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OF NORWAY

Finnmark Faculty, Department of Tourism and Northern Studies

The image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a tourism destination

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Ekaterina Khudyakova

Master thesis in Tourism Studies … September 1 2015

Abstract

This research project is concerned with the investigation of the image of the Arkhangelsk Region among international tourists. It will include description of images that international tourists had during different stages of their visit in the destination from pre-travel stage to post-travel stage. Following that, I offer conclusions about image development and modification and about pre and post-image differences. The research may help to understand what image Arkhangelsk Region has among international tourists, if it has some changes during travel experience, also it will figure out what is interesting to tourists at this travel destination and what potentially may prevent them from making a future trip to the Arkhangelsk Region. The study gives deeper understanding of a phenomenon of image modification which informants ascribe to their travel experience in the particular tourist destination.

Keywords: image, tourist destination, the Arkhangelsk Region, image modification process, pre/post image, international tourists.

Acknowledgements

This Master Thesis is the result of the two year master program Tourism Studies at the University of Tromsø (Finnmark Faculty) in Norway.

I would like to say thank to my supervisor Trine Kvidal - associate professor at the Institute for Tourism and Northern Studies for support and inspiration during the all process of writing this Master Thesis. Her valuable guidance and feedback helped me a lot in this research.

I am grateful to all professors of Department of Tourism and Northern Studies whose advises were valuable for my research.

Also I want to say thank to all nine informants which participated in the research project and helped me to collect all necessary data.

Finally, I am grateful to my family and friends for their support.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background for the study

The Arkhangelsk Region is considered a northern area of Russia. The development of tourism in the northern areas has significant differences with more southern areas. Some of those differences include climate conditions, restricted accessibility, and sparsely distributed population. These factors can influence tourists not to travel there (Müller & Jansson 2006). Nevertheless, the north is becoming more and more attractive for tourists and international tourism is growing significantly in some northern regions. Müller and Jansson (2006) note that the northern territories are usually perceived as mystique - like inspired by stories of frontiers, pioneers life and adventures. Such mystique accounts for why northern areas are considered as interesting and unique places to go. My personal interest in tourism in the Arkhangelsk Region as a topic for my Master's thesis arises from my background. I was born in the Arkhangelsk Region and I want to work in the tourism industry there. That is why understanding the image the region has among tourists is important to me. In my opinion, the Arkhangelsk Region has potential for being a northern destination. As consequence the region should strive to create good condition for the development of international tourism there. Creating a positive image would aid in attract international tourists to the region.

According to Jenkins (1999:1), destination images have direct influence on a "tourist's travel decision-making, cognition and behavior at a destination as well as satisfaction levels and recollection of the experience." On different stages of the trip, the tourist can have different images of a destination. Therefore, it is very important to understand different images that visitors have of a destination in order to promote and develop it. Two models of destination image formation and modification created by Gunn (1972) and Clawson and Knetch (1966) have been of particular interest to me. I have used these two models as a basis for creating the model of image modification applicable for my research.

The research for this thesis focused on the image of one specific destination – the Arkhangelsk Region in Russia. According to documents published by the regional authorities on tourism, Barents Tourism Action Plan (BART), an underdeveloped image of the Arkhangelsk region is one of the key barriers to international tourism development. Poor information support and unavailability of comprehensive information bases, web sites, portals, and reliable statistics are some of the major downsides for tourism businesses in the region (García-Rosell, Hakkarainen 2013). An investigation of the image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a tourism destination is a pertinent topic because to date, no specific research has been undertaken with such a focus. This means that there is little research-based knowledge

on destination image available when this area is to be developed as a tourism destination. However, there are several non-scienticic publications, related to this topic. For example, some publications and programs are produced by the Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation under the Government of the Arkhangelsk Region. According to this agency, the aim of the tourism industry is to increase domestic and international tourism flows in the region and thereby increase the contribution of tourism to the socio-economic development of the Arkhangelsk region (Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation under the Government of the Arkhangelsk Region 2014).

Also, the long-term program, "The development of tourism in the city of Arkhangelsk" (2011), mentions that in order to create and promote a positive image of Arkhangelsk as a cultural center, subsequent participation in international and national tourist exhibitions, forums, conferences, publication in the media and in the Internet must be planned. It is necessary to develop the "brand" of the city, to produce souvenirs, which will increase the level of fame of the city and help increase the flow of tourists. The Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation under the Government of the Arkhangelsk Region (2010) also plans to take more advantage of the tourism potential of the Arkhangelsk region; and in the plan "Development of inbound and outbound tourism in the Arkhangelsk region" (2010) it points to the need to increase the number of domestic and international tourists in the region and to integrate the Arkhangelsk region in the Russian tourist market as well as to develop inter-regional and international cooperation in the field of tourism.

This background demonstrates that the Arkhangelsk Region is perceived as having a potential for growth in tourism and in particular international tourism. Existing long-term programs acknowledge that understanding of the image that the region has remains underdeveloped and how important to create positive image to increase touristic flow. In my research I address this need in that I want to understand different images tourists have on different stages of their visit to the region, and I want to examine what meaning they ascribe to the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination. My research will thus show how their image of the region relates to descriptions in existing documents and long-term programs.

1.2 Structure of the master thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter contains background information of the tourism destination image concept; a brief description of the destination upon which this

concept was applied, that is the Arkhangelsk Region, formulation of the research question, and, finally, consideration of the significance of the study.

In the second chapter, I present a review of literature with particular relevance to the topic of destination image and point theories, which I have used when addressing the research question. The chapter also presents definitions of destination image as well as existing models of image modification processes, which have been central in my research.

Chapter three describes the methodological approach used in this project. It includes information about the method used for data collection and the data analysis process. Here I also present the informants who participated in the study, and address limitations and ethical issues of relevance to the research project. I also offer a reflection on my own role as a researcher.

In chapter four, I present the main findings, which have come out of my analyses. Finally, in chapter five I summarize the key points from the findings and provide some conclusions. At the end of the chapter, I briefly discuss main implications of the findings, specifically for practitioners in the tourism industry in the Arkhangelsk Region.

1.3 Tourism destination image

The concept of tourism destination image is complex and can for instance be approached in relation to issues of marketing, consumer behavior and branding. While it is problematic to singularly define the term "tourist destination image," for the purpose of this research project, I align myself with Jenkins (1999:2), who notes that the most common definition of the concept is "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination," and with Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001:607), who define destination image as "an individual's overall perception or total set of impressions of a place or as the mental portrayal of a destination."

According to Jenkins (1999), understanding the different images, which visitors and non-visitors have about a destination is important, because such an understanding can be applied in tourism marketing planning. Destination image researchers agree that the image of potential tourists and tourists who have already visited a destination are likely to be different (Jani & Hwang 2011). Researchers, who apply such a temporal dimension, have categorized destination image into pre- and post-travel image. According to Gunn, the pre-visit image is formed from second-hand information about a destination whereas the post-visit image is formed from actual experiences at the destination (ref. in Jani & Hwang 2011).

Pizam and Mansfeld (1999) purports that the image of an area exists on two levels: organic and induced. Organic image is the product of different noncommercial sources: history and geography books, some periodicals, newspapers, and so on. Organic image is often characterized by prejudices and stereotypes and it is difficult to change. Induced image is linked with advertising and promotional efforts. Induced image can be changed and used by marketers to improve the image of particular destinations. Thus, appropriate marketing are important constituent for informing and convincing potential travelers to visit any destination (Stanciulescu 2014).

1.4 The Arkhangelsk Region

The Arkhangelsk Region is located in the north of the European part of Russia. The region is the biggest in Northwest Russia and comparable in territory with France and Spain. It is located close to the Arctic Ocean and washed by White, Barents and Kara Seas. Most of this territory is equivalent to the Far North. The region has a great potential for development of tourism. It has a rich natural and cultural heritage, which can be attractive for tourists. However, the region also has some problems, which hinder tourism development. According to the Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation of the Arkhangelsk Region (2014) the region has problems with infrastructure, insufficient number of qualified personnel for the tourism industry, insufficient advertising of tourism opportunities of the Arkhangelsk Region abroad and so on.

International tourism is one potentially positive source for the development of the tourism industry in the Arkhangelsk Region. The Arkhangelsk region's tourism industry is characterized by positive dynamics of inbound tourist flows, including international tourists. A largest number of foreign tourists come from countries, which are traditional partners of the Arkhangelsk region in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, specifically, Norway, Finland, and Sweden. Tourists also originate from German, France, and the United Kingdom, UK (The Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation under the Government of the Arkhangelsk Region 2014). Nevertheless, the number of international tourists visiting the region is quite insignificant. Because of this fact, studying and interviewing international tourists, who have visited the region, would aid understanding the region's destination image as well as any particular associations the Arkhangelsk Region has for these visitors.

Figure 1. Location of the Arkhangelsk Region and some of its tourist attractions.

(Map source: http://ru.wikipedia.org/Архангельская область; pictures: pomorland.travel)

1.4 Research question and importance of the study

The main question of the research that informs this thesis is "How do international tourists' image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a tourism destination become modified during different stages of a visit?"

It is important to evaluate how expectations before the trip corresponds with impressions after the trip, because it influence on common satisfaction with the travel experience and future intention to visit the same destination and recommend it to others. This research has relevance for the entire tourism industry in the Arkhangelsk Region as well as for separate tourism organizations, who are interested in attracting international tourists. The findings from the research have the potential to help scholars and practitioners gain a deeper understanding of the image that international visitors have of the region, which can be useful for further research and future tourism planning and development in the region

Chapter 2. Theoretical foundations

2.1 Previous researches

My review of previous research on destination image shows that the first publication regarding this concept appeared in 1970s. Gallarza, Irene, and García (2002) conducted an overview of extant literature between 1971 and 1999, and as part of this examined 65 articles on destination image. Around the same time, Pike (2002) did a review of 142 papers associated with destination image analysis published between 1973 and 2000.

According to Govers, Go and Kumar (2007), previous studies of destination image have mostly paid attention to the relationship between destination image and different variables, such as visitation intention and destination preference; influence of previous visitation and destination familiarity; trip purpose; geographical locations of tourists; socio-demographical characteristic of tourists; and situational or temporal influences. Image modification through different stages of a visit is an area, which has been given little attention in the existing research.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999:869) suggest with regard to destination image that "most studies have largely focused on its static structure by examining the relationship between image and behavior, but not on its dynamic nature". They noted only a few studies concentrated on how image was actually formed.

There are, however, some studies, concerned with destination image formation and modification processes of relevance to my research project were found. One important contribution can be found in the book *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions*, where Gunn (1972) presents a model of the relationship between a traveler's buying process and a destination image, which consisted of seven stages of image modification.

Further, Chon (1991) drawing on Gunn's model describes how the destination image of South Korea and related tourist perceptions were modified and enhanced through travel to South Korea by American tourists. Using qualitative measures, specifically a seven-category survey, a difference between pre and post-visit images was found.

Using a similar approach, Chaudhary (2000) studied foreign tourists' pre- and post-trip perceptions of India as a tourist destination. The researcher asked respondents to estimate 20 attributes of India using a five-point scale associated with their pre-trip expectations and their post-trip satisfaction. According to a gap analysis between expectations and satisfaction levels Chaudhary (2000) identified strengths and weaknesses in image formation of India.

While both Chon (1991 and Chaudhary (2000) have made important and valuable contributions to the field of destination image, their work was conducted using quantitative methods only. In fact, my review of the relevant literature reviled that most of the research applied structured techniques to explain the construct of destination image. A minority of papers used qualitative methods, which involved consumers, at any stage of the image formation (Pike 2002), but, as Echtner and Ritchie (2003) point out, in general the researchers gave a preference for quantitative methods, and only few of them used unstructured techniques to conceptualize destination image. A qualitative approach, however, has a lot to offer scholars interested issues of destination image, and in line with this, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) propose the use of a combination of structured and unstructured techniques to better understand destination images.

In my research project, I thus address both the lack of research-based knowledge regarding image modification through different stages of a visit, as well as the need for greater variation in terms of the methodological approaches to the topic of destination image.

2.2 Who is tourist and why people travel

As this particular research project focused on tourists destination image, I found it pertinent to discuss who a tourist is and why people travel. This is also important to keep in mind when seeking to understand differences among different groups of tourists in terms of how they think about the image of a destination.

The World Tourism Organization states "tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes" (Holloway & Humphreys 2012:7). The UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) defines the term 'tourist' as:

> Anyone making a trip as a visitor who is traveler taking a trip to a main
> destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year, for any main
> purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose)) other than to be employed
> by a resident entity in the country or place visited (Holloway & Humphreys
> 2012:9).

Thus, travel and trip purposes can be very different from person to person. It is important for this research to differentiate the purposes for travelling to a destination, because, depending on the purpose, the perception and image may differ. For example image

of the same destination may be different for leisure and for business travelers, because they have different initial goals at this destination.

People travel for holidays, business, health, study, meetings or conferences, visiting friends or relatives, religious pilgrimages, sports and others. Each one of these purposes has their own set of characteristics and it is important to differentiate them. For example, if we compare leisure and business travelers we will notice some differences right away. In general, travelers with a business purpose do not determine the choice of destination or timing of the trip to the same extent that leisure travelers do. Also, for leisure travelers, enjoyment of attractions at the destination may be a main part of the trip, while for business travelers experiencing a destination will be different in that it is not the focus of the visit. Additionally, business trips are usually quite short in time, even when some tourist excursions are included. So business travelers are more concentrated on their business goal of a trip. Additionally, business travelers may be less worried about the cost of a trip, because their job usually pays for them. Leisure travelers, on the other hand, tend to be more elastic with regard price (Holloway & Humphreys 2012).

In his travel-motivation theory, Gray (ref. in Jamrozy & Uysal 1994) identifies two main motivations for leisure travel. One is called "wanderlust," that is, the desire to go away from the place you know to an unknown place – to discover something new. The second motivation is "sunlust." This involves travelling to a place with specific features that you do not have at your own place of residence (for example, coral reefs or ski slopes covered by snow).

2.3 Destination image and its components

Destination image can be studied using a variety of approaches from different disciplines, such as, anthropology, sociology, geography, semiotics and marketing, particularly, tourist consumer behavior (Gallarza et al. 2002). This multiplicity of approaches means that defining the term 'image' is problematic.

A literature search will quickly reveal that there are multiple definitions of destination image generated by researchers who have studied destination image in different contexts. Examples of some of these are presented in Table 1. As Table 1 shows, the definition of the term 'image' remains unclear.

Reference	Objective	Definition of Image
Hunt (1975)	To measure the images of four states; Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming	"Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area"
Crompton (1977)	To measure the image of Mexico	"Organized representations of a destination in a cognitive system"
Goodrich (1977)	To measure the image of nine destinations: Florida, Hawaii, Mexico, California and five Caribbean Islands	Not defined
Crompton (1979)	To measure the image of Mexico in different States of the United States	"Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination"
Pearce (1982)	To measure and compare the pre-travel and post-travel images of seven countries	Not defined
Haahti & Yavas (1983)	To measure the image of Finland (twelve countries included in the survey)	Not defined
Crompton & Duray (1985)	To measure the image of Texas (while testing alternative approaches to importance-performance analysis)	Not defined
Kale & Weir (1986)	To measure the image of India	Not discussed
Phelps (1986)	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca	"Perceptions or impressions of a place"
Tourism Canada (1986-1989)	To measure the image of Canada in various major tourism generating markets	"How a country is perceived relative to others"
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	To measure the change in Utah's image over a 12 year period	"Impressions that a person ...holds about a state in which they do not reside"
Richardson & Crompton (1988)	To explore differences in images held of USA and Canada between French and English Canadians	"Perceptions of vacation attributes"
Gartner (1989)	To measure the images of four states: Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming (utilising multidimensional scaling techniques)	"A complex combination of various products and associated attributes"
Calantone, et al. (1989)	To measure the images of eight Pacific Rim countries held by tourists from various countries of origin	"Perceptions of potential tourist destinations"
Reilly (1990)	To measure the image of Montana	"Not individual traits ... but the total impression an entity makes" (ref: Dichter)

Table 1. Definition used by destination image researchers (Echtner & Brent 1991)

In addition to a high number of different definitions, many of the definitions of 'destination image' appear to be vague. This multiplicity of definitions and understandings is not unique to this concept; in fact, many concepts, which have received considerable attention from researchers, will be defined in different ways. It is not my intent to decide on the most proper definition of destination image, but rather to position myself among the many different approaches and understandings of the concept.

As a term, image is used differently in numerous contexts and disciplines, and has different meanings. In psychology, `image' refers to a visual representation. In behavioral geography, the term can include all knowledge, impressions, values, emotions and beliefs. Definitions from marketing refer to the attributes that are basic for image as well as relate image to consumer behavior (Jenkins 1999).

According to Tasci and Gartner (2007) some researchers purport that proper image development is of significant importance for the overall success of a destination in tourism. Others refer to destination image as an important factor in relation to marketing variables, such as, positioning and promotion. Still others write about the importance of destination image relating to tourist behavior, especially decision-making. Overall, however, researchers agree on the importance of image for a destination's viability and success in tourism, regardless of the approach they support (Tasci & Gartner 2007).

It is not only the image-concept that has been defined in many different ways. The same can be said about the concept of 'destination.' Since the subject of this research is 'destination image' it is also important to define 'destination.' Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2011:4) note that the term 'destination' is problematic because while "some treat a destination as a set of attributes and others treat it as a set of cultural and symbolic meanings and contested 'realities.'" Some scholars claim that 'destinations' can exist only through marketing. More specifically, a 'place' only becomes a 'destination' through the images and narratives communicated by tourism promotional material (Morgan et al. 2011). The most common definition of a 'destination image' is "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Tasci & Gartner 2007:413).

In my research I wanted to understand what individuals (in my case international tourists) think about the destination (in my case the Arkhangelsk Region) on different stages of their travel. That is, I was interested in how their image about the destination is developed through pre-visit stage to post-visit. In my understanding, expectations refer to pre-image, while impressions to post-image about the destination. Thus, I defined 'destination image' as set of expectations and impressions that individuals have of destination.

Destination image can include several dimensions. Some scholars use only cognitive elements when defining the concept of destination image, emphasizing functional characteristics of a place, for example, price and availability. Others highlight psychological characteristics, such as, atmosphere and feelings. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that at least two dimensions of destination image exist: these are cognitive (or perceptual) and affective (Michaelidou et al. 2013). The perceptual/cognitive component refers to the individual's beliefs or knowledge about a destination, for example, landscape, climate, food, transportation. The affective component refers to an individual's feelings toward, or attachment to a destination, specifically, favorable, unfavorable, or neutral (Beerli & Martin 2004). Several scholars recognize a third conative dimension. Conation refers to behavioral intentions, which individuals have in relation to a destination based on the knowledge

(cognition) and feelings (affect) they have about it (Michaelidou et al. 2013). "It can be interpreted as a propensity to visit a destination within a certain time frame" (Stepchenkova & Morrison 2008:549). All these three dimensions are interrelated and impact upon each other.

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) conceptualized destination image and created a multidimensional model that describes the main dimensions along three continuums. These are attribute – holistic; functional – psychological; and common – unique (ref. in Michaelidou et al. 2013). The attribute–holistic continuum ranges from individuals perceiving images as "separate" pieces of information (for example, climate, accommodation facilities, convenience of transportation) or as a "whole" mental picture. The functional–psychological continuum moves between functional characteristics (for example, climate, price levels, transportation) or psychological characteristics (for example, service quality, friendliness, safety) and shape destination image. The common–unique continuum refers to elements that are common to all destinations or those that are unique to a specific destination (Michaelidou et al. 2013).
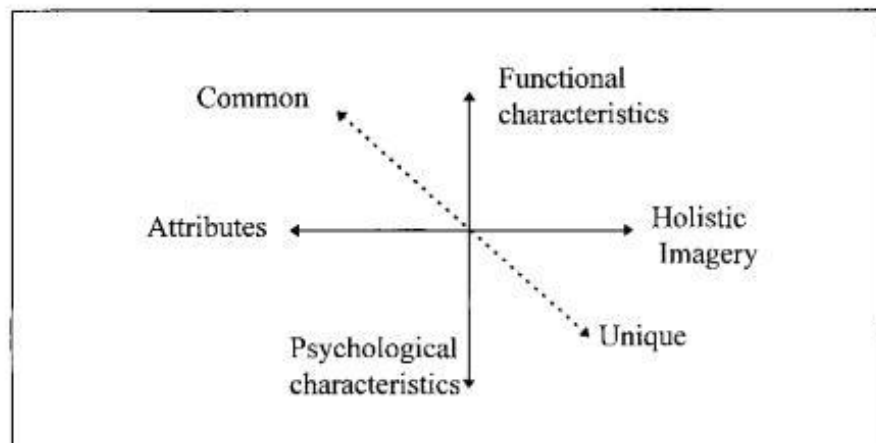
Fig. 2. The components of destination image by Echtner and Ritchie (2003)

Numerous researchers agree that image is formed mainly by two factors: stimulus and personal. Stimulus factors include information sources, previous experience and distribution. Personal factors include psychological and social characteristics of perceivers (Baloglu, McCleary 1999). Both stimulus and personal factors influence destination image construction. As mentioned above, researchers agree that image contains both perceptual/cognitive and affective components. Both perceptual/cognitive and affective components form an overall image of a place which can be related to positive or negative evaluations of a destination (Beerli and Martin 2004). Relatedly, Baloglu and McClearly (1999) created a framework of destination image formation, which is presented in Figure 3.
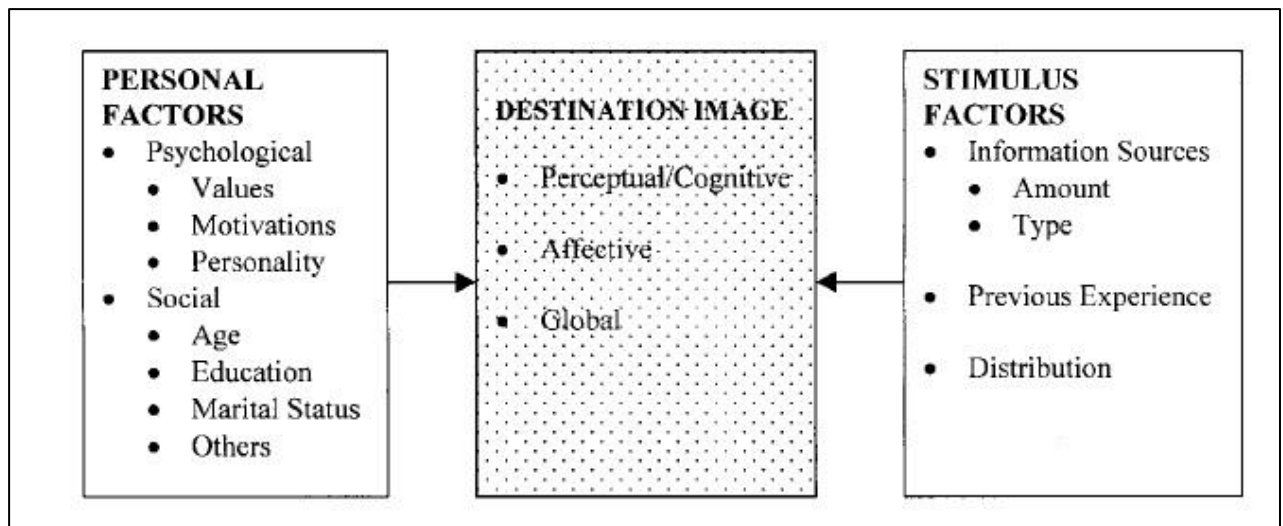
Fig. 3. A General Framework of Destination Image Formation

(Baloglu, McCleary 1999)

The theoretical background of the 'image' shows how complex this term is. It is formed by several components (cognitive, affective and conative) and is influenced by several factors (personal and stimulus). Combination of all this components and factors creates the overall image of a destination, positive or negative. Since in my research I want to define the image among tourists it is important for me to know their background information: their motivation, age, level of education, previous experience and so on (i.e. personal and stimulus factors) and to define what knowledge (cognition) and feelings (affects) they have of a destination. All these may help me to understand how tourists form they image of a destination.

2.4 Destination image formation

As I was interested in how destination image is developed, it was important to look at existing research regarding the process of destination image formation. Reynolds (1965) describes the image formation process as "the development of a mental construct based upon a few impressions chosen from a flood of information" (ref. in Echtner & Ritchie 1991:3). This information can be drawn from many sources, such as, the general media (television, books, newspapers, magazines), promotional literature (travel brochures, posters), also from the opinions of other people (family/friends, travel agents). Furthermore, during visitation and after visiting a destination, the image may be further modified based upon first hand information and experience (Echtner & Ritchie 1991).

This understanding of image formation has reflection in the Gunn's (1972) model about the relationship between a destination image and a traveler's buying process. Gunn suggests that tourist behavior can be explained through a seven-phase travel experience and that accordingly a tourist's destination image develops and changes over each of the stages of this decision-making cycle. The stages are:

1. accumulation of mental image about vacation experience;
2. modification of those images by further information;
3. decision to take a vacation trip;
4. travel to the destination;
5. participation at the destination;
6. return travel;
7. new accumulation of images based on the experience

According to the Gunn model, illustrated in Figure 4, three phases of destination image formation can be identified: organic, induced and modified-induced images. In phase one and in phase two, the image of a destination is mainly based on secondary sources of information, whereas after experiencing the destination, actual modification of the destination's image can happen. At the phase of organic image, the image is formed primarily by information from non-touristic, non-commercial sources, such as the opinions of family/friends, the media, and education. Further, at the phase of induced image, it is more commercial sources of information, such as travel brochures, travel agents and travel guidebooks that are used. At the stage of modified-induced image, when the destination visitation experience occurs the image tends to become more realistic, complex, and differentiated (Echtner & Ritchie 1991).

Extant literature reviewed for this research project indicates that organic and modified–induced images have been described as having more influence because they have higher credibility than induced image (Michaelidou et al. 2013). Induced image, which is mostly under a marketer's control, focuses mostly on cognitive elements, such as, price, availability, convenience; while organic and modified–induced image focus on affective elements, that is, emotional aspects and experiences. Marketers are unable to directly control organic and modified–induced images. However, they can try to create induced destination images, which correspond with the organic and modified–induced images that tourists have of a destination. Doing this can be quite effective due to the fact that it is seen as more credible (Michaelidou et al. 2013).

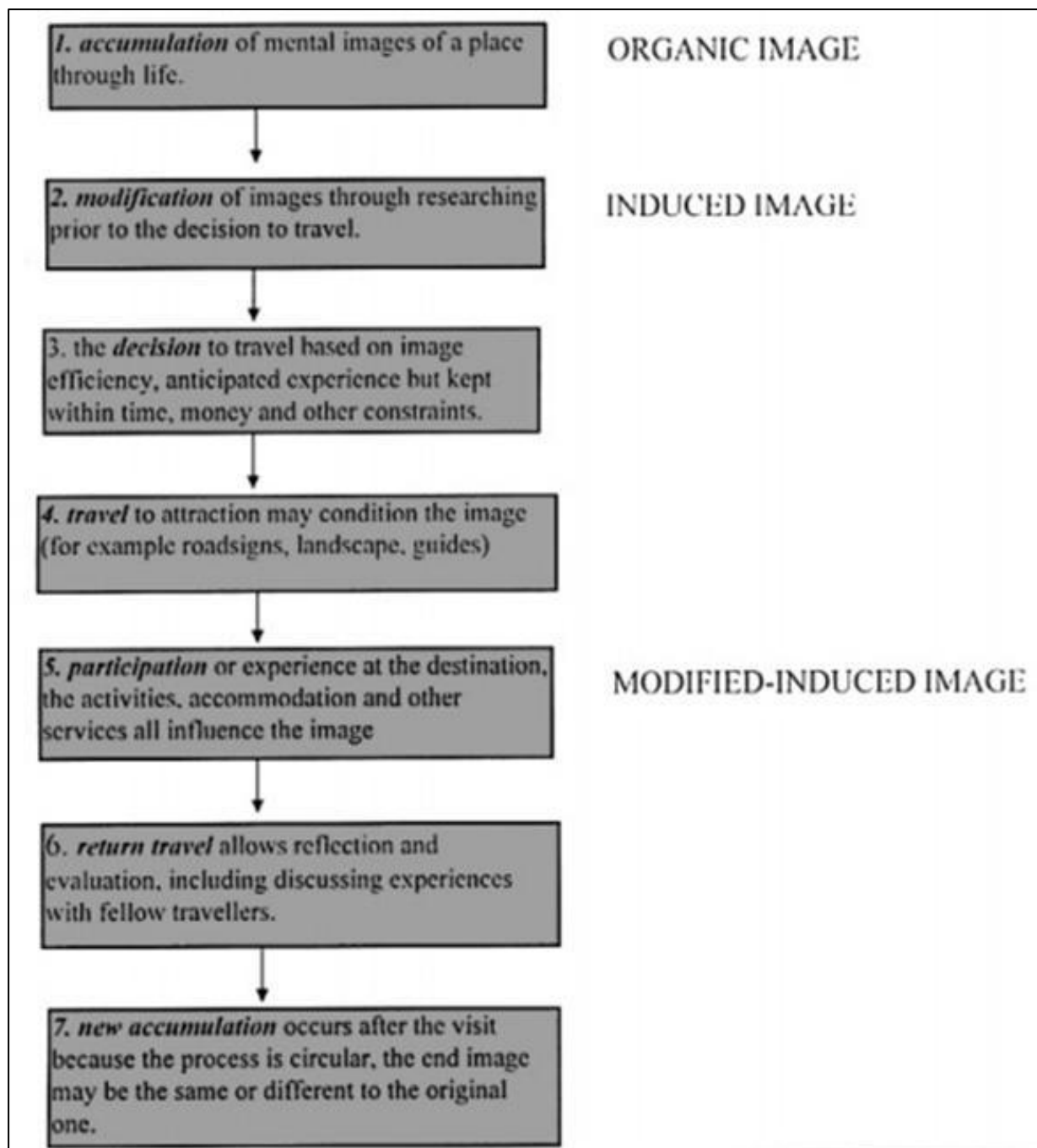| 1. *accumulation* of mental images of a place through life. | ORGANIC IMAGE |
2. *modification* of images through researching prior to the decision to travel.	INDUCED IMAGE
3. the *decision* to travel based on image efficiency, anticipated experience but kept within time, money and other constraints.	
4. *travel* to attraction may condition the image (for example roadsigns, landscape, guides)	
5. *participation* or experience at the destination, the activities, accommodation and other services all influence the image	MODIFIED-INDUCED IMAGE
6. *return travel* allows reflection and evaluation, including discussing experiences with fellow travellers.	
7. *new accumulation* occurs after the visit because the process is circular, the end image may be the same or different to the original one.	

Figure 4. Gunn's stage-theory of destination image (Jenkins 1999:4)

Clawson and Knetch have created a similar recreational behavior model, based on a five-phase development (1966):

1. anticipation: planning and thinking about the trip
2. travel to the site: getting to the destination
3. on-site behavior: behavior at the site or destination region
4. return travel: travelling home

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5. recollection: recall, reflection and memory of the trip.

Clawson and Knetch's first phase, the anticipation phase in the travel decision process, embraces all activities before the trip, including need recognition and search of relevant information. Next, the travel to the site phase includes the set of experiences and services associated with the mode of transport. Sometimes travel to and from the destination may be one of the main parts of the travel experience. The on-site behavior phase incorporates all activities and experiences at the destination and is may be shaped by a wide range of services including the recreation outlets, accommodation facility, retails services and interactions with other travelers. Finally, the recollection phase relates to post-purchase evaluation of the travel experience and it will impact on the next purchase decision (Hanlan et al. 2006).

For the purpose of this research project, these two models of Gunn (1972) and Clawson and Knetch (1966) are used as a basis for creation of modified model of image modification process applicable for my research.

2.5 Pre-travel and post-travel image evaluation

Researchers using the temporal dimension for categorization of destination image divide it into pre- and post-travel image (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Frias et al., 2008; Sussman & Unel, 1999; Yilmaz et al., 2009 (ref. in Jani & Hwang 2011)). This categorization can be referred to Gunn's stage-theory of destination image in which pre and post-travel include all of the other categories. The pre-travel image arises from second-hand source about a destination whereas the post-travel image proceeds from the on-site experience at the destination (Jani & Hwang 2011).

Jani and Hwang (2011:342) claim that destination image, particularly the pre-travel image, is related to tourist satisfaction, as it is "the perception prior to the actual experience." It is important for destination marketers to narrow the difference between the pre-travel destination image (related to expectation) and the post-visit image (related to experience in the destination) in order to provide tourist satisfaction (Jani & Hwang 2011). Sussman and Unel (1999) state that when developing a marketing strategy, it is necessary to create pre-travel and post-travel image congruence. According to Susman and Unel (1999), the pre-travel image should not represent more than the destination can realistically offer; otherwise, satisfaction of the travel experience and post-travel image comparison with pre-travel image will be lower and will lead to incongruity. In addition, it should be mentioned, if the pre-travel image is very low in comparison with what the destination can offer, then it is not

likely that potential tourists would choose to visit that destination (Jani & Hwang 2011). Consequently, marketers should provide tourists with more functional information about the destination during trip preparation, and then create all necessary conditions and provide all necessary services at the destination to satisfy tourists. That being done, potentially tourists will have a positive image of the destination (Jani & Hwang 2011).

Pizam and Mansfeld (1999) studied consumer behavior in travel and tourism and also discussed congruence. They purported that after a trip happened, a tourist will evaluate the actual travel experience against previous destination images and expectations. Such evaluation has four sets of comparison:

- Positive incongruity will occur if the individual had a negative image of a destination while the real experience was positive. This set exhibits the highest possible level of satisfaction.

- Positive congruity will occur when the discrepancy between positive expectations and positive experience is low. This set associates with moderate satisfaction.

- Negative congruity will occur when the discrepancy between negative expectations and negative experience is low. This associates with moderate dissatisfaction.

- Negative incongruity will occur when the discrepancy between positive expectations and further negative experiences. This associates with high dissatisfaction.

This after-visit evaluation process greatly influences the modification of destination image. Such modification processes will determine whether a destination would be considered for future visitation and recommendation to other people (Pizam & Mansfeld 1999).

Thus, the level of satisfaction associated with travel is an important element of destination image. Researchers in consumer behavior and marketing pay attention to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) concept. This concept refers to post-purchase behavior and has great importance because it can influence repeat purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations (Pizam & Milman 1993). According to Pizam and Milman (1993:197) "Satisfaction, reinforces positive attitudes toward the brand, leading to a greater likelihood that the same brand will be purchased again . . . dissatisfaction leads to negative brand attitudes and lessens the likelihood of buying the same brand again." Similarly, according to Kozak and Rimmington (2000:261) "overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the result of evaluating various positive and negative experiences." In other words, if consumers are satisfied with the product they purchased, they will be more willing to purchase it again and

share this experience with the others, and if consumers are dissatisfied, they will try to escape from purchasing it in future and complain about it to other consumers.

The most widely used theory that explains the satisfaction/dissatisfaction concept, is the expectancy disconfirmation developed by Richard Oliver (1980). This theory presumes that consumers purchase products with pre-purchased expectations. Thus, when outcomes correspond to expectations, confirmation occurs. When there is difference between expectations and outcomes, disconfirmation occurs. When outcomes are higher than expectations disconfirmation is positive, and contrary, when outcomes are lower than expectation, disconfirmation is negative. Therefore, satisfaction relates to confirmation or positive disconfirmation, while dissatisfaction relates to negative disconfirmation. Many researchers who are concerned with destination image use this theory and hypothesize that tourist satisfaction with a destination can be identified like a difference between outcomes and expectations (Pizam & Milman 1993), or in other words that it has to do with the difference between the pre-image and post-image of a destination.

In my research project I want to see how the destination image becomes modified during different stage of a visit to the Arkhangelsk Region, and then to see if there is difference between pre-travel and post-travel image. There are different techniques to measure congruence and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. I do not set out to measure congruence and satisfaction but aim for a deeper meaning and understanding of the phenomena. Following this, I have taken a qualitative approach in my research.

Chapter 3. Methodological approach

3.|1 Research design

While both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be used for research in tourism studies, my particular project is aligned with a qualitative tradition. Quantity refers to an amount of something; quality refers to its essence and ambience. Thus, quantitative research is about counts and measures, distributions and extents of things. Qualitative research is about meanings, characteristics, symbols, concepts, and descriptions of things. Many authors state that quantitative method is dominant in tourism studies. This is so because these procedures and purposes are predefined and accepted, and such methods are perceived to be more trustworthy (Steckler & Allan 1992). Alasuutari (1995) refers to qualitative techniques as an alternative method in social science. Nevertheless, over the past forty years, there has been substantive growth in the use of qualitative approaches (Hammersley 2003). Creswell (1998) drawing on Denzin and Lincoln, proffers that qualitative research locates researchers in the world and that "researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (1998:36). According to Berg and Lune (2012), researchers who use qualitative method are interested in individuals and their so-called life-worlds, and researchers focus more on the meanings individuals assign to any experience. If a researcher needs to gain a complex understanding of a problem, qualitative research is recommended (Creswell 1998).

For the research associated with this Master's thesis, I chose a qualitative approach. In particular, I wanted to get a deeper understanding of the phenomena, in this case the image of the Arkhangelsk Region. I was interested in what meaning international tourists ascribed to it as a travel destination, and what opinions they had about their experience in the destination.

3.2 Informants

As the overarching question of this research project was to investigate the image of the Arkhangelsk Region among international visitors, informants for this research were international tourists. In addition, I included the criteria that informants should be older than 18 years and that they had to have been on only one trip to the Arkhangelsk Region. This last criteria was included because research has pointed to how the image returned visitors hold, can be different from that held by those who have only visited the destination once. For example, Jenkins (1999:3) says that "images held by potential visitors, non-visitors and returned visitors will differ" and, similarly, Beerli and Martin (2004:660) note that there is a difference between first-time and repeat visitors and, furthermore, that "repeat tourists could

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have difficulty recalling the sources of information used before visiting the place for the first time".

Potential informants were found via the tourist web site Trip Advisor. Specifically, I saw people who published comments about the Arkhangelsk Region here as were seen as potential participants in my study. Based on the information on the Trip Advisor-page, I sent out a message inviting people to participate in my research project. All in all, an invitation to participate in the research was sent to 30 people via Trip Advisor. The request for participation in my research project is presented in Appendix B and contains ethics related information about the background and purpose of my research, information about what does participation in the project imply, what will happen to the information about informants and that participation in the project is voluntary.

When I received the tourists' replies, I was able to determine if these potential informants fit the selection criteria for inclusion in my research. In total, 10 persons responded to my initial message. Six of them were fitted all the criteria. These six tourists were subsequently interviewed.

In addition, I used the snowball sampling method to get access to some more informants. This involved asking previous informants if they knew of other people who fit the informant criteria. I also asked friends and other connections if they knew anyone who had been in the Arkhangelsk Region and who could potentially participate in the research. Three additional informants were found using this sampling method, all of whom agreed to participate in the study and were subsequently interviewed.

Table 2 contains demographic data about the informants who participated in the research project. All names given to informants are pseudonyms to maintain informant anonymity.

In total, nine informants were interviewed during the data collection process. All interviews were held in English. All of the informants satisfied criteria for participation. All were residents from countries outside the Russian Federation. Seven of them were residents of European countries: three persons from Norway, two persons from United Kingdom, one person from Finland, and one person from Denmark. Two informants were residents of the USA. Informants were between 28 and 70 years old at the time of the interview. All had visited the Arkhangelsk Region only once and had engaged in tourist experiences there.

Table 2. Overview of informants

Informant	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Education	Country of Residence	Occupation	Purpose of travel
Ben	28	male	single	Master	Norway	student	leisure
Chris	41	male	single	Master	Finland	service	leisure
John	36	male	single	University	Denmark	bank	leisure
Philip	62	male	married	Master	UK	oil company	business
Tom	70	male	married	University	USA	geology (retired)	leisure
Victor	49	male	married	University	UK	advertising	leisure
Anna	29	female	single	PHD	Norway	student	study
Laila	69	female	married	Master	USA	librarian (retired)	leisure
Veronica	51	female	married	PHD	Norway	health service	business

The majority (six) of the informants were male and three were female. Four of informants were not married and lived on their own. The remaining five informants were married and had children.

All of the informants had university-related education qualifications. Most had a university Master degree education. One of informants had PHD and one was a PHD candidate at the time the research was being conducted. The informants worked in different spheres, two informants classified themselves as students at the time of participation, and two were on retired.

All informants had engaged in many rich tourist experiences before their trip to the Arkhangelsk Region. They had travelled extensively to domestic and international destinations. All were familiar with many destinations around the world and had a range of experience with which to compare their travel to the Arkhangelsk Region.

Their purpose of travel was threefold in nature: leisure (six informants), business (two informants) and education (one informant). Four of the leisure traveler informants were individual travelers and two of them had friends in Arkhangelsk.

3.3 Data collection

As mentioned previously, a qualitative methodological approach was chosen for this research project. The process of data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews with international tourists either face-to-face or using Skype.

Interviewing can simply be defined as a conversation with a goal to gather information. Understandings are achieved by talking directly with people so they can share their experiences about any issue, and researchers can hear their voices and see their emotions (Creswell 1998). The interviewer offers questions and informants provide answers (Berg & Lune 2012). The interview is an interpersonal situation focused on conversation about a theme of mutual interest (Brinkmann and Kvale 2014). Interviewing is a useful method when researchers want to understand the perceptions of informants or learn how informants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events (Berg & Lune 2012).

Specifically, "in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation" (Boyce & Neale 2006:3). It is useful to use in-depth interview if a researcher wants to get detailed information about an individual's thought and behavior in order to explore issues in depth. According to Gill et al. (2008) in-depth interviews provide a "deeper" way of understanding social phenomena and have high flexibility. I was interested in perceptions of international tourists, who had visited the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination. I wanted to gain information about their experiences, which was relevant to my research question. During the process of interviews, international tourists as interview informants shared their stories, which helped me to understand the topic of my research project.

Interviews can be structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews are similar to questionnaires, in that all questions are strictly predefined. Contrary, unstructured interviews have almost no pre-set organization. In the case of this particular research project, I decided to use semi-structured interviewing. This type of interview is located somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews usually have some key questions, which provide some guidance for the interviewer regarding what to ask about depending on the response of informants (Gill et al. 2008). In line with this, I prepared an interview guide with questions, which I used as a basis for my interview. I strived to have a conversation with my informants and depending on the responses informants provided, I had the opportunity to skip a question if it had already been

addressed through our conversation. I could also choose to ask some additional questions, which seemed relevant to me in light of the specific situation. This flexibility is important, because sometimes informants can share information about some aspects that you did not anticipate when preparing the interview guide, or did not know to ask them about. This unanticipated information can lead to some interesting findings and a different view of the phenomenon at hand. The semi-structured interviewing allowed me enough flexibility for this to occur.

The web-based communication software, Skype, was mostly used for the conduct of interviews. It is therefore relevant to consider some aspects of interviewing done without meeting the informants face-to-face, such as web-based and telephone interviews. Telephone interviewing is limiting in several ways because you cannot see the person you are talking with and may interpret the information they provide incorrectly, as you do not have facial expressions and body language to guide your interpretation of an utterance. Nonetheless, in some situations, a telephone interview may be the only viable means for collecting data; for example, when it is difficult to reach an informant because of geographical location (Berg & Lune 2012).

Since my informants were from different countries it was difficult to reach them and engage in face-to-face interviews, so all interviews (except one face-to-face interview) were conducted using Skype. When used with a computer-linked video camera, Skype can provide real-time communication and has similarities with face-to-face interviews. However, since not all respondents used web-cameras, some interviews were closer to a telephone interview. Two informants preferred not to use web-camera, and interviews with them were similar to a telephone-interview. The rest of informants used the camera and interviews were conducted similarly to face-to-face interviews.

A voice recorder was used during the interviews in order to capture in full the conversations with informants. The interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. I then transcribed all the interviews.

According to Gill (2008) questions in a qualitative interview must be open-ended (not only yes/no answers), as well as sensitive, neutral and understandable. It is better to start with some easy questions, which interest participants and can be easily answered before moving to more difficult questions. "This can help put respondents at ease, build up confidence and rapport and often generates rich data that subsequently develops the interview further" (Gill et al. 2008:292).

My interviews included some predetermined questions but also allowed for deviations during the interview process. The interview guide is presented in Appendix A. It contains four parts: The first part focuses on background information, like informants' age, place of residency, marital status, education, occupation. It also contained questions about travel experience (domestic and international) and familiarity with other tourist destinations around the world.

The next three parts in the interview guide had to do with the image of the Arkhangelsk Region before, during and after the trip. The part which focused on the image of the region before the trip referred to the reasons for traveling to the area, how informants found out about the destination, what kind of information they used when they decided to go, as well as what they actually expected to see there.

The part in the interview associated with image during the trip, included questions about their on-site activity, what informants were doing during the trip, what positive and negative experiences they had during their stay, what their experience was in terms of infrastructure as well as communication with the locals, and about the most memorable experience the informants had during their visit.

The last part of the interview guide was concerned with informants' image of the region after the trip and included questions regarding if and how the image of the destination had changed after the trip and why, as well as thoughts about revisiting the area in the future and if they would recommend the destination to other visitors. The interview focused on helping me understand if and how the informants' image of the Arkhangelsk Region had changed from the before trip stage to the after trip stage.

3.4 Data analysis

According to Lacey and Luff (2001), the process of qualitative data analysis consists of several stages: transcription, organizing data, familiarization, coding, themes.

When all interviews were conducted, the next step in my project involved organizing and analyzing the obtained data. According to Berg and Lune (2012), processes of qualitative data analysis remains fairly poorly described. Because of the level of creativity of qualitative methods, it is impossible to follow a rigid step-by-step procedure during qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis process cannot be led quickly and neatly, but this should not be considered as a limitation. To the contrary, it is probably its greatest strength. Such kind of

analysis can uncover meaning and understanding about a problem and phenomenon that would otherwise remain unidentified (Berg & Lune 2012).

Before the data analysis all material obtained during data collection processes should be transcribed. Verbatim transcript is very useful for researcher and allows the researcher to return to the data at any stage of analysis (Barbour 2008). In my case, I used a voice recorder to type all interviews and did not miss any data. Consequently, it allowed me to transcribe all interviews verbatim except some repetitions of phrases and sentences. In addition, I left out phrases that did not have anything to do with the topic of the research. For example, one business traveler recounted his business activity at the destination, when I was mostly interested in his tourist experience. Thus, I did not include the former information.

After the transcription stage, it is important to organize data into sections, which are easily retrievable. Researchers should give each interview a code or number to provide interviewees with anonymity. The information in each file is confidential and should be securely stored. The researcher needs to remove personal identifiers, such as names and other identifiable information in transcripts (Lacey & Luff 2001).

During these two stages, the process of familiarization commences. Specifically, during the process of recording and listening, the researcher starts to make summaries prior to the formal analysis (Lacey & Luff 2001).

After familiarization with data, preliminary coding should be done. Codes include "a variety of ways that respondents express an underlying concept" (Lacey & Luff 2001:23). After this, the researcher identifies themes and develops more well-defined categories.

In my analysis, I coded the transcribed interviews for themes related to models of destination image modification, in particular the model of Gunn (1972) and the model of Clawson and Knetch (1966), which were presented in theory chapter. I used these models as the basis of analysis of the obtained data.

Gunn (1972) in his model describes two stages that relate to the formation of pre-image:

1. accumulation of mental image about vacation experience based on previous knowledge;

2. modification of those images by further information.

Clawson and Knetch (1966) combine these two into one stage: anticipation, planning and thinking about the trip. I also decided to combine the two stages of Gunn model, because both of these stages have direct influence on pre-image formation about the destination and I wanted to analyze such data in conjunction with each other.

Gunn's (1972) decision to take a vacation trip stage is also related to pre-image formation. It has a strong influence on the purpose of a trip. Clawson and Knetch (1966) did not identify this stage in their model. I do not include this stage as separate constituent, because it flows out from the previous stage and can be combined with it.

The next stage, the travel to the destination stage was presented in both models. I included this stage in my analysis because getting to the destination is initial stage in travel experience and can have big influence on image development.

Gunn's (1972) participation at the destination stage or on-site behavior phase of Clawson and Knetch (1966) was very important to incorporate as in this stage tourists engage in actual experiences and consequently can modify their image during their stay at the destination.

While the return travel stage is presented in both models, I do not include it in my analysis because during the travelling back from destination tourists start to evaluate their experience and I decided go straight to the post-trip evaluation stage.
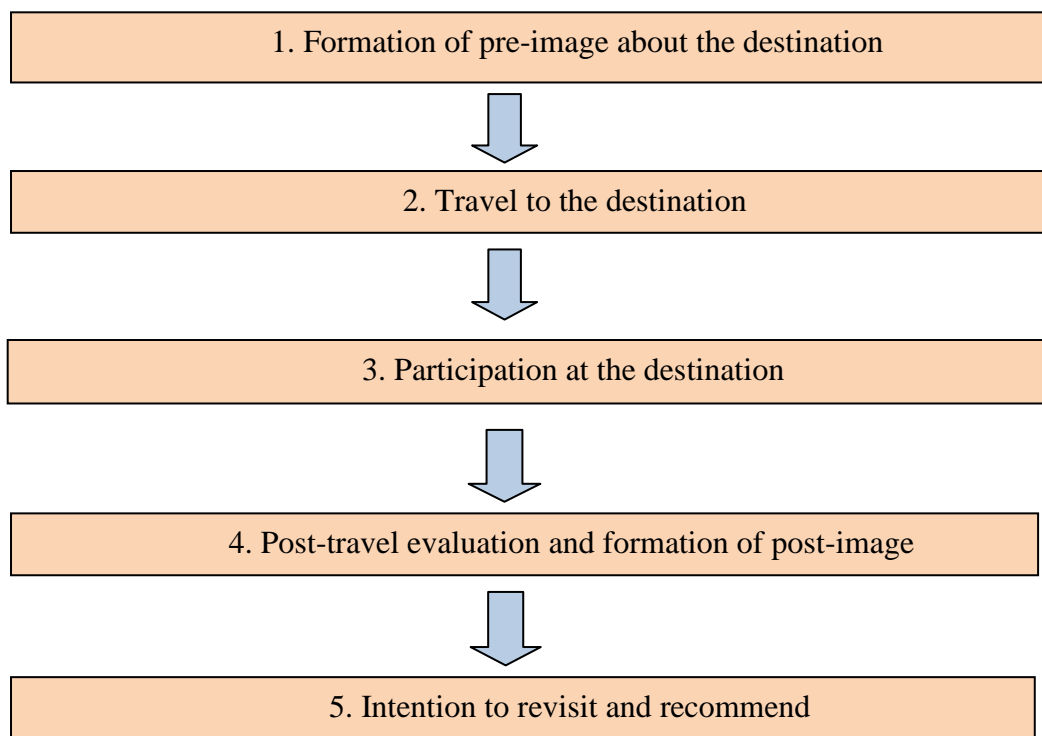
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      1. Formation of pre-image about the destination         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              2. Travel to the destination                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              3. Participation at the destination             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      4. Post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              5. Intention to revisit and recommend           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Fig. 4 Modified model of image modification process

The last stage in both models focuses on post-travel evaluation, that is, Gunn's (1972) accumulation of new images based on the experience stage and Clawson and Knetch's (1966) recollection (recall, reflection and memory of the trip) phase. This stage is the final one and

the most important, because after the trip, tourists may have modified their image based on actual experiences, and this would be of particular interest to my particular research project.

While the intentions of informants to revisit the destination in future and/or to recommend it to others could be combined with the previous stage, I have decided to distinguish it and describe it separately.

Subsequently, my analysis contains five stages of image modification (Figure 4) and my findings in chapter 4 are built following to these stages.

3.5 Limitations

All research projects have limitations, including mine. For this study, I found the process of finding informants was quite difficult. Some of informants, who participated in the study had been in the Arkhangelsk Region some time ago while others had been there relatively recently. For example, three of the informants traveled to the Arkhangelsk Region in 2008, 2009 and 2010, while another had been there in 2013/2014. This meant that the memory of the trip was not as fresh for some informants. As a consequence, it was quite problematic for three of these informants to remember the nuances related to the traveling to Arkhangelsk Region. This was especially challenging in terms of questions pertaining to their image of the Arkhangelsk Region before the trip. It was not easy for them to talk about what kind of sources they used and how they had found out about the place.

Also, the study of all the stages was done after the tourists had completed the trip, and this may give some slightly adjusted information on the pre and during phases compared to if the research had been done while people were travelling.

One further limitation is linked to language. English is not my first language and this was relevant as all informants were from different countries and had a different accents. Because of this, some misunderstanding and incorrect interpretations might exist. This may be especially so in interviews with the two informants, who did not use video camera connections during the Skype interview process. Additionally, during the process of transcription, there were a few words I did not include, as their meanings were unclear to me. This may be considered as the missing of some data.

Finally, an aspect that might be considered a limitation has to do with me as an interviewer. As all the informants were aware that I am from the Arkhangelsk Region, it is possible that this may have influenced them to be less negative and critical regarding the image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a tourist destination.

3.6 Ethical issues

For any research, it is important to pay attention to potential ethical issues. There are some principles, which were created to protect the rights of participants in any research. The principle of **"**voluntary participation" means that no one should be compelled to participate in research. The principle of informed "consent" means that participants consent to participate based on awareness about procedures and risks involved in research. The principle of "confidentiality" refers to guaranteeing that all information, which is going to be collected during the research, will be available only for those who are involved directly in the research. The principle of "anonymity" is stricter and means the participant will be anonymous - even for researchers themselves. The anonymity is a stronger guarantee of privacy, but sometimes it can be difficult to fully attain (Research Methods Knowledge Base 2006).

In my research I interviewed international tourists. It was important for me to explain to them their rights. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) before an interview takes place, participants should be informed about the research details and give them information about ethical principles, such as anonymity and confidentiality. Due to this informants will have some idea of what to expect from the interview, which will "increase the likelihood of honesty and is also a fundamental aspect of the informed consent process" (Gill et. al. 2008:292).

So, before interviews, I sent to participants requests for participation in my research project, where all necessary information about the research was provided: description of the project, an explanation of why they are chosen as participants, and information about their rights according ethical principles. The request for participation in the research project is presented in Appendix B.

The research project was conducted in line with guidelines provided by the NDS (Norwegian Social Science Data Services). NSD is the Norwegian data protection official and implements assessment of research projects and controls and monitors project changes, extensions and project completion (Data Protection Official for Research).

3.7 Reflexivity and my role as a researcher

Qualitative research requires researchers to be reflexive about their own role and influence during research processes and thereby be aware of any potential bias (Ritchie et al. 2013). This means that any researcher has influence on research process. Haynes (2012:72) defines reflexivity as "an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way

this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research process and outcomes." Reflexivity assumes that researcher and researcher's object affect each other during the research process. The image of Arkhangelsk Region was the main interest of this research is my home region. I was born in the city of Arkhangelsk and grew up there, I have been to many places around the city, in the Solovetsky Islands, in some arctic islands (archipelagos Franz-Josef Land and New Land), also in some rural districts of the Arkhangelsk Region. Therefore, I had personal experience with visiting some popular tourist places in the region. Furthermore, my previous study background in Arkhangelsk was nature management and ecological tourism. During the study, I took some courses, which were devoted to tourism in the Arkhangelsk Region. In this context, I also can say that I have some academic knowledge about the tourism industry in the Arkhangelsk Region. However, most of my previous knowledge was about the ecological constituent of tourism development in the region and I did not have enough knowledge that could be related to image development.

Accordingly, these facts had some influence on formation of my interview guide. For example, I used my knowledge of problems associated with the Arkhangelsk region's tourism industry. I included questions in my guide to ascertain informant views of such problems. That being said, during the interview process, I tried to be neutral. For me, it was important to understand informants' points of view and visions of the situation. This was the interest of my research, and I did not try to influence them according to my knowledge.

Chapter 4. Findings

My research aimed to understand how the image of the Arkhangelsk Region was developed and modified during the pre-travel to post-travel stage of tourist experiences. With this in mind, I interviewed international tourists who had visited the Arkhangelsk Region. This chapter presents findings based on my analysis of the collected interview data.

As mentioned in the in data analysis section of the methodology chapter, my analysis was inspired by two models of destination image modification developed by Gunn (1972) and Clawson and Knetch (1966). A modified model, which I generated from a combination of these two models and applied in this research project, contained five stages of image modification:

1. Formation of pre-image about the destination;

2. Travel to the destination;

3. Participation at the destination;

4. Post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image;

5. Intention to revisit and recommend.

4.1 Formation of pre-image about the destination

Based on the work of Gunn (1972) and Clawson and Knetch (1966), during the "formation of a pre-image about the destination" stage, a traveler draws on previous knowledge as well as searches for appropriate destination information, which shapes the traveler's expectations.

Specifically in this stage, I was interested to determine how informants found out about the Arkhangelsk Region; what kind of previous knowledge they had about the Region; and what kind of secondary sources of information did they use prior to traveling to the destination. As was already noted in chapter 2, theoretical foundations, the pre-travel stage image can be organic and induced. An organic image is formed primarily by information from non-touristic, non-commercial sources. On the other hand, induced image is based on more commercial sources of information. It was interesting to determine what image tourists had before visiting the Arkhangelsk Region and how it effected their future image formation. According to Pizam and Mansfeld (1999), organic image is often characterized by some stereotypes and it is difficult to change. On the contrary, induced image can be changed by appropriate marketing efforts (Pizam & Mansfeld 1999).

4.1.1 Previous knowledge

Previous knowledge of a destination can be considered as an organic image that is based on non-commercial sources of information, such as, the opinions of family/friends, the media, and education (Echtner & Ritchie 1991).

In my study, some informants also stated that they found out about Arkhangelsk Region from friends and relatives or from reading books. For instance, Ben mentioned: "It's mostly from my friends, but I'd heard about Arkhangelsk before I got there. I saw books at least in Northern Norway but there was just very little about the Arkhangelsk Region."

Tom also acknowledged that:

My wife's sister took a 'round the world' cruise with her husband, and Solovki and Arkhangelsk were two of the places they visited. So, that was the first we heard about it [the Arkhangelsk Region] … After that, my wife read about it in some other contexts. She was reading about GULAG [Soviet forced labor camp] … The next discovery was through reading history.

Anna, on the other hand, found out about the Region during her study at the university: "I think when we started to study Russian, especially Russian history, we were also introduced to basic knowledge about the Russian North, and cross relation traditions between the Northern Norway and the Arkhangelsk Region."

Similarly, Veronica has heard about the Arkhangelsk Region because the college where she works cooperates with Arkhangelsk. She commented: "Yes, I have heard about Arkhangelsk, because there was a lot of cooperation between the college and Russia and Arkhangelsk was one of the main cooperation cities I think. So I've heard about it but it was not something …I didn't know exactly where it was."

Each of the informants had an organic image of the Arkhangelsk Region before they went there. They thus had some knowledge about it, although the knowledge was quite limited and it did not contain any information about the region as a travel destination. The next sub-stage relates to searches for appropriate information to help form a clearer image about a destination.

4.1.2 Search of promotional information

Search of promotional material can be considered as induced image that has been based on more commercial sources of information, such as travel brochures, travel agents and travel

guidebooks (Echtner & Ritchie 1991). In my study, informants explained that the search for promotional material about the Arkhangelsk Region as a destination was strongly connected with the purpose of the trip. This corresponds to Holloway and Humphrey's (2012) claim that different purposes of the trip have different sets of characteristics and that experiencing at a destination may differ for different groups of visitors. That is, the two informants who went there for business purposes were the ones that did not search for much information about it. Since the main reason for them to go there was business-related they were not so much interested in it as a travel destination. For example Philip stated: "I didn't read any promotional material before going there."

As explained, informants who travelled for leisure reasons tried to search for some information about the Region before the trip. Mostly they searched the information on the Internet. Anna said: "I checked some wikitravel pages, and also some other pages, probably Google, to find things to see and things to do in Arkhangelsk."

Ben also mentioned:

Yes of course I went to the Internet to find some videos about Arkhangelsk. It was mostly from the main attractions around Malye Karely, the Solovetsky Islands, and some attractions not far away from Arkhangelsk … It was one friend who gave me one page about Pomor land, it was an English web-page. There I read a little bit but I really did not know what to expect.

Some of informants noticed that there was not much information available in English or that it was difficult to find. For example, John noted that he had problems with finding information: "Even when I tried I couldn't find any. They might exist but I couldn't find it … I haven't seen any promotional material about it." Victor also stated: "I didn't see any tourist web-pages about the area."

It should be mentioned that a tourist web-page about the Arkhangelsk Region does exists, including an English version. However based on the informants' experiences, it appears to be difficult to find. This signals to destination marketers that they need to take some follow-up action.

4.1.3 Pre-image about the Arkhangelsk Region

Based on previous knowledge and further searches for appropriate promotional information about the Region, informants constructed a pre-image in their mind about this Region as a travel destination.

Informants in this research had little prior knowledge about the destination and the information that they did found was quite limited. Because of this, the image that informants had before their trip to the Arkhangelsk Region was not clear, most of them stated that they did not have any expectations before traveling to the destination. Over half of the informants had unclear ideas of what the region was like, which indicates the pre-image was underdeveloped and/or limited.

For example, Chris said: "Before travelling I didn't have like really a clear idea about the place… it was kind of an exotic place to go. I didn't have real idea." Tom similarly commented: "I did not really know what to expect … I would like to say that I did not have too strong picture." John mentioned: "Of course I've heard something about the city but not enough to form an opinion based on that." Victor stated: "I did not have any real expectations about the area, I was just very curious to see another country and its traditions."

Several informants had a stereotypical image in their minds, which was similarly applied to the whole of Russia or even the former Soviet Union. Ben described his pre-image as: "My image before I visited Arkhangelsk was something like big communistic block houses, some industry, but I also thought it was a really important city because it's on a picture of the 500 ruble and it's something really historic and special." John described: "It [the pre-image] was based on general expectations of Russia, some countryside in regions and countries, some soviet history."

Veronica expected to find more developed area:

I had heard from people who had been to Russia several times say that things were developing and it has been so much better in Russia now than it was maybe 10 or 20 years ago. And I was thinking, ok, if it's so much better, then my image was it looks like here [in Norway], it's similar. I expected more westernized areas than I experienced there.

Based on the interviews with the international tourists, the Arkhangelsk Region is not a well-known tourist destination. For most of the informants, it was quite difficult to form a pre-image about the destination, mostly because of a lack of appropriate information in

English or difficulty in finding it. It supports García-Rosell and Hakkarainen's (2013) claim that poor information support and unavailability of comprehensive information on web sites and portals are one of the major downsides in tourism development sector in the Arkhangelsk Region.

Again, the finding that the intention to search for any information about the destination was linked to the purpose of the trip corresponds to Holloway and Humphreys (2012) who investigate dependence of travel experiencing from purpose of the trip. In the group of informants in my study, leisure travelers were concerned about searching for promotional materials, however, business travelers did not care about searching for that.

For most of the informants, the image they had before the trip was organic, which was based on non-touristic, non-commercial sources. As a consequence, informants had a very vague picture in their mind or had a stereotypical image about the destination.

4.2 Travel to the destination

As discussed in chapter 2, theoretical foundations, the stage of actually travelling to a destination can be very important for a destination's image and may even serve to partly form the image of a destination.

Most of the informants in my study did not mention anything about travelling to the Arkhangelsk Region at all and only told me about their experience at the destination. Some of the informants mentioned about getting to the destination because they had faced some problems. Mostly they were not prepared for the kind of 'old' infrastructure that they encountered.

Philip noticed: "The airport experience was not very good. We could not check in, we had to just wait, wait. When we got to aircraft, the aircraft was delayed. What else I can say except that we were frozen during flight."

Veronica wondered:

I think it is maybe my own fault that I was not prepared enough for the trip actually. I was quite shocked when I came out into the airport in Tromsø and saw the old plane which was supposed to get me in Arkhangelsk. I was just shocked and surprised because it was such old plane and I was not aware of that.

Laila also stated:

The plane to Arkhangelsk, I think, was Soviet, the same with the plane from
Arkhangelsk to Solovki. It was an experience in itself. One more thing about
Arkhangelsk. I was not sure that it was Arkhangelsk. I mean maybe the airport is
different now, but since all announcements were in Russian, we even did not see a
sign on a building that it is Arkhangelsk. I had to ask to be sure that we were in
Arkhangelsk.

Thus, this stage was quite negative for some of informants. This is initial stage of the
actual trip experience and according to Hanlan, Fuller and Wilde (2006) can have a large
influence on the overall image about a destination. To minimize visitors' disappointment, it
may be necessary to improve infrastructure or at least provide accessible information to make
travelers aware of what they should expect.

4.3 Participation at the destination

This stage of participation at the destination includes all activities that tourists have at the
destination, including their experiences relating to accommodation, transport, food,
sightseeing and other services. It may also include interactions with other travelers. In my
research, most tourists traveled on their own, so they mostly did not interact with other
tourists. More interesting were interactions with local populations and what was their
perspectives of those interaction experiences and what levels of hospitality were
demonstrated.

4.3.1 Accommodation

Arkhangelsk region has a quite large selection of accommodation facilities. It includes a
variety hotels that meet European standards with regard to service level. Mostly such hotels
are located in Arkhangelsk. Tourists can also find a wide range of guest houses everywhere
in the region (Information Guide Arkhangelsk).

Most of the informants stayed in hotels in Arkhangelsk. Overall, they were quite
positive when speaking about accommodation experiences, especially room standards and
staff in the hotels.

For example, Philip described:

I enjoyed the hotel, I felt very comfortable. They gave me a lovely room. It was
almost like a lighthouse. It was wonderful. I do not think that people could do

more for me, they were so incredibly kind, so incredibly polite, whether because of my position but I really did enjoy them.

Victor also speaks warmly about the hotel experience:

The hotel we stayed in we came very early in the morning like about 7:00 am because of a train. After the train, we took a taxi, the taxi driver took us straight to the hotel, no problem. The person in the hotel on the front desk said "You should really check in at 2 o'clock but the room is available"… so we just went into the room. When we got to our room, we were at the back in the hotel without a view on the river, so we went down and said "might you give us a room with a view on the river" and she said "yes, no problem" and sent the maid to open the new room for us. So, the accommodation was excellent. The service was great, the rooms were nice. The hotel name was "Stolitsa Pomoria". It was right in the river that is why we had chosen it.

On a similar note, two of informants described experiences at a hotel in Solovetsky Islands. Laila mentioned: "On Solovki the hotel we stayed in was new, very simple, a lot of wood, really beautiful. The dinner room was just beautiful."

Anna, who was there for study purposes, lived in a special student dormitory. She stated: "I lived in a student dormitory. It was connected to the Norwegian center. It was like a student house, it was OK. It was like we expected."

Some informants' expectations were confirmed. Almost everyone had quite a positive experience related to accommodation facilities in the Arkhangelsk Region. Informants stated they were happy about levels of service, politeness and friendliness of staff, the rooms, hotel decorations, location of the hotels, and views from windows. All these characteristics helped them to enjoy their stay in the Arkhangelsk Region, which is a good point with regard to formation of a positive image.

4.3.2 Transportation

In terms of transportation in the Arkhangelsk Region most of the informants preferred to use taxis during their stays. They found public transport difficult to use mostly because of language problems.

For instance, John mentioned: "The problem is that if you want a seat on the bus it's a bit difficult if you don't speak language." Ben said: "When it comes to transportation. The

thing is that the Arkhangelsk Region is so big, so many places you don't know where it ends, what happens if you get a wrong bus, what should you do then!?"

Some of informants also mentioned that the transportation was not modern as noted in statements about planes in the previous section on the travel to a destination stage.

John commented: "I would say that the infrastructure looks old. Some buses I think were from the 50s, roads are not so good."

Several informants had used public transport, but in these cases, they had Russian friends with them or could understand Russian language.

For example, Anna recalled:

The transportation was a bit of a challenge, but again I spoke Russian, we managed and we had already had some experience with the Russian public transport, so it was fine, we even took a train to Moscow. We did not try to take the bus anywhere outside of Arkhangelsk. Our experience on the Russian train was very good. Travelling by train we got to meet a lot of Russian travelers, it was a very good experience.

In Arkhangelsk Region, informants mostly used taxis for transportation and the informants were satisfied with them. For most informants the use of public transport was problematic due to language problems. In addition, most of public transport in the region was considered to be associated with 'old' infrastructure, which created some negative thoughts in minds of travelers. From a tourism perspective, modernizing public transport and making it more accessible for international travelers may assist with the image formation of the destination for tourists.

4.3.3 Food experience

Food experiences are an important characteristic for any destination. Gastronomy or culinary elements play an initial role in the marketing of some tourist destinations. Food experiences are an essential part of a holiday experience, and it should be a pleasurable and memorable part of that experience (Kivela & Crotts 2006). In some ways, food experiences can determine the image of a place. Arkhangelsk offers a wide variety of different restaurants and cafes, which provide European and Pomor traditional cuisine (Information Guide Arkhangelsk). All informants in my study were very positive about their food experiences and talked about it with pleasure.

Most of them said that food in Russia, in particular, in Arkhangelsk, was delicious and they enjoyed their time in local restaurants.

Victor commented: "We ate a lot of good food. We found a restaurant that sells the best ice cream in the world. So we went there every day and had a lot of ice cream". He even stated: "The most memorable experience was ice-cream in the restaurant."

Laila was also very positive about the food experience: "We had a dinner at one of the restaurant, I think it was called a Pomor restaurant. It was beautiful, it was very light there. The food was so delicious there, almost every food I've ever had in Russia I loved, it is just delicious!" Chris also recalled his food experiences positively: "What relates to a positive experience? I think that food was really good. There were good restaurants in Arkhangelsk."

Some informants also acknowledged that there was quite a large choice of restaurants and cafes in Arkhangelsk with different kinds of food.

For instance, Ben recounted that:

Food in Arkhangelsk is incredibly good, so many good cafes and restaurants and so diverse. I was actually shocked how many restaurants and cafes you have. Sushi, pizza, hamburgers, an Argentinian restaurant, you have everything. I was in an American restaurant, Japanese, Czech, Italian with pizza, and traditional Russian restaurants, in particular, Pomor restaurants. And I also think I was in a Spanish one or Argentinian. Food is everywhere and the food is excellent I have to say.

John also said: "There were many cafes, the food was fine and service was better than I expected. It was nice that many places have decorations, it was nice to sit there, staff were polite and it was nice."

The only problem that informants stated was connected with language problems. Ben mentioned: "If you go to the restaurant all menus are in Russian."

All in all, food experiences were very positive and provided memorable experience for all of the informants. They enjoyed delicious food, a diverse choice of different cuisines, the atmosphere of local restaurants and their decors. It was great supplementation for formation of a positive image. According to my informants, the only aspect for improvement is to ensure English versions menus are available in restaurants..

4.3.4 Sightseeing

Sightseeing is a very important element in any travel experience and many authors consider it as central to the tourism process (Richards 2002). McKercher (2002) suggest that learning about the heritage and culture of a new place is a major reason to visit a destination. Therefore, sightseeing is an important component for tourists at any destination.

Most of the informants in my study told me they had visited attractions in Arkhangelsk and in adjacent areas during their stay. Two of the informants also had been in the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea as well as in Arkhangelsk.

When recalling their sightseeing experiences, informants stated that they mostly walked in the city center and along the Northern Dvina embankment, went to several museums, and visited the open-air museum of wooden architecture "Malye Karely" near Arkhangelsk. One informant also had a ski experience.

When reflecting on his sightseeing experience, Ben said:

This is something completely new for me. One of the things that really fascinated me was the wooden architecture in Arkhangelsk, even those in the city I have to say. It was very special for me to see all this traditional stuff that I didn't know existed. I was shocked and very fascinated.

Also John recalled:

Of course walking around the city. I like to walk around the city to get a feel of the city. Also skiing outside the city in the forest …We also went to this museum of the scientist Lomonov, I think in the village of Lomonosovo. We went by car there, saw the countryside, villages on the way and people. It was actually quite interesting to see the region, not only inside the city … And I also saw an open-air museum and wooden buildings. It was nice, a little bit like Northern Norway style. I think it was very beautiful. And for skiing. If even I was really bad at skiing, you really have good facilities. It was nice slopes, people were professional ... Also some museums I saw it was interesting especially about some parts of Russian history I did not know before. The city seems to have life always, I was surprised about life in the city, always people out on the streets.

Informants described it as interesting and exciting to be able to see something different from they were used to seeing, to learn something that they did not know and had not seen

before. This corresponds with Gray's travel-motivation theory (ref. in Jamrozy & Uysal 1994), which suggests that one of the motivations of people for travel is the desire to go to an unknown place and to discover something new.

Two of informants however did not find sightseeing the most interesting part of the trip. For example, Chris mentioned: "You have some rich history there, but you don't have like big sights to go." Philip who had been in Arkhangelsk for a business purpose said: "I went to business district, but I didn't really see much in the way of a cultural center. I don't have any memory or sense that would make me come back as a tourist." This can be related to research of Holloway and Humphreys (2012) who suggest that experiencing at destination may differ in dependence from purpose of the trip.

Sightseeing, thus, was an important and memorable experience for most of the tourists who participated in my study. Two of them, however, did not find it interesting enough. The approach to sightseeing can also be connected with the purpose of the trip. Those informants who came to Arkhangelsk for business did not have enough time to fully engage in sightseeing because their main reason for travel was business. For them, leisure and sightseeing were additional parts of their trip.

4.3.5 Language

The Russian language is based on Cyrillic alphabet and it is quite difficult to read for foreigners who have a different type of alphabet. Furthermore, English and other foreign languages are not so much widespread in Russia among local people, except for those for which it is a professional obligation. During the interviewing, the language barrier was brought up as the most important problem that prevented international tourists from traveling to the Arkhangelsk Region.

For example Ben who visited his friends in Arkhangelsk said:

> For me Russia is pretty much a hard country to travel in because you don't understand the language … I have to say without my friends it would never have happened. That is for sure. There were very few people who spoke English … So the main problem is communication; it is hard for foreigners to travel.

Some informants commented that Russia, and in particular, Arkhangelsk was a hard place to travel if you are individual tourist.

John stated:

Some people spoke English, but very, very few. So I think if you want to travel there you should know some basic Russian. You need to be able read it if you want to do some shopping, you have to know the money, know some numbers, express some basic feelings. Even if you know some basic things and you can ask something in Russian, when things are not always working as you want. I think it is a big challenge, if you are independent tourist, if you go with a group of course it is different, because there is a tourist guide to take care of you.

Laila also noted: "The main negative is the lack of people speaking English. You can imagine it if you travel by your own without a guide, even if I know a little bit of Russian, I can read a little bit, but I can't really understand too much, so that is the main negative."

Subsequently, most of the informants recounted how difficult it was for them to travel to Russia because of the language problem.

When relating to workers of tourism industry, however, it was different. For example in hotels or some tourist information services, the staff could speak English and when it comes to this aspect of the trip, the interviewed tourists were quite satisfied.

Laila described her experience in the Solovetsky Islands: "We went to the visitor center, and there was a woman there who spoke English, she had very good English, she was very nice, very friendly and helpful." Veronica also mentioned "At the hotel, people who worked there spoke English, and very good English. So when I communicated with people who worked in tourism industry I didn't experience any trouble."

Only one informant had an absolutely different opinion about the language. He did not consider language as a problem, which would prevent him from traveling and represented a different way of thinking about tourism and who is responsible for 'adaptig' to a destination. Victor replied:

The problem with communication is my problem. I am in Russia, I should speak Russian. People were … you know when you speak with them in English or a few Russians they tried to understand and help. No problem with communication. I can say that I do not speak Russian, so it is not a negative to Arkhangelsk. It is negative for me. The people who work at the hotel spoke English, so it was not problem there, and taxi drivers spoke a little English.

Mostly the interviewed international tourists considered the Arkhangelsk Region as a hard place to travel as individual tourist because of the language. People who worked in the

tourism industry were able to speak at least some English, so it was a positive moment. However, when considering shops, restaurants, and communication with the local populations, especially when tourists need some help, language problem exists.

4.3.6 Hospitality

King (1995) defines hospitality as a relationship between host and guest. This relationship can be commercial and social. Commercial hospitality occurs when a host provides the guest with different types of services, including offering food, drink, sleeping accommodation and/or entertainment. Social hospitality occurs as a more equal interaction when a guest can contribute to the relationship to the host in some way (King 1995).

Elements of commercial hospitality were partly described in the sections discussing accommodation, food and transport experiences. Mostly informants recounted their experience of communication with local people during their trip, which can be considered as a kind of social hospitality.

In spite of language problems, most of the informants described Russian people that they met as very nice and helpful even if they could not speak any English.

Chris noticed: "I think that locals were quite helpful. So every time we asked something they always tried to help."

In fact, some informants found their experience relating to relationships and communication with local Russian people the most important experience during their visit.

As, Ben appreciated:

The most memorable thing I can say was when my friend took me to his home where his mother and grandmother lived. It was my first time ever in a Russian home. They were so hospitable, really made me feel good. For me it was very fascinating. The apartment was full of love, it brought up a lot of memories, actually it was a very huge contrast with how you grow up in Norway and live in an apartment. That is something that I really appreciated. So it is my most memorable experience.

John also acknowledged that for him meeting locals and trying to communicate with them was a very important experience: "The most memorable thing was actually the New Year party with local people. Talking to people, seeing how ordinary people celebrate one of the biggest party of the year in Russia."

Philip also mentioned that one of the memorable experiences in Arkhangelsk were interactions with local people: "Kindness of people, they wanted to help me, they wanted to practice their English. I felt extremely welcome."

Laila provided one observation about Russian people: "Another interesting thing is the big difference between young and old people. Young people are more friendly, they are more open. Older people who have lived during the Soviet times they are closed, they are abrupt."

Some of informants tried to compare Arkhangelsk with Moscow and St. Petersburg and found it much more friendly and a safe city to travel.

Victor recalled: "If you go to Moscow or St. Petersburg it's different. If you go to Arkhangelsk, it is Russia, where Russian people live. People want you to start talking to them, and were very, very friendly. So that's my impression of the city." Philip also mentioned: "I felt completely safe in Arkhangelsk, completely. Nobody was stressing to me. I have been in Moscow, and I found Moscow very stressing. In Arkhangelsk, it has the feeling of very safe town."

So, in spite of language barrier most of the informants found Russian people very hospitable and helpful. For some of them to meet and to see and to talk with local people was the most memorable part of the trip.

The participation in a destination stage is quite extensive. It includes a lot of components of different kinds of experiences that informants had in the Arkhangelsk Region. Each of the components had a direct impact on image modification. During this stage, tourists engaged in actual experiences in the destination and their image started to change with regard to their pre-travel image. Most of informants were very positive about their accommodation and the level of services they received there. All of informants enjoyed the local food and found it very tasty and memorable. Tourists found the Arkhangelsk Region an interesting destination from the point of view of sightseeing, except those who were on a business trip. Transportation was considered quite problematic with regard to the use of public transport, although informants were satisfied with using taxis. The language barrier was the most important problem for most of the informants, but in spite of this they found local people very hospitable and kind. This fact presumes that the language is not an insurmountable problem to traveling to the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination. According to the Agency for International Tourism and Cooperation of the Arkhangelsk Region (2014) the main problems of tourism industry of the Arkhangelsk Region are infrastructure, insufficient number of qualified personnel and language barrier. Some of these

problems were mentioned by informants, in particular transportation as kind of infrastructure and language problem.

4.4 Post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image

The post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image stage refers to tourists reflecting on their trip experiences. This stage occurs after the trip has concluded and when tourists start remembering and recalling their experiences. During this stage, travelers conclude whether their expectations meet their actual experience, and whether their image remains the same or different after the trip in comparison with what it was before.

In my research project, I found that informants said their image about the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination had changed significantly from pre- to post travel. This corresponds to Gunn (1972) who suppose that destination image develops and changes over each of the stages of travel experience. In the section focusing on formation of pre-travel image, informants did not have a clear idea about it or had stereotypical images. After the trip, almost all of them had a clear image about the Arkhangelsk Region and for most of them the image had become more positive in comparison to what it had been prior to the visit.

For instance, Ben commented:

Of course it [the image] changed. It changed because it was a city I did not know, for me it was just a place where my friends live, to be honest I didn't know what to expect. My image now I can say is very positive, much better. The image I have now of Arkhangelsk is that it is a very, very cultural area, in fact it was so much culture there that I was choked. For me, maybe I was expected something like a communistic city, some kind of industry, but now I see that it is not like this at all. After my trip to Arkhangelsk, it became really relevant, because I see that the whole area of the Arkhangelsk Region is so diverse, so many cultures, so many sights, so many small places, stores.

Anna reflected:

Yes, it was changed. I think it is, again my general impression, when I've been travelling often your stereotypes are confirmed but you also I guess get some other perspective because you see so many things that do not fit these stereotypes, you see things that you didn't really expect. Yes, now I have a much broader understanding of the Arkhangelsk Region and people who live there.

Veronica similarly said:

It became more… You can see it more clearly. Before I did not have any image. I was just thinking about Arkhangelsk like a place in Russia. Now I know how it looks like and I know something about topography, I know about people living there. Archangelsk is really something else.

Victor described:

Before I went there I didn't really have any idea about what Arkhangelsk was going to be like. Having been there, I still have a small idea because I was there just for four days, but at least I know now a little bit what this area is, a little bit about the city. It has changed because now I know more information… Now I understand that the Arkhangelsk city is a bigger place than I thought it was, with more history than I knew. The area itself, I didn't explore much outside of the Arkhangelsk city, I don't know much about surrounding areas, but my impressions is it's an interesting place, it's real Russia, you know. If you go in Moscow or St. Petersburg it's different. If you go to Arkhangelsk, it is Russia, where Russian people live.

According to Jenkins (1999), post-image can remain the same or become different. In the case of this research, the image was modified for all informants, mostly in a more positive direction. Accordingly, image congruence and satisfaction about the travel experience require discussion.

In this research project, it is problematic to talk about congruence because mostly tourists had quite a vague image before the trip or did not have one at all and they did not state if it was a positive or negative expectation they held. I define this as positive incongruity, which occurs if an individual had a negative image of a destination while the actual experience was positive. This corresponds with a statement by Jani and Hwang (2011:342) that "if the pre-travel image is very low compared with what the destination has to offer, then the chances of potential tourists choosing to visit that destination are lower". Positive incongruity relates to satisfaction about travel experience. It informs us that marketers should create a clearer image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination, otherwise unclear and vague images may prevent potential tourists traveling there.

Since the-post image became more positive in comparison with the pre-image, consideration of positive disconfirmation, which according to expectancy disconfirmation theory by Oliver (1980) means that outcomes after the trip were higher than expectations before, can be done. In chapter 2, theoretical foundations, positive disconfirmation relates to satisfaction of the travel experience.

These two characteristics of congruence and satisfaction were not measured in this research, but their understanding helped to make conclusions about reflection of informants regarding their travel experiences. Since tourists were satisfied about their travel experience it is high likelihood that they will decide to come to the destination in future and will recommend it to other people to visit.

4. 5. Intention to revisit and recommend.

The previous stage associated with the formation of post-image has a significant impact on future revisit intentions and word-of-mouth recommendation. Satisfaction with a travel experience can reinforce tourists to purchase such tourist products again as well as recommend it to others. According to the previous section, most of informants were satisfied with their travel experiences.

4.5.1 Intention to revisit

Most of informants expressed a desire to travel back to the Arkhangelsk Region in the future. Most of them said they would want to see some other things in the Region, not only Arkhangelsk and the places they have already visited. Those informants who have been in the region in winter or late autumn wanted to experience it in another season when there was no snow.

Ben said:

Yes. I will travel there again. But next time I think I will not just travel to meet my friends, I think I will travel to see more touristic stuff. One thing that I want to do – is to try to arrange a trip on a Russian train. Then of course to visit some strange villages, towns, down the Dvina River. Just be a tourist. Actually, I want to visit the Arkhangelsk Region if it is in spring or autumn, when there is no snow. Yes, I want to travel there again!"

Anna exclaimed: "I would love to go back to Arkhangelsk. As I mentioned, I would love to see the Solovetsky Islands. It will be nice to go back and be a bit more like a tourist."

Some of informants were still struggling because of the language problem. Veronica said: "I think if I could travel with someone who speaks Russian I think it could be very interesting. But I think it would be very hard to go there by my own because of the language and because few people speak English. It's a difficult place to travel on your own."

One of informants was unsure about any revisit intention: "I hope so but I don't know. I have some other parts of the world to travel."

The informants were mostly willing to revisit the Arkhangelsk Region again in future. They found the Arkhangelsk Region an interesting place to visit and they were willing to explore it more extensively and find out more about it.

4.5.2 Intention to recommend

'Word of mouth' recommendations include all informal communications from other consumers to potential consumers about particular goods and services. Unsurprisingly, favorable 'word of mouth' increases the probability of purchase, while negative 'word of mouth' has the opposite effect (Litvin et al. 2008). Subsequently, a positive image of a tourist destination will increase the probability of previous visitors to recommend it to others.

Overall, the informants in my study had a positive image of the Arkhangelsk region after the trip and most of them were willing to recommend it as a place for others to go see.

Ben stated: "I'm going actually to tell people to go there." Anna similarly commented: "I will definitely recommend people to go there."

As well as a willingness to recommend travel to the Arkhangelsk Region to their friends and relatives, informants had opinions regarding the category of tourists for whom the Arkhangelsk Region would be interesting and exciting destination to go. Since tourists have different goals for travel, what category of tourists did informants consider would be interested in the Arkhangelsk Region.

Most of informants suggested that the Region would definitely be interesting for tourists who are interested in Russian history and culture, and also for those who are seeking something different, even exotic, as well as for people who like nature. In addition, they commented that the Arkhangelsk region is not the place for mass tourism.

Veronica intimated: "I think people who are interested in history and society. People who don't want and necessarily need comfort, the western comfort, who can enjoy things, which are different from things you have at home."

Anna suggested: "I would recommend it to people who are interested in some things out of the ordinary. Someone, who is interested in going somewhere that everyone doesn't see and who are willing to challenge themselves."

Laila similarly said:

Someone who is interested in places "off the beaten track". It is not a big tourist destination, it's not Moscow, it's not St. Petersburg. If you are interested in places that are a little different, you have a different experience. "Off the beaten track" are places that are not so popular, but are definitely worth seeing.

Informants had positive intentions to recommend the Arkhangelsk Region to others. They also gave some recommendation relating to what kind of tourists would find the Region interesting. Most of them stated that the Arkhangelsk region was an interesting place to visit for those who were seeking something different and exotic, and who were interested in places "off the beaten track."

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the research for this Master's thesis, I aimed to understand how the image of the Arkhangelsk Region was developed and modified by international tourists during the different stages of a visit. Nine interviews were conducted with international tourists and data from these interviews were analyzed to address the research question.

In Chapter 2, theoretical foundations, models of image modification processes were presented. The chapter discussed two models in particular, Gunn's seven-phase' model of the travel experience (1972) and Clawson and Knetch's recreational behavior five-phase model (1966). On the basis of these two models, I created a modified model of image modification process, which I applied in the research reported in this thesis. The modified model is constituted of five stages of image modification:

1. formation of pre-image about the destination;
2. travel to the destination;
3. participation at the destination;
4. post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image;
5. intention to revisit and recommend.

In chapter two, theoretical foundations, it was noted that an image can remain the same during visitation or can be modified (Jenkins 1999). My research concluded that the image of the Arkhangelsk Region was modified significantly from the pre-travel to post-travel stage. This corresponds with a statement by Gunn, who suggested that an image of a destination changes during each of the stages of a tourist's travel experience (1972).

In general, the pre-travel image of the Arkhangelsk Region the informants in this study held was unclear and vague or stereotypical. Most of informants had little previous knowledge and they also stated that it was quite difficult to find appropriate information in English about the destination. The business travelers I interviewed did not try to find any information before the trip because for them, the main goal of the trip was business. Leisure travelers discovered that available information was limited. As a consequence, most informants did not know what to expect from the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination.

The travel to the destination stage was mentioned by on a few informants. Comments were associated with problems relating to transportation. Some of informants were not prepared for or were disappointed by 'old' kinds of infrastructure.

The participation at the destination stage covered a wide range of activities that were described by informants in detail, including accommodation, transportation, experiences relating to food, sightseeing, language and hospitality.

All of informants were quite positive about accommodation facilities in the Arkhangelsk Region. They enjoyed the rooms, the location of hotels, the decorations and the views from windows. They were satisfied with the level of service and politeness of staff. Food experiences were also considered as a very positive experience by all informants. Some of them stated that food was one of the most memorable experiences during the trip. The large choice of different restaurants, delicious foods, engaging atmosphere of local restaurants and their decor were mentioned by informants as positive moments associated with local cuisine. The only problem encountered was an absence of English menus in restaurants. Sightseeing experience were also very positive for most informants. They stated that it was interesting and exciting to see and to get to know something different to that which they were used. They were interested in finding out more about local culture and history, they enjoyed nature, and local architecture. Only those who have visited the Arkhangelsk Region for a business purpose did not find sightseeing exciting enough. This may have been related to leisure and sightseeing being additional parts of their trip, when the main goal was business. All of these can be considered as contributing to the formation of a positive image.

On the other hand, transportation was not viewed in a positive manner. Most of the informants in this study used taxis, with which they were satisfied. However, if they wanted to use public transport it was problematic for them because of language issues. Additionally, some of the informants mentioned that the existing public transport represented a kind of 'old' infrastructure. This elicited some negative thoughts regarding transportation.

All in all, language problems were acknowledged as a main negative of the destination. Most informants stated that it was difficult to travel to the Arkhangelsk Region in Russia independently. As the same time, though, informants did not encounter any problems with workers of tourism industry, because they are able to speak English. But communicating with locals was problematic. But in spite of this fact, informants considered local Russian people very hospitable and helpful. Some of informants commented that their experiences seeing how local people lived and trying to communicate with them was the most memorable experiences of the trip.

The stage of post-travel evaluation and formation of post-image relates to travelers reflecting on their tourist experiences, particularly, whether the pre-image is the same or different after a trip. In this research, the image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination changed significantly between pre- and post travel. Initially, the pre-image of the destination was unclear. After the trip, almost all informants had a clear image about the

Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination. All of them mentioned that the image had become more positive in comparison to what it had been prior to the visit.

A positive post image about the region generated positive intentions to revisit and recommend to the others. Most of informants said they were willing to come back to the Arkhangelsk Region again and to see other parts of it. Most of them would recommend the Region to their friends and relatives as a destination to visit. They also recommended that the Arkhangelsk region is not a place for mass tourism, instead it is a place for those who want to get see and to know something different, it is kind of exotic place to travel.

The image of the Arkhangelsk Region was modified through five stages of the proposed model of image modification process.

Of particular interest for me were the descriptive words that informants used when they described their pre- and post-image and what associations they had about this destination before and after the trip. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. International tourists' pre/post image and association about the Arkhangelsk Region

Pre-travel	Post-travel
Unclear	Clearer
Vague	More realistic
No real idea	Much broader understanding
Stereotypic	More positive
Communistic	Adventure discovering
Unknown	A lot of cultural and history
Don't know what to expect	Nature and wilderness
Curious	Something different
Cold	Out of ordinary
	Off a beaten track
	Exotic

The image of Arkhangelsk Region shifted from a vague, unclear and stereotypical image to a clearer and realistic image. Importantly, this latter image was a more positive image. When describing their post-image, most informants stressed the differences between what they saw in the Arkhangelsk Region with what they were used to seeing at home. When

describing the region they used words, such as, "something different," "exotic," "unique," "off the beaten track," and "out of the ordinary." Such difference and kind of 'exoticism' may be described as an attribute of the region in order to attract tourists. As already mentioned, the Region is probably not best suited as a mass tourism destination, but rather for those who are seeking something different.

My research findings contribute a better understanding of congruence and satisfaction related to post-image evaluation compared to pre-travel expectations. For the Arkhangelsk Region, the difference between pre and post-image was significant and exhibits positive incongruity, which occurs when an individual has a negative pre-image of a destination and the actual experience is positive. This signals to marketers to redevelop the image of the region because of the current 'vague and unclear' image may hinder potential tourists from traveling there when the actual image of the region is very positive. Most informants were satisfied with their travel experiences to the Arkhangelsk Region.

This research contributes information for future destination image development in the Arkhangelsk Region. The destination image of the Arkhangelsk Region was positive for all of international tourists informants. The Region was deemed a very interesting and a unique destination for visitation by them. Existing problems, such as, language and 'old' infrastructure were not the main barrier to travel there; instead the main problem was the lack of clarity regarding what the region is about. Based on the research reported in this thesis, the development of more relevant and easily accessible pre-image related resources and materials by marketers would make the Arkhangelsk Region more attractive as a destination to potential international tourists.

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Appendix A

Interview guide (for international tourists)

I.   Background information

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background? Where are you from? Your age, marital status, education, occupation?
2. Have you travelled a lot in your life? (internationally)

II.   Before the trip

1. What was the reason for your trip to the Arkhangelsk Region?
2. How did you find out about the Arkhangelsk Region?
3. Did you read any promotional material about the Arkhangelsk Region? If so, which?
4. Did you see any tourist web-pages of the Arkhangelsk Region? If so, which?
5. What was the image about the Arkhangelsk Region you had before visiting it?
6. What was your image based on?

III.   During the trip

1. How long have you been in the Arkhangelsk Region? With whom did you travel?
2. What have you been doing during your trip?
3. Have you had any positive experience in the Arkhangelsk Region?
4. Have you had any negative experience in the Arkhangelsk Region?
5. What can you say about your experience related to:
     - infrastructure? (accommodation, transport, food)
     - tourists resources? (places of interest, their statement)
     - relationship and communication with local population?
6. What experiences were the most important and memorable for you during your visit?

IV.   After the trip

1. What image about the Arkhangelsk Region do you have now?

2. How have your thoughts (images, associations) about the Arkhangelsk Region changed after the trip? And why?

3. Which associations come to your mind when you think about the Arkhangelsk Region as a travel destination now?

4. How do you think who is the perfect tourist for the Arkhangelsk Region? Who can you recommend should visit it?

5. Would you plan to go travel in the Arkhangelsk Region again?

Appendix B

Request for participation in research project
"The image of the Arkhangelsk Region as a tourism destination"

Background and Purpose

The main purpose of the research is to understand "How does international tourists' image about the Arkhangelsk Region (Russia) correspond with the image the Region' tourism industry present?" One of the sub-question of this research is "How do international tourists who have been in the Arkhangelsk Region perceived it as a tourist destination?" This project is master project at the University of Tromsø in Norway and it is held by student (Ekaterina Khudyakova) from Arkhangelsk Region (Russia).

People who are invited for participation in project can be from any country (except Russia) who have been in the Arkhangelsk Region and have had some tourist experience there.

What does participation in the project imply?

Data collection is going to be gathered in the form of interviews "face to face" or over Skype. Approximate duration of interview is about 30 minutes. Questions will concern about trip experience, images or associations informants have about the Arkhangelsk Region before, during and after their trip and how does it change. Audio tape recorder is going to be used to record answers.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only me and my supervisor (Trine Kvidal, associate professor at the University of Tromsø) will have access to personal data and your answers. I'm not going to use your name in the research. I will ask only short information about your background (age, marital status, education, occupation) for common statistic. Data will be stored at my personal computer until the completion of the research (May 2015). After this all recordings and personal data will be deleted.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be deleted.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact:

Master student: Ekaterina Khudyakova (Tel.: +47(45112969); e-mail: khudjakva-katja@rambler.ru)

Supervisor: associate professor at the Institute for Tourism and Northern Studies **-** Trine Kvidal (e-mail: trine.kvidal@uit.no)

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Consent for participation in the study

Consent may be attained in writing or verbally.

If you would like to make it in writing form you can sign it below.

I have received information about the project and I am willing to participate

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(signed by participant, date)