

Bacheloroppgave - BAC 3100

# Examining Norway's destination image and French tourists' travel choice behavior

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Implications for destination organizations

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## **Abstract**

The study of destination images (DI) has become increasingly important as the competition between destinations has increased. Practitioners and researchers have therefore highlighted the importance of the marketing of destinations; in fact the creation of positive destination image has been claimed to affect the very viability of destinations. This is due to the commonly accepted notion that images affect travel choice behavior. It is also commonly accepted that images are complex in nature and consist of many different dimensions and components. Furthermore, several authors have found that different components and dimensions of the DI construct have varying effect in different kinds of destinations. Thus, this study aims at contributing to the destination image literature, by assessing the images of Norway held by the French and examining what effects DI (and its components) have on French tourist choice behavior.

A quantitative e-survey was conducted, through the use of the social media, Facebook. 103 usable questionnaires were collected, which resulted in a 29,4 % response rate. A convenience sample was used, which is a limitation of the study.

The results indicate that the French perceive Norway as a nature based destination, with a focus on activities in nature and an atmosphere in one with the nature. This is consistent with the marketing efforts of Norway. Several of the components had different effects on travel choice behavior, as the literature proposed. Items of the cognitive components, the infrastructure and urban construct, had a significant relationship with intention to travel. Items such “good nightlife and entertainment”, “opportunity to learn about a new culture” and “convenient transportation” impact the intention to travel for the French. From an importance – performance analysis performed in this study, the results indicated once again that there were items from the infrastructure and urban construct that was deemed important by the French respondents in selecting a holiday destination.

Thus, the results indicated that there is a fairly high level of attractiveness with the French sample and Norway. However, several items of the cognitive component, infrastructure and urban items should be more of focus in the marketing efforts aimed at the French market, since these items are important to the French and because they affect the travel choice behavior. It is therefore recommended that tangible and physical aspects, such as transportation, accommodation and other facilities receive more attention in the future in the marketing strategies of Norway aimed at the French.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The tourism industry is seeing a steady growth each year, and the industry has exploded from a mere 25 million in 1950 to 800 million arrivals in 2000 (UNWTO). This makes the tourism industry the industry with the most remarkable growth in the world (UNWTO). Both academics and practitioners have realized the importance of the marketing of destinations due to the growing competition between destinations, the growing number of destinations and the ease of travel (Pike and Ryan, 2004). Marketing and branding techniques are strategies used by the destination marketing organizations in an attempt to differentiate and position themselves in an increasingly competitive environment (Pike et al., 2004; Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). One way of differentiating and favorably positioning the destination in the minds of the consumer, is by creating positive images (Pike et al., 2004; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). Several researchers claim that positive images or perceptions held by the tourist will attract potential travelers, due to the commonly accepted notion that positive images influence a tourists' choice behavior (McCartney, Butler and Bennett, 2009). In fact it is suggested that positive images can affect the very viability of destinations (Pike et al., 2004).

In recent years the Norwegian government has expanded their investments in the tourism industry. The money invested in the marketing of Norway doubled from 2005 till 2008, and in 2008 the government created the "National strategy for the tourism industry" in cooperation with the governmental departments and the industry (Næring og handelsdepartementets Reiselivsstrategi). It is clear that the marketing of nature as the main asset Norway has to offer is the focus of the strategy. The positioning, differentiating and branding strategies of Norway are "experiences in nature", therefore the Norwegian slogan is "Norway, powered by nature". In an international and European perspective Norway has a very small percentage of the total arrivals, 0,45 % and 0,88 % respectively (Næring og handelsdepartementets Reiselivsstrategi). European countries account for 52 % and the French has a 4 % share of international arrivals in Norway (Nøkkeltall, 2009). In the national marketing strategies of 2011 there are 15 countries which are of investment focus at the moment, France being one of them. These are countries or regions where the resources for marketing will be invested, and the goal is to increase arrivals from these countries (Innovasjon Norge). The marketing activities directed at the French have, as all others, a focus on the possibility of experiences in nature (Innovasjon Norge). City experiences are not a focus in the marketing of Norway and up until now been viewed as the gate to Norway, not an attraction in itself, as it is stated in the strategy (Næring og handelsdepartementets Reiselivsstrategi). From a market research

conducted in 2009 it is claimed that most French are interested in visiting Norway on the basis of experiencing the natural and cultural attractions, yet in their market statistics nearly an equal percentage of the tourists said they are in Norway to visit cities (Innovasjon Norge). It would therefore be interesting to assess and measure what implications and effects the current marketing strategy of Norway has on the potential French tourists' choice in Norway as a holiday destination.

### **1.1 Research area, objectives and aim**

The research area of this paper is: *“What effects does destination image have on the French tourists' choice of Norway as a tourist destination?”*

This study aims at contributing to the understanding of images and its complex nature. Further it will assess the effects of images by measuring the French image of Norway as a tourist destination, and then discuss the implications of these images both from a demand perspective (the tourist) and supply perspective (the destination). The purpose of this paper is therefore both descriptive and causal, where it will firstly discover and describe the images held by the French and then further elaborate on this by assessing whether there is a connection between the image and intention to travel to Norway and lastly discuss what implications these findings have for the destination organizations. The findings will contribute to the study of image research, as well as being interesting for further research for the destination organizations. The results can also be used in marketing strategies and planning for the destination organization aimed at the French tourist.

### **1.2 Outline of the study**

The paper will first review general marketing and branding literature. This will be done to give context to the research area. Although marketing and branding techniques are not an aim in itself in this paper, it is important to understand the complex nature of marketing destinations. Furthermore the paper will review past image literature and its related subjects, such as the formation of images and the selection process. This will be done in an attempt to shine light on the various aspects of destinations images. Once the literature has been reviewed the paper will continue on with explaining choices made in the methodology and how the survey has been conducted. The paper will end with a discussion on the results found, and their implications for the destination organizations.

## **2.0 Literature review**

Both academics and practitioners have argued for the importance of destination or tourism marketing, due to the growing competition in the market today and the shifted importance of the service industry as opposed to traditional industry in many countries (Skinner, 2008). Due to the growing competition and the changes in the environment one of the greatest challenges that have arisen is the effective marketing of destinations (Echtner et al., 1991). Thus, there has been a large amount of research in this area since the 1970's covering themes such as destination branding, the management of brands, place management, city branding, country of origin effects, destination image and so on (Skinner, 2008; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). As globalization and international transactions have increased, so has the competitiveness of places. This has in turn led to an increase in the traditional marketing techniques in the promotion of destinations (Baker and Cameron, 2008). Strong destination brands may result in decreased marketing costs for existing customers, lower cost for attracting new customers (Tasci et al., 2006), as well as not only attracting tourists, but also other investments and industry in the region (Skinner, 2008). This research paper will firstly review past destination marketing and branding literature. This will be done to give context to the aim of the research paper "the effects of destination image on tourists' selection of Norway as a tourist destination". Although branding and marketing techniques are not an aim in itself in this paper, the author finds it important to have a thorough understanding of the complex nature of marketing destinations. Secondly, the paper will review destination image literature and its construct and components in an attempt to find a suitable definition, and to investigate the complex nature of images. In addition, the formation process of images and the selection process will be discussed, before leading on to a discussion on the focus in the present study.

### **2.1 Background – Destination Marketing**

In the marketing and branding literature there is confusion and ambiguity regarding the terms and definitions used. The term often used is "destination marketing" or "destination branding", although it has been argued that the word "place" would be more encompassing and cover more than just the tourism industry in the region (Skinner, 2008). However the word "destination" is still the most widely used term in the tourism marketing literature and the word "place" occurs most frequently in the business literature (Skinner, 2008). Due to the aim of this research paper, "the effects of *tourism* marketing", it is most suitable to use the term "destination", since marketing will be looked at in a tourism perspective. The term



destination will in this article, as in many others, cover the study of large entities, for example countries or regions (Echtner et al., 1991); it will not cover individual cities, resorts or attractions within the nation.

Brand is defined as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Morgan et al., 2004: 41). In addition to this it is also stated that the brand gives a promise of value, and creates feelings and associations about the product or service (Morgan et al., 2004). There has been a great deal of research on the topic of branding, both in general marketing literature and in the tourism literature (Baker et al., 2008; Hankinson, 2007; Hankinson, 2009; Morgan et al., 2004; Skinner, 2008; Tasci et al., 2006). In the literature, it is commonly accepted that branding aids in differentiating products or services from those of the competitors, and they emphasize the great need for this in the growing competition in the market (Tasci et al., 2006). It is a marketing tool used to place the product or service in the minds of the customer, with unique characteristics and attributes that evoke emotion and adds value and a link between the target market and the brand (Tasci et al., 2006). Destination branding is therefore claimed to be the “selection and strategic combination of a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building” (Tasci et al., 2006:302). Destination branding is the activity of which a destination organization communicates with its target market through directed promotional techniques to create a bond between the customer and the brand (the destination), telling the customer who it is and how it wants to be seen (Skinner, 2008).

In the past, traditional branding theories have been the topic of research in the tourism marketing literature. However it is now widely acknowledged that the tourism product is more complex than that of consumer goods (Hankinson, 2009). First of all, it is not possible to separate the national culture and the brand. The national identity, culture and the brand is strongly linked together. For this reason, a destination never starts on a “zero base”. Unlike a new launched product, there will already exist images and stereotypes of the destination (Skinner, 2008). Secondly, the tourism product is complex in the way that it consists of several facilities, infrastructure, services, attractions and venues, all being produced by a multiplicity of individual businesses, both public and private (Hankinson, 2009). Because of the complexity in destinations, challenges in ownership arises, where normally there is not one organization which has total control of the product, but rather several different

organizations, small and large businesses and other stakeholders (Baker et al., 2008). Furthermore, it has been argued that due to the main differences in products and services, the management of a brand in service industries would be very different from the management of product brands. This is due to the characteristics of services; inseparability, intangibility, services being perishable and the heterogeneity of services (Tasci et al., 2006). The different services, attractions and facilities would be consumed simultaneously by different target markets, with different needs and with their own unique expectations in mind, leading to less control over the experience by the destination marketers (Hankinson, 2009). Lastly, due to the multi-faceted nature of the destination product, different destinations (and their brands) will have very different meaning to different target groups (Hankinson, 2007).

Since the 1980's environmental changes, such as a growth in larger cooperation with many different product lines, fierce competition, technology and communication advances and globalization, has resulted in organizations reevaluating the value of their brands (Hankinson, 2007). This led to a focus on corporate brands as opposed to individual product brands (Hankinson, 2007). Due to the complexity of destinations and the management of destination brands, several researchers have looked into the similarities of managing corporate brands and destination brands (Hankinson, 2009). There are several similarities between destination brands and corporate brands. First of all, they both have to interact with several stakeholders at the same time with different objectives, and they both have to communicate with these stakeholders with different points of contact and channels. Thirdly, both corporations and destinations have an over-arching function, where they manage several different activities, products and services at once. And last but not least, both have to manage serving different target markets, with different needs, who consume the product simultaneously (Hankinson, 2009). Hankinson (2007) therefore found, through a review of corporate brand literature, five guiding principles in managing destination brands; (1) Strong, visionary leadership (2) A brand oriented organizational culture (3) Departmental co-ordination and process alignment (4) Consistent communications across a wide range of stakeholders (5) Strong, compatible partnerships. These guiding principles are very similar to Baker et al. (2008) success factors in managing destination brands; strategic orientation, destination identity and image and stakeholder involvement.

The literature review above shows the complexity in the marketing of destinations, and there has been much debate over what management techniques are found to be most successful (Baker et al., 2008; Hankinson, 2007 and Hankinson, 2009). One of the greatest challenges

for destination marketers today is to differentiate their product and favorably position themselves in the minds of the customer. One key to this is to create a positive perception, or image, of their destination (Echtner et al., 1991).

## **2.2 Destination image**

As discussed above, the massive growth in the tourism industry the last fifty years or so has led to great competitiveness between tourism organizations (Echtner et al., 1991). Due to increased leisure time, higher levels of disposable income and advancement in transportation technologies consumers are able to travel more than ever before. In addition to this, the growth in tourism activities has led to expanded tourism choices (for example in developing countries) available to the consumer (Echtner et al., 1991). These changes in the environment have influenced the way marketing and management techniques are carried out by the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). Consumers are now being bombarded with promotion and advertisement campaigns, and in this way being over-exposed to great amounts of information (Pike et al., 2004). Images can therefore be explained as representing “a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are the product of the mind trying to process and essentialize huge amounts of data about a place” (Pike et al., 2004:334). The way marketers can cut through all the information, is by serving the consumer with simplified, to the point and concentrated messages which are differentiated and appealing to the desires and needs of the target group (Pike et al., 2004). The DMOs must therefore know their consumers and their perceptions of the destination to be able to make strategically good choices in marketing and planning (Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010).

There has been much research conducted in the area of destination image (DI) since the 1970's, and since then it has become one of the most researched topics in tourism marketing literature (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). The studies cover a large spectrum of topics such as; conceptualization and dimensions of DI (Tasci et al., 2006; Stepchenkova et al., 2010; Echtner et al., 1993; McCartney et al., 2009; Lin, Mourais, Kersetter and Hou, 2007), assessment and measurement of DI (Echtner et al., 1993; Echtner et al., 1991), formation of images (Gartner, 1993), DI, destination personality and destination identity (Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2007), pre and post trip variations (Yilmaz, Yilmaz, İçigen, Ekin and Utku, 2009) and DIs impact on behavior (McCartney et al., 2009; Lee, 2009; Lin et al., 2007) among many others. The impact image has on tourist behavior is one of the most studied research areas

within the image literature. “It has been suggested that images held by potential travelers are so important in the destination selection process that they can affect the very viability of the destination” (Pike et al., 2004:334).

### **2.2.1 The destination image construct**

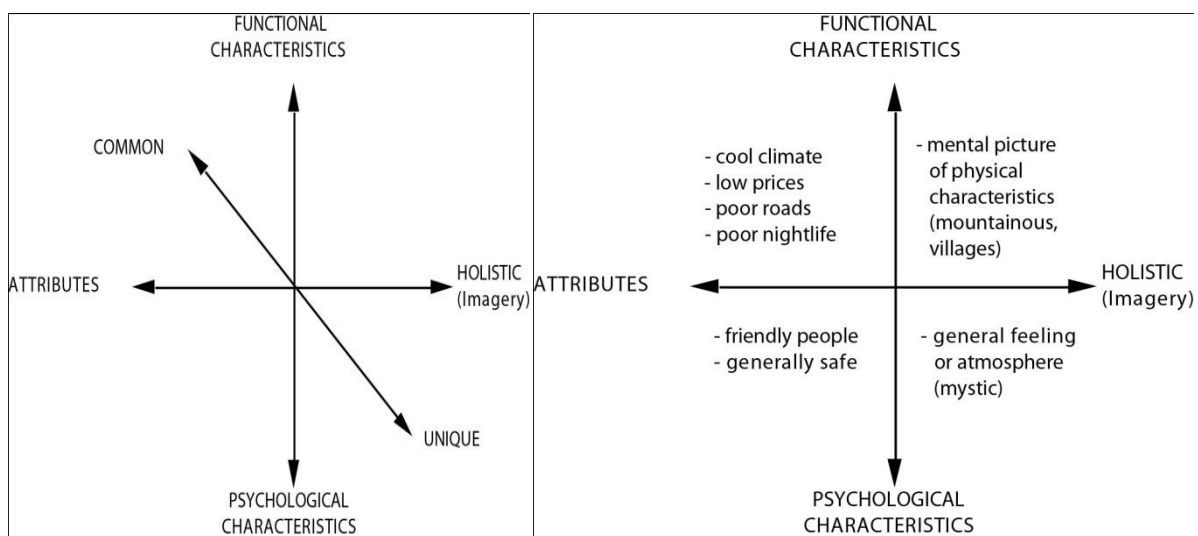
The extensive research has led to an understanding of the complexity of the DI construct (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). Although authors agree about the importance of destination image, especially related to tourists’ choice behavior, there is no general consensus about the conceptualization of the DI construct. This might be due to the subjectivity of images; images are a subjective perception held by an individual about a destination (McCartney et al., 2009). However, Echtner et al. (1991) argues that although images are unique and held by individuals, there are also accepted stereotypes about destinations, which can be commonly held by groups of people. Research on image assessment and formation traces back to the study of psychology, and has in the field of psychology been explained as “processing and storing multisensory information in working memory” (Echtner et al., 1991:39). There has been many literature reviews on the topic, with Echtner et al. (1991) studying articles from 1975-1990 and Pike (2002) reviewed 142 destination image articles from 1973-2000 whilst Stepchenkova et al. (2010) reviewed 152 articles from 2000-2007 in an attempt to conceptualize the construct and reaching a consensus of an image definition. Echtner et al. (1991), making a list of several definitions, argues that most definitions are vague. These definitions normally explain destination image as “perceptions held by potential visitors about an area”, “perceptions or impressions of a place”, “how a country is perceived relative to others” and so on (p.41). These definitions make no clear distinction between what components or aspects of the image are being explained.

Due to the complexity and the subjective nature of images, studies have found that images consist of several different dimensions or components (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). It is commonly acknowledged that the DI construct consists of two main components – the holistic and the attribute-based component (Echtner et al., 1991; Echtner et al., 1993; Lin et al., 2007; Stepchenkova et al., 2010). This is the area that arises from the field of psychology, claiming that humans process information on individual characteristics (attribute based) as well as having a mental overall (holistic) impression. It is argued that humans use both components in evaluating products in the selection process. However, there exists confusion in whether the attribute based component assists in reducing alternatives, followed by a holistic evaluation,

or if it is the other way around, where people assess the holistic impressions in reducing alternatives followed by an attribute based evaluation to make the final selection (Echtner et al., 1991).

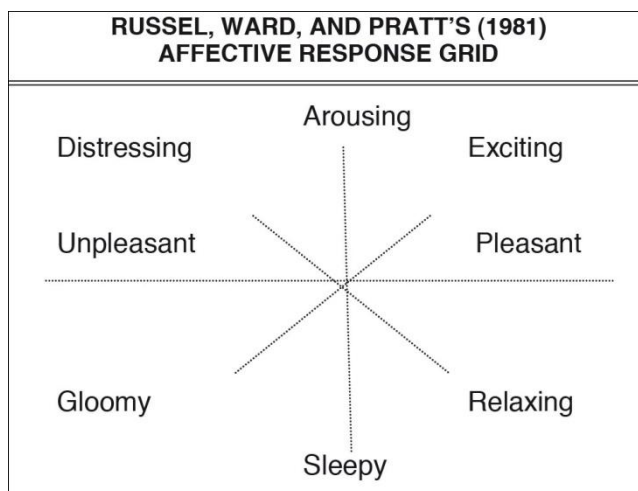
Echtner et al. (1991) also found that images consist of a functional and psychological dimension. The functional aspect is tangible and measurable characteristics, such as price, and the psychological aspect is intangible and immeasurable characteristics, such as hospitality. The functional-psychological dimension is also divided into holistic or attribute based items (see figure below), for example the functional attribute-based could be items such as price levels and climate, while psychological attribute-based could be items such as friendly people. In the same way there can be both functional holistic or psychological holistic items (Echtner et al., 1991). Moreover, Echtner et al. (1991) also suggests that the image construct consists of functional or psychological common or unique traits. This means that some features, attractions or events at a destination can be common for many destinations (both functional and psychological), while some are especially unique experiences for that particular destination. The different components found by Echtner et al. (1991) are illustrated in Figure 1 and 2 below. Echtner et al. (1991) states here that Figure 1 should be envisioned as three dimensions, where the image can be rated by common and functional characteristics, such as climate and infrastructure, but the image can also be rated on common psychological characteristics, such as hospitality or safety. Figure 2 gives examples of four of the components.

**Figure 1 and 2: The components of the destination image (Echtner et al., 1991)**



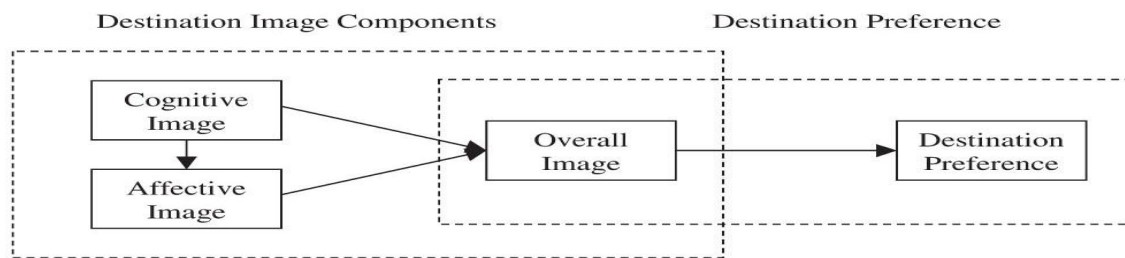
In recent years, further elaborations of the DI construct, in addition to Echtner et al. (1991, 1993) holistic/attribute, functional/psychological and common/unique dimensions, has occurred (Lin et al., 2007). It is purported that images also consists of cognitive, affective and conative components (Pike et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2007; Stepchenkova et al., 2010). The cognitive component comprises the knowledge, awareness and beliefs a person holds about a destination, and it normally contains tangible attributes (Lin et al., 2007). The affective component is the feelings a person has about a destination, which can be positive, negative or neutral. The affective component can be divided into four semantic differential scales according to Pike et al. (2004); Arousing – sleepy, pleasant – unpleasant, relaxing – distressing, exciting – gloomy.

**Figure 3: The affective response grid (Pike et al., 2004)**



The literature shows that it is the cognitive component most studies focus on, and there are rather few affective research studies. Pike (2002) found in his literature review only 6 out of 142 articles that showed interest in the affective component. Lastly, the conative component is equivalent to customer behavior, or intent. It is the intention a customer has in selecting and purchasing the product within a time frame. Conation then becomes the intended action component (Pike et al., 2004). Conation is therefore strongly linked to the selection process or destination choice, in the way that it is the behavioral action, resulting from images, as shown in Figure 3 below. Destination preference can be defined as “an attitude resulting from an explicit comparison process by which one destination is chosen over the other” (Lin et al., 2007:184).

**Figure 4: Proposed integrated model (Lin et al., 2007)**



### 2.2.2 Arriving at a definition

After an extensive review of the DI construct, with all of its components and dimensions, it becomes clear that definitions such as “impressions of” or “perceptions of a destination” do not cover the complexity of images (Echtner et al., 1991). However, in an attempt to conceptualize the construct, Lin et al. (2007) suggests to add a sentence to a commonly accepted definition; “Destination image is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions individuals have of attributes, and/or activities available at a destination” (Lin et al., 2007:183) and adding that it “is the formation of overall mental pictures (imagery) of that destination” (Lin et al., 2007:183). The Lin et al. (2007) definition covers the attribute-based and the holistic components, as well as adding the cognitive aspect (beliefs and ideas). Although the affective component is still missing in this definition, it is still the strongest and most encompassing definition found through the literature review. This is because it highlights and gives a better understanding of the complex nature of the construct. For the purpose of this research paper, the definition proposed by Lin et al. (2007) is found to be the most suitable.

### 2.2.3 The formation of images

There has been much research on the formation of images, and Gunn (1972) pioneered this research by stating that images are formed at two levels; (1) organic, which is an internal formation of images from actual experience, from friends and family and word of mouth and (2) induced, which is a formation of images from external sources and information, such as advertisement, news and other media sources (as cited by Sönmez and Sirakaya, 2002:185). Gartner (1993) took this idea further, by elaborating on the levels of which images are formed, including their costs, level of credibility, market penetration and connecting the

image formation process with the selection process of the tourists'. Gartner (1993) found that there are eight levels of image formation. These are (as cited by Sönmez et al., 2002:186):

1. Overt induced I (i.e. traditional forms for advertisement)
2. Overt induced II (i.e. information requested from travel intermediaries)
3. Covert induced I (i.e. celebrity spokesperson's recommendations)
4. Covert induced II (i.e. reports, stories, articles about a destination)
5. Autonomous (i.e. independent information such as news and movies)
6. Unsolicited organic (i.e. unsought information from friends, colleagues)
7. Solicited organic (i.e. friends, relatives, word of mouth) and
8. Organic (i.e. personal travel experience)

Furthermore, the article elaborates on whether each of these image formation agents have low, medium or high levels of credibility, market penetration and cost. For example overt induced has low credibility, but very high market penetration, while autonomous and the organic levels have high levels of credibility, but low market penetration (Gartner, 1993). It is then stated that the destination needs to know what target markets to reach, the target markets existing images, demographics, experiences sought and the size of their own destination, to determine what level to use in their marketing techniques (Gartner, 1993). It is also claimed that DMOs realize the importance of images, but still there are few attempts of understanding the formation of images, how to develop image strategies at destinations and its importance in the tourist selection process (Gartner, 1993).

In the image formation process, researchers have also found that images differ in accuracy depending on proximity or distance to the destination. This means that potential travelers who are closer in distance from a destination, tend to have a more accurate and realistic image of the destination, and tend to be more knowledgeable about the destination. Thus, the greater the distance, the more unrealistic and inaccurate the image becomes (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). It was also found that the more knowledgeable a person is about a destination, the more likely that person is to have favorable images. This could mean that the more successful a destination is in marketing itself, by providing information and knowledge using the correct levels of image formation agents (induced, autonomous or organic) depending on the target group, the more likely they are to chose that destination (Stepchenkova et al., 2010).

Other researchers refer to the different image formation agents as (1) supply-side, or the destination, (2) independent or autonomous and (3) the demand-side, or the image receivers



(Tasci and Gartner, 2007). The supply-side is therefore the destination, which attempts to create positive images, through promotional techniques. The independent agents are agents in which the destination has no immediate control. The demand-side is the perceiver, or the consumer, who filters the information received and creates images depending on their comprehension and interpretation of the messages (Tasci et al., 2007). The DMOs must therefore see if any discrepancy exists in the message sent and the perceived message. They should then either attempt to change the negative or unfavorable images, or develop their tourism product or both, depending on the discrepancy which exists and resources available (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999).

Innovation Norway, through the travel portal Visitnorway.com, is the main marketing organization of Norway (Visitnorway). It is stated on the official websites of Innovation Norway, that the destination is a small, not well-known country, with little resources; therefore Norway has to stand out, with a clear and to the point message (Innovasjon Norge). The essence of the Norwegian branding is “fresh and intense experiences in beautiful and pure nature”. Further it elaborates by saying that the key values of the Norwegian brand is: fresh, authentic, friendly and innovative. The main goal of the marketing campaigns is to make a strong brand based on nature; therefore the slogan is “Norway, powered by nature” (Innovasjon Norge). The strategy for doing this is through a communication platform of four areas of experiences in nature. The main area of focus is the **fjords and mountain scenery**, followed by three subgroups: **coastlands, mountain and wilderness** and **the arctic Norway**.

The promotional and marketing strategies used for France consists mainly of overt induced agents (Innovasjon Norge). The strategy is to promote Norway as a desirable destination with untouched, pure nature, with a focus on all year round natural activities through agents such as:

- Advertisements/campaigns and product profiling in selected local media (overt induced I).
- Outdoor and street advertisements in Paris and other major cities (overt induced I).
- Web- and online advertisements (overt induced I).
- Direct contact with the customers through social media (overt induced I).
- Norwegian days and/or other events with information for the travel agents and other travel intermediaries in France (overt induced II).

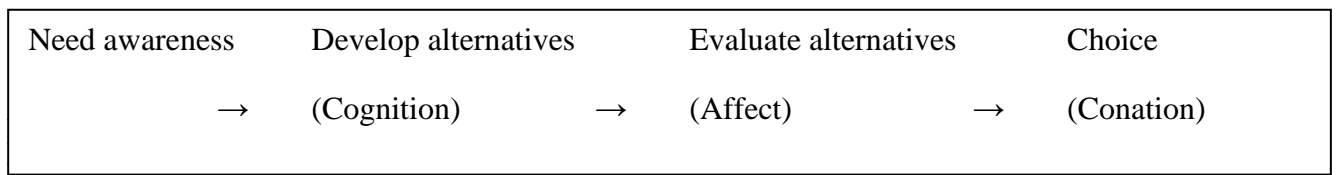
#### **2.2.4 The selection process and the destination image components**

Gartner (1993) discusses in his article the destination selection process and the importance of the DI components and the formation of images in selecting a destination. In his article he considers Goodall's (1991) selection model. It is here claimed that once consumers decide to travel, or recognize a need, they go through stages of "evaluations sets". It starts with the "total opportunity set", which consists of all the options available for the consumer. However, some destinations are not an option, because the consumer is not aware of that option, has no knowledge of certain destinations, or is not an option due to other constraints such as money and distance. The reduced amount of options then forms the "realized opportunity set". The consumer then evaluates the options which remain, and reduces the number of options even further. The "consideration set" is the next evaluation set, the options that are actually considered by the consumer. If the consideration set is large, and contains several options, the consumer assesses what needs are sought and who can meet their needs by evaluating the attributes of the destination, this result in the "choice set". Once the attributes are evaluated, the consumer is in the "decision set", which normally contains no more than three options. A final evaluation takes place, which is the final decision, or the "holiday choice" (Gartner, 1993).

Further, Gartner (1993) then elaborates on the meaning of the three components of destination image, the cognitive, the affective and the conative in the selection or purchase. As discussed above, the cognitive is the awareness or knowledge about a destination; it is the component that derives from facts. The less a person knows about a destination, the less realistic and accurate the image would be. Therefore the process of forming cognitive images, will decide whether a destination continues to be evaluated and move downwards in the evaluation stage model. The affective component is strongly related to a person's motives for travelling, for example whether the person seeks familiarity or unique exotic travels. The emotions, or the motives for travelling will be evaluated in the choice set, when the needs are being evaluated and which destination can meet the needs sought. Conation is the action component, which results in a choice being made. After all information is processed, the selection takes place. Conation is directly linked with the cognitive and affective components, choice "depends on the images developed during the cognitive stage and evaluated during the affective stage" (Gartner, 1993:196).

Pike et al. (2004) found the same link between the three components in the decision making process, using a model to explain it (p. 335):

**Figure 5: Model of link between the components and travel choice (Pike et al., 2004)**



### 2.3 Destination attractiveness

Most studies carried out concerning attractiveness have devoted much time on developing a conceptual framework of destination images (Das, Sharma, Mohapatra and Sakar, 2007). Destination attractiveness, just like destination image, also contains attribute-based and holistic dimensions (Das et al., 2007). It is argued that tourists will therefore measure the degree of attractiveness based on the attributes a destination may offer (Das et al., 2007). A destination may seem attractive or not attractive, depending on the evaluation of attributes and the holistic impression and whether there exists a match between the images and the needs and desires of the tourists (Lee, Huang and Yeh, 2010). Destination attractiveness is defined as: “the perceived ability of the destination to deliver individual benefits” (Lee et al., 2010:811). Ability is meant as delivering desired attributes. The ability or the attributes can be divided into two categories, “man-made” and “given”. The man-made attributes are infrastructure and tourism facilities such as hotels, restaurants, tourism offices and so on, and the given are attributes which are naturally there and attract the tourists, such as climate, landscape, historical-cultural buildings and so on (Lee et al., 2010). Destination attractiveness theories are based on the notion that certain attributes attract the tourist to certain destinations, and also influence the selection of holiday destination, revisits and satisfaction expectations (Lee et al., 2010). However, what attributes are attractive to one person, may not be attractive to another person, since the needs and desires of people will vary (Lee et al., 2010). Lee et al. (2010) further elaborates that identifying the attributes that may or may not be present at a destination, does not suffice, there is also a need to identify the importance of these attributes, either from a demand-side or supply-side perspective.

### 2.4 Conclusions and focus in the study

Through the literature review above it has become clear that images are a complex phenomenon, consisting of several different and varying components, which are not easily measured. There have been many attempts in conceptualizing the concept, and many studies have been executed in an attempt of understanding the complex nature of the DI construct

(Stepchenkova et al., 2010). The effects of destination images, such as travel choice (demand-side) and implications for the marketing of destinations (supply-side), are commonly accepted throughout the literature, and thus understanding the tourists' image has become of great importance in the tourism literature (Pike et al., 2004, Stepchenkova 2010). Yet, there are few attempts made by destination marketing organizations in understanding their target groups images, and develop strategies accordingly (Gartner, 1993).

#### **2.4.1 Main contributions in the study of images**

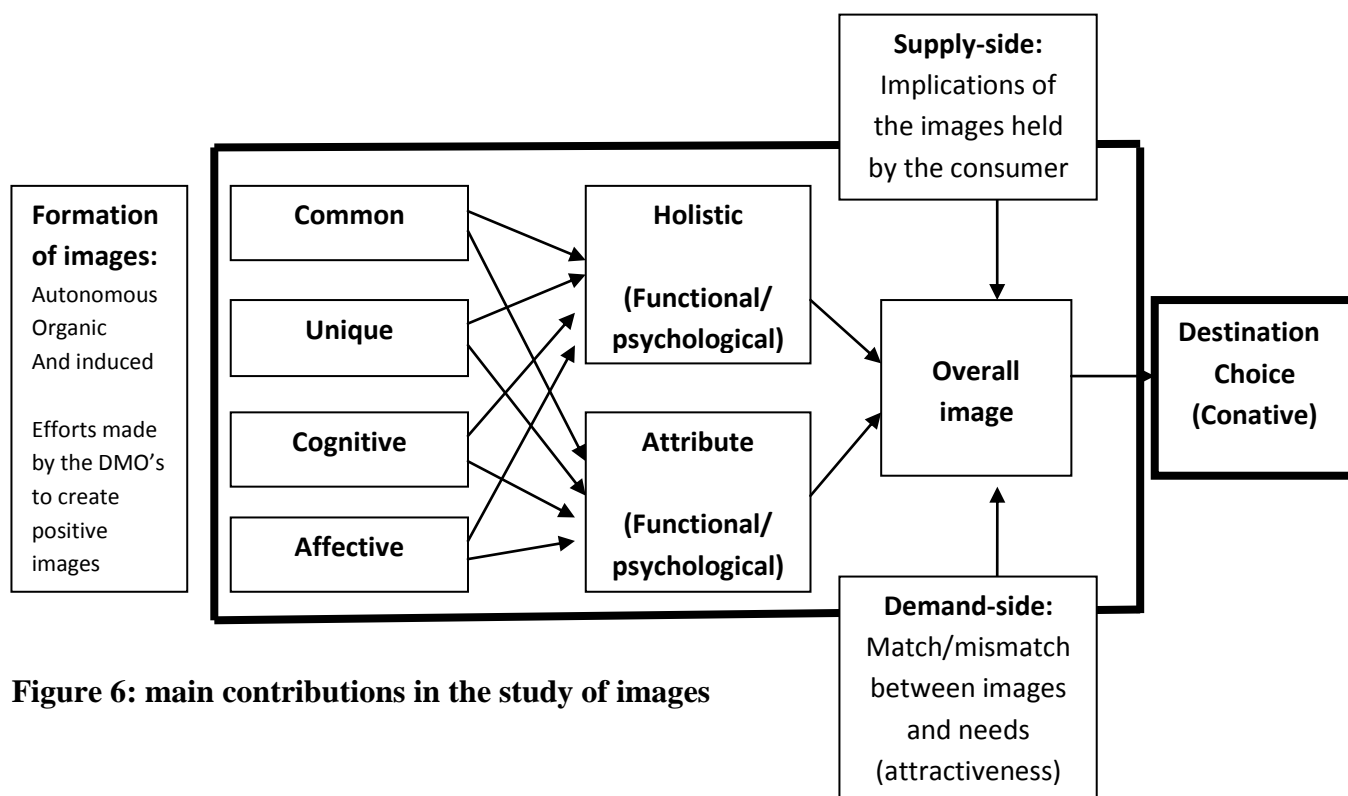
Since the 1970's when the first studies of destination image appeared, it has become one of the most studied research areas in tourism literature (Pike et al., 2004). Several topics have been of interest, such as the formation of images (Gartner, 1993), pre and post trip variations (Yilmaz et al., 2009), conceptualization of DI (Echtner et al., 1991; Lin et al., 2007) and measurement and assessment of DI (Echtner et al., 1993; Stepchenkova, 2010), among many others. However, the most researched topic is the destinations images' effect on choice behavior or buyer behavior (Pike et al., 2004).

Due to the complex and subjective nature of images, there exists much confusion and ambiguity regarding the conceptualization of DI, the definitions used and there exists several different methods for measuring images (Stepchenkova, 2010). By reviewing articles from 1975-1990, Echtner et al (1991 and 1993) had a unique approach regarding the assessment of images and how to measure them. To be able to assess and measure images it is firstly important to fully understand images, and its components (Echtner et al., 1991). Echtner et al. (1991; 1993) explored a new and unique conceptualization of images. They found that images consist of different components. Their conceptualization of images, consisting of both holistic and attribute dimensions, as well as common and unique features is a school of thought that has pervaded the literature ever since and has thus become commonly acknowledged (Stepchenkova, 2010). This conceptualization means that images are simplifications of the real world in the minds of the consumer, and individuals assess a product based on their holistic impression of the product as well as on individual attributes a product may offer (Echtner et al., 1991). Another school of thought that also is commonly accepted is the notion that images consist of cognitive (knowledge and believes) and affective (emotions) dimensions (Stepchenkova, 2010). There is great interest in the literature on how images and its components affect travel choice behavior of tourists and this relationship is conceptualized as the conative or behavioral element in images (Stepchenkova, 2010).

Several authors focus on the formation of images, claiming that to fully understand images we must also understand how or through which agents the images are formed by (Gartner, 1993). Gartner (1993) gives an extensive review of different agents in which images are formed, being grouped into induced, organic and autonomous. The organic and autonomous agents are the agents with the most credibility, given that they do not have any interest in promoting a destination (Gartner, 1993; Stepchenkova, 2010). Gartner (1993) stress the need to fully understand the effects of the different agents used, and depending on resources available and the target groups' needs and wants, a destination marketing organization should tailor their strategies and agents used accordingly.

Linked into the above literature is also the selection process (Gartner, 1993). The formation of images and the different components of the DI construct is all a part of the tourists' choice behavior (Gartner, 1993). The selection process or the choice behavior is one of the most studied areas of research (McCartney et al., 2009). This might be because it is claimed that images directly affect the viability of destinations, in the way that it affects the choices made by the tourist (Pike et al., 2004). Both Pike et al (2004) and Gartner (1993) found a link between the cognitive and affective components and the intention to travel (conation). The consumer recognizes a need, and then they asses the options available, resulting in different "evaluation sets". These sets are evaluated by the cognitive (attributes) and affective images, before a final decision is made (Gartner, 1993; Pike et al., 2004).

Several authors have also linked destination attractiveness with destination images (Das et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Pike et al., 2004). Destination attractiveness is the evaluation of attributes and the holistic impression an individual may have of a destination, and whether these images match or mismatch with the needs and wants of the tourist (Lee et al., 2010). Pike et al. (2004) in their study of images, stress the need to measure destination attractiveness as well. This is because only assessing the images held by the tourist is not enough, you also need to know what they find important and what attributes they desire (Pike et al., 2004). The main contributions in the study of images are joined together and illustrated in the figure below.



**Figure 6: main contributions in the study of images**

### 2.5.2 Focus in the present study

To be able to explore the research area it will first of all be important to uncover the images held by the French of Norway as a tourist destination. The first focus in this study will therefore be on the components of DI. Focusing on the components of DI will be done in an attempt to discover and describe the holistic, attribute and emotional images that the French have of Norway. The first focus will therefore be the center square in Figure 6, all of the components of destinations image. Echtner et al. (1991; 1993) stress the need to assess both the attribute and holistic dimensions of the DI construct. They further elaborate that there is also a need to assess the functional and psychological aspects as well as the common and unique features in a destination. According to their research, measuring the entire image with all of its different components is firstly done through using a list of attributes, which contains both functional and psychological aspects as well as common and unique features in particular destinations (Echtner et al., 1993). Secondly, there is also a need to measure the holistic component, which will require a different research technique, often open ended questions. The measurement of the holistic component should also contain the functional/psychological and common/ unique elements (Echtner et al., 1993).

More recently, following Echtner et al. (1991; 1993) conceptualization of the DI construct, another commonly accepted notion is that images consists of cognitive and affective dimensions (Stepchenkova, 2010; Pike et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2007). The cognitive and

affective components will therefore also be used in the paper. To measure the images held by potential travelers is a complex task, like the literature review above shows it contains several different components and dimensions, all needing different measurement scales (Stepchenkova, 2010; Echtner et al., 1991;1993). The literature show that studies undertaken in the past normally focuses on the attributes and the cognitive elements of images, and there are few studies measuring the holistic component (Echtner et al., 1991) and the affective component (Stepchenkova, 2010). However, to assess the entire image there is a need to measure all of the different components, therefore this will be done in the research paper. Through the review it appears that no research in the past has measured all of the components in one study. To measure and assess the entire image held by the French, all of the components in the DI construct will be used in this survey.

Further, the purpose of this paper is not only to assess and measure the images held by the French, but also to see what effects these images have on the intention to travel to Norway. The second focus in this paper will therefore be on the effects of images. Therefore, the conative component will also be a focus in this paper (right side square in figure 6). The respondents will be asked to rate whether they are likely to travel to Norway within given time frames. Although this is only stated intent, it was found that intent to travel was strongly linked with behavior when time and context is included (Pike et al., 2004). In the literature it is also claimed that only discovering the images held by the potential consumer does not suffice, there is also a need to examine whether these images match with the needs and desires of the consumer (McCartney et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2010). The most common measurement of images in the literature is the ranking of attributes. However, this will only measure the image perceptions of the consumer and not the destination attractiveness (McCartney et al., 2009). In these articles, it is discussed that for the destination organizations to correctly create strategies and marketing techniques aimed at their target group, they need to know what attributes the consumer find important and not only how the destination rank on these attributes (Pike et al., 2004). Therefore to examine the implications and effects of the images held by the potential travelers, it will thirdly be important to also assess Norway's destination attractiveness in the eyes of the French, not only the images (bottom square in figure 6). The implications of the results for the supply side will be discussed (top right square in figure 6), through assessing the components of the image, images' effect on intention to travel and the destination attractiveness.

The formation of images and the selection process are also important aspects in the study of images (Gartner, 1993), however this will not be the focus in this study. This is because these subjects go beyond the scope of the research area and aim of this paper. Measuring the formation of images and the selection process will not contribute to the aim and purpose of this paper. Which sources the consumer has received its information from about the destination is irrelevant in the research, considering that the aim is to shed light on what images are held by the French and what the implications of these images are, as opposed to where they got the images from. The same goes for the selection process. The aim here is to see if images affect the tourists' intention to travel (conative component), and not to discover in what "evaluation sets" the decision has been made. Further on, formation of images and the selection process, what sources are used and when the decision was made, would be more suited in studies where the consumer has already decided to travel to Norway, when the sources and the decision would be of a more conscious level, as opposed to in this study where it is very likely that some of the respondents have no or very limited knowledge of the destination, and have no intention to travel. Lastly, formation of images and sources used would be a very difficult task to measure, in the way that multiple sources would have been used in some cases and no sources would have been used in others. These subjects are recommended to research in further elaborations on the study of images by the destination organization (Gartner, 1993).

### **3.0 Methodology**

The methodology in this paper is based on the structure of Johannessen, Kristoffersen and Tufte (2004).

#### **3.1 Research design**

The possible research designs that are mostly qualitative in nature are (1) phenomenology, which is research aimed at developing an understanding of people's experiences with a phenomenon, (2) grounded theory, which is research aimed at developing new theories in areas where little research already exists, (3) ethnographic studies, which aims at describing and analyzing different cultures, and (4) case designs, which are studies aimed at researching one or a few cases in depth (Johannessen et al., 2004). Further on, the designs that are normally quantitative in nature, according to Johannessen et al. (2004), are (1) surveys, which are studies performed once in time to get a picture of a phenomenon, or to discover



relationships between phenomenon's, (2) longitude studies, which are studies performed more than once to discover if the data varies over time, (3) experiments, which are studies aimed at seeing the effects of antecedents, and (4) evaluations, which are studies aimed at discovering the effects of special measures.

There exists a lot of research in the field of destination images. From the above literature it becomes clear that this is a topic that is heavily researched, and scales and instruments are already tested for how to measure DI. Therefore the quantitative survey design is the most suited in this study. There are good foundations for developing scales and developing a questionnaire. Survey is also most appropriate due to the fact that it is performed once in time, as well as discovering relationships between variables. The survey design is appropriate for the research area in this paper, which is to discover the images held by the French of Norway as a tourist destination, and to discover the effects of these images, due to the fact that surveys are well suited both for describing and finding different variations in a phenomena as well as discovering the relationships between different variables (Johannessen et al., 2004). The downside to surveys is that the study is only conducted once in time, and therefore it is not possible to draw conclusions for the future, unless it is a subject that is considered to remain stable over a long time (Johannessen et al., 2004). The positive aspect of surveys is that it is a design that is well suited for generalizing from the sample to the population, especially when used with quantitative methods like it is done in this paper (Johannessen et al., 2004).

Most research studies in the past have used quantitative methods to measure destination image and its related topics such as intention to travel (Stepchenkova et al., 2010, Echtner et al., 1991). Some researchers call for the need to use qualitative methods, due to the subjective and complex nature of images (Ryan and Cave, 2005). However, it is claimed that the quantitative methods are most common, because it is most suited and there are more strengths and benefits from using the quantitative designs (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). For example it is claimed that due to the multifaceted nature of images, the amount of data will be so great that it will be difficult to code, reduce and analyze using qualitative designs. It is also mentioned that qualitative methods will be costly and time consuming. This in turn has resulted in studies using qualitative methods as their main technique, has compromised on sample size (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). For the aim and purpose of this paper, which is to discover the images of Norway held by the French, it is most suited to use the quantitative method, because of the need for a big sample size. The conceptual model, research area and questions are founded on previous research, which calls for a quantitative approach.

### **3.2 Purpose and aim of the research**

A research paper may have several different purposes. For example the purpose of a paper may be to describe a situation or happening, or it might be to explain relationships between different variables, or it could be to understand a phenomenon (Johannessen et al., 2004). Other research purposes may be to change, predict, evaluate or to give reasons for decisions being made (Johannessen et al., 2004).

According to the literature review above, it becomes evident that images are a complex matter, which consists of several different components, as well as the commonly accepted notion that images have an effect on future the behavior of the tourist (Echtner et al., 1991; 1993; Pike et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2007; Stepchenkova, 2010). Therefore a research study that aims at examining Norway's images, and its effect on tourist choice behavior, needs to be conducted in both a descriptive and causal nature. First of all the descriptive purpose is needed to document the images the French hold about Norway, and the causal purpose is needed to analyze if image has any affect on the choice of the tourist, and to uncover any other implications of the images that may appear. Through the causal purpose it could be uncovered that there is a correlation between the images and the choice to travel. But to do this, there is a need to examine the entire image and not just parts of it. Authors have argued for the importance of examining the different components of images, the holistic, the attributes, the cognitive, the affective and so on (Echtner et al., 1991, Lin et al., 2007), therefore to be able to examine the entire image and the different effects of the different parts of images, there will be a need for both the descriptive and the causal techniques.

### **3.3 Development of the questionnaire**

The research was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire, which contained mostly structured and some unstructured parts. This was used because the literature shows that surveys using structured questionnaires are most common in the study of images, as well as this being an instrument that has been tested and retested for reliability and validity several times by other researchers (Stepchenkova, 2010). The use of questionnaires has several benefits, such as objectivity and precision (Johannessen et al., 2004). It is also an instrument that allows for high levels of generalization, as well as being easily tested for reliability and validity and it is also easy to retest for other researchers (Johannessen et al., 2004). The questionnaire took five minutes to complete. (Questionnaire; see appendix number 8).

### **3.3.1 Development of scales**

The measurement of images is influenced by the conceptualization, which is a complex matter, so not surprisingly the different aspects of images require different instruments and measurement scales (Stepchenkova, 2010). The questionnaire consisted of eight sections. The first section was socio-demographic information, the respondents were asked to state whether they are male or female as well as age, ranging from 20-45. The age group was selected because the ages 25-44 have the highest number of travels in France (Eurostat). Since this age group is considerably small, the age group was extended to 20-45 year olds. There were no groupings of the ages, as it is best to ask every respondent to state their age, and then later group them to find any differences that may exist if required (Johannessen et al., 2004). In the first section, respondents were also asked to state whether their residence in France is in a city or in the country side. This was done because the marketing of Norway as a tourist destination is focused around Paris and other major cities (Innovasjon Norge). It could therefore be interesting to see if any differences exist in the residency of the respondents, to see if the marketing of Norway has any different effects in cities and country side, or if the level of knowledge about Norway differs in residency. The second section consisted of two filter questions. First of all the respondents were asked whether they have any intention to travel in the next year or in the next three years. This was done as if the respondent has no interest in travel anywhere, they are not considered as a potential tourist to Norway either. The second filter question was whether a respondent had already participated in a trip to Norway in the past. This was done because several authors have found pre and post trip variations in images (Yilmaz et al., 2009). The third section asked the respondents to rate on a Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) how familiar and knowledgeable they consider themselves to be with Norway. This was done because through the literature review it appeared that individuals who are more familiar with a destination tend to have a more positive image about that destination (Stepchenkova, 2010). The fourth to the eighth sections in the questionnaire included all the components to measure the DI construct; the holistic, attribute, common, unique, functional, psychological, cognitive, affective and conative components. The development of these scales will be discussed next.

### **3.3.2 The attribute-based and holistic component**

It became clear quite early in the study of images, that image consists of both holistic and attribute-based dimensions, yet most research focuses on the attributes of images (Echtner et

al., 1991,1993). The most common research technique in the field of images is structured questionnaires, normally using semantic differential scales or Likert scales. This might be because the technique is standardized and the data is therefore easily reduced, coded and analyzed using sophisticated statistical instruments. By only using structured questionnaires the study will measure the common and attribute dimensions of images, leaving the unique and holistic dimensions still unexplored (Echtner et al., 1991). However, several researchers stress the need to measure both the holistic and attribute dimension, as well as the common and unique dimension (Stepchenkova et al., 2010, McCartney et al., 2009, Echtner et al., 1991 and Echtner et al., 1993). Echtner et al. (1993) through their literature review found only one study using unstructured methods, through open ended questions. They argue that structured methods only focus on the attributes of the image and force the respondents to think about the attributes in forms of scales. The items in the scales are also chosen by the researchers, therefore leaving no room for the respondents to express their own thoughts about a destination. Because of this, they argue for the use of both structured and unstructured methods, and in this way measure both the attribute and the holistic component. The researchers also claim that by using unstructured, open ended questions, the study will also assess the unique aspects of the image. The respondents will then be able to more freely describe his/her impressions, thus the holistic and unique component will appear. Therefore, both structured and unstructured methods will be used in this questionnaire. However, there exists some difficulties in using the unstructured methods; the amount of data and level of detail will vary depending on the respondents, and due to the qualitative nature of the unstructured methods the statistical analysis will be limited (Echtner et al., 1991). Regardless of the difficulties that arise from using both structured and unstructured, it is still recommended; using only one of the methods will leave part of the respondents' image unexplored. Through literature review, expert panels and testing, Echtner et al. (1993) arrived at three open ended questions, suitable for any destination (p. 5):

1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of XXX as a vacation destination? (Functional, holistic component).
2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting XXX? (Psychological, holistic component).
3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in XXX. (Unique component).

These questions have been tested and used since 1993 by several other researchers (McCartney et al., 2009), and will therefore also be used in this paper along with a list of attributes of cognitive elements, both functional and psychological to uncover the attribute based aspect of the image. This will be done to make sure the survey captures the entire image, covering the holistic and attribute dimensions as well as the unique and common dimension. To ensure that the open ended questions can be used in the same statistical instrument as the structured questions, the respondents were asked to list three characteristics on each of the questions. This will allow for an analysis of a more quantitative nature.

### **3.3.3 The cognitive, affective and conative dimensions**

According to Pike et al. (2004) most research focuses on the cognitive component in measuring images, and the most common technique used is Likert scales. Echtner et al. (1991) discuss the use of the structured, attribute-based scales, which measures the cognitive components of the DI construct. It is here argued that the attributes should contain both functional or physical aspects as well as the psychological or more abstract aspect. The attributes used in a survey should be selected on the bases of a thorough search, including literature review, focus groups, and expert panels and so on. It should include attributes which are best suited for the destination in mind, as well as be based on a standardized system, so the results can be compared with other destinations and over time (Echnter et al., 1993). The difficulties that arise from using structured scales are to make sure all aspects of the cognitive component have been revealed. There are many chances of missing out on crucial points, which would have been of great importance in measuring DI. Secondly, the attributes may vary from destination to destination and therefore it is difficult to arrive at a standard model for measuring images (Echtner et al., 1991). Through a thorough procedure proposed by Churchill (1979, as cited by Echtner et al., 1993), the authors made a final list of 35 attributes, arranged along the functional-psychological continuum. The 35 attributes have been the base in many other scales used in other research studies, although adapted to specific destinations (McCartney et al., 2009).

More recently, Stepchenkova et al. (2010) found that most studies focus on the cognitive aspect, and very few study the affective component. Even fewer studies measures both cognitive and affective in the same study. This might be because cognitive, affective and conation needs different kinds of measurement scales, and thus becomes more complicated (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). The most commonly used scale to measure the affective

component is semantic differential scales. Baloglu et al., (1999b, as cited by Pike et al., 2004) proposed using four semantic differential scales pleasant/unpleasant, arousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy, and relaxing/distressing. These scales have been used in several other studies (Lin et al., 2007). The affective scales proposed by Pike et al. (2004) and Lin et al. (2007) could be compared with some of the psychological items in Echnter et al. (1993) list of 35 attributes; restful/relaxing, opportunity for adventure, atmosphere, and hospitality/friendliness. In this paper the four affective semantic differential scales was used. The respondents were asked to rate the items from 1(negative) to 7 (positive) as proposed by Pike et al. (2004) and Lin et al. (2007).

Due to the similarities in the often used attribute items, this research study conducted a content analysis of previous literature and compared all lists of attributes from the literature review, categorized them and ended up with a final list of 30 cognitive attributes (both common and unique, and functional and psychological items) which was based on standard models as well as using the items most suited for the destination. Items best suited for Norway, are items that relate to nature and activities in nature, both winter and summer. This is because it is nature that the marketing of Norway has concentrated on, and it is seen as the most unique aspect and factor where Norway can gain competitive advantage (Innovasjon Norge). In research conducted by Innovasjon Norge (2009), they also found that the French tend to think travelling to and from Norway as well as travelling inside Norway is difficult, therefore this was also included, in the form of a statement: “accessibility to and inside Norway is convenient” as well as other infrastructure attributes. Further, it was interesting to see that almost the same amount of tourists that visited Norway, wanted to visit cities, while the marketing of Norway focuses on nature (Innovasjon Norge). Therefore urban and city activities were also included in the list of attributes to see how they rate. This was done in an attempt to cover all aspects of the possible images held by the French. All of the cognitive attributes were presented as statements, where the respondents should rate these statements on a Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Conation, which is the behavioral component, is often measured by asking the respondents of the intention to travel to a specific destination in a specific time period (Pike et al., 2004). Although, this only states the tourists’ intent, and not actual travel, it is found that intent was closely related to actual behavior, if time and context was included in the questions (Pike et al., 2004). Measuring conation was done by three statements, “I intent to travel to Norway within 12 months, 3 years and in the future”. The respondents were supposed to rate this from

1 (definitely not) to 7 (definitely). The time intervals were chosen, because as the literature proposes, time and context should be included (Pike et al., 2004). Pike et al. (2004) used the next 12 months as their time frame, but considering that this is international travel it is not sure that potential tourists will consider travelling within the next year, therefore other time frames were also included.

### **3.3.4 Destination attractiveness – importance/ performance analysis**

Pike et al. (2004), like Lee et al. (2010) also discuss the notion of comparing attributes with the consumers' perceived importance of the attributes. Therefore, in their studies, Pike et al. (2004) did an importance – performance analysis. Firstly, they asked the respondents to evaluate the importance of 20 cognitive attributes. The respondents were then asked to rate a specific destination on the same 20 attributes. They state that measuring impressions of a destination on certain attributes does not suffice; there is also a need to measure how important these attributes are for the tourist in selecting a destination. Pike et al. (2004) argue that to measure a destinations' attractiveness there is a need to measure the beliefs and impressions of a place, but also the importance of these beliefs and impressions. It could therefore be argued that measuring attractiveness is done by measuring images, both the holistic and attribute as well as unique and common, and then link the results with the degree of importance of these attributes and find the match or mismatch between the images and tourists' needs. Therefore in this study, an importance – performance analysis will also be performed. The respondents will be asked to rate the 30 attributes, as discussed above, on how important these items are to them in selecting a destination, from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important), before they in the next section in the questionnaire rate Norway on the same 30 attributes.

## **3.4 Data collection**

The questionnaire was distributed using the social media of Facebook. A group was created on Facebook, named “Questionnaire – l’image de Norvège”, where 13 French acquaintances in the south of France were invited. Instructions were listed on the group page and a link to the questionnaire. The 13 French were asked to invite their friends, family and colleagues to the group and encourage them to respond to the questionnaire, and their friends were asked to invite even more people to the group, and so on. The aim was, by starting with a few people, the social network would eventually create a large number of members in the group, in

different ages, different gender and from different parts of France. The questionnaire was therefore not conducted in person and there is the disadvantage of not being face to face with the respondents, to have the possibility of correcting any misunderstandings, or make sure people complete the entire questionnaire (Johannessen et al., 2004). There are several advantages of using the internet as a way of recruiting as well as conducting the survey (Stepchenkova, 2010). First of all, it is cost and time efficient, secondly it has the possibilities of reaching a very large geographical area, more so than with paper-based questionnaires (Stepchenkova, 2010). The large geographical aspect and the time and cost advantages were very much needed in this paper, therefore the internet was very well suited. The difficulty that arises from using e-surveys is to get a representative sample, as well as difficulties in calculating a response rate (Stepchenkova, 2010). However, by creating a group on Facebook, with specific instructions as to the sample needed, reduced to an extent the level of insecurity on sample, representation and response rate. Through the group the researcher was able to monitor the activities on the group web page, as well as the number of people being invited to the group. The response rate normally achieved in internet surveys, using members of online communities is 4% (Stepchenkova, 2010) therefore there was a great need of a large amount of members joining the group, to reach the desired level of responses. There were 350 people invited to the group, and there were 103 responses, resulting in a 29,4% response rate. It is not possible to be completely accurate on the response rate through a media, such as social networks, because several people may have seen the activities on the group page, but since they were not invited to complete the survey, they are not included in the calculations.

### **3.5 Critical factors in the execution of the survey**

The questionnaire and all of the items on the questionnaire were based on a content analysis, using variables that have already been tested by other researchers. However, all of the variables used were phrased in English, therefore a translation was needed. The author first translated the entire questionnaire into French, and then sent it to an individual whose first language is French. The questionnaire was corrected for any fault that may have existed and then sent back to the author. However, one of the questions, specifically one of the open ended questions asking the respondents about the mood and atmosphere expected in Norway, created some difficulties. According to the individual who corrected the questionnaire they do not have the same way of phrasing such a thing concerning the atmosphere in French. Therefore a discussion on this was carried out, where the meaning of the sentence was



explained and a new suggestion was made for that particular question. The questionnaire was then checked by a professor, who speaks both Norwegian and French, and who has knowledge in conducting surveys, thus understanding the importance of sentences being phrased correctly. The entire questionnaire, plus the suggestion on the one particular question was approved by the professor, and then suggested to be tested.

A pilot study was conducted on four French individuals, using a convenience sample. This was done to test the practicality of the questionnaire, the French translation, and to make sure the electronic survey (Questback), using Facebook as a media was working correctly. The individuals in the test were asked to comment on the questionnaire, and whether there were any difficulties. The questionnaire was then approved by the test sample, and the second suggestion on the open ended question was decided to be used.

On 16<sup>th</sup> of April the survey was opened. The group on Facebook was created, and the instructions were given to the 13 acquaintances. Five days later, there had been no activity on the web page. Therefore the researcher contacted two of the individuals who were members in the group. The two individuals then invited respondents to the group and wrote a word of encouragement to their contacts on Facebook about responding to the questionnaire. Once this was done by two people, several more did it. Initially the researcher intended on having no specific contact with the group, besides sending a reminder mid way through and when the questionnaire was coming to an end. However, the researcher discovered that more responses were received when the web page was active, meaning if someone posted any news on the web page or invited more people. Therefore the level of contact was increased, and the researcher posted reminders on the web page every second day throughout the survey period. This resulted in more responses received. The questionnaire was closed the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, therefore being open for three and a half week, resulting in 103 responses out of 350 invited.

### **3.6 Sample and population**

The population in the study is French people in the age 20-45, with some knowledge of Norway. The sample in this study consisted of French people in the ages 20-45. As discussed above, this age group seemed appropriate since this age group travel the most. There was a convenience sample used in the survey, where 13 acquaintances were used to recruit the respondents (Johannessen et al., 2004). Due to the geographical aspect and time and cost advantages, the convenience sample was most suited for this paper. Convenience sample can

affect the validity, reliability and the representativeness of the paper, as well as being less able to generalize from the sample to the population (Johannessen et al., 2004, Stepchenkova, 2010). However, since it was used with the social network, Facebook, there were still possibilities that the sample was spread out in age, gender, and residency in France. This is also a snowball method for selecting your respondents, in the way the respondents also were asked to invite more people to the group on Facebook, and the recruiting continued on through several levels (Johannessen et al., 2004).

#### **4.0 Analysis strategy**

The data was analyzed using the statistical program SPSS (PASW Statistics 18). The cognitive and affective items consisted of 34 attributes, which needed to be assessed for reliability and validity and to reduce the number of items if needed. Convergent and discriminant factor analysis was therefore conducted, to assess the correlation between the items and their factor loadings, as well as assessing whether the latent constructs, although correlating, are separate constructs (Kim and Yoon, 2003). Secondly, descriptive analysis will be carried out to assess the attributes and the holistic components of the destination image. Analysis of means, standard deviations and analysis of the holistic open ended questions, will provide a detailed overview of the images held by the French of Norway as a tourist destination. Further, the images held by the French will be compared with the importance of the same 30 cognitive attributes, as to understand the attractiveness of Norway and if there exists any differences between the performance of Norway and the importance in choosing a holiday destination. Lastly, several regression analyses will be performed to assess whether images affect the decision to travel. The descriptive, importance – performance and causal analysis will be carried out in an attempt to reach the aim and purpose of this paper; which is to uncover the images held by the French, to assess whether image affects the decision to travel and what implications this has on the DMO's. Lastly, the results will be used for a discussion on the images held by the French, any discrepancy that may exist in the performance and importance and what components of the image that has an effect on travel choice. The implications of these findings on the marketing of Norway will lastly be discussed. The filter questions in the questionnaire was decided not to be used, as there were only 9,7 % indicating that they have no intention to travel anywhere, and only 15,5 % have travelled to Norway before. With the minimal variations in the respondents answers (table 4),

it was not seen as great importance to assess the differences in the filter questions between the groups.

## **5.0 Validity and reliability**

Validity tests are carried out to assess whether the research is actually measuring the constructs and phenomena it is intended to measure (Johannessen et al., 2004). The definition of validity is very general and simplified and therefore there is a need for several different kinds of validity testing (Reve, 1985). There is construct validity, statistical conclusion, internal and external validity (Reve, 1985). Construct validity is the most basic form of validity and can be defined as the level of compliance between the theoretical construct and the operational measurements (Reve, 1985). Construct validity also consists of several different forms; face validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity and nomological validity (Reve, 1985). The validity of this research including construct, convergent, discriminant, face validity, internal and external validity and reliability will be discussed next.

### **5.1 Construct validity**

Before any statistical analysis was carried out the construct validity was tested by performing convergent and discriminant factor analysis. It was a confirmatory factor analysis in nature, as it was testing whether the factors were consistent with previous research and understanding of the constructs.

The convergent factor analysis resulted in four factors being extracted from the cognitive attributes; nature, urban, infrastructure and society and one factor for the affective attributes. Some of the initial items had to be dropped, as their factor loadings were non-significant. Two items were dropped from the nature construct (climate and sun/beach opportunities), no items were removed from the urban construct, one item was removed from the infrastructure construct (inexpensive goods and services) and all of the society items were retained as their factor loadings proved acceptable. The cronbach's alpha values exceeded .60 on all latent constructs, which reflects a high internal consistency (Lee, 2009). The alpha values were .896, .930, .886, .903 respectively. No items needed to be removed from the affective items, as all of the factor loadings were significant. The cronbach's alpha was .862 for the latent affective construct. Maximum likelihood estimations (MLE) were used in all of the convergent factor analysis, as the recommended sample size for this is between 100 and 150 (Kim et al., 2003).

All factor loadings for each construct was high (above 0,5) therefore proving that the respondents have been consistent in their replies and the level of measurement error is low.

**Table 1: Convergent validity**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Goodness of fit: Df/sig.</b>
<b>Factor 1: Nature</b>		.896	9/.000
Natural scenic beauty	.776		
Environment is clean and litter free	.797		
Pleasant natural excursions	.920		
Many natural sites to visit	.796		
Opportunity for adventure/sport activities	.647		
Opportunity for winter/snow activities	.715		
<b>Factor 2: Urban</b>		.930	24/.000
High degree of urbanization	.542		
Variety of festivals, concerts and events	.850		
Good nightlife/ entertainment	.748		
Good quality of accommodation	.802		
Opportunity for learning ethnic culture, customs	.685		
Good culinary experiences (cafés, restaurants)	.739		
A variety of city recreational activities	.894		
Nice and unique architecture	.853		
Many historical buildings, museums (rich cultural heritage)	.842		
<b>Factor 3: Infrastructure</b>		.886	14/.000
Quality of roads	.708		
Not overcrowded	.588		
Convenient public and private transportation	.764		
No traffic congestion problems	.713		
Many choices in accommodation	.722		
Possibility for shopping	.811		
Accessibility to and inside Norway	.781		
<b>Factor 4: Society</b>		.903	5/.000
Political stability	.876		
Safe to visit	.950		
Friendly and hospitable local people	.794		
Easy to communicate	.725		
The quality of service	.649		
<b>Factor 5: Affective</b>		.862	2/.000
Sleepy – arousing	.891		
Unpleasant – pleasant	.892		
Gloomy – exciting	.810		
Distressing – stressing	.595		

The discriminant factor analysis proved to be more challenging than the convergent factor analysis. At first attempt all four cognitive constructs were used in the discriminant factor analysis, and MLE was also used here. Four factors were extracted, however several items loaded on two or more factors. The challenge that arises here was that the infrastructure items seemed to correlate strongly with both society and urban items. The infrastructure construct was therefore decided to be dropped, as the correlations with the other items were too strong. These findings correspond with Lin et al. (2007) who also dropped their infrastructure construct, only retaining nature and amenities. As the attribute list in this research paper was made through a content analysis, including all items suitable for the destination, and using the most common attributes in other research, it seemed to be hard to distinguish between the constructs. Therefore, society was also dropped as these items loaded on more than one factor and they are not of main importance in the study. A second discriminant factor analysis was conducted using only the urban and nature constructs. This was done because the main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of Norway's marketing of nature on future travel behavior of the French, and therefore the nature and urban constructs can be of great importance. The pattern matrix of the two constructs, using maximum likelihood extraction proved satisfactory. A few items loaded on both factors, but as the extracted variance between two pairs of factors exceeded 0,2, the discriminant validity was justified. The validity of these two constructs can also be argued to be justified through face validity, as these two factors, nature items and urban/city items are intuitively two different constructs, and also because the constructs have been used in several other research (Lin et al., 2007).

**Table 2: Discriminant validity**

<b>Factor/Item</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Nature 1</b>		-.755
<b>Nature 3</b>	.161	-.704
<b>Nature 4</b>	-.136	-1.021
<b>Nature 5</b>		-.829
<b>Nature 7</b>	.225	-.494
<b>Nature 8</b>		-.668
<b>Urban 1</b>	.376	-.263
<b>Urban 2</b>	.886	
<b>Urban 3</b>	.642	-.177
<b>Urban 6</b>	.770	
<b>Urban 7</b>	.921	
<b>Urban 8</b>	.873	
<b>Urban 9</b>	.797	

Although not being valid for latent constructs, the society and infrastructure items will still be used in the measurements of importance – performance analysis, as these items are still of importance as a part of the entire image and of importance in selecting a holiday destination for the French.

## **5.2 Internal and external validity**

The internal validity refers to the extent in which we can conclude that there exists a causal relationship between the constructs in the study (Reve, 1985). Internal validity is of great importance in studies that evaluate cause-effect relationships, such as in this study. As all of the constructs in this paper is based on previous research, and since image studies have a long research history it is assumed to be a high level of internal validity.

The external validity refers to whether the data and the results in this study can be transferred to the population, and whether the results concern only the sample in this study or if it the results can be generalized (Johannessen et al., 2004). One indicator of external validity is the sample used in the study. The results can often be generalized with high certainty if there is a representative sample (Reve, 1985). This study used a convenience sample, and therefore there is not a high level of external validity. However, another indicator of external validity is whether there are many varying replies from the sample, or if the results are consistent across the sample. If the results have a low degree of splay, the external validity becomes higher. One way of looking for this is the standard deviation in the results, which will be carried out in the descriptive analysis (Table 4).

## **5.3 Reliability**

The reliability of the data was also tested, by performing reliability tests with SPSS. Reliability is the level of which we can trust the data, and concerns the data collection methods and how the data is used (Johannessen et al., 2004). The results indicated that all items reflecting one latent construct was reliable with a Cronbach Alpha exceeding the critical level of 0,6 (Lee, 2009). The reliability was checked for the cognitive constructs (example: C1 nature), the importance items (example Imp nature) and the affective items.

**Table 3: Reliability measures**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N of indicators</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Imp nature	103	8	0,773
Imp Urban	103	9	0,809
Imp Infra	103	8	0,845
Imp Society	103	5	0,721
C1 Nature	103	8	0,852
C2 Urban	103	9	0,930
C3 Infra	103	8	0,866
C4 Society	103	5	0,903
Affective	103	4	0,862

## 6.0 Results

The majority of the respondents were female (58, 3 %), aged 26-31 (57, 8 %). The sample consisted of 12, 8 % in the age group 20-25 and 14, 8 % were 32-37, 14,9 % were 38-45. The sample consisted of 41, 7 % male. Residency in France, city or countryside, was almost equally represented with 49, 5% and 50, 5% respectively (see appendix 1). 65% stated that they had intention to travel abroad within the next 12 months and 23,3% has the intention for international travel within the next 3 years. This reflects that the selected age group in this sample travels frequently as suggested by Eurostat, and is therefore an interesting group to assess. Only 9, 7 % indicated that they have no interest in international travel. 15, 7 % have already visited Norway on previous holidays, which means that 84, 3 % have never visited Norway before (see appendix 2). The results of this study can therefore become of interest in the marketing of Norway, as this is a group with high levels of interest in travel, but also a very high number of potential tourists that have never visited Norway before.

Level of familiarity with Norway was very low, with 83,5 % stating that they had no knowledge or little knowledge of Norway (1-3) and only 16,5 % indicated 4 or higher (on a scale from 1 to 7) on their knowledge of Norway (see appendix 4).

### 6.1 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis was carried out to assess the image of Norway. Frequencies methods were used, such as means and standard deviations. This is done to give an understanding and a description of the image, as this is the number one purpose of the paper.

### 6.1.1 Cognitive and affective attributes

The respondents were asked to rate the 30 cognitive and the four affective attributes on a scale from one to seven. The highest ranked cognitive attributes are those of the nature construct. With the top three attributes being “Norway offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty” (6,16), “Nature/natural excursions are pleasant in Norway” (6,14) and “Norway has many natural sites to visit” (6,11). The top ten rankings in the cognitive attributes consist only of items from the nature and society constructs. Examples of the society construct which rated high are “safe to visit” (5,83), “easy to communicate” (5,77) and “political stability” (5,7). No weak perceptions were indicated (with means less than 3,5). However, the climate, inexpensive and opportunity for sun/beach activities had the lowest ranking with 4,17, 3,46 and 3,5 respectively. However, these items were initially dropped from the convergent factor analyses (table 1). All of the infrastructure and urban items were ranked from the middle and below, items such as “a variety of city recreational activities”, a “high degree of urbanization” and “accessibility to and inside the destination” were ranked number 23, 24 and 25 out of the 30. These findings are consistent with the study performed by Innovasjon Norge (2009). They found that the French consider the price level in Norway, the climate and the transportation (both inside Norway and to get to Norway) as barriers for travelling to Norway.

**Table 4: Attribute image perception of Norway from French respondents**

<b>Norway offers:</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Norway offers:</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Natural scenic beauty	6,16	1,17	Possibilities for shopping	4,83	1,54
Pleasant natural excursions	6,14	1,15	Convenient public transport	4,83	1,60
Many natural sites to visit	6,11	1,27	Variety of festivals and events	4,77	1,40
Clean and litter free	5,94	1,36	Good nightlife	4,76	1,51
Safe to visit	5,83	1,55	Good culinary experience (cafés, restaurants)	4,76	1,58
Winter/snow activities	5,80	1,50	No traffic congestion problems	4,68	1,60
Easy to communicate	5,77	1,53	Variety of city recreational activities	4,65	1,51
Political stability	5,70	1,70	Urbanization	4,64	1,50
Friendly and hospitable	5,64	1,57	Accessibility to and inside	4,58	1,36
Quality of service	5,61	1,34	Choices in accommodation	4,50	1,41
Adventure/ sport activities	5,39	1,57	Not overcrowded	4,47	1,73
Learning new culture	5,37	1,32	Nice climate	4,17	1,55
Quality of accommodation	5,36	1,55	Inexpensive	3,46	1,63
Rich cultural heritage (many museums and historical buildings)	5,07	1,52	Sun/ beach holiday	3,50	1,65
Nice architecture	4,98	1,53			
Quality of roads	4,90	1,42			



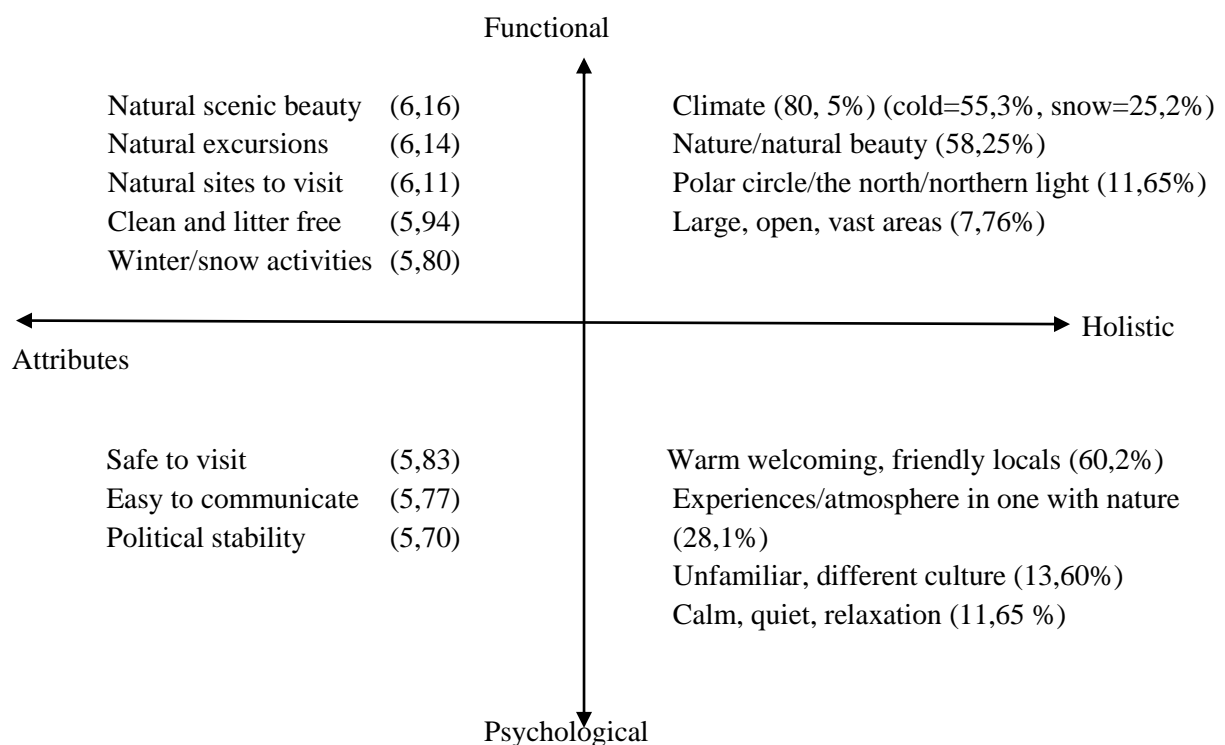
The four affective attributes, like the cognitive attributes, had high means, with no items ranking lower than five. However, exciting (5,06) and arousing (5,17) received the lowest means and relaxing (5,76) and pleasant (5,70) received the highest means (see appendix 5).

### **6.1.2 Holistic statements**

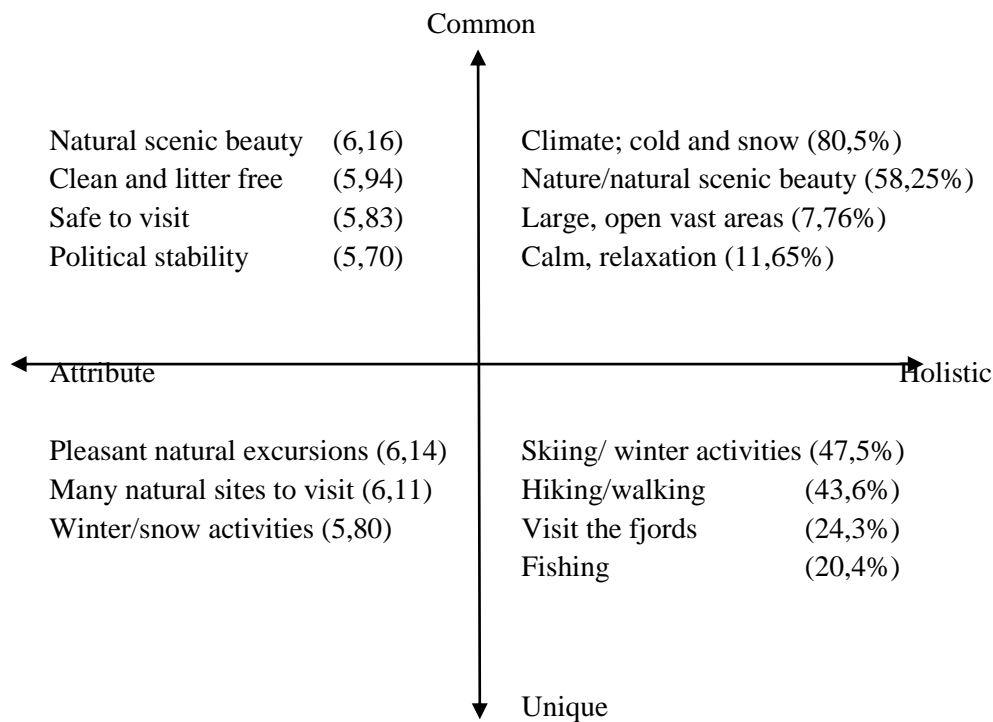
The three open-ended questions, as adapted from Echtner et al. (1991, 1993), were analyzed by classifying and labeling the various descriptions provided by the French respondents in each question. Then the means of frequencies were assessed. The respondents were asked to list three items in each question. However, some used sentences and phrases to explain what they expected in visiting Norway. The underlying meaning of the sentences was then used to classify it under a label. For example several respondents used single words such as calm and relaxing, therefore sentences stating meanings similar to this, was also grouped into the label of “calm and relaxation”. One particular word that was repeated many times created some difficulties at first, as this word (*dépaysement*) has several meanings in French. The person who aided in the questionnaire (whose first language is French) was then contacted, and the meaning of the word was clarified. *Dépaysement* means something that is new, different or strange from you. In this context it therefore means a culture that is different from your own, therefore this was categorized together with other similar statements such as “discovering a new culture, that of northern Europe”. Very specific descriptions, such as the fjords, were categorized as specific labels, as opposed to being categorized with a more general label of “nature”. As mentioned above in the critical factors in the execution of the survey, question two concerning the expected atmosphere and mood created some difficulties in the translation. This was because the words atmosphere and mood does not exist in the same matter in French. The closest translation to this was what kind of welcoming do you expect. Although the French individual who helped with the questionnaire stated that the meaning would both be about people, as well as the environment, a high number of the respondents wrote items referring to the hospitality or the welcoming of the Norwegian people. This could be seen as a disadvantage, since the mood and atmosphere in the sense of the word in English, would include many more aspects than hospitality. It is then difficult to know whether this is the actual first image that would come to mind for the French, or whether this was a result of the translation. However, there were still several other items mentioned, which are of great interest. For a complete list of the ranking of the holistic statements, see appendix 7.

The first open-ended question, relating to the immediate images and characteristics that come to mind, were centered around nature items, such as “cold” (55,3%), “Nature/scenic beauty” (33,9%), “snow” (25,2%) and “the fjords” (24,3%). The atmosphere expected were one of “hospitality” (60,2%), “mood and atmosphere, which is in one with nature” (28,1%), “New and different” (13,6%) and “calm and relaxation” (11,6%). The unique tourist attractions that the French think of in Norway were also centered on nature activities. With “skiing/ winter activities” (47,5%), “hiking/walking” (43,6%), “visiting the fjords” (24,3%) and “fishing” (20,4 %). The elements of “an atmosphere in one with nature” and the culture being seen as very different or strange to the French, were items that were not represented in the list of attributes used in the questionnaire. The strong focus on nature, relaxation and calm in the holistic questions also enhanced the understanding of their image. This shows that the use of both attributes based and holistic impressions gives a more comprehensive understanding of the complex image (McCartney et al., 2009). The leading image characteristics from both the attribute and holistic questions are illustrated in figure 7 and 8 below. The figures are represented in two dimensional models of Norway’s image, as seen by the French. The figures then include the functional and psychological and common and unique elements separated into both holistic and attribute views and will give an understanding of the image.

**Figure 7: Attribute/holistic and functional/psychological components of Norway’s image**



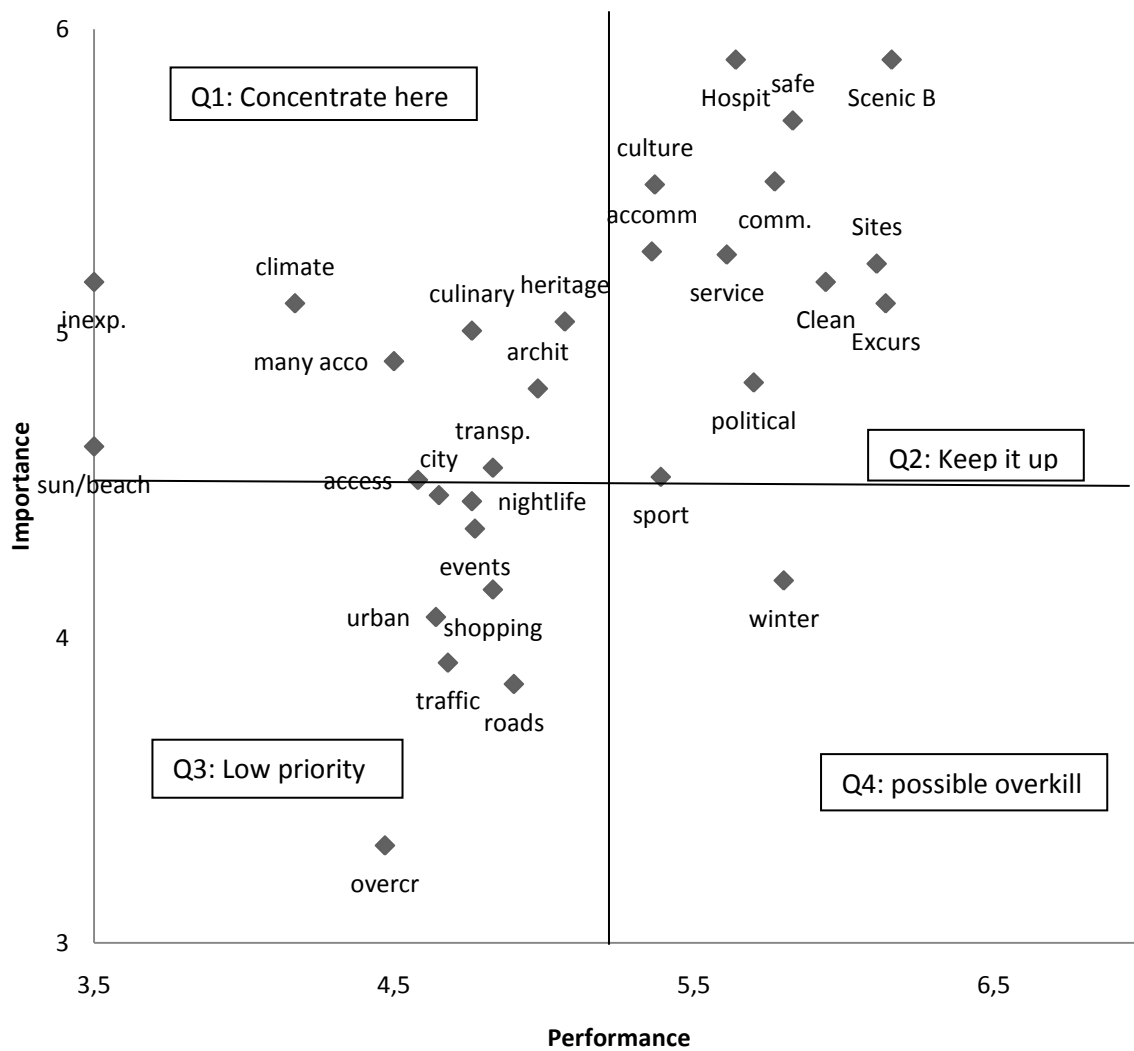
**Figure 8: Attribute/holistic and common/unique components of Norway’s image**



### 6.1.3 Importance – performance analysis

Pike et al. (2004) argue that to measure the attractiveness of a destination, it is not sufficient to only measure the image of Norway held by the French. There is also a need to assess how important the various attributes are in selecting a holiday destination. Therefore the respondents were asked to rate the same 30 cognitive attributes, according to their importance in selecting a holiday destination. “Natural scenic beauty” (5,9) followed by “friendly and hospitable people” (5,9) are the two attributes rated the highest. Further on, “safe to visit” (5,7), “easy to communicate” (5,5), “the quality of accommodation” (5,27) and “quality of service” (5,23) are the items that follows (for a complete list of ranking of the importance of attributes, see appendix 6). As with the perceived image of Norway, all items were rated significantly high, with no means less than 3,3. “Inexpensive goods and services” and “opportunity for sun/ beach holiday” are the items rated the lowest on performance in Norway, but are still considered of some importance to the French. The attribute means on both performance (table 4) and importance (see appendix ...) are plotted in the importance – performance analysis matrix (IPA matrix) (figure 9).

**Figure 9: Importance – performance matrix**



The matrix is adapted from Pike et al. (2004) and it is divided into four quadrants as proposed by the authors. The x-axis goes from 3,5 to 7, as no results indicated lower than 3,5 in performance (table 4). The y-axis goes from 3 to 6 as no results rated lower than 3,3 or higher than 6 in the 30 importance attributes. The crosshair axes are placed in the middle of each axis.

Quadrant 1 consists of items which are of great importance for the tourists, but is not perceived to perform strongly in Norway. Quadrant 2 is attributes that are both of great importance, and is perceived to be performed in the destination. Quadrant 3 and 4 are attributes of low priority, because it is not rated as high importance for the tourists (Pike et al., 2004). For example “easy to find and many options in accommodation” (“many acco”) rated 4,5 on the x-axis (performance) and 4,91 on the y-axis (importance), therefore it was dotted in the “concentrate here” quadrant. As can be seen from the IPA matrix, several of the attributes

in quadrant 1 (concentrate here) are adjustable items, such as “many choices and easy to find accommodation” (many acco), “Accessibility to and inside the destination” (access), “Opportunity for city recreational activities” (city), “culinary experiences” (culinary) and “good private and public transportation” (transp.). These items are attributes that should form a part of the marketing efforts aimed at the French target group.

## **6.2 Causal analysis**

Regression analysis was carried out next to assess the relationship between the image and the intent to travel to Norway. Firstly regression analysis was performed on all 30 cognitive attributes and the four affective attributes. Secondly, the relationship between the factors extracted from discriminant validity “nature” and “urban” was assessed with intent to travel and lastly the relationship between the three constructs (urban, nature and affective) was assessed, as to see whether there exists any relationship between the constructs.

### **6.2.1 Regression analysis of the cognitive attributes**

The first step was therefore four different regression analyses, one of nature, urban, infrastructure and society with all of its underlying items as independent variables. This was done three times to include the three conative items as dependent variables (intent to travel within the next 12 months, intent to travel within the next three years and intent to travel to Norway in the future). All items were used in the regression analysis, because the variations in respondent’s responses were small (table 4), and it was considered a need to firstly assess each item (within its latent construct) to see if any specific items were of interest. The regression analyses first of all showed that the results varied in time frames, indicating that the time frames included in the questionnaire were of importance. Table 5 shows all the attributes that had a significant relationship with intention to travel ( $p < .05$ ). The p-value shows the probability of rejecting a correct null hypothesis, normally one should not accept higher probability than 5% (Johannessen et al., 2004). The t-value is related to the p-value, and should not be lower than the critical level of  $\pm 1,96$  (Johannessen et al., 2004). It was interesting to see that several of the regression analyses were significant (from the ANOVA matrix), however none of the individual items were of significance. This could be due to the small standard deviations in the responses (table 4), given that a prerequisite for regression analysis is the normal distribution in the data (Johannessen et al., 2004). Due to the small standard deviations some p-values above  $< .05$  are still noted in the table.

**Table 5: Attributes with significant relationship with intention to travel**

Cognitive items	Beta	P value	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
<b><u>12 months:</u></b>					
<b>Infrastructure</b>		.050		2,038	.075
Convenient public and private transport	.342	.019	2.383		
Possibilities for shopping	-.469	.006	-2.835		
<b><u>3 years:</u></b>					
<b>Society</b>		.004		3.780	.120
(No items were sig.)					
<b>Urban</b>		.107		1.670	.056
Good nightlife/entertainment	.270	.080	1.772		
<b><u>In the future:</u></b>					
<b>Nature</b>		.006		2.913	.130
(No items were sig.)					
<b>Urban</b>		.004		2.908	.144
Good nightlife/entertainment	.245	.095	1.688		
Learning about a new culture	.291	.032	2.183		
<b>Infrastructure</b>		.053		2.016	.074
Convenient public and private transport	.329	.024	2.289		
<b>Society</b>		.001		4.858	.159
(No items were sig.)					

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> shows the explained variance of the dependent variable by the independent variables (Johannessen et al., 2004). Society has the highest explained variance with 15,9%, however none of the items were significant. As a first step, the use of regression analysis on all cognitive items indicates which items are significantly related to the intention to travel. Urban items (good nightlife/entertainment and possibilities to learn about a new culture) and infrastructure items (convenient transportation and possibilities for shopping) are significantly related to the intent to travel to Norway. Both nature and society showed significance, but no specific items were related to the intent to travel. It was only infrastructure items that were significantly correlated with travel within the next 12 months. This is similar to the findings from the IPA matrix, where several of the infrastructure items were considered important in choosing a holiday destination (transport, accessibility and accommodation). The Beta values indicate the level in which independent values affect the dependent value. “Convenient transport” has the strongest positive effect on intent to travel ( $\beta=.329$ ). When comparing the attributes that the French rank important in selecting a tourist destinations (the top ten, appendix 6) and the regression analysis results (table 5), there is only one overlap; opportunity to learn about a new culture. Looking at the leading image perceptions that the French have of Norway (table 4), none of the top ten items overlap with the items that are related to intention to travel (table 5).

### 6.2.2 Regression analysis of the four affective attributes

Regression analyses were performed on all four affective attributes three times to include the different time frames. The results show that “exciting” has a positive significant relationship with intention to travel within the next 12 months and within the next three years. Within the next three years “relaxing” also had a significant correlation with intent to travel, but it was a negative relationship with a beta level of -.218. Relaxing and calm are rated number four (11,65%) in the holistic descriptions explaining the atmosphere expected in Norway (appendix 7). This indicates that relaxation has a negative effect on the choice of travel to Norway, but relaxing is the perceived image the French have of Norway. The regression analysis for travel in the future was also significant, but again, no items were of significance. Arousing was almost significant, with a p-value of .103. The significant affective attributes are listed in table 6.

**Table 6: Affective attributes with significant relationship to intention to travel**

Affective items	Beta	P value	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>12 months:</b>		.001		4.827	.131
Gloomy-exciting	.418	.006	2.828		
<b>3 years:</b>		.000		5.497	.150
Gloomy-exciting	.263	.075	1.798		
Distressing-relaxing	-.218	.074	-1.803		
<b>Future:</b>		.000		6.238	.170
Sleepy-arousing	.280	.103	1.648		

### 6.2.3 Regression analysis of the urban and nature constructs

Regression analyses were also performed three times (12 months, three years and the future) on the two constructs derived from the discriminant factor analysis (urban and nature). This was done, because the aim of this research is to see what the effects the marketing of Norway as a nature destination has on the DI. Therefore the urban and nature constructs are viewed as important factors in this paper, being that nature and urban elements would be considered opposites, when it comes to holiday destinations. The results showed that no constructs were significant in choice of travel to Norway within the next 12 months. The urban factor is significantly related to intention to travel within the next three years and nature is significantly related to travel in the future.

**Table 7: Constructs with significant relationship to intention to travel**

Constructs	Beta	P value	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Three years:</b>		.005		5.525	.081
Urban	.229	.058	1.917		
<b>Future:</b>		.000		10.842	.162
Nature	.350	.003	3.072		

#### 6.2.4 Analysis of the relationship between nature, urban and affective constructs

Regression analysis was performed on the three constructs, nature, urban and affective, to assess what relationships exist among them. Lin et al. (2007), although using structural equation modeling (SEM), found that the affective dimension had no relation with natural destinations, indicating that the affective elements had no effect in attracting tourists to natural destinations. It would therefore be interesting to see if there are any relationships between the urban, nature and affective constructs in this research paper. The test was performed three times, using the different constructs as dependant variables. The results indicated that nature and urban dimensions have a significant correlation, and urban and affective have a significant correlation with each other. The results in this report support Lin et al. (2007) results, where the affective and the nature constructs had no significant correlation. The significant results are listed in table 8 below.

**Table 8: Assessing the relationship between urban, nature and affective constructs**

Factors	Beta	P value	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dependent variable: Nature</b>		.000		28.939	.354
Urban	.604	.000	6.195		
<b>Dependent variable: Affective</b>		.000		24.932	.319
Urban	.575	.000	5.599		
<b>Dependent variable: Urban</b>		.000		53.689	.508
Nature	.460	.000	6.195		
Affective	.415	.000	5.599		



## 7.0 Discussion and implications

The research area of this paper is: “*What effects does destination image have on the French tourists’ choice of Norway as a tourist destination*”? The purpose and aim of this study was therefore to firstly (1) examine the destination image of Norway held by the French, then (2) assess the effects that destination image have on travel choice behavior, and (3) discuss the implications of these findings on the marketing of Norway. It was considered important to first of all examine the image of Norway held by the French, before being able to answer to the research area, of what effects the image has on tourist choice behavior. By conducting a quantitative survey, including all components of the DI as reviewed in the literature, the results gave an in depth understanding of the image as (a) a nature based destination, (b) a holiday destination based on calm and relaxation, (c) having winter and nature activities as its main tourist attractions. Further on, the importance – performance analysis and regression analyses results gave an indication of what items are of importance for the French tourist and thus found that (d) several of the cognitive and affective components of image have an effect on travel choice behavior. The results from causal analyses are consistent with previous research, and this research paper therefore supports the notion that images have an impact on travel choice behavior (Lin et al., 2007).

The survey was based on previous studies, which indicated that the use of both structured and unstructured methods is needed in assessing the complexity of destination image. This paper contributes to the image literature in the way that it is based on both the theories from Echtner et al. (1991 and 1993) (attributes and holistic open ended questions) as well as adding the theories that images consists of cognitive, affective and conative elements (Lin et al.,2007; Pike et al., 2004). Through the literature review, there were no signs of any research conducting a survey with all components in one single study, as it is conducted in this research. It was challenging to include all components, but it also proved to be important to include the open ended questions, as well as the affective response grid to give a more thorough understanding of the image. This paper also contributes in a meaningful way, because no previous studies, besides the destination marketing organization itself, has assessed the destination image of Norway held by the French.

The commonly held purpose for destination image research in the literature is to be aware of the images held by the target group to be able to build positive images, plan for strategies in the marketing efforts, and through this attract more tourists (Baloglu et al., 1999). The results of image studies gives a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in a destination,

as perceived by the potential tourists, and gives an indication of what attributes are important in selecting a destination for a target market (Baloglu et al., 1999). The results can then be used to better plan for segmentation, positioning, branding and other marketing strategies.

Several researchers claim that familiarity and distance has an effect on the perceived image and thus, destination choice (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). The results in this research indicated that the majority of the French sample had no, or very limited knowledge about Norway (appendix 4). According to the literature, the more knowledgeable a person is about a destination, the more likely they are to choose that destination (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). It therefore became quite evident from the survey that the French would require more knowledge, more information and more familiarity with Norway, if they are going to choose Norway as a holiday destination. This was also shown in statements from the holistic open ended questions, several times (13,60 %) the descriptions used were “strange”, “different” and “unfamiliar” (appendix 7). This could be an indicator that the French would need more information about Norway, through the use of several agents that has different levels of credibility and market penetration (Gartner, 1993). As discussed in the formation of images, the DMO's in Norway at the moment focus their advertisement campaigns on major cities in France and in areas around Paris, as opposed to the country side and other parts of France (Innovasjon Norge). And the agents mostly used are overt induced, such as outdoor and street advertisement and web and online advertisement, which have low levels of credibility (Gartner, 1993). The sample in this survey consisted of younger people (age 20-45) mostly residing in the southern parts of France. Their level of familiarity with Norway was at a minimum and 84,3 % had never visited Norway before (appendix 4 and 2), which can be an indication of their low levels of familiarity and therefore destination choice.

The respondent's level of familiarity and the link to their choice of Norway as a holiday destination is also shown from the intention to travel within the next 12 months and the next three years (appendix 2). The results indicated that a high percentage of the respondents have the intention for international travel within the next 12 months (65 %) and the next three years (23,3 %). However, 77,7% indicated that they had no or little intention to travel to Norway within the next 12 months (respondents ranking from 1 to 3 on a scale from 1 to 7), and 43,7 % had no or little intention to travel to Norway within the next 3 years (appendix 3). These results indicate that the sample in this survey has a high intention of travel, as suggested by the European statistics, Eurostat, the age group 20-45 is therefore an interesting target market.

The results from this survey therefore becomes of importance, as it provides for an understanding to why Norway is of low consideration for their next holiday.

There is a general consensus of the effects destination image has on destination choice (Stepchenkova et al., 2010), which has also been proved in this paper. However, several researchers call for the need to assess the individual components' of the DI constructs effect on choice for different types of destinations (Lin et al., 2007). This is important because the marketing efforts can then be more strategically aimed at different target markets for different types of destinations focusing on different elements of the image construct (Lin et al., 2007). The image of Norway from French respondents is that Norway is a nature based destination. This became clear from both the cognitive attributes as well as the holistic statements. Five of the top six perceived attribute image of Norway were items from the nature construct, such as "natural scenic beauty", "many pleasant natural excursions", "many natural sites to visit" and "winter and snow activities" (table 4). The holistic statements indicated that "the climate" (snow and cold), "nature/natural scenic beauty", "atmosphere in one with the nature" and "winter/snow activities" are the highest ranked holistic impressions the French have of Norway (appendix 7).

The perceived image is consistent with the marketing efforts of the DMO's, where the focus has been on experiences in nature (Innovasjon Norge). There are several items that Innovasjon Norge state as their main objectives in the marketing efforts targeted at the French, which is consistent with the perceived image the French have of Norway. For example, key values of the Norwegian brand are "fresh" and "pure" (Innovasjon Norge). "Clean and litter free" (5,94) is rated number four of perceived attributes in Norway, and several times in the holistic statements descriptions such as "pure environment and air", "clean", "proper", "sustainable" and "healthy" was used about Norway in the two first questions (6,79 % and 10,7 % respectively, appendix 7). Fjords and mountains is the number one communication platform in the marketing of Norway (Innovasjon Norge), and the fjords were one of the top four (24,3%) unique tourist attractions mentioned in question three. Further on, arctic Norway is a major focus in the marketing efforts (Innovasjon Norge), and this was also one of the top four (11,65%) immediate impressions of Norway, as perceived by the French. "Valuable experiences in nature" is the basis of all marketing efforts, thus the strategy for tourism in Norway is named accordingly (Innovasjon Norge). The results from question three, concerning unique tourist attractions in Norway reflected this impression, where most items mentioned in one way or another describes experiences and activities in

Nature. However, there are still 84,3 % of the sample which have never visited Norway before. So, the question lies in how do they attract the 85 % potential tourists that have never visited Norway, considering that the perceived image is very consistent with the marketing efforts of Norway?

From the perceived image of Norway (figure 7 and 8) it became evident that Norway is perceived as a nature based destination. However, when these results are compared with the ranking of the importance of the same 30 attributes (figure 9), it becomes more clear what items and what areas of the destination that require some considerations. In quadrant 1 (concentrate here) in the IPA matrix there are several items from the infrastructure and urban constructs. Items such as “many choices and easy to find accommodations”, “transportation” and “good cafés and restaurants (culinary experiences)” are in this quadrant. Other items such as “accessibility to and inside the destination” and “city recreational activities” are just on the border between quadrant 1 and 3. These findings give an indication on what areas are of importance for the French in selecting a holiday destination, yet these items were not considered to performing strongly in Norway. The IPA matrix therefore shows that most items which need more consideration in the marketing of Norway are adjustable items. Adjustable items, according to McCartney et al. (2009), are items which should be focused on in the marketing efforts and be developed into the tourism product, since they are of importance in selecting a destination. These items can be adjusted, as opposed to other items, such as “the climate” or being “expensive”, which are items that cannot be changed in a destination.

What also becomes evident from the importance – performance analysis is that the highest amount of items are dotted into quadrant 2 (“keep it up”), which indicates that several items which are of importance for the French in selecting a destination, is perceived to be performed in Norway. This quadrant consists mainly of nature and society items, such as “natural scenic beauty”, “many natural sites to visit”, “safe to visit” and “political stability”. These items should continue to be a part of the marketing efforts and continue to be a part of the tourism product (Pike et al., 2004). The high amount of items in this quadrant can indicate a high level of attractiveness of Norway, as perceived by the French respondents (Pike et al., 2004). A high level of attractiveness means that the destination is able to offer certain attributes, which are needs and desires sought by the French tourists when selecting a destination (Lee et al., 2010). Therefore there exists a match between the destination and the tourist (Lee et al.,

2010). The results are supporting the findings of Innovasjon Norge (2009), which found that a high percentage of French tourists (48%) are interested in nature based vacations.

However, Lin et al. (2007) discuss in their paper, when assessing destination attractiveness across different types of destinations that some attributes are of universal importance in selecting a destination and some are unique for choosing a particular kind of destination. They found that items from the natural construct, such as “scenic beauty” are considered to be of equal importance across different types of destinations (natural, developed and artificial destinations). It could therefore be discussed whether there is a high amount of items in quadrant 2, because many of the items are of universal importance, or whether they are specifically important in choosing Norway, or a nature based destination, as a tourist destination. When Innovasjon Norge (2009) conducted their market research of the French, they firstly assessed the population of France, finding that 48% of the French are interested in nature based holidays. However, questions asked to identify whether respondents wanted nature holidays, were items such as: “clean and untouched nature” and “dramatic, wild nature and beautiful scenery”. According to Lin et al. (2007) items such as these could be universal items, meaning that they have equal importance in selecting for example a developed destination, as well as artificial destinations (theme parks). Thus, it could be argued that asking respondents questions such as these, does not reflect an interest for nature based holidays, rather general desires for all kind of destinations. Interestingly, the respondents in Innovasjon Norge (2009) market research rated “local art, culture and lifestyle” as the number two activity sought by (following “clean and untouched nature”) and “big cities” as number four. These responses are consistent with the results in this study, which indicates that universal items (according to Lin et al., 2007) such as “natural scenic beauty” and “proper and clean” are the highest ranked attributes. However, items similar to the “local art, culture and lifestyle” is plotted into quadrant 2 (concentrate here) in this research, indicating that items such as “Good cafés, restaurants and culinary experiences” and “many historical buildings, museums and cultural heritage”, is missing in the perceived image of Norway by the French. Yet, these are not of focus in the marketing directed at the French.

These results can further be compared with the results of Lin et al. (2007). They found in their study that the cognitive and affective components have different level of influence in different types of destinations. For artificial destinations, such as theme parks, the affective components were of most importance. For nature based destinations, the cognitive components were most important in destination choice and in developed destinations (urban),

both cognitive and affective components were equally important (Lin et al., 2007). According to Lin et al. (2007), when positioning and marketing a nature based destination, functional and tangible attributes, such as scenic beauty, facilities and activities becomes of great importance. When comparing Lin et al. (2007) results with the results of the IPA matrix, there is reason to believe that several of the items that needs to be of focus in the marketing of Norway, as a nature based destination, are physical and practical information of the infrastructure and urban constructs, such as transportation, accommodation facilities and cultural experiences. When comparing the results in this study, with the results of Lin et al. (2007) and the market research of Innovasjon Norge, it becomes clear that defining “nature based holidays” will become of importance for the destination in the future, as it could be argued that the meaning the respondents place in such a term could vary. This is beyond the scope of this research; however it is noted as important for the destination to clarify the meaning of “nature holidays”, as it could have been meant as universal items from a French perspective.

To further assess whether the results in this paper are consistent with the results of Lin et al. (2007) as discussed above, a regression analysis was performed to measure the relationship between the urban, nature and affective constructs. The results showed that the urban construct had a significant relationship to both affective and nature. However, the nature and affective constructs had no significant relationship (table 8). This is consistent with their research, indicating that the affective component is not of importance in nature based destinations. Although it must be taken into consideration, that the regression analysis is just an indication of the relationship found by Lin et al. (2007), because in this study the cognitive and affective attributes were not compared for different types of destinations, and Lin et al. (2007) used SEM in their study, which is more suited in comparing the components of DI across destinations.

The IPA matrix gives a general overview of the perceived image of Norway compared with the importance of the attributes. As a general overview the matrix shows that quadrant 2 (“keep it up”) consists mainly of nature and society items, which then should continue to be a part of the marketing efforts. While quadrant 1 (“concentrate here”) consists mainly of infrastructure and urban items, which should in the future form a part of the marketing efforts. “Opportunity for winter and snow activities” is the only item in quadrant 4 (“possible overkill”), which is of low importance for the French, and which might have been over-focused on in the marketing efforts (Pike et al., 2004).

From the regression analyses several of the components of destination image was proved significant with intention to travel to Norway. This supports the notion claimed in the image literature, that images has an effect on the travel choice behavior (Stepchenkova et al., 2010; Echtner et al., 1991; Lin et al., 2007). In the regression analyses it again became clear that there are several of the cognitive attributes, of the infrastructure and urban constructs, which have a direct effect on intention to travel. The items that were of significant relationship with intent are: “good nightlife and entertainment”, “possibilities for shopping”, “convenient public and private transport” and “opportunity for learning new cultures”. Comparing the regression analyses results with the IPA matrix, convenient transport is in the “concentrate here” quadrant, therefore indicating that the French do not consider Norway to have good transportation, but it is significant in intention to travel. It should therefore be of great importance in the marketing. “Opportunity for learning about new cultures” is the only item of the four which overlap with IPA matrix, meaning that it is the only item perceived to be performed in Norway (in quadrant 2, “keep it up”). None of the top ten perceived cognitive images of Norway (table 4) correspond with the items affecting the intention to travel to Norway (table 5). The regression analyses performed in this study therefore enhanced the notion (from the IPA matrix) that there is a need to provide more information regarding the functional and tangible attributes of Norway, considering that no items of the perceived attribute image of Norway overlaps with the attributes that have a significant relationship with intention to travel (McCartney et al., 2009).

A regression analysis of the urban and nature construct was also performed, to see whether there existed any differences between the two constructs and intention to travel to Norway. The results indicated that the different constructs had different significance in the different time frames. None of the items were of significance with intention to travel within the first twelve months. One rationale for this might be that travel within the next twelve months has already been planned, and Norway was not an option. Another rationale might be that travel within the next twelve months could be considered more spontaneous, thus neither nature nor urban items are of great importance, there could be other factors that influence the decision, such as flight costs or availability. The urban construct was significantly related to the intention to travel to Norway within the next 3 years. While the nature construct was related to intention to travel to Norway in the future. This could be due to the age group in the sample, which consisted of individuals in the age 20-45. Perhaps, urban activities and elements are considered of more interest in the earlier stages of the life cycle, than nature

holidays. If so, it is consistent with the results showing that in the near future (within three years) city break holidays were significant, and in the distant future (when the sample would be older) nature holidays are significant. If this is the case, it gives a good understanding of possible segmentation strategies for Norway (McCartney et al., 2009). However, this would require further research to establish.

Another indicator of the age in the sample, and what possible segmentation strategies that could be required for this age group, are the affective regression analyses results. The affective regression analyses results showed that affective components have an effect on intention to travel, which is the opposite of Lin et al. (2007) results for a nature based destination. However, it should be taken into considerations that the researchers used SEM in their study, therefore integrating all cognitive and affective attributes into one model, as opposed to doing it separately with the regression analyses in this research. The results showed that “exciting” had a positive relationship with intention to travel to Norway, whereas “relaxing” had a negative relationship with intention to travel. This indicates that the respondents aspire for exciting holidays, as opposed to relaxing holidays. A rationale for this could again be the age of the sample, considering that they are a fairly young group (20-45). Meanwhile, the descriptive results of the affective attributes (appendix5), as well as the holistic statements (appendix 7), indicates that the perceived image of Norway is one of “relaxation”, “calm” and “quiet”, with relaxing being rated the highest (5,76) of the four affective attributes. This shows a mismatch in attractiveness between the images perceived by the French and the emotions sought on a holiday (Lee et al., 2010).

None of the items were significant with intention to travel in future, however “arousing” was almost significant (p-value = .103). Again, this could indicate that there might be differences in the emotions sought on a holiday as the sample gets older. The different time frames, compared with different ages should be investigated further, as to establish the different effects age and time have on intention to travel to Norway for segmentation purposes.



## **7.1 Implications of the findings for Norway's destination marketing organizations**

According to Baloglu et al. (1999), the implications of the results of image studies are that the destination either needs to alter unfavorable or negative images, or develop their tourism product, or both, depending on the perceived image by the potential tourists, the needs sought and the discrepancy that exists between the two. McCartney et al. (2009) adds that not all destinations can be all things to all target markets. Therefore segmentation might be a required result from image studies, and some markets which have no match with the destination might be chosen to be ignored.

The results from image studies can first of all be used in the marketing efforts of the destination (Baloglu et al., 1999). It becomes clear that the image the French have of Norway, is one with a focus on nature (figure 7 and 8). This is consistent with the marketing efforts performed by the DMO's in Norway, where the focus is on the nature in Norway, thus the slogan "Norway, powered by nature". Quadrant 2 in figure 9 therefore show consistency between the performance of Norway and the importance of these attributes, which indicates a fairly high level of attractiveness (Pike et al., 2004), yet 84,3 % of the sample had never traveled to Norway before, and 77,7 % had no or little intention to travel to Norway within the next 12 months, and 43,7 % had no or little intention of traveling to Norway the next 3 years. Thus, what becomes important for the DMO's from this research paper is the identification of areas where discrepancies exists between the perceived image and the importance (quadrant 1, Figure 9) and the need lies in altering these. From the research conducted in this paper, the results indicated that the French place a high importance on urban and infrastructure items (Figure 9), such as transportation, accessibility, accommodation and some cultural and city activities. According to Lin et al. (2007) nature based destinations should focus on tangible and physical attributes, such as scenic beauty, activities and facilities. This was supported by the research conducted in this paper, as it was clear that both infrastructure items and urban items are important for the French, both from the IPA matrix (Figure 9), as well as the results from the regression analysis (Table 5). This research therefore indicates that in the future there is a need for the DMO's to focus more heavily on infrastructure items and urban items to more successfully attract the French tourist. The focus should perhaps slightly change from emotional and abstract messages, to more tangible messages.

Another option from image studies results are altering or developing the tourism product. This depends on the differences that exist in the perceived image, and on resources available

(Baloglu et al., 1999). In this case the results indicate a lack of infrastructure and tangible/physical aspects of the destination. This might be due to the lack of familiarity with the destination, and thus the image might be inaccurate (Stepchenkova et al., 2010). If this is the case, information and knowledge is required, as proposed above in the marketing efforts. However, recently a focus in the media in Norway has been on the lack of toilet facilities for tourists in different parts of Norway. Several news articles have lately showed photos of unattractive toilet facilities (Kaur, 2011), as well as hotel owners complaining about the tourist buses which stop and use the hotel toilet facilities (Mikalsen, 2010). Therefore, in this case the results from the research compared with the media shedding light on the lack of tourist facilities, indicate a need to develop the tourism product in Norway. The focus here, from the French point of view, lies in the infrastructure items, such as accessibility and transportation. As these items are adjustable items, according to McCartney et al. (2009), they are more easily adapted and changed in the tourism product. Furthermore, other items that were not a part of the survey might also need a focus (such as the example above with the toilet facilities). The development of a tourism product is a costly matter, thus this option depends on the resources available at the destination (Baloglu et al., 1999).

According to the literature, the last option of implications for the DMO's of destination image studies is segmentation (McCartney et al., 2009). The results can be used for segmentation, as to more strategically aim the messages sent at different target markets. The results in this study indicate segmentation possibilities, such as a more exciting (affective) and cultural and city possibilities in Norway for younger target markets. McCartney et al. (2009) also mention that not all destinations can offer all things, for all target markets, therefore, depending on the results from the research, some target markets might be chosen to be ignored, if the attractiveness level is low (McCartney et al., 2009). However, the results from this study indicate that the attractiveness is fairly high, as several of the IPA matrix attributes are dotted in the "keep it up" quadrant 1. Therefore the results indicate that it is not recommended to ignore this target market. The items in quadrant 2 consist mainly of adjustable items, thus it is not a severe discrepancy that exists between the importance and performance of the attributes. The sample also place high importance on other infrastructure and society items as well, such as "service quality", "quality of accommodation" and the "ease of communication", as these are perceived to perform well in Norway (quadrant 2) there already exists positive images of Norway. The results therefore indicate that this target group should not be ignored, as the sample is a group that travels frequently, and since there is a match between the perceived

image and the marketing efforts of Norway. Thus, the destination is perceived as fairly attractive to the tourists, although small adjustments in the marketing efforts and the development of the tourism product might be required as discussed in the two previous sections.

## **7.2 Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that it only assessed the images of the French tourists on Norway. Other customers, such as other European countries might have different impressions of Norway, therefore the results and implications only concern the French. However, France is one of the areas in which Innovasjon Norge has a focus, and it is one of the areas which resources are devoted to. It is therefore very important to assess this population. Another limitation is that it does not measure the images compared to other destinations, thus it does not include the competition and how Norway should position itself compared to the competition. Although this research does not include competing destinations, it still gives an understanding of the images held by the French, and it is therefore a valid starting point for further research.

The sample and sampling methods can be considered a limitation in this research, due to the fact that it was convenience sample and a relatively small sample (103 respondents), whose residence is mainly in the south of France. However, this sample still gives a thorough picture of the images held by the French, and it is a good indicator of what needs to be of focus in the future for marketing efforts, as well as for further research. The respondents replied similarly on all items, therefore the results had minimum standard deviations. This might be a limitation for the regression analyses, given that a prerequisite for regression analyses are the normal distributions of the responses (Johannessen et al., 2004). However it is also an indicator of the strong, stereotypic image the French have of Norway. From the small standard deviations from 103 respondents, it could be argued that the responses would be similar if the sample was larger and more representative.

### **7.3 Further research**

This study contributes to the image literature in the way that it assessed all components of the destination image in one single study. It also contributes in a meaningful way because it measures the images held by the French, which is an area of focus in Norway, and examines what components of the image has an effect on intention to travel. It would be interesting to assess the images in comparison with the competition, as have several other researchers (Lin et al., 2007; Pike et al., 2004; Baloglu et al., 1999). It would also be interesting to measure the images of Norway in other European countries, as to assess whether similar images and similar results will occur, and thus segmentation and positioning strategies could be aimed at several groups across borders. If this was the case, it could be possible to plan for more time and cost efficient marketing efforts for different segments, across borders. It would also be interesting to further investigate the segments that exist in the market regarding age, as the urban, nature and affective constructs received different results in the different time frames in the research conducted in this paper.

### **8.0 Conclusions**

The aim of this study was to contribute to the literature of destination images, by assessing (1) the French image of Norway, (2) examine the effects of destination image on travel choice behavior, and (3) discuss the implications of the results on the destination marketing organizations of Norway. The purpose and aim was reached through conducting a quantitative survey, including all components of the DI construct, as the literature recommend (Echtner et al., 1991; McCartney et al., 2009). There are some limitations to the study conducted, such as the convenience sample. However, the results in this study is still of great importance as it gives an indication of the images held by the French, what effect the image has on travel choice. It is thus an important starting point to create further interest in the effects and implications of the marketing of Norway.

As proposed by Lin et al. (2007), Pike et al. (2004), Stepchenkova et al. (2010) and McCartney et al. (2009) among many others, destination image was proved to have an effect on tourist choice behavior in this study. Further, several authors also call for the need to identify the different effects of the different components of the DI construct (Lin et al., 2007). This study found that some infrastructure items and some urban items (of the cognitive component), and two affective attributes had an effect on intention to travel to Norway

(relaxing negatively influenced travel intention and exciting positively influenced intention to travel). From the IPA matrix performed in this study to measure destination attractiveness, findings also showed that some infrastructure and urban items were of importance in selecting a destination for the French respondents.

The results of this study indicates that for Norway, as a nature based destination, tangible and physical attributes, such as choice in accommodation, transportation, nightlife and entertainment, scenic beauty and cultural and city activities should have a larger focus in the marketing efforts. They should form a part of the marketing efforts because these items have a direct effect on travel intention, and they are deemed important in selecting a destination by the French respondents. The attributes that have been proven to affect travel choice behavior, as well as the items that are ranked high in importance from the French respondents, are also recommended to be further developed into the destination product offerings. As the media shed light on the lack of tourist facilities in Norway, it is viewed as important for the destination, depending on resources available, to further develop the tourism product. Norway had a fairly high level of attractiveness for the French respondents, considering that several attributes matched between the importance of the attributes and the perceived performance of the attributes at the destination. Therefore, the results in this research indicate that it is not recommended to ignore this target market. It is a market that travels frequently, there is a match between the perceived image of Norway and several of the importance attributes, thus the results in this study indicate that it is recommended to pursue this market with a slightly shifted focus in the marketing efforts and further developments of the tourism product.

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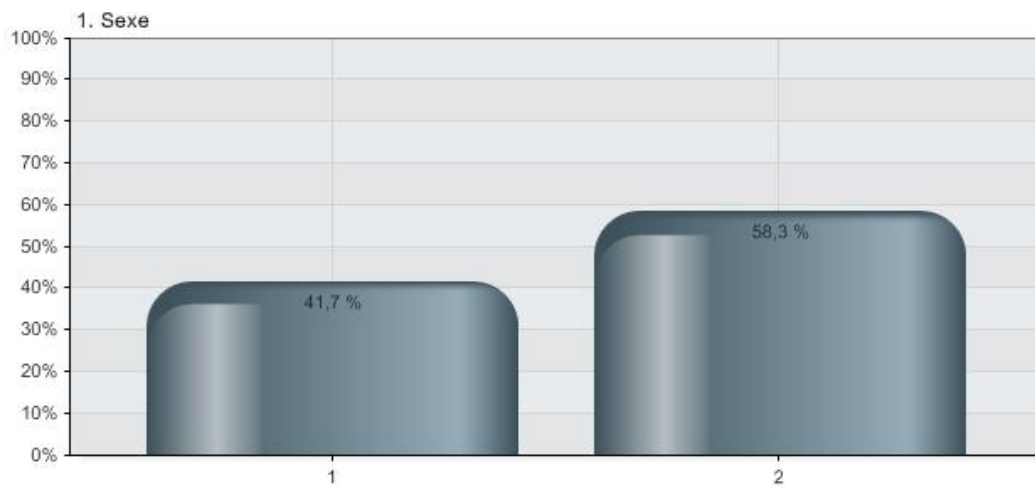
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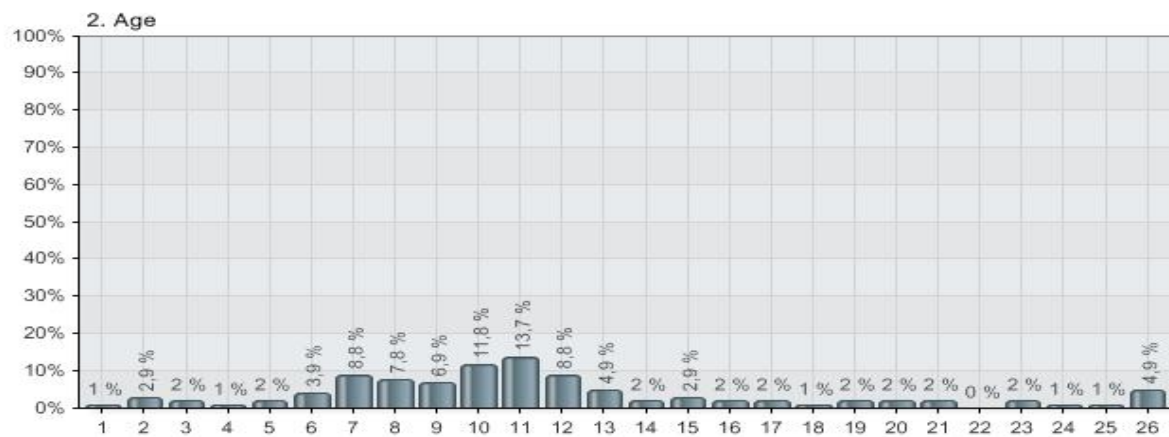
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## Appendix 1: Demographic data

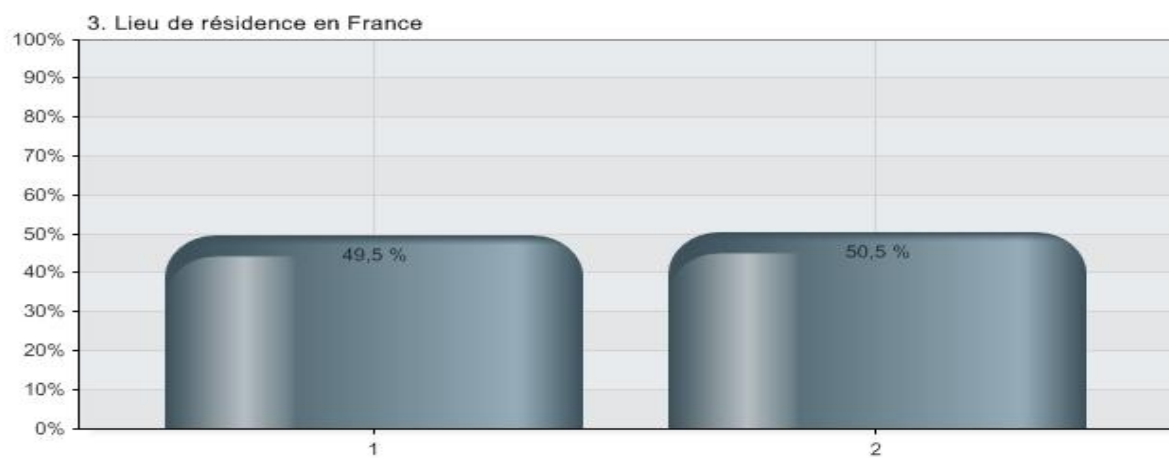
Gender : 1=male, 2=female



Age : 1=20, 26=45



Residency : 1=urban, 2=rural



## **Appendix 2 : Previous travel to Norway and future international travel**

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<b>Question :</b>	<b>Percentage :</b>
<b>Intention to travel</b>	
Within the next 12 minths	65 %
Within the next 3 years	23,3 %
No	9,7 %
<b>Previous travel to Norway</b>	
Yes	15,5 %
No	83,5 %

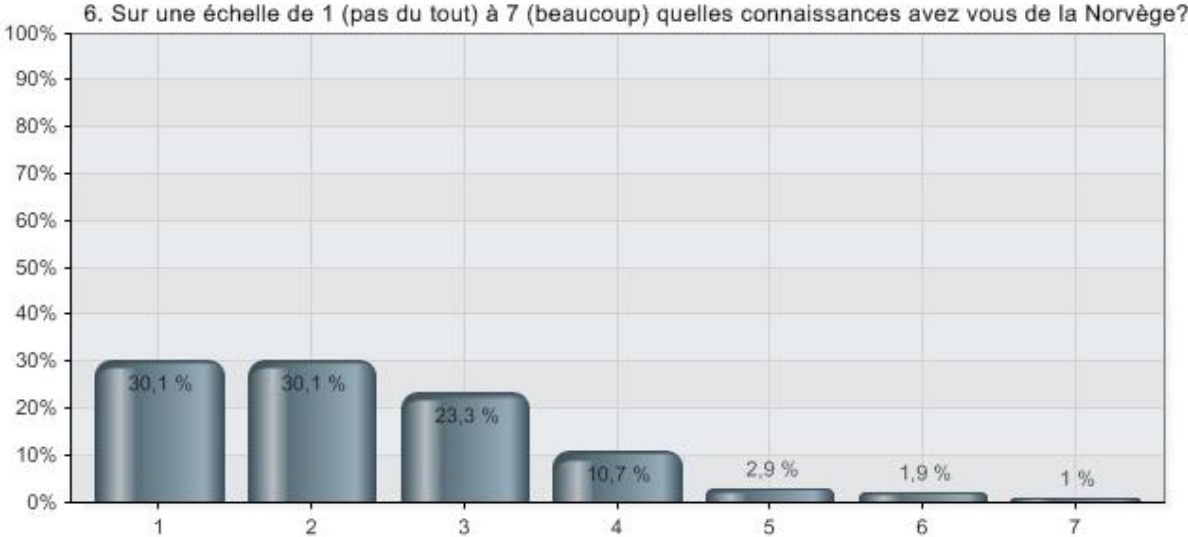
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### **Appendix 3 : Intention to travel to Norway (Conative)**

<b>Intention to travel within the first 12 months</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Intention to travel within the next 3 years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Intention to travel in the future</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1 (Certainly not)</b>	34%	<b>1(Certainly not)</b>	14,6%	<b>1(Certainly not)</b>	5,8%
<b>2</b>	30,1%	<b>2</b>	16,5%	<b>2</b>	10,7%
<b>3</b>	13,6%	<b>3</b>	12,6%	<b>3</b>	3,9%
<b>4</b>	12,6%	<b>4</b>	17,5%	<b>4</b>	10,7%
<b>5</b>	3,9%	<b>5</b>	9,7%	<b>5</b>	8,7%
<b>6</b>	1%	<b>6</b>	12,6%	<b>6</b>	19,4%
<b>7 (Certainly)</b>	4,9%	<b>7 (Certainly)</b>	15,5%	<b>7 (Certainly)</b>	40,8%

**Appendix 4: Familiarity With Norway:**

**1= not at all familiar with Norway, 7= very familiar with Norway**



### **Appendix 5: The affective descriptive results**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviations</b>
<b>Sleepy – arousing</b>	5,17	1,424
<b>Unpleasant – pleasant</b>	5,70	1,211
<b>Gloomy – exciting</b>	5,06	1,533
<b>Distressing - relaxing</b>	5,76	1,505

## **Appendix 6: Ranking of the importance of the cognitive attributes**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Natural scenic beauty	5,90	Political stability	4,84
Friendly and hospital people	5,90	Nice and unique architecture	4,82
Safe to visit:	5,70	Opportunity for sun/beach	4,63
Easy to communicate	5,50	Convenient transport	4,56
Opportunities of learning new cultures	5,49	Opportunity for adventure/ sport holidays	4,53
Quality of accommodation	5,27	Accessibility to and inside the destination	4,52
Quality of Service	5,26	City recreational activities	4,47
Many natural sites to visit	5,23	Good nightlife/entertainment	4,45
Clean and litter free	5,17	Variety of festivals, events and concerts	4,35
Inexpensive goods and services	5,17	Opportunity for winter/snow activities	4,19
The climate	5,10	Possibilities for shopping	4,16
Pleasant natural excursions	5,10	High degree of urbanization	4,07
Historical buildings, museums and a rich cultural heritage	5,04	No traffic congestion problems	3,92
Good cafés, restaurants (culinary experiences)	5,01	Quality of roads	3,85
Many choices and easy to find accommodations	4,91	Not overcrowded	3,32

## **Appendix 7: Ranking of the holistic statements**

<b>Question/descriptions</b>	<b>Mean of frequency</b>
<b>Q1: What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Norway as a vacation destination?</b>	
The climate (snow 25,2 % and cold 55,33%)	80,5 %
Nature/ beautiful scenery (the fjords 24,27% )	58,25 %
Polar circle/the north/the northern light	11,65 %
Large, open vast areas	7,76 %
Pure, clean environment	6,79%
Salomon	6,79 %
<b>Q2: How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect while visiting Norway?</b>	
Warm welcoming, friendly locals	60,2 %
Atmosphere/mood in one with nature	28,10 %
Unfamiliar, strange, different	13,60%
Calm, relaxation	11,65%
Pure, clean environment	10,70%
Good food, good drinks to enjoy with friends	8,74%
Vast, large and open	7,76%
<b>Q3: Please list any distinct or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Norway</b>	
Ski/ winter activities	47,5 %
Hiking/ walking	43,6 %
Visiting the fjords	24,3 %
Fishing	20,4%
Dog sleds/ sledging	13,6 %
Visit cities (Oslo)	13,6%
Cultural activities	12,6 %



## **Appendix 8: Questionnaire**

### **Part 1: Personal information**

1. Gender:        male            female
2. Age:            20-45
3. Residence in France:        rural/urban

### **Part 2: Intention to Travel**

4. Do you intend to travel outside of France for a holiday or business for more than one night:
  - Within the next 12 months?
  - The next 3 years?
  - No

### **Part 3: Previous visits to Norway**

5. Have you ever travelled to Norway before?        Yes/No

### **Part 4: Familiarity with Norway**

6. How familiar/knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be with Norway?  
(1-7 Likert scale)

### **Part 5: Holistic impressions of Norway**

7. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Norway as a vacation destination?
8. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Norway?
9. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Norway.

## **Part 6: Destination attractiveness**

State how important these factors are for you in choosing a holiday destination: (Likert scale from 1=not at all important to 7= extremely important).

### Natural:

1. Natural scenic beauty
2. The weather is nice
3. The environment is clean and litter free
4. Pleasant nature/natural excursions
5. Many natural sites to visit
6. Good beaches/opportunity for sun and beach holidays
7. Good opportunities for adventure/sport activities?
8. Good opportunities for winter and snow activities?

### Amenities:

9. A high degree of urbanization/cities
10. A variety of festivals, concerts and events
11. Good nightlife and entertainment
12. The quality of accommodation is good
13. There are good opportunities for learning ethnic customs/culture in Norway
14. Good cafes/ restaurants and good culinary experiences
15. A variety of (urban, city?)recreational activities
16. Nice and unique architecture
17. Many historical buildings, museums and rich cultural heritage in Norway

### Infrastructure:

18. The quality of roads (getting around is easy)
19. Not overcrowded
20. Convenient private and public transportation
21. No traffic congestion problems
22. Inexpensive goods and services
23. Many choices and easy to find accommodations
24. Possibilities for shopping
25. Accessibility to and inside the destination

### Society/ environment

26. Political stability
27. Safe to visit
28. Friendly and hospitable local people
29. Easy to communicate, many people speaking English
30. The quality of service

## **Part 7: The cognitive component**

(Likert scale from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree)

### Natural:

31. Norway offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty
32. The weather in Norway is nice
33. The environment in Norway is clean and litter free
34. Nature/natural excursions are pleasant in Norway
35. Norway has many natural sites to visit
36. Norway has good beaches/opportunity for sun and beach holidays
37. Norway has good opportunities for adventure/sport activities?
38. Norway has good opportunities for winter and snow activities?

### Amenities:

39. Norway has a high degree of urbanization/cities
40. Norway has a variety of festivals, concerts and events
41. Norway has good nightlife and entertainment
42. The quality of accommodation is good in Norway
43. There are good opportunities for learning ethnic customs/culture in Norway
44. Norway has good cafes/ restaurants and good culinary experiences
45. Norway offers a variety of urban/ city recreational activities
46. Norway has nice and unique architecture
47. There are many historical buildings, museums and rich cultural heritage in Norway

### Infrastructure:

48. The quality of roads in Norway are good
49. Norway is not overcrowded
50. Private and public transportation is convenient in Norway
51. There are not traffic congestion problems in Norway
52. Goods and services are inexpensive in Norway
53. There is many choices and easy to find accommodations and restaurants in Norway
54. Norway has possibilities for shopping
55. Accessibility to and inside Norway is good

### Society/ environment

56. There is political stability in Norway
57. Norway is safe to visit
58. The local people in Norway are friendly and hospitable
59. It is easy to communicate, many people speaking English in Norway
60. The quality of service in Norway is good

**Part 9: The affective component**

(Semantic differential scale from 1=negative to 7=positive)

Norway is:

1. Sleepy - arousing
2. Unpleasant - pleasant
3. Gloomy - exciting
4. Distressing - relaxing

**Part 10: The conative component**

(Likert scale from 1= definitely not to 7= definitely)

1. Do you intend to travel to Norway within the next 12 months?
2. Do you intend to travel to Norway in the next 3 years?
3. Do you intend to travel to Norway in the future?