends. In the times of social media consumers ask about a destination from their friends on the social networks before even consulting official webpage of a destination. They are testing company's reputation by what the others belonging to their social media network have to say about it. Company's reputation becomes company's best promotion – and the more positive reviews there are, the better promotion a company or a destination can get.

A marketing strategy that is going to be based on this new paradigm should not only engage the customers, but also track the results of all the action taken in social media world to see the results of it as well as monitoring the social media in order to get the proper picture of the company's reputation (Birch in Shao et al. 2011). More importantly, the old rules of marketing cannot be blindly applied to the new social media and the new Web 2.0 communication paradigm. The tourist 2.0 is a different type of tourist and marketers have to confront the changing communication paradigm and "listen to the customers, accept their empowerment, understand their real stories, share the communication authority with them" (Volo 2011: p. 159). The marketing message has to be delivered in a new and more innovative and interesting way (Volo, 2011).

2.1.2 Empowered customers

When TIME magazine named "You" as the person of the year 2006, the signal was clear: individuals, especially those belonging to actual generation, are more empowered then ever. Cooper and Hall (2008) touch upon the characteristics of the consumer behaviour of generation Y, generation of those born from 1980 to 1994. Logically this generation represents the future of tourism consumption. They define generation Y, as the *"connexivity kids",* of the *"dot-com generation".* Consumers who belong to this generation are more familiar with new technologies, they are concerned to be connected and understand the importance and the meaning of networks in their lives. The best way to be a successful destination/tourist product in the times of the generation Y is to "be connected " with them, to let them co-create tourist products and experiences. "It is less important to build products *for* them, but to build products *with* them in the classic model of co-creation" (Cooper & Hall, 2008: p. 85). Further more, it is important to let them share their experiences with each other. This generation is strongly influenced by peers and friends. Therefore, the impact of both viral marketing and word-of-mouth will be considerably higher.

The customer participation is crucial when speaking about all functional areas of social media marketing or Web 2.0 marketing. Successful marketing in social media is more about return on engagement than about return on investment (Frick in Shao et all. 2011). The development of the Web 2.0 contributes to the process of empowerment of the customers, as now they have tools to tell about a product, a destination, a service provider not only to their close family, but to million of others, as Sigala (2009) puts it Web 2.0 is considered a "tool of mass collaboration".

The new consumers are connected and they are getting information in different ways and to a greater extent than before - from the other consumers. The new consumers are hyper-informed and are globally social. Consumers around the world are using social media to learn about other consumers' experiences, find more information about brands, products and services, and to find deals and purchase incentives. The participants in the Global Social Media Survey 2012 held by Nielsen and NN Incite (2012) were asked about how likely they were to make a purchase based on social

media websites or online product reviews. The answers showed, that "travel/leisure" category of products was placed in top 3 categories of the products that are likely to be bought based on social media website review alongside with "entertainment" and "home electronics".

2.1.3 From Word-of-Mouth to electronic Word-of-Mouth

The research question of this dissertation is about someone's words can be persuasive enough to motivate a future visit to a destination, like Norway. Based on the fact that communication paradigm had undergone some changes, I can assume that the traditional word-of-mouth has also been changed in the light of the new connected economy.

Word-of-mouth (hereinafter WOM) is defined as: *"communication between consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence"* (Litvin et al. 2008: p. 459). The development of society, appearance of the new technologies and marketing mechanism have changed the way the marketing activities are performed. The same is true about word-of-mouth. Nowadays the information about any brand, company or country is easy available on the Internet. It includes the official webpage alongside with an article from online encyclopaedia Wikepedia. Moreover, this information, created by the users, will almost certainly come among the top five search results (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The power of the word-of-mouth has grown even stronger due to its digitalization and it is time to speak about online or electronic word of mouth (hereinafter eWOM): *"any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customer about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet"* (Hennig -Thurau et al., 2004)

Even though the principal is still the same: to make a statement about a products/ service/company/provider and share it with others, the digitalisation of the WOM has also brought some significant differences. Dellarocas (2003) described four main differences between the traditional and the eWOM. First, the scale and the dynamics of eWOM are dramatically larger, than scale of a traditional WOM. Buhler (2011) uses

expression "word of mouth on steroids" to describe the extent of reach that WOM can now get, especially due to the development of the social Web. Almost everybody can now have access to what the others are "saying" (read "posting on-line") about products and services. This information can be spread further with no effort at all: visible to thousands after one click. eWOM is to be found on different online channels: consumer review websites, emails, blogs, forums and virtual consumer communities, as well as social media and social networks. The traditional WOM was mainly available to a certain group, a circle of people; it was a part of a more private discussion. While eWOM is out there available for the greater public. What is even more important is that all e-WOM is stored for future references and can be used over and over again. Second, there is a possibility to format and monitor communication. In the times of traditional WOM one couldn't possibly know everything what was said about a product/a destination, nor was it easy to encourage positive WOM. Now, when both the marketers and the customers are connected and are both online: "you stop speaking to them and start talking with them" (Goodman, 2012). Third, anonymity of those who spread the word can cause problems, as their messages can be misleading on purpose. Fourth, as any written word, eWOM can be taken out of their context and misinterpreted

In addition to this, Andreassen and Streukens (2009) pointed out that consumers are more open to eWOM, as they are actively searching for it, meaning that they are motivated to be informed. This active search also implies that the consumers will be exposed to the others reviews and opinions to a greater extent, as they are looking for the reviews on the resources that contain lots of information from the others.

The origin of the WOM

Originators of the WOM are opinion leaders. They are the key players in this process - they are individuals that are active in interpreting the meaning of information that they get from the mass media or advertisement to others. They are more self-confident than the others and they are listened to and trusted by the opinion seekers and can come form the same social class or higher, can be close friends/family or under certain circumstances – just acquaintances (Fill, 1999; Litvin et al. 2008). The same is true about eWOM with one big difference – though originated by people or producers, it gets

a totally new scale, spreading speed, as well as virtual influence, influence that is not under control the producers or the readers: eWOM "actually creates a new type of reality by influencing the readers during their online information search" (Litvin et al. 2008: p. 462).

Social Media and eWOM

Before, WOM originated from the opinion leaders. Later, the eWOM was articulated with the help of the online opinion-platforms. But none of the "old school" opinion leaders, not even those who frequented web-platforms could dream about reaching the same community as any user of the popular social media can potentially reach nowadays. Information nowadays is spreading fast not because it is available electronically, but because it is spread in no time thanks to the social media (see Nielsen report on State of Social Media 2012). Social media and social networks is *"an ideal tool for eWOM, as consumers freely create and disseminate brand-related information in their established social networks composed of friends, classmates and other acquaintances"* (Chu & Kim, 2011: p. 49).

2.1.4 Web 2.0 and social media – an introduction

It is clear that new, empowered consumers couldn't be longer satisfied with only receiving and reading official information from the companies, destinations, providers and suppliers on the Internet. The empowerment of the customers continued to the World Wide Web (WWW) and the old Web 1.0 version was replaced by the Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 is a newer version of the World Wide Web – the web that now allows users to generate content. It is a platform for development of the social media, as its principles make it possible for online users to add content by the means of different tools and social networks (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). In other words, this new version of the WWW made it possible for its entire user to become co-creators of the content by providing the possibilities and tools to do so. The development of the social media wouldn't be possible without the platform of Web 2.0.

"Web 2.0 is a term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: p. 60-61).

Although the term social media is not new for the majority of business executives today, there is still little understanding of what "social media" are and what challenges and opportunities they create (Ibid). Hence I find it necessary to have a closer look at the definition of the social media as well as to have an introduction of the those social media that are often referred to in tourism and travel research. Social Media as defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010):

"Social Media - a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange fo the User-Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein: p. 61).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) describe social media in the following manner, giving more details on what kind of forums can be included under the name "social media":

"Social-media encompasses a wide range of online word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion board and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service rating web-sites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, or photographs), and social networking websites" (2009: p. 358)

It is stated in a report by "Global Futures and Foresight" on Social Networks (Smith 2010) that by 2020 there will be up to five billion people around the world online and most will connect via social networks. Already by May 2010 in UK only social networks attracted more on-line traffic than search engines. In 2010 about two thirds Britons were using social networks more often that face-to-face communication with their relatives and friends. Social Media report 2012 by Nielsen and NN Incite states that more people in the USA continue to spend more time on social networking using 20% of

their PC-time and up to 30% on the mobile time on different social network sites. The same report indicates that unique Social Networks audience in the U.S. has grown larger in 2012 and is estimated to 171.8 million people against 163.6 million in 2011 (Nielsen & NN Incite 2012). These numbers illustrate the importance the social media are gaining a well as the potential they represent for promotion and information sharing.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) come with six types/forms of the social media: blogs, social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter), virtual social worlds (Second Life), collaborative projects (Wikepedia), content communities (You Tube, Vimeo) and virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft). In this dissertation I would like to present only some social media and social media networks that are used in travel and tourism. The choice is based on the social media popularity and their relevance to the study question.

Facebook

This social networking site was founded in 2004 and was opened to the general public in 2006. Every user on Facebook (FB) has his/her own profile with possibilities to write posts, upload photos, videos and text files, create groups of friends and events, as well as to comment the posts, photos, videos of the others by writing comments or by simply pushing "I like" button. These likes and comments become visible to the other FB friends (unless the user makes them invisible in the privacy settings). Companies, hotels, tourist destinations, celebrities, political figures have an opportunity to create "a page" on FB with the possibilities to present their information, news, photos and videos to the users who can "sign-up" for these news updates by simply "liking" a particular page. As per December 2012 FB had over 1 billion active users registered with approximately 82% of monthly active users outside the U.S. and Canada. It is estimated that on average 618 million people use FB every day and about 680 million do it every month. The service is available in 70 different languages[1]. It is however important to mention that the popularity of FB varies from country to country. While it is completely banned in mainland China, Facebook "look-alikes" are more popular in other countries, for example social netwotk "Vkontakte" that is largely used in Russia and Ukraine. "Vkontakte" used the same principles and even has the same interface as one of the

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[1] http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts

previous versions of FB and claims to have over 200 million users, where over 47 million are active[2].

Twitter

Launched in 2006 Twitter is today ranked as the fastest growing social platform in the world (Global WebIndex 2013). Twitter is a microblog where an update - a Tweet is send by users to their network of followers has to be 140 signs. Every user who has a Twitter account has a name that is registered in the following way: @name. All the Tweets are available for the other users to see and one can make them easier to find by adding a hashtag sign # to them. These hashtags work as search words and all the Tweets with the same hashtag will be displayed in one list. This can also help to identify the hashtags that are used the most on a particular day, hashtag of the year or a most used hashtag in a particular country. Tweets can be shared (retweeted) by other users of Twitter, send as SMS-messages to mobile phones and devices or they can be shared to other social media networks, like blogs and Facebook, where they can be spread further to other users without a Twitter account.

Today Twitter is available in 20 languages, has about 288 million monthly active users and is said to be used by 21% of the global Internet population (Global WebIndex 2013). This literally means that every 5th Internet user has a Twitter account. The number of Tweets per day can reach up to 400 million[3]. The popularity of this particular service is also proven by the fact that American Dialectic Society designated two words, used in close connection with this network, as "word of the year". In 2009 the word "tweet" was selected and in 2012 – the word "hashtag". The latter is also related to the increasing popularity of other social media – Instagram, that will be presented later in this chapter.

A great amount of Tweets are personal and depicts moments/feelings of one's everyday life. However, as any social media Twitter is used to talk about experiences, including discussing, recommending or complaining about services, products and brands. In fact, a study carried out by Jansen and his colleagues (Jansen et al. 2009) showed that up to

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[2] http://www.liveinternet.ru/stat/vkontakte.ru/
[3] www.twitter.com

1/5 of what is tweeted is about brands or products and taking into consideration the amount of Tweets every day and the number of potential users that are exposed to these Tweets we can easily estimate the power of a single Tweet.

YouTube - a content community for video uploading

YouTube is a video sharing website, founded in 2005. In order to upload a video one has to have a registered account on YouTube – also know as YouTube channel. Videos are mainly uploaded by individuals, but also by companies that choose to create their channels for advertisement, video-blogging, promotion. Registered users can subscribe to the channels that they like and hence they get all the new videos uploaded on their home page. They also have a possibility to comment the videos, to "like" or "dislike" the videos, as well as to arrange their videos in different playlists and mark their favourite videos. Everybody (even without a registered account) can share the reviewed video with friends by e-mail or on social networks or directly on one's blog.

Today the web-site has over 1 billion unique users each month, is available in 61 language and has its representative offices in 53 countries. The amount of videos that are available for users is gargantuan and is constantly changing - the official statistics say that every minute over 72 hours of video is being uploaded to YouTube and that each month over 4 billion hours of video are watched on YouTube. In 2011 the videos were watched over 1 trillion times, meaning about 140 views for every person on Earth[4]. The fact that YouTube´s Twitter account is among the top 10 most followed accounts on Twitter again proves its popularity among the users of the social media.

Instagram is a photo sharing and social networking service launched in 2010. The very idea of its creators was to connect the world though photos. Users can register their account on-line at www.instagram.com. It is however, mostly used on mobile devices like mobile phones and tablets with inbuilt cameras. Today the service has 100 million active users, there are 8 500 likes per seconds and about 40 000 pictures are uploaded every day (Weissman, 2013). All the users who take pictures and want them to be found under certain categories can use a hashtag #, for example under #norway they can post

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[4] http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/index.html

all the pictures that are related to Norway. The majority uses several hashtags. Users can share their pictures by mail, post it on social media like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or to their blog at Tumblr. They can also give "likes" to the pictures or albums, as well as follow the other users they like. Instagram attracts a lot of users because it combines the features of several social media in one, is free from advertisement and allows its user to create great pictures by providing a number of different filters. These filters, as well as the distinctive square shape of the photos with 16:9 aspect ratio, have a certain retro charm and make even ordinary pictures to look special. A columnist from "The Guardian", Daisy Buchanan, summarises it very precisely: "Facebook is for real life, but Instagram is a compelling combination of some strangers' realities, and the fantasies of others" (Buchanan, 2013).

Although free from adverts, Instagram is used widely by brands to present pictures of their product as well as to engage users in posting pictures with particular hash tags to create even a greater number of brand pictures.

Blogs.

The total number of blogs (microblogs are not counted here) that was tracked down by NM Incite, a Nielsen/McKinsey company by the end of 2011 was over 181 million and the increase from 2006 with 36 million is enormous. According to the report "State of Blogosphere 2011" published on-line on Technocrati.com (2011), "Travel" is among the top 30 themes (tags) that are used by the bloggers all over the world in 2011. Volo (2012) comes with the following definition of blogs: *"Blogs, short for weblogs, are free, public, web-based entries in reverse chronological order presented in a diary-style format."* (Volo, 2012: p. 151).
The most common platforms for blogs (where one can register a blog free of charge) include the following: WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr and LiveJournal. These platforms may vary when it comes to the set of themes for editing blogs, possibilities to synchronize blog with other social media (like Facebook or Twitter), possibilities for posting content on-line (uploading audio and video files). Other differences include: services that are included in the free of charge package, as well possibilities to connect with other bloggers using the same or different platforms. However, corporate blogs are

often created as a part of the corporate website and those bloggers who gain more attention prefer to buy and register their own domain (address on the Internet) on-line.

A report on Digital Influence 2013 carried out by Technorati (2013) showed that while the largest portion of brands' digital spend goes to such social networks as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, blogs and on-line influencers are ranked high by consumers when it goes to trust, popularity and influence. In fact, blogs are on the 3rd place when it goes to the website that consumers consult before taking a purchase decision (overrun only by the brand and retail sites). Blogs are also included in the top five "most trustworthy" sources that are available on the Internet and have a stronger influence on both shaping opinion (here they beat Twitter), as well as on purchase decision (blogs are considered having a stronger affection than Facebook in these matters). The same report introduces an interesting category: On-line Influencers (or communities of those) - those who are said to be considered as experts and though they use different tools to spread their word and opinion to the other users, the large majority - 86% of influencer BLOG and up to 18% of the content of their blogs are inspired by the other bloggers whom they trust. In other words, influential bloggers spread their word and the word of their blogger friends, hence maximising the effect.

Needless to say, that the majority of bloggers, being interested with sharing their content with as many other social media users as possible, have accounts on the biggest and the most popular social media. These accounts are used to inform about new articles that are published, to post photos and to have a more vivid interaction with the reading audience. From a marketing point of view it is crucial for promotion to identify blog sites that have the greater marketing influence. This can help to get a wider promotion at lower costs, as well as to increase visibility of a brand (Li et al. 2011).

Social media and the way they are interconnected can be compared to an ecosystem – a *"social media ecosystem"* – a huge community where all participants are connected and interacting like one system (Hanna et al. 2011). Truly, the content posted on one social media can be shared to another. Some social media, like Instagram, and YouTube make the process of sharing as easy as one click. Once the content is out on one social media, it can be easily spread on all of them, hence increasing the target audience.

2.2 Destination Marketing and Promotion in the times of the new technologies

2.2.1 eWOM and Social Media in Tourism

The arrival of the Internet as well as the development of information technologies have led to a certain change in the tourism marketing. New technologies as Web 2.0 allowed people to generate content and share their knowledge with other users on-line. The very core of tourism – information is now generated and shared not only by those who are working in the industry, but by the consumers. Moreover, these technologies empower common people to get engaged with the hotels, tourists companies, and destinations in a totally different way. Customers are writing reviews and online opinions about a destination or about the experiences it has to offer. It is no wonder that this content, user-generated content, is likely to get the same AIDA effect (attention, interest, desire and action) on travellers as the traditional marketing that the destinations are trying to achieve in their marketing campaigns. Due to the extent use of the Web 2.0 technologies, travellers quickly become co-creators of the content for destinations and tourist companies, they are becoming co-marketers and co-distributors (Sigala 2011, 2012). Modern travellers are defined as Travellers 2.0 (Parra-López et al. 2011), because of the extent to which the modern traveller not only use the web to get the desired information, but also to buy the tourist products and to share their own experiences, photos, films, reviews.

eWOM and Tourism

There is no doubt that word-of-mouth and interpersonal influence are important sources of information when making a purchase decision, as well as for changing the prior-made decisions after viewing the reviews posted by the other travellers on-line (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). On-line reviews and comments are based on the other travellers´ experiences and as a result are perceived as highly trustable (Pan & Crotts, 2012). In other words, in the tourism and hospitality industry the importance of eWOM and social media is increasing even more, as many of the products offered are intangible and hence cannot be evaluated prior to consumption (Litvin et al. 2008).

"eWOM will inevitably change the structure of travel information, the accessibility of travel information, and subsequently travellers' knowledge and perception of various travel products" (Litvin et al. 2008: p. 462).

Reviews that are written by other consumers are perceived as more credible and trustworthy than information provided by marketers (Smith et al., 2005). These reviews as well as other forms of consumer feedbacks are personal stories and personal stories and experiences are perceived as more persuasive (Woodside 2008 in Volo 2011). Yoo and Gretzel (2012) point that as the nature of tourism is experiential, the information coming from the other travellers gain more influence and importance when speaking about decision-making process. In other words, one can suggest that people are choosing new destinations not only because of the good marketing of this or that National board, but because "the other users told them so".

The most important change that the appearance of the social and eWOM has led to is the appearance of " *a new set of influencers, people in one's social graph, representing all of their relationships, including those established in social networks*" (Buhler, 2011: p.1). Very often these influencers are to be found among prominent bloggers, whose blogs are followed, liked, cited and shared by thousands and thousands of other users.

Blogs and Tourism

Among all the social media that are used in tourism, travel blogs have gathered the biggest attention from the researches (Yoo & Gretzel 2011). Blogs in travel and tourism can be described as digital form of travel journals that were popular in the past (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). They gather and present peoples' experiences, but at the same time they are interactive by their nature – when a post appears on-line it becomes visible for millions of users. The other users also have a possibility to leave comments, quote it and share it further. Even when the privacy settings are strict – when posted on-line you words can be quoted, copied and spread further, once again, involving others into discussion. Blogs are presenting stories, personal experiences – they have an easy to consume content that is so important in travel and tourism (Volo, 2011). Blogs are powerful source of " electronic word of mouth" or as some researches put it: *"word of*

mouse" – when all you need to spread the message from the blog you like is to click on the "share" button with you mouse (Gleb & Sundaram in Volo 2011).

Pan and his colleagues (Pan et al. 2007) conducted a qualitative study of travel blogs and their implications for destination marketing. They found out that travel blogs can provide both consumers and marketers with "rich, authentic and unsolicited customer feedback". A great share of this information cannot be easily collected from the traditional visitors' surveys and information posted on blogs by visitors cover each and every single aspect of a trip (Ibid). Not a single marketing campaign can possible provide with the same amount of information, not to mention the expenses and recourses such campaign would demand from marketers.

2.2.2. Travel information search in the times of new technologies

When people are looking for inspiration for our future trips or when they are making plans for holidays, they ask first of all are family members and friends, as well as those who are sharing same interests (members of the same club/community etc). In other words, they will look for information and advice in their social networks. Nowadays social networks are digital and this has changed the way people communicate and interact with each other. To put it simple – the opinion of those who are trust is often available at one click. Sometimes one doesn't have to ask – it is already there to be found. At the same time –the circle of those whose opinion is trusted is getting bigger – social networks are in the digital world. Further more, due to the expansion of the social networking sites or online social networks into travel and tourism, people can not only get reviews from the networks that they belong to, but also connect with a destination on a social network and check other travellers' opinions about it.

Studies by the Travel Industry Associations of America (TIA) indicate that over half (52%) of American travellers use the Internet to search for travel information and/or make reservations (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). A study of Yoo and Gretzel (2012) showed that about half of 1.682 respondents used contents/media created by other travellers. Further the study showed that comments on blogs, videos and photos were used by a larger number of respondents in 2010 than in 2008, meaning that the degree of penetration of the social media content into the travel information has increased.

Nusair et al. (2011) conducted a study in order to find out which online social networks are used most for travel purposes. They found out that Facebook was the most used social networking website in travel with over 88% reporting usage of it. The second place with 44% respondents went to YouTube – that was not mentioned earlier among the leading on-line social network. Myspace was reported to be used by 37% of respondents, while Twitter by 36%. Eighteen percent of respondents were looking for destination information and again, Facebook was the main choice for many users.

Content created by the other users of the social media (stories, videos, reviews, articles, comments) is mostly likely to appear first when one conducts a search for on-line using a search engine (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). This means that all the users, looking for travel information on-line (the first information source for many travellers) are exposed to a very large amount of social media content. A research carried out by PhoCusWright in 2011 showed that up to two thirds of the trendsetter travellers do not have any specific destinations in mind when they conduct a search on the Internet (Rheem, 2012). The search and buying patters of these trendsetters are likely to be copied and followed by the majority in the coming years. This development is quite logical, as one of the biggest challenges for the travellers nowadays is how to cope with this amount of information and find what is best for them. This is why many turn to the experts on-line, may it be a personal site of a traveller or his/her blogg/micro-blogg. They search for the information on the platforms that they frequent and at the crossroads of the social networks.

When it goes to the conversion rate of this search, several scholars suggested that there is a positive correlation between the spreading of Web 2.0 technologies and the booking behaviour (Pan et al. 2007; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). A study on trust in e-reviews in agro-tourism showed that the impact of e-reviews on consumption decision (especially when booking accommodation) was particular high (Sidali et al. 2012).

These examples illustrate the importance and the influence of Social media and online reviews not only on the process of information search, but also on business performance. What is important to mention here is that the less familiar the service provider is, the bigger is the search for information and opinions from others

(Chartterjee 2001 in Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2009). A destination like Norway cannot be named among the most known, nor among the most visited – hence the importance of WOM, eWOM and information available on the Internet is even higher.

2.2.3 Destination, Image formation and destination choice

Globalization led to the change in how people travel and what they want expect from travelling. Obviously there are more places now available for visiting, with guides speaking in different languages and hotels responding to the standards that tourists are used to. At the same time, the more global travelling has become, the stronger is the need to be individual, to have a unique product, to make a unique package. More people choose to discover destinations previously not known, or hard to reach. This means even more competition for destinations and even a greater need to differentiate from the others in order establish good, persuading, emotional connections with customers followed by an actual visit (Baker & Cameron, 2007).

At the same time, the budgets that destinations have leave much to be desired compared to global brands and products. This brings up another need that destinations have to face today: the need for more innovative marketing communication that can help them to reach out to the customers as well as to become a real WOM, or more importantly eWOM. Destinations that create a buzz and whose marketing campaigns are going viral in the social media and on-line have a greater chance to be remembered. This is a precious quality in the times when a potential customer is exposed to that much information.

Tourist destinations nowadays are seen as perceptual concepts, meaning that they can be interpreted subjectively by consumers (Buhalis, 2000). This means that destinations are not only what they have of infrastructure and activities, but what is it filmed/ taken picture of /said /written /posted /twitted/blogged about them and how this information is perceived by potential visitors. At the same time, *"destinations cannot be "sampled" by potential visitors in the way that cereals can be tried in small quantities, or a car be take for a test drive"* (Laws 1995: p. 57). This again leaves us with the challenge, when a potential tourist can easily take a destination choice decision based on the

reports or experiences of his friends, relatives or other member of his/her social network. Very often it is easier to find this kind of information in social media, than the official one.

Individual users very quickly adopt the use of social media, as they can see the benefits of the use much quicker than an organization. In this respect, the users are ahead of the products. The tourists are connected to each other quicker than a destination is connected to them. A research done by Stankov, Lazic and Dradicevic in 2009 showed that only half part of the National Tourist organizations in Europe were officially present on the FB, the number of those who were present and had a group on FB was also quite low. Already by that time FB was the most visited webpage in the world. This fact shows once again, that in the times of social media destinations have to be as quick or better than the users. Nowadays it is no longer a suggestion, but more an imperative: *"tourism companies and destinations must now integrate blogs and other social media into their communication strategy if they want to remain relevant to the emerging tourist mindset"* (Volo, 2011: p.155).

A report by "Global Futures and Foresight" (Smith 2010) suggests that already now social media networkers are forming a new group of stakeholders in firms and companies. This is related to tourism as to any business. They are now being lifted to this level because of the power that social media have obtained and will be gaining over time. People trust other customers and what they say, blog or tweet more and more often. The modern tourists are no longer passive recipients of the destinations' images – they want and they can engage with the destination (Hamill et al. 2012).

A complex of different factors, or "agents" influences destination's image formation, as well as a destination's choice, where the traditional word of mouth is "an organic agent consisting of any form of solicited or unsolicited nonpaid communication between travel decision makers" (Tham et al., 2013: p. 146). In the research on image formation of an iconic Australian destination Hanlan and Kelly (2005) found out that both word of mouth and information from independent sources were the key media, which the respondents used in forming the image of an Australian destination. It is however important to mention, that as the research was carried out in 2004, at the time when the

majority of the social media used today were not available and hence didn't play that important role in the information search and didn't impose any influence. Also, one has to admit, that the very process of travel information search was different at the time of the research. Though travel blogs were not mentioned as an important information source, the research showed that WOM coming from the trendsetters or opinion leaders, like experienced travellers or trusted travel guides, like Lonely Planet, was of a great influence. Quite a number of the travel journalists and travel guides are now largely present of social media, have their own blogs and accounts. This will definitely add some new aspects to this problem. Some of the tourist bloggers have more than 50 million subscribers/followers – this is an enormous audience in the terms of reach. When the word-of-mouth goes to social media and becomes an electronic word-of-mouth, its impact and audience increases. As it states from the results of the research, in 2008 only 57.2% were influenced by the SM when taking a decision "where to go", while in 2010 the number increased to 68.8%. (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012).

2.3 Conclusions

This chapter presented how marketing and promotion paradigm had changed with the arrival of the new technologies, like the platform of Web 2.0 and new Internet applications, like social media. A monologue in marketing communication and promotion, when the tourists were only passive receivers of official destination information is now replaced by an on-going dialogue between the customers and the destination and more importantly, between the customers themselves. New technologies changed the way people connect and communicate, as well as how they search and share travel information. Modern tourists are becoming media and advertisers as they post their reviews and create electronic word of mouth, available for many more than only the traditional circle of relatives and friends. The phenomenon of social media is now *"the de facto modus operandi for consumers who are disseminating information on products and services"* (Mangold & Faulds, 2009: p.358).

The chapter presented an overview of the social media that are highly used by the modern tourists. As it is clear from this presentation, the number of the users of social media, as well as of the volume of the content (posts, photos, videos, discussion forums,

comments) is enormous. The traditional word-of-mouth had been replaced by an electronic word-of-mouth.

The centre of discussion around WOM and promotion is not about how to create a positive word-of-mouth or whether word-of-mouth will lead to an increase in sales. The discussion now is more about how to use word-of-mouth as a part of marketing campaign in order to both save resources and cost, as well as to create more business. At the same way a company would hire a marketing team, the powerful and influential nodes in social networks are now being chosen to be a part of the word-of-mouth marketing (Li et al. 2011).

As the amount of information increase, the users are going more and more to the semi-closed platforms. In other words, customers are choosing whom to follow and what information to get. The more become the role of those who are followed by many and whose advice and expertise are highly appreciated. These experts can shape image, bring more customers or ruin the most expensive marketing campaign.

Chapter III Endorsement in Social Media

"Marketers should try to identify "social influencers" in SNSs
/social networking sites/,
encourage users of SNSs to spread positive eWOM
regarding selected brands and discourage them from sharing
negative information with their personal networks"
(Chu & Kim, 2011: p.67)

3.1 Endorsement - the principle, how it works and why using it

The previous chapter presented changes that promotion in travel and tourism industries had undergone with the appearance of the new technologies. A communication paradigm shift brought the concept of electronic word-of-mouth, as well as the appearance of influencers, opinion leaders who are sharing their ideas and endorsing products and services in the online world and social media. In this chapter I will look into the mechanism of endorsement in offline and online world, as well as I will touch upon the dimension of trust. Finally, this chapter will present an overview of the qualities that a potential endorser or social media influencer is likely to have to be persuasive enough based on the literature review.

Merriam Webster Online dictionary[5] gives us the following definition of the verb
"to endorse": to approve openly, especially: to express support or approval of publicly and definitely; to recommend (as a product or service) usually for financial compensation".

In other words, endorsement is the process when one decides to express his/her opinion about a product, service, or like in our case, a destination. Though often associated with an activity that is paid for, endorsement can be done "for free" – every time when one says: *That country was great, I am definitively coming back!"* or when tourists post a picture on a Facebook or other social network site with a comment *"Husky trip is best in Northern Norway",* they endorse this country or this activity to their followers, friends and family members. Moreover, on the online review website Trip

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[5] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/endorsing

Advisor many of the reviewers are writing it directly: *"I endorse this hotel to all my friends"* or *"I endorse all the previous positive reviews about this place"*. Endorsers play an important part in attracting attention of potential customers, as they can *"serve as an information cue to consumers, indication whether or not product information is worth one's attention"* (Mittelstaedt et al. 2012: p. 56). This is especially important in the modern world overloaded with information from different sources.

Ben Starly (2010), CEO of Meteor Solutions says that: *"on average, approximately 1% of a site's audience generates 20% of all its traffic through sharing of the brand's content or site links with others".* Further he states that: *"these very important Internet users can directly influence 30% or more of overall end actions on brand websites be it recommending the brand's site, products or promotion to friends."* The important users of the Internet can contribute to any marketing activity in a positive or negative way. This is why knowing the influential bloggers of your destination is as important as knowing you marketing director. The main question for a great number of businesses, may it be companies, brands or tourist destinations would be "how to identify and engage this 1%?". More importantly, one more question should be asked: what qualities are making this 1% so influential, believable and trustworthy. The marketers often ask the same question when they are looking for the right endorsement for their products or campaigns. Very often, a celebrity is chosen for this task.

3.1.1 Endorsement and celebrity endorsement

Bringing in the concept of celebrity endorser in this discussion is important for me for the following reason: the very nature of endorsement of a tourist destination when a single person is considered to be persuasive enough to motivate a purchase or a visit.

An experiment conducted by R. Petty, J. Cacioppo and D. Schumann (Petty et al.1983) showed that those consumers who do not have enough information about the product or do not need it (low involvement) would remember more about the product if a celebrity endorses the product. More of it, people tend to be more positive towards a particular brand when their preferred celebrities are endorsing it, in case they are only interested in the product category (Petty et al.,1983: p. 142). Follow the logic of the Petty et al.'s experiment (1983), I can suggest that this is applicable in case of a destination. Normally

people do not have enough information about a destination they never visited before, as well as a long planning process is required before taking the decision to go there. The use of celebrity endorser can help in promoting a status-products and products with high social and psychological risk (Van der Veen, 2008).

The phenomenon of celebrity endorsement in a tourist destination context was studied in particular by van der Veen (2008) and van der Veen & Song (2010). In his analysis of the implementation of celebrity endorsement in destination marketing, van der Veen (2008) states that the choice of an annual holiday or a destination involves high financial and psychological risk and the use of a celebrity endorser *"could make an appropriate match and create a more favourable evaluation of the product advertisement than a non-endorsed product advertisement"* (van der Veen 2008: p. 219).

Van der Veen and Song (2010) conducted a study on perceived image and advertising effectiveness of celebrity endorser in tourism context. They used a three dimensions model developed by Ohanian where the three most important dimensions of source credibility are: *perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of the source*. Van der Veen and Song (2010) included three attitudinal factors in this framework: *attitude toward an advertisement, attitude toward the destination and intention to visit.* It turned out that all the components except *trustworthiness* played an important role when measuring effectiveness of celebrity endorser in advertisement of a tourist destination.

The discussion about the use of the celebrities is not about just exposing a celebrity to obtain attention, but to a greater extent about the match-up between the product and the endorser. As Misra and Beatty put it: *"the match-up between the spokesperson and the brand is an important dimension, and it should lead to better memorability and a possible transfer of affect from the spokesperson to the brand"* (1990: p.161). The mentioned match-up, also named *congruence with the brand* *"implies that the highly relevant characteristics of the spokesperson are consistent with the highly relevant attributes of the brand"* (Ibid). In other words, to obtain a better recall and effect of the advertisement and stimulate the intent to buy it is better to invite a relevant celebrity whose image matches the brand image, than to invite a more popular, but less congruent celebrity.

The match-up conception of endorsement was supported by a study conducted by Mittelstaedt and his colleagues in 1994, when they found out that three athletes were perceived as a match-up with three different products. The study showed that the effectiveness of endorsement depend of the unique relationships between products and endorsers – the match-up will only occur when the combination endorser – product is perceived as right (Mittelstaedt et al. 2000).

Another important issue to address here is *trustworthiness* – the major source of credibility when an endorser is perceived as honest and believable. Van der Veen & Song (2010) found out that paid celebrities were not perceived as trustworthy in their advertisement of a tourist destination and hence this dimension didn't have an impact on visit intention. A study done by Pornpitakpan (2003) showed that all three credibility dimensions: *attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise* had a positive effect on product purchase intention. Still, the scenario when the celebrity endorses the product without a compensation is more likely to increase the effectiveness of the message, in comparison with the "cynical" scenario when a celebrity gets a reward for his/her services, sometimes even without using the product, (Van der Veen 2008). The fact that endorsement is paid would influence trustworthiness of the endorser, along side with the information about the celebrity that comes from external media sources (Van der Veen & Song 2010). Later in this chapter I will look closer on the aspect of trust and credibility.

Summing up the qualities of a good celebrity endorser, I can say that the right endorser should be congruent with the brand (match-up with), be perceived as trustworthy and relevant to the endorsed product.

When presenting the positive scenario of celebrity endorsement, I have to mention the challenges that are often associated with the use of the celebrities in endorsement. Celebrities are often considered as human-brands and can bring their qualities into everything they do and stand for influencing the perception of what they endorse. Some of the celebrities are seen everywhere endorsing all types of products and services – this will of course influence the consumers perception of the endorsement as well his/her intention to purchase. A study carried out by Ilicic and Webster (2011) showed that if

attachment to a celebrity is strong enough, than the attitude towards the advertisement and brand will be positive, even if this celebrity is engaged in numerous endorsements. However, when it goes to intention to buy those who have a stronger attachment to celebrity will have a weaker intention to buy in case this celebrity has got several endorsement jobs.

When talking about a tourist destination, one has to consider that the process of choosing a tourist destination often involves several persons with a different attitude towards the same endorser. Hence the effect of celebrity endorser might be diluted. Moreover, the choice is emotional and that a celebrity cannot change attributes of a destination (Van der Veen, 2008). Some public relations experts argue that it is possible to find a celebrity that will appeal to everybody in a definite target group. Hence travel journalists who are independent and are not paid for endorsement would be perceived as more credible (Williamson, 2007).

Many of the celebrities are very active in social media – posting content about the things that they have been doing, visiting, eating. With the new technologies their army of fans is getting more global and can follow them live and share their excitement over things they have seen and tried. The influence of the celebrities is getting stronger and wider with the arsenal of social media. For example, Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) when studying the brilliant viral marketing technique of Britney Spears compared her social media activity with Coca Cola and found out that Britney Spears had at the time of research over 7 million followers on Twitter against 200.000 followers of Coca Cola. In addition to this she had over 8 million likes on Facebook and 100.000 subscribes to her YouTube account. In other words, the final number that could be reached by Mrs. Spears is impressive. Off-line celebrities are important players in the social media reality. The same is true about a celebrity travel journalists or travel brands like National Geographic – their presence on the social media is quite a successful one with over 3,3 million followers on Twitter, 14 million likes on Facebook and about 1.7 million followers on Instagram. One of their bloggers – Digital Nomad Andrew Evans is read and followed by thousands of people all around the world and his nickname "digital nomad" is now used to describe a whole new emerging category of vagabond bloggers and travel writers.

As the marketing campaigns go on-line to a greater extent, celebrities who have an endorsement assignment follow the campaign to the social medias. For some being an active endorser on-line and off-line is a part of the contract. Celebrities are invited to "add sparkle to a destination" or to promote a new travel company, like Robert De Niro and Julianne Moore were endorsers for New York, Uma Thurman, Kate Moss and Pamela Anderson - for Virgin Atlantics (Williamson, 2007). Musicians, models, writers, architects, designers, entrepreneurs with their origins from Scandinavia took part in the "Faces of Scandinavia" campaign in USA (facesofscandinavia.com). Moreover, in some campaigns the celebrity endorsers actually beat the social media Ads (Mandese, 2011). There is a positive effect on branding of goods and services as well as higher CTR (click-through rate) when the product is introduced via celebrity on social media.

3.2 Social-media endorser or social media influencer

3.2.1 Social media influencers (SMI) and their qualities

The development of the social-media lead to the appearance of a new type of marketing – social media marketing and of a new type of endorsers – social media influencers.

> *"Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media"* (Freberg et al., 2010: p.90).

In other words, a social media influencer is an endorser whose opinion is perceived as credible and trustworthy, so that it can influence other peoples´ perceptions and attitudes. All the users of the social media can have a certain influence on their friends and relatives. However, when a member of social media network becomes an endorser, this implies that he or she has a certain authority and his or her "approval" or "disapproval" has more weight and value for other users. Active users of social media can be considered as active members of society or celebrities –they are media persons and their social presence is quite high. And like in the case of off-line celebrities – the more they are present and anticipated by the others – the more influence they have on others' behaviour (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media influencers can be compared to opinion leaders on-line. They are playing the same role as in offline world, but their power is considerably stronger, as their opinion matters for millions connected opinion

seekers. We find the following definition of opinion leader in Pan et al. (2007): *"the opinion leader is the agent who is an active users and who interprets the meaning of media message or content for other users"*. Even though it is all on-line now, it is still about people and the same rules are used: people would like to have an opinion and advice from those whom they trust and whom they consider as experts. In other words, with the arrival of the new technologies the opinion leaders who often were the originators of the word-of-mouth, have got the means of spreading their word to a greater audience and in a considerable less amount of time. It is important to mention that in the literature on social media, social networking sites, Web 2.0 technologies and electronic word-of-mouth the word "influencer" is used more often than opinion leader or endorser. The term "endorser" is used more when speaking about offline reality or when speaking about involving celebrities in the process of marketing and promotion. In this study I am using the term "social media influencer" (SMI) when speaking about endorsers in social media.

Social media influencer belongs to a social media network (SMN) or to several of those. This person can help to bring and share the necessary information or the information he/she find interesting to the social networks in a quicker and often more effective than if a network is contacted from the outside. The following figure helps to illustrate the concept of social media influencer:
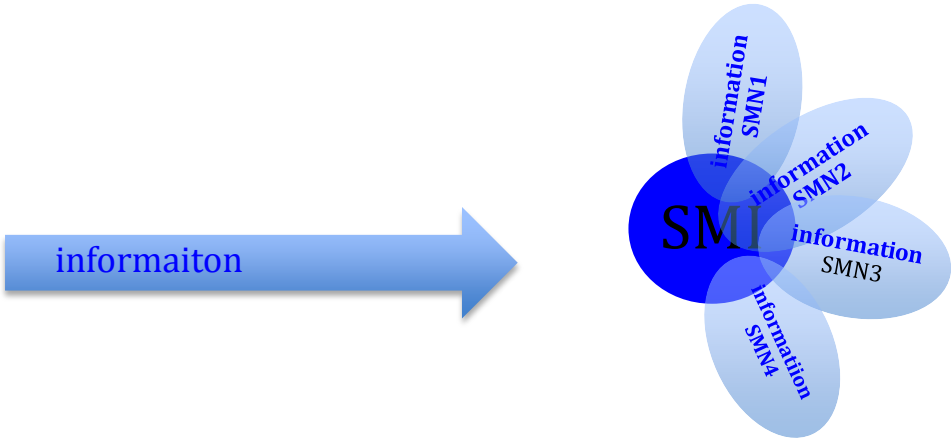
Figure 1. Social media influencer

As presented in the previous chapter, more and more active consumers nowadays are those who belong to the Generation Y (born from 1980 to 1994). This generation respond better to humour, irony and honesty when it goes to promotion. For them knowledge is power and their language is rooted in the digital age. In terms of marketing this means *using the same language,* as well as providing *truthful and comprehensive information* (Cooper & Hall, 2008). People who are using Internet, different search tools and social media are not only interested in getting information, but also in the process of interaction with each other, future tourists seek enjoyment prior to their travel experience, they seek *enjoyment* when reading others stories, as well as posting their own (Parra-López et al. 2011). In their study of the perceived personality of social media influencers Freberg et al. found out that the best influencer has the following characteristics: he/she is "*verbal, smart, ambitious, productive, and poised*" (2010: p. 91).

Li and his colleagues (2011) had posed the similar question: how to choose the most influential bloggers with the strongest virulence and what are the characteristics of those? They developed a model that could help the marketers to discover influencers for marketing in the blogosphere. In their study they used bloggers who write about food experience and restaurants – an experience good where travelling/ visiting a destination fits well. The three factors/qualities that define an influential and powerful blogger who could contribute to word-of-mouth marketing are: *"the strength of society, resonance, and activity at the same time"* (Li et al. 2011: p. 5156). I would like to present each of these qualities in detail.

The strength of society is the social connection of a blogger, the number of online friends and the way he/she interacts with the online friends and followers. Bloggers who tend to gain more comments and citations will gain more attention in the blogoshpere and those with a higher blogroll (the number of people who recommend the blog/ blogposts to their friend) will be considered as more trustworthy. Hence the combination of attention and a blogroll is the best possible scenario, as these bloggers will have the strongest influence. In other words, if a blogger is a trusted travel blogger already who managed to gain a lot of comments and has been cited buy the others, he will have a stronger power over others. This factor is *the network factor* - very often the number of

followers is the first thing one take into consideration when talking about the power of a blogger or about his/her potential influence and reach.

Resonance is the extent to which the blog content is interesting for its readers. Blogs with a longer history, a subjective way of presenting the information and longer more elaborated posts tend to gain more trust and attention from the other users. *Activeness* – is the quality, which helps to identify how active bloggers are when posting their own posts, and replying to comments. Bloggers who are posting new content regularly and who engage themselves in dialogue with their followers and readers are perceived as more reliable, attractive and interesting to follow – hence they gain more influence.

Before summarizing all the qualities of a social media influencer, it is important to have a closer look at the personalities of those, who create content in social media as well as at the concept of trust in online universe.

3.2.2 Who are the creators of the content in travel social media?

According to Parra-López et al. (2011), the modern traveller, the travellers 2.0 are using the technology for "information search" and for "information posting". The latter is their chief characteristic - as the Web 2.0 implies the existence of the User-generated-content –the travellers 2.0 have to generate content like travel pictures (photos or videos) and comments (reviews of the products, rating of the services or experiences). At the same time, one needs to remember, that although many are using the social media sites, a considerably lower number of the users do actually produce/generate information. This is also true for travel-related content – there is a certain gap between the number of users of the travel-related content and the number of those who create it (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011).

According to the Global Web Index 2009 (in Pan & Crotts ,2012) all the users of the social media can be divided into 4 main groups:
  - watchers (ca 80% of US social media users) – these only consume the content in the process of decision-making

- sharers (about 60 % of US social media users) – they upload information, they forward information to the others in order to help or to demonstrate their knowledge
- commenters (36 % of US social media users) – they both review and rate products, as well as comment on those who do the same – they do it in order to participate and contribute
- producers (24 %) – those who create their own content in order to express their identity and garner recognition.

Other classifications divide all Web 2.0 users into passive and active users, when passive users are called "lurkers" – those who are browsing, consuming content, eventually commenting or asking questions. While active users are not only consuming, but also creating content: blog entries, pictures, videos, links (Volo, 2011).

A study of Yoo and Gretzel (2012) showed, that out of 1682 travellers and Internet users 83% had never posted content on-line, while 50% used travel-related information available on-line in travel planning. Further, they identified the characteristics of the travel social media creators based on their research held in 2008-2009. These characteristics described creators as most likely *to be young, male, with a higher income and outstanding internet skills, travels a lot and is an active trip planner* (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012). The same researchers studied the influence of personality traits on consumer-generated media creation (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Their findings showed, that *extraverts* are likely to create travel-related content for the people they never met, as well as they are likely to respond to other's blogs. Motivations like altruistic and enjoyment/self-enhancement were reported to be the strongest motivation factors for creating travel-related content. Characteristics of the creators' personalities were found to be the following: *high level of extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness.* Like in real, offline world, extraverts are more likely to be active players in online communication, they take an active part in engaging themselves in the process of creation of travel-content online, in contributing with the content to the unknown audience. In other words, those who are sociable, talkative, eager to make new friends, open to new experiences, curious, imaginative, original, flexible, broad-

minded, tolerant, cooperative are more likely to be the creators of the travel-content online (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011).

3.3 Trust and influence: whom do we trust online?

A distance between a product/a destination and the customer in case of a destination like Norway is a pretty long one. It gives ground for an asymmetry in how much information a potential customer has and how much is needed to make a decision. Sidali et al. (2012) write that trust can be considered as an effective mechanism to sustain information equilibrium. Like in the system of hotel ratings and star classification that we chose to trust, as this star-rating system makes our choices easier. The trust in e-reviews is based on the same principle – these reviews can help us to make a choice – to get the extra information that is missing and without which it is difficult to make a decision. In their study on trust in e-reviews among agro-tourists Sidali et al. (2012) summed up the following dimensions of trust, based on several previous research:

- competence or expertness –this dimension is based on the fact that a consumer believe in the expertness of the reviewer
- integrity or credibility – this dimension is based on how a reviewer or the source is perceived by a customer.

By summing up the results of several studies Sidali and her colleagues came with the following important variables, important to consider when talking about trust in e-reviews: expertness, credibility of e-platform, style (friendly style of the e-review) and brand familiarity (how well the brand is known to a customer). The results showed, that *"perceived expertness"* was by far the strongest component when speaking about trust in e-reviews. The *"credibility of the e-platform"* is of a great significance when speaking about trust in reviews. These two dimensions are the central ones when it goes to trust. The more a customer knows the brand the less trust he/she puts in e-reviews. The style of the review had little to say when it goes on influencing the trust. The authors of the experiments call them "peripheral cues" as their impact on trust is lower.

Martin & Johnson (2010) investigated 50 public relations blogs and found out that digital credibility of the blogs has two dimensions: *visual credibility* and *technical*

credibility. In other words, blogs are considered or perceived as more believable if they are visually and technically dynamic, i.e. energetic in their content, have photos and moving images and other graphic, as well as different interactive features like possibility to contact the author, links, bookmarks, RSS feeds.

A study by Yoo and Gretzel (2012) that was already referred to earlier in this chapter, showed that a large majority of online travellers (those who read the travel-related content) that took part in the study trust the information posted by the other travellers, the number of those who trust this type of information was even higher among those who actively use consumer-generated media for planning their trips. However, quite a large number of respondents from the online travellers groups (readers of the content) would rather get a recommendation from a person they know, than follow an advice by someone who posted it online. The percentage is lower among the active users, but still, half of them would also rather get someone known to advice. At the same time, other researches suggest that "friends" in the social networks are among those who can inspire a higher level of trust, as we check their profiles and add them to our network by accepting them as friends. Thus credibility of these friends can be considered higher than of unknown contacts (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Some studies show that travel-content created and posted by the others online has a larger influence on the choice of accommodation, travel activities decision and dining. While the choice of destination can be influenced in half part of the cases when a consumer-generated media is used (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012).

The influence that social media are gaining over their users (and the number of users is growing every day) – is an important issue. In fact, opinions and reviews posted online by the other users are becoming the second most trusted source of information. A Nielsen Report (2012) on "Global Trust in Advertisement and Brand Messages" showed, that on global average people trust first of all recommendations from the people they know (92%), while "consumers opinion posted online" is trusted by 70% of respondents on global average. Articles in the newspapers, editorial content, branded websites are left behind the traditional WOM and eWOM. Not only the respondents trust these online

opinions, but also find them relevant (75% of respondents on global average) as a source of information about products and services, beaten by the traditional WOM only. Further, the same study showed, that the percentage of those who trust the online opinions varies in different parts of the world with the highest degree of trust in Asia/Pacific region (76%) to a lower degree in Europe (64%) and in North America (68%).

At the same time, the travel map is expanding nowadays and more and more modern consumers can have relatives or friends that have travelled, eaten, slept, drove in the places that they are planning to visit. The great development of online travel communities like Trip Advisor suggests that the modern consumers tend to read and to consider the feedbacks on hotel, excursions, restaurants and tourist activities posted by the total strangers. This is why the question of judgement of the online information becomes a new issue and the consumers have to seek cues that would help them to decide upon the trustworthiness of the information that is posted online by the others. An experiment carried out by Pan and Chiou (2011) addressed this new issue. The results showed that those who have close (strong) social relationship and has a higher rank standing among the others participants in the online discussion will be perceived as more credible (Pan & Chiou, 2011). This happens because for all participants in the online discussion it is clear that the high rank and strong relationships can only be obtained by a small number of those *who dedicate time to the participation in the online community, as well as put a considerable effort in what they do.* The same study also showed that in the case of experience goods the negative statements are seen as more credible than positive ones, as well as the relationship between the information trust and the attitude toward the product is stronger when talking about the experience goods. This means, that for marketers of experience goods, which the majority of travel products are, it is crucial to follow what is written/said online by the trusted participants of the online social networks. Also, it is important to remember, that the attitude is formed easily in the online communities, hence underlining the meaning on the social media influencers.

The power of the traditional word-of-mouth cannot be underestimated, even with the all the modern technologies present in our daily life. Tham et al. (2013) concluded that the

traditional WOM is still perceived as the most credible and influential agent when it goes to the destination image formation and destination choice. They agree however, that the exposure and accessibility of eWOM is much greater and that eWOM can evoke destination appeal and strong influence over time among potential tourists.

3.4 Selecting Mr. or Mrs. Right – a summary of all qualities

After reviewing the literature on celebrity endorsement and endorsement in social media, as well on some aspects of trust in online and offline world, a summary of the following important qualities of a SMI can be presented: credibility, trustworthiness and perceived level of expertise, network, content, activeness, relevance (congruence with the brand/ destination). These qualities play a considerable role in attracting attention, stimulating interest, inspiring further product research, increasing awareness, motivating trial and purchase, as well as recommending the use/purchase to the others.

Credibility in digital world is correlated with both visual and technical dynamism, meaning that not only the content is important, but also whether a social media influencer has a good platform that proves his/her technical skills. In online reality good communication skills are as important as offline. One has to be or to be perceived as an interesting companion whose opinion is worth listening to. A good endorser in social media know how to communicate with his/her followers and understand that the process of communication is a two way street – a monologue in online world is a rare thing – you have to give attention, if you want to get attention. To make a good impression one should keep a dialogue with the followers and other users interesting, use the language that is understandable to the target audience. At the same time this dialogue should stand out from the mass and give both enjoyment and entertainment.

The power of network is becoming even more important in online reality, as one can get a very extended network and has all the technical means to maintain this network. In order to be perceived as trustworthy and influential one has to be proactive in staying interesting, as well as to interact with the others members of the network. The level of activity is of a certain importance in the digital reality that is changing every second. In order to be able to leave a trace in the online reality one has to have a certain dedication to the process – the level of activity is one of the criteria one is measured by in the online

world. If order to have an influence, one should be more active than the others in both searching, creating, sharing and interpreting information, as well as in supporting the other active users in their online work. This will help to expand the network and as a result to get more followers and readers. The latter will again get a social influencer a higher status and as a result - will increase the credibility. Moreover, the level of expertise of a social media endorser or influencer is measured by his/her experience in the online world – the length of the presence and the elaboration of his/her input.

In the same way a celebrity endorser is perceived as more relevant and credible, when the match-up between him/her and the product is right, a good social media influencer should be congruent with what he/she is writing online. A review of a mountain restaurant by a passionate hiker with a certain level of experience and expertise has a better potential to be a good match, than if a review would come from an experienced traveller who however never hiked before and only reviewed restaurants at "all inclusive" resorts.

It is also important to mention, that level of trust in the social media endorsers and influencers as well as in the content that is generated by the other users of the social media is higher among those who are actively using the Social media, than among those who do not (Cox et al. 2009).

3.5 Conclusions

New technologies made it possible to get an army of destination advocates, opinion leaders in the online communities and social media influencers, endorsers of a new type. Literature review in this chapter showed, that be it a celebrity or not, in order to be listened to, to get a positive influence, to give a destination a good recall or in general, to attract attention, one who is talking about it should be: energetic, extraverted, with a certain level of expertise, technical and communication skills.

Endorsement in social media represents a very powerful form of eWOM and while its' influence is different from the traditional WOM, it is still representing a considerable power and influence on the social media users, the number of which is growing

everyday, also among the potential visitors to many tourist destination around the world.

However it is important to remember, that not only the qualities of the endorser should be taken into consideration, but the such qualities as the "attitude to the destination", "attitude to the media" and "intentions" of the potential tourists. Not only the factor that are coming from outside can influence the perception, but also the inner factors.

Chapter IV Methodology

4.1 Research Plan

This chapter presents the type of the research that was being undertaken, as well as the method that was used to collect primary data. The chapter provides the reasons for choosing this particular method to solve the research question. Further the chapter presents limitations to primary data. Finally two thematic networks based on the reviewed literature are introduced.

The key to choosing research approach and the methods for collecting data is the research question (Robson, 2011). The research question of this dissertation can be studied from three perspectives. First, there is a perspective of the users of the social media who are more "lurkers" (Volo, 2011), i.e. active readers, but not creators. The readers of the social media content can be asked about what qualities a social media influencer should poses to be perceived as trustworthy and persuasive enough to motivate them to visit a tourist destination. Second – to ask the creators, the social media influencers themselves about their view on the same problem. Finally, the third perspective would be to ask the opinion of the experts - marketers, who are working with promotion and marketing of a tourist destination and are using different tactics and strategies in their daily work. Their experiences and insights can help to understand the nature of the phenomenon of endorsement in social media, as well as to get an idea of how these endorsers/social media influencers can be used in promotion of a concrete tourist destination - Norway. This perspective was chosen for my research.

The information that is vital for this research lies in words and meanings of the experts, not in numbers. Getting "inside" the minds of the informants and interpreting the data that is provided by them suggests *"a more flexible approach to data collection, usually involving qualitative methods and generally an inductive approach"* (Veal 2011: p. 32). Qualitative methods are more suitable here because the number of cases or persons who can help in answering is limited, while the information needed has to be as detailed as possible (Ibid). Inductive approach seams to be relevant also because there is very little

existing literature dedicated to the topic of endorsement in social media and social media influencers (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008).

An important source of information regardless of the perspective would be other works and studies devoted or related to the same or similar research question.

4.2 Literature review

A fundamental part of any research project is going through the existing sources of information that are related to the research, both published and in press (Veal, 2011). The process of reviewing the literature can be compared to a dialogue, when a researcher asks a question: *"what is known about my theme from before?"* and gets a lot of information, ideas, dilemmas, interpretations and findings from the other researchers (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). Literature review for this particular dissertation allowed me to get a better understanding of the key issues related to the use social media in tourism and hospitality context. Furthermore review of the existing data sources helped me to see what are the issues related to the use of endorsement in tourism. Moreover, this review provided me with a lot of materials for comparison with the primary data, so that the latter can be interpreted and understood in a better way.

As it has been mentioned earlier in the introductory part – there is still a certain lack of both examples from the industry and the research on what are the dos and don'ts when it comes to the use of social media in promotion of tourist destinations (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012; Hamill & Stevenson, 2012; Gretzel, 2012). The same can be said about the question of endorsement in social media in the context of tourism, not to mention the general little research on the question of social media influencers/endorsers. Reviewing as much literature as possible was an important part of this dissertation.

Literature review for chapter two and chapter three was undertaken in three overlapping phases and took about 20 weeks in total. First phase included gathering all the general information about the use of social media in travelling, tourism marketing and destination promotion, second phase - the general literature about the marketing and endorsement and finally, third phase included more specific search for information on eWOM and social media influencers in promotion and in tourism. Examples from the

industry, reports from different kind of surveys, as well as the opinions of the online experts were reviewed in parallel with the three mentioned phases. It is also important to mention that further search in relevant sources continued during the rest of the period of research. The biggest bulk of literature reviewed for this research comprises of academic work (mostly journals) that were accessed from the on-line services provided by the library of the Finnmark University College (Norway). These services included: Science Direct, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, Taylor&Francis, a certain number of reports was downloaded directly from the websites of the research companies specialising in the themes like Social Media, new technologies in marketing and tourism (PhoCusWrite, Nielsen and Technorati to mention just a few). Limitations to these sources are presented in the next section.

4.2.1 Limitations to literature sources

I have come across several researches that focuses on the question whether electronic word-of-mouth can influence a destination choice (Litvin et al. 2008; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Tham et al. 2013). However, they concentrate more on the distinctive dimensions of the eWOM in comparison with the traditional WOM, as well as its influence, not on the creators of the eWOM and their characteristics.

A study of Yoo and Gretzel (2011) presents in a very interesting way the problem of how personality traits can influence the process of creation of travel-related content. Their study concentrates however more on the relation between the personality and the process of creation, not on what makes a possible creator believable or motivating.

In general, the amount of literature on Social Media Influencers or endorsement in Social Media is limited. Although I came across some studies that touch upon the problem of influencers in Social Media (Freberg et al. 2010), identifying the influencers for better promotion in tourism context (Stevenson & Hamill, 2012; Li et al. 2011), still the number of these studies is not high.

4.3 Primary data

4.3.1 Sampling

The aim of a qualitative research is not to generalize, but to develop a better, in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). This is why the informants for the interview were chosen among those who presumably have the needed level of understanding and expertise to articulate their ideas about the research question. This type of sampling is called judgmental sampling and is used when some persons "are though to be more appropriate (knowledgeable, experienced, etc.) for study than others"(Ibid: 96). A sample of PR-managers and project managers who work with social media and promotion of destination Norway was formed. The sample included experts from 11 Innovation Norway's offices abroad and from two Scandinavian Tourist Board (STB) offices: Chinese and Japanese. I have chosen to interview these experts because they all use social media and work actively with different aspects of social media on daily basis.

4.3.2 Data Collection

The ability to access directly to what happens in the real world and to ask people to provide comments on any situation in real life is one of the strengths of the qualitative research (Silverman, 2010). The aim of this study is quite narrowed and can not be studied only by posing broad questions like in the unstructured interviews, at the same time, a very structured explanatory study would limit the ability of the informants to share their experiences and insights. This is why a semi-structured interview, also called depth or in-depth interview (Robson, 2011) was chosen as the most appropriate interview technique. All the informants were at first contacted by e-mail. The message contained information about the purpose of this dissertation, the questions for the interview (see appendix I); the first version of the project description was enclosed. In the same message a possible date and time for the phone-interview was suggested. I have chosen to carry out the interviews in this way for two purposes: as all the informants work not only with social media, but have other working tasks and area of responsibilities, I found it important to give them some time to get the necessary information in order to be able to answer all the questions as detailed as possible. At the

same time, I did not want to get the answers in written, but to be able to talk to the informants about the questions. Like this I had a possibility to elaborate their answers with some probes, to stimulate them to give more detailed answers, to clarify what was the meaning of some questions. The latter was necessary as English language is not a mother tongue, neither for the informants, nor for the researcher. Conducting interviews by phone was chosen as the most cost and time effective method. I assume that no valuable information was lost, as the focus of the interviews was on the interviewees' expertise, working experience and opinions and their social cues were not important information sources (Robson, 2011).

Average response time to mail was less than one day – the majority of the respondents replied the same day. All in all there were 13 interviews held in the period from 23.04 to 07.05.2013. An average interview lasted for about 35 minutes. The number of the informants in total was 17 as at some interviews there were two informants present/involved. The language of all interviews was English, with one exception, when the interview was hold in Russian and translated to English under transcribing. This was done because the informant didn't feel competent enough to answer quickly and precisely to all the questions in English. All the informants were notified that the interview is going to be tapped. I used "TapACall" application to record all the interviews directly on mobile phone. In addition, some notes were taken parallel to our conversation – directly on the computer. All the interviews were transcribed shortly after being taken. This was a very time consuming process, but it helped me in identifying the categories and patterns as well as in identifying the key quotes that could help me to illustrate the connection between the theoretical assumptions and the marketing practice and experience. Press-coordinators working for STB in China and Japan replied by mail only.

4.3.3 Limitations to primary data

First of all, there is a certain challenge related to the interpretation of the data/findings collected by the qualitative methods. This interpretation might become very personalized. Further, there is a certain concern related to the sampling technique, judgmental sampling, that can be criticized to be "very much subject to the researcher's preconceptions" (Altinay & Paraskevas 2008: p. 96). I have, however, chosen those

whose working instructions include active work with promotion of Norway (including the use of social media) and who are involved in the daily communication with social media users. Hence, I was guided by their official work descriptions and not by my own assumptions or preconceptions.

Second, only a limited number of marketers was interviewed. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, the same research question can be also studied from two more perspectives with a definitely larger number of informants. This however, will be a larger study and will demand a longer time and potentially a different research approach as well as different methods to collect data.

Third, all the informants work with promotion of one destination only. It would be interesting to compare the approaches and the criteria from the marketers who are working with different destinations. To have a comparative analysis of the SM tactics used in three Scandinavian countries.

Finally, one can stipulate that as all the informants work for the same company or in cooperation with the same company – Innovation Norway they would follow the strategy that comes from the HQ in Oslo. This is only partially true. Though it is obvious, that all the community/PR-managers have to follow a certain set of rules, our interviews showed that the approaches, the level of creativity is different. It is also worth mentioning that the cultural differences also influence the process of working with social media and contribute to its variety.

4.4 Data analysis

To analyse and interpret primary data I used thematic coding analysis. I have chosen this approach, as the nature of this study is descriptive and from the beginning I was not linked to any particular theoretical perspective. Further, as very great part of my research was dedicated to reviewing the literature, it was important for me to find the best way to analyse and interpret the themes occurring from my research question, arising from the literature review with the marketers' practice. Two main themes are identified in the aim of the research: the role of a social media endorser or SMI and the

qualities of an effective SMI. A number of sub-themes were identified from reviewing the literature, i.e theory-related materials. This is one of the techniques that can be used to identify themes in thematic coding analysis and these themes are called predetermined themes that one can use when analysing data (Robson, 2011).

Summarising the literature presented in Chapter 2 and 3, the role of social media influencers can be described as powerful nodes at the crossroads of eWOM and social networks. They play an important role in marketing and promotion (Li et al. 2011). The main qualities of an effective social media influence are: credibility (dynamic and technical), trustworthiness and perceived level of expertise, network, content, activeness, good communication skills, relevance - congruence with the brand/product. After reviewing the literature I have come with 2 thematic networks: the first one is dedicated to the Role of SMI and the second one – to the Qualities of an effective SMI. Schematically these can be presented in the following way:
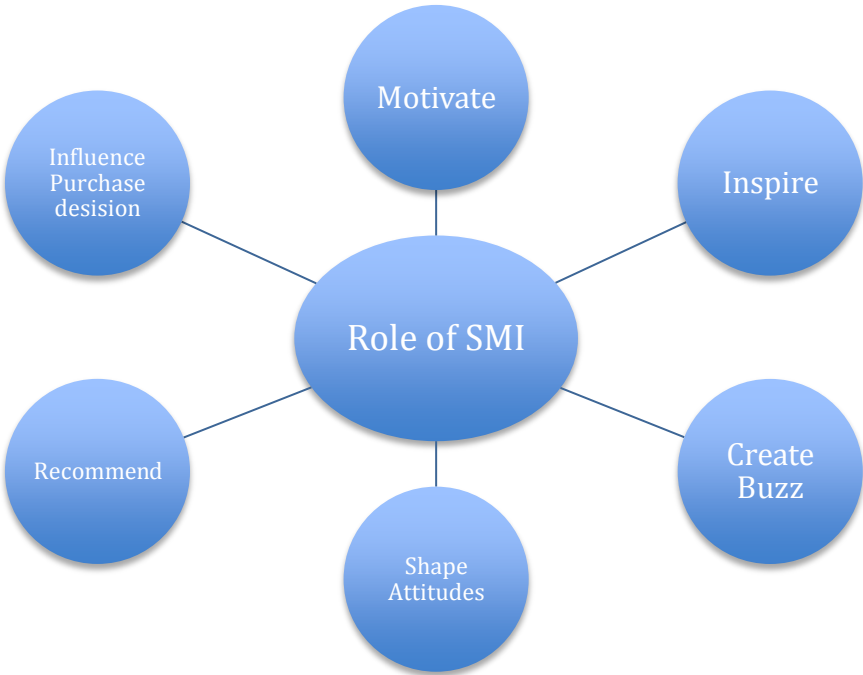
Figure 2. Thematic network 1 "Role of social media influencer" (SMI)

Figure 3. Thematic network 2 "Qualities of an effective social media influencer" (SMI)

The next step in the analysis would be to see whether these qualities and roles named in the literature are also identified and supported by the marketers who work with the social media and the social media endorsers/influencers in their daily work. The results of this analysis are presented in the next chapter.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter presented the methodological approach used in this dissertation. Further, the chapter provided an explanation why the judgmental sample technique was used to choose the informants, as well as the reasons for choosing semi-structured interview as a method of data collection. All the informants were contacted first by e-mail and informed about the purpose of the research as well as presented eleven open questions about the use of the Social media in their daily work, criteria for choosing the best influencers in social media, as well as questions about the process of working with social media.

The interviews were carried out by phone giving the informants more freedom to express and share their ideas and for me to get a possibility to elaborate questions with probes and get a better, in-depth information on the subject. Primary data had a certain

number of restrictions: the main focus is on the opinion of the marketers, the presumed experts who all are working with promotion of the same destination – Norway and use the Social Media in accordance with the common official communication strategy coming from the head quarters of Innovation Norway in Oslo. The time and the resources for this study were limited and hence I could only carry out this type of study. On the other hand, the experiences and the insights of the informants varied from market to market.

The main findings obtained from the interviews are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter V Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains analysis and broad examination of primary data. The analysis of the primary data will be presented in accordance with the themes and subthemes identified in the previous chapter: the role of the social media influencer and the qualities of a good and effective social media influencer. The use of social media in tourism is quite a popular theme nowadays and there are numerous research covering different aspects of it. This is only partially true for the themes like endorsement in tourism and the use social media endorsers in tourism promotion. In this part I will analyse the answers of the experts in order to check whether there is a connection between the findings from the literature review and the marketers' practice. I will also try to identify whether there are new and different perspectives. The results of the analysis will be presented as two new thematic networks.

5.2 Analysis of the primary data

First of all it is worth mentioning that although all the informants were very eager to take part in the interview, several of them expressed a certain concern about being quoted with names. This research doesn't have its' aim at evaluating or comparing the different practices in Innovation Norway or Scandinavian Tourist Boards offices (STB), nor aimed at evaluating the performance of these organizations. The anonymity of the quotes won't have any influence on the analysis. However, some information given by the experts is widely known and hence is referred to with the name of the country's office. As it has been mentioned in the fourth chapter, there were 17 informants present at 13 interviews. Their answers will be treated as 13 units.

This study has showed that the majority of the offices are actively using at least two social media. Table 2. shows the summary of the use of social media by different offices. The majority uses Facebook and Twitter: 10 out of 13 offices. Two offices use FB only and three offices have their own country YouTube account. It is important to mention however, that social media, as YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest are coordinated from the head office in Oslo with one international account and can be used by all Innovation

Norway offices. Offices in Russia and in China are actively using local social media. If in case of Russia it done mainly because of the popularity of these platforms, in China it is necessary because of the country restrictions for use of international social media. The office of Scandinavian board in China only uses the local Chinese social media, as the use international social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube is not allowed in China. However, they are using the social media that have a lot in common with those used elsewhere in the world: Sina.com/weibo (MicroBlog) =Facebook/Twitter; Renren.com=Facebook; Youku.com (Video website)=Youtube.

If given a choice to only use one social media, the majority puts Facebook as the most popular, known and the most effective social media channel to use in the interaction with the target audience. Other international social media mentioned included: LinkedIn – 1 mention (a social network to stay connected with business contacts), Flickr (social photo sharing network)– 1 mention, Live Journal - 1 mention (a blog service).

All respondents are using or starting to use bloggers in their work, except the office in Japan that does not work with bloggers because of the cultural aspects related to the phenomenon of blogging. It is however important to mention that the degree to which the bloggers are engaged in the promotion of Norway as a destination varies from office to office. While the office in Spain has the longest and the most profound experience of working with bloggers, the office in Denmark is about to start to explore this opportunity, but hasn't used them in their promotion yet.

Table 2. The use of social media by the informants

SOCIAL MEDIA	NUMBER OF MENTIONS (out of 13)
Facebook and Twitter	10
Only Facebook	2
YouTube own channel	3
Additional local social media	1
Only local social media	1
Other International social media	3
Use bloggers in promotion	11

Social media influencers identified by the informants.

The majority of the informants referred to bloggers when speaking about the social media influencers and two even referred to the bloggers as "influencers". When speaking about bloggers, some of the informants said that bloggers who have been on a press trip to Norway become the ambassadors and write about interesting news from Norway also after their trip. It is however important to mention that several experts also named active members of their community on Facebook as influential users or more precisely as "Ambassadors" and "Norway's enthusiasts".

5.3 The role of social media influencers

First of all, I would like to mention that the informants almost by default were identifying these persons as co-players in the process of destination marketing. The fact that almost all offices have campaigns that are either aimed at active social media users or at bloggers in particular, proves that social media and its influencers are taking into consideration by both Innovation Norway's and STB offices. However, thematic analysis of the interviews helped me to further identify more details related to different roles that social media influencers are likely to have in accordance to the marketers. Three thematic clusters are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Thematic clusters: roles of a social media influencer

	ROLE	NUMBER OF MENTIONS (out of 13)
1	Press-like	6
	Advertisement	1
	Marketing	1
	WOM	1
	Reach the target group	4
2	Ambassadors	3
	Add credibility to the message	3
	Help other users with advice	3
3	Create buzz	7

Create Buzz

The role as those who can help to "create buzz", i.e. amplify the marketing message and spread it to a greater audience, was mentioned by more then half of the experts. Social media influencers can help with buzz in social and sometimes in traditional media.

Almost all offices are using both their active fans on the social media to spread the message and the blogs that they have in their databases.

Press-like

The role of the influencers (bloggers in this case) similar or close to the one of the press or travel journalists was mentioned in six interviews. The experts described the bloggers and their activity as *"a new branch of press"* or *"it's similar to press, let's make it simple".* An interesting aspect to mention here is that while the role as journalists was mostly mentioned in the interviews when talking about the press activities or press trips, the role of the ones who create the buzz was mostly named in connection with the campaigns and news feeds. In other words, the role of a social media influencer as perceived by the marketers can vary depending on the activity in which they are engaging the influencers.

Ambassadors/reach the target group/marketing/ WOM

The role of influencers as *"ambassadors for Norway"* was mentioned in three interviews. Several experts mentioned also, that the influencers can *"add credibility"* and believability to the message and they can provide a more credible advice to the other members of the on-line community. It was also mentioned that the message that is spread is *"more reliable than anything WE say"* or that the other community members "*prefer answers from other users, because then they know it's neutral".*

> *Emmm, and I would also say, it's a nice way for us. Those who have been to Norway many times, they are like, they are working as ambassadors for us and very voluntarily, we don't have to pay them anything, we don't have to tell them to do it, they do it because they want to, because they love Norway...*

One expert mentioned that the role of the social media influencer is word-of-mouth. The role as "marketing" was also mentioned once. One interview referred to an example where a social media influencer (a famous blogger) is used for spreading more commercial message. Visit Norway places its official advertisement at this blogger's site.

In general, the roles are strongly connected to the process of increasing brand awareness, as well as to the one of marketing and promotion, but in a more informal

way. Although the role "press-like" is more used, still, platforms of the social media influencers are located online and in the social. Further, the process of information spreading has a lot in common with how the electronic word-of-mouth is spread.

Traditional press VS social media.

Although several experts compared the role of the social media influencers as close to that of the press, they were also pointing out that the work with traditional press (both print and online) remains their high priority. Some experts also underlined, that the traditional media still have far more respect at their markets compared to what is written by bloggers or by the users of other social media. However, the informants also argued that though *"we all love glossy magazines and print articles, and of course, when you get up to my age it's something more tangible"* and *"maybe I am a little bit old for them in my head"*, the next generation will be more used to the online publications and social media.

5.3.1 Thematic network "Role of SMI".
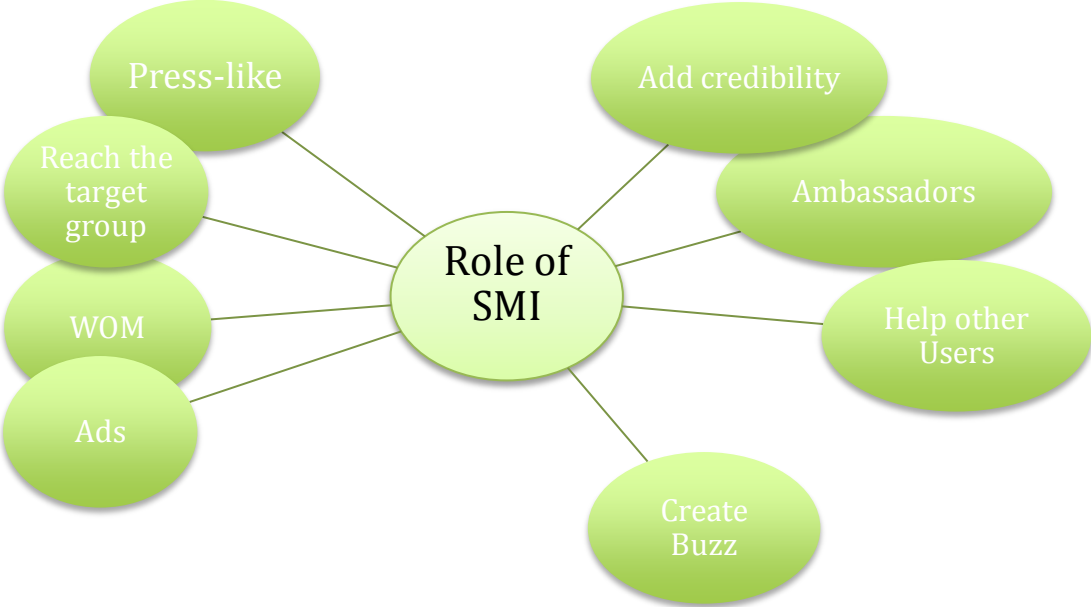
Figure 4. Thematic network "Role of SMI" after analysis

Figure 4 presents the thematic network of subthemes in clusters identified after the analysis of the primary data. All the subthemes are related to the main theme – role of a

social media endorser. Although the majority of the subthemes identified by the experts differ from those identified in the previous literature they are still similar to the ones found in the literature. However, one important difference is worth mentioning here, quite a large number of marketers compared the role of the social media influencer to the role of travel journalist.

5.4 The qualities of a good social media influencer

When speaking about the qualities of a good social media endorser, all the informants were first of all referring to bloggers. As reviewed in the second chapter nowadays bloggers are present on different platforms that vary by popularity. The majority of more professional bloggers prefers to register their own domain name. However they use other social media to stay connected as well as to inform the other users about their blog. Here, one microblog network, Twitter, is worth mentioning in particular, because its popularity has been increasing recently.

"Good travel bloggers" are not numerous. Their number is limited even in the big countries like USA or Germany. In general, the number that the informants referred to varies from 20 good ones to 70 good ones, though the number of all travel bloggers can be quite high. Several of the informants underlined that a group of bloggers that are qualified is small. I find it quite logical, as traditionally the number of opinion leaders is limited.

Several subthemes were already identified after reviewing the relevant literature. After conducting analysis of the answers from 13 offices I have developed a summary of all the qualities that were mentioned. It was noticed that some of the subthemes were more related to each other and this is why the following presentation shows these subthemes in five clusters.

Table 4. Thematic clusters: qualities of a social media influencer

	QUALITY	NUMBER OF MENTIONS (out of 13)
	Relevance	11
1	Cross-roads of themes	3
	Network	9
2	Quality of the Network	6
	Content	7
	Quality of the content	8
3	Lifetime	2
	Personality	5
	Communication skills	3
	Expertise	2
4	Trustworthy	1
5	Cross-roads of outlets	6

Relevance and crossroads of the themes

The relevance of theme of the blog and how it corresponds to the marketing message is the most mentioned quality. Eleven out of thirteen offices mentioned relevance among the necessary qualities. Obviously, when promoting a tourist destination, one should first and foremost, concentrate on spreading information with the help of the relevant, i.e. travel information resources. An active influencer in social media should be interested in destination Norway, in travelling to different parts of the world, and in writing about travelling. One the informants says:

> *In general it should be bloggers who correspond to our goal/aim, i.e. those who write about travel. Because there are many bloggers who are working with other themes, like cuisine, recipes etc. but we are interested in those who are writing about travel, travel, fishing, active holidays.*

Further, relevance is important when speaking about the target audience. What is written by the blogger should be relevant for the target audience of the destination. One of the informants puts it this way: *"we would of course check … also what the person is writing about. … If it's for children, you know, it has to fit in with our goal or marketing or the target audience."*

I have also noticed, that for countries where the knowledge about Norway is traditionally higher, like Sweden, or where the nature is the main component of vacations, like Germany or the Netherlands, the preferred character of a blogger is 100% travel. The same is true when speaking about the far markets, like USA where the

readers should know the basics: the distance, the top sights, the temperature. The marketing message should be as clear as possible, as the general knowledge about Norway as a destination is very limited. In other words, it is important that a message from a possible social media influencer is focused on more basic and general things when a destination is far from the readers both when it goes to the physical and mental distances, as well as in cases when the message should be focused on the main unique selling point.

At the crossroads of themes.

Informants from Southern Europe offices as well as from Northern Europe see an opportunity to have bloggers that are writing at the crossroads of themes, they mentioned that a good blogger writing about culture, food or design might also be interesting as a potential participant in a press trip to promote Norway as a destination.

> *Because, like I say, we promote Norway, the tourism in Norway, by architecture, by speaking, writing about architecture, about fashion may be too. About literature.*

In the counties where tourists are traditionally more exposed to culinary and cultural heritage, interest in experiencing both cuisine and culture is quite high. Hence it is common to present destination Norway in a more subtle way, not talking about the main attractions straight away, but more creating an interesting story about how people live, what are the traditional courses and what are the typical recreation activities (skiing, hiking with families, fishing, taking a trip with "Hurtigruten" to visit relatives). The marketing message can be "baked in" in a lifestyle report.

The content should not only be about travel or destinations, but also and preferably about other interesting themes. In other words, one of the qualities can be – the ability of a blogger (SMI) to present information at a crossroad – where the theme of travelling is "meeting" another travel related theme. Several of the informants mentioned cooperation between Innovation Norway and Norwegian Seafood Council, when famous food bloggers that were invited to travel to Norway and to experience the fish industry in Norway.

Network and quality of the network.

Network of the influencers or bloggers is an important quality, as the bigger the network is, the wider is the spread of their information. The more likes and followers a social media influencer has, the more people can be reached in a short amount of time. Not surprisingly, nine offices mentioned this quality. The minimum size of networks that the experts referred to varied from 10.000 visits a month up to 25.000 or more. Checking the number of the followers can be compared to checking the number of the readers when talking about traditional travel journalism. The numbers are important and even if a blogger is really talented and the content looks nice, still the size of the network is something that makes up marketers decision whether to support a trip or not, whether a blogger can really become an influencer.

> *We need to know is it a big blog, is it an influential blog or is it just a small blog, someone sitting at home, writing for 5 to 10 people. Then we can't really support that trip.*

At the same time, almost half of the offices (six of thirteen) reports that the quality of network is important to take into consideration as well. Paraphrasing a famous proverb, one can suppose, that followers should be like books, good, but rare. True, in the world where a teenage fashion blogger can have over 200.000 followers or a famous football player has more followers than country's oldest newspaper, the size of the network can be deceiving. Especially when talking about getting a certain influence on destination choice. Good followers that can actually afford a trip to Norway or belong to the target audience are more important than great numbers. The following quote illustrates this though in a very good way:

> *But of course, you have to balance the content and the reach. It's like "Se og Hør" in Norway, it has a lot of readers, but it is not our target audience, so you have to balance the reach and the likes with the content, how they portray Norway or other things they were writing about, may be how they take the pictures, video, it's a balance, it' s a mix. But we wouldn't send a blogger with one follower, numbers are important.*

The quality of network, of the target group to which the influencer is connected is an important quality to think about when engaging a social media influencer to promote a destination. Information should be spread among consumers who can afford a trip to Norway.

Quality, content and maturity.

Quality of the blog, quality of the messages, and of pictures that are spread by a social media influencer, is the third most important quality. Eight out of 13 offices mentioned it. Again, this is quite logical, as when marketing a destination it is important to use the best images and the most motivating arguments to convince people to pay a visit.

> *But of course it is very important to us, quality first of all, what they write how they write, so that they write good, nicely, appetite provoking. Quality, of course, everybody wants quality.*

Quality of the blog is not only the quality of its elements, but also the overall impression. It is visible when a blogger takes the whole process seriously and not merely as a hobby. Respondents stress that a good blog is a full-time job and this is why their influence is getting high – when people see the devotion and a lot of work done, they put more trust in the message. In other words, a good social media influencer is not only sharing and spreading news, but also works on the message, adapts it to his or her audience, comes with new and good ideas.

What the influencer is writing about – the content of the message is the fourth most important quality mentioned by the experts. The content, the real value of the message was mentioned several times. Of course, when promotion is based on the message, the content of the message plays quite an important role. One of the informants mentioned that the content should bring the value not only in the form of travel information, but also some practical advice, like how to take pictures of the Northern Lights. Content like this is of a better value for a possible reader, as it not only tells about a destination, but also gives some new information that can make the trip even better.

Lifetime of the blog is also of a certain importance, though mentioned only by two of the offices. The reason for this is that the majority of the experts work with already mature bloggers that were discovered by the community managers or by the social media monitoring tools. Informants that are only starting to use bloggers actively in their work mentioned this quality. Logically, to gain both a good network and to have an extended content one should spend some time writing the blog. Another quality mentioned by the experts in connection to the quality and professionalism of the blogger was maturity or

lifetime of the blog. This means that a social media influencer should be present in the world of social media over a certain period of time to get more contacts and to become known for his or her content or influence.

Personality, communication skills, trustworthy, expertise.

This cluster presents the subthemes that are all related to the personality of an influencer. Four out of 13 offices mentioned that a lot depends on the person who is involved in the process of marketing; while several other experts touched upon the personal characteristics more or less indirectly. Of course, personal traits can influence the process of communication, even though there is no face-to-face contact. *"Friendly", "open-minded", "active and engaged"* – these or similar words are used to describe the personality of a potential social media influencer.

The way in which these influencers communicate with their followers and other users is a quality to consider. Here the informants mentioned the reaction to the comments, involvement in the conversations, as well as the tone of the writing. One of the informants comes with the following example:

> *The way the blogger responds to the comments, because this can be, the site looks professional, the site looks interesting, it has good pictures but… if a blogger commented or responded to the comments in a wrong way, well… let's say very critical to the comments, and we of course… this is unlucky. In the professional way the site looked interesting, but the comments were too strong. Then we said, no, we don't want to cooperate with this kind of person that is not professional by all means.*

Interestingly the quality of trustworthiness was only mentioned once. And this trust was more about whether there will be a result after a promo trip: "*It would be a lot on the person, may be the age, how much we can trust them, that there is going to be something written after the trip".*

Two of the experts mentioned the level of expertise of an influencer as a quality to consider. However here, expertise was more related to the experience as a traveller, like a social media influencer should preferably be a famous traveller or a travel writer.

Several more experts touched the quality that is similar to the quality of expertise – position of the influencer at the crossroads of outlets.

Crossroads of the platforms.

By crossroads of platforms I mean those influencers who have several outlets, several platforms for spreading their message. Six out of 13 offices mention this quality when speaking about an influencer in social media. The experts were referring to the bloggers who are well connected to the offline reality – those who can be found at the crossroads of advertisement platforms – like good writing journalists with blogs, TV-personalities with blogs – those who can get attention of different audiences. Further, the experts say, that having one contact with several media and especially combining a personality famous offline and online is quite an attracting scenario for using a social media endorser. However, it can also be all online platforms, like a blogger with an average network of contacts in several social media and who is also writing for an online newspaper with a confirmed readership of 100.000 visitors per month.

> *So, yeah, en, I mean it is if a journalist can be, can come up with more than just a small blog, I can definitely work with that, but it has to be you know, that is, that's where I decide whether to support or not. Unless sit is a big, well-known blog or Twitter, that has a big following and also if I can find out who the audience really is. That makes my decision.*

Several informants touched upon the professionalism of the influencers. Those with experience in journalism quite expectedly created the best results when it comes to the quality of the text and often of the pictures. One of the informants came with the following classification of the bloggers that he uses in promotion of Norway: " (i) journalists with blogs; (ii) journalists who became bloggers; (iii) pure bloggers – have a very good technical skills, but not so good in writing". He pointed out that while the two first categories can be really talented and get the best results, the third group is often those who have better technical competence, and who know how to work with search engines and networking, hence they are often those with larger networks and large number of followers. The quality of both their texts and photos is not at its best, but they are learning constantly and some of them can now deliver the same result as the professional journalists.

Another interesting aspect related to the crossroads of platforms and outlets is the fact that traditional journalists, even when still writing for print media, have several social media accounts with a considerable number of followers. Like this many of them who are invited on traditional press trips to Norway can also spread information about destination to the users of social media.

All the qualities can be summarized in the following quote by one of the most experienced of all informants:

> *And we call these people not bloggers, but influencers, when you become an influencer, then you can travel in Norway, but if you are just a blogger, you can remain a blogger forever.*

5.4.1 Thematic network 2 "Qualities of SMI"

Figure 5. Thematic network 2 "Qualities of SMI" after analysis

Figure 5 presents the thematic network of subthemes in clusters identified in the analysis of the primary data. All the subthemes are related to the main theme - qualities of a social media endorser. The experts identified the majority of the subthemes that were mentioned in the previous studies. However, there are three new subthemes worth mentioning that the analysis of the interviews revealed: the quality of the

network of a potential endorser as well as the position of an endorser at the crossroads of themes and at the crossroads of outlets.

5.5 Additional themes identified

In addition to the themes and subthemes identified after reviewing literature and theory materials I have also identified two additional themes that are related to the concept of SMI. These are: the process of working with a SMI and challenges related to the use of a SMI in promotion of a tourist destination.

5.5.1 The process of working with the SMI

Several of the informants underlined that traditional media are still the most important and sought after partner in promotion of Norway. Though all informants agreed that the popularity of bloggers is rising, still not all were so persuaded in their real value. A possible explanation can be the difference between the knowledge of the traditional media and outcomes of press work and a relatively short experience with the social media. Although working for the same organisation the participants have different experiences when it goes to both working with social media and to working with bloggers. Further, there is an aspect of cultural differences: in some countries traditional media are still highly trusted and respected by the majority and especially among the target audience of the Innovation Norway, while blogs and social media are still perceived as something for the young ones. In Japan the use of bloggers in promotion is limited by the fact that they very seldom reveal their names and real identities, making work with them difficult more unpredictable and with too many conditions. Table 5 presents important subthemes related to the theme "working with the SMI".

Table 5. Thematic clusters: working with social media influencers

	WORKING WITH SMI	NUMBER OF MENTIONS (out of 13)
	Blog trips/Campaigns	11
	Support them	3
1	News feed/press-releases	4
	Monitor them/ID them	7
	Follow them/connect with them	6
2	WOM about SMI	6

The first cluster includes subthemes related to engaging social media influencers in press and promotional activities. Logically, when one chooses to work with social media and its active users, it is important to engage them in promotion and marketing. Activities that the informants referred to included: (i) special blog trips, both in group and individual; (ii) campaigns, both aimed at bloggers and those where bloggers were used to help to spread the campaign's message; (i) sending news feeds and press-releases to the key bloggers.

The second cluster comprises of subthemes related to monitoring, identifying and staying connected with the influencers in social media. It goes without saying that in order to get the best result spreading a promotion message one has to know who the messenger is and to be able to engage the best messenger. In the world of social media staying connected with the influencers is quite an important aspect of the work. Almost half of the respondents identified *"following them"* and *"staying connected with them"* as necessary actives when working with social media influencers. Several of the experts named Twitter as an important channel to both follow the interesting bloggers, as well as to stay connected with them. Social Media Monitoring[6], although helping a lot in *"scanning the blogosphere",* remains quite time-consuming work and it has being also mentioned as one of the challenges.

The use of WOM to identify and evaluate an influencer.

Six experts mentioned a very interesting aspect of working with social media influencers – the use of traditional word-of-mouth when to get information and to evaluate a potential influencer. Even with all the Social Media Monitoring tools available, and all the blog alerts and Google analytics at hand, the experts still prefer to talk and consult with their colleagues from other tourist boards as well as with other travel bloggers whose opinion they trust. Of course, this step is often only a part of the process and the choice of a potential influencer is always a combination of several factors.

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[6] Social Media Monitoring – the process when the marketers use special software applications and monitoring tools to find relevant information across different social media platforms

Though travel blogging is quite spread almost at all the markets that I have gained information from, the frequency of contacts between the blogosphere and the representatives of the Innovation Norway or Scandinavian Tourist board varies. From *"may be one a month"* to *"I am drowning".* The number of inquires from bloggers depends on how known travel blogging is and how spread in the market it is. Obviously, in the markets that are very into blogging, the number of those who want to get some financial help for travelling increases. Also, once a company starts engaging them, the word about it will go around and one has to be prepared for having more inquiries.

5.5.2 Challenges and things to consider

When working with social media one can encounter different problems that sometimes can be the same or similar as in work with other media, and sometimes are more related to the phenomenon of the social media. The challenges identified by the experts are summarized in the Table 6. Once again, they are presented as cluster of related subthemes.

Table 6. Thematic clusters: challenges in work with social media influencers

	CHALLENGES	NUMBER OF MENTIONS (out of 13)
	Time	9
	Human resources	5
1	Staying connected	3
2	ROI /conversion	6
	Next big thing/New technologies	5
	Competence/strategy/experience	2
3	Changing nature of it	2
	Monitoring	4
4	Info overload	2
	Lack of control	4
5	Personality of an influencer	3

Lack of time /Human resources/ Staying connected all the time

Experts mentioned that one of the important challenges is to find time for all the social media related activities, as well as to allocate resources to the process of social media monitoring and staying connected with the active users of the community and the influential bloggers. When working with social media one cannot *"do it from time to*

time" or *"go radio silent".* One of the informants, when speaking about the "Scream" campaign[7] in social media said: *"It made <u>US</u> scream, you know!".*

ROI and conversion.

One of the biggest concerns among the experts was return-on-investments *"how do we measure this people and who do they reach?".* The same is true about the problem of conversion connected to the use of social media influencers like bloggers and to the use of social media in general for promotion of Norway.

> *We are very uncertain if…if they really boost the bookings to Norway or if they are just like some younger cool people with a lot of followers and their followers are their friends or other bloggers. Do they really have the money to come to Norway?.*

This challenge is closely connected to the quality of the network – when it is important that the information about a destination is not just spread among hundreds, but actually reaches the target group: *"Is it enough to have 10 million followers if they don't book?".* Several of the informants mentioned that it is easier to work with the traditional media or the well established online media in this respect, because the audiences are known and the numbers can be analysed according to the demographics and income and other variables. Keeping track with the new technologies that are coming up on the markets, as well as to always watch out for the next big thing were also mentioned by the experts. This challenge is also closely related to the changing nature of social media and the lack of experience in the industry. Working with the social media demands every day contact, the same does the competence – one has to *"to build your competence every day, because users are getting more savvy, and they expect more."*

Monitoring/Information Overload

To keep track with the bloggers and the trends in social media can be done with the help of Social Media Monitoring. However, several experts mention that the results that they are getting from clipping services and other tools are not sufficient or are not capturing

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[7] "Scream" campaign – a social media campaign carried out by Innovation Norway in the first half of 2013. The campaign is named after a picture "Scream" by a Norwegian painter Edvard Munch and is dedicated to his 150th anniversary.

all the changes good enough. Then again, one has to use his/her working time to monitor the blogosphere and to study the results from Google analytics.

The fact that there are so many blogs or other entries on social media coming every day makes it difficult for the consumers as well as for the destination marketers to follow with the amount of information. Several experts mentioned that they see more and more that people are tired of the social media and all the information on the Internet, as it is both getting too commercial (reference to too much advertisement on Facebook) and the amount of articles, blogs, and websites is increasing.

> *There is so much information now that people cannot possibly have enough time to read that all, to watch. How much private time one needs to dedicate to it.*

Coming through this information overload can be a problem, especially taking into consideration the number of destinations that are targeting the same or similar groups of potential tourists.

Lack of control.

Four experts mentioned lack of control over the result as a challenge. They referred to the work with the traditional media, when they can agree with the editor or the journalist about a proofread of an article or about publishing a fact box containing official destination information along with the article. An article can be even stopped in some cases, even though that can be a problematic matter. But there is no way to control the result given by a social media influencer, " *when it's on social media, it's out there. Anybody can pick it up".*

The challenge of control is closely related to the personality of an influencer. It can be related to the fact that a blogger is so famous, that he/she starts behaving like a capricious star and cannot give a good result, though possessing an enormous network. It can be also related to the fact the famous bloggers, especially those who are famous offline *"are not so eager to cooperate with destination companies".* Another important aspect is to check whether a professional blogger also runs a personal blog and what kind of information he/she puts out there. Even the best results written and shared by a talented blogger in social media can be jeopardised by the other inappropriate inputs

under the same name, even though the channels can be different. One of the informants referred to an example of a good professional blogger who however ran his own blog while travelling in Norway describing basically his sex life during the trip.

I suppose that all the concerns of the informants can be summarized into this brilliant metaphor that shows both the changing nature of the social media, the lack of time for good involvement and for making decisions and the uncertainty related to the whole process:

> *… for the moment, it is the main challenge, to have the possibility to follow this thing… It's so changing, you know, quick ways, that sometimes you feel that you are always running to arrive and you never catch the thing. So this is the challenge … the challenge is it's so changing, the challenge is to find the right train to jump on. And ehh, and not to stick on to the old one or the slowest one, and to be forward is always well, probably not for everybody, but it's difficult, so sometimes, the challenge is to … be on the right train if you know what I am saying.*

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter presented the results of the analysis of primary data – 13 interviews with the PR-managers of Innovation Norway and Scandinavian Tourist Board. This study showed that while the experts supported some of the roles and qualities identified in the literature review, some differences and new aspects were discovered. The role of the social media influencer was more closely associated to that one of a traditional press, and in some cases – to an ambassador of a destination. Further, new qualities that were discovered included: crossroads of platforms and crossroads of themes, for example when an influencer is not only creating content about travelling, but also about other travel related issues and operates at several outlets; has a photo stream, writes for an online newspaper and a blog. The quality of network of an effective social media influencer was also identified in the interviews. Whether a potential social media influencer can reach a network of customers who belong to the target audience of the destination promotion is an important issue to consider. The chapter also presented two additional themes that are important to consider when engaging social media influencers: how to work with them as well as what are the challenges of working with influencers.

The process of working with SMI has a lot of similarities with the traditional press work with considerable difference – one has to stay connected and tuned-up all the time, as the nature of the social media demands a constant contact. An interesting aspect of the work with SMI identified by several experts was the use of traditional word-of-mouth in the process of identifying and evaluating a possible influencer. While time and human resources remain quite classical problem of many companies, some specific challenges are more related to social media influencer. One of the most important ones is the problem of return-on-investments and conversion. How to measure if the message spread by a chosen social media influencer resulted in a real booking or trip to a destination – was the challenge mentioned by almost half of the experts.

The research showed that while there are some of the universal rules that might apply to the choice of a good SMI, it is still a combination of set of predetermined factors and personal evaluation. One still needs to look at each influencer separately and make a decision. Choosing a good SMI for destination promotion can be compared to an editor's job when giving a journalist an assignment with only one huge difference – SMI does not feel the same obligations that a normal journalist would feel to his/her editor and the result is very often unpredictable even after all the necessary monitoring.

Chapter VI Discussion

This chapter will present the results of my analysis of the primary data in the light of the previous research and the existing literature. The aim of this dissertation is to identify the role of an effective endorser in social media – a social media influencer as well as to define his or her qualities. As it has been presented in the third chapter, a social media endorser is an active user of social media whose opinion is perceived as influential by other users. In this study I was mainly referring to these endorsers as social media influencers as the term "influencer" is the one used in the literature on social media and Web 2.0. Based on the literature review I have set up two thematic networks presenting both the role of the social media influencer and his/her important qualities. The chapter will first present the role of the social media influencers followed by the qualities of an influencer. Finally, some aspects related to the differences between the traditional and the social media will be discussed, as well as aspects related to the work with social media influencers and challenges to consider.

6.1 The role of the social media influencers

Although there has been a change in the marketing communication paradigm, the laws of the marketing are still applied. Traditionally marketers wanted their clients to get the message, message about a product or a destination and stimulate a future visit. Nothing has changed with the arrival of the new media and new technologies – the purpose of the marketing is still the same at the end – to increase awareness and to stimulate the purchase. The biggest difference is however that almost everything becomes social, even if not meant so. A print advert can be taken pictures of and spread on social media in no time with all the mobile advices available. Communication with the potential customer or tourist became more fragmented and more impulsive as well as more spontaneous with the arrival of the social media. At the same time it has become easier to monitor the word-of-mouth, or the modern version of it – electronic word-of-mouth. It has also become easier to interact with consumers and with the opinion leaders that are now to be found online and in the social media.

The existing research suggests that endorsement in social media is "a important form of eWOM" (Chu & Kim 2011, p. 68) and social media influencers can help to increase

awareness, encourage the other users to try and to adopt the new products and services (Li et al. 2011), as well as to build positive eWOM brand impact (Stevenson & Hamill 2012). Still little is know about the role of the social influencers. The marketers that I have interviewed perceive them more like a new type of press and their role as more of a new type of journalist. It is however important to mention that the majority of the experts were mainly referring to the travel bloggers when talking about the influencers in social media. The experts also mentioned their role as ambassadors of Norway, similar to " brand advocates".

Interviews showed that social media influencers are used for both a broader goal – to promote Norway as a tourist destination alongside with the traditional press (but to a less extent), as well as for more precise goals: to increase awareness of different seasonal/ activity oriented campaigns going on as well as a platform for advertisement, when advertisement is placed on the websites of the influencers (on their blog pages). Social media marketing can bring the desired information quicker, in a cost-effective manner and to a precise group of users. Very often, these users are actively searching and asking for this information, when they add a destination or a blogger to their "inner circle" – the circle of their friends on social networks. It is also easier to monitor the whole process and to see whether the marketing message aroused any reaction or interaction and whether it was perceived positively or not. In other words, with the arrival of the social media marketing it has become easier to evaluate the effect of the campaign as well as the customers' reaction to it.

6.2 The Qualities of a good Social Media Influencer

The study has shown that a potential social media user should possess the following important qualities: relevance and crossroads of themes, network and quality of network, content, quality of the content and life-time, personality, communication skills, expertise and trustworthy as well as crossroads of outlets. Thus several of the qualities were identified in the literature, some were also identified in the process of interview analysis.

Relevance – the most important quality of an influencer, or more precisely of his or her message. This quality can be compared to the quality of congruence with the brand or match-up between a celebrity endorser and a brand (Misra and Beatty, 1990). Endorser, being famous or not, should be perceived as relevant to the brand/destination. The message of the influencer will be only perceived as persuasive enough when there is a match between him/her and the matter of the message. In other words, influencer who is involved in the sphere of travelling, be it a blog or a microblog or a photo stream about travelling, will be perceived as relevant.

Quality of the content: as one of the informants said about the style of the writing of a potential SMI "it is very important to us ...that they write good, nice and appetite provoking". The same expectations are expressed by Li et al. (2011), in their study of the aspects important for identifying influential bloggers they write: "a post should be arouse the reader's interest and desire for consumption" (Li et al. 2011: p. 5156).

This study showed, that a potential influencer should possess good communication skills, should be "open-minded" and friendly", should be willing to help and share some valuable and practical content. Even though the communication is not happening "face-to-face", still the communication skills play an important role in the online communication. Positive tone of writing, the way how active an influencer is involved in the conversation and how much he/she is sharing with the followers, this what identify an active player in both creation of a content and in communication online (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011).

Only one of the informants and only in relation to how much a marketer can trust a social media influencer mentioned *trustworthy* - the aspect of trust. I believe this can be explained by the fact that the marketers presume that the other qualities of an influencer, especially the relevance of the message (here, blog) and the size of the network prove that an influencer has a certain rapport of trust among his/her followers and readers. The size of the network is closely connected with the rapport of trust and how much influence a blogger might have on his/her followers (Li et el. 2011). The same is true about the quality of expertise of an SMI. This quality has not got a lot of mentions from the marketers. I presume, that here again, the marketers were more guided by the

qualities like network and content. When an influencer is getting a lot of attention from the other users in form of followers and readers as well as shares and likes, it can be perceived as a sign that this person's opinion is sought of, like an opinion of an expert. People tend to connect the level of expertise with the time a person dedicated to a particular subject or activity. When bloggers are spending hours in both creating content, building their network and engaging in online discussion with others, their blogroll increases.

The new important qualities that were identified in the process of interview analysis included: quality of the network, the position of the social media influencer at the crossroads of the themes and platforms.

The experts mentioned both extended network and the quality of the network as important qualities of a social media influencer. Though big numbers are preferred, still several informants expressed concern that big numbers of "wrong" readers have little relevance, compared to smaller numbers of ready-to-buy readers. Choosing influencers that can spread their word or belong to middle-sized community of target audience is thus highly preferable scenario. This will increase the chances that a trip/visit to a destination will actually find place. Shao et al. (2012) write that concentrating on high numbers with low engagement will not bring any positive results. The arrival of social media and what comes with it can be compared to a high wave coming where the danger to drown for any destination is pretty high – the real art is how to surf this wave and to enjoy the ride (Ibid).

This interview analysis also showed, that an ability of a social media influencer to operate at the crossroads of themes can be useful in promoting a destination, especially in the cultures where a holiday is closely associated with savouring both culinary and cultural heritage. This can also be true for broader public. In their study on Social media Monitoring of Two destination cities of London and New York Stevenson and Hamill (2012) found out that the influential bloggers about these two cities included not only accommodation and travel blogs, but also blogs covering a broader spectrum of themes from food and music to sports and lifestyle. This happens because of how travel is

perceived today – traditional travel boundaries are extended and travel is interconnected with other areas of interest to a greater extend.

An ability to be positioned at the crossroads of platforms is another important quality of a social media influencer. These crossroads will increase the reach of the message and hence increase the audience. Like in case when a celebrity also famous offline is invited to endorse a destination or a product. The fame, the network of contacts and followers can be both transferred to the message, as well as help to increase the brand/destination awareness.

Traditional VS social Media

In several interviews experts also touched upon how the traditional media should be used in the times of the new technologies. Although the experts still prefer to use the traditional media and argue that traditional media are still more respected source of travel information in their markets, they also agree that the development of the technologies will continue and hence the importance of the social media and the content created and spread in the social media will increase. Several experts also mentioned that the active social media users nowadays, those who belong to the younger generation, will be in the target group in 10 – 15 years. The next generation will be the one that never had only one option for sharing information – the traditional WOM, they will be the ones who are used to always have several alternatives for telling the world around what they like, recommend or dislike and hate. Several research on both the role of user-generated content in travel planning and consumer engagement in eWOM showed that those who are actively using WEB 2.0 technologies and user generated content have more trust in it (Cox et al. 2009; Chu & Kim 2011; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). In other words, there is a possibility that in some years there will be more potential tourists who are more predisposed to eWOM and opinions of the Social Media Influencers than we can see today.

6.3 The process: how does it work ?

The experts mentioned that the number of good and reliable influencers (travel bloggers) is limited at each market. The gap between those who can actually create a travel related content and those who actually read it was also observed by Yoo and Gretzel (2011). Several of the activities that are suggested in the literature, like promo trips for influencers (Litvin et al. 2008) or engaging them in campaigns and spreading the "buzz" are already included in the work of the majority of the offices.

The analysis of the interviews also revealed one interesting aspect of working with promotion in the social media. Though existing literature suggests that a destination should engage the influencers to create more buzz in the social media (Hamill & Stevenson 2012), some times, quite an extensive buzz in both traditional and social media could come as a result of a successful, first of its kind campaign, as well as because an innovative Facebook app.

Almost all the experts from Innovation Norway offices mentioned the social media campaign of 2013 "Scream". This campaign was inspired by the painting under the same name by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. The goal was to involve as many users as possible to film and upload short "scream"-videos to create the longest scream in the world. On several markets the goal was to involve travel bloggers to help to spread the news and to get more people to participate. The campaign got a great deal of media attention both from print press, online media and at some markets also helped to extent the database of travel bloggers.

Just being the first to start working with the social media in a more innovative way can bring both attention and experience, as well as a certain status. The office of Innovation Norway in Spain is used as a reference when it goes to discussion of the use of the bloggers, the social media in tourism and destination promotion. The office in Poland got a certain amount of attention from different media when they were the first NTO in Poland to launch a competition for travel bloggers. A Facebook App "Daily Challenge" developed in the USA was innovative enough to bring in considerable results in terms of participation, low level of drops-off, high number of unique users and overall engagement with the app. The App was used by "Forbes USA" as an example of a

successful campaign. In other words, just the fact that the work with social media and social media influencers brings successful results or is carried out in an innovative way can create positive buzz in different media channels, as well as stimulate more eWOM. This positive buzz and eWOM work together on strengthening destination awareness.

There are however, some challenges that arise when working with social media and social media influencers.

6.4 The challenges in the future work

Several of the challenges named by the experts are closely related to the new marketing paradigm, where customers play a more important role and often are co-creators of the content and become brands' advocates spreading information through a large number of networks. In other words, while the number of working hours and employees in a National Tourist Organisation stays the same the amount of information and "partners" is increasing. This logically generates the challenges with time, human resources. The process of following and monitoring the new development demands more efforts as well.

The challenge of time is more or less relevant to all the marketing efforts, be it working with the traditional marketing and press, only with social media or as a combination. The amount of information and new possibilities that are available nowadays as well as the appearance of a new type hyper-informed customer obviously increase demand for time and more human resources to handle the process. The concerns about the changing nature of the social media, the next big thing coming or the development of the new technologies that can bring new platforms or media were also expressed. This is a quite logical to have this kind of concerns as many of the experts who are nowadays working intensively with social media were "testing" them only four years ago. When you witness how quickly the changes are coming in the digital era, it is quite normal to start to think ahead. The world of Social Media is changing constantly and one certain type of SM can be out-of-fashion by tomorrow (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Several experts mentioned lack of control over the result as one of the challenges. Again, this challenge is connected to the new marketing paradigm, when the control over information spreading is taken by the multiple avenues and no longer lies in the hands of one marketing organization (Magold & Faulds, 2009).

Several of the informants were paraphrasing the title of this dissertation and asking themselves: "would the tourist actually come to Norway because they read about it in this blog?" or "how can we convert the Social Media involvement into a real booking". This proves once again, that there are still many questions about the actual influence of the user generated content on booking behaviour. I have studied several posts from different trips that were supported by Innovation Norway on their trips to Norway. Some of the comments left by the readers leave no doubt that the booking will be made and some indicate that these blogs will increase interest in the destination as well as motivate further research and possible bookings. Here is an example of one of such comments:

> *I followed your adventures already when you were in Norway the first time (was it last year or the year before?) and wanted to visit it ever since. Your love letter is so cute. I think no guy ever wrote me such a nice letter. I will definitely plan my trip to Norway now. ... Thank you so much for sharing all your wonderful adventures and your beautiful photos, they truly inspire to travel!*

> Left to a post by a German blogger
> http://www.off-the-path.com/2013/02/i-love-norway/

The challenge of conversion and ROI is closely related to the quality of the network. One of the experts mentioned her concern that the majority of the readers of the blogs are bloggers themselves. The same was also observed in the research by Cox et al. (2009) and Yoo & Gretzel (2011) when they found out that those who are actively using travel blogs, show more trust in the their content. At the same time, the majority of users tend to search and read the users generated content after the destination decision is made (Cox et al. 2009).

Finding an influential bloggers or brand advocates without using an effective social media monitoring tool would be a tedious task (Stevenson & Hamill 2012). Even in case

when the names of the best travel bloggers are widely known, one should use the monitoring tools to estimate the reach, the influence, the size of audience, the relevancy etc. One can argue that an efficient social media monitoring tool, will be enough to identify the best of the best. It is however only partially true. A detailed and more thorough review is required to see whether the influencer can be used for promotion and what is the best way to engage him or her.

Finally, I can mention that the tourists' perspective has to be studied more thoroughly. A study of Norwegian and Danish tourist to Mallorca carried out by Jacobsen and Munar (2012) showed that traditional sources of information, like word-of-mouth, information from the providers/destinations/hotels, as well own experience – can be still considered as the most influential and significant in destination decision-making. Social media like Facebook, as well as tourist blogs had little influence on the participants of this study in their destination choice. Another interesting finding is that Web 2.0 and social media are not substituting the Web 1.0, but complement each other. It is however important to consider three important issues here: one need to carry out more studies of the same problem to get a broader picture, as well as the fact that families, relatives and other who create the traditional WOM are predisposed to information online and can base their recommendations under this influence. Finally, information search carried out by the charter tourists travelling from Scandinavia to Spain might vary from the travel information search carried out by those who are willing to visit Norway for holidays.

Chapter VII Conclusions and recommendations

There are several studies in tourism and hospitality literature that bring up the importance of the social media in promotion of destination and tourists products. Some researchers point out the importance of the influencers in social media and suggest involving and engaging them in the process of marketing and promotion. These influencers belong to a totally new class of third-party endorsers that can be found in the social media universe. However, little is known about, what role do they actually play in the social media. There is almost no research dedicated to identifying important qualities of these social media influencers, as well as what one should think of when involving them into the process of destination promotion. This dissertation had its aim in identifying the role and the important qualities of endorsers in social media - social media influencers.

In this research I constructed two thematic networks based on the review of the existing literature and two thematic networks based on 13 interviews with 17 PR-managers from 13 offices that work with promotion of Norway as a tourist destination in 13 countries in Europe, Asia and USA. The networks were later compared. The result of this comparison showed, that although in the literature the role of online influencers is compared to the electronic word-of-mouth, the experts were more eager to compare their role to that one of the traditional media. The greatest concern expressed by the experts in relation to engaging social media influencers and the use of social media in promotion in general was the problem of ROI and conversion. There is still a lot of doubt in whether the social media influencers can really bring in the actual bookings. The experts also showed a strong desire to work with the traditional media, and to use the social media influencers as an additional channel for both press and consumer activities. The better one understands the role of social media endorsers, the better will be the match between expectations of the marketers and the result delivered by the endorsers.

The research has shown that in order to be perceived as trustworthy and influential in the process of destination choice, social media influencers should posses a certain number of qualities: relevance, content, communication skills, network, level of expertise, activeness. Based on the comparison between the networks several new qualities of an effective social media endorser were identified. Almost half part of the

interviews suggested that the quality of the network that an endorser could reach is an important quality of a social media influencer A good network is described as a network of affluent, ready to buy followers or readers, who belong to the target group of Norway's Tourist board. Further, a potential social media influencer should be preferably found at the crossroads of themes and at the crossroads of platforms. If the first one is especially relevant for the countries where a visit to a destination is closely connected to the dimensions of food and cultural heritage, as well as modern design and architecture, the latter is relevant for all markets. To increase the reach of the message as well as the area of influence, one should think about choosing an influencer who can deliver the message to several platforms and outlets, as well as who is famous in both offline and online world.

Two additional themes closely related to the question of the use of social media influencer in destination promotion were identified: how to work with SMI and the challenges to consider.

The next most important challenge identified be the experts - is the challenge of ROI and conversion. As referred in this dissertation, I have observed several examples of motivated users expressing not only their feelings, but also a concrete desire to go and visit Norway as a result of a blog post. During our literature review I have not come across any studies that actually follow the "action after blog reading" aspect. Whether there are concrete trips or not coming after these comments is one of the interesting topics.

The study is limited to the marketers' perspective only. It is however, interesting to know the consumers'/tourists' perspective on the same problem - what are the qualities of the social media influencers the readers/followers find the most attractive and under what circumstances the influencers' message can lead to a concrete purchase/travel decision. As a large research problem I can mention a comparative study of several destinations and their use of social media, and especially the use of social media influencers in their promotion work.

Would you go to the end of the world because I Tweet you so?

The chances that someone would go booking and packing after reading an opinion of a social media influencer depend on the following: inspiring, high quality content (both text and photos) preferably written by a talented travel journalist or a known traveller with some insights that can make this and other journey even more memorable. The chances are increasing to sky-high level if a future traveller has a blog of his/her own and if a social media influencer is a friend or a friend of a friend. From the point of view of the marketers, the chances are increasing if the number of readers, i.e. potential tourists, is high enough and when they belong to the target group; and if the same message is spread on several platforms, extending the reach of the message. All these factors should be ideally and perfectly combined and more importantly they should also have similar influence on other travel companions. Needless to say, that a possible purchase also depends on the resources available to carry out the trip that a good influencer was so successful in endorsing and inspiring.

Still, there is no perfect recipe how to inspire a possible visit to a destination, neither in traditional, nor in social media marketing. One can only study the possible combinations and learn from the existing practices to find both time and cost effective solutions for best possible results.

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APPENDIX I

Interview-guide

1. What kind of Social Media (SM) do you use in your work promoting Norway on your market?
2. Why these SM were chosen? (if there are any restrictions for the use of SM in your country, please, specify)
3. How do you use SM for promoting Norway?
4. If you would give a priority to only one SM, which SM would it be?
5. Are there any particular SM that are only common in your country? How do you use them for promotion? If you do not use them, why?
6. In what way you/your office monitor SM in your country?
7. In what way do you engage SM users in your PR-activities? (PR-events, press-releases, press-conferences, competitions etc).
8. How often do you get direct inquiries from SM users to your office?
9. What are the main criteria when you decide to support a SM user's trip to Norway?
10. What are the advantages of using SM in promoting Norway?
11. In your opinion, what are the main challenges in the future work with SM when promoting Norway?