A CULTURAL GAZE?
Understanding Japanese and German Perceptions of Kiruna as a Tourist Destination (Applying Volunteer-Employed Photography)

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ABSTRACT

Photography and tourism have been developing in parallel with each other and leaving memories of the trip in photographs still remains as a significant part of traveling today. Tourist photograph is an effective tool to display the way tourists see the destination they visited. However, while there are studies regarding general relationships between photography and tourism, what tourists see and photograph in each destination has not yet profoundly been investigated.

This study first investigates images of Kiruna, Sweden, utilized in its promotion as a tourist destination to understand how it is expected to be perceived by tourists. Then these images are compared with tourist photographs to understand how they actually respond to this expectation.

Also, this thesis aims to add a new perspective to the concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ proposed by John Urry (1990). Specifically, it takes particular note of ‘nationality’ and ‘culture’, and focuses on two specific tourist groups in Kiruna, Japanese and German tourists, to investigate differences between these nationality groups in the way they perceive Kiruna as a tourist destination. In order to fulfill this aim, Volunteer Employed Photography (VEP) was applied and photographs they took in Kiruna were collected. In order to enrich the photographic data, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with each study participant.

The results revealed that the study participants photographed subjects that were both appeared and not appeared in the promotional images of Kiruna. The study also revealed that there were certain differences between Japanese and German tourists in the way they perceived Kiruna and each nationality group has its own hermeneutic circle.

Keywords: Tourism, Photography, Volunteer-Employed Photography (VEP), Tourist Gaze, Hermeneutic Circle, Culture, Nationality, Northern Sweden
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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines how a tourist destination is promoted and how tourists see the destination by taking particular note of photography, specifically ‘promotional destination photographs’ and ‘tourist photographs’. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of this thesis including background of relevant studies as well as the existing gaps in the literature. Thereafter, research questions and objectives of the thesis are explained. A brief outline of the following chapters is also provided in the end of this chapter. To begin with, the chapter summarizes relevant studies in three different sub-disciplines within the field of tourism, namely photography and imagery in tourism (1), influence of culture and nationality on tourist motivation, behavior and perception (2), and destination image (3).

1.1 Photography and imagery in tourism

In Japanese, ‘sightseeing’ is translated as ‘観光 (kankou)’. ‘観 (kan)’ means ‘observing’ and ‘光 (kou)’ means ‘light’. The etymology of the term ‘kankou’ is derived from a passage ‘観国之光利用賓于王’ written in the Chinese ancient divination text ‘易経 (Yi Jing)’ also known as ‘Book of Changes’ in English. Hence the original meaning of ‘kankou’ is to observe the light of the country, in other words, seeing the excellence and highlights of the country. Although Yi Jing was written thousands of years ago, seeing various highlights in different countries still remain as a significant part of traveling today. These highlights can widely vary depending on the country and they may also change as time proceeds. However, many countries have certain iconic tourism resources that are constantly highlighted and promoted through various media including brochures, travel guides, TV programs. These highlights can be popular photographing spots for visitors.

Both tourism and photography have emerged approximately at the same time and have been developing in parallel with each other (Osborne 2000; Urry 1990). As travel photography became prevalent over time, certain spots in each destination were photographed over and over again, which resulted in creating representative images of the destination that induced further repetitive recaptures by other tourists (Horne 1992). Tourists bring these images back home as souvenirs (Belk 1990, 1991; Benson and
Silberman 1987; Hutnyk 2004; Yeh 2009) and also as visual evidence that the trip was made (Sontag 1977). This recapturing of the images is well-explained by the concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ proposed by John Urry (1990), which is explained in detail in the next chapter. Several scholars have investigated this photographic circulation of destination representative images (Garrod 2009; Jenkins 2003; Larsen 2006). However, what tourists find intriguing and photograph in each destination may not only be these representative attractions that are already widely recognized and promoted as tourist attractions via various media. Hence, this query of what tourists actually see in detail has not yet been profoundly investigated.

1.2 Influence of nationality and cultural background

Similar to the question of where and what tourists photograph, ‘who photographs’ is also an important question that may influence the outcome. In particular, nationality and cultural background are crucial factors to take into account as they may have a substantial impact on the overall shape of individual trips (e.g. decision on where to visit, what to do, perception and evaluation of the destination), which could also influence how tourists see the destination as well as what they photograph during their trip. Meanwhile, defining nationality and cultural background of each tourist is not an easy task particularly in contemporary world due to the rapid globalization and increasing human mobility across national boundaries. Despite the difficulty of defining nationality and cultural background today, a number of studies have emphasized the role that these factors may play in tourists’ travel motivations (Devonish and Jönsson, 2010; Kozak, 2000), behavior in the destination (Pizam and Sussmann 1995), perception of destination image (Beerli and Martin 2004; Bonn, Dai and Joseph 2005). The results from each study show clear variances among different nationality groups. Hence, although there are cases where it is difficult to determine the ‘true nationality’ of tourists, it is also apparent that some tendencies can still be observed from certain nationality groups.

In this manner, there are studies investigating the influence of nationality and cultural background on tourists’ travel motivation, behavior in the destination and perception of destination image. However, there are very few studies examining the influence of nationality and cultural background on what tourists actually see.
Additionally, photography, which is intimately connected to individual perspective and could directly reflect what people see, is rarely applied in this field.

1.3 Destination image

The study of destination image is one popular sub-discipline in the field of tourism research. It is relevant to this study in that it investigates how a tourist destination is perceived by tourists or prospective tourists. In particular, influences of destination images in tourists’ decision making, perception of the destination, behavior and satisfaction are the most prevalent themes. For instance, Binge, J. Sanchez and M. I. Sanchez (2001) discuss how destination image influences tourist perception, satisfaction, intention of revisit and willingness to recommend the destination to others. Similarly, Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) examine the interrelationship between the images of four Mediterranean destinations, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy, that US-based tour operators / travel agents have and how they promote these destinations. Baloglu and McCleary (1990) and Beerli and Martin (2004) investigate how destination image is formed and what factors influence tourist perception of the destination. Also, with a slightly different approach from the studies mentioned above, Alvarez and Martinez (2010) compare the image of Turkey as a tourist destination and the general image of the country as a whole. They claim the significance of distinguishing these two images when studying destination images.

This way, scholars have approached destination image research from various angles and attempted to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon. However, most previous studies focus on perceptual and sensory images of the destination such as invisible destination images and stereotypes. How tourists visually capture the destination (through visual destination images) has rarely been studied.

1.4 Importance of the study for tourism industry

This thesis is also expected to provide certain contributions for tourism industry, particularly for destination marketers by demonstrating the importance of taking nationality and culture into account when promoting the destination and how these factors influence the way tourists perceive and consume the destination.
1.5 Research purpose:

Considering the existing gaps in the three study fields explained above, this thesis sets the study objectives as follows. It focuses on two specific tourist groups, Japanese and German tourists, in Kiruna, Sweden in order to fulfill the objectives:

• **Understanding how and what kind of photographs are utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a tourist destination, and what tourists in practice see, capture and find intriguing in Kiruna**

• **Finding out if there are any differences between Japanese and German tourists in the way they see and capture Kiruna**

• **Integrating the achieved findings, perspectives of nationality and culture, with Urry’s ‘hermeneutic circle’ to provide insights into its extensive characteristics**

To accomplish the objectives listed above, the study takes both quantitative and qualitative approaches and applies three research methods: content analysis of official destination brochures to analyze promotional images of Kiruna (1), photographic analysis, namely Volunteer Employed Photography (VEP) to analyze photographs taken by tourists in Kiruna (2), and semi-structured interviews with tourists to enrich the photographic data (3). Each method is explained in detail in the methodology chapter.

This thesis is consisted of eight chapters including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework for this study including Urry’s ‘hermeneutical cycle’ and other key fields of the literature. Chapter 3 introduces the case study setting, Kiruna, and reasons why it was selected. Chapter 4 explains the methods applied in this study, why they were thought to be suitable, procedure of the data collection and how the collected data were analyzed and imported in the study. Chapter 5 presents the results obtained and summarizes them in an easily comprehensible manner. Chapter 6 provides a further discussion of the results in relation to the research purposes. Chapter 7 summarizes the main findings of the study and the discussion. Chapter 8 lists the limitations of this study and provides suggestions for further studies.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to present relevant works previously done by other scholars in order to provide an insight into the theoretical structure of this thesis and a justification for the research purpose noted above. The theoretical structure of this thesis mainly comprises three sub-disciplines within the field of tourism, namely photography and imagery in tourism (1), influence of culture and nationality on tourist motivation, behavior and perception (2), and destination image (3). Previous works and gaps existing in each study field are presented throughout the chapter.

2.1 Photography and imagery in tourism

2.1.1 The Tourist Gaze by John Urry (1990)

‘The Tourist Gaze’ written by John Urry (1990) is one of the most frequently cited pieces of literature within the study of the relationship between photography and tourism. In his study, Urry discusses the concept of tourism from a sociological perspective and also examines the relationship between photography and tourist behaviors. For instance, he argues that photography gives shape to travel and becomes the reason for stopping to capture what tourists encounter during their trip before moving on. Urry also notes that photography involves obligations and makes people feel that they must not miss seeing particular scenes as otherwise the opportunities for photographing will be missed. In this manner, seeking a photogenic subject can even become a primary purpose of traveling, and travel agencies also spend much time to indicate where photographs should be taken. The other important theory he proposed considers photography as a part of ‘hermeneutic circle’ of tourism production / reproduction. In the study, Urry notes that:

‘Involved in much tourism is a kind of hermeneutic circle. What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photographic images, as seen in tour company brochures or on TV programmes. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the
images that they had seen originally before they set off.’ (Urry 1990, page: 140)

The concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ was originally proposed by a German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927) who claimed that understanding the whole requires the understanding of the individual parts and understanding of each individual cannot be done without reference to the whole, thus, it is a circle. Although a relationship between Heidegger’s concept and Urry’s work is not clarified, hermeneutic circle in the context of tourist photography is clearly unique to Urry.

Urry’s hermeneutic circle, which is a core concept of this thesis, is mentioned in Jenkins’s study (2003) as a part of the concept of ‘circles of representation’ (Figure 1), which is based on her interpretation of Urry’s hermeneutic circle. What is special regarding Jenkins’s ‘circles of representation’ is that the projection of the image can be done not only by society (e.g. mass media, destination promoters) but also by individuals (tourists). Tourists show their photographs from their trip to others and motivate them to also re-capture these images, which as a result, becomes the image projection phase for the circle of representation by individuals.

![Figure 1. The ‘circle of representation’ for tourist destination images (Jenkins, 2003)](image)

Thus, in this wise, Urry and Jenkins make an assertion of the significance of photography in both pre-stage and post-stage of tourist practices.
2.1.2 Critiques and limitation on Urry’s tourist gaze

While many authors support Urry’s theory, there are several scholars regarding his point of view as somewhat insufficient. MacCannell (2001) sharply criticizes Urry’s work although he acknowledges that it has provided a valuable contribution to the field of tourism research. He sees Urry’s theory, particularly the concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ mentioned above as deterministic and ideological. In his study, MacCannell refers to ‘The Birth of the Clinic’ written by Michel Foucault (1975) – which is also mentioned in Urry’s study, however the purposes of their citing differ – and supports his argument to suggest a way out for Urry’s determinism. According to Foucault, although institutions and structured itineraries are provided in advance by those who will benefit from them, within these strategically fixed structural arrangements, the freedom of choice for human subjects still remains as everyone must interpret diverse discourses and eventually produce their own outcome. Thus, MacCannell claims that even though the tourist gaze described by Urry is to some extent legitimate, it does not monopolize the tourists’ field of vision.

In addition, Garlick (2002) points out that Urry discusses photography merely as an instance of the all-pervasive influence of the tourist gaze and lays stress on the significance of further approaches to the complexity of the tourist gaze. As one part of it, he discusses the possibility of photography as an art having an impact on the tourist gaze and argues that if tourists approach photography as an art, it becomes more than just simply slicing a picture from the sights they encounter. This may to some extent extend Urry’s tourist gaze as, in this case, tourist photography reaches beyond simply capturing the images they have seen before the trip.

In addition, it is apparent that the formation of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ relies on the type of tourist group. Larsen (2006) conducted comparative analysis of traditional imagery of Bornholm, an island in Denmark, as it appeared on official postcards and brochures with the gaze of family tourists visiting the island. Then the result showed that the major subjects for these family tourists to photograph were their family members and the location of photography practice was not an important concern. Thus this suggests that the concept of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ may not be or less valid with certain types of tourist groups.
2.1.3 Supporting studies on Urry’s tourist gaze

Conversely, there are also some scholars who have tested Urry’s theory by conducting a specific case study and obtained results that support his work. Jenkins (2003) conducted a study that purposed to examine the relevance of the ‘circle of representation’ concept, based on Urry’s ‘hermeneutic circle’ concept, to understand one particular group of tourists: backpackers. She first conducted a detailed content analysis of the imagery appeared on 17 brochures that attempt to attract backpackers to Australia and then carried out semi-structured interviews with over 90 backpackers visiting Australia as well as domestic ones with the aim of deepening the understanding of their practice and behaviors relating to their travel photography. Also, she collected travel photographs from 10 backpackers by employing Visitor-Employed Photography (VEP) to compare these photographs with the imagery on the brochures she analyzed. After the comparison, she discovered that these backpackers captured ‘iconic’ and ‘photogenic’ sights that were similar to the ones appeared in the brochures.

Similarly, Garrod (2009) also conducted a case study in a small town Aberystwyth in Wales in order to reveal the interplay between photographs taken by tourists who were randomly asked to volunteer and those captured by a professional postcard-photographer. Same as Jenkins, he applied VEP as a method and the result demonstrated that the subjects photographed by the tourists were similar to the ones appeared on postcard shots, though some slight differences (e.g. angles, area of inclusion) were found. Therefore, Garrod himself also notes that this finding might to some extent support Urry’s notion of the closed circle of representations.

2.1.4 Other tourism studies related to photography

Although without direct linkage with Urry’s study, the study conducted by Schmallegger, Carson and Jacobsen (2010) is one of few studies that applied photography and investigated what tourists see in detail. They applied VEP in their study and compared destination marketing organization (DMO) images and images collected from both domestic and international tourists in Flinders Ranges, Australia. The results revealed certain differences between DMO images and tourist images. For instance, while local cuisine was a subject frequently appeared in DMO images, it was
completely absent in the images from both domestic and international tourists. Similarly, tourist images included particular activities that were not promoted by DMOs such as mount climbing and camping under the stars.

Several problematic aspects of photography utilized in tourism-related media were also mentioned in the literature. Hunter (2007) points out that photographic images appeared in travel advertisements only show socially desirable aspects, while socially undesirable sights such as unsightly construction sites, urban blight, poverty, crime and pollution are missing. He also mentions that photographic representations of a tourist destination can create a standardized image of the destination and it may result in compromising identities of the destination and its locals.

While some hazardous effects on tourist destinations caused by travel advertising photographs are noted, some positive impacts are also discussed. Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) state that tourism is uniquely visual and thus, photographs are considered as a paramount factor to successfully create and convey the image of the destination. Additionally, the significance of photographic communication online is also pointed out. Lo et al. (2011) state that, due to the rapid advance in technology and the increasing number of internet-users, sharing photographs online by tourists assumes a significant role within contemporary tourism, particularly in tourism marketing, destination image formation and customer to customer communications. Similarly, Schmallegger, Carson and Jacobsen (2010) discuss the significance of consumer-generated images and peer-to-peer communication online in relation to ‘Web 2.0’, which replaces traditional face-to-face word-of-mouth communications and enables tourists to easily share their travel experiences with other like-minded people. They also mention the increasing camera ownership due to prevailing of affordable price cameras today and integration of cameras with mobile phones, which may lead to the acceleration of this trend.

While Lo et al. (2011) and Schmallegger et al. (2010) discuss the advance in technology and increasing importance of online communication, Andereck (2005) states that brochures are still the most commonly utilized tourism information source regardless of technological development. She mentions that utilizing travel brochures are especially beneficial for smaller companies and destinations due to the fact that they do not have adequate finances for sophisticated and costly information dissemination.

In this manner, the pros and cons of Urry’s tourist gaze have previously been
debated and some case studies with certain groups of tourists in specific contexts have been conducted by different scholars attempting to test the theory, and the outcomes have shown its legitimacy and limitations. Also, there are sufficient amount of studies focusing on the general relationship between photography and tourism, particularly the ways promotional photographs (e.g. brochures, postcards) represent the destination, and whether tourist photographs correspond to the imagery offered by various media or not. However, very few studies focus on the actual contents of tourist photographs in detail. In particular, while there is a relatively large number of studies examining the similarity between tourist photographs and photographs of the destination promoted through various media, the nature of differences existing between these two types of photographs is often neglected. Hence, instead of conducting a study with the same approach as the previous studies, this study attempts to compensate for these gaps. Also, as noted, this study focuses attention on the concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ proposed by Urry, however, it does not intend to examine the legitimacy of the concept, as a number of scholars have already done so. Instead, it aims at revealing the extensive characteristics of this photographic circulation and contributes to a richer understanding of.

2.2 Influence of nationality and culture on tourists’ motivation, behavior and perception

As a way of revealing the extensive characteristic of the photographic circulation noted above, this study takes particular note of ‘nationality’ and ‘culture’ based on a hypothesis that what tourists see and photograph in the destination is influenced by their nationality and cultural background. However, defining nationality and cultural background of each tourist is not an easy task particularly in contemporary world due to the rapid globalization and increasing human mobility across national boundaries. Dann (1993), for instance, points out the complexity that emerges when utilizing the concept of ‘nationality’ and lists four reasons:

I. Many tourists have multiple nationalities and their country of birth and country of origin or nationality may differ, and cultural differences exist among people with the same nationality.
II. In societies with newly formed political order (e.g. South Africa, Iraq, countries of former Yugoslavia) it does not make sense to speak of national identification.

III. Countries with citizens consisting of immigrants from various countries (e.g. Australia, United States, Canada) cannot be viewed as a single national entity.

IV. Many tourist-receiving countries are pluralistic in their cultures (e.g. India, Brazil).

The relationship between nationality / cultural background and tourist photography has also not yet been profoundly investigated. However, there are studies investigating interplays between nationality / cultural background and tourists’ motivation, behavior and perception of the destination. Devonish and Jönsson (2010), and Kozak (2002) examine how nationality influences travel motivation. Devonish and Jönsson (2010) consider nationality as one of three causal factors (also gender and age) affecting travel motivation. They collected 163 complete questionnaires from tourists from different countries visiting Barbados, an island nation situated in the easternmost part of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean. Kozak (2002) focuses on two specific tourist groups, British and German tourists visiting Turkey and Mallorca Island, and collected 1872 complete questionnaires. Both studies apply the same categorization of travel motivation and divide it into four types: culture (to visit historical and cultural sites, to increase knowledge of new places, to meet local people), pleasure seeking / fantasy (to seek adventure, to get away from home, to have fun, to mix with fellow tourists), relaxation (to be emotionally and physically refreshed, to spend time with people cared deeply about, to relax, to enjoy good weather), and physical (to get close to nature, to engage in sports, to be active). The results from both studies show that travel motivation varies depending on tourists’ country of origin. For instance, Canadian tourists visiting Barbados were likely to have physical motivations, while the majority of British tourists are likely to have motivation based on the overall need for relaxation (Devonish and Jönsson, 2010). German tourists visiting Turkey seem to have strong motivation for relaxation, while British tourists have a relatively high motivation for pleasure seeking (Kozak, 2000). In this manner, it became apparent that travel motivation varies depending on the nationality.

Pizam and Sussmann (1995) have attempted to examine the interrelationship
between cultural background / nationality and tourists’ behavior in the destination. To compare behavior of tourists with different nationalities, 123 complete questionnaires were collected from tour guides living in London who were asked to answer the questions regarding the behaviors of the tourists they had guided by nationality. Tourist behavior was categorized into five groups: social interaction factor, commercial transaction factor, activity preference factor, bargaining / trip planning factor, knowledge of destination factor, and in each category, behavioral variances among different nationality groups, perceived by the tour guides, were discovered:

**Social Interaction Factor (Interaction with other tourists)**
- **French:** Highly social but mostly only interact with other French tourists.
- **Italian:** In between American, French and Japanese. Tend to interact with other Italian tourists.
- **American:** The most social group, interacting with other tourists regardless of nationality.
- **Japanese:** The least social group, trying to keep to themselves.

**Commercial Transaction Factor**
- **French:** Purchase significantly fewer souvenirs and gifts in comparison with other tourist groups. Photograph the least. Often travel alone.
- **Italian:** Purchase significantly fewer than Americans and Japanese. Photograph occasionally.
- **American:** Purchase souvenirs and gifts the most. Photograph the most. Travel in a group.
- **Japanese:** Purchase souvenirs and gifts the most. Photograph the most. Travel in a group.

**Activity Preference Factor**
- **French:** The most adventuresome group.
- **Italian:** The most adventuresome group.
- **American:** In between French, Italian and Japanese.
- **Japanese:** The most passive group.
**Bargaining / Trip Planning Factor**

- **French:** Bargain occasionally.
- **Italian:** Bargain the most. Do not plan the trip in advance.
- **American:** Do not bargain and mostly pay the price they have been asked.
- **Japanese:** Do not bargain and mostly pay the price they have been asked. Plan the trip in advance.

**Knowledge of Destination Factor**

- **French:** Interested in “authentic” tourist experience
- **Italian:** Interested in “authentic” tourist experience
- **American:** Interested in “authentic” tourist experience
- **Japanese:** Satisfied with “staged” tourist experience

➤ All the groups were perceived to be knowledgeable about the destination at the same level.

In this wise, it is apparent that nationality and cultural background do influence not only the travel motivation but also tourists’ behavior in the destination, although the difference among certain groups is sometimes not as distinctive as the others. Furthermore, significance of the influence from nationality and cultural background is likely to remain the same in the formation of destination image perception, and the following scholars approach this matter in their work. Beerli and Martin (2004) found that the country of origin significantly influenced the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image of the destination. In addition, Bonn, Dai and Joseph (2005) investigated differences in image perception between international and domestic tourists visiting Florida, U.S. From 1993 to 2004, tourists visiting the Tampa Bay region in Florida were personally interviewed and a total of 53,864 complete surveys were collected from the visitors in the region. The study results show that, in comparison with domestic visitors, international ones had slightly lower satisfaction with certain matters including signage (as in most Florida destinations signage is only written in English, while it is available in multiple languages in many other destinations when traveling internationally). Also, certain environmental matters including the climate were rated lower by the international visitors compared with the domestic ones. This suggests that the country of origin is significant but its influence on overall perception of the destination is also intimately entangled with the gap of expectation.
that exists between international visitors and domestic ones, as well as what the destination offers.

Köker, Maden and Topsümer (2012) focus attention on tourist generating regions and examine how geographical factors as well as nationality and cultural background influence the way people perceive Istanbul as a destination. The target group of the study was students at the University of Torino, Italy and a total of 218 students from various countries participated in the survey that consisted of several categories of questions about Istanbul. The results show that participants from the regions geographically close to Istanbul as well as ones from Muslim regions have a more positive perception, and also have less worry in comparison with the participants from regions geographically further away. Yet, there are also exceptions, including participants from Balkan countries who are from a region geographically close to Istanbul but have the highest worry about personal safety, treatment of females, terrorism and helpfulness of police in Istanbul. Hence, this finding seems to correspond to the study result obtained by Bonn, Dai and Joseph (2005) in the sense that people from regions geographically close to the destination are likely to have relatively positive perception compared to ones from regions further away.

As outlined above, there are a certain number of studies investigating the influence of nationality and cultural background on travel motivation, tourists’ behavior and perception of the destination. There are also case-based studies including the works mentioned above, that identify intriguing reciprocal relationships between tourists’ country of origin and its influence on both physical and perceptual experience of the destination. However, influence of cultural background and nationality on what tourists actually see and find interesting in the destination has not yet been sufficiently understood. Thus, this thesis aims at investigating how tourist attractions depicted in tourist photography vary depending on tourists’ nationality. It provides empirical contributions to this field of research by conducting a case study with two tourist groups of different national and cultural backgrounds: Japanese and German tourists.

In addition, with the aim of adding a new perspective to the concept of the hermeneutic circle, the study proposes a hypothesis that each nationality group has its own hermeneutic circle, which is demonstrated in Figure 2. As displayed, each nationality group has its own circle, however, each circle intersects with another when both nationality groups share the same subjects in the destination that attract both
groups. These subjects can be considered as the representative / iconic images of the destination that are often appeared in the promotional images of the destination, while the remaining ones may represent more culturally specific interpretations of the destination.

![Figure 2. Hermeneutic circle by nationality](image)

### 2.3 Destination image

‘Destination image’ is another study field relevant to this study in a sense that it also considers how a destination is perceived, although it does not focus only on visual perception including tourist photography. Destination image as a study subject became prevalent in the 1970s within the field of tourism (Pike, 2002), and since then numerous scholars have conducted studies on the role of destination image in the context of tourism from different angles, however, there are certain themes that seem to be especially popular. Pike (2002) has provided a literature review of 142 destination image-related papers from 1973 to 2000 as a reference guide to the context, method and focus of previous studies. He mentions the study conducted by Chon (1990) who reviewed 23 most frequently cited destination image studies at the time and discovered that the most popular themes were the role and influences of destination images in tourists decision making, behavior and satisfaction.

For instance, Binge, J. Sanchez and M. I. Sanchez (2001) conducted research to
clarify the interrelationships among destination image, tourist perception, satisfaction, intention of revisit and willingness to recommend the destination to others. In their work, the significant relationships between destination image and tourist behavior including decision making is highlighted, although without provision of any specific evidence. Also, they stress the importance of image improvement for each destination to remain competitive in the holiday market and achieve positive post-purchase evaluations by tourists that may lead to the increase of repeaters, as well as the number of visitors in general. Chen and Tsai (2006) also conducted a survey with visitors over the age of 18 years in Kengtin region, a popular coastal destination in southern Taiwan, and found that the destination image – defined as “an individual’s mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings and overall perception of a particular destination” – has the most significant effect on tourist behavioral intentions including intention to revisit and recommending the destination to others. However, not only the interplays between destination image and tourists, but also interrelationships between destination image and travel suppliers, tour operators and travel agencies, have been examined. Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) have attempted to reveal the relationships between US-based tour operators/travel agents and their image of the four Mediterranean destinations that they are selling: Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy. Their empirical results show that the tour operators/travel agents are not likely to promote the destination that they have negative images of and also that the image of each destination strongly influences their decision of which destination to promote.

Another popular theme is the way destination image forms and what influences destination image formation. Baloglu and McCleary (1990) have conducted a study on how destination image is developed and what factors influence its formation, and they introduce the idea, which is also agreed by scholars in other disciplines, that image construction involves two types of evaluations: perceptual/cognitive evaluation and affective evaluation. The perceptual/cognitive evaluation consists of the belief or knowledge about a destination's attributes and the affective evaluation is the result of feelings toward or attachment to it, and the overall image of a place is often constructed from both evaluations. The result of their study shows that affective evaluation strongly influences the overall image of the destination, rather than the combination of both affective evaluation and perceptual/cognitive evaluation and the affective evaluation intervenes between perceptual/cognitive evaluations and the overall image.
Similarly, Beerli and Martin (2004) attempt to enrich the understanding of the process of destination image formation as well as the factors that influence tourists’ perception of the destination image. A case study took place in Lanzarote, the easternmost island of the Canary Islands, and they conducted the survey on 616 tourists visiting Lanzarote and also interviewed tourists at the airport. In order to identify the factors influencing the destination image, they categorize the image source into three groups by applying the categorization proposed by Gartner (1993): induced sources, organic sources and autonomous sources. Induced sources are ones provided with the aim of attracting tourists to certain destination, such as tourist brochures issued by the destination’s public authorities or tour operators, mass-media advertising campaigns and travel agency staff. Organic source can be obtained from actors that are not directly involved in the inducement of tourist visits, including friends and family members who were either requested or who volunteered to provide information about the destination. Finally, autonomous sources are ones publically available and provide information regarding the destination, however, the provision of such information may not deliberately intend to increase the number of tourist visits to the destination. This includes guidebooks, news, articles, reports, documentaries and programs about the destination offered through various media. The result of the study shows that the induced sources do not have significant impact on the destination image, although travel agency staff were the only source that is likely to have positive impacts on tourists’ perception of the destination, indicating that those who are in charge of transmitting the information about the destination must ensure that it mirrors the desired images of the destination. Conversely, both organic and autonomous sources proved to be important factors influencing the destination image. This suggests that the destination should transmit the images that reflect reality and not exaggerated images as such images may not coincide with the information provided by organic sources. The destination should always be aware of what types of images and information are broadcasted through autonomous sources by reason that they are difficult to control. Additionally, the study found out that affective image can be positively influenced when there is congruence between tourist motivations and the place offer.

With a slightly different approach from the studies mentioned above, Alvarez and Martinez (2010) take particular note of the interrelationship between destination images and general images of the country that the destination belongs to and claim the
significance of distinguishing these two images when studying destination images. The study was conducted at one of the major universities in Spain and 180 questionnaires were collected from Spanish undergraduate students who studied tourism and had previously not visited Turkey. The result of the study shows that the respondents had relatively positive images of Turkey as a tourist destination while their general perception of the country was rather negative. They also note that taking these two perspectives is particularly important for studies conducted in the context of developing countries, as the gap between the image of the country as a whole and the image as a tourist destination may be more significant than developed countries by reason that less-developed environment can be a pull factor for travelers from developed countries who seek exotic experiences. However, they are also aware of the limitation of their contribution and note that further studies with more heterogeneous non-student respondents with different levels of knowledge about the country are needed.

As seen from the above, over the past few decades, a number of scholars have approached the study of destination image and attempted to reveal its extensive characteristics. However, in reverse proportion to the wide range of different themes within the field of destination image, the methods applied in the studies are relatively limited. In particular, previous destination image studies are highly focused on quantitative methods which is also pointed out by Pike (2002). Application of quantitative methods may be useful in finding trends of certain phenomena; however, they do not display each individual’s view, which is crucial for this study field as destination image is mostly a cluster of individual perceptions. In addition, he also suggests that more case-based studies are needed in order to better understand the detailed nuances of how destination image is formed and perceived.

Hence, this thesis makes a contribution to the field of destination image study by qualitatively approaching destination image and conducting a case study, although this is not the primary aim of the study. Similarly, most previous destination image studies focus on tourist’s sensuous impressions such as a perceptional sense of safety / anxiety or a vague positive / negative feeling about the destination. However, there are surprisingly few studies focusing on the actual contents of the destination image and what tourists practically see in the destination. Therefore, this study adds to previous works by revealing what each tourist sees, as well as how they perceive the destination in practice through their photographic behavior.
3. CASE STUDY

In order to analyze what tourists see and find intriguing in the destination in detail, a case study has been conducted of Kiruna in northern Sweden. This chapter provides the general background of the case destination, as well as information regarding its tourist attractions, and also gives a justification for choosing Kiruna as a case destination.

3.1 Background to the case region

Kiruna

Kiruna is the northernmost municipality in Sweden, which is situated in a province of Lapland, and belongs to Norrbotten county. Kiruna has approximately 23,200 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden, as of 2014) and lies in the middle of the cultural region of Sami people, the indigenous people in habiting the Lapland area. Kiruna was originally known as a land for reindeer herding by Sami nomads, however the use of the land has thoroughly shifted since the discovery of a rich iron ore vein within the area (Granas, 2012; Nilsson, 1998). Since the beginning of twentieth century, the mining industry in Kiruna has been experiencing a significant growth and a number of people have migrated to the region from abroad, as well as from different districts within Sweden over the decades (Granas, 2012). The development of Kiruna as a mining area has coincided with the growth of the state-owned mining company LKAB (Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag). LKAB was established in 1890 and holds around 4100 employees (as of 2014) and approximately 2,100 of inhabitants in Kiruna municipality are employed by LKAB (as of 2013). Additionally, the mine in
Kiruna is the world’s largest iron ore mine (Nilsson, 2010).

Another factor that has spread the name of the city internationally is its unique facet as a space research area. Kiruna is located at 68 degrees north latitude and this position is extremely favorable for space research, particularly research into the Aurora Borealis, also commonly called the Northern Lights (Nilsson, 1998), due to the fact that the area frequently falls within the range of Aurora Oval where the Northern Lights can often be observed directly overhead (the area between 65 and 70 degrees north latitude in most instances). By virtue of this suitable environment for space research, Kiruna has become one of the European centers for space-related activities in short duration (Nilsson, 1998). Kiruna marked its first entry into space research in 1957 only with a staff of five people at KGO (Kiruna Geophysical Observatory) and today more than 500 people either work in or study in the space sector (Sandahl & Wikström1, 2005). In addition, due to these unique facets and rich natural environment around the area, Kiruna has started to draw attention as a tourist destination.

### 3.2 Tourism attractions in Kiruna

Tourism in Kiruna is highly dependent on nature-based experiences throughout the year. During the summer period, hiking and trekking around the area is one of the most popular tourist activities, particularly hiking on the trail Kungsleden, meaning “The King’s Trail” in Swedish, from Abisko to Hemavan. People can also enjoy biking as well as horseback riding in the area. In addition to onshore tourism, aquatic activities such as rafting and canoeing along the Torne River are common attractions for summer visitors. Being located in high latitude itself also generates unique and distinctive natural attractions for tourists, such as the midnight sun and – probably the most significant natural resource for the winter tourism – the Northern Lights. As noted above, Kiruna has a very favorable environment for Northern Lights gazing and there are various Aurora-related tours available for the tourists, such as observations from a Sami tipi (a traditional conical tent in which Sami people live), photo tours with professional photographers who instruct tourists on how to capture the Northern Lights, and Aurora gazing tours combined with a dog or reindeer sleigh experience and a snowmobile ride. Another unique amenity for winter tourism in Kiruna is the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi where tourists can stay at a room with an ice bed and ice sculptures.
created by international artists. Besides, other types of winter activities are also available such as snowshoeing and skiing. Not only seasonally limited attractions, but Kiruna also has distinct tourist attractions that are available all year around including the visit to IRF (Swedish Institute of Space Physics) that enables tourists to see what has been occurring in space research with their own eyes, and the backstage tour in the ore mine that shows tourists the history of Kiruna as a mining area.

3.3 Why Kiruna?

One reason that Kiruna was thought to be an appropriate case destination is the fact that it is a destination highly dependent on the winter season – although it does not necessarily mean that the destination is not popular during summer season – and hence, it suits well with the study period for this thesis. Secondly, Kiruna is a suitable destination for the study as its major tourist attractions for the winter season are clearly identifiable (e.g. Aurora Borealis, Ice Hotel, dog sleigh). Compare with bigger and more complex tourist destinations within the country (e.g. cities such as Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö) where a variety of different attractions are available, this means that what tourists are expected to see in the destination is more specified. This is expected to make the comparison of multiple tourist views easier and more accurate to some extent. Thirdly, since there are not many existing studies that were conducted in the context of Nordic and remote northern regions, this study is also expected to add a new geographical perspective to previous studies on tourist photography. Lastly, the feasibility was also taken into account when determining the case destination. Kiruna was thought to be a suitable destination by reason that it is fairly easily accessible from Umeå where the author resides. Additionally, considering the financial limitation, conducting the study in Kiruna was thought to be feasible.
4. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide explanations of the research methods that are applied in this study and reasons why these methods are thought to be suitable for fulfilling the research objectives. The study takes a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods and applies three methods, namely Content Analysis of promotional destination photographs, Volunteer Employed Photography and Semi-structured Interviews with tourists. Each method is explained in more detail in the chapter. The chapter also provides a detailed description of the sampling procedure, participant recruitment, data collection strategies and the procedure of the data analysis.

Research objectives:

As outlined in Chapter 1, the following research objectives have been identified for this study:

• Understanding how and what kind of photographs are utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a tourist destination, and what tourists in practice see, capture and find intriguing in Kiruna
• Finding out if there are any differences between Japanese and German tourists in the way they see and capture Kiruna
• Integrating the achieved findings, perspective of nationality and culture, with Urry’s ‘hermeneutic circle’ to provide insights into its extensive characteristics

4.1 Content Analysis of promotional destination photographs

In this study, thematic content analysis of images in travel brochures was applied in order to understand how and what kind of images are utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a tourist destination and what ‘selling points’ the destination expects tourists to catch. Thematic content analysis is an effective research method to analyze various forms of contents and summarize characteristic and discourse of the subject. This method has also widely been applied within the field of tourism. For instance, one
common purpose of utilizing content analysis in tourism study is to analyze travel brochures both photographically and textually. Dilley (1986) has applied content analysis to his study in order to analyze photographic images used in 21 different National Tourist Organization brochures and succeeded in finding out that there were clear patterns in the types of images projected depending on the type of the destination. For example, the brochures for island destinations (such as the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago) were dominated by the images of coastal landscapes and recreational activities, while the brochures for destinations with the image of the ‘old world’ (including Britain, Portugal and Japan) tend to use historical and art-type images, such as heritage buildings. Also, Hughes (1992) applied content analysis to analyze a brochure offered by Scottish Tourist Board (STB) for 1990-1991 and investigated how the text is utilized in the brochure to construct the image of Scotland and to attract a specific target group. For example, the study shows that Scotland is characterized by terms of certain types of people such as a piper, a weaver, an angler, a boatman and allusion to dairying, distilling and craft manufacture. And it also shows that the target tourist group described in STB marketing plan, married couples who are holidaying without dependent children, is identifiable by the way texts in the brochure introduce Scotland.

Hence, by reference to the previous works mentioned above, content analysis was thought to be the suitable research method to the purpose of this study.

4.2 Volunteer Employed Photography (VEP)

As a means of revealing what tourists actually see and find intriguing in Kiruna, Volunteer Employed Photography (VEP) was applied. VEP traditionally involves distribution of cameras to participants and collection of the photographs they took with the aim of ‘extracting’ what they see in a specific location. VEP was originally used as a practical research technique in the 70s by Cherem and Traweek (1977) in order to obtain public perception of natural environment, and later developed by Cherem and Driver (1983) and Chenoweth (1984) with the aim of investigating landscape management issues. However, as VEP became prevalent in other disciplines including study of children (e.g. children’s experience and perception of place) and the field of health and well-being (e.g. experiences of patients and practitioners) (Garrod, 2009), scholars in the field of tourism also began to apply VEP in their studies. For instance,
Haywood (1990) conducted a study on how tourists perceive the city of Toronto, Canada, and Jutla (2000) carried out a comparative analysis on the image of Simla, the capital city of Himachal Pradesh in northern India, perceived by tourists and residents. Also, Garrod (2009) examined the similarity between photographs of Aberystwyth, the administrative centre and a popular holiday resort within Ceredigion, West Wales, captured by tourists and a professional postcard-photographer. Despite the fact that the purpose of applying VEP in each study slightly varies, these scholars have succeeded in eliciting what tourists see in each case location and thus, considering this proven potential from previous works, VEP was considered to be a suitable method to fulfill the purpose noted above.

However, it also must be noted that the method applied in this study is slightly different from VEP applied in the studies noted above as the candidates used their own cameras to take photographs instead of using ones provided by the researcher. Collecting photographs that candidates have already taken with their own cameras was thought to be a better strategy, based on the assumption that distributing cameras and asking candidates to photograph may cause a sense of obligation and influence the outcome. However, in either case, the results achieved by the scholars mentioned above certainly demonstrate the usability of VEP when analyzing the tourist gaze.

4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Considering the possibility that there may be certain additional information to be collected about tourist photographs, semi-structured interviews were also applied in order to maximize the quality and the range of the collected data. Semi-structured interview has been applied in a variety of different study fields including the field of tourism and has been utilized in various ways. Also, it is an effective method to enhance the quality of certain photographical data including tourist photographs. For instance, photography is an effective tool to display what people see, as explained in the discussion of VEP; however, certain matters (e.g. intentions behind, reasons why each photograph was taken) are sometimes not clearly captured in photographs. Conducting interviews is an effective way to compensate these gaps, and it has become evident in the study conducted by Markwell (1997) and Jacobsen (2010). In order to investigate the role of photography in tourism, Markwell (1997) organized a 3-week nature-based
tour in East Malaysia with 20 Australian university students as study candidates. After the trip, the photographs taken by the students were collected and a semi-structured interview was conducted with each candidate asking them regarding their experiences including two questions related to photography: (1) ‘how important was it for you to be taking photographs during the tour?’ and (2) ‘which of your photos mean the most to you and can you tell me why?’. The result of the interviews shows intriguing information including participants’ intentions behind their photographs, how important photography was for them during the trip and personal meaning of certain photographs. In this manner, Markwell has succeeded in providing a great understanding of tourist photograph by combining it with semi-structured interview.

Jacobsen (2010) conducted an ontological study on domestic 4WD tourists in central Australia and three domestic 4WD tourists participated in his study. VEP was applied to visually record participant’s experiences and their actual encounters during a 4WD tour in desert Australia. An interview was also conducted with the purpose of capturing verbal and non-verbal information that cannot be obtained by VEP. For instance, he notes, based on Laverty (2003), that interviews can record participants’ manner of speaking that can mirror certain feelings, such as the use of silence, which indicates interviewees’ hesitation or contemplation. This can also reflect interviewees’ sentiment towards certain subjects. In this manner, Jacobsen applied a combination of VEP and interview and succeeded in depicting study participant’s sense of belonging to Australia and their meaning of being a domestic tourist, which is characterized by a freedom of perceiving Central Australian landscapes.

Hence, by reference to the results obtained in these studies, a combination of VEP and semi-structured interviews was thought to be worth implementing to enrich the achieved photographic data.

4.4 Data sampling strategy

In accordance with the methodology explained above, this section provides a detailed explanation regarding the procedure of data sampling including the choice of data sampling period, study participants and locations for recruiting the participants. At the end of this chapter, the unexpected issues that the author encountered during data collection and the limitations of the data sources are noted.
4.4.1 Data collection period

Data collection was conducted during the period of February 23rd and March 2nd, 2015 in the central area of Kiruna. Originally, the data sampling was planned to be carried out at the beginning or in the middle of February as it coincides with the school holidays both in Japan and Germany, expecting that additional student-participants could be obtained. However, due to the fact that setting the date with a local cooperator took longer than initially scheduled, the plan had to be rearranged. However, an influence of this rearrangement on the study was inconsequential as there were still a sufficient number of tourists in Kiruna during the data collection period.

4.4.2 Study participants

In order to examine how nationality influences what tourists see and find intriguing in Kiruna, two specific tourist groups were selected: Japanese tourists and German tourists. According to the research conducted by RESURS in 2012, both Japanese and German tourists are among the ten largest tourist groups visiting Kiruna (Figure 4). Japanese tourists are the largest group among Asian tourist groups and German tourists are the second-largest (following Norway) group among European tourists. Although Norwegian tourists are the largest group, tourists from neighboring countries (Nordic countries) were deliberately excluded by reason that some tourists

![Figure 4. 10 largest tourist generating nations for Kiruna (2012). Source: (RESURS)](image-url)
from countries situated geographically close to Sweden may not have the same view upon the case location as ones from further countries. In other words, some visitors from Norway may have similar perspectives as domestic visitors, and this may result in involve influential factors other than nationality and cultural background but also the fact that both countries are connected by land and share the longest national boundary. Hence, considering these potential risks that may compromise the study result and the fact that no major issue regarding selecting German tourists was found, replacing Norwegians with Germans was thought to be favorable. Also, choosing nations that are spatially distant from each other was thought to be more suitable to identify distinct cultural differences than focusing on ones that are geographically situated close to each other in order. Again, this is based on the assumption that countries located close to each other are influenced by each other more than ones distant from each other.

In addition to the selection of nationality, two conditions associated with the selection of participants were set in order to enhance the accuracy of the collected data. Firstly, the participants for the study were limited to tourists visiting Kiruna for leisure purpose. Those visiting for business purpose were excluded as the decision of visit may not have been made by the visitors themselves and thus there may be a gap in the degree of interest towards the destination in comparison with leisure tourists. Secondly, only tourists who have stayed at least one night in Kiruna qualified as study participants in order to ensure that they have spent a certain minimum amount of time to photograph the area.

4.4.3 Participant recruitment

To efficiently find the study candidates, two sites were selected in Kiruna: Kiruna Tourist Office and Camp Ripan. The Tourist Office was thought to be suitable to find both Japanese and German tourists as it is situated in the middle of downtown and has constant flow-through of tourists. Also, Kiruna Folkets Hus, where the Tourist Office is located, is a starting point of some of the activity-based tours (e.g. LKAB mining tour, dog sleigh tour, snowshoes tour) offered by the Tourist Office and local travel agencies, thus, there are often tourists waiting for a guide to pick them up. Camp Ripan is a hotel located approximately 10 minutes away from the central part of the city on foot and is popular especially among visitors who wish to see the Northern Lights as it provides a
wide range of aurora-related tours and services. In addition, Camp Ripan was thought to be a suitable site to recruit Japanese tourists because it is known as ‘the hotel’ where Japanese tourists stay and is heavily promoted by multiple major travel agencies in Japan including JTB, H.I.S and Kinki Nihon Tourist.

Both the Tourist Office and Camp Ripan were contacted in advance via e-mail and a permission from the Tourist Office was successfully obtained. However, a response from Camp Ripan was not obtained, therefore, the author visited the site on the first day of data sampling and a permission was obtained on this occasion.

In total, 25 study participants were obtained (13 Japanese and 12 Germans) and an overview of the participants from each nationality group is presented in Table 1. Approximately ten participants from each nationality group was thought to be adequate by considering the time limit and the time required to analyze collected data in detail. As seen in the table, sex distribution is fairly equal for both nationality groups and multiple couple tourists are obtained from both Japanese and German participants. Although each participant’s age was not identified, majority of Japanese participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant No. (Sex)</th>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
<th>Participant No. (Sex)</th>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Male)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>1 (Female)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Male)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2 (Male)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>3 (Male)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Male)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>4 (Female)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Male)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>5 (Male)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
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<td>6 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
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<td>8 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>8 (Female)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
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<td>Couple</td>
<td>9 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 (Male)</td>
<td>Group (Family)</td>
<td>10 (Male)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Single</td>
<td>11 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (Male)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>12 (Female)</td>
<td>Group (Friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 (Female)</td>
<td>Couple</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were middle-aged, while most German participants were slightly younger and also included multiple students. The clearest difference between Japanese and German participants was that a half of German participants were traveling in a group of friends, while none of Japanese participants were traveling with friends. Additionally, traveling alone in Kiruna seemed not to be common for both nationality groups. Although three of Japanese participants joined a package tour solely, all of them were eventually traveling with other tourists in the same tour group.

4.5 Data collection procedure

4.5.1 Brochures

In order to analyze the images utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a winter tourist destination, the Kiruna Lapland Winter Brochures (2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015) that are available both online and at the Kiruna Tourist Office were collected. The brochures were considered to be appropriate image sources for the study as they are divided by season and thus it can be expected that the images appeared on the winter brochures are purposely selected to promote Kiruna as a winter tourist destination.

4.5.2 Tourist photographs

Both Japanese and German tourists (including single, couple and group tourists) who passed by the Tourist Office and Camp Ripan (the main lobby) during the data collection period were asked to participate in the study. As a means of collecting photographs from tourists, the author held an event in association with aurora photography at each data collection site. As a photographer, the author has written a booklet regarding basic camera operation and with tips for photographing the northern lights in Japanese and English (due to the time restriction on finding a German-speaking translator), and the booklet was given to each study participant as an appreciation for their contribution. In addition, in order to raise attention from tourists from Japan and Germany, A3 size posters with each national flag explaining the event were set up.
When collecting the photographs from the candidates, an USB-card reader, which can be connected to Secure Digital (SD), Micro Secure Digital (MSD), and Compact Flash (CF) cards, was utilized in order to smoothly transfer the images to a laptop computer. Considering the ethical concerns, the research terms were explained to each candidate and they were allowed to choose the images they did not wish to share before transferring the images, however, all the other images were imported to the laptop computer at once in order to avoid spending too much time on choosing the images. Also, collecting all the photographs was thought to be appropriate for the purpose of the study as candidates may have chosen only the images that they thought were expected to be chosen and the other ones that they thought were less important but are practically more important for the study might have been discarded.

4.5.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Based on the assumption that there may be certain variances between Japanese and German tourists that may exist but are not captured by the collected photographs, a brief semi-structured interview was conducted with each candidate at the end of the data collection session with the aim of supplementing the information obtained from the
collected photographs. Each interview took approximately 5 to 10 minutes and all the candidates were asked the same four following questions:

I. Are you visiting Kiruna with a package tour? Or have you planned the trip by yourself?
II. Have you looked at any pictures of Kiruna before visiting? If so, where have you found them?
III. What are the three major reasons of your visit to Kiruna?
IV. What did you find interesting or attractive in Kiruna? It can be anything (e.g. culture, weather, scenery etc). Tell as many things as possible.

All interviews have been recorded and in order not to cause any ethical issues, each candidate was informed in advance that the recorded data would only be utilized for the study purpose and would not be published without permission. Additionally, interviews were conducted in English with German participants and in Japanese with Japanese participants. All German participants had a good command of English, thus language barriers were not an issue in this study. In addition, it must be noted that interviews from Japanese participants were translated in English by the author during the analyzing process.

4.6 Data analysis

The purpose of this section is to provide an explanation of the criteria set to analyze each type of collected data discussed above, namely, brochures, tourist photographs, interviews. The chapter clarifies the process of how data has been analyzed and imported in the study.

4.6.1 Brochures

As explained in the previous chapter, four different editions (2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015) of winter brochures of Kiruna were collected with the purpose of understanding how and what photographs are utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a winter tourist destination, and clarifying its ‘selling points’ from the
perspective of the destination. To do so, an open coding was conducted as a part of the content analysis and the photographs appeared on the brochures are categorized into following groups:

1. The Northern Lights  
2. ICEHOTEL  
3. Mine  
4. Dog / Reindeer Sled  
5. Moose  
6. Snowmobile Ride  
7. Skiing / Snowboarding  
8. Sami  
9. Kiruna Church  
10. Naturescape (mostly consists of natural subjects such as trees, snow and mountains)  
11. Cityscape (captured in the city area of Kiruna and includes artifacts such as buildings and roadways)  
12. Accommodation  
13. Food  
14. Other

This categorization was done based on each subject’s frequency of appearance in the collected brochures. Subjects 1 to 13 are subjects appeared in all the four brochures at least once, and the category ‘Other’ includes subjects that are appeared only in some of the brochures such as ice fishing and snowshoeing.

The correlation between the images from each category and the page number has been investigated. For instance, two photographs of the northern lights appeared on two separate pages (two pages with one photograph each) were counted as two, however, two photographs of the northern lights appeared on the same page were counted as one as multiple small images are sometimes used instead of single larger image. Also, each front cover image was counted as two based on the assumption that these images show what the destination especially wants to highlight. After counting the page number for each category, the result was calculated into percentage in order to make it easier for comparison.

In addition to the photographs, texts, particularly the introductory section, was also included in the analysis to deepen the understanding of how the destination perceives Kiruna and what they think are the attractions of Kiruna. Each brochure has an introductory text briefly introducing Kiruna and what is enticing about it, hence, this section was thought to be an appropriate section to focus on to understand the attractions of Kiruna from the perspective of the destination marketers. To do so,
particular terms and expressions utilized multiple times to describe the characteristics of Kiruna such as ‘north’, ‘extraordinary’ and ‘latitude 68° N’ were interpreted as the way they perceive Kiruna. Also certain expressions that imply their intention to attract tourists (example quotations are presented in the results chapter) were used as hints to understand what destination marketers consider as attractions of Kiruna.

Additionally, certain images with subjects that may not be seen as a tourist attraction, such as ones utilized for specific commercial purpose including advertisements promoting local bus companies or hotels, were excluded from the analysis by reason that these images might not have been put as tourist attractions. However, advertisements for certain subjects and activities such as the ICEHOTEL and dogsledding that are heavily promoted by destination marketers as tourist attractions were included.

4.6.2 Tourist photographs

In order to understand the tourist view in detail, the collected photographs were analyzed per participant. However, since the number of photographs each participant took widely varies (from 11 to 341), the percentage method was applied same as the way the brochure images were analyzed in order to enable a comparison among the
participants. Also, the same categorization of photographic subject was utilized to investigate the photographs under the same criteria as the brochure images. These categories correspond to the photographic subjects that are likely to appear at least once in each brochure as well as in the promotion of Kiruna in general via various media. However, as explained previously, providing an understanding of tourist photographs that do not correspond to these representative images of the destination is one of the aims of this thesis. Therefore, the category ‘other’ was also added in order to take these ‘minor’ photographs into account and demonstrate some examples to provide an insight into the complex tourist views.

In addition, some of the participants were sharing one camera with another participant and thus distinguishing which participant took which photograph was somewhat difficult. Therefore, in this case, the percentage was calculated as the sum of these two participants and the result was applied to both participants.

4.6.3 Interviews

As noted, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant with the aim of supplementing the collected photographic data and providing a better understanding of individual tourist’s view. Hence, same as the tourist photographs, the interviews were analyzed per participant. Responses to each question were summarized per participant in order to investigate a correlation between the results from the interviews and tourist photographs, particularly whether participants’ responses are reflected on their photographs. Firstly, the results from the interviews were listed per participant in itemized form by the author and then summarized by nationality. Responses that were particularly intriguing were utilized as quotations in the thesis texts. In terms of the last question – What did you find interesting or attractive in Kiruna? It can be anything (e.g. culture, weather, scenery etc). Tell as many things as possible – , the responses were coded and categorized by nationality and summarized in the form of a list. Also, the number of participants per category was calculated with the aim of identifying the most common responses from each nationality group (the result is presented in the next chapter in the form of a ranking list).
5. RESULTS

This chapter provides the results obtained from the data analysis in detail and summarizes them in order to present them in an easily comprehensible manner. The chapter begins with presenting the result from the analysis of the brochures. Then the results from the participant photographs and interviews are provided.

5.1 Brochures

Excluding the commercial-purposed images of subjects that are disrelated to tourist attractions, the total number of 226 photographs in the collected four brochures (2011-2012: 49, 2012-2013: 63, 2013-2014: 71, 2014-2015: 43) was analyzed and the result can be seen on Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Subject Category</th>
<th>No. Per Category ( ) = %</th>
<th>Page No. Per Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 – 2012</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>8 (17.0%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>1 (2.1%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>5 (10.6%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dog/Reindeer Sled</td>
<td>8 (17.0%)</td>
<td>6 + 1 (Front Cover)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowmobile Ride</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>5 (10.6%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>3 (6.4%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kiruna Church</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naturescape</td>
<td>11 (23.4%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cityscape</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 – 2013</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2 (3.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>1 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dog/Reindeer Sled</td>
<td>9 (14.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>2 (3.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowmobile Ride</td>
<td>3 (5.0%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>3 (5.0%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>3 (5.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kiruna Church</td>
<td>1 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naturescape</td>
<td>8 (13.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cityscape</td>
<td>1 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>5 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>5 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9 (14.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 – 2014</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>10 (14.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>4 (5.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dog/Reindeer Sled</td>
<td>7 (9.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowmobile Ride</td>
<td>5 (7.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>6 (8.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>2 (2.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kiruna Church</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naturescape</td>
<td>9 (12.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cityscape</td>
<td>5 (7.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>3 (4.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>6 (8.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11 (15.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 – 2015</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ICEHOTEL & 4 (9.3%) & 2 \\
Mine & 1 (2.3%) & 1 \\
Dog/Reindeer Sled & 2 (4.7%) & 2 \\
Sami & 1 (2.3%) & 1 \\
Snowmobile Ride & 2 (4.7%) & 1 \\
Skiing/Snowboarding & 5 (11.6%) & 4 \\
Moose & 0 (0%) & 0 \\
Kiruna Church & 1 (2.3%) & 1 \\
Naturescape & 1 (2.3%) & 1 + 1 (Front Cover) \\
Cityscape & 3 (7.0%) & 5 \\
Accommodation & 5 (11.6%) & 3 \\
Food & 7 (16.3%) & 3 \\
Other & 9 (20.9%) & 7 \\

In terms of the number of photographs by category, the highest was Other (31). A high number of Other was within the scope of assumption as it comprises multiple subjects such as ice fishing, snowshoes and space-related subjects including Esrange Space Center owned by Swedish Space Center (SSC) that promote the image of Kiruna as a space research area. Some of them also appeared on multiple brochures, however, the number was relatively small in comparison with the other subjects. Aside from Other, a category with the highest number was Naturescape (29), then The Northern Lights (28), Dog/Reindeer Sled (26) and Food (20) follow after. Ranking for the rest was: Skiing/Snowboarding (19), Accommodation (13), Snowmobile (12), ICEHOTEL (11), Cityscape (9), Moose (8), Mine (8), Sami (3), Kiruna Church (3).

Both photographs of naturescapes and the Northern Lights were utilized not only for forefront images but also as a background image with texts and other images on it. Photographs of dog/reindeer sleds were used in multiple advertisements for local tour operators offering various winter activities. In terms of images of foods mainly consist of various local cuisines, the size of each image is often smaller than ones with other subjects and multiple images are gathered in one place, showing various kinds of local cuisines. Conversely, the number of photographs of the ICEHOTEL and the mine was relatively low, however, each image is often larger and eye-catching. As for the other
categories, no distinct pattern was found. Sami-related images however, it needs to be mentioned that the actual number of the images is slightly higher as reindeer sledding is also promoted as a ‘sami culture experience’ occasionally and these images were included in the category of Dog/Reindeer Sled in this analysis.

In terms of the page number by category, which is also demonstrated in Table 4 below, the highest was The Northern Lights (27) and Naturescape (22), Dogsled (21) and Other (18) closely follow after. Images of both the Northern Lights and naturescapes are often large and one image is sometimes used for a double-page spread as a background. This can be one of the factors that brought this result on top of the number of the images. The ranking for the other categories was: Skiing/Snowboarding (12), Food (11), Cityscape (10), Snowmobile (9), ICEHOTEL (8), Accommodation (8), Moose (7), Mine (5), Sami (4), Kiruna Church (3). Although the ranking slightly changes, no significant difference was found in comparison with the result of the number of the photographs by category. One minor difference was that Food and Accommodation were placed in a lower rank. This can be explained by the fact that the images of both foods and accommodations are often smaller and gathered on fewer pages.

For the front covers, two images of the Northern Lights, an image of dog sled and naturescape (mountain-landscape) were utilized. This result corresponds with the results
from both the number of photographs and the page numbers by category in that these three categories are the ones with the highest numbers in both rankings. Additionally, as seen in the images below, more texts have been added to the latest edition.

With regard to the introductory texts in each brochure, there were four topics that were included in all the brochures: ‘northness’ (extraordinary place), relocation of the city, the Northern Lights, a wide range of winter activities. All the brochures begin with discussing the unique characteristics of Kiruna that come from its geographic location and how north it is:

“HERE, IN THE NORTHERNMOST part of Swedish Lapland, the contrasts are as beautiful as they are numerous – almost infinite.” (2014 – 2015, page 2)

“There are so many reasons to come and see us up here in the north. The location itself is quite cool. If you follow our latitude, 68° N, round the world, you’ll discover that it runs through uninhabited wilderness on much of the globe – Kiruna has quite an extraordinary geographical location.” (2012 – 2013, 2013 – 2014, page 2)
“The winter season in Kiruna is very long, lasting from November until May!”
(2011 – 2012, page 2)

In addition to the geographical uniqueness, relocation of the city centre was also mentioned in all the brochures as a part of extraordinary characteristics of Kiruna. This relocation of the city itself was also conveyed as a reason for people to visit Kiruna as the following quotation implies:

“As you may know, large parts of Kiruna centre will be relocated in the coming thirty years, so grab the chance to visit the central areas before it is too late!”

The importance of the Northern Lights for Kiruna was also seen in the text. When they discuss tourist attractions in Kiruna, the Northern Lights seem to be the one that is always mentioned in the beginning. Not only as a solo-attraction, but the Northern Lights were also mentioned with other attractions as a combined attraction such as “dog sledding tours under the Northern Lights” (2011 – 2012, page 2) and “a frost nipped landscape and northern lights dancing in the sky above” (2012 – 2013, 2013 – 2014, page 2).

Finally, apart from the Northern Lights, a wide range of winter activities were also mentioned as attractions of Kiruna in all the brochures. Each edition listed the name of activities available and stress the fact that tourists have sufficient activities to enjoy, which can be seen from the texts such as “All kinds of activities go on here” (2014 – 2015, page 2) and “Kiruna offers numerous opportunities to enjoy a beautiful and varied winter season”(2011 – 2012, page 2).

5.2 Tourist photographs

In total, 2482 photographs (Japanese: 831, German: 1651) were collected from 13 Japanese participants and 12 German participants. Table 3 below demonstrates the obtained results that are aggregated by nationality (tables with detailed results per participant can be found in the appendix). The average number of photographs for German tourists was 153 and was approximately one-and-a-half time higher than
### Table 3: The number of participant photographs by category (aggregated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th></th>
<th>German</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>% (Ranking)</td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>% (Ranking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>21.6% (2)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>12.1% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>39.9% (1)</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>24.2% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.7% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog/Reindeer Sled</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.6% (9)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>8.9% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5.3% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowmobile Ride</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.2% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.4% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Church</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.6% (8)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.0% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturescape</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.6% (7)</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>15.8% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cityscape</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>12.7% (3)</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>10.9% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.8% (4)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.5% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.9% (6)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.3% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.9% (5)</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>18.2% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>831</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1651</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Brochure photographs – page number by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page No. (Ranking)</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page No. (Ranking)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>27 (1)</td>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>8 (9)</td>
<td>Kiruna Church</td>
<td>3 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>5 (11)</td>
<td>Naturescape</td>
<td>22 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog/Reindeer Sled</td>
<td>21 (3)</td>
<td>Cityscape</td>
<td>10 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>4 (12)</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>8 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowmobile Ride</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>11 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skiing/Snowboarding</td>
<td>12 (5)</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Japanese average: 98. The highest number for German participants was 341 (participant 1) and the lowest was 49 (participant 3). For Japanese, the highest number was 286
(participant 12 & 13) and the lowest was 11 (participant 10).

In terms of the percentage by category, the highest for Japanese participants was ICEHOTEL (39.9%) and The Northern Lights (21.6%) and Cityscape (12.7%) follow after. Rankings for the rest of the categories are as follows: Accommodation (7.8%), Other (5.9%), Food (3.9%), Naturescape (3.6%), Kiruna Church (2.6%), Dog/Reindeer Sled (1.6%), and the rest of the categories (Mine, Sami, Snowmobile Ride, Skiing/Snowboarding, Moose) have 0%. For German participants, the highest category was ICEHOTEL (24.2%), same as Japanese participants, and Other (18.2%) and Naturescape (15.8%) follow on. The result for the rest was: The Northern Lights (12.1%), Cityscape (10.9%), Dog/Reindeer Sled (8.9%), Sami (5.3%), Mine (2.7%), Kiruna Church (1.0%), Accommodation (0.5%), Skiing/Snowboarding (0.4%), Food (0.3%), Snowmobile Ride (0.2%) and Moose (0.1%).

A variety of different subjects were found in photographs from both Japanese and German that were included in the Other category. These images include subjects such as participants themselves or their companions, locals moving around with a sleigh, snow, snowshoes, trains (Norrlandståg), specific signage in the city (e.g. temperature signs, signage that uses certain terms related to Kiruna such as “Kiruna”, “Lap” and “Aurora”), the city hall, animals (e.g. birds), art objects in the city and local residences.

Example 1: A person with a sleigh
Example 2: Norrlandståg

(German participant 11)
(Japanese participant 12)
5.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant and each interview took approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Same as the results obtained from the tourist photographs, certain differences in perceiving Kiruna were found between Japanese and German participants. This section presents the results of the interviews and summarizes them per question.

As for the first question, it was found that most Japanese participants were visiting Kiruna in a group with a package tour offered by Japanese tour operators (11 participants out of 13). During the data collection period, there were three groups of Japanese tourists with different tour operators, and only two Japanese tourists (a couple) who planned their trip by themselves were found. Conversely, most German tourists planned their trip by themselves (11 participants out of 12). German participants 11 and 12 explained that they think planning a trip by themselves is nicer as there is no constraint by pre-scheduled plans and they can do whatever they want whenever they want (Interview, March 2, 2015).

More than half of study participants from both nationality groups (German: 8 out of 12 / Japanese: 7 out 13) looked at certain images of Kiruna before they set off. German participants looked at these images of Kiruna via various sources such as Facebook (pictures taken and uploaded by other people who had previously visited Kiruna), online image search, Google Earth & Street View, travel agency websites and brochures, an
article in a newspaper. The sources for Japanese participants were only guidebooks, TV programs and specific websites of places they knew they were going to visit (e.g. ICEHOTEL, Camp Ripan).

In this manner, the results revealed that both nationality groups have their own image sources and the brochures utilized in this study were not commonly used. However, both what images of Kiruna they looked at and where they found these images before visiting Kiruna were clarified through the interviews, which can be seen in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Participant No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Source Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Camp Ripan</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>Online, Travel Agency’s Brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Camp Ripan</td>
<td>Online, TV</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Camp Ripan</td>
<td>Online, TV</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>City Relocation</td>
<td>Online, Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
<td>Online, Guidebook</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dog sledding,</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>ICEHOTEL</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>The Northern Lights</td>
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Online image search was the most common image source for both Japanese and Germans and most participants who mentioned the ICEHOTEL and Camp Ripan visited their official websites. In addition, almost all the participants listed in Table 5 also photographed the subjects they looked at before visiting Kiruna, which to some extent support Urry’s hermeneutic circle. German participants 6 and 7 were the only participants who did not photograph the subject they mentioned (the Northern Lights), however, this can be explained by the fact that they did not see it during their stay due to unfavorable weather condition. There were also two German participants who were excluded from the table by reason that the images they looked at were difficult to identify as a specific
subject (e.g. satellite images and street views on Google Map).

In terms of the three major purposes of visit, seeing the Northern Lights was the most common purpose for both Japanese and German participants. However, for German participants, experiencing ‘real’ winter in remote wilderness was as important as seeing the Northern Lights, while the primary purpose of visit for Japanese participants were highly concentrated on seeing the Northern Lights. Also, visiting the ICEHOTEL and experiencing dog sledding were common purposes for both groups.

The other purposes of visit for German participants were because of someone else including friends and relatives visiting Kiruna during the same period, learning about ‘northern culture’ including the life of Sami, seeing animals (e.g. moose, reindeer, husky), entering the Arctic Circle, getting out of city life, accessibility and reasonable price of the trip. For Japanese participants, the other purposes of visit include taking Norrlandståg – a train operated by Statens Järnvägars (SJ) –, staying at Camp Ripan, eating reindeer meat, photographing the region, talking to locals, due to a recommendation by friends and because of the fact that Kiruna was one of the destinations included in a package tour.

With regard to the last question – What did you find interesting or attractive in Kiruna? It can be anything (e.g. culture, weather, scenery etc). Tell as many things as possible –, various answers including both positive and negative ones were obtained from each group (note: the Northern Lights, ICEHOTEL and dog sledding were excluded from the lists below as they were frequently mentioned by both groups as a positive memory):

**Japanese:**

**Positive (No. = Ranking by the number of participants)**

1. Comfortable hotel  
   Local residences (use of color, roof)  
   Nature  
   Dry snow
2. Suitable environment to see the Northern Lights  
   Crossing national boundaries is very easy (unlike Japan)
3. Relocation of the city  
   Mine  
   Friendly people  
   Decoration on the houses  
   Sami handicraft (for souvenirs)
4. Compactly organized city (easy to walk around)  
   Sleigh people use to get around
People exercising outside when there is much snow  Beautiful cityscape
People speak English well

**Negative**

1. Lack in the variation of food
2. Lack in the variation of souvenirs
   Fee-charged toilet and shopping cart (due to the fact that they are free in Japan)

**Germans:**

**Positive (No. = Ranking by the number of participants)**

1. A lot of snow
2. Nature / wilderness / remoteness
   Learning about Sami culture, how they live
   Relocation of the city
3. Mine (mine tour, knowing how important it is for the local community)
4. Kiruna Church
5. Snowmobile
   Coldness
6. Different people (in comparison to people living in southern Sweden)
7. Polar night (dark all the time)
   Sauna
   Getting to know other tourists
   Exhibition at the City Hall
   Snowshoes
   Information available in multiple languages
   Sleigh people use to get around
   Mountains
   Ice slide in the city center

**Negative**

1. Lack of information regarding the relocation of the city
   Ugly cityscape
2. Mine dominating the region, exploiting the nature, making the landscape artificial
   High general cost
As seen from the interview results, certain differences were found between Japanese and German participants. Firstly, taking a package tour was the most common way of visiting Kiruna for the Japanese participants, while it was the opposite for the Germans. Also the results from the last two questions revealed that Germans were intrigued by nature-based attractions and ‘authentic’ winter experience (e.g. snow, coldness, mountains) while Japanese showed interests in artificial attractions (e.g. hotels, foods, facilities to see the Northern Lights). In other words, Japanese tourists seem to care more about how well-equipped / well-developed the destination is for tourism purposes, while Germans prefer things to remain untouched.

In addition, Japanese participants’ desire to see the Northern Lights was stronger than for the Germans. When they were asked about the major purposes of their visit, most of them instantly answered “the Northern Lights” first and then paused for a moment before coming up with the next. Also for some of the Japanese participants, seeing the Northern Lights was a long-cherished dream. For instance, participant 2 explained:

“Seeing the Northern Lights has been my dream since I was young. And I’m turning 65 this year and thought this would be the last chance.” (Japanese Participant 2, Interview, February 24th, 2015)

Similarly, some Japanese participants re-stressed that their primary purpose of visit was to see the Northern Lights at the end of the interview, while the opposite response was received from some of the German participants:

“Seeing the Northern Lights would be nice, but for me, it was not the first priority.” (German Participant 8, Interview, February 27th, 2015)

A variance between Japanese and German participants was also found in their visual perception of the cityscape. As seen above, many Japanese participants made positive comments regarding the appearance of the city such as the use of colours for the buildings, roofs and decorations on local residences. However, German participants had relatively negative views and expressed the cityscape of Kiruna with adjectives such as ‘ugly’ and ‘boring’.
There were also a few distinct tendencies particular to each group. What were particular to German participants were that they like snow, learning ‘how’ and exploring/being active. Firstly, what Germans found attractive or impressive in Kiruna was neither the Northern Lights nor the ICEHOTEL, but the amount of snow, which was not mentioned even once by Japanese participants.

“We came up with the title ‘winter wonderland’ which this place reminded us. I think we have got less winter less snow at home in Germany than how it used to be 20 years ago. Also it reminds me a bit of my childhood, where I could run on the snow.” (German Participant 5, Interview, February 26th, 2015)

“Snow snow snow snow, very impressive because everywhere snow.” (German Participant 6, Interview, February 2015)
As can be seen from the examples displayed above, German participants’ interest in the snow was also well-captured in their photographs.

Also, in comparison with Japanese participants, Germans seemed to enjoy knowing ‘how’. For instance, German participants 2 and 3 mentioned that it was interesting to know how important LKAB is for the local community (Interview, February 24th, 2015) and German participant 11 noted that she wanted to know how people in northern Sweden including Sami live as she has only seen the life in Stockholm (Interview, March 2nd, 2015). In contrast to Germans, Japanese participants were focusing more on seeing what they have previously planned to see rather than understanding the background or the meaning of the subject.

Similarly, German participants were more active in general and liked to explore which can be seen also from the collected photographs. The percentage of naturescape-photographs for Germans was 15.8%, which was approximately four times higher than the percentage for Japanese (3.6%). This suggests that German tourists are likely to explore more around the area instead of staying within the city area in comparison to Japanese. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the percentage of cityscape-photographs between Germans (12.1%) and Japanese (12.7%). However, photographs collected from German participants included not only shots taken within the city area but also ones taken from the hills around the city, while the photographs collected from Japanese participants were mostly taken around the central area of the city. Activeness of German participants also became evident through the interviews, for example, German participant 4 explained:

“We like activities we can do by ourselves. We don’t like to sit all the time and something is passing by.” (Interview, February 25th, 2015)

Meanwhile, what was particular to Japanese participants was their interest in accommodation, food and Norrlandståg. Firstly, their interest in accommodation was obvious and became evident both through the interviews and collected photographs. In the interviews, more than half of them mentioned hotels either as a part of the highlight of their stay or the purpose of their visit in Kiruna. In particular, Camp Ripan was mentioned frequently.
“Camp Ripan is a well-known hotel and it was also featured on the TV program we watched. That’s the reason we wanted to stay at Camp Ripan.” (Japanese Participant 3 and 4, Interview, February 25, 2015)

“The cottage-styled room was good.” (Japanese Participant 6) “Yes, it was good that the room was large because of the cottage-styled room.” (Japanese Participant 7) (Interview, February 25th, 2015)

Likewise, interest in food was particular to Japanese participants. While food was not mentioned by any of the German participants, many Japanese showed their interest toward food through the interviews as well as in the photographs. For instance, Japanese participant 5 mentioned eating reindeer meat as one of the purposes of visit:

“I can’t say it loud but I wanted to taste reindeer meat. I tried a reindeer stew last night and it was very tasty, so I have made a reservation again for tonight.” (Interview, February 25th, 2015)

Also, Japanese participant 1 and 10 explained that they were somewhat disappointed by the lack in variation of foods:

“In terms of meals, I didn’t really enjoy it and it seems like the others felt the same way. Like, salmon and moose. Always similar kind of meals and I felt like
'oh again’.” (Participant 1, Interview, February 24th, 2015)

“Here, people eat a lot of fish. Also ham and... It’s always ham. Also sandwiches, it’s always like ham, ham & cheese or salami. It’s the same.” (Participant 10, Interview, February 25th, 2015)

Example 1: Reindeer stew
(Japanese Participant 5)

Example 2: Fish sauté
(Japanese Participant 6, 7)

Another interesting result particular to Japanese participants was their interest towards Norrlandståg. It was mentioned by three participants during the interview as one of major purposes of their visit and the train was also photographed by multiple Japanese participants. Norrlandståg was not mentioned at all neither by any of German tourists nor by any of the collected brochures. This finding can be explained by the fact that Norrlandståg is promoted as “歐州最北の列車 (the northern most railway train in Europe)” by major travel agencies, tour operators and in “地球の歩き方 (chikyu no arukikata)” which is the most prevalent guidebook in Japan. Also, traveling by train is often romanticized in Japan and there are various travel-related TV programs exclusively focusing on railroad trips. In particular, “世界の車窓から (sekai no shasou kara)”, which has been broadcasted on every weekday since 1987 and shows railroad trips in different countries, is extremely well-known in Japan. In addition, according to “日本鉄道テーマ検定実行委員会 (Executive Committee of Japanese Themed-railway Test)”, there are approximately two million railway enthusiasts in
Japan and there are a number of these people who take different levels of themed-railway tests that are held by this committee and has a different specific theme each time, to become a ‘railway master’. Hence, this Japanese enthusiasm for railway could also be a factor partly influencing this study finding.

Norrlandståg featured tour offered by Finn Tour. Source: http://www.nordic.co.jp/news/tour/fp0417/
Retrieved on 27/04/2015

Retrieved on 10/06/2015
6. DISCUSSION

The purposes of this chapter is to provide a further discussion of the results presented above and consider their meaning in relation to the research questions.

6.1 Images of Kiruna conveyed by destination marketers and how tourists perceived Kiruna in practice

As presented in the results chapter, the study demonstrated what types of photographs were utilized in the brochures, interpreted what the destination regards as the attractions of Kiruna, and revealed how tourists captured Kiruna in practice. Comparing the photographs appeared on the brochures and the ones collected from both participant groups, most subjects captured by the participants were also shown in the brochures, thus, it can be said the brochures covered demanded tourist attractions fairly well. However, there were also a few incongruieties found in terms of the proportion between the images utilized in the brochures and participant photographs. For instance, despite the fact that ICEHOTEL was the most heavily photographed subject, the number of the pages used for ICEHOTEL in each brochure was relatively low. Similarly, although it became evident that Norrlandståg was seen as an attraction by some of the Japanese tourists, no images and descriptions of it was found in the brochures. Additionally, the result demonstrated that there are also other ‘minor’ subjects that are rarely promoted as tourist attractions but still attract tourists.

Taking a look at the result from the collected tourist photographs by nationality, the range of subjects they captured widely varied between Japanese and Germans. The photographs from Japanese participants covered 9 photographic subject categories out of 14, and Germans covered almost all the categories (13 out of 14) apart from skiing/snowboarding. This result also shows that German participants explored Kiruna more extensively and actively than Japanese participants did.

The study also found that the introductory texts in all the collected brochures highlighted the unique and extraordinary characteristics of Kiruna in relation with its geographical location and the extreme ‘northerness’ as its attractions. And the results particularly from the interviews showed that German participants enjoyed this facet of Kiruna more than Japanese participants did. This was an intriguing finding considering
the fact that Germany is geographically situated much closer to Sweden and still has somewhat similar sceneries as well as climatic environment as Sweden (e.g. similar seasons, snow in winter, etc) in comparison with most parts of Japan. Although few Japanese participants made general comments regarding the climate in Kiruna, they did not seem to consider Kiruna as unique nor extraordinary in a positive sense.

In addition, there was an inconsistency between how the relocation of the city promoted through the brochures and what was offered in reality. The relocation of the city was mentioned in all the collected brochures as a part of the uniqueness of Kiruna, however, it seemed that what the destination offered did not satisfy some of the participants, particularly German participants. While the destination was successful in gaining tourist interests to an extent, the lack of information in particular resulted in creating tourists’ dissatisfaction.

“I thought the transformation of the city was interesting but I was little bit disappointed by the information in the mining museum. I thought it would be bigger.” (German Participant 9, Interview, February 27th, 2015)

This to some extent supports one of the findings from Beerli and Martin (2004) that transmitting of destination images should be based on reality. When these images do not reflect the reality, the destination will not succeed in satisfying tourists, which eventually leads to the formation of negative influences on the destination image that are transmitted by tourists’ word of mouth communication.

6.2 Influences of nationality and cultural background

The results also showed that most participants from both nationality groups who had looked at images of Kiruna before they set off found these images online or through various other media in their country of origin instead of the brochures offered by the destination. This indicates that each nationality group has its own image sources, although certain sources, the Internet in particular, are likely to be shared by multiple nationality groups.

Internet search including photo sharing on social media was the most common image source for both nationality groups and this supports the work conducted by Lo et
al. (2011) who claim the importance of online photographic communication in contemporary tourism due to the rapid advance in technology. Conversely, the argument by Andereck (2005) that brochures are still the most commonly utilized tourism information source regardless of technological development may in need of re-verification in the context of tourism today.

Hence, from the results, it became evident that taking the nationality of tourists into account and understanding how and where they find images of the destination before they set off is crucial to comprehend the tourists’ preconceptions and expectations of the destination accurately.

In addition, the study found certain influences of nationality and cultural background on both tourists’ purpose of visit and the way they see Kiruna as a tourist destination. German tourists are likely to visit Kiruna to take a break from their everyday life, enjoy the ‘real winter’ with a thick layer of snow and the vastness of the nature. “Untouchedness” was also an important matter for many of German participants, which became apparent particularly through the interviews.

“Yesterday we had a long snowshoe walk but it was untouched nature and at that time of the day, nobody has been there before and it was just untouched snow and that was really nice.” (German Participant 5, Interview, February 26th, 2015)

Additionally, most German participants did not minutely plan what to do and when to do in advance and found what were available by exploring after arriving. Conversely, most Japanese participants were visiting Kiruna specifically to see the Northern Lights and the other attractions seemed to be “additional” for them. Also, eating and comfort of the stay were significant matters for many. In contrast to the Germans, Japanese participants seemed to care more about facilities, particularly hotels, rather than the untouchedness of the place, and how to make the stay comfortable at the same time as fulfilling their aims that they had planned in advance.

By the fact that Japanese and German participants visited Kiruna with different purposes and motivations, their behaviors during the stay also varied by necessity. For instance, while many German tourists were actively seeking activities to fill their spare time and go outside of the city area to enjoy the authentic winter experience, many Japanese tourists were looking for souvenirs around the city area or staying at the hotel,
relaxing and waiting for the guided Northern Lights tour to begin.

Additionally, as discussed above, how Japanese and German participants perceived the cityscape of Kiruna was also different. While Japanese participants mostly had positive perceptions of the appearance of the city, German participants had relatively negative perceptions, which was not clearly reflected on their photographs but became evident through the interviews. This result adds a new perspective to the findings by Bonn, Dai, Joseph (2005) and Köker, Maden and Topsümer (2012) that tourists from the regions that are geographically close to the destination have relatively positive perception of the destination. Their findings may be valid when considering tourists’ perceptions such as worry regarding personal safety and the level of convenience of life (e.g. availability of transportation system and signage in multiple languages) as people from the regions geographically closer to the destination often know better or have experienced a similar environment as the destination. However, depending on the context, being in an unusual or exotic environment can also result in forming positive perceptions. Taking the cityscape of Kiruna as an example, German participants had relatively negative perceptions despite the fact that Germany is located geographically closer to Sweden than Japan. Possible reasons that the cityscape of Kiruna did not impress German participants could be that it was not special and somewhat boring for them as similar cityscapes can also be found in other parts of Europe, or it was not impressive enough for those who reside in cities with spectacular medieval architectures. However, it was perceived positively by many of the Japanese participants as the cityscape, particularly the local residences, was different from how it looks in Japan. Similarly, seeing the Northern Lights was one of the major purposes of visit for both Japanese and German tourists and this is because of the fact that the Northern Lights can rarely be seen in these countries, meaning that it is an exotic experience for them. For locals however, it may not be as impressive as for tourists as they are simply able to see it regularly. In this manner, being familiar with the environment of the destination may reduce a sense of anxiety or excitement. Hence, relationships between geographical distance and tourists’ perception of the destination may vary depending on what factor to focus on.

However, the findings of this study generally support the previous works noted earlier in that cultural background and nationality have impacts on tourists’ motivation, behavior and perception of the destination. In particular, the result from the behavior of
Japanese participants in Kiruna demonstrated that the finding from Pizam and Sussmann (1995), who investigated behavioral variances among French, Italian, American and Japanese tourists in London, is still valid after two decades.

Another finding of the study regarding the influence of cultural background and nationality was that there seemed to be two types of ‘seeing’: insensible seeing (1) and sensible seeing (2). Insensible seeing is simply having a subject within the field of vision. Within this seeing, the subject entered in the field of vision is seen but may not be recognized by reason that it has no factor that stimulates the interest of the viewer. For instance, passing scenery and people that do not retain in the viewer’s memory can be categorized into subjects seen by this type of seeing. However, there are sometimes certain scenery or people that do remain in the viewer’s memory and these are the subjects seen by sensible seeing. This seeing also starts with having a certain subject in the field of vision, however, it then involves a gaze with an intention. In this case, the subject in the field of vision has a factor that stimulates the viewer’s interest and once the viewer intentionally looks at the subject, insensible seeing becomes sensible seeing. And cultural background and nationality function as a filter of tourists’ eyes and influence on determining what subject is insensible or sensible for them. Superimposing this on the case of Japanese and German participants, both Japanese and Germans certainly saw the snow in Kiruna, however, the result suggests that Japanese saw the snow by insensible seeing and Germans saw it by sensible seeing. Although Japanese participants still possibly remember the fact that there was snow in Kiruna, German tourists may remember the snow in more detail such as the condition and the texture of the snow as the quotation from German participant 5 noted above implies. Thus, it can be said that there are certain subjects that are only ‘visible’ for a specific nationality group (s). For Japanese tourists, it may not be possible to see Kiruna in the same way German participants did, and the same holds for the way German tourists see Kiruna unless they become aware of the perspective from other nationality groups and attempt to see Kiruna in their way.

In order to understand what is seen by sensible seeing by each nationality group, photography can be an effective tool. When photographing, people mostly have a certain reason or intention behind and they do not release the shutter randomly unless they plan to do so. This means that it can be said that the subjects appeared on the photographs are in most cases seen by sensible seeing and ones seen by insensible
seeing are automatically excluded. In practice, the photographs collected from Japanese and German participants revealed what seems to be visible or invisible for each nationality group and this may support the existence of these two ‘seeings’.

Hence, in addition to tourists’ motivation, behavior and perception of the destination, the results obtained also proved that cultural background and nationality have an impact on what tourists actually see in the destination.

6.3 In relation to Urry’s hermeneutic circle

With regard to Urry’s concept of the hermeneutic circle, the major purpose of applying the concept to the study was to provide an insight into its extensive characteristic by taking ‘nationality’ and ‘culture’ into consideration, and integrate the obtained results with the concept. As was demonstrated above, certain variances were found between the photographs taken by Japanese and German participants, while they also had a few photographic subjects in common. The subjects that were particular to Japanese participants were hotels, food and Norrlandståg, and the subjects that were particularly common among German participants were the snow and naturescape. Hence, these findings support the hypothesis noted earlier that each nationality group has its own hermeneutic circle rather than one shared circle that all the tourists follow. And, it partially intersects where both nationality groups capture the same subjects that are attractive for both groups such as the Northern Lights and the ICEHOTEL in the case of Kiruna. Additionally, the results found that where the participants saw the images of Kiruna before they set off also varied by nationality and both groups utilized various media in their country, at the same time as partially sharing certain sources with the other nationality group including the Internet. Also, some of the participants from both nationality groups had no preconception of Kiruna before visiting. Therefore, taking these findings into account, the model presented in Figure 5 is thought to mirror the hermeneutic circle more accurately.

It must be noted that both nationality groups may have the same images in the stage of Image Projection and Image Perception; however, this still occurs within each nationality boundary and does not mean that they share the same image projection and perception unless they interact and influence each other.
Although examining the legitimacy of the hermeneutic circle was not the major purpose of the study, the result both supports and disapproves of the concept to an extent. To begin with, two findings from the results support the concept. Firstly, despite the fact that there were certain photographic subjects that were captured by only one of the groups, or captured by both groups but photographed only a few times by one of the groups, there were also subjects that were frequently photographed by both groups and were also promoted by the destination fairly well such as the Northern Lights and the ICEHOTEL. If we consider these subjects as what the destination or travel agencies indicate tourists to photograph as Urry describes, the concept can be considered valid to some extent. Secondly, some of participants from both nationality groups explained that the photographs shared by others who had previously visited Kiruna motivated them to make the trip. This also supports Urry’s argument to some extent that tourists photograph the destination and demonstrate that they have really been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen before they set off.

Conversely, as Larsen (2006) criticizes that Urry’s hermeneutic circle may not be valid for certain tourist groups such as family tourists, the concept may also become invalid or less valid depending on tourists’ purpose of visit. For example, German participant 8 mentioned travelling with friends as one of three major purposes of her visit.
visit (Interview, February 27th, 2015) and photographs of friends account for 37% of the total photographs (43 out of 115). In this manner, German participant 8 had a clear purpose of visit, travelling with friends, that has no association with the attractions of Kiruna and it is apparent that this purpose also influenced the photographs she took. In this case, applying Urry’s concept may not be appropriate.

In addition, the results obtained through the study generally support MacCannell’s (2001) argument based on Foucault (1975) that although there are structured itineraries laid down in advance by those who will benefit from them, freedom of choice for human subject in determining how to interpret the diverse discourses and these strategically structured arrangements still remains. Including the brochures utilized in this study, Kiruna is promoted through various media and by travel agencies, and they provide strategically structured images of Kiruna that indicate the way to interpret Kiruna for prospective tourists. However, the findings of this study show that although both Japanese and German participants captured the images of Kiruna that are commonly promoted through various media (e.g. the Northern Lights, ICEHOTEL, dog sledding), they also captured subjects that are rarely promoted as tourist attractions of Kiruna (e.g. local residences, people using a sleigh to get around, temperature signs). Additionally, even with the same subject, how it is interpreted seems to vary among individuals, as some Germans participants perceived the mining positively while some did not. This indicates that what tourists see as well as how to interpret the destination is determined by each tourist. The results also indicate that this freedom of choice in what to see and how to interpret the destination is influenced by each tourist’s nationality and cultural background.

Hence, as Urry describes, images of the destination that tourists see via various media before they set off seem to have an impact on what tourists see in the destination to some extent. However, as Garlick (2002) and MacCannell (2001) claim, these images may not monopolize the tourist gaze and are one of multiple factors that influence the tourist gaze including nationality and cultural background.
7. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the research objectives in relation to the main findings obtained through the study and summarize the achievements of this thesis. Then, theoretical and practical contributions of this study are presented.

This study was conducted in pursuit of three objectives. The first objective was to investigate how and what kind of photographs are utilized in the promotion of Kiruna as a tourist destination and what tourists in practice see and find intriguing in Kiruna. As a means of understanding how Kiruna is photographically promoted as a winter destination, the images appeared on the winter-season brochures offered by the destination were categorized by subject and analyzed and compared with the photographs collected by the study participants. The results showed that, overall, the images utilized in the brochures corresponded to the photographs taken by the study participants fairly well, however, there were also particular subjects that were photographed by multiple participants but were rarely included in any of the brochures (e.g. local residences, people using a sleigh to get around, Norrlandståg).

The second objective was to find out if there is any difference in the way tourists from Japan and Germany perceive Kiruna. When taking nationality into account, certain differences were found between Japanese and Germans in the subjects, as well as the range of subjects they photographed. As for the range of the subjects, German participants covered a wider range of subjects than Japanese participants did. There were also certain subjects that had been photographed only or more commonly by one nationality group. The collected photographs demonstrated that German participants took approximately four times as many photographs of naturescape and multiple Japanese participants took photographs of hotels, food and Norrlandståg that were captured by almost no German participants. Additionally, with the aim of enriching the photographic data as well as uncovering information that may not be obtained from the collected photographs, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. Through the interviews, it was found that almost all Japanese participants visited Kiruna with a package tour offered by Japanese tour operators and almost all German participants planned the trip by themselves. The result also indicated that Japanese participants have a stronger interest in eating and hotel facilities in comparison with
German participants, and German participants showed a strong interest in the snow and experiencing the ‘real winter’ in untouched nature. Seeing the Northern Lights was one of the major purposes for both Japanese and Germans, however, it was only a part of the purposes of visit for many of German participants, while most Japanese participants were visiting Kiruna specifically to see the Northern Lights. The influence of cultural background and nationality was also discussed in relation to two types of seeing, namely “insensible seeing” and “sensible seeing”. This distinguishes simply having a subject in the field of vision unconsciously (insensible seeing) from intentionally looking at a subject (sensible seeing), and what is seen by the sensible seeing is partly influenced by cultural background and the nationality of the viewer.

The third objective of the study was to integrate the achieved findings with Urry’s concept of the hermeneutic circle. As the results from the collected photographs demonstrated, there were certain differences between Japanese and Germans in the subjects they photographed, aside a few subjects that were frequently photographed by both groups. And through the interviews, it was found that each nationality group has its own sources for the images of Kiruna that they saw before they set off. Thus, considering these findings, the author concludes that it is more accurate to assume that each nationality group has its own hermeneutic circle rather than one shared circle that all the tourists follow, and it intersects with that of another nationality group at the point where both groups capture the same subjects that are attractive for both groups.

In addition, although examining the legitimacy of Urry’s hermeneutic circle was not the major purpose of the study, the results indicated both legitimacies and limitations of the concept. As noted above, while certain differences were found between Japanese and Germans in what they captured, there were also particular subjects that both groups commonly photographed particularly the Northern Lights and ICEHOTEL. These are attractions heavily promoted in both Japan and Germany and were also frequently photographed by both participant groups. Therefore, if considering this phenomenon as re-capturing of the images indicated by travel agencies, this result supports the concept to some extent. Also, it became evident by the interviews that some of the participants saw images of Kiruna that were taken by their acquaintances who previously visited Kiruna. This also supports Urry’s assertion that people bring back their version of the images that they had seen before they set off, and utilize them to prove that they have really been there. Conversely, one of the participants mentioned
that traveling with friends as one of the major purposes of visit, which has no
association with choosing Kiruna as the destination, and photographs taken by this
participant were highly affected by this purpose. Hence, application of the concept of
hermeneutic circle may not be appropriate depending on the purpose of visit.

The results of the study also provided certain contributions to previous studies
noted earlier and referential clues for those who play a role in promoting a tourist
destination including Kiruna. To the field of tourism and photography research, this
thesis provided an understanding of not only tourists’ re-capturing of representative
images of Kiruna offered by the destination, but also how different tourists’
photographs are in comparison with these promotional images. Some examples of
photographs that were taken by the study participants and rarely appeared on the
brochures were given, and what each study participant actually looked at in Kiruna,
hypothetically by sensible seeing, was demonstrated by analyzing the photographs they
took.

The influence of cultural background and nationality on what tourists see and find
intriguing in the destination was also what tended to be neglected within this field of
tourism research. Hence, in order to fill this gap, photographs taken by Japanese and
German tourists in Kiruna were compared to find out the differences existing between
these nationality groups. To provide a better understanding of what each nationality
group found intriguing during their stay in Kiruna, a semi-structure interview was
conducted by each participant and the results showed clear distinctions between
Japanese and Germans. The lack of studies that provide empirical data from case studies
was also pointed as a gap within this study field; thus, this is also expected to be a part
of the contributions this study can provide.

The study also provided a new insight into the extensive characteristic of Urry’s
hermeneutic circle by integrating the perspective of culture and nationality with the
concept. Although how the hermeneutic circle varies by cultural background and
nationality of tourists was not a significant concern of his original argument, the
findings of this study may contribute in providing different angles to approach and
develop the concept further.

The empirical results obtained through the study also provide a few referential
clues for the use of photographs when promoting a destination for prospective tourists.
As this study revealed, the way tourists see a destination differ by nationality, however,
when looking at brochures offered in multiple languages, it is often that the contents including photographs utilized are exactly the same for every language and the brochures of Kiruna utilized in the study were also one example. In many cases, this may be a result of reducing extra costs, however, making slight changes in the selection of photographs depending on the target nationality (s) may not cause a major financial burden. Thus, considering the potential benefit, it may still be worthy to try. To provide a specific example of Kiruna, multiple Japanese participants photographed Norrlandståg and some of them also mentioned traveling with Norrlandståg as one of the major purposes of visit, particularly due to the fact that Norrlandståg is known as the northernmost railway train in Europe. However, despite this fact, no images of this particular train were used in the brochures nor on the destination’s website. Similarly, the fact that it is the northernmost railway train in Europe was not mentioned. Considering the fact that Japanese are the largest tourist group visiting Kiruna from Asia, utilizing a few images of Norrlandståg in the promotion of Kiruna may be appropriate to capture the attention of this market.
8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

This chapter aims at clarifying limitations of the study findings presented above and providing suggestions for further studies.

Firstly, data collection was conducted within a limited period of time (8 days) and almost at the end of the peak period for winter tourism. Thus, the results might have been different to an extent if the data had been collected during the peak period; yet, the difference is not expected to be substantial.

With some participants, the data was collected before the last day of their stay mainly due to their time availability for participating in the study. Hence, the photographs that were taken after the data collection session were missed, which may lead to certain limitations of data validity.

Some of the Japanese participants were visiting Kiruna with the same package tour and this might have influenced their behavior during the stay. However, since they all had decent amount of time to act freely as well, the influence from this factor is not expected to be substantial. Also, as noted earlier, most Japanese participants were visiting Kiruna with a package tour offered by Japanese tour operators, therefore, the result may also differ to some degree when more private tourists are included. However, this at the same time indicates that there are less private tourists from Japan in comparison with group tourists.

In addition, almost no skiing/snowboarding photographs were collected this time, and none of the participants mentioned skiing/snowboarding as a purpose of visit. This may be due to the fact that the data collection was conducted only in the city area of Kiruna and thus, larger number of skiing/snowboarding tourists could be found when the data collection is conducted also the outside of city area (e.g. in mountain area around Abisko).

Collected photographs were analyzed and categorized based on the author’s subjective interpretation. In most cases, identifying what was the main subject of the photographs was fairly easy, however, there were also cases where the subject was somewhat ambiguous. In this case, categorization of the subject was done based on the author’s speculation, hence, this may also add a certain limitation the interpretation of the data.
For further study, more case studies with different nationalities in different travel contexts need to be conducted in order to verify the validity of the findings presented through this thesis in different situations. This is also significant to provide a better understanding of the tourist gaze in general.

In this study, the age of study participants was not taken into consideration as the major focus of the study was on culture and nationality. However, depending on the age, the condition of traveling may vary as according to time availability, financial situation and also physical condition. This at the same time may influence certain matters including their behaviors, the choice of activities and where to stay in the destination. Therefore, to obtain a holistic understanding of the tourist gaze, investigating the influence of age is thought to be crucial.

Additionally, in order to analyze the photographic circulation between the destination and the study participants in detail, the source for the promotional images of Kiruna in this study was specified to the brochures offered by the destination. However, as was discussed above, one destination can be promoted through a variety of different sources (e.g. guidebooks, newspaper articles, TV programs) and in many different countries. Hence, to fully understand how Kiruna, or any other destination, is promoted globally as a tourist destination, extensive investigations on these multiple promotional image sources are needed.

Finally, this thesis provided a new insight to the understanding of the tourist gaze by reference to the concept of the hermeneutic circle proposed by Urry, adding perspectives from culture and nationality, and also by looking at tourist photographs in detail. However, the findings of this study are still merely one facet of the complex tourist gaze. Therefore, further investigation with various angles of approaches will continuously be needed and thus I here share this task with each reader of this thesis.
REFERENCE


VIII


**Websites**


ICEHOTEL. Retrieved from: [http://www.icehotel.com](http://www.icehotel.com)


### The number of photographs by category – Japanese [x = Participant No. (Sex)]

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