

Department of Social and Educational Sciences

**Zahra Ghodrati**

## **Master's Thesis**

# **Your Photo, My Destination!**

A qualitative semiotic analysis of tourist user-generated content from the west of Norway on Instagram.

Digital Communication and Culture

**2022**

# Acknowledgment

When I was in the Stryn area in the summer of 2021, little did I know that this place was not only filling me with joy in the summer but also was going to be a part of my master thesis. Completing this project was both interesting and challenging and I would like to show my gratitude to those who made this possible.

Thanks to my supervisor, Gunhild Lien, for believing in me and supporting me in my thesis journey. Her constructive feedback throughout the whole process kept me motivated to achieve my goal.

I also want to thank my dear friend, Camilla, for mentoring me throughout my master's study and for her kind and encouraging support.

Special thanks to my beloved husband, Ali, who was always a good listener to my thoughts and reflections. His support, patience, and consideration made writing a thesis beside a full-time job possible.

Thanks to all my family, friends, and colleagues for their support and love.

Last but not least thanks to my cat who always accompanied me while I was writing my thesis, which was very comforting.

# Abstract

Instagram is a popular platform for sharing visual content. Instagram users share content about various topics such as daily life, food, their interests, and their vacation. Users usually follow aesthetic norms which are defined by their community which can refer to as Instagramism. Users' practices and activities on social media, including Instagram, changes constantly and rapidly, and therefore there is a constant need for research in this field. This thesis investigates the tourist photographs published from three specific tourist destinations in the western part of Norway by users on the social media platform Instagram. This thesis helps us understand how tourist photographs from the western part of Norway shared on Instagram influence other Instagram users' practices and also why. This research is based on a qualitative content analysis method and is done by doing a semiotic analysis of 120 tourist photographs on Instagram. The analysis is based on Barthes's theory of semiotics and the dual concept of studium and punctum. The key findings of this research are that elements of photos that receive attention gradually enter the communication language that is practiced in UGC tied to these destinations. Moreover, users who visit the area create a similar presentation of the location and themselves as this is expected and helps them gain and maintain social and cultural capital. Furthermore, users emphasize their Norwegian identity in these photos.

# Sammendrag

Instagram er en populær plattform for deling av visuelt innhold. Instagram-brukere deler innhold om ulike emner som dagligliv, mat, deres interesser og ferieturer. Brukere følger vanligvis estetiske normer som er definert av Instagram-brukere i fellesskap som kan referere til som Instagramisme. Brukernes praksis og aktiviteter på sosiale medier, inkludert Instagram, endres konstant og raskt, og derfor er det et konstant behov for forskning på dette feltet. Denne oppgaven undersøker turistbilder publisert fra tre spesifikke turistmål på Vestlandet av brukere på den sosiale medieplattformen Instagram. Denne masteroppgaven hjelper oss å forstå hvordan turistbilder fra Vestlandet som deles på Instagram påvirker andre Instagram-brukeres praksis og også hvorfor. Denne forskningen er basert på en kvalitativ innholdsanalysemetode og gjennomføres ved å gjøre en semiotisk analyse av 120 turistbilder på Instagram. Analysen er basert på Barthes sin semiotikkteori og dobbeltbegrepet studium og punctum. Nøkkelfunnene i denne forskningen er at elementer av virale bilder gradvis kommer inn i kommunikasjonsspråket som praktiseres i UGC knyttet til disse steder. Dessuten skaper brukere som besøker området en lignende presentasjon av stedet og seg selv slik dette forventes av dem, og dette hjelper dem med å få og opprettholde sosial og kulturell kapital. Videre fremhever brukerne sin norske identitet i disse bildene.

# Table of Content

<b>Your Photo, My Destination!</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acknowledgment</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Sammendrag</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Content</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Introducing the project	9
1.2 Instagram	12
<b>2. Theoretical and Contextual Background</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Photography's Role in The Representation of Norway	14
2.2 Photography as a Medium of Communication	16
2.3 Tourist Photography and Social Media	18
2.4 Social Capital on Social Media	21
2.5 Social Media and Participation	22
2.5.1 Instagram Vernacular	25
2.5.2 Instagramism and Algorithmic taste	26
<b>3. Methodology and Data Selection</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Hermeneutics, The Circle of Interpretations	32
3.2 Photo Analysis Method	33
3.3 Data Selection Method	36
3.4 Ethical Considerations	42
<b>4. Analysis</b>	<b>43</b>
4.1 Rakssetra	44
4.1.1 The White Dress	44
4.1.2 The Honor of Being Physically Active	54
4.2 Pier at the Loenvatn feriesenter	60
4.2.1 A Dip In The Lake	60
4.2.2 On the Pier	64

4.3 The Bødal Pier	71
<b>5. Discussion</b>	<b>78</b>
5.1 Recreating Viral Photos	78
5.2 Emphasizing the Location and The Place	82
5.3 Norwegian Identity and Culture	85
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>89</b>
6.1 Limitations and Future Studies	90
<b>7. References</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>8. Instagram References</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>98</b>

# 1. Introduction

*“Unlike the mass media before it, social media is fundamentally a participative medium.”*  
(Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 55)

We use different social media platforms daily to communicate with others. Digital communication and new media have become a natural and inseparable part of our lives. According to professor Hansen, what makes new media, in this context social media, so popular is its “sheer connectivity”. “The simple capacity to reach myriad like-minded users, that is afforded by that act of uploading content.” (Hansen, 2010, p. 180). One of the bold characteristics of internet-based media is participation, as the medium is reciprocal. (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 57; Munar, 2011, p. 292). In other words, social media is working as a window to our lives. Digital photo publishing networks such as Instagram are platforms for self-presentation and users can present themselves through photographs and other content that they share. (Rettberg, 2014, p. 2). Users of social media are not only consumers but they are also producing content and are therefore both users and producers, Burns uses the term “producers” to refer to this characteristic. (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 59)

Because of the shift from consumer to being both consumer and producer at the same time, “our online experience increasingly involves methods of actively providing information about what we are doing, or what we think of something.” (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 55). The type of content we produce and share on social media can vary depending on the platform. It could be in the form of text, voice, music, photos, videos, or multimodal. In media studies, the content that users produce and share on social media is commonly known as user-generated content (UGC). (Munar, 2011, p.292). We share what we like and what interests we have most of the time, usually things that we do in our free time or on holiday. In fact, tourists use Web 2.0 tools to search for information and share their content online. Content that tourists share has a great influence on “destination awareness and image creation”. (Munar, 2011, p.291).

The quality of photographs and sharing of such photos are also connected to the smartphone being among other things a camera, as well as a hub for social media. Taking photos and publishing photos are done on the same device. Mobile phones having cameras make the everyday an object of photography as the camera is always available. Mobile cameras can easily connect to the outside world, and therefore receiving and consuming photos and videos and producing and sharing them has become faster, cheaper, and easier than two decades ago. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 35; Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 62). High-speed internet, interactive social media platforms, and everyone having a smartphone with a high-quality camera have led to visual media dominating social media. (Li & Xie, 2020, p.1). It is with this backdrop that this thesis places itself.

Content production, distribution, and reception is a popular research area in the humanities and social sciences and different aspects of it have been studied in the past years. (Munar, 2011; Smith et al. 2012; Jalali & Papatla, 2016; Manovich, 2017; Skinner, 2018; Taylor, 2020; Davcik, et al., 2021; & Kumar et al., 2021 ). Of particular relevance to this thesis is professor of media studies, Lev Manovich's work. Manovich has done a study on visual culture on 15 million Instagram photos shared between 2013-2015 in 31 countries and had the aesthetic aspect of UGC in focus. However, as he mentions, "Instagram keeps modifying and expanding its platform, and its users also change their tactics". (Manovich, 2017, p. 4). He also mentions that users in different cultures and countries have different conventions and therefore cultural analysis can not be generalized. (Manovich, 2017, 137). These conventions which are known as "platform vernacular" (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257), will be explained more in the conceptual background chapter. What Manovich states means that there are still things to uncover and therefore, a study of more recent photos shared on Instagram can be advantageous.



## 1.1 Introducing the project

When I was planning my summer vacation in the Stryn area in 2021, I came across a photo on Instagram that caught my attention. The photo (figure 1.) is taken by Kjersti Kvamme. She guides climbing tours and is active on Instagram and posts photos of outdoor activities taken by herself. (Kjersti Kvamme, Instagram) The photo is taken by a small wooden pier at Lovatnet lake, august 2019. The pier has become so popular that it is visited by many people after the photo went viral and got shared numerous times by many professional travel inspiration accounts, such as @norge (NORWAY NO, 2021, May 21) and many personal accounts on Instagram. During summer vacation 2020 many people traveled to Lovatnet, of those, many even asked Kjersti how to capture similar photos. (Sunde, 2020). The main reason I am mentioning this exact photo from Kjersti is that although the pier is in nice and beautiful surroundings, it did not get any attention before this photo went viral. The turquoise lake, mountains in the background, and mainly the two ladies in the flying pose changed the story of this place.



Figure 1: Screenshot of the photo shared by Kjersti Kvamme on

Instagram.

I was making a travelog on Instagram at the time and I was using hashtags in my stories and under my posts. I got curious after each hashtag that I used and scrolled down the posts which were marked with the same hashtag. It was very interesting to observe that the photos were very much alike. One reason for this is as Rettberg writes, there is a decided and programmed aesthetic that cameras on our phones follow and we all have the same filters on social media. (Rettberg, 2019, p. 1). Having access to the same filters on Instagram results in a homogeneous aesthetics in the photographs which are in contrast to the opportunity that photography gives us to be creative. (Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 63). Instagramism, which is the leading platform vernacular on Instagram, is another reason why photographs look like each other. Manovich

defines Instagramism as the recognizable Instagram aesthetic and atmosphere which are visually perfect. (Manovich, 2017, p.81). The other reason I suggest is how we get influenced by the photos we see from others, it could be professional photographers, hobby content creators, influencers, or other users like us.

This thesis is therefore based on an empirical study of destination-related UGC from the west part of Norway and studies their aesthetic aspects and their relations to each other. This project contributes to a better knowledge of why tourist photos often look very similar on Instagram and what is the purpose of these photos. While the similarity of course is found in the objects and destinations that are photographed, it is more in the details of how it is presented and why that is of interest in this study. This can tell us something about the underlying processes and patterns of UGC production, distribution, and consumption. In other words, why do so many of the photos taken of Rakssetra, a hiking destination in the west of Norway, look so similar aesthetically? This study helps to understand the importance of tourist UGC for social media users and also helps us get a better understanding of travelers' content creation patterns.

More specifically, I am doing a case study on users' tourist photographs on Instagram from the western part of Norway. These are photographs from three destinations, two of the destinations are beside the Loenvatnet lake and one is a hike destination named Rakssetra. I used hashtags #loen, #loenvatnet, and #rakssetra to observe and find photos from the same destinations. The reason I chose these locations is that after the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the number of Norwegians traveling inside Norway increased (Henriksen, 2022) and these destinations are among popular destinations for the summer holidays and users publish many photos from these destinations. This can have a mutual effect on users publishing the photos and also gives enough data for the case study. Another factor behind choosing these destinations is the natural landscape characteristics of Norway, such as fjords, mountains, valleys, lakes, and old cabins which are present in these destinations and are an important element in Norwegian culture and identity. In addition, my own visit to the area helped me to have a better perspective of these locations. I have observed thousands of photos but I have selected forty photos from each of

these destinations as data for my project. The goal of this project is to analyze the photographs from an aesthetical point of view. And the research question is;

How and why do tourist photographs from the western part of Norway shared on Instagram influence other Instagram users' practices?

The focus of this project is photos that users share on Instagram; therefore, there will be a short introduction to what Instagram is and what functions it has.

## 1.2 Instagram

Instagram is a social networking service that allows users to share photos and videos. In 2019 Instagram had 500 million active users which has doubled in the past two years, meaning Instagram has more than 1 billion active users in 2021. (Dean, 2021). What is quite interesting about Instagram is that all different elements of photo culture which were separate are gathered in a single platform. “Camera, photo paper, a darkroom, exhibition spaces such as galleries, and publication venues such as magazines exist together in one hand-held device. This single platform medium is a remarkable development in the history of modern media.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 11). Since the early 20th-century people have always shared photos in groups such as camera clubs, that defined norms for how things should look like and be photographed (Schwartz, 1986, p. 180; Griffin, 1987, p. 386; Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 186), so historically this is rather a continuation of an established practice.

Users can publish photos and videos in posts and stories. Posts are permanent content, but content shared in history lasts only for 24 hours. There have been different new features added to the service during the past years, such as IGTV which allows users to publish longer videos and Reels which is a feature very similar to Tik Tok. There are a variety of filters and effects on the platform that users can use to edit their content. Content that gets shared on Instagram is very repetitive and has many similarities. There are some genres that are particularly popular on Instagram to make content about such as food, interior design, travel, and nature photos as well

as everyday photos of influencers and famous people. The popular photos are so similar in their aesthetics that they are recognizable and could be categorized as good Instagram photos. (Rettberg, 2019, p. 10). The Instagram aesthetic is a phrase that is being used to refer to the characteristics of these “good” photos. In other words, Rettberg is referring to what Manovich calls Instagramism.

Users are not only able to share their content but also can interact with other users’ photos and videos. It can be liking, commenting, reacting to a story, or even adding a post to one’s favorites. According to Instagram’s algorithms, these interactions can have a huge impact on what kind of content would be displayed on users' timelines. (Mosseri, 2022). More detail about Instagram practices and platform vernacular, user-generated content, participatory culture, and other relevant theoretical and contextual backgrounds for this thesis will be presented in the next chapter.

## 2. Theoretical and Contextual Background

To answer the research question of this thesis, I will make a qualitative analysis of Instagram photos from Loenvatn Feriesenter, Rakssetra, and the pier in Bødal. All of these places are located in the western part of Norway with the landscape unique to the area. I will return to the data in more detail in the methodology and data selection, and analysis chapters. In this chapter, I am going to present the theoretical and contextual background that is necessary for the completion of this project. The theoretical framework will start with a brief historical starting point about how photography helped establish the identical image in Norway which in my opinion is one of the important elements in order to understand the connotations of the photographs studied for this thesis. Then I move to more recent media studies and research on visual communication and social media. The theoretical framework is mainly constructed on participatory culture and Instagramism.

### 2.1 Photography's Role in The Representation of Norway

Norway was a part of the union with Denmark for about four hundred years, finally, in 1814 Norway became an independent nation, having its own king and constitution. Being a new nation made Norway seek to present a new image of the country. Photography which was a new visual medium at the time was a great help to a new nation looking for a new identity. (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 81). What could this new identity be?

Herder, the German philosopher, acknowledges that culture and identity are something that changes all the time and each era has its own spirit. At the same time, there is an element that is more stable to make a national character and that's atmospheric and geographical conditions. Each culture and country has some characteristics that make it different from other nations and make a base for the national identity and national history. Norway's national identity is mainly tied to the landscape, mountains, and fjords, and understanding people depends on knowing and understanding this natural situation. (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 81). In this situation, it was natural

that the nation wished to have more visits from other countries, which could also be a way to introduce Norway to the world.

Tourism in Norway was greatly affected by photography. Mostly landscape, mountains, valleys, and fjords were subjects of these photos, but sometimes elements of cities or historical symbols were photographed as tourism pictures as well. (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 82). Photographic representations of Norway at the time played a huge role in forming a mental picture of Norway for Norwegians and their national identity. (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 116).

This mental picture is so strong, even today, that even for me as a non-Norwegian who has lived in Norway for just four years has unconsciously made a connection and have added a new piece of the puzzle to my identity. On my previous trip to Iran, as a usual habit, I visited the “Saadabad Palace Fine Art Museum” in Tehran. When entering the large exhibition hall, I just pointed to a painting from the entrance door and told my sister “that is a Norwegian landscape.” I was right. It was a painting called “Summer episode” (figure 2) painted by Hans Dahl. It was then that I felt like visiting “home” at home.



Figure 2: A snap I have taken of the Summer episode by Dahl,

Saadabad Palace Fine Art Museum, Tehran.

It is interesting to see how this national identity is practiced today digitally on Instagram which I will discuss more in the analysis and discussion section. The ease of taking photos and distributing photographic images in the 2.0 era is what will be discussed in the next section.

## 2.2 Photography as a Medium of Communication

The form and purpose of taking photos have changed hugely since photography was created in 1839. Taking photographs is not anymore only a hobby and it is an integrated part of modern lives with phone cameras always available so taking photos in the web 2.0 era is not only a form of documentation but also a form of communication. The Web 2.0 era, which refers to the first and second decades of the twenty-first century, is the age in which the internet became much more open, we see users collaborating and a new participatory culture is introduced. We can also add user-generated content to this era, users create content in the forms of text, audio, images, GIFs, and other kinds and share it on social media and participatory websites which could be liked, commented or shared by others. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. xvii).

Photography has always been a communicative and social practice and this is even more signified when it comes to mobile photography in the age of web 2.0. Integration of internet connection to mobile cameras keeps users of smartphones being visually online all the time as they can easily use the camera and share the results in a matter of seconds. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 61; Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 64). Mobile cameras are used to take photographs for different purposes, among which can refer to capturing memories, communicating and aiding relationships, and presenting and expressing ourselves. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 4).

Photobloggers share everyday photos on different platforms such as websites and social media platforms like Instagram. These photos are photos of mundane and banal events of everyday life and do not require a special occasion. (Cohen, 2005, p. 887). These photos are taken because the photographer provides the opportunity by having an eye for what happens in the everyday



actions such as going for a walk or appreciating a moment. Having the phone camera at hand, having enough storage, and having internet access all encourage photobloggers to take photos. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 19).

The combination of Web 2.0, smartphones and user-generated content has made a visual communication revolution. We are surrounded by images all the time, taking snaps, sending photos to friends and family and receiving from them, and sharing photographs on social media. These photos are not necessarily sent to be archived but are mostly means of communication. “When pictures become a visual language conveyed through a communication medium, the value of individual pictures decreases while the general significance of visual communication increases.” (Van Dijck, 2008, p. 62). I believe this is a very true statement, photographs are not a rare phenomenon and there are also endless numbers of photos that do not have a significant value, but as technology develops and as we become inhabitants of a society that gets more and more digital and visual, visual communication and photos, in general, have great importance.

Taking photos with mobile phones being free of charge, easy, and accessible can easily result in taking many more pictures than people used to take, more than we have time to proceed or even have a look at. Storage is no longer a huge issue as phones have much more internal storage than a decade ago. Phone galleries can be full of everyday life photos, photos of gatherings and trips, selfies, and photos that are taken for the sake of documentation or instead of taking notes. While analog photos come to life after they have been developed, digital photos' life might start after they make their way from folders to social media or networking sites. This is even more obvious when it comes to tourist photography and the immediate sharing of the photos. “Holding a smartphone camera has now become part of everyday experience, even part of our existence, and it is quite rare nowadays to travel without a camera or not to have a smartphone camera ready at one’s side throughout the journey.” (Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 65).

Some mobile cameras even tell us when we have the most harmonious composition and when to take the picture. In addition, editing tools that social media platforms and various applications

provide are free and easy to use by users which results in publishing photographs that seem to be more professional. (Manovich, 2017, p. 59). Flusser claims that taking photos is like throwing dice and is no longer a creative process. (Flusser, 2000, p. 69). I would interpret this as he is emphasizing that the act of taking a photograph has become very easy, but this does not necessarily mean that the outcome is extraordinary, and taking creative photos are even more difficult than earlier due to the all-presence of photography.

## 2.3 Tourist Photography and Social Media

Travelers have always been interested in sharing their experiences with others. In older days and with analog cameras, they were impatiently waiting to receive their print photographs to show to their family and friends. But now mobile phones and the internet have eased sharing of travel experiences. (Skinner, 2018, p. 10). Tourist photography had a special place in the middle-class family photo albums and now in modern days, tourist photography is a popular genre on social media. In fact “97% of millennials say they share pictures while traveling, especially on Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, and Snapchat”. (Skinner, 2018, p. 15). Millennials refer to people who are born between 1982 and 2002.

Being at a specific location is one of the key elements of tourist photography, sometimes there are even emotional geographical connections involved. Some photos are symbols of precious memories decorating walls or social media. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 25). On the other hand, Kuhn believes, these positive memories could also be the dark side of photographs, years after they are taken. They remind us of our dead family members, moments that no longer exist, or even our bodies aging, (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 31) or that the vacation or the summer holiday is over.

“It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along. Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun

was had.” (Sontag, 2005, p. 6). This was written in 1977 when cameras were analog and sharing photos was not as easy as today. Today this is therefore even more central, as the networked possibilities and the sharing culture of social media is so dominant. As mentioned before, mobile photography makes snapping pictures much faster as it is very easy and available all the time. This immediacy is even more practical when people are on vacation. In the age of web 2.0 smartphones can almost be considered an extension of the human body. Tourists taking photos with their phones can also help them not be popped out as tourists in the crowd. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 36).

The ‘now’ is also very noticeable in tourist photography. Instead of sending postcards after the trip, or posting the photos on Facebook after coming back home and accessing the internet and writing I was here, travelers can just post their pictures right away. (Molz, 2012, p. 66) ‘I was here’ would no longer be a popular text if the photograph is not old enough. The slogan has changed to ‘I am here now’. “The near-real-time speed at which images can be shared by the photographer in the act of shooting and simultaneously viewed by other users allows the viewers to ‘be’ in the same place as the photographer, sharing what he or she is experiencing at the moment.” (Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 62). Going live on Instagram is also proving how important it is for the users to report what they are experiencing at the actual moment. Spending time on taking the perfect Instagram shot does however have an impact on both the quality and quantity of one’s holiday experiences. Masdari & Hosseini claim that “the act of sharing the experience and the pleasure of the present moment seems to carry greater worth than the pleasure of the experience itself.” (2020, p.66). Sontag refers to this phenomenon as “a way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it—by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. (Sontag, 2005, p. 6).

The development of the internet and accessing different websites and social media platforms has even changed the way travelers plan their trips. Social media has also influenced how travelers search for information. (Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169). They often use their network to get information about a place others have been to and also want to contribute to the community that

they are a part of. Sharing content such as photos and other information related to travelers' destinations and experiences can develop their social capital and show a correlation with other users. (Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169).

Munar's research shows that photos shared by tourists on social networking sites have a greater extent of reality and less manipulation compared to destination management organizations. Tourist-created content has an impressive impact on "destination image formation". (Munar, 2011, p. 297). What Munar refers to as a destination image is what picture people have in their mind of the destination. Travelers rely on each other's content and make decisions based on them. One of the important factors in choosing the destination for the younger generation could be the Instagrammability of the place. In other words, users want to be able to take photos that are worthy of Instagram on vacation. Research also finds that UGC plays a huge role in choosing the travel destination. (Taylor, 2020, p. 64; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169). By publishing travel content on social media users contribute to "co-create" a product. This product is the destination image that users make for other users. Although destination identity could be the same, destination image which is the perception that travelers have of a place can change and this is greatly dependent on UGC. (Skinner, 2018, p. 13).

We are always recreating our image through social interaction including on social media by posting photographic images and selfies as well as other forms of self-expression. According to Davcik et al. "creation of content is associated with users' willingness to express themselves, contributing to the establishment of their social self". (2021, p. 16). While we are away from everyday life and on a trip we have even a bigger chance to create a better image and reinforce ourselves to the community in which we are involved. This contributes to a social comparison and others who are seeing the new representation, begin to think of recreating a better image of themselves to maintain their social capital. (Taylor, 2020, p 65; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169). And a never-ending cycle of self-representation occurs as a result. In the next paragraphs, we have a look at different forms of capital, especially social capital, as taking and sharing photos can be seen as an attempt to gain social capital as well.

## 2.4 Social Capital on Social Media

Capital has different forms, and Bourdieu divides them into different categories. Economical capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economical capital is the most obvious form of capital and is dependent on the financial status of the person. Cultural capital can be represented in three forms, *embodied* state which can be what you like, and your taste of music, for example, *objectified* such as cultural objects that you own for example paintings and books, and *institutionalized* state such as when you are linked to a university. Cultural capital depends on many factors such as social class but one could obtain cultural capital in a form of self-improvement. Embodied culture is not something that could be obtained in a short time or transferred by gifts as it is more of making some practices into habits. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 17-18).

Social capital depends on individuals' networks, communities, and groups that they are a member of. It could be being a member of a family, having collaboration with a research group, or being a member of a club. Social capital can never be measured without considering other forms of capital. However, being a member of a community can lead to having more economic, prestigious, and symbolic capital as well. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 21-22).

Being on social media results in having a wider and more varied network and leads to more social capital. (Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 119 ; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169 ). Developing both cultural and social capital on social media seems to be very popular. Studies show that “users engage with social media in search of gratifications associated with social, functional and emotional values”. (Davicik et al. 2021, p. 4). Manovich also mentions that Instagram users use their skills on the platform to have pleasant experiences, meet people with the same interest, maintain their social relations, or gain social prestige. Cultural capital is also created as a consequence of using these skills and gaining a higher number of followers or respect in the community. (Manovich, 2017, p.117). This means that the act of taking photos of the same place and concentrating on the same motives can be a way of trying to achieve more social and cultural

capital. Therefore, considering social and cultural capital as a factor while analyzing UGC can make the analysis more precise and meaningful.

## 2.5 Social Media and Participation

*“The medium is the message”* (Hansen, 2010, p. 175)

What McLuhan conveys with this sentence is that the medium has a great influence on how the message is perceived. In the 21-century different social media platforms give us the affordance to choose our medium according to the effect we will have on our audiences. The internet and social media which were considered a virtual world are now tightly woven into our lives (Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 60), both private and professional, that it is not referred to as virtual life. It is real, we live on social media. “New media in general can be thought of as consisting of two distinct layers—the “cultural layer” and the “computer layer.””(Hansen, 2010, 179). “For if “new media” today names a range of contemporary technical, aesthetic, and social developments, what holds them all together is not a common technical basis so much as an effort to interface the technicist logic of computation with human experience.” (Hansen, 2010, p. 184).

Thus, technology is already so prominent in us that we may be able to promote that in many ways it is becoming a "cyborg"? According to Haraway (1991), a cyborg is a connection between humans and technology, where it can be difficult to distinguish between the human and the technological characteristics in relation to the person's behavior and thinking. So these algorithmic thoughts of social media and living and presenting us on social media are almost always with us. Our account on Instagram is a part of us, and what we do there are our real actions, even if it is not our body that does it directly. We do things to share them online, we work online and earn money on social media. A window from our private life that is opened to the world. Some choose to have curtains to control what to see and what to show, others have

blinds and just sneak peek at what happens outside without letting others see anything from them.

As I referred to earlier, one of the main characteristics of web 2.0 and social media is participation and user-generated content. Users can participate by even just viewing the content. It is a two-way platform letting each user be the audience and the producer of content at the same time. (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 55) What distinguishes new media from mass media is their function and connectivity. According to Hansen, “many-to-many” connectivity and user-generated content offered by the Internet have facilitated this change of focus. Production is bolder than storage in new media and therefore archiving individual experiences has been replaced by “collective presence”. (Hansen, 2010, p.180).

What is the definition of User-generated content? As Davcik et al. mentioned, “a generally-accepted definition of UGC is still lacking and as a consequence different conceptualizations co-exist.” (Davcik et al. 2021, p. 6). In Munar’s definition of user-generated content, there is a focus on the users being creators and her definition for UGC is, digitalized information that users upload on the internet. (2011, p.292). However, Smith et al. define UGC as what users produce while they are social and is a means of communication to express their individuality online. (2012, p.102). Smith et al.’s definition is more relevant in the context of this thesis as publishing photos on social media is a way of self-presentation (Rettberg, 2014, p. 2).

There are of course different practices among different generations and individuals, but users of social media have the opportunity to produce content and share it, either privately or publicly with a larger audience. Munar refers to a specific type of user-generated content and that is tourist-created content (TCC), (Munar, 2011, p.297) content that refers to the content users create while they are on vacation. TCC is a form of communication for the users and allows the tourist to express and reflect on how they experienced their travel, but creating TCC has also an effect on how tourists experience it. (Munar, 2011, p. 297). As TCC is not a very established term in media studies I prefer to use UGC in this thesis.

All our followers or our friends on a social media platform might not be the potential audience of all content that we share. In my case and on a personal level, the content could be targeted at my family and friends in Iran, my friends in Norway, colleagues, or my friends all over the world. Usually what we share on social media does not contain very important information and this is very common in our conversations and small talk in everyday life. What we usually talk about is socializing and having that information does not matter but it is the act of socializing that is very important, it is like social grooming and gives us social bands and connections. Sharing photos, liking, and commenting on social media could be the equivalent of small talk in the real world. (Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 53-54). Also as different social media platforms give the opportunity to the users to share their experiences, their content, and their opinion then UGC can be considered electronic word-of-mouth. (Skinner, 2018, p. 14).

As social beings, we all want to be liked and valued by others and therefore on social media, we try to show our best side to get the most acceptance from our surroundings. You might say that this makes a kind of fake and “too good to be true” image of people on social media. But if we think about everyday life and real-world communications we observe that it is not common to talk about your toughest experience and weakest points to those with whom you don’t have a deep relationship. Even if someone asked how it is going we usually do not answer with a very negative answer although we might be feeling very down. (Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 64).

Visual communication has always been very important in human history, from paintings on stone to billboards on the highways. It is also very important and effective with huge authority on social media and especially on Instagram, we often remember the visual content better than the text or who or which account posted it. (Li & Xie, 2020, p.16). “Instagram may be considered a new expression of the ancient form of human communication embodied in painting, now redefined within a virtual framework and augmented with the capability to distribute messages on a global scale.” (Masdari & Hosseini, 2020, p. 62).



By being on social media we usually choose how we want to present ourselves and our photos have a great role in this process. (Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 67). There is no real or fake self, how we present ourselves depends on the audience and the people with whom we are communicating. (Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 72). Photos on social media are visual stories of users who communicate to other users and the world. “Visual UGC is one form of personal visual influence of consumers on other consumers.” (Jalali & Papatla, 2016, p. 377).

This consumption form does not necessarily need to be a product, it could be referred to as the audience of any social media account. Users could be consumers of visual content, such as tourist photographs, or even as Skinner mentions they could be consumers of destinations (2018, p. 13). Photos on Instagram could receive more or less attention because of aesthetic values, picture composition and complexity, originality, and color composition. (Jalali & Papatla, 2016, p. 355). As this thesis is covering UGC on Instagram, it is necessary to be aware of the vernacular and practices that are specifically common to the platform. In the next section, I am going to explain this in more detail.

### 2.5.1 Instagram Vernacular

Each social media has a specific method of communication which is defined by users' practices and affordances of the platform. “These communicational practices are assumed as ‘platform vernacular’ or ‘genre of communication’.” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257). In other words “Platform vernaculars are shared (but not static) conventions and grammars of communication, which emerge from the ongoing interactions between platforms and users.” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257). These conventions can change due to changes in practices or new affordances that get introduced on various platforms.

Sharing content on Instagram, editing tools, and tagging photos are some of the affordances which are central on Instagram. Instagram vernacular is how these affordances are practiced on the platform. (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 258). Another important affordance of Instagram is that the

application is fiercely set up on mobile phones which has a huge effect on how the platform is used and is a part of everyday practices for its users. (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 258). While Instagram platform vernacular is the general pattern of use on Instagram, when I use vernaculars in plural or vernacular dialect I am referring to sub-versions of the main vernacular.

When the application was first launched, the focus was on inspiring creativity and the simplicity of sharing on-the-go photographs in real-time. (Manovich, 2017, p. 11). Publishing photos right after taking them is so socially acceptable and even expected that publishing a photograph that you have already taken might in some instances confuse the followers. Some users, therefore, choose to mark their older photograph as TB standing for a “throwback”. There is even a trend for posting older or nostalgic photos on Thursdays with a TBT hashtag on Instagram. Some pictures that have not made their way to social media may be referred to as expired by their photographers meaning it is late to publish them and they might not be worthy of a TB. Here it is important to mention the efficacy of the moment which makes more and more sense as the phones and internet speed and accessibility get better. Using hashtags is Instagram platform vernacular and using #TB or #TBT is an example of vernacular dialect.

### 2.5.2 Instagramism and Algorithmic taste

Manovich claims that seeing aesthetically perfect photos on Instagram might let us think that a medium that was supposed to be on the go in real-time has turned into its opposite, nothing is in real-time, and photos are carefully composed and staged. Everything gets arranged, even when the photo is going to be shared and which tags it needs to have. But also his study which was large scale shows that Instagram’s vision lives on. (Manovich, 2017, p. 21-22). I do not completely agree with this, as the quality of on-the-go photographs and the affordances of Instagram and phone cameras has changed hugely since Manovich has done his analysis. But on the other hand, It might be more precise to say that Instagram users do not plan their Instagram posts, but they plan their everyday activities and practices in order to produce their Instagram content. I will come back to this in the discussion chapter.

Manovich's Instagram analysis "suggests that the subjects and styles of photographs are strongly influenced by social, cultural, and aesthetic values of a given location or demographic." (Manovich, 2017, p. 26). Meaning that the definition of "ordinary" photos can vary from location to location. The same applies to the definition of a good photo and it depends on the aesthetic norms of different communities. Algorithms are also an important factor in considering a photo a good photo. This includes both algorithms built-in phone cameras and also algorithms on social media. (Rettberg, 2019, p. 2). These algorithms are meant to promote photos that make people buy even more cameras or be on Instagram for a longer period. (Rettberg, 2019, p. 5). These algorithms in the cameras also result in more professional photos shared on Instagram.

There are usually three major types of photos on Instagram which are casual photos, professional photos, and designed photos. I have seen tendencies to these categories in the photographs that I analyzed for this study so, in the following paragraphs, I will explain what is referred to by each phototype.

Casual photos are used as means of documentation and communication. Users who share casual photographs are not necessarily just sharing their best photos. They might get happy with receiving many likes or some followers but they are not looking for getting thousands of followers and their main goal is to communicate with their friends and family. (Manovich, 2017, p. 31). The main goal of casual photos is to document an experience or portray a person or a group of people. Other popular subjects of casual photos can be popular subjects that emerged with Instagram, such as food, coffee, flowers, the ground, and the photographer's shoes. (Manovich, 2017, p. 52-53).

Casual photos are very similar and Manovich describes this beautifully by saying that these users twist the advice that renowned photographer Alexei Brodovitch gave to his students "If you see an image you have ever seen before, do not click the shutter." (Manovich, 2017, p. 53). Casual photos seem to be the fan of "If your image looks like many images you have seen before, capture it." (Manovich, 2017, p. 53) What I have observed in the tourist photos selected for this

project was that there are many photographs that are quite similar. We will get back to this in the discussion chapter.

Professional photos are photographs that are following photography rules which were well-established before the emergence of Instagram, for example rule of third, balancing the composition, and defining the subject in the frame. “Professional aesthetic is about deep perspective, big open spaces, and infinite details in every part of a photo.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 68). On the other hand, the designed aesthetic “is about close-ups, shallow spaces, big areas in one color, and most or all of the photos with little or no details.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 69). Designed photos are arranged and edited in a way to follow a specific style. Usually, Instagramers who publish designed photos take care of not only each individual photo style but also arrange their feed too.

In his book *Instagram and Contemporary Images*, Manovich refers to a movement called Instagramism. “Instagramism offers its own vision of the world and its visual language. But unlike modernist art movements, Instagramism is shaped by millions of authors connected by, and participating in, Instagram and other social networks.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 115). According to Manovich Instagramism is constructing sets and photos that are atmospheric and picture-perfect; in other words, Instagramism refers to the aesthetics of designed photos on Instagram. (Manovich, 2017, p. 81). The question might be how to achieve these designed and atmospheric photos? This is generally done by opposing the popular and normal aesthetics and breaking these conventions. (Manovich, 2017, p. 122).

Users either learn Instagramism by observing and engaging with such content on Instagram or search actively for advice from other Instagramers. There are countless numbers of articles, blogs, and videos on how to take and edit the perfect Instagram photo. (Manovich, 2017, p. 133). In my analysis and discussion, I will specifically focus on how tourist photos are a type of Instagramism and a particular variation of the Instagram vernacular. Instagramism is one of the leading platform vernacular which is practiced widely as it refers to the style of photos on Instagram that is achieved by filters and tools which are common for all users of Instagram.

Examples of Instagramism photographs with the same vernaculars are seen on the Instagram account @Insta\_repeat (Insta Repeat, Instagram) (figure 3). In this account, the account owner collects twelve very similar pictures of the same vernacular and puts them together as a collage, and shares them on her account. Each post is picturing a vernacular, but they are usually photos of nature and landscape with usually a person in the photo. These photos have Instagramism and are considered good Instagram photos. In the bio of the page, it is written: “Deja Vu Vibes” (Insta Repeat, Instagram), which refers to the extreme similarity of these photographs and that seeing these photographs make the viewer feel that they have seen them before.

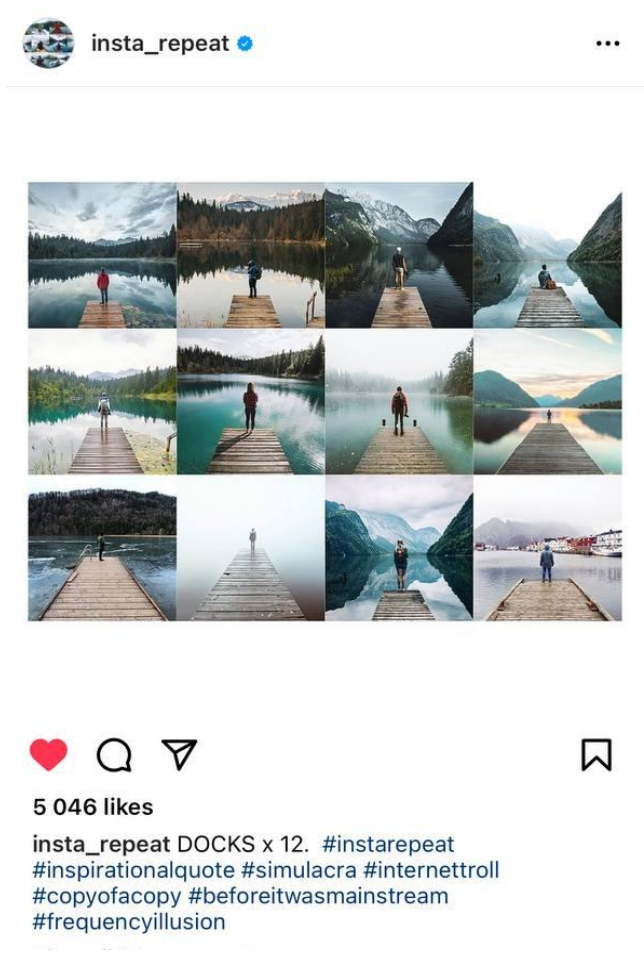


Figure 3: a screenshot of insta\_repeat’s post

I do not necessarily see this as a negative phenomenon and I think the common reason behind all these similarities is that we all have access to equipment, nature, and the internet. There is no doubt that we get influenced by what we see and would like to recreate the appealing photos by ourselves. Repeating is a way of liking something, isn't it? The way we create our own – but similar -versions of something – like knitting patterns, singing songs, or other examples. But this is not the only reason behind the similar photos. We are all very similar humans, even though we believe we are more individuals with our own integrity, we do a lot of things in the same way others do even without having seen them doing it and it is a part of being a normal human being.

On Insta Repeat photos are gathered by a person but algorithms are doing a similar job on Instagram and Facebook. Users see content on their Instagram timeline based on what content they or their friends have engaged with, (Rettberg, 2019, p. 11) so the chance of seeing photos that are very similar to what the user has interacted with increases. This can be very interesting as users see what they are interested in, but it can also be a manipulation tool or cause bias in the users. And this also influences what we ourselves choose to photograph and how we photograph it. I will now go on to my methods chapter and explain how I choose the photos I am analyzing, photos that collectively resemble this insta-repeat-practice.

### 3. Methodology and Data Selection

I will now present the process of data collection for this study and the techniques chosen for data analysis, as well as include some ethical reflection on the choice and presentation of the content. I will also give an introduction to how I will employ my theoretical and contextual framework when analyzing the Instagram photographs.

The study is qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a suitable method when one wants to know about changes and development of text or content that have been published in different time periods or on different channels. (Østbye et al. 2013, p. 207). I am going to analyze representative tourist photographs on Instagram from three destinations in the Stryn area - Rakssetra, the pier in the Loenvatn Feriesenter, and the pier in Bødal- in western Norway and compare them together. These specific places are typical Norwegian natural destinations that were host to a much larger number of visitors after the Covid-19 lockdown (Henriksen, 2022) and consequently, the number of photos shared on Instagram from these destinations increased hugely. For example, from the 4500 public posts shared using the hashtag #rakssetra up until October 2021, more than 4000 of these were shared starting March 2020.

Qualitative content analysis is a method for studying documents and communication artifacts and is greatly dependent on interpretation. Hermeneutics is an approach that is broadly used in the humanities and social studies which are interpretive sciences. Usually, the social reality is not an objective reality and depends greatly on the interaction between people. Completion of such studies needs lots of interpretation and understanding of how people interact, in this case, digital visual interaction, and what makes stable social relations and patterns. (Østbye et al. 2013, p. 288). Qualitative content analysis is a method that can not be completely objective and has a background in hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the interpretation process that involves both objective and subjective sides. In this chapter, I am going to present hermeneutics based on Gadamer's point of view, because this type of interpretation will affect the way I will conduct my

analysis and the method I will use. Afterward comes an introduction to the specific photo analysis method that is used in the analysis chapter. The final part of this chapter is about my data selection method and the process of data collection.

### 3.1 Hermeneutics, The Circle of Interpretations

Hermeneutics means interpretation and in philosophy, it refers to the procedure of perception. The process of interpreting and understanding anything that has a meaning such as books, images, historical events, and artwork can be used in defining hermeneutics. Our knowledge and bias affect the way we interpret, and this is important for the process of understanding. The interpretation that we make can also modify or change our bias, the knowledge, and understanding that we have of the particular subject, or we might find confirmation for what we already knew or believed in. In order to perceive a better understanding of the subject and get a better overview, one would usually flow between different large and small units of implications in the process of interpretation. The process of moving between different units of meaning and making a new interpretation based on the updated bias and knowledge is called the hermeneutic circle. (Kvarv, 2014, p. 73-74).

We never stop interpreting, although this might not be conscious. Therefore the process is a circle and can be continuous. “This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation”. (Gadamer, 1960, p. 269). The same hermeneutic circle applies to interpreting and analyzing photos. As Larsen and Lien state, the more you know about the background of a photograph the more you see in the picture, (Larsen & Lien, 2008, p. 420). both of the objects and the meanings. As interpretation starts based on the individual's knowledge and bias, therefore everyone has a unique perception of the very same artwork, event, or book.

“A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the



text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.” (Gadamer, 1960, p. 269).

This example from Gadamer explains why we experience things differently based on what we have experienced earlier in life and what knowledge and understanding we have and carry with us.

It is important to keep in mind that hermeneutics is not a method of analyzing or interpreting, but it refers to the process of understanding and defining what we experience. However, hermeneutics makes the path for conducting an analysis clearer and means I have to account for how I see something, with what background I do the analysis, or what optics or glasses I have on. These glasses are what my theoretical and contextual background chapter is.

### 3.2 Photo Analysis Method

The photo analyzing method one chooses depends on what research question and issue one will answer and it is essential to follow a plan to conclude the most precise answer as a result. In this thesis, I have chosen to analyze the data based on Barthes's semiotic theory. Semiotic is the study of signs and a semiotic analysis is to interpret and understand the signs and what they stand for.

Barthes indicates that there are different layers of meaning in the photographs. The first layer is what one sees in the picture, such as objects, landscape, people, and animals, which Barthes refers to as the denotation of the image. To understand a deeper meaning of a photograph it is required to note what these objects refer to. The implication and meaning of the denotations that are seen in the photograph are considered the connotation. According to Barthes the connotation

is more complicated and points out to a deeper layer of meaning. Our interpretation of connotation hugely depends on our personal, cultural, and social backgrounds. (Barthes, 1977, p. 18).

In the book *Camera Lucida*, Barthes uses the words signifier and signified to refer to the object and the inner and deeper meaning of the photograph. He states that the photograph can not be completely eminent from the object, which Barthes calls a signifier. On the other hand, understanding the photographic signifier might not necessarily be as easy as looking at the photograph. Perceiving the signified concept might require cultural and social background and needs a deeper thought and knowledge. (Barthes, 1981, p. 5-6). “In order to "see" the photographic signifier, they are obliged to focus at very close range. Others are historical or sociological; in order to observe the total phenomenon of the Photograph, these are obliged to focus at a great distance.” (Barthes, 1981, p. 7). Here, the culturally relevant backgrounds are photo practices on Instagram, but also that of tourism photography and Norwegian national identity.

“Every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent”, writes Barthes. (Barthes, 1981, p. 76). Each photograph is the real representation of what has been photographed and the photograph would not exist if the signified was not a real thing and was not there. (Barthes, 1981, p. 76). The photograph is a representation of a truth that was at least once a reality. This can sometimes cause misunderstandings as to the reality and the truth that a photograph shows could vary, if the truth is not a valid truth now does not mean that it was not real at the time of photographing as well, and the opposite applies too. If there is a photograph, it does not mean that the reality is still the same.

Barthes, therefore, does not analyze photos in solitude and states that “even from the perspective of a purely immanent analysis, the structure of the photograph is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure, namely the text - title, caption, or article - accompanying every press photograph.” (Barthes, 1977, p. 16). The linguistic message can also

be binary and have a connoted sign as well as a denoted meaning. (Barthes, 1977, p. 33). This is extremely relevant to keep in mind while analyzing photos on social media. Many users add captions, emojis, and hashtags under the photos they share. All these symbols are visual signs and are natural to include in a semiotic analysis process. In my analysis, I do this by considering which message is connotated by the text, does it confirm the photo or does it add any new information.

In the book *Camera Lucida*, Barthes refers to two elements in photographs which are *studium* and *punctum*. He defines *studium* as what makes the photograph interesting, it can be that the photograph is aesthetic and has a nice composition or that it is a photograph that has a cultural or political content. To receive the *studium* of the photograph one needs to consciously look for motifs and meaning. The other element does however disturb the *studium* and surprises the audience. Barthes refers to this element as a *punctum*. The *punctum* is a small detail in the photograph that breaks the *studium* and catches the attention. (Barthes, 1981, p. 26-27). Barthes states that *punctum* “is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me”. (Barthes, 1981, p. 26). Barthes argues that to understand the *studium* of the photograph the audience needs to be aware of the photographer's intention. (Barthes, 1981, p. 27). In my study, publishing a public photo and adding a hashtag to it, means that the photographer has an intention of showing it off to the world. However, the photographer can also have multiple other intentions, some of which are revealed through looking at the photo in connection with other connected photos. Connected networked photos, is as I have stated earlier, a constitutive element of Instagram.

What makes a photograph stand out and have that *punctum* quality is the presence of heterogeneous connotations, or even denotations, in the photograph which shocks the viewer. However, a photo may not necessarily have a *punctum*. And finding out what the *punctum* is, if the *punctum* is copied, or if it is missing, will be relevant for my analysis.

In this semiotic analysis, I will therefore also consider the whole Instagram post as a unit and consider the linguistic message as well as the photographic message. I will observe the photograph and the caption carefully and in detail in the first stage. Then I will try to understand the second layer of meaning in the post and understand the connotations. I will also discuss the punctum of the photo if there is any.

### 3.3 Data Selection Method

When research is going to answer a broad question, one should either study a limited data in depth or examine a larger data selection but less in-depth. Large data gives the opportunity for generalizing, but on the other hand, the small sample provides a greater opportunity to give a thorough description of the phenomenon. (Østbye et al. 2007, p. 266-267). For this thesis, I have chosen a small selection and when the data is going to be limited, it is better to choose a strategic selection method rather than random data selection. (Østbye et al. 2007, p. 266-267) The data material that I could choose from for my project was huge. Researchers are usually faced with a large amount of data while working with content and it could be confusing what data to include or exclude from the study.

The data needs to be sorted and studied along with the project and it is a good idea to integrate the data in the process of writing as soon as writing the draft report. This helps to make a hermeneutic and constructive base for the data and writing process. (Østbye et al. 2013, p. 130). While my first photo was chosen carefully because of how viral it had gone, I also wanted to supply this with a few others. I searched through the hashtags of #rakssetra, #loen, and #loenvatnet, here I looked at both sorted by popularity and sorted by recent. I chose these hashtags because they are specific to the name of the place which made finding relevant photos for the study more straightforward and minimized the number of irrelevant content. It also gave me the possibility to look at many photos to get a general knowledge and understanding of

tourist photography from these destinations. I went through the photographs and noted down which views or objects were specifically dominant and showed up as a pattern.

Further on, there are a couple of reasons why I have chosen photos of these destinations. One main factor in choosing the locations is my own visit to the area. It was important because it contributed to triggering my interest in tourist photography. I believe it was advantageous to know about the places and people who visit these destinations and it contributed to a better knowledge and a more authentic understanding of the photographs which lead to a better analysis of them. A gap in our knowledge about what we see in the photographs shows itself in our understanding of the photo and sometimes can cause misunderstanding. (Larsen & Lien, 2008, p. 420). I got to know about the place Bødal pier through Instagram, which is a very similar story to many other travelers. I have observed the locations, seen how people act there, and searched for photographs on Instagram of this place. I believe the fact that I have experienced this journey, gives me a better perspective and helps to deepen my analyses.

Another important reason is the natural characteristics and landscape of the area which is very representative of western Norway's nature that is a part of Norway's culture as a country and nation. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, closed borders, and travel restrictions, traveling in Norway became more common, and traveling to this region became more popular than before the pandemic. This led to a massive number of photos being shared from these known destinations (both known from before, and newly discovered through Instagram) in the period of the last two years. I have done my data selection in October 2021, therefore photos that were published after this time are not considered for this study.

I looked through all the photos published between March 2020 and October 2021 with the hashtags #loenvatnet and #rakssetra and #loen. Under the #loen hashtag, there was a broader range of photos taken at different places. Observing this hashtag which has more than 100000 posts helped me get a general idea of the aesthetic pattern of the destination photos. However as these posts were sometimes random for this thesis, I did not choose the final photos with the help

of this hashtag. The hashtag however led me to choose a more specific one, #loenvatnet. I observed 3500 Instagram posts under the #loenvatnet hashtag and 4000 Instagram posts under the #rakssetra hashtag. I then identified 300 photos, 100 from Rakssetra and 100 photos from each pier. By identifying I mean that these photos were actually taken at these locations and were not only using hashtags to promote their posts, and also none of these photos included product or any other type of advertisement. I then had to scale it down so it was possible to analyze, I did this by selecting 120 photos. The final selection was based on representativeness and I tried to keep the proportions of different types of photos unchanged, for example, if in the 100 photographs there were 25 photos that had similar characteristics, I chose 10 of them for the final data set. Last, I had 40 Instagram posts from each location. 40 photos are chosen from the #rakssetra and 80 photos, 40 photos for each pier, are chosen under the #Loenvatnet hashtag.

The three destinations that I have chosen for this analysis have different histories behind them which could be very relevant to know. Rakssetra (figure 4) is a destination after a short hike and has a picturesque view of the mountains, fjords, Olden, and Loen. There are small old cabins at the site that add the historical look and feel to the place. This region used to be home to farmers and still is a place where sheep graze during summertime. There are some cabins that belong to local people who live there and cabins that are being rented out to the visitors.



Figure 4: Raksetra, taken summer 2021

The pier located at Loenvatn Feriesenter (figure 5) is the other destination. The holiday center is located beside the Lovatnet where the water has turquoise color and the scenery is very beautiful and calming. Buildings at this site are not of the same old type as those at Raksetra. Taking photos at the pier has become very popular and has almost turned into a symbolic Norwegian summer vacation photo.

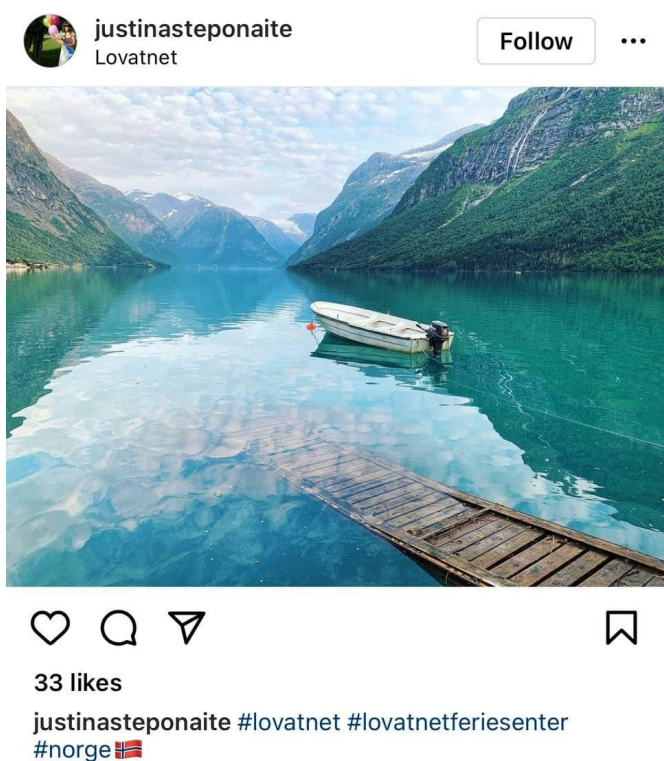


Figure 5: Screenshot of a photograph of Lovatnet Feriesenter on

Instagram

The last destination is the pier at the end part of Lovatnet, the Bødal pier (figure 6). The major difference with the pier at the Loenvatn is that people go to a destination which includes this pier, and a vacation center. Bødal pier, however, is located right beside a private farm and the place became popular because of the photo which was published by Kjersti Kvamme (figure 1). People go to the same location to take photos and the pier is the main and only destination. The scenery is very similar to the other pier, but I would like to have a closer investigation to see if the visual and textual communication about these two destinations and Rakssetra is any different because of how they have been introduced to people and if the history behind each of these locations makes any distinction. The comparative study of these visual communications can be quite illuminating which I will discuss in more detail in the analysis and discussion chapter.





Figure 6: A photo I took at Bødal's pier, July 2021

The goal of this analysis is to be done with as little bias as possible, but at the same time, this is a qualitative analysis that is based on the hermeneutic circle (Østbye et al., 2007, p. 59) and my role as the analyzer is inevitable. (Østbye et al., 2007, p. 68) Through the theoretical and contextual background, I have disclosed what I bring with me into the analysis, the glasses I use, and how my perception also changes from initial understanding to deeper understanding as I spend time analyzing the photographs. I am also very aware that I have another cultural background which can make my interpretations of these photos different from a Norwegian's interpretation. It could be both positive and negative. Although I have tried to make myself familiar with Norwegian culture and history and understand it as well as possible, still I could miss some references that have lots of meaning for a Norwegian. On the other hand, as a positive point, I have a fresh point of view and a new perspective on some aspects and try to find reasons

for why things are the way they are and what could be the reason behind it. It is sometimes easier for me to look at something from afar when I am looking at it up close.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Collected empirical data consisting of photographs that have been analyzed and mentioned as examples for this thesis are all photos of users and accounts on Instagram that have been published publicly. In the analysis chapter, there are examples and also screenshots of Instagram posts where users have not been anonymized as Instagram users know that posts that are published publicly can be seen or even shared by other Instagram users. Users include hashtags in their caption and tag official tourism accounts, which shows they want their photo to be seen and are aware of this fact. These are also the photos I have focused specifically on, as they represent what I am analyzing – shared tourist experiences, made for others to engage with.

However, users might not think that their content will be seen for research purposes. The topic of this study is not a vulnerable topic and there is no sensitive information revealed from the users more than what they have provided in these posts. This project does not harm any of the users whose photo is studied. In order to do more ethical research, I have chosen to not include photos of children in my dataset. This is an aesthetic study of visual data and therefore showing some photo examples were necessary for a better understanding of the research and all unnecessary use of photos is avoided. Photos that are included in the thesis are screenshots of the post, which show the account of the user, and they are cited and given credit for their content. I also see a master's thesis as something that is limited in its reach, but should the opportunity arise that I get to do extensive dissemination of my research it should be a courtesy to contact the user accounts to let them know.

## 4. Analysis

This chapter will present a qualitative semiotic analysis of images of the three places chosen. The empirical data consists of 120 user-generated posts on Instagram, which are photographs that are taken at three different locations. All samples are public posts and the data is found by searching for hashtags on Instagram. These locations are all located in the west part of Norway and are very close to each other. The first place is Rakssetra, which is a viewpoint after a short hiking path. The two other locations are piers beside Loenvatn lake. I will present the findings of the sample of photos, and some particular photos I have chosen to go into detail and do a semiotic analysis of because they represent a pattern of images or a recurring motive.

This analysis is a qualitative study based on Barthes' semiotic theory and dual concept of studium and punctum which was discussed in the method chapter. According to Barthes, photographs should not be analyzed in solitude; therefore, for this research, the whole Instagram post is considered as a unit, and texts and emojis in the captions are taken into consideration. The study will be presented in three different analysis sections based on where these photographs are taken. My theoretical framework also influences how I see and understand the artifacts I am analyzing and how they come to be.

In each section, there will be a presentation of what has been observed in the user-generated content and how they are interpreted. These observations also include a report of what is typical or what is the current practice of users for presenting these particular tourist destinations through their Instagram posts. Examples and photographs from each place will also be presented.

### 4.1 Rakssetra

Photographs published from Rakssetra using the hashtag #rakssetra, have more variety than the other two locations. One reason is the diversity of the location itself. The area is much larger, and

more elements in this location can be characteristics of the place in the photographs. The other reason is the presence of a broader range of visitors. Rakssetra comes after a thirty minutes moderate hike and visiting the place includes an activity suitable for most age groups and families. However, by having variety I don't mean that these photos are random but that there are various vernaculars that are connected to the tourist photographs from this place.

There are very few photos shared with the hashtag #rakssetra before the summer of 2019 and those are pictures with a very different aesthetic. After the pandemic, during the summer holiday of 2020, the number of photos increased hugely but still, the most number of photographs are posted in the summer holiday of 2021. Covid-19 restrictions during the pandemic caused more people who live in Norway to be tourists in their home country and rediscover their own landscape. The reason for the increasing number of photographs shared in 2021 could be that the location was more and more discovered as Instagram-friendly after the first outburst of user-generated-contents on Instagram in 2020, which resulted in many more visitors to the location in 2021. Consequently, the number of UGC shared from this location increased in 2021. The following paragraphs will discuss some of the typical kinds of photographs shared on Instagram of this location.

#### 4.1.1 The White Dress

The first photograph analyzed in this section is taken by Frank R. Dahl (figure 7). The photograph was first published on August 11, 2019, on the Instagram account @anetteaugustaa (Anette Augusta, 2019), which is the account of the person who is in the photo. @frank.dahl shared the photograph on his account on May 31 in 2021, @norge which was tagged in the post shared the photograph the same day (Norway NO, 2021 May 31). The Instagram post on @norge has more than 29000 (29k) likes in April 2022 which is when this report was written. Here, the official account of @norge reposted the image and spread it to their followers.

Shortly after May 31, many other official tourist accounts shared the photograph, resulting in the photo getting viral in the summer of 2021. For example, @dreamchasersnorway, @norway.raw, @nortrip, and @incredible\_europe are some accounts that shared Dahl's photo on their accounts in June 2021 and they respectively had more than 14k, 9k, 10k, and 13k likes in April 2022. This photograph received much attention in the summer of 2021 and seems to encourage many travelers to visit the area and was an inspiration to the creation of many other similar photographs.



Figure 7: Screenshot of @frank.dahl's post on Instagram

The signifiers of the photograph are now to be presented. The photo is taken on a nice sunny day from a picturesque viewpoint. The view is toward the valleys and a small village called Olden.

Mountains with snow on top surround the fjord and there are two cruise ships in the fjord. The weather is mostly sunny, and there are a couple of clouds close to mountain tops. A lady in the photograph is sitting on a rock surrounded by wildflowers, looking toward the fjords and mountains. Here we have an opposition to the traditional and casual photos which portray the face of the subject in the photo. She has blonde hair and is wearing a white summer dress and has bare feet. There are two old cabins with roofs covered in meadow grass and wildflowers between the woman and the view. The cabin on the left is red and the right one is orange and they have the fjord as their background. This photograph has a high level of detail but the woman and the cabins are the main focus and the rest of the composition is a background to them. What I described was the denotation (Barthes, 1977, p. 18) of the photograph.

This idyllic background is a signifier of Norwegian identity and culture. Cabins are an essential part of the Norwegian summer holidays, and the small old cabins in the photograph are signifiers of the Norwegian picturesque landscape. The denotation of this photo is the Norwegian landscape on a sunny summer day and the connotation of it is the Norwegian culture and identity. The cruise ships also refer to tourism and connote holidays. A woman in a white dress is a symbol of innocence and can also have a connotation to the untouched landscape. The studium of the photograph is very picture-perfect and can possibly attract any viewer independent of if they understand the connotation of the image. The caption does also directly refer to the Norwegian romantic nationalism “Surrounded by beautiful and wild nature, with steep mountains, fjords, glaciers, wild rivers, and waterfalls everywhere. Could it be any more Norwegian romantic nationalism?” (my translation) He does also include an icon of the Norwegian flag in the caption. Looking at the photograph we see the three colors of the Norwegian flag beside each other, the red in the cabin, the blue color of the fjord, and the white dress. Not only the Norwegian flag is recreated, but also the woman has a role in it. Nationalism is the connotation of this recreation.

Why has this photo become popular and influential on other UGC on Instagram? Is it only because it is picturesque scenery or is there any, as Barthes said, punctum in the photograph that

catches the viewer's attention? The woman with the white dress and bare feet is the punctum of the photograph that makes this photograph stand out. Her bare feet resemble her being free and enjoying the warm summer day and the white dress makes the photograph even more dreamlike. But the white dress in this scene has another function as well, and that's to recreate the Norwegian flag. The punctum in this photo is so effective and got very popular among Instagram users. Many young women wearing dresses, usually white, with bare feet, either sitting on a rock, standing, or in a walking position, took photographs at Rakssetra and shared them on Instagram. The quality of these photos varies. Some of these photos are more casual than others and just borrow some elements from Dahl's photo and some others are more staged or have a more balanced composition. Some recreation and versionalized examples of these photos will be presented.

Lindland shared an Instagram photo (Hanna Elisabeth Lindland, 2021, June 11) (figure 8); this woman is also sitting on the same rock. In her photo, the sky and mountain tops are not in the frame, and it seems that for her, the Norwegian romantic nationalism landscape does not seem to be exactly as important as the punctum of the former photograph of Dahl, which was the barefoot lady with a white dress. The sky and the mountains are cut out from the photo, instead, the focus is more on the lady with the white dress. Interestingly she mentions the cabins on the mountainsides in her caption and there is no focus on the mountains as a factor "Rakssetra 🏠 Such an idyllic place with these tiny houses along the mountainside, with views of Olden and Loen looking like something from a postcard! 📧" By using the word "postcard" she is connotating that the view is picturesque and not an ordinary view and perhaps that her photo is not ordinary either.





Figure 8: Screenshot of @hannalindland's post on Instagram

This photo is more staged and is more similar to designed photos with fewer details in the background. When paying closer attention to the color composition of this photo on the left side of the frame, the recreation of the Norwegian flag is very powerful in this photo. The blue from the fjord, the red cabin, and the lady in white represent the colors in the Norwegian flag in this photo as well. She has not directly mentioned Norway, but this is an interesting way of denoting her connection to the country by using the punctum that Dahl's photo has.



Another example of UGC influenced by Dahl’s photograph is a post shared by Malin Lunde (2021, June 18) (figure 9). Most of the same signifiers are present in Malin’s photograph, but his photograph is a wider photo than the one taken by Dahl, and therefore fewer details are visible. Consequently, the photograph is not as eye-catching as Dahl’s photo and is more casual version, but still the photo is staged. In addition, as the photo is wide the cabins are a part of the background and there is not much focus on them this decreases the effect of the punctum to recreate the flag.



829 likes

maliinlunde Raksetra ❤️ (før den ble optråkket 🤖)

Figure 9: Screenshot of @maliinlunde’s post on Instagram

In the caption, she has mentioned “Raksetra, (before it became popular)”. This photo was shared on 21st July 2021 and there is no evidence of what she meant saying before it became

popular. It could be taken in 2019 or 2020. Mentioning this by her means that it is important that she has been there and taken the photo before it turned into something that a lot of people do, but still, she wants to present that she has practiced the same vernacular dialect. There is also another photo that Dahl has published of the same place both in July 2019 and July 2020 (Frank R. Dahl, 2019, July 17 & Frank R. Dahl 2020, July 4). This photograph was taken on the same day and is almost identical to the photo we analyzed, the only difference in them is the lady's pose, in which she is walking toward the cabins instead of sitting on the rock. In addition, her feet are not visible in this photo and do not have the same punctum of bare feet on rocks. This photo was also shared many times on Instagram but did not receive as much attention as the one published in 2021, but this photo could be an inspiration to the photos from Instagram users where the person is in a standing position in the photograph.

STINE has published an Instagram post (2020, August 11) that the photograph is taken from the same standing point (figure 10). She is standing bare feet toward Olden, wearing a long white dress. She is holding the skirt of the dress romantically. In her caption, she has written “Dreamy Norway ❤️🇳🇴” as if she wants to emphasize the connotation of her photograph. This photo has a good composition and is balanced with the cabins and the mountains being on the third rule point. The photograph is edited to have a high contrast to be atmospheric and also to highlight the blue, red, and white in the photo.



934 likes

stiiniiii Dreamy Norway 🇳🇴🇳🇴

Figure 10: Screenshot of @stiiniiiii's post on Instagram

@katrinemads1 shared a different photo (Katrine Norway,2021, September 23) of bare feet and in a white dress at Rakssetra (figure 11). Parts of five different cabins are visible in this photograph. We see some mountains, but the lady in the frame blocks the view of the fjords. So in this photo, the blue color of the fjord is not present to make the Norwegian representation together with the white dress and the red cabin, but then there are two small Norwegian flags beside the cabin on the left. The missing signifiers of Norway in the background are replaced by another representation, which is flags. This photo is also not a casual photo and seems to be thought through and staged.



731 likes

katrinemads1 Ser etter nye eventyr rundt alle hjørner



Figure 11: Screenshot of @katrinemads1's post on Instagram

Users might not be copying other users' content intentionally. It could be that they are inspired by a post that they have seen, and they might even not be aware of who has created the content. In some cases, users might not even remember the origin of the inspiration and think that the idea is very original and is theirs. In other cases, users might ultimately be aware and would like to recreate a photograph that they enjoyed watching.

The particularity of the white dress could speak for the last argument. This is however dependent on the equipment and skill of the users if they perceive the same qualities or not. The same applies to user-generated content that is influenced by Dahl's photograph. Other examples of ladies in white dresses are photos shared by Renate Hem (2021, June 8) (figure 12) and Elizabeth (2021, July 31) (figure 13).

In Renate's photo, a large proportion of the composition colors are white and blue, there is however no red element present and the white dress is in focus. It seems like the white dress has become an independent element or punctum and is now even more important than representing the Norwegian flag. Signified by Renate's caption is that she is inviting people to visit Rakssetra. This photo has a balanced picture composition and color combinations. She is on one side of the frame and looking toward the other side which directs the eyes of the viewer to the left side of the photo and out of the frame. Her photo connotes innocence and fresh, untouched nature.



263 likes

renatehem Rakssetra in Loen, Norway 🥰 This view is only a 30 minute hike away, if you're in Loen. Just sayin 🙌🔥. #rakssetra #loen #norway #norwaynature #vestlandet #visitnorway #visitloen #visitstryn #hike

Figure 12: Screenshot of @renatehem's photo on Instagram

Interestingly Elizabeth has mentioned in her caption "Finally we got to Rakssetra" (my translation). This could mean that she has seen many photos from Rakssetra on her Instagram timeline, either from friends or family of accounts with a higher number of followers, or maybe



she has been actively looking for pictures from this region, for example with the #rakssetra hashtag.



Figure 13: Screenshot of @elisabeth\_o.c on Instagram

#### 4.1.2 The Honor of Being Physically Active

The other type of photo which is to be seen a lot from Rakssetra is photographs taken while the subjects are in a (victory power pose) pose with their arms and hands open and stretched out to the sky in a V form. Photographs of couples, friends together, siblings and small children, and individual photos in a victory power pose such as the Instagram post that Svarstad posted (Santa Svarstad, 2021, August 27) are always popular at the peak of a mountain or a hiking destination such as Rakssetra (figure 14).

In Svarstad's photograph, we see the valleys and mountains and the fjord in the background. The lady is wearing a summer training set and sneakers, in contrast to the previous photos with the white summer dresses. There are a number of rocks and stones visible and their shadows make a sharp contrast. She has her right foot on a rock and her arms are making a V form and has her back to the camera. She is standing between two cabins and walls and a part of the roofs of the cabins are visible in the photograph. Taking photos between these two cabins, where Svarstad is standing. Visitors and hikers wait for the spot to be available to take their shots right in front of the valleys and fjords, on the rocks between the two cabins.

Victory and a feeling of being strong are signified by the power pose. This is empowered even more with having the stones and rocks in the photo which also have a connotation of being strong and powerful. The photograph is aesthetic and has a connotation of Norwegian culture and an active holiday. Showing interest in being active in nature and going hiking is what is emphasized here in contrast with previous photos which were more national romantic. The text "Worth a visit" which also includes emojis of the Norwegian flag and mountain connotes an invitation to the area. The photograph is appealing because of the picturesque background and the contrast of the light and shadows in the foreground, the photo however could have a more interesting composition if the background of the woman's arm were of the same color, either the fjord or the sky. The photograph has a nice studium to it but lacks the punctum, there is no extraordinary detail in the composition.

Cabins are an essential part of Norwegian holidays. These small old cabins at Rakssetra give an extra feeling of holiday and charm to the photos taken there, independent of whether the Rakssetra visitors stay at the cabins or not. Furthermore, these cabins are primarily orange and red, so their color is complementary to blue and green, making the scenery and the photographs even more appealing and leading to more Instagram-friendly posts.



Figure 14: Screenshot of @santadesvassa's post on Instagram

Another popular pose at this destination is the jumping pose. Many users choose to add a bit more excitement to the whole photo and have their photograph taken while jumping. As Manovich refers to, they want to oppose the traditional photographing poses. (Manovich, 2017, p. 122). In Ariane's photo (Ariane, 2021, August 5) a couple is jumping on a rock between the two cabins I mentioned earlier (figure 15). Both of them have their feet off the ground. The woman has her arms up in the victory pose while the man has only her right hand in the sky. Besides all the signifiers that are mutual with other photos that were discussed, there is a tent



emoji in the caption that has a connotation with outdoor activities. Outdoor activities have a significant place in Norwegian culture. The punctum of this photo is the couple captured being in the air, a quality that distinguishes the photo from a casual photo. Jumping and yoga poses are popular among young adults, both male and female.



Figure 15: Screenshot of @arian\_ou's post on Instagram

There are photographs of children, young adults, middle-aged adults, and old adults published with the hashtag #rakssetra. However, in my observation, I noticed that young women have

shared the most number of photographs. One possible explanation for this could be the influence of the feminine connotation that the subject in Dahl's photo has on the other users sharing photographs of them wearing dresses. There are some differences in how each age group mostly poses and what kind of photos are more prevalent among them. For example, middle-aged adults take more casual photos such as group photographs, and these are usually those who share photos that show their happy faces to the camera. Photo composition seems to be less critical for this group of visitors. They mainly want a photo as a memory of their visit to the breathtaking nature, either with their friends or family. As an example, @tanteerling shared a post which is a selfie at Rakssetra. The focus of the photograph is on the two people who are happily enjoying their hike on a warm summer day. The connotation of this photo is more on the experience and the joy of the couple.

Having your back toward the camera with a pose that shows you are taking in the view has become the common practice among the younger generation at the time. It is sending the message of presence at a destination without much self-presentation, or perhaps another type of self-presentation as it shows that the person is familiar with Instagram vernacular. This pose is popular in photos taken at Rakssetra, It could be sitting on a rock, standing on the rock at the edge of the hill, swinging, or sitting and leaning toward one of the cabins, such as Ewa Stensrød's photo (2021, August 4), and enjoying the view (figure 16).

Leaning toward a wall that is exposed by the sun is a favorite thing for Norwegians to do and has a very pleasurable connotation for them. If this is combined with the idyllic view, then it should be an approved subject for photography as well as relaxing and enjoying the time. In Stensrød's photo, the camera is in the same line as the subject in the photo and this gives a relaxing connotation to the viewer as if they are also sitting there on the ground and enjoying the view and the sunshine.

In many captions that users write for photos of Rakssetra, they include a pin 📍 to indicate location, mountain emoji, and the name of the place itself, "Rakssetra". Users also write positive

words to describe the location, and the most used words in English are beautiful, amazing, wonderful, and the best view. Most written words in Norwegian are fint, fin, nydelig and fantastisk.



Figure 16: Screenshot of @ewastensrod's post on Instagram

Self-presentation is not the first impression one gets from many of these photos thinking of the more traditional self-presentation photos but sharing photographs of any kind is a way of expressing oneself on social media. (Rettberg, 2014, p. 2; Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 67). Also if we pay more attention, we can see self-presentation in the inner layer of the meaning of the photos. Why are people jumping? What does it show? It makes their photographs cool, but it also helps them show that they have good physical fitness. Why do young women dress white

and recreate the photos? It is a way of showing that they are a part of a network, recreating the Norwegian flag, or being “the lady in white” at Rakssentra. Producing these kinds of UGC can also help them to show their lifestyles and gain more social capital.

While I was at Raksetra, many people were taking photographs using the different vernaculars that I described in this section. However, taking photos was a bold activity but people were also doing other stuff, they were enjoying their time and enjoying the view with some simple snacks and lunches that they brought along, and some people were enjoying the company of a book.

## 4.2 Pier at the Loenvatn feriesenter

This section shows three different types of Instagram photographs that are typical photos published from this pier on Instagram with the hashtag #loenvatnet. Not many photos of men are published from this location, and I did not observe any photographs of children. The pier goes into the lake, and the scenery is very romantic. There is a small white boat at the site, which is present in many of the photos and is one of the characteristics of the location.

Loenvatnet’s water temperature is cold even during summer as the water flows from the glacier. This is a good factor why we see more photos of people on the pier than on the lake. However, there are a couple of dipping photos in my data sample. It is noticeable that all of the people in the photographs standing or sitting on the pier are women and young ladies. There are a few photos of men dipping into the lake who are more interested in showing the activity they have done at the place than just their photo with the pier.

### 4.2.1 A Dip In The Lake

The first category is the photographs where someone is diving into the lake like the post published by @norge (figure 17). This photo is also taken by Kjersti Kvamme, who is mentioned

in the introduction of the thesis and is shared on @norge in 2020 and 2021 (Norway NO, 2020, August 13 & Norway NO2021, April 19). In April 2022, the Instagram post published in 2020 has more than 29K likes and the post from 2021 has more than 20K likes.

Let's first have a look at the signifiers in Kvamme's photograph and then move on to the signified concepts. On the top of the frame which is less than one-third, we see mountains, glaciers, valleys, and the sky. The turquoise lake takes a very considerable portion of the composition and is the background to the main subjects of the photograph. The small white boat is entering the frame from, almost in the middle of, the right side. The pier is also in the right part of the frame following the center. At the end of the pier, there are three ladies diving. All three are partly in the lake and partly in the air, none of them touches the pier anymore and there are splashes of water around them. A dog is standing on the pier and observing the ladies.

What is the connotation of this photo? It is a sunny day and the ladies' diving does also have a connotation with summer and hot days. Enjoying the company of friends and a furry friend in an idyllic place is another message this photograph has. The photograph is very alive and tempts any viewer to take a dip in the green lake. The eye follows the different moving subjects of the photograph in a circle. The punctum of this photograph is a great composition of the boat and the ladies and where the dog stands. It is an active photograph that does not let the viewer rest the eyes. The water splashes also evoke both motion and warm days. Probably, we can consider this as a professional staged photograph.



Figure 17: Screenshot of @norge's post on Instagram

Other users publish similar photos of diving in the lake. In these photos, the pier is a medium between the person and the lake, the pier is visible, but diving into the lake and the body entering the water is the prior message of these photographs. Sebastian Rasch's (2021, June 21) (figure 18) and Katrine Andreassen Lindøe's (2021, October 17) posts (figure 19) are examples of these diving photos. The photo Sebastian shared is clearly not a casual photo with such good composition and editing.





139 likes

sebastianrasch Naturen var hakket bedre enn... more

Figure 18: Screenshot of @sebastianrasch's post on Instagram



326 likes

katrinelindoe Høsten er kommer for fullt,  
& jeg savner dagene i B I K I N I

Figure 19: Screenshot of @katrinelindoe's post on Instagram

## 4.2.2 On the Pier

Taking photos while a person is on the pier is very commonly practiced and a known vernacular of this location. Let's have a look at some examples, the first photo is published by the Instagram account @hannaakarolinee (Hanna Karoline, 2021, July 12) (figure 20). Signifiers of the photograph are as follows. The subject is in the middle of the photo, standing on the pier with her dog, surrounded by the green mountains and the clear, shiny lake. The pier leads the eyes of viewers to her. The clouds being concentrated in the center toward the right side and having the valleys and the red floater there also leads the attention to where she is looking. The clouds add a majestic effect to the overall composition as well and add more texture to the sky.



Figure 20: Screenshot of @hannaakarolinee's post on Instagram



She stands at the end of the pier and is closer to the mountains than the camera. She has her gaze toward the furthest point in the valleys, and she is closer to the Norwegian national romantic scenery than the photographer or the viewer of the photo. Her green shirt has a connotation of her touching nature and being a part of it. She is a signifier for a connecting point between the viewer and the landscape. She describes in the caption that exploring Norway with her friends gives her joy. In the photo, this joy is mirrored to the audience by the bright green mountains under the sun and the shiny green lake.

There is a huge difference between the proportions of the mountain on the left and right part of the frame and the left part of the photograph is very heavy. The studium of the photo could be more attractive with a better composition. However the texture of the lake with small soft waves and being extremely shiny works as a powerful punctum and grabs the attention. Many photographs are shared from this pier that is very similar to the photo Karoline has shared. A lady with or without a dog, standing at the end of the pier and looking toward the valleys. Photos are mostly taken so the pier is diagonal in the photos.

Another pose and type of photo seen often from this location is sitting at the end of the pier, either having the feet in the water or on the pier. Amanda Helsem Leine's post (2021, August 8) is a good example of this category (figure 21). In this photo, a large proportion of the photograph is the pier which is a signifier for this location. The subject is sitting at the end of the pier and looks toward the valleys. The red floater catches our attention toward the sharpest valley, and when we look closer, the woman's glance also leads us to the same point. Like Hanna Karoline's case, the person in the photo is the connecting point between the audience of the photograph and the Norwegian landscape. The pier in this photo has a strong connotation with being present at this place and shows the importance of emphasizing where she has been.



Figure 21: Screenshot of @amandaleine's post on Instagram

In my data sample from photographs from this destination, I observe that including the pier in the composition is one of the critical elements. More than three-quarters of the photos have the pier in the photo, and in more than half of them, the pier is one of the main focuses of the photographed scene. The pier significantly helps to identify the place, and it leads off into the landscape, symbolically it is a pathway into Norway or Norwegian nature. I consider this is one of the reasons that users want to have it as a document that I have been to the same place that many others have been. Maja Midttun Mæland (2020, September 12) has chosen to convey this

message in the form of linguistics in the caption “Oblig bilde when in Loen” (figure 22). ”. She is stating that this is a mandatory photo, just like going to Pisa in Italy and taking a photo while you pretend to “hold the tower up”. Or going to Paris and taking a photo of Eiffel. As the expression goes “pics, or it didn’t happen”. Having the pier in the photograph makes it much easier to identify where the image is taken, and this caption shows the importance of showing that you have been there. The connotation of this text is why should someone even visit this place if they are not posting a photo.



Figure 22: Screenshot of @mmmaja’s post on Instagram

Another noticeable characteristic of these photographs is that among those photos in which a person is present in them; the majority of these people are in a standing position, mainly at the end of the pier. It is also fascinating that these people have their faces and eyes away from the camera, gazing toward the furthest valleys. I interpret this as a sign to show how fascinated these people are by the view that they don't want to be the main focus of the photograph. Instead, they

will be a part of the breathtaking view and show that they are taking in what is to be seen there. They don't want a casual portrait there, or a selfie, but a memory of how they were lost in the beauty of nature, or at least this is what gets published.

Although self-presentation is not the first message of the photographs that are being published, still some of them have a bolder presenting effect, such as the photo @theresaa86 has posted (*Theresa* , 2020, September 9) (figure 23). The horizon line in this photo is almost in the middle, and the sky and the lake have similar proportions. The boat's existence in the picture breaks the symmetry and makes the composition less straightforward and more appealing to the eye. Some ripples are caused because she entered the lake, but the lake is calm and mirrors the mountains.

The lady's red dress has a huge contrast with the greenish-blue background. And the photograph is also edited to have even more contrast. This helps to bring the focus mostly to her. Her standing in the water and looking away from the camera and toward the scenery has a connotation that she is connected to nature and to the background. In the caption, she tries to balance having the focus on her versus the place. "Take me away, to better days. Back to this paradise." I want to be the center of attention, but not totally! The sharp contrast and the warmth of her dress against the cold colors of the background is the punctum of this photograph and makes it stand out.



Figure 23: Screenshot of *Theresa* 's post on Instagram

Users try to show the characteristics of the location in their photos, including the turquoise lake, which is sometimes greener than blue. The mountains and the valleys are also important signifiers of the west coast of Norway which are being presented in the photos. Users do want to name Norway or the lake in the caption. It is also common to describe the emotions they have while being there, for example, being joyful and amazed, happy, enjoying the view, and being on

an adventure. Not only words but emojis such as blue and green hearts to positively represent the colors of the lake and green mountains are used under the posts. Another emoji widely used is Norway's flag to represent the country.

Many have also written descriptions such as “vårt fantastiske land”, meaning our fantastic country. “turist i eget land” being a tourist in your own country is another caption written for a post. Writing such captions is common in the photos shared after March 2020, which was the beginning of the lockdown in Norway. While I was visiting Loenvatn Feriesenter in the summer of 2021, it was a warm day and people who were at the site were busy doing water activities such as swimming, stand-up paddling, kayaking, and row-boat. There were people who also were taking photographs on the pier, but the area was full of visitors. there is also a cafe so visitors can buy food and beverages. This is also a factor that helps visitors stay there for a longer period. The lockdown made it an obligatory opportunity for many Norwegians to consider traveling inside Norway. This caused a cultural reunion with the iconic Norwegian natural features, such as mountains, valleys, lakes, and fjords, and awakened the belonging feelings more than before. Of course, this does not apply to all the visitors, but the last two years for many Norwegians were a rediscovery of what they had perhaps taken for granted.

### 4.3 The Bødal Pier

The Bødal pier was not known before Kjersti Kvamme shared a photo from this place in August 2019 and before it went viral. The Bødal pier and the pier at the Loenvatn Feriesenter are beside the same lake, and the view from both piers are very similar but there are at least two differences between them. One is that the Bødal pier does not end in the water and has a height, and the other, which I assume to be the main difference, is why people go to these piers. Bødal pier is located in a private area, it is not a part of a hike or a walking path, and there is no camping site, cafe, or anything besides it. Instead, it got all its attention from Kvamme's photo.

This photo was reposted many times on different tourism Instagram accounts and other public accounts and was getting attention from viewers. For example, @norge shared this photograph (figure 24) in the summer of 2019, 2020, and 2021 (NORWAY NO, 2019, August 4 & NORWAY NO, 2020, June 1 & NORWAY NO, 2021, May 21), and in April 2022 these posts have more than 24K, 30K, and 21K likes respectively. Kvamme's photo and some other users' photos will be presented and analyzed in the following paragraphs.



Figure 24: Screenshot of @norge's post on Instagram

Kvamme's photo shows the horizon line in the middle of the frame. It's a sunny day, the lake is very calm, and the mountains' reflection makes a very nice symmetry. The lower side of the frame opens to the pier that almost takes the whole side. There is a dog on the pier that is looking toward the lake. The most important signifiers are the two ladies who are jumping into the lake. The lady on the left side of the photo has her arms up in a V form; she has her legs back toward her tights -making a reverse V- creating a nice form with her body. Not only is her pose identical on both sides of her body but also gives an illusion of symmetry between the upper part and the lower part of her body too. Her body posture connotes happiness and joy.

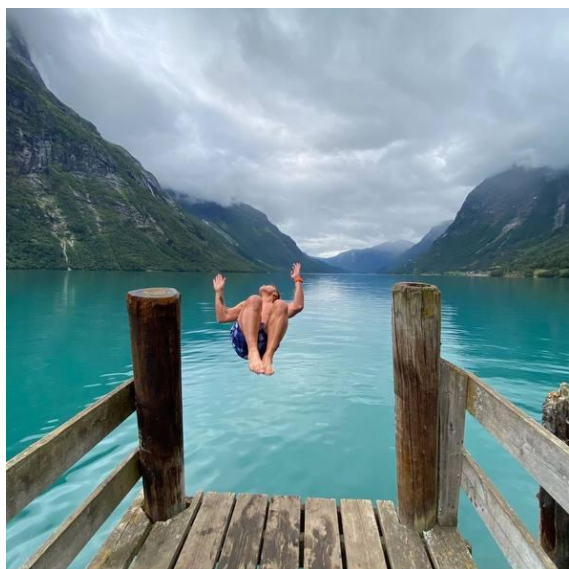
The lady on the right has a body pose that resembles a flying bird, which is a signifier in the



photo that is very close to the center of the frame. The background of her arms is the sky, strengthening the connotation of freedom and dreaminess of this pose. The flying lady must be the punctum of this picture-perfect photo. Flying contradicts human abilities, and therefore it gives a pleasurable shock to the viewer, gives the photograph a strong punctum, and makes it so unforgettable. This punctum is what distinguishes the photo from the traditional photos and makes it stand out.

Different photographs are shared from the Bødal pier and the pier itself is one of the main signifiers present in most users' photographs shared on Instagram. Many choose to compose their photos so that the pier works like a frame for the foreground such as Kvamme did. Rune Bjelland's post (2021, August 5) is an example where the pier covers the whole lower side of the frame (figure 25). The man in this photo is flipping into the lake, his face is toward the sky. It does not seem to be a warm day as the whole sky and top of the mountains are covered by clouds.

His pose connotes adventure and facing the unknown. He has also written a caption that is vague, jumping into it. The signified behind "it" could be the lake, adventure, decisions, and life. As it is both an expression of something just going headfirst into a problem, but also a description of something, more literally.



37 likes

bjelland.rune Hopper i det #loen #loenvatnet #utpåtår  
#mittnorge #norway

Figure 25: Screenshot of @bjelland.rune's post on Instagram

Interestingly, the number of men sharing photos from this place was much more than at the Loenvatn Feriesenter. It is more adventurous to take a photo diving in the lake or jumping up in the air in this location than on the other pier. It is also more challenging to capture a flying pose so the result would be a huge reward. Many users try to recreate the flying pose of the lady in Kvamme's photo. For example, we see a reasonably similar composition and pose in the photo, posted two years after the original photo on @tomestikss's account (Tom Erik Steen, 2021, August 2) This photo is strongly edited and has high contrast (figure 26).



tomarikss  
Lovatnet

Follow



550 likes

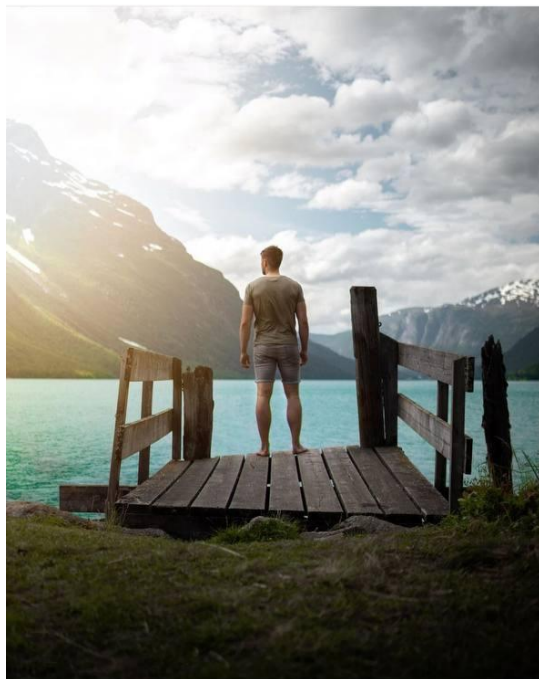
tomarikss Its Monday! Let's fly away 🦅  
Loen was great! I will be back ✨

Figure 26: Screenshot of @tomarikss's post on Instagram

Users who take photos at this place usually want to use the recognizable characteristics that the area has. If your follower has seen photos of Bødal pier even once, then there is no risk that they wouldn't identify where it is taken. Reading the captions, I assume that the place has a different kind of value for the users, not necessarily more or less but very different. One of the major connotations of this place is that it is a dreamy place and there are two reasons for this. First, it is not a very widely known place and is the host to visitors that have seen it on Instagram, and the second reason is the punctum of Kvamme's photograph, a flying woman. This should be a place where dreams come true, a place where the visitor can get away from ordinary life. The place is also associated with summer and holidays, and most photos show people with bathing suits on, but there are photos of colder days and even wintertime.

Words such as fly and dream are repeated a lot in users' captions. Some write that being at the place is like a dream, and others write that they dream of going back there. The pier is referred to as a hidden paradise or as a hidden gem which indicates that users know that the pier is not known broadly and also mention it as a positive characteristic of it. This can answer the question that I earlier asked about if there is any difference between how the Loenvatn Feriesenter Pier and the Bødal are presented. The Bødal pier is presented as more abstract and surreal.

In the caption of his post, Ruben Waage Ropstad (2020, July 17) writes, “Found the infamous Loen pier I’ve seen all over Instagram. There are a lot of people in the area, but we actually had this gem of a spot all to ourselves for a good hour and a half. Really beautiful spot if you can find it!” (figure 27) Just finding the hidden treasure on its own is an attraction for many of the visitors and makes the visit an adventure.



746 likes

rubenropstad Found the infamous Loen pier I've seen all over instagram. There are a lot of people in the area atm, but we actually had this gem of a spot all to our self for a good hour and a half. Really beautiful spot if you can find it!

Figure 27: Screenshot of @rubenropstad's post on Instagram

The photograph he shared has a different composition than most of the other photos shared of this place. One-fourth of the bottom of the photograph consists of the ground. The lake is the background to the pier and they are in the second one-fourth portion of the composition and are the main focus of the photograph. The cloudy sky which is very light in color makes the largest proportion of the composition on the top. Between the sky and the lakes, mountains are visible. The man is standing at the edge of the pier and looking toward his left. His pose is a signifier that he is confident and strong. Could it be because he finally managed to visit this place as he mentions in the caption? The ground and the pier are very dark and have a high contrast compared to the background, which is slightly diffused. The connotation of this huge contrast could also be that he is looking at a vague dream.

Usually, the edit users choose for the Bødal pier is sharper and has more contrast than the photos shared for the other pier. There is not much focus from the users on whether the location is in Norway but mostly that this is a special place. The pier is presented as a magical hidden place that lets the visitors relax and have time for themselves. The linguistic message under the photos also confirms this. Data reveals that the visitors can either quietly enjoy the peaceful atmosphere to dream or be as wild and free to fly. However, when I was at the Bødal pier, it was very shocking to me that people came to the pier, took their photos, and left without even taking in the view or enjoying their time there. So the most important thing was to document their visit to the pier without even spending much time there. Visitors were primarily young adults who just jumped into the lake, took several photos and videos, and left. This is however not a thing that can be judged by only seeing the photographs.

## 5. Discussion

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings and the analysis of the data. Key findings of this study based on the previous chapter will be presented and discussed in this chapter. I will also compare the results with what I have discussed in the literature review earlier. What type of platform vernacular dialect connected to Norwegian tourism is being practiced in the data will be also discussed.

The findings of this study clearly show that Instagram users try to reproduce tourist photos that have gone viral. Another practice among users is to emphasize the place where they visited. The findings also indicate that these users are acting as ambassadors of Norway and want to spread their Norwegian identity and culture on Instagram.

### 5.1 Recreating Viral Photos

In the photo analysis, I found that users are recreating photos that have gone viral, in different personalized versions, some try to be as similar as possible and others would give it a little twist. For example photos of women in white dresses at Rakssetra with a particular view are one of these types of photos that is popular among Instagram users to recreate. How can these vernaculars be explained? According to Manovich, this phenomenon could be explained as Instagramism. (2017, p.81). Users who are trying to recreate these scenes want to achieve the familiar Instagram atmospheric aesthetic of the location that they have observed.

These photos need to be planned, at least considering taking a white dress on a hike. Why is this so important for the users to take a similar photo when they are finally at Rakssetra? This practice seems to have turned into a specific version of the Instagram vernacular connected to tourist photos at Rakssetra, but why? As I mentioned earlier in the contextual background, users

on social media want to have pleasant experiences and maintain their social relations with like-minded people which also helps them develop social and cultural capital. (Manovich, 2017, p.117; Taylor, 2021, p. 65; Kumar et al., 2021, p.169; Davcik et al. 2021, p. 4). So by publishing a new personalized version of a popular photo users are showing their connectivity to a community and depending on how well this will be received, they obtain social and cultural capital.

In the photo analysis, I have addressed different typical photos from each destination which shows that the same phenomenon of recreating photos is popular in the other destination as well and there are several variations to the vernacular for each destination and not only one single vernacular. This makes sense, as Manovich states that the cultural and social values of a location have a great influence on the vernacular related to that region. (Manovich, 2017, p. 26). As an example, the vernacular dialect that is central to the Bødal pier is presenting it as a surreal place and as I discussed in the analysis this is greatly dependent on both the aesthetic of the photo that went viral and also to the history of the pier not being widely known.

The vernaculars are not only for the composition which is practiced but there are vernaculars for editing these photos as well, either to achieve a more contrast in the photographs which picture a sunny day or to give a completely cold hue to the cloudy photographs. As Masdari and Hosseini point out, Instagram filters that users apply to their photographs also result in defined and uniform aesthetics on Instagram. (2020, p.63). But also editing and applying filters can be considered generally one of the basic considerations to achieve more Instagramism (Manovich, 2017, p. 81) which is the leading platform vernacular on the platform. Users have used Instagram affordances to enhance the atmospheric condition which again can increase Instagramism.

How does this narrow and defined Instagramism form? Users on Instagram are both audiences and producers. (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p. 59). So a person who watches other holiday photographs and likes them or maybe even drops a comment under the post, can at the same time produce their content and have other audiences. As Jalali & Papatla highlight, UGC is a form of

individual influence of users on each other. (2016, p. 377) While users are in the audience role, they observe the photographs and get inspiration and maybe new ideas that they can use while they are in the producer's role. An example of this in the analysis system was the photo that @tomerikss has shared, which is obviously a recreation of the flying woman at the Bødal pier.

As I mentioned in the analysis, photographs that got shared by Instagram accounts with a large number of followers have received a lot of attention in form of likes, and comments, and consequently getting shared again and again on other accounts. Selected data for the thesis shows that users follow the aesthetics of these well-known photographs more precisely and try to take and share very similar content. It shows that the number of likes gives more validity and capital to the photo and makes it a safer vernacular dialect to practice to receive attention. The level of creativity decreases by this act, but there is an important point in this, which shows users that make similar content on purpose are to a larger extent looking for acceptance from their audiences and followers by making something that is already approved- in the form of likes and popularity- by others followers. This is not rare as Aalen & Hoem Iversen mention an important quality in the social human being and that is not anything but that we try to show our best on social media to be cherished and accepted by others. ( 2021, p. 64) Referring to my research question, this can partly answer it, that tourist content that has received a considerable amount of attention has a direct influence on how other users make their content and defines the vernacular dialect of these locations.

Tagging photos with different hashtags is one of the affordances or platform vernacular of Instagram (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 258) that makes distributing content very manageable. Hashtags allow Instagram users, in this case, Instagram travelers, to find the content they want to see or to find the right audiences for their content which are other users who are interested in the type of content they publish. Users learn about the Instagram platform vernacular and valid Instagramism for their community by observing other users' content (Manovich, 2017, p. 133) By this, I mean that observing the vernacular of a location can easily be done by searching for relevant hashtags to the area.



Searching for hashtags on Instagram to find photographs related to a topic or a place is a feature that many users use. As the hashtags get more specific, the photos also get more similar, like the Rakssetra hashtag is narrower in dimension than the Loen hashtag which I described in the methodology chapter. If users engage with these photographs, their chance of seeing similar content on their timeline increases as the result of Instagram algorithms, (Rettberg, 2019, p. 11) which again exposes them to similar content and influences the user even more, either to travel to the destination or to practice the same vernacular dialect to create content in those destinations.

As Skinner specifies, tourist Instagram users are consumers of destinations (2018, p.13), and also many users choose their destination based on information on Instagram. (Taylor, 2020, p.64; Kumar et al., 2021, p.169). Considering this, it is probable that users will check different tags on Instagram to check “Instagrammability” (Taylor, 2020, p 64; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169) of their destination which can get them familiar with the vernaculars that are common for their destination. For example, being an observer of #rakssetra for a while before visiting the area and being the producer of the #rakssetra, and giving new contributions to the community helps the vernaculars continue to be valid for a longer period of time. This is something that we can find traces of in the captions, such as “Finally we got to Rakssetra” in @elisabeth\_o.c’s post.

The viral photos of Rakssetra, the pier at the Feriesenter, and the Bødal pier have a huge role in representing a “destination image” (Munar, 2011, p. 297) for these locations. Being exposed to these photos encourages users to make similar contributions to the Instagram community, which also helps them “establish their social self” (Davicik et al., 2021, p.16) and in return gain social capital (Taylor, 2020, p 65; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169).

Jalali & Papatla mention that the composition, originality, and aesthetic values of the photos have a critical role in how much attention the post gets. (2016, p. 355) This can explain why the viral photos which were analyzed in the previous chapter have received a lot of Instagram credit and why users want to copy them. In addition, it was mentioned in the analysis chapter that all three

photos that have received a lot of attention and are being recreated by other users have very powerful “punctum”. (Barthes, 1981, p. 26). The lady with the white dress, the three women dipping in the lake, and the flying women are the punctum which was referred to. These are elements in the photos that catch attention and are unforgettable. It is not bizarre that other Instagram users want to borrow these punctum and make unforgettable photos for their audiences. This can also help the Instagramers to make something cooler than their everyday life photographs. In other words, this is what Manovich refers to as breaking the conventions of traditional and casual photos to create a more designed photo. (Manovich, 2017, p. 122)

Visitors usually take photos with their phones and therefore have the opportunity to take as many photos as they finally are satisfied with the result, so they have the affordance of taking such photos that they have enjoyed watching. This is the reason Flusser claims that taking photos is not a creative process anymore. (Flusser, 2000, p. 69). I think published photos are not necessarily the most creative and best photos one takes, but they are more representative according to the image that the location already has on Instagram. Even users who choose to share different angles and varied photos try to share at least a photo that is more in line with the trending vernaculars. This way users can also represent themselves and their lifestyles in the way they would like which is one of the main reasons why users publish photos on social media. (Rettberg, 2014, p. 2; Aalen & Hoem Iversen, 2021, p. 67)

## 5.2 Emphasizing the Location and The Place

Another finding of the photo analysis is that the data clearly shows users care about the place they visited and would like to emphasize it with repetitive photos of the same angle and including a very specific element of the destination in their photos. One of the most common features of all photos I studied was that the essential message of the photograph is the location. Users either include a recognizable scene or elements such as the piers that are recognizable in their photographs, as well as either pin the location or hashtag the location. According to Sontag,

the travel photo is the proof of the visit for the tourist (2005, p. 6), and this can to a great extent explain that visitors to the studied locations want to document their visit to this particular place, and perhaps also document that they visited it in the way that others visited it? An example that even the caption of the post addressed this was @mmmaja's post with the caption "Oblig bilde when in Loen." But still there need to be other explanations for why they share repetitive photos and not from other angles.

According to Munar UGC has a great influence on "destination image" (Munar, 2011, p.297), and by destination image, she is referring to the understanding and the image that the users have in mind of the specific destination. Taking the same photos in Rakssetra from the same angle including the view and the two cabins, including the Lovaten Feriesenter pier diagonally in the photo, and having the Bødal pier as the full foreground has been repeated a lot. Not only do these photos establish vernacular dialect for other users, but also these elements consequently turn to Instagram aesthetics which helps create the desired ambiance in the users' feed.

Also, they make an image in the potential travelers' minds of these destinations. So when the Instagramer tourists are at the location and visit the area they finally see the familiar scene and representation of the area, they might not even pay attention to the rest or they might actively search for finding the known view. I would like to repeat Manoviche's quote that he said users who take casual photos are like "If your image looks like many images you have seen before, capture it." (Manovich, 2017, p. 53). So the visitors who have seen the familiar scene will take a photo and share it and as I mentioned in the contextual background one of the key characteristics of tourist photos is being at a specific location. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. 25)

In the analysis chapter, I mentioned shortly the practices that I had seen at these three locations. Although at every location visitors were very busy taking photos and documenting their visit, the most strange for me was how visitors acted at Bødal pier. Visitors at the Bødal pier did all their activities only to take photos and videos and when they were done they just left the location. Although it was very surprising to me, at least for those visitors that I met that day, documenting

their visit to the pier was more important than enjoying that place. What I observed was a clear example of what Sontag refers to. “A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it—by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir.” (Sontag, 2005, p. 6). Here the experience is to create these photos, of the same location from the same angle.

I have been to each location for a few hours, I can not generalize what I observed but what is worth mentioning is that these differences are barely visible in the photos. I get the impression that for some users being satisfied with the content they make for Instagram is as important or maybe even more important than enjoying their time in actual life. Masdari and Hosseini do also point out to this in their article, that the worth of sharing the moment with others is more than enjoying the experiment itself. (2020, p.66). Tourists turn their holiday experience to Instagram posts, which according to Sontag are their souvenirs and these souvenirs can be considered as their units of credit. As I mentioned in the contextual background, I believe that some Instagram users plan their daily activities or in this case even their trips to produce Instagram content, this is an indicator of how important this platform has become for the users.

In addition to this, repeating these scenes could help the users gain social capital as it is a means of showing they know the vernacular dialect related to the location. This again means that they are following certain types of accounts or hashtags. On the other hand, these destinations are mostly associated with summer holidays and vacations, so emphasizing the visit to these places can mean the affordance of being free and disconnected from everyday life and enjoying their time in nature which can also have an effect on their cultural capital. Norwegian culture and national identity are tightly connected to the landscape and natural characteristics of the country (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 81), consequently, outdoor activities have a special place in Norwegian culture. This can explain why visiting these destinations and swimming, even if it is only for the sake of taking photos, and hiking is considered a way of maintaining and gaining cultural capital.

Moreover, the “Instagrammability” (Taylor, 2020) of these frames can also justify why they are getting repeated. Users producing very similar UGC of the same location indicate that they are updating the image that they present of themselves according to the community and the network that they have. (Taylor, 2020, p 65; Kumar et al., 2021, p. 169). Sharing an Instagram post to show that a user is one of the exclusive visitors of the Bødal pier, or presenting a photograph that is taken at Rakssetra while the subject is sitting calmly and enjoying the picturesque view are examples that Instagram users try to show improved representations of themselves. A better self-representation means a better network and more social and cultural capital for the Instagram user.

According to Larsen & Sandbye, some tourist destinations are associated with “emotional geographies” (2014, p.25) and that is what UGC related to the Bødal pier in the collected data indicates. It seems that what is important for the users is that they have been to a special hidden place. The destination is considered a hidden gem that can qualify the place as an exclusive location and this can make the visitors feel special. Moreover, visiting this pier is a sign of being a part of a network, and being a member of a network helps people gain social capital. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 21) And gaining social capital can help these users gain cultural capital as well. In the users' linguistic message under the Instagram posts in the data samples from Bødal pier, it appears that there are different emotions affiliated with this place, a place that is magical and calm and not widely known. In my opinion, users are looking to credit themselves with cultural capital by publishing a post that refers to these characteristics, and including a visual element of the place makes sending these connotations to the audience easier.

### 5.3 Norwegian Identity and Culture

Another major finding from the photo analysis is that users want to show their connection to Norway in their photographs taken in these locations. Photographs of Norway’s landscape and nature had an effective role in the country's tourism in the early 20th century. (Larsen & Lien,

2007, p. 82). These natural characteristics are still an important part of Norwegian tourist photos. In the photographs from Rakssetra, mountains, valleys, fjords, and cabins play a huge role in presenting Norway in the photographs. In the photos beside the Loenvatnet lake, the mountains in the background and the lake and the boat in the lake make a Norwegian romantic nationalism scenery. National identity in Norway is strongly tied to the natural characteristics of the country which distinguishes Norway's landscape from other countries, (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 81) and is therefore the reason why users insist on showing their connection.

According to the collected data, users tend to intensify their connotation of national identity in the "linguistic message" (Barthes, 1977, p. 16) by mentioning Norway and the icon of the Norwegian flag. This is a quite established platform vernacular among the visitors. These types of linguistic messages are more common under the Loenvatn Feriester posts than in the other two locations. Perhaps as this location presents fewer characteristics of Norwegian scenery compared to Rakssetra, the linguistic message is a way of complementing the national bond for users.

Also as was discussed in the last chapter, the recreation of the Norwegian flag colors is very bold in photos of women in the white dress at Rakssetra. Another way of showing the connectivity to Norwegian culture, as was discussed, is by showing presence in nature and doing outdoor activities, like in the photo that Svarstad posted of herself in the victory pose. So users have been trying to both represent Norway and its culture in their posts, either by picturing the romantic landscape or by linguistic messages. Some have chosen the symbol of the Norwegian flag in the caption, others have used the actual flag and another group has recreated the Norwegian flag.

In addition, users show their appreciation and connection to Norway in their captions. Messages like "tourist i eget land" or "vårt fantastiske land" and "Dreamy Norway" are examples where the user shows their positive emotions about being a tourist in their own country. As I stated before, the data for this research are photos that were published during the lockdown in Norway because of the Covid-19 pandemic. So these messages are also a form of showing gratitude for

being able to rediscover the natural national resources and destinations. Being at Bødal pier and discovering this place can also be a way of showing that users are on an adventure in Norway and that the country is like a hidden paradise. Moreover, showing connection to Norway and representations of Norway in any form is a way of showing that the person belongs to a larger community, a culture, a nation, and a country. Being a part of a community helps people to gain prestigious, symbolic, and economic capital. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 21-22). And by showing their connection they are reminding themselves and others of this social status.

As the German philosopher Herder stated already in the late 18th century, national culture and identity elements usually adjust as time passes but what is based on geographical characteristics is more stable as they do not change. (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 81). At the beginning of the twentieth-century photography was a great aid for Norway to represent its national identity and also attract tourists (Larsen & Lien, 2007, p. 82). In contrast to the early 20th century taking photographs is not exclusive to a few photographers. In the earlier chapters, I discussed that having high-quality phone cameras and speedy internet in the era of Web 2.0, has resulted in a visual revolution. User-generated content is also an inseparable part of this era. (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. xvii). In addition to this due to the Covid pandemic, travel practices of people living in Norway changed, and traveling inside Norway became more common in 2020 and 2021. The findings of this study show that all this resulted in a new wave of visual presentations of Norway in the form of UGC on Instagram. It seems like each Norwegian Instagram user who travels inside the country is an online ambassador of Norway on Instagram. So in the twenty-first century, again photography, this time on Instagram, is attracting Norwegian tourists to Norwegian destinations.

The majority of these photographs are however very cliché and lack novelty. Photographs are taken from the same angles and it seems like the photographers' goal has been to include all the natural and romantic characteristics of the location in their photograph. Another point is that users are very loyal to the "destination image" (Munar, 2011, p.297) that is formed by UGC of these locations, so the Instagram users try to present the same image of Rakssetra or the pier at

Loenvatn Feriesenter over and over. Another explanation for this repetition is as was said before Instagramism (Manovich, 2017, p.81). It can also be explained as these destination images have opened their way to the grammar of tourism photos and are very popular vernaculars at the moment which can absolutely change.

Another cliché in these photographs is that there is no crowd in the photo and the presentation of these locations on Instagram is therefore not very realistic. This is the opposite of what Munar has in 2011 stated, that the photos shared by tourists are more real compared to the destination management organizations. (Munar, 2011, p.297) A lot has changed since then and showing the whole reality is not what Instagram users prioritize. A picture-perfect photo and a designed feed are of more importance. Saying that I would also refer to “Every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent” (Barthes, 1981, p. 76). However, these photos are not showing the whole reality but they are a representation of the moment of taking the photo.

However, the recreations also come with some variations. This perhaps can be explained by the wish of tourists to also be the creator of a new destination image tied to the places. While the original viral photo had the woman in a white dress included to add the “Missing” white color, needed to represent the flag, others have taken this specific item “the white dress”, and created other depictions of the place with a lady in a white dress, but not with emphasized red cabin and blue water to make up a flag. They take the punctum of an image and try to make new punctum with new connotations in new photos. Another example of these variations is @rubenropstad’s photo beside the Bødal pier, representing a powerful presentation of himself in the location, but still creating the dreaminess of the location by how the foreground is dark and the pier is in the focus.

From this discussion of the analysis, it is, therefore, possible for me to answer my research question and make a conclusion.



## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to shed light on the platform vernaculars which are practiced related to the tourist photographs that are shared on Instagram from Western Norway and to answer the research question: “How and why do tourist photographs from the western part of Norway shared on Instagram influence other Instagram users' practices?” My research addresses this by doing a qualitative analysis of users' photos posted on Instagram depicting 3 specific places in the western part of Norway, with their own hashtags.

The study finds that Instagram tourist content from Rakssetra, the pier beside the Loenvatn Feriesenter, and the Bødal pier has defined a specified destination image of these locations, and through discussing this by relating these photos to platform vernaculars, I reach the conclusion that photo tourism of these places both follows an identifiable way of photo style which Manovich calls Instagramism and thus follows the platform vernacular in terms of the style of photos posted. This is for instance recognized by how the same motive is “copied” by other users, once a particular motive first goes viral. Copied, by not just taking a photo of the same place, but also staging the photo in the same way, as with the woman in the white dress shown from behind. However, there are variations, and users are also playing on the original motive, making their own versions. This is for instance the case with the photo @katrinemads1 posted on Instagram.

The analysis of this thesis indicates that the majority of Instagram photos that are related to the three destinations which were studied for this research are not casual photos and have a significant degree of Instagramism. These photos are mostly staged and designed to follow the platform vernaculars that is trendy at the time. On the other hand, these vernaculars are so repeated and so commonly used that it could be concluded that Instagramism as a vernacular is the new casual photos of these destinations on Instagram. Casual tourism photography is not really casual in our networked world, especially when it is published to be shared and seen by others. A better description is that tourist photos are clearly designed photos, they are practicing vernacular dialects related to the destination but also another characteristic of these photos is to

take photos of the same thing, the same view from the same angle. The reason for this is that the social and cultural capital that one can get from going to a specific tourist destination and taking the same photograph is so important for this specific vernacular.

We also know from earlier research that UGC on social media influences tourist destination image and destination selection which is also seen in this study. Moreover, gaining social and cultural capital plays a critical role in why these vernaculars are practiced. Going to a tourist destination and knowing how to photograph it shows that you are an Instagram tourist, a good tourist taking good photos, as Rettberg calls them when referring to the aesthetics of Instagram photos. (Rettberg, 2019, p. 10)

This study has therefore been able to both strengthen the concept of Instagramism as logic for visual culture on Instagram, and also show how a platform's vernacular dialect influences how people take photos and how they share them, and how they look, as well as how it works in a feedback loop by practices they do also constituting this vernacular dialect. The study brings importance to taking in and understanding these concepts and how they shape destination photos depicting places on the Norwegian West Coast. Here, we see the cultural context of the long history of representing Norway in photographs repeating itself, showing off mountains, fjords, nature, history and even the flag itself represented in new ways, both in the photos and as emojis in the captions. Norway is both "naturally" designed in red, white, and blue (Rakssetra), and also full of hidden gems, serving as a springboard where you can find your path into nature or jump in it, head first. Designed, of course.

## 6.1 Limitations and Future Studies

I want to point out some limitations of this thesis. The first factor that might be considered a weakness of this study is that I had only access to publicly shared photos and that could be considered a filter in itself, which means that all these photos have a common goal of being seen

and might not be representative of the tourist photographs from same locations taken and shared on private accounts, and those shared without using the hashtags I used as a query for my data collection. However, this can also strengthen my study because I am particularly interested in the photos that are shared and are meant for strangers to be seen and shared. The other limitation is that this is a qualitative analysis based on a limited number of photographs of a few locations, so the results can not be generalized to all tourist photographs from every destination, and perhaps not even to Norway in general, but still, the result can give an insight into the trends of tourist photographs from the locations I studied.

A possible future study would compare photos from different rural places in Norway to investigate if the same similar type of idea of Norway is present in all places. As well as motives. As social media is always undergoing changes and development and new features will be introduced on different platforms, therefore users are also adapting and changing their practices constantly. The photographs that were studied for this thesis were published during the pandemic. As further research, it will be interesting to have a follow-up study and investigate if the practices of users and aesthetics of photographs from the same location will change after the pandemic is over and traveling practices worldwide changes. By this, I mean to study if international visitors will practice the same vernaculars as the Norwegian visitors do, or maybe to see if the vernaculars slowly fade with fewer Norwegian visitors to the area. It will also be interesting to follow how the destination images develop.

## 7. References

1. Aalen, I. & Hoem Iversen, M. (2021). *Sosiale medier*. Oslo: Fagbokforlaget.
2. Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text*. London: Fontana Press.
3. Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang
4. Bourdieu, P. (2005). The forms of capital. I S. J. Ball (Ed.), *The RoutledgeFalmer reader in sociology of education* (p. 15-29). London and New York: Routledge/Falmer.
5. Cohen, C.K. (2005). 'What does the photoblog want?', *Media, Culture, Society*, 27: 883-901.
6. Davcik, N., Langaro, D., Jevons, C., & Nascimento, R., (2021). Non-sponsored brand-related user-generated content: Effects and mechanisms of consumer engagement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2020-2971>
7. Dean, B. (2021, September 10) How Many People Use Instagram In 2021? [How Many People Use Instagram? 95+ User Statistics \(2021\) \(backlinko.com\)](https://backlinko.com/how-many-people-use-instagram-95-user-statistics-2021/)
8. Flusser, V. (2000). *Towards a philosophy of photography*. London: Reaktion books.
9. Gadamer, H. (1960). *Truth and method* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
10. Gibbs, M., Meese, J., Arnold, M., Nansen, B. & Carter, M. (2015) #Funeral and Instagram: death, social media, and platform vernacular, *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(3), p. 255-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152>
11. Griffin, M. S. (1987). *Amateur photography and pictorial aesthetics: Influences of organization and industry on cultural production* (Ph.D.). University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
12. Hansen, M. B. N. (2010). New media. In W. J. T. Mitchell & M. B. N. Hansen (Red.), *Critical terms for media studies* (p. 172-185). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
13. Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.
14. Henriksen, G. (2022, February, 25) Høyeste antall Norgesreiser som er målt noen gang <https://www.ssb.no/transport-og-reiseliv/reiseliv/statistikk/reiseundersokelsen/>

15. Hinton, S. & Hjorth, L. (2013). Participation and user created content. In Understanding social media (p. 55-76). Los Angeles: Sage.
16. Mosseri, A. (2022, March 23) Control your Instagram Feed with Favorites and Following <https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/favorites-and-following>
17. Jalali, N. Y. & Papatla, P. (2016). The palette that stands out: Color composition of online curated visual UGC that attracts higher consumer interaction. *Springer Science*, 14, 353-384.
18. Kumar, T. B. J. , Goh, S-K., & Balaji, M. S. (2021). Sharing travel related experiences on social media – Integrating social capital and face orientation. *Journal of vacation marketing*, 27(2): p. 168-186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766720975047>
19. Kvarv, S. (2014). Vitenskapsteori: Tradisjoner, posisjoner og diskusjoner (2nd ed.). Novus.
20. Larsen, J. & Sandby, M. (2014). Digital snaps: The new face of photography. New York: Tauris.
21. Larsen, P. & Lien, S. (2007). Norsk fotohistorie: frå daguerreotypi til digitalisering. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
22. Larsen, P. & Lien, S. (2008). Om å lese bilder (p. 415-427). *Kunsten å lese bilder*. Oslo:Spartacus forlag.
23. Li, Y. & Xie, Y. (2020) Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? An Empirical Study of Image Content and Social Media Engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research* 57(1), p. 1-19.
24. Manovich, L. (2017) Instagram and contemporary image. All text is available Online under Creative Commons license. <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image>
25. Masdari, F. & Hosseini, S. H. (2020) The aesthetics of Instagram: Exploring the aesthetics of visual and semantic aspects of Instagram, *Journal of Cyberspace Studies* 5 (1) 59 - 78 [https://jcss.ut.ac.ir/article\\_83943.html](https://jcss.ut.ac.ir/article_83943.html)
26. Molz, J. G. (2012). Travel connections: Tourism, Technology and Togetherness in a Mobile World, London: Routledge.

27. Munar, M. A. (2011). Tourist created content: rethinking destination branding. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 5 (3), p. 291–305.
28. Rettberg, J. W. (2014). Seeing ourselves through technology: *How we use selfies, blogs, and wearable devices to see and shape ourselves*. London: Palgrave MacMillian
29. Rettberg, j. W. (2019). Seeing through algorithms. *Norsk Medietidsskrift*, 27 (1-2019), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN.0805-9535-2019-01-03>
30. Schwartz, D. (1986). Camera Clubs and Fine Art Photography: The Social Construction of an Elite Code. *Urban Life*, 15(2), 165–195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124168601500202>
31. Skinner, H. (2018). Who really creates the place brand? Considering the role of user generated content in creating and communicating a place identity. *Communication & Society*, 31(4), p. 9-25
32. Smith, A.N., Fischer, E. & Yongjian, C. (2012), How Does Brand-related User-generated Content Differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter?, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2) p. 102–113.
33. Sontag, S. (2005) *On Photography*, New York: Rosettabooks.
34. Sunde, F. (2020, August 8). Det turkise vannet skjuler en dyster historie. [Det turkise vannet skjuler en dyster historie \(tv2.no\)](#)
35. Taylor, D. G. (2020) Putting the “self” in the selfies: how narcissism, envy and self-promotion motivate sharing of travel photos through social media. *Routledge*, 37(1), 64-77.
36. Van Dijck, J. (2008). Digital photography: communication, identity, memory. *Visual communication*, 7(1): p. 57-76.
37. Østbye, H., Helland, K., Knapskog, k., Larsen, L. O. & Moe, H. (2007). *Metodebok For Mediefag*, (3th ed) Oslo: Fagbokforlaget
38. Østbye, H., Helland, K., Knapskog, k., Larsen, L. O. & Moe, H. (2013). *Metodebok For Mediefag*, (4th ed) Oslo: Fagbokforlaget

## 8. Instagram References

1. Amanda Helsem Leine. [@amandaleine]. (2021, August 8). 🇳🇴 *Fin avslutning på helga!* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSU47yKC3vU/>
2. Anette Augusta [@anetteaugustaa]. (2019, August 11). *Ferien du var fin! ❤️ Fint å komme tilbake på jobb i mårrå med sånne her ferieminner 😊* [Photograph] Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B1CCt0loMI1/>
3. Ariane 🍀 🌸 [@arian\_ou]. (2021, August 5). *Amazing Norway 🇳🇴 🥰 🏠* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSMOMLRqbsT/>
4. Elizabeth [@elisabeth\_o.c.]. (2021, July 31). [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSAB-vpMAT8/>
5. Ewa Stensrød [@ewastensrod]. (2021, August 4). 📍 *Raksetra Loen 🍷 Nydelig utsikt 🥰 🥰* [Photograph]. Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/p/CSKrqc0Ab\\_m/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CSKrqc0Ab_m/)
6. Frank R. Dahl. [@frank.dahl]. (2019, July 17) *God morgen Loen 🙌 ❤️* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0ApTSSoXfj/>
7. Frank R. Dahl. [@frank.dahl]. (2020, July 4). *Love the smell of summer 🌸 🌸 🍀* [Photograph]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCONomolNoF/>
8. Frank R. Dahl. [@frank.dahl] (2021, May 31). *Omgitt av vakker og vill natur 🌿, med bratte fjell, fjorder, isbreer, ville elver og fosser overalt. Mere nasjonalromantisk blir det vel ikke? 🇳🇴* [Photograph]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPiyy4gsRsZ/>
9. Hanna Elisabeth Lindland [@hannalindland]. (2021, June 11). *Raksetra 🏠 Such an idyllic place with these tiny houses along the mountainside, with views of Olden and Loen looking like something from a postcard! 📧* [Photograph] Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CP--p9ujA9W/>
10. Hanna Karoline. [@hannaakarolinee]. (2021, July 12). *Exploring Norway with my best friends gives me so much joy 🙌 🙌.* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CRO0u4zKFP1/>
11. Insta Repeat [insta\_repeat]. [account]. Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/insta\\_repeat/](https://www.instagram.com/insta_repeat/)

12. Katrine Andreassen Lindøe [@katrinelindoe]. (2021, October 17). *Høsten er kommer for fullt, & jeg savner dagene i B I K I N I* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVHr5b7IuwB/>
13. Katrine Norway[@katrinemads1]. (2021, September 23). *Ser etter nye eventyr rundt alle hjørner* 😍❤️ [Photograph]. Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/p/CUI4y6\\_LDqG/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CUI4y6_LDqG/)
14. Kjersti Kvamme [@kjerstikvamme]. [account]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/kjerstikvamme/>
15. Malin Lunde[@maliinlunde]. (2021, June 18). *Rakssetra* ❤️ (før den ble opptråkket 🤢) [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQRCCChhBPaf/>
16. Maja Midttun Mæland. [@mmmaja]. (2020, September 12). *oblig bilde when in Loen* 🏔️😍 [Photograph]. Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/p/CFCQk\\_jkFD/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CFCQk_jkFD/)
17. Norway NO [@norge]. (2019, August 4). *Summer at Lovatnet* ☀️😍🇳🇴🏔️ Tag someone you would jump in with! 💧 [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0v-Qo2jiGs/>
18. Norway NO [@norge]. (2020, June 1). *Perfect day at Lovatnet* ☀️😍🇳🇴🏔️ Tag someone you would jump in with! [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA43p66jXqs/>
19. Norway NO [@norge]. (2020, August 13). *Morning at the beautiful Lovatnet* 🇳🇴 Tag a friend you would be here with! [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CD0fXO6Dh5p/>
20. Norway NO [@norge]. (2021, April 19). *The beautiful Lovatnet* 🇳🇴☀️ Tag a friend you would be here with! [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CN2TuxeDr2G/>
21. NORWAY NO [@Norge]. (2021, May, 21). *Perfect day at Lovatnet* ☀️😍🇳🇴🏔️ Tag someone you would jump in with! [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CPIapNHjWZ\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CPIapNHjWZ_/)
22. Norway NO [@norge]. (2021, May 31). *Summer in Norway* 😍🇳🇴 Can you name this place? [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPjm9BjDU9B/>



23. Ragnhild Norderhus [@tanteerling]. (2021, August 27) *Tb til sist helg og roadtripp på Vestlandet.* [Photograph]. Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/p/CTFXvIBqy-\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CTFXvIBqy-_/)
24. Renate Hem [@renatehem]. (2021, June 8). *Rakssetra in Loen, Norway 🤩 This view is only a 30 minute hike away, if you're in Loen. Just sayin 💛🌟* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CP2YAjQA-tn/>
25. Ruben Waage Ropstad [@rubenropstad]. (2020, July 17). *Found the infamous Loen pier I've seen all over instagram. There are a lot of people in the area, but we actually had this gem of a spot all to ourselves for a good hour and a half. Really beautiful spot if you can find it!* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCwPohHH4T-/>
26. Rune Bjelland. [@bjelland.rune]. (2021, August 5). *Hopper i det* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSMXPnz-19/>
27. Santa Svarstad [@santadesvassa]. (2021, August 27). *Worth a visit 🇳🇴🏔️* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CTE1ruptBVV/>
28. Sebastian Rasch [@sebastianrasch]. (2021, June 21). *Naturen var hakket bedre enn stupinga på denne turen* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/COYjpuvAxwA/>
29. STINE. [@stiinii]. (2020, August 11). *Dreamy Norway ❤️🇳🇴* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CDwjntXHB6X/>
30. Theresa . [@theresaa86]. (2020, September 9). *Take me away, to better days🌞 Back to this paradies♥* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CE6zGF0n8Te/>
31. Tom Erik Steen 🇳🇴. [@tomerikss]. (2021, August 2). *It's Monday! Let's fly away 🦅 Loen was great! I will be back ✨* [Photograph]. Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSEwPI0jJ0-/>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Screenshot of the photo shared by Kjersti Kvamme on Instagram.

Figure 2: A snap I have taken of the Summer episode by Dahl, Tehran.

Figure 3: A screenshot of insta\_repeat's post

Figure 4: Raksetra, taken summer 2021

Figure 5: Screenshot of a photograph of Lovatnet Feriesenter on Instagram

Figure 6: A photo I took at Bødal's pier, July 2021

Figure 7: Screenshot of @frank.dahl's post on Instagram

Figure 8: Screenshot of @hannalindland's post on Instagram

Figure 9: Screenshot of @maliinlunde's post on Instagram

Figure 10: Screenshot of @stiiniiiii's post on Instagram

Figure 11: Screenshot of @katrinemads1's post on Instagram

Figure 12: Screenshot of @renatehem's photo on Instagram

Figure 13: Screenshot of @elisabeth\_o.c on Instagram

Figure 14: Screenshot of @santadesvassa's post on Instagram

Figure 15: Screenshot of @arian\_ou's post on Instagram

Figure 16: Screenshot of @ewastensrod's post on Instagram

Figure 17: Screenshot of @norge's post on Instagram

Figure 18: Screenshot of @sebastianrasch's post on Instagram

Figure 19: Screenshot of @katrinelindoe's post on Instagram

Figure 20: Screenshot of @hannaakarolinee's post on Instagram

Figure 21: Screenshot of @amandaleine's post on Instagram

Figure 22: Screenshot of @mmmaja's post on Instagram

Figure 23: Screenshot of *Theresa*'s post on Instagram

Figure 24: Screenshot of @norge's post on Instagram

Figure 25: Screenshot of @bjelland.rune's post on Instagram

Figure 26: Screenshot of @tomerikss's post on Instagram

Figure 27: Screenshot of @rubenropstad's post on Instagram