

The place of National Park and ecotourism in Norway

Elena D. Karlsen

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Abstract

Tourism is a big and growing business all over the world. In recent decades, Norway promotes tourism in general and ecotourism in particular, as a product, as well as the improvement of quality and the development of tourism. Norway is more goal-directed to promote not just a profitable tourism but a sustainable one. Experiences and recreation in the Norwegian nature are the most important reasons why foreign tourists travel to Norway. That's why the country has to take care and protect the nature that have a great value for both an ecological diversity and a stable economy.

The landscape in Norway is so varied that it can attract tourists from all over the world and tourists with different wishes and expectations. Famous tourist sites are fjord-indented coastline, mountains, ski resorts, lakes and woods. Of course, unspoiled nature in Norway has a big interest among the tourists. People from regions of big cities wish in a growing extend to experience something different. Fresh air, clear water and virgin nature have a great value for many people. Furthermore there are the special nature-experiences which attract tourist to travel to a place where mass tourism has not broke out yet (Dolve; Holt-Jensen; Seim, 1995, p. 162). Norway has a big challenge to find the right approach in tourism development to combine ways to attract more tourists to the country and still not to spoil the nature and the feeling of a calm place.

Introduction

In Norway, conservation and protection of the nature have always been central in nature development and preferred in case of tourism. In last decades, tourism has started to be seen also as a source for economical stability for the country. It means that some places which were closed for public and tourists before, are more available for visiting now. Norwegian sites are promoting nature destination on the global market to attract more tourists and by that increase the profit from tourism in the country. Still, Norway pays a great attention to it's nature and develops sustainable ways for tourism.

One definition of sustainable tourism development focuses on 'leading to management of all resources in such a way that we can fulfill economic, social, and aesthetic needs, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems' (Tourism Canada cited in Murphy, 1994, p. 279). By ecological sustainability means that development does not have negative effects on essential ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources. Social and cultural sustainability suggests that development should help locals to have economical sources in the region and strengthens community identity. Economic sustainability says that development should be economically efficient and that resources are managed so that they can support future generations (WTO, 1993; Mowforth and Munt, 1998).

A good example of sustainable tourism development strategy that represents by a national park in Scandinavia is Fulufjället National Park in Sweden. It is a part of Pan Park Group. Jotunheimen national park have also zonation and have some ambitions of being the first Norwegian Pan park.

Studies show that there has been significant increase in the number of national parks in Norway. For example, thirty-three parks on the mainland make up about eight percent of the total land mass of the country (Haukeland, 2011, p. 135). Since 2003, eight parks have been added to the list. The total square kilometers of the country is 323,802. If other categories of "protected areas" are included then the percentage rises to fifteen. The country has at least 76 landscape-protected areas, and 1,172 nature reserves (Norway Country Profile, 2013). In 1970, the Nature

Conservation Act in Norway had the express goal to safeguard representative areas of Norway's habitats and landscapes, and in 2009, the Nature Diversity Act, reinforced this idea, saying that "national parks should protect particular or representative ecosystems and landscapes" (Haukeland, 2011). The Act is meant to safeguard biological diversity and ecological processes within the park systems of the country (2009). However, the text of the Act says that "The environment provides a basis for human activity, culture, health and well-being, now and in the future . . ." (Governmental Act, 2009). Norway ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993. The important threats to biological diversity are the destruction of habitats, over-exploitation and pollution. More than 3,000 species have been placed on the Norwegian Red List of threatened species. For example, the Varanger peninsula in Finnmark is a typical example of an arctic landscape that holds a plentiful array of biological treasures, with sweeping tundra, and biodiversity that needs to be protected, but also an advantage for the ecotourist. The peninsula is home to a rich biodiversity that includes bunting, ptarmigan, little stint, gyrfalcon, ducks, geese, hare, rough-legged buzzard, red fox, and occasionally the lucky traveler can see the Arctic fox, or see a snowy owl by using one of the two region's largest bird cliffs — the largest in Norway (Nutthall, 1400).

Therefore, in order to protect biological, geological and landscape diversity and ecological resources through conservation and sustainable use, the parliament passed the Nature Diversity Act in 2009. Biological diversity is threatened in the country by overexploiting resources and destruction of habitats. In Norway, over 3,000 species have been placed on its endangered species list in order to protect the landscapes, geology and ecological resources that these species need to sustain their existence in Norway's protected lands. Norway is now only recently utilizing its parks as a dual function to both promote nature conservation and to increase income from tourism and recreation (Hall & Frost 2009, p. 308).

Goals and method

In this paper tourist motivation to Norway will be explored and investigated. What attracts travelers to embark on ecotourist travel plans? In the paper, particular attention will be

concentrated on the concept of motivation as it applies to ecotourism in Norway's natural parks, and nature preserves.

For this paper I did research in the scientific library using some of the following terms: tourism in national parks, management in national parks, business in national parks and many others.

Motivation, consumer habits, and the behavior of ecotourists: ecotourism destinations in Norway's national parks and nature preserves

What factors make a tourist destination popular? Specifically, what makes a nature-based site like national park popular? The easy answer is nature itself, but as this paper suggests, in Norway, attracting people to its nature-based sites is a combination of romanticism, nature, placement, marketing, and a complex differentiation of what constitutes ecotourism and the identity of the ecotourist.

Ecotourism is the umbrella term not only for attracting people to nature-based destinations, it comprises also making the environment as a place to see, and raising awareness of keeping it as a place to see for generations to come. Serious nature lovers will seek Norway as a destination spot for its reputation with a strong nature base. While this is true the definition of ecotourism must be further analyzed and thought about in relation not only to nature-based tourism in general in Norway, but also in terms of what motivates different levels of nature lovers to experience nature based sites and destinations.

In Norway, a country already known for its ecological treasures, ecotourism faces both challenges and rewards in the country. On the one hand, it seems obvious that tourists would be attracted to Norway for its rich deposit of virgin landscapes and scenic outlooks. On the other hand, maintaining and sustaining the environment is not necessarily the same as drawing tourists to visit. The underlying challenge of ecotourism is to balance demand for visiting ecologically important sites in the country, especially its national parks, and nature preserves, but at the same time protecting these same sites for future generations to enjoy.

Conceptualizing Ecotourism

Ecotourism has been conceptualized as a form of tourism that is “environmentally and socially benign” (Gössling & Hultman, 2006). Ecotourism contributes both to the local region’s economic growth and raises awareness and motivates conservation efforts (Fennell, 1999; Honey, 1999; Weaver, 2002; Cater, 2004). For example, Sweden can be a model for this kind of growth which Norway also tries to duplicate. Fulufjället National Park in Sweden has a good sustainable tourism development strategy and tourist policy.

This fact is taken in tandem with the huge growth of nature tourism in the international market — it is considered the fastest growing sector of international tourism (Fredman & Tyrvainen, 2010), although in Norway, it is often seen that nature tourism is the de facto tourism, so the term “ecotourism” seems redundant (Gössling & Hultman, 2006). However, nature and ecology are not the same. To love nature does not necessarily mean the same thing as promoting ecology. Nature is unfortunately a passive term. In Norway, viewing the Northern Lights from a ship is a passive nature activity, while helping to herd reindeer in a sustainable way in the northern part of Norway is an activity that demands an appreciation for ecology and the impact of human interference. To travel to Norway already implies traveling to a place that is “natural” and tourism there is implicitly “understood by the public as well as tourist operators” to be both natural and friendly to nature.

Ironically, for a region that is understood in terms of its nature, the concept of ecotourism is not developed good enough as it should be after some years been in use in business in Norway (Viken, 2006). Undertaking development in growing an industry that depends on nature as its commodity is largely gaining traction in Scandinavia, not only in Norway. Sweden, Norway and Denmark have experienced a boom in ecotourism. The thrill of visiting remote natural areas has been a primary motivator for ecotourists. Consequently, a benefit for country like Norway that are starting to realize that people are willing to visit their countries to experience nature, what can be used for strengthening of the economy. Partly this is due to a romantic perception that nature is good. People associate romantic ideals to nature, but ironically, we live in a largely urban, man-made society. More people live in urban areas, and more people wish to travel to nature-based sites to escape these areas.

As a part of business, the success of ecotourism depends largely on marketing efforts (Gössling & Hultman, 2006). Although this is a challenge in Norway because marketing nature-based sites is looked upon with some distrust. Since ecotourism is largely a capitalist term, it associates with growth. In fact, many Norwegians do not see their national parks as places to contribute to international visitation but rather they see them as places of conservation and sustaining biological diversity, as well as a place to relax. Of course in the larger geopolitical worldview, the country depends a lot on income from tourists despite regional and local resistance.

Even Norwegians, relatively conservative nation, are starting to realize importance of providing the nature resources as a tourist attraction. The country does have its own website to attract tourists: <http://www.visitnorway.com/> and many others. As of this writing, the marketing is very much explicitly related to nature-based tourism. Most of the headline features the Northern Lights, autumn in Norway, and visiting the fjords, hiking, and taking in the mountains are related to the nature.

In the last few years, there have been increased interests in ecotourism in general and specifically ecotourism in Norway. For example, with the release of Disney's film *Frozen*, a retelling of the Hans Christian Anderson tale *The Snow Queen*, tourism to Norway has significantly increased, according to Harald Hansen, a publicist for *Visit Norway* (Stampler 2014). According to Hansen hotels had a thirty-seven percent increase in bookings over time, and tour operators have had a forty percent increase in sales.

When it comes to traveling to Norway, it is the nature that people most want to experience. In fact nature tourism in general is the main attraction for people who want to visit the fjord region of the country, or to catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights, or to enjoy the nature generally.

Norwegian attitudes about nature and national parks

Norway maintains good relationships with its European neighbors, even though it is not a member of the European Union. In this way, Norway is not seen as an integrationist country, and

its attitudes with ecology and tourism is kind of equivocal. It has also been able to design its own environmental policy. Norway has been able to make greater unique contributions.

For example, in terms of national parks, Norway has made several proactive measures to differentiate its national parks for conservation as well as for the enjoyment of nature. The concept of a national park in Norway is not as old as in some countries, most of the parks were established in the last few decades, and it sits between a dual purpose of providing relaxation to visitors while at the same preserving the country's natural habitats.

Rondane National Park, for example, was not named a national park until 1962 — and it is the country's first national park. The idea of a park in Norway has first of all been based on the idea of protecting nature. In Aasetre's paper from 1998, the norwegian park management approach was described as “classical nature protection” (Aasetre, 1998). As it says for its self, “classical nature protection” as a strategy doesn't give a lot of opportunities to locals and other commercial interests to decide and influence in national park management. In this way, conflicts about the place and human and economical rights are not invertible. In Norway, in many decades the dominant philosophy of natural resource management was a utilitarian, commodity view of nature (Williams et al., 1992). This philosophy doesn't have a place for socio-cultural values which makes the people have been living in generations on the national park territories or around them, and some times economically dependent on that territories, invisible and unheard.

It is still, in general the Norwegian mind is more interested in seeing itself a priori concerned with environment rather than seeking ways to motivate foreign travelers to visit the country's natural parks and preserves.

There is a difference between attitudes about anthropomorphic views of nature and anthropocentric views. Ideas about hunting and fishing, and using nature as a means of enjoyment are anthropocentric. The ideal of the ecotourism is to capitalize on a biocentric view of nature, which in turn is the motivating factor behind the Nordic nature-based trade in general. Anthropocentric views of nature are purely ones used for the utility of nature. Biocentric views place emphasis on the preservation of the natural order (Hall, p. 136).

Realization of the park as location for ecotourism is fairly new in the country. For Norwegians in general, who already for the most part, see themselves as deeply connected to nature, the idea of ecotourism is simply to “socialize alienated people with nature” (Viken, 2006). It has only been some years, under new governmental regulations, that the management and

administration of the country's park system is maintained by the created Department of the Environment (Gössling, 2006, p. 150). After time of the decline in rural economies in Norway and the associated lack of job opportunities in that areas, the national authorities had to find new ways for stable economical and employment situation in the country. These new ways were to look at the national parks and other protected areas utilized as possible areas for commercial purposes like tourism. (Finansdepartementet, 2003; Miljøverndepartementet, 2005). It means that management of protected areas is developing toward careful use of protected areas from their total preservation (Haukeland, J., 2011).

In a world where the reality of “wilderness” is shrinking fast, “the growing nature tourism industry is actively looking for places to expand and develop new products” — Norway is becoming that place (Hall, p. 132). Norwegians want to safeguard the heritage of their national parks, and loathe contributing to more and more marketing ploys to attract income from tourists. There is already in place the idea of the country as open to nature, offering spaces for people to experience a healthy place, and the idea has largely been supported by politicians and by tourist organizations.

Conflicts that arise in the process of tourism development and some solutions

With national park establishment, conflicts can appear between locals and the administrative authorities in protection phase and in management process. Possible causes of conflict may involve for example cultural differences, reduced transportation in the area, loss of income, reduced opportunity for tourism development.

Cultural differences are often a source of conflict associated with natural resource (Krogh, E.). There is often a lack of understanding between locals and the administrative authorities. Locals may have trouble to understand some precautions in national park because they have grown up in the area and have a completely different relationship with the local nature than the administrative authorities.

Reduced transportation, at some point, creates inconvenience for the residents and makes their life harder and uneasy. For example, in Tinn municipality in Telemark, the road between Tessungdalen and Veggli over Imingfjell was closed in winter due to protection of caribou habitat (Jordhøy and Strand, 2009).

Precautions in protective areas are preventing certain sources of income as cabin building and forestry. New action plans and legislation in preservation areas limit a possibility to initiate tourism or continue with already initiated tourism business. The opportunity to develop new business will also have limits. New, strict restrictions as regards infrastructure, transport and development can create problems for the people who make their living on the tourism industry. It is required that you put on the thinking and considering new strategies. The willingness to be creative and innovative among the people involved can often be limited and thus create conflicts.

Conflicts may arise also between locals and tourism in the area. Tourism business wants to draw as many tourists as possible to areas. Some locals think it's unpleasant to have many tourists near the areas where they live and have daily routines. National concept stands in many places as a stamp of quality for tourists and draws many people to areas. Tourism needs to develop infrastructure. It means local who want to live in calm and quiet zones, can be unsatisfied with tourism development.

To keep the level of conflict as low as possible when creating new protected areas there are several measures that can and should be done in the early stages. Experience shows that there may be moderating effect by creating a partnership with the local population: both individuals, the tourism industry, other enterprises and local governments.

Providing full information on the plans in the areas of national parks and reservations will give more space for understanding and support from locals.

Benefits of ecotourism for Norway

Ecotourism is an ethical form of tourism that fits into the country's self-acclaimed care and concern for the environment and a way to help the country's shifting economics. First, ecotourism benefits national parks. By raising awareness of national parks, tourists are more

interested in visiting Norway and partaking in the benefits the parks provide. In Norway, the benefits of eco-tourism is directly connected to those at the local level who have the most ability to make decisions, which is true for many locations around the world based in nature-tourism interests (Balmford, 2009).

Secondly, ecotourism would help to increase both the Norwegian economy, and employment. Tourism is increasingly becoming necessary to create year round income for Norwegians, because of the decline in revenue from traditional income streams such as farming, and so forth (Buckley p. 161).

Thirdly, the benefit of tourism and attraction of national parks as tourist destination spots increases the positive attitudes people have about visitors, and raises the ecological awareness of Norway's own environmental heritage to others.

Commercializing nature

The visitor to Norway who wants to experience the beauty in nature will be divided into three consumer categories according to Chen (et al. 2013). There is the hard-core nature lovers. The hard-core lover commercializes nature by actively engaging themselves in it without trampling it. The typical participant and the casual lover are more likely to commercialize nature by looking at beauty from the deck of a cruise ship. If Norwegian tour operators are seeking to attract people to visit national parks, they need to rely on the vocabulary of the hard-core nature lovers. Because they take Norwegian nature seriously and does not see their enjoyment of nature as only a passive endeavor to be taken lightly. Most of national parks in Norway don't have facilities for tourists to experience more comfortable residence at that areas.

In 1957, a law was created (*Friluftsloven*) that gives free admittance to people to enjoy outdoor areas that are uncultivated, no matter who owns the land (Viken, 2006). Activities such as skiing, walking, berry picking, horseback riding, cycling, hunting, and fishing are allowed, and no entrance fees at the gate is collected. In fact, it was in Norway in the 1830s that skiing first became fashionable in Europe. The spread of Nordic way of skiing as fast become the motivator for sports enthusiasts to visit Norway. Near Norway, the major attractions put

emphasis on “sights” and nature becomes a backdrop for scenery, spectacular views, and nature itself becomes an aesthetic commodity oriented towards the gaze of the spectator (Duffy, 2002, p. 135).

Breiby makes the salient point that gains in ecotourism can be made if only places like Norway make a distinction between sightseeing and gazing at the beauty of the nature. In other words, those who are serious about the environment will not be motivated by the vocabulary of sightseeing. The ecotourist who visits a national park doesn't want to see it from an enclosed bus that allows no interaction with nature.

However, the serious ecotourist will know that free access to the park impinges upon/undermines its sustainability. The sweet spot for the tourist industry is to provide ways in which the serious ecotourists can gaze upon nature in a way that fully integrates their experience within their surroundings but maintains the ethical status of ecotourism. In man-made tourists destination like Disney World or Universal Studios, nature aesthetics is constructed by making the artificial fit into nature, and it is in this way that the ecotourism in the main is a Western construct, for it tries to take the beauty of nature and form a qualitative link between consumer satisfaction and the harmony they feel in nature. It is in this way that aesthetic gaze of nature sightseeing is commercialized. Eco-tourism ventures prioritize the beauty of nature, and less on the equally important elements of nature (Viken, 2006).

The Norwegian tourist space is certainly not in a vacuum and it is shaped by political forces influenced by political boundaries, Nordic identity, and a space that insinuates “Nordic” into both a geographic and cultural space (Hall, p. 3). Arne Naess has been a central key player in ecotourism in Norway, in particular, in the 1960s. He brought ecology into political ideological terms. In this way, many Norwegians, unfortunately look at ecotourism as marketing and as “greenspeak” (Dann, 1996). This idea is connected with the political reality that in Norway the governing Labor Party and the Socialist party, and the Center Party have had major conflicts over the exploration of oil in the sea off the Lofoten Islands — a proposal the Labor Party wants, but further exploration of these waters could negatively impact fishing and tourism in the country (Norway Country Profile, 2013). Lofoten is also the home of many tourists who flock to the region for its fishing. Development of these areas would promote the economy but the environmental hazards of drilling in the arctic region may have huge negative impacts for

ecotourism. In fact, ecotourism, no matter its intensity, seeks to find ethical ways to approach tourism without adding more negative impact to the environment.

Ecotourism is practiced differently in different parts of the world and local conditions, regional laws, and the cultural attitudes both about nature, and its visitors to nature-based locations must be considered (Higham, p. 41). Visiting safari in South Africa, has different ecological impact than whale-watching in Norway, and certainly there has to be a consideration for the different ways in which the ethics of ecotourism is presented when talking about the commercialization of nature for tourist consumption that both respects the nature it is selling and the respect for the same nature.

Profit

Ecotourism is a brand that is more than just using nature as a selling point — but it is trying to create a space that capitalizes on undeveloped natural landscapes in a sustainable and moral way. With a population of 4.7 million people, Norway has a gross domestic product per capita of \$55,300 in 2012 (Norway Country Profile, 2013). Economic turnover for the national park system in Norway is difficult to determine, but for example, Dovre-Sunndalsfjella National Park raked in an estimated EUR 6.5 million (Aas et al. 2008). In the summer, fishermen spend an estimated 1.3 billion dollars on fishing permits, accommodations, meal services, and contribute to the economy (Stensland and Baardsen, 2012, p. 628).

Although according to one report (The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013 Reducing Barriers to Economic Growth and Job Creation), 2013 tourist data marks a decrease in tourism to the country, and a decrease of one percent of overnight guests in the Norwegian market (cite). However, international arrivals to the country increased by five percent. In total, spending in Norway was about Nok 25 billion. As an ecological brand Norway is bigger than most, but as a brand as itself it is modest/limited. Innovation Norway states that the goal for profit in Norway needs to include more than just nature-based experiences. On the island of Svalbard, 300,000 U.S. dollars was spent in 2003. In the cruise ship industry, 23,846 tourists went on board and stopped at various short stops in the Arctic sea.

It is possible to reach a desired profit by ecotourism with wisely chosen strategic path.

Facilities and transport

Visiting national parks is a pastime equally enjoyed by many international and domestic travelers in Norway. The geography of mainland Norway where national parks are located is comprised of mountains, moorland and forests. The challenge of supporting tourism to parks in Norway has to do with the added challenge of conservation. Protected areas around the world are protected for a reason as they provide shelter for the world's most sensitive ecosystems, habitats and species (Eagles, 2009). The situation is that people want to visit so as to see and experience these places, but their continued survival depends on limited number of foot traffic. The right of public access is particularly salient in discussing Norway, because the country lets its citizens access to uncultivated lands without fees.

The access to these places of ecological importance has to be maintained. National stakeholders, politicians, and commercial investors will have to work together to resolve problems, and to maximize the benefits of increasing tourist traffic to these beautiful areas (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). This not only includes management of facilities within the park itself, but also in the surrounding towns and borders of the park. Haukeland recommends that especially in countries like Norway that privilege nature conservation, but also wants to increase tourist revenue, the strong suggestion is to promote a sustainable model for nature-based tourism in managing the vision for the country's parks (2013, p. 308).

To promote an alliance between private business and public parks administration, the concept of intact biodiversity must be maintained, for the parks to be a possible option both for recreation and for the sustained growth of its positive environmental effects. One good aspect of Norwegian governance is that it implements its policy to find and use sustainable way in tourism and to reach an environmentally adapted tourism.

For example, there is a focus on more environmentally friendly transportation as a public transport on long distance and cycling and walking on short distance for both Norwegian population and tourists. There can't be sustainable tourism without traveling that means using of

transport (Høyer (2000)). Norway provides also more environmentally friendly goods transportation by delivering of goods to the tourist industry through increases in the use of local resources, local food specialties and other locally manufactured products (Høyer (2000)). These are also aspects of a locally initiated system for the environmental certification of hotels and restaurants.

The conservation of biodiversity is a key strength in the country, but Norway needs to lower its carbon footprint. Extraction of oil in the country has a huge impact on the environment. Specially, finding new places for drilling puts the nature in danger.

Norway is trying to market the public transportation in the country, and now they are in a process to make the nation's railway system better to make it easier for people to travel to parks and nature preserves, and there is a ferry system in place.

Parks in the arctic region

Two parks, Stabbursdalen and Ovre Park have facilities and they lie north of the Arctic Circle. But the island of Svalbard gets particular mention for being stand-out/unique. In the Polar Regions where hotels are difficult to maintain, places like Svalbard are interesting places to mention. Svalbard is an island that rests in the Arctic Ocean. In a testament to the country's environmental policies, the island is one of the best preserved and best-managed wild areas in the world (Norway Country Profile 2013). In 2002, the Norwegian government set strict criteria on its management and are trying to make the land as untouched as possible. Many of the tourists who visit places Longyearbyen and Svalbard are Norwegian, and in fact seventy percent of these tourists are Norwegian. To visit these places, you cannot visit unannounced, and strict regulations restrict tourist groups to access the interior of the park. Cosmos Tourama, for example, recently advertised seven night tour of Norway and the fjords, with a one night stay in Bergen (*Travel Weekly*, 2006). Tourist product manager Ian Hailes of Cosmos says "This new tour will complement our current range, especially the cruising element, which is proving very popular with many of our customers this year" (2006). And in terms of the hard core ecotourists,

those who fall into the casual nature seeker will more likely take a cruise, since the typical visitor to Norway is actually more motivated to engage in the beauty of nature more than anything.

Jotunheimen national park

Jotunheimen national park is Norway's most well-known national park and it has the highest alpine mountain peak in the country, including the famous Besseggen. But the park is the most used in the country's list of parks.

The area of the park is approximately 1151 square meters, with 300 km of T-Marked routes and a lot of well-marked trails for hiking. The park was set up to protect wild and undisturbed landscape with a plentiful and varied flora and fauna.

The whole park area is zoned for wise use for preservation and visiting and tourism. There are such zones as protected area, user zone and establishment zone. These zones are made with influence and inspiration of the ROS, the IUCN and the Pan park organization (Vorkinn 2011). They were approved by the National park board in November 2012 as a visitor strategy for the Jotunheimen national park. Further work is being carried out, with some ambitions of being the first Norwegian Pan park.

In protected area (green zone on the picture below) located wilderness areas, where protective considerations are above all other interests. There are few signs of recent human activities and there is a wish that these areas should be without human impacts also in the future. Marking of tracks and building of tourist cabins are strictly prohibited in these zones. The role of these zones is providing opportunities to experience untouched nature and silence.

In user zones (dark and light yellow zones on the picture below), some activity is possible as carefully provided activities, minor establishments and impacts for simple outdoor living, like marking of tracks and building of self-attained cabins within a planned network of tracks. Existing establishment may, with few exceptions, be maintained, but as a rule will not be allowed. Consideration of the nature carrying capacity and specific protected values will be provided through certain care taking establishments.

Establishment zone are zones where it is allowed to more active tourism and more development. These areas are with special establishments for general passage and where possibilities may be open towards special impacts due to tourism, reindeer herding and so on. These are also areas where larger technical impact such as roads and water dams belong. The zone usually includes only minor areas. In Jotunheimen an area of 250 meters, surrounding the tourism cabins (except the Fannaråk cabin), areas around dams and mass depot for building, power lines and roads.

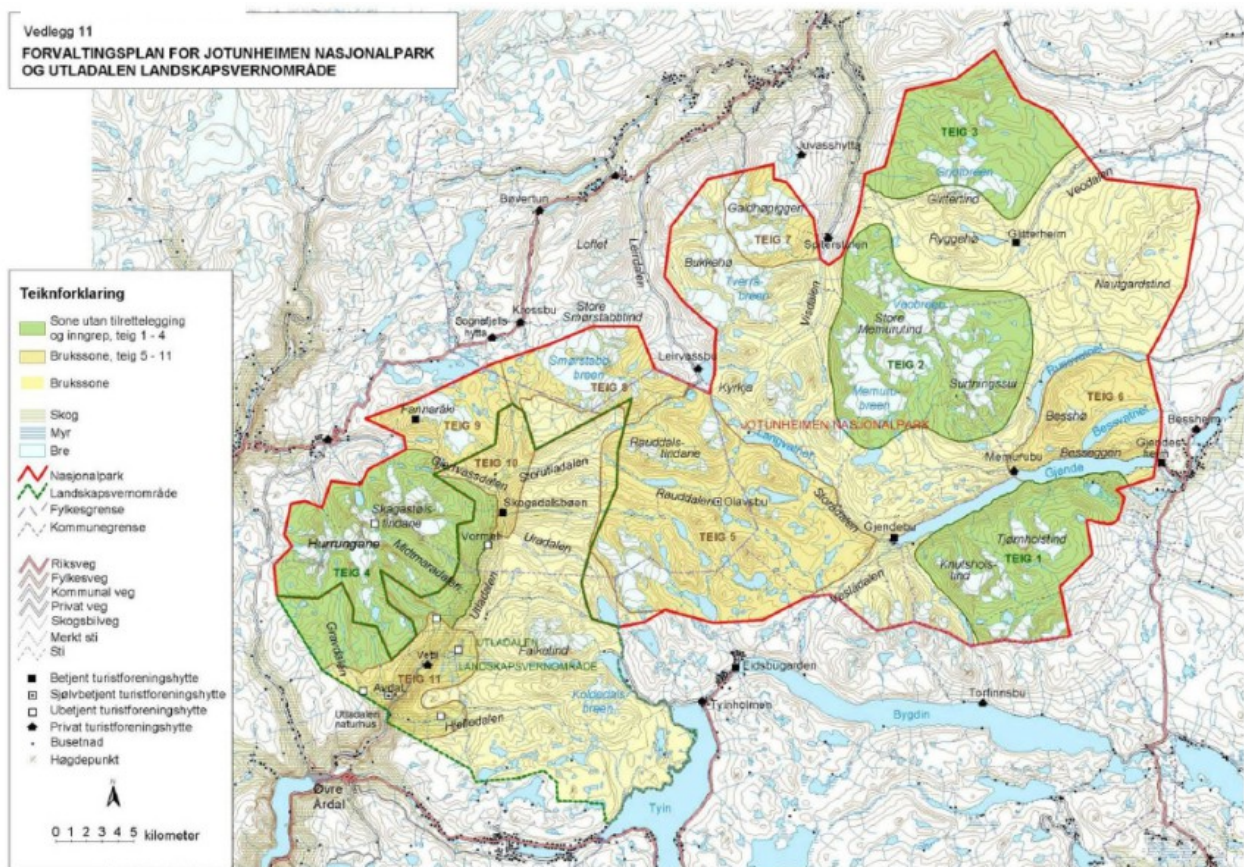


Figure 1.

While most of the country's parks are low profile, the main challenge is not to overuse facilities, but rather the underdevelopment of facilities, which often, as noted in this paper, the difference between the soft and hard ecotourists. Hard-core ecotourists are more likely to be motivated to travel to Norway because the regulations regarding their use are stricter than in other countries, and therefore there is less soil erosion, and access to parks do not entail a fee,

although there are highway tolls to pay. In Norway's parks, the hard-core ecotourist will appreciate the fact that dumping trash, using motorized off-road vehicles, and disturbing wildlife are forbidden. The soft tourist may have issues with these restrictions and may not be as motivated to visit Norway. In fact, the hard tourist will find that Norway's reluctance to build new facilities is a good thing. New facilities are forbidden and there is a restriction on automobile traffic within the park's enclosed areas that attracts one group of tourist to visit Norway and scares another from ecotourism in the country.

Rondane national park

Places like Rondane national park, established in 1962, are characteristic of national parks in the country. The total area is 963 km². The Rondane massif has peaks stretching more than 2000 meters above sea level. There are deep valleys and steep mountainsides. The most popular activity in this park is hiking and summit because of its dry climate and firm terrain. There are stone shelters that were built in Rondane National Park, used by local hunters and fishermen, falcon trappers and hikers. Today Rondane is a good place for traditional mountain outdoor life in Norway. Rondane offers countless hiking routes, ranging from day trips to overnight tours. There is a choice when it comes to marked hiking trails and overnight cabins in Rondane. In 2003 Rondane National Park was expanded and some landscape conservation areas were established as Frydalen, Grimdalen and Dørålen. The main purpose of their establishment was to protect these distinctive and beautiful natural and cultural landscapes because these areas are most affected by human activities and the traditional use of resources than the rest of national park territory. The areas are also an important habitat for wild reindeer. Wild reindeer have inhabited these mountains for thousands of years (<http://nasjonalparkriket.no/en/where-to-go/national-parks/rondane-national-park/>).

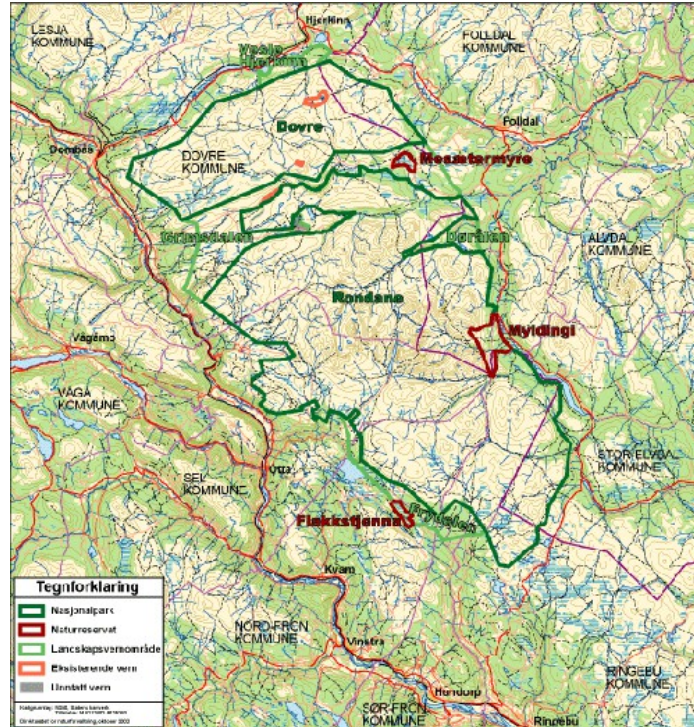


Figure 2.

In Rondane national park, the Norwegian government has the responsibility to protect the reindeer population, and this area is deemed too sensitive to allow a large influx of human impact (Vorkinn & Brata, 2006). Motorized access to these areas is seen as a major source of concern for local residents who feel that the sensitive reindeer population is being adversely affected and disputes continue to arise over the construction of motorized transport lanes, and the negative impact of increased business in the area. The example of reindeer strikes the problem in relief, for though the reindeer herders use snowmobiles to herd the animals, the conjunction of tourist visitation has the tendency to complicate the problem and shows the difficulty of using natural preserves as both places to protect wildlife and to attract income from tourism.

Overexposure and exploiting parks

The concept of wild is an ethically loaded statement, and there are many conflicts that can arise when using this term to discuss Nordic travel that is based on nature. Commercializing the wilderness sounds like an oxymoron, and it is a strange concept even when spoken about in the

most benign terms of travel. There is a general concern that people are “loving the parks to death” (Berle, 1990). Ideally a wilderness preserve in a national park should be ecologically diverse, and the people allowed access should not damage the nature, or spoil the wild areas, and as a rule a true wild area should not have roads, and the landscape should be left in its natural condition. Any structures built need to merge with the natural landscape, and this is the challenge and the risk imposed on creating this kind of spaces to generate awareness.

There is concern that the effects of tourism on the environment is affecting wildlife, despite the measures taken to avoid endangering already protected species (Buckley, 2003, p. 230). Hikers trample trails that destroy vegetation, and expose plant roots, and the extent of trampling can reduce the vigor of plant life in general (Haukeland, 2013). One important policy, for example in Rondane, has been to install hiking paths that do not directly harm the shelter of protected animal species. To use the park for recreational purposes of a human being is secondary, and it is the general idea that tourist activity must take place within this already legal and cultural position of conversation that exists in the country. Unfortunately, there has been little emphasis on actively managing facilities that would support tourist activity (Haukeland & Lindberg, 2001). The lack of funds to build or to restore facilities has been a hamper/obstruction on growing the tourist industry. Especially in terms of space that comprises national parks, there is less success for tourist growth. On Rondane example, 50,000 tourists visit each year, especially in the focus area of Hovringen, but there are fourteen registered accommodation sites that can give each year 284,000 guest nights (Haukeland, 2011). The park system has a few staffed cabins in the park, and people mainly come to the area in winter so they can cross-country ski and hike. Only about 18,000 guest nights are given to nationally accommodated cabins. Clearly, the private sector is making inroads into profit. In about the last ten years, small and medium sized companies have made investments in tourist operations in Norwegian national parks (Kaltenborn, 2011).

On Jotunheim park example, 40,000 people hike across the mountain edge of Besseggen every year and many more visit the area surrounding Lake Gjende. In fact, areas adjacent to mountains are increasingly seen as the most prominent and expanding areas of interest for ecotourist growth (Price et al., 1997; Godde et. al, 2000; Moss, 2006). Amenity migration to mountain areas is seen as a global phenomenon. The park system has accommodation for 45,000 guests per night, but hotels and rented cabins offer 211,000 guests nights near Jotunheimen.

There are 36 registered hotels in the area. Jotunheimen is popular in the summer for hikers. Thankfully, Norway does not suffer the Disneyland effect of parks, where during the peak tourist season the natural landscape becomes an urban landscape.

Dovre-Sunndalsfjella national park

Dovre-Sunndalsfjella National Park is one of Norway's largest protected areas and with Rondane national park, it is Europe's last high mountain area where wild reindeer, gnutton, mountain fox, golden eagle, raven and small rodents exist on the same area and have the same habitat. The areas east of the Snøhetta massif have a typical continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. But because of climate changes in the area, local flora and fauna are not stable, but in change.

In Dovre-Sunndalsfjella national park there are two types of mountain rocks: gneiss predominate and about 1,000 million years old and mineral-rich sandstone about 600 – 700 million years old. The flora and fauna on rocks are relatively poor.

Dovrefjell – Sunndalsfjella national park was established to preserve a large, contiguous and predominantly virgin mountain region, to protect a high mountain ecosystem with natural biological diversity, to secure the preservation of an important part of the habitat of the wild reindeer herd in the Snøhetta and Knutshø areas, to ensure a wide diversity of ecological habitats, to protect landscape formations and distinctive geological features and to preserve cultural monuments.

Even if there are not a lot of vegetation and species, it is still nice view to see around. Recent studies suggest that the park receives over 40,000 visitors each year, of which 30,000 visit between June and October (Gundersen & Andersen 2010). In the park, a total of 43 trails link visitors to nine tourist lodges and cabins within the protected area, but a total of five cabins exist just outside of the boundaries of the park (Dovrefjellradet 2006). Activities like tenting, picking berries and mushrooms, hunting, trapping and angling are possible but with accordance with relevant regulations. Bicycling in the Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella national park is only

permitted on routes specially marked for this purpose on the tour map for the area. Organized travel must have special permission to operate in the national park. The only exception is traditional rambling activity run by tourist associations, schools, nursery schools, non-profit organisations and associations. (<http://www.nasjonalparker.org/en/nasjonalparkene/dovrefjell-sunndalsfjella-nasjonalpark/>).



Figure 3.

Kaltenborn, B.P., Qvenild, M. and Nellemann wrote an article about management in Dovre-Sunndalsfjella national park. The focus of the article is to show relation between tourism and management in a mountain protected area on example of Dovre-Sunndalsfjella. The area reflects classic conservation conflicts that based on misunderstanding between locals and authorities. Results in the article are a good example of conflicts that can appear during conservation process as it was written earlier in this paper.

Information in the study area in the article is collected from interviews conducted in 2006 and 2007 with “tourism operators offering commercial activities within Dovre-Sunndalsfjella national park in Southern Norway”. Most of the tourism operators in the study area are small and medium-sized businesses with limited resources, and many of them are family enterprises with long traditions in the area.

Results show that most of the tourism operators feel lacking of information and a poor dialogue with management actors. The informants want to participate more in ongoing processes and provide input to political documents in public hearings. But their views were neglected in the final documents and their experiences and valuable knowledge about local area was ignored.

Several operators said that authorities were listening mostly to researchers and conservation experts, and that national interests were valued higher than local concerns. Restricting access makes it hard to develop business in national parks areas. But managers are preoccupied with restricting access in preserving territories.

As a solution of the conflict, local tourism operators as key stakeholders wish interaction and cooperation with the vested management authority (Kaltenborn, B.P., Qvenild, M. & Nellemann, C. 2011).

Strengths and weaknesses of ecotourism approach

Scandinavians already see nature as part of why anyone would want to travel to Scandinavia. In terms of nature conservation, Norway is an ideal country to show off concern for the environment. According to the Yale Environment Center, Norway ranks third on its 2012 environmental performance index (Norway Country Profile, 2013). However, the concept of ecotourism has been slow to catch on among a people who already see themselves as nature friendly. In researching consumer behavior, it is not enough just to use nature as a marketing tool. Consumers associate nature with mindfulness, as well as experiences of natural beauty, as Ladkin points out (2000). The hypothesizes that “mindfulness” is what attracts consumers to nature parks and the study introduces the concept of mindfulness to map an understanding of tourists who wish to visit nature-based destinations. National parks are increasingly the hot places to visit, and are fast becoming the most appealing locations for tourists to visit, and national parks are becoming people’s preferred destination in planning both packaged travel, and the spur-of-the moment travel (Reinius & Fredman, 2007). A packaged travel option is perhaps better served in Norway with its attention paid to limited access, and has been indicated in some

places like Svalbard Island which can only be reached by tour groups. It is possible, then, to look at consumer consumption and motivation in buying a packaged holiday, in terms of promoting vacations to Norway. Even if visitors to Norway do not have nature-based travel as their primary motivation, it is very common for nature-based activities to be part of their trip, and certainly nature is one of the secondary or tertiary reasons they are vacationing in the country. People who visit Norway most likely want to experience the beauty of nature, to get close to nature, and their least motivated desire is to use their body to be active in nature (Chen, 2013, p. 656). It is significant because the research shows that consumers make impulse purchasing decisions based on their mood, their excitability levels, and if they have already purchased a packaged holiday, they will more likely buy "tchotchkes" that connect with their packaged experience and the enjoyment of spending their money knowing that the planning part of the trip has already been paid (Waligora 2014). In a lesson of behavioral psychology, people are more likely to spend more money on their vacation if the planning part of the vacation has been secured so Norwegian ecotourist companies can predict greater sales by more streamlining of their products and targeting locations that will most leverage the desires of both the soft and the hard ecotourists. While travel to parks is mainly free, the increase in profit will be from leveraging the experience. This increase in park visitation is not only limited to Norway, but is an increase in travel preference seen all across the globe (Balmford et al., 2009; Wray, Espiner, & Perkins, 2010).

Tourists seek ecological preserves and frequent natural parks because they are seeking to raise their own spiritual awareness. The concept of the spiritual is why people want to see a whale in the Arctic Ocean, or why they wish to rent a cabin near a fjord. Even in a very secular society, people still hang on the romantic notion that nature is spiritual and they want to be uplifted by nature. In fact the country's reputation as a tourist destination originates from the Romantic era of European history.

There are two kinds of ecotourists, one of which see the visitation of natural sites as actually contributing to positive impacts on the environment. The hard tourist is this kind of tourist, as opposed to the soft tourist (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). The hard tourist is already aware of the environmental impact of recreational activities on parks, and their interest is closely connected to ecological interest (Priskin, 2003). The tourist with the highest level of ecological concern as studies show is correlated with high interest in nature-based tourism (Haukeland 2013, p. 294). This group is often called in literature hard ecotourists because they are also less

reliant on existing infrastructure, whereas the other group, soft ecotourists, is more dependent on infrastructure. The weakness of soft tourists is that they are using more resources and making a larger impact on the environment, but the paradox is that these soft tourists use more money on their trip and that income from them gives the efficient profit to tourist companies that target eco-commerce seek.

While most visitors to nature preserves realize that their presence affects wildlife, it is surprising that a study showed that only forty percent of ecotourists were aware of the detrimental affects recreational tourism in parks can have, and twelve percent said that in one day they could disturb the life of wildlife (Sterl et al., 2012). Ecotourists tend to be more educated than other tourist types. While impact on negation is often noticed more immediately, it is the managers of sites who see these issues as an issue. In other words, it is alarmingly more in the interest of the manager to preserve the park than it is in the interest of the visitor, for the manager has to bank on the ecological integrity of the park to garner future monies to visit the park, while the visitor will move on to a different location or destination to fulfill their desire to experience nature. In other words, managers, and those who work in the parks, see the actual empirical damage visitation brings to park integrity, while visitors themselves are sometimes more concerned with perceived environmental damage. It behooves stakeholders to invest in biodiversity in parks, then, as noted by many of the researches, this is due to such a critical product for those who seek out these destinations in the first place. It is surprising, then, that there has not been more partnership with consumer interests, private contractors, and conservationists, to advocate for maintaining the integrity of parks for both appealing to tourists, and support for park administration and expenditures. It is strength of ecotourism and ought to be used in drawing attention to attracting tourists.

Mindfulness is when an individual is made more aware of their surroundings, and it seeks to uncover what conditions are necessary to make this mindfulness happen. For example, how much is nature involved in planning a trip to Scandinavian countries or to visit natural parks in the region? As we have already mentioned, many tourists consider themselves to be ecotourists, and Norwegians especially already see themselves as providing pristine views of nature, so the relevant idea is to increase nature awareness, and to think of how frequency of visits to nature parks is connected to the spiritual as well as to the natural. Marketing trips to fjords and to the

Northern Lights in nature parks should draw on tourists' expectations of what spiritual insights they will draw from the experience.

The good thing about promoting ecotourism in the national park system is that it promotes the idea that appreciation is a good indicator of intelligence. The idea that a person who visits a national park will gain from the experience is noted by how well they score in the new ecological paradigm score. So for example, various types of attitudes exist towards activities one does in a natural environment and suggests the complex relationship that exists between recreational interests and predictor of recurring visits based on appreciation of nature (Bjerke, 2006).

Also, there is increasing interest in Norway for rural communities to monetize on parks, on protected areas, especially areas that have been given the protection of World Heritage Site status by UNESCO. These sites are not only known for their environmental treasures, but for their cultural value (UNESCO, 2011). In Norway's parks there is evidence of human habitation that dates back thousands of years, and old settlements, trapping pits, tracks, graves, and other cultural monuments have been unearthed by archaeologists (Nutthall, p. 1398). One example is the coastal city of Vega, in Central Norway which received such status in 2004. The designation of World Heritage status has potential to benefit the local economies of these regions, even if they do not fall within the categories of national park. The Vega municipality comprises a host of islands (about 6,500 of them) which includes the three main islands.

The Vega archipelago is a bird lover's dream. Access to the island could be buttressed by more access by ferry, and even though there are 2,500 places to stay in the Vega islands, its attractiveness as an environmental choice for travel has to be supported by its undiscovered nature. This is the paradox of ecotourism and business. People want, or should it be said, desire, a reality that does not exist. The markers of virgin and untouched are there, but in reality there is no such thing as an undiscovered island. People sometimes wish to travel to a nature-based destination so they can experience the unrepeatable, as if nature itself is a commodity that demands a special relationship.

The area is rich in ecological and cultural heritage (Kaltenborn et al., 2013). Attaching World Heritage Site status to more places in Norway can raise awareness of the importance of these places, and also increase income from tourists to the country, especially at the local level. Norway as a brand has sought to streamline this Romantic idea into how it promotes itself through green endeavors, and eco-labels.

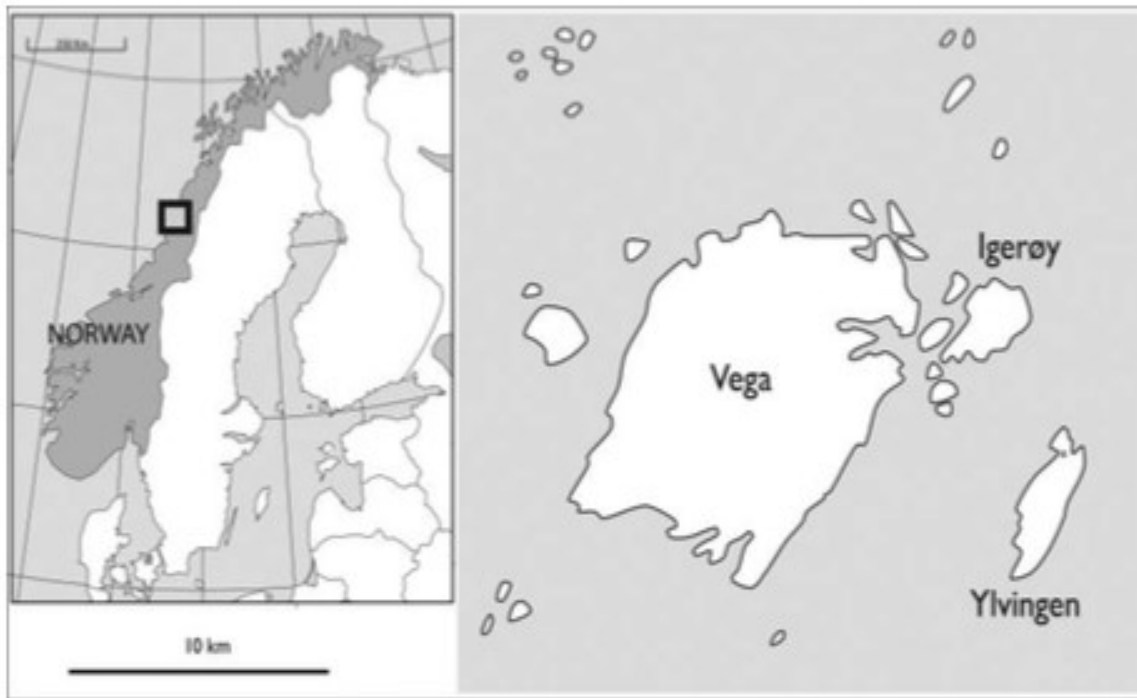


Figure 1. Study area – the Vega municipality.

Alternatively, the draw to ecotourism sights is also linked to geography (Löytynoja, 2008). Specific tourist spots draw visitors to stay in unique places not only for the nature, but for its unique geographical distinctions. The country should market the fact that the line of the Arctic Circle cuts through its boundaries, and it could leverage this basic geographical fact to attract tourists. For example, spots that focus on geographical boundary, for example, in the Arctic Circle, and the easternmost point of the European Union are untapped regions of revenue. Once what researchers call geodetic and extreme locations are discovered and named, their unique place location could translate into economic gains for tourists because of their geographical uniqueness. The issue for Norway is not to just get people to visit because of nature, but to make the natural site a unique place to visit. To motivate people to visit the geographical story of the site must be delineated. New sites can be generated based on looking at the powerful draw of saying, “I’ve been there” and making new geographical sites profitable based on marking the destination as famous.

Result

Norwegians in general support the national parks as protected areas because it provides a sharper distinction between urban and rural, and provides more significant access points for locals to experience wilderness. As we see tourism is a benefit for both Norwegian economy, employment and nature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal of this paper has been two fold. First, it has been the goal of this paper to look at the advent of national parks in Norway as possible places to advance the tenets of ecotourism in the country. Consumers want to experience Norway as an ecological brand, to say that they have seen the beauty of Norway as their primary means of motivation to visit the country (Chen, 2013, p. 656). Ecotourism is meant to be a sustainable way to think about tourism by raising awareness of nature-based sites, and also attracting a certain kind of consumers. Since ecotourism is about an ethical stance to nature, it makes sense that in Norway, its existing park system would be a good way to not only increase income from tourism into the country, but to also keep the country's rich and complex ecological diversity intact.

Nature based tourism remains one of the world's most lucrative niche markets. Norway has done well in preserving its national parks, but also providing a complex, rich place for the nature lover to explore. In this paper, it has been suggested that the hard-core ecotourists will be best served to visit the national parks of Norway, and bad policies to attract ecotourists should be avoided. While ecotourism is a western construct, its primary aims in this context are to divest itself of pure profit driven motives, and tries to leverage both a concern for sustainability, for the protection of biodiversity, but also as a way to bolster and to protect the national economy. As has been mentioned, the labor force in Norway is shrinking due to an aging population. The burden is on the younger generation to deal with a burgeoning pension burden, and to find creative but ultimately sustainable ways to leverage the country's pristine nature-based

destinations that will give more jobs and to help maintain and grow the country social and ecological infrastructure.

Today it is Germany and the Scandinavian countries that have the potential to further dominate inbound tourism, which is mostly the summer season, and attracting ecotourists to not only view the fjords, but to experience the visible north of the Arctic Circle. As urban society becomes mired in the technology of artificial things, the romantic desire to seek out nature will only increase. To understand nature-based travel and Norway is to understand the desire “to experience the beautiful Norwegian nature.”

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Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås, Norway
+47 67 23 00 00
www.nmbu.no