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Chinese independent travelers in the Nordic region:
A netnographic study of tourist motivation

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Abstract: This study investigated the travel motivation of Chinese travelers who chose the Nordic region as a travel destination. The main methodology adopted in this study is netnography, and the main theoretical framework applied is the push-pull model, as it is suitable to work out my research question. Through analysis, some new findings and new concepts that are previously not included have been found. The value of the worldwide influential brands has been considered as part of pull factors of a tourism destination. In addition, demotivation is an important supplement to consider when applying the push-pull model.

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1. Introduction

The five countries in the Nordic region, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, have always been famous for their beautiful scenery and unique culture, and are sought after by travelers all over the world. In recent years, they have made Chinese tourists more interested in them through various promotional activities. Finland, where you can live in a glass house to watch the Aurora and where you can use Alipay; Denmark, calling for Chinese foodies to help eat oysters; Iceland, where the Great Wall in "Game of Thrones" is filmed... In recent years, the impression of Chinese tourists on the five Nordic countries has gradually changed from mysterious, remote, and cold to accessible and splendid, attracting more and more Chinese tourists to the Nordic region. Due to the geographical and cultural differences between the Nordic region and China, many Chinese travelers are eager to visit this wonderful land. China has become a growing and emerging overseas market for the tourism industry of the Nordic countries.

Also, statistics show that Chinese outbound tourists have maintained rapid growth in recent years. According to McKinsey & Company (2018)'s report about Chinese outbound travelers, in 2017, Chinese travelers made more than 4 billion domestic trips and 131 million overseas trips. China is already the world's largest outbound tourism market and will develop furthermore. More than 70% of Chinese travelers choose to travel with family or friends. These groups spend the most per single trip all over the world. There is more room for growth in spending: McKinsey & Company (2018) expected an annual growth rate of 6.1% in the next few years.

Chinese tourists are showing more interest in the Nordic region than before. The survey data of McKinsey & Company (2018) indicates some new characteristics and preferences of Chinese tourists, which includes that the Nordic region has become a more attractive travel destination than ever before for them. Besides, Chinese tourists show that they tend to pay more attention to the special experience gained during travel and are willing to understand local people and have some local experience.

In the context of the development of China's outbound tourism, this thesis focuses on Chinese tourists who choose the Nordic region as their tourist destination. Specifically, I would like to take Chinese independent travelers in Nordic region as the main research target. Independent travelers refer to those who are likely to travel alone or in small self-organized groups without the dependency on tourism intermediary and agency (Xiang, 2013). Independent outbound tourists tend to share their thoughts and experiences publicly on the Internet, which can make it easier for scholars to obtain the true thoughts of this group (Pearce, P. L., Wu, M., & Osmond, 2013). The reason for the choice is also because I have lived in Sweden for more than two years as a Chinese, and have witnessed the influx of Chinese independent travelers visiting the Nordic region. Additionally, the development and growth of Chinese independent travelers are increasingly attracting the attention of scholars (Xiang, 2013).

Studying the behavioral motivation of these travelers is of far-reaching significance for the tourism

industry in the Nordic region, which will potentially help the industry to provide better services to the growing number of tourists in this group. Motivation is regarded as the driver of human behavior that enforces individuals to arrange activities to meet their demands (Li, Zhang, & Cai, 2016) and tourist motivation aims to understand tourists 'travel behavior' (Li et al., 2016). Tourist motivation study is a part of the core in the field of tourism study (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). The study of tourism motivation is regarded as the basis of any effort to be obtained on travel behavior and has therefore been an important topic in the leisure and tourism literature. However, except for the study conducted by Huijbens & Alessio (2015) and Larsen & Wolff (2019), there is little research on Chinese independent tourists who choose the Nordic region as their travel destination. In the current academic research that can be found, the attention paid to these tourists to the Nordic region is far from enough, while research in this area is imminent.

Hence, the research purpose of this study is to understand Chinese independent travelers' motivation to the Nordic countries through the push-pull theoretical model and give out some reflections and implications based on the analysis. Additionally, netnography as an emerging unobtrusive methodology is applied when collecting data for this research.

Accordingly, the research question of the thesis is as follows:

What are the motivations of Chinese independent travelers visiting the Nordic region?
1) What are the internal reasons for Chinese travelers to visit the Nordic region?
2) What are the external reasons for Chinese travelers to visit the Nordic region?

2. Literature review

2.1 Tourist motivations

In tourism literature, tourist motivations studies aim to understand tourists 'travel behavior' (Li et al., 2016). Motivation is considered a driver of human behavior (Mook, 1996) that compels individuals to engage in activities to satisfy their needs (Li, Zhang, & Cai, 2016). Motivation is the total network of biological and cultural forces which give value and direction to travel choice, behavior, and experience (Pearce et al. 1998). Travel motivation refers to a series of needs and attitudes that predisposes a person towards a specific tourist activity (Pizam, A., Neumann, Y., & Reichel, A., 1979). Studies on tourist motivation have been a key part of the tourism literature since the research work of this field began (Bowen & Clarke, 2009).

Travel motivation studies attempt to answer the 'why' question, including 'why people travel' and 'why people choose a particular destination'. However, there are four reasons for the difficulties to measure why people travel (Crompton, 1979): (a) the unwillingness of tourists to reflect on real travel motives, (b) their inability to reflect on real travel motives, (c) their unwillingness to express real travel motives, and (d) their inability to express real travel motives (Dann, 1981). In the previous study of tourist motivation, several theories and models have been introduced and developed, such as the push-pull factor framework (Dann, 1977), the allocentric-psychocentric model (Plog, 1974), the escape-seeking model (Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991), and the travel career ladder model (Pearce & Lee, 2005). In the push-pull factor framework, people travel because they are "pushed" into travelling by internal reasons or factors and "pulled" by external factors, i.e. destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). The allocentric-psychocentric model proposed by Plog (1974) uses two types of personality to explain why tourists make certain choices for their travel. It starts from the traveler's perspective and does not consider the impacts of the characteristics of destinations on travel motivations. The escape-seeking model by Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola (1991) asserts that personal escape, personal seeking, interpersonal escape, and interpersonal seeking motivate tourism and recreation. Pearce & Lee (2005)'s travel career ladder model identifies five levels to explain tourists' motivations for travel, including 1) biological needs (specifically relaxation), 2) safety and security needs (or levels of stimulation), 3) relationship development and extension needs, 4) special interest and self-development needs, and 5) fulfillment or deep involvement needs akin to self-actualization.

Except for the push-pull factor framework (Dann, 1977), all the other models mentioned above only focus on the internal forces for tourist motivations. To investigate both the internal and external reasons for Chinese travelers to visit Nordic countries, the push-pull factor framework (Dann, 1977) that considers both travelers' internal factors and external factors (i.e. destination attributes) is more appropriate than other theoretical models for this study.

2.2   Push-pull model in tourist motivation research

2.2.1 The establishment of the theory

In Dann (1981)'s framework, the push domain focuses on the 'why' question (socio-psychological predisposition to travel) and the pull domain focused on 'where to' issues (destination choice decision).

The push-pull model is built and preliminarily developed by Dann (1977) and Crompton (1979), and it has been widely adopted to study tourist motivation since then (Dann, 1977; 1981; Crompton, 1979; Hanqin and Lam, 1999; Jang and Cai, 2002; Hsu and Lam, 2003). Push factors are defined as internal forces or motives that cause tourists to seek activities to reduce their needs, while pull factors are destination-generated forces and knowledge that tourists hold about a destination (Gnoth, 1997).

According to this theory, people travel because they are "pushed" into travelling by internal reasons or factors, or because they are "pulled" by external factors, such as destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). Push factors are origin in the internal desire of tourists for satisfying their psychological and inner demands. Push factors play a guiding role that predisposes individuals to travel. In contrast, pull factors are external factors to tourists, which are about benefits provided by particular destinations (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). These factors play an attractive role in the decision-making process of a traveler, determining where, when, and how the traveler decides for his vacation (Klenosky, 2002).

2.2.2 The relationship between push and pull factors

The push and pull factors in explaining tourists' motivation are two sides of the same coin (Crompton, 1979). People travel because they are pushed by their internal forces and simultaneously pulled by the external forces of a destination and its attributes (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Cha et al., 1995). It is emotion that plays the role of middleman to connect the psychological factors of both sides (Goossens & Cees, 2000).

As such, the push domain emphasizes the 'why' question, while the pull domain focuses on 'where to' issues (Klenosky, 2002). In other words, push factors as the needs and wants of tourists explain why they would like to get out of their resident places, whereas pull factors explain why certain places are chosen. The two factors are taken together to explicate how tourists' motivations arise in their decision-making process (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). Though the two decisions are made separately, they are not independent of each other. People make travel decisions because they are pushed by their internal demands as well as pulled by the external attractions from destinations and related travel products (Chul Oh, H., Uysal, M., & Weaver, P. A., 1995).

Due to the different functional definitions of push and pull factors, pull factors are more tangible, measurable and specific than push factors. Push factors are more connected with emotional and affective content and are harder to measure from a quantitative perspective (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). And thus, when analyzing with push and pull framework, it is important to capture the *interaction* between the factors.

The push-pull framework assumes a dynamic and interactive perspective, which sees motivational 'push' in response to destination 'pull' (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). Other researchers indicated that the pull factors of a destination are corresponding to the motivational push (Chul Oh, H., Uysal, M., & Weaver, P. A., 1995). As such, it is addressed that the attitude of a tourist toward a destination might be a measure of that destination's ability to pull the tourist. As follows, the push and pull factors as well as the application of the model in previous research are discussed.

2.2.3 The development and previous applications of the theory

Crompton (1979) identifies two clusters of motives, socio-psychological motives and cultural motives. In his research, nine motives had been generated based on an analysis of 39 unstructured interviews. There are seven socio-psychological motives including: escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction; those classified as cultural motives include: novelty and education. Although not precise, Crompton wishes to link these motives to push and pull factors by arguing that push factors for a vacation are socio-psychological motives, while pull factors are cultural motives.

Furthermore, Dann (1977) builds his theory on the basis of two conceptualizations: anomie and ego-enhancement. Taking a sociological approach to tourist motivation, Dann identifies anomie and ego-enhancement as two important travel motives. He later claims that both motives are push factors. Dann's sociological background is likely to influence the use of the term 'anomie', which is unfamiliar to the layman. Anomie refers to the desire to transcend the feeling of isolation obtained in everyday life, where the tourist simply wishes to 'get away from it all'. On the other hand, ego-enhancement derives from the level of personal needs. Just as in the need for social interaction, people wish to be recognized. The need to have one's ego enhanced or boosted is analogous to the desire for a 'bodily tune-up' (Dann, 1977).

Dann (1977) and Crompton (1979) adopt different methodologies to tourist motivation research. Crompton practiced a qualitative method by conducting unstructured interviews and content analysis, and the research process is inductive, which is similar to Pearce, P. L., & Caltabiano, M. L. (1983). On the contrary, Dann started his research by developing and empirically testing hypotheses, which is a deductive process. These two studies generated remarkable results in the research history of this model, thus both approaches are valuable for the upcomers.

2.2.4 Applications of push-pull model in tourism motivation research

Many studies have been conducted to apply the push and pull model in tourism motivation research and testify the push and pull model (See **Table 1**). As such, a large amount of push and pull factors have been generated in the research of tourism motivation regarding different destinations.

Author (year)	Research method	Push Factors Identified	Pull Factors Identified
Dann (1977)	Hypotheses test	Anomie, ego enhancement	
Crompton (1979)	Unstructured interviews	Escape, self-exploration and evaluation, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, social interaction	Novelty, education
Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Factor analysis	Escape, novelty, prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships, relaxation/ hobbies	Budget, culture and history, wilderness, ease of travel, cosmopolitan environment, facilities, hunting
Uysal and Jurowski (1994)	Factor analysis	Re-experiencing family togetherness, sports, cultural experience and escape	Entertainment and resorts, outdoor and nature, heritage and culture and rural and inexpensive
Oh, Uysal, and Weaver (1995)	Canonical correlation analysis	Safety and comfort, culture and history experience, novelty and adventure, and luxurious experience	Historical/cultural, sports/activity, safety/upscale, nature/outdoor, inexpensive/budget
Turnbull and Uysal (1995)	Factor analysis	Cultural experiences; escape; re-experiencing family; sports; prestige	Heritage/culture; city enclave; comfort-relaxation; beach resort; outdoor resources; inexpensiveness
Baloglu and Uysal (1996)	Canonical correlation analysis	Sports and activities, novelty, urban lifestyle and beach and resort	
Hanqin and Lam (1999)	Factor analysis	Knowledge, prestige, enhancement of human relationship, relaxation, and novelty	Hi-tech image, expenditure, accessibility, service quality and attitude, sightseeing variety, and cultural links
Jang and Cai (2002)	Factor analysis	Novel experience, escape, knowledge seeking, fun and excitement, rest and	Natural and historic environment, cleanliness and safety, easy-to-access

		relaxation, and family and friend togetherness	and economical deal, outdoor activities, and sunny and exotic atmosphere

Table 1 Previous studies applying push and pull model

It can be noticed that in previous research process, different research methodologies including canonical analysis, correlation and regression model, and factor analysis have been adopted. During the research history of applying push-pull theoretical framework to tourism motivation study, a variety of push and pull factors have been identified on the basis of the framework. However, netnography, as an adaption of ethnography has not been much utilized to study push and pull factors for tourist motivation, while it has been proven an effective way to study tourism motivation through recent years' relevant work (Wu & Pearce, 2013).

2.2.5 Push and pull factors in previous research

In previous studies, some push factors and pull factors have been widely mentioned and studied. Crompton (1979), as one of the founders of this theory, find a series of classic push factors and pull factors. These factors provide many enlightening thoughts for researchers in this field (Yuan and McDonald, 1990; Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Oh, Uysal, and Weaver, 1995; Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Hanqin and Lam, 1999; Jang and Cai, 2002). In the research of Crompton (1979), the push factors and pull factors he puts forward are explained explicitly. In the subsequent applications of these classic factors to the research process, the meanings of these factors are further refined and supplemented, such as health and fitness (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996) and interests and hobbies (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Yuan and McDonald, 1990) (see details below).

Push factors:
- Escape: Crompton (1979) pointed out that escape motive means one's willingness to escape from daily life and environment. Jamrozy & Uysal (1994) completed the concept by pointing out one's willingness to escape can be due to the pressure, stress caused by personal life or interpersonal life with colleagues, employers or even family.

- Rest and relaxation: Relaxation means that people engage in activities that they do not usually participate in during travel to get spiritual relaxation (Crompton, 1979). These activities that people participate in to obtain relaxation during travel are not related to people's hobbies. People participate simply because they have time to engage in these activities during the travel, thereby obtaining a sense of relaxation. This category is including a motive to get out from daily routine activity, enjoy the time and romantic experience (H.Bansal & H.A.Eiselt, 2004).

- Self-esteem and prestige: A pleasure vacation may be viewed by some people as an opportunity for re-evaluating and discovering more about themselves or for acting out self-images and in so doing refining or modifying them (Crompton, 1979). The prestige factor means that people are

eager to gain the attention and appreciation of others by enriching their knowledge and experience and highlighting their differences, which inspires the joy of travel and helps travelers achieve personal growth (McIntosh et al., 1995). Although travelers generally do not recognize prestige as a primary reason their travel decisions, they regard it as a factor for other travelers' decisions (Crompton, 1979; Hanqin and Lam, 1999).

- Health and fitness: Sports activities are considered to be one of the important tourism push factors in some follow-up studies (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). Travelers achieve health goals through certain sports activities during the journey. At the same time, traveling to destinations with vacation purposes to get a sense of relaxation is also considered by travelers as good for physical and mental health (Crompton, 1979; Jang and Cai, 2002).

- Social interaction: An important motivation for some travelers to go on vacation is to meet new friends in different places. For those people, getting to know friends outside of the family and gaining opportunities to communicate with different people become a desire for them in their travels. Another kind of social aspiration shown in travel is to maintain a longer-term relationship through travel (Crompton, 1979).

- Interests and hobbies: Crompton (1979) argued that during the rhythm of ordinary routine life, people are not able to focus on hobbies or self-fulfilling interests, and the vacation is a way of taking time to pursue these things. However, the pursue for hobbies and interests has been taken separated from rest and relaxation factor by upcoming researchers. In follow-up studies, scholars believe that in addition to looking for activities other than daily hobbies, travelers will also meet their hobby needs through some specific activities in the travel destination (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Yuan and McDonald, 1990).

Pull factors:
- Scenic beauty: Natural scenery is an important feature that distinguishes different travel destinations (Yangzhou Hu, J.R. Brent Ritchie, 1993). In the findings of many researchers, the natural scenery of the travel destination has become an important selling point of the travel destination (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Hanqin and Lam,1999; Jang and Cai ,2002).

- Cultural attractiveness: Crompton (1979) regards cultural factors as the only important pull factor, and points out two primary cultural factors, novelty and education. In Uysal and Jurowski (1994), Turnbull and Uysal (1995) and Oh, Uysal, and Weaver (1995)'s studies, cultural experience is what travelers are eager to have while destinations happen to be capable of providing cultural experience as a pull factor for travelers. Novelty includes curiosity, adventure, new and differences. Education means that people increase their experience through travel and become more open-minded.

- Recreational opportunities: Recreational opportunities is a concept derived from the subsequent application of the classic push-pull model in tourism motivation study (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). Recreational opportunities refer to the leisure and recreational activities created by the travel

destination for tourists under its own tourism resource endowment, so as to provide tourists with leisure and relaxation through such activities.

2.3 Chinese independent travelers

2.3.1 Independent travelers

Independent travelers adopt a self-organized travel solution, and they can arrange travel itineraries and activities on their own. They are likely to travel alone or in small self-organized groups without the dependency on tourism intermediary and agency (Xiang, 2013).

Discourses about independent outbound tourism are usually presented and spread on the Internet, especially in public forums, personal blogs and social media (Pearce, P. L., Wu, M., & Osmond, 2013). Due to this, netnography is particularly suitable for this study as it can render the unique opportunity to collect data on Chinese independent travellers' motivations for travel.

2.3.2 Chinese travelers in the past

Until the end of the 1990s, the only option for Chinese outbound travel was group travel. As Roth (1998) written in the Chinese outbound travel market report, the group tours are all-inclusive. The package tours include transportation, accommodation, all meals and full-time guides. One must consider that most of the Chinese tourists have never travelled to such a distant and foreign destination as Europe before. Therefore, they fear being exposed to this exotic world by themselves and expect everything to be arranged before-hand by the travel agency (Roth, 1998). This illustration generalized the characteristics of Chinese outbound tourists at that time. It also reflects how independent tourists differ from tourists who choose package tour solutions.

2.3.3 The emergence of independent travel in China

Independent tours have gradually become popular in Western countries since the 1980s. Many scholars have researched the behavior patterns of independent tourists during travel. This mainly includes independent tourists' travel motives, information collection methods, consumption decision-making patterns, consumption preferences, etc. (Andersen, Prentice, & Watanabe, 2000; Caruana, Crane, & Fitchett, 2008; Hsieh, O'Leary, & Morrison, 1993; Hsieh, O'Leary & Morrison, 1994; Hyde & Lawson, 2003; Sheldon & Mak, 1987).

With the emergence of the trend of Chinese independent tourists (Xiang, 2013), research on Chinese independent tourists has also been carried out before. Some unique characteristics of Chinese tourists have been discovered. Chinese outbound tourism has attracted the interest of researchers and industry managers since it has developed significantly at a phenomenal pace. Previous study has examined the characteristics of independent Chinese outbound tourists from five aspects: sociodemographic characteristics, motivations, decision-making process, spatial pattern of

destinations, and consumer patterns (Xiang, 2013). The mainstream of Chinese outbound tourists could be categorized as middle class in Chinese cities and the main motivations include sightseeing, leisure/holiday and business (Xiang, 2013). "Doing homework" is a seemingly important step for Chinese tourists in decision making process (Xiang, 2013). Their consumer modes are categorized as frugal, hedonistic and mixed (Xiang, 2013).

2.3.4 Chinese independent travelers' motivations

In Xiang (2013)'s study about the motivations of Chinese outbound tourists, sightseeing is the main reason (71.8%) for Chinese independent outbound tourists. Religious and health motivations do not provide an important explanation for travel motivation. Although Chinese outbound tourists are well-known for their shopping behaviors, the study finds that shopping does not constitute a motivation for Chinese tourists to travel abroad, but rather exists as a supplementary behavior (Xiang, 2013). Only a few independent outbound travelers see shopping (1.1%) as their travel motivation. By contrast, they tend to regard shopping as a by-product of travel, and its meaning is to leave a souvenir or bring a gift for themselves and family and friends.

In the previous studies on the travel motivations of Chinese outbound tourists, many destination countries (e.g., Singapore and Canada) are covered. The push-pull model is widely adopted in those studies (Hsu & Lam, 2003; Zhang & Lam, 2003) to identify Chinese tourists' travel motivations. The following table (Table 2) lists some examples of the travel motivations of Chinese tourists identified in the recent studies.

Author (year)	Destination country	Identified motivations
Ah Keng Kau and Pei Shan Lim (2005)	Singapore	Family/Relaxation seekers, Novelty seekers, Adventure/Pleasure seekers and Prestige/Knowledge seekers.
Yahua Zhang & Yiqian Peng (2014)	Cairns, Australia	Push factors: personal relationships, fun and self-satisfaction, relaxation and knowledge Pull factors: various activities for fun, relaxing environment, easy accessibility, scenery
Zhen Lu (2011)	Canada	Push factors: prestige, enhancing friendship, exploring opportunities, escape, and novelty Pull factors: natural sceneries, high quality of Canadian life, appealing travel ads, shopping opportunities, and Canadian cosmopolitan city life
Jun Wen, Songshan (Sam) Huang, TianyuYing (2019)	Israel	Knowledge enhancement/learning, business development, sightseeing,

		escape/relaxation, self-fulfillment, destination uniqueness, adventure

Table 2 Travel motivations of Chinese outbound travelers to different destinations

The previous research on Chinese outbound tourists mainly focuses on some tourist destinations that are more familiar to Chinese tourists than the Nordic region, such as Hong Kong, Macau, Australia, Singapore, etc (Jin & Wang, 2016). A recent study finds that Chinese travelers with relatively high crisis resistance have started to explore traditionally unusual or controversial destinations (Wen, J., Meng, F., Ying, T., Qi, H., & Lockyer, T, 2018) and take part in special tourism activities stimulated by interests, such as cigar tourism, cruising tourism, recreational vehicle tours, and wine tourism (e.g., Wen et al., 2018). It is revealed that Chinese outbound tourists travel to a specific destination for unique purposes. For example, they visit Amsterdam to consume commercial cannabis (Wen et al., 2018), visit Australian wineries to partake in wine tourism (Gu, Qiu Zhang, King, & Huang, 2018), and spend time in Cuba for the renowned cigars (Ying et al., 2018).

Accordingly, a study that explores the Chinese tourists travel motivations to the Nordic region is needed. Furthermore, it would be valuable to find out in the study whether Chinese tourists visit the Nordic region for some specific reasons and what are those reasons.

2.4 Summary

As found in the literature review, the previous research makes a lot of contributions to the research of tourism motivation by use of the push-pull model, which serves a solid theoretical foundation to this research. The literature review also uncovers two research gaps in the field.

First, it is found that netnography, as a method to study tourist motivations has merely been used in the extant studies. Only in some recent studies netnography are applied as a new method of collecting data (Wu & Pearce, 2013). This method is considered to be particularly suitable for studying Chinese independent tourists' travel motivations as discussions on independent outbound tourism usually present and spread on the Internet, especially in public forums, personal blogs and social media (Pearce, P. L., Wu, M., & Osmond, 2013).

Second, it is found in the literature review that the Chinese independent travelers' travel motivations to Nordic region remain unclear though the Nordic region has increasingly attracted the attention of Chinese tourists in recent years (Statista, 2018),

Hence, in this study, I will study the Chinese independent travelers' travel motivations to the Nordic region by use of the netography method.

Based on the literature review, the push-pull model is developed to guide the data collection and analysis in this study. The model incorporates the push and pull factors that are frequently mentioned and highlighted in the previous relevant research (Yuan and McDonald, 1990; Uysal and Jurowski,

1994; Oh, Uysal, and Weaver, 1995; Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Hanqin and Lam, 1999; Jang and Cai, 2002) (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1 Summary of push and pull factors in stimulating tourism motivation

Push factors

Escape

Rest and relaxation

Self-esteem and prestige

Health and fitness

Social interaction

Interests and hobbies

Pull factors

Scenic beauty

Cultural attractiveness

Recreation opportunities

Tourism motivation
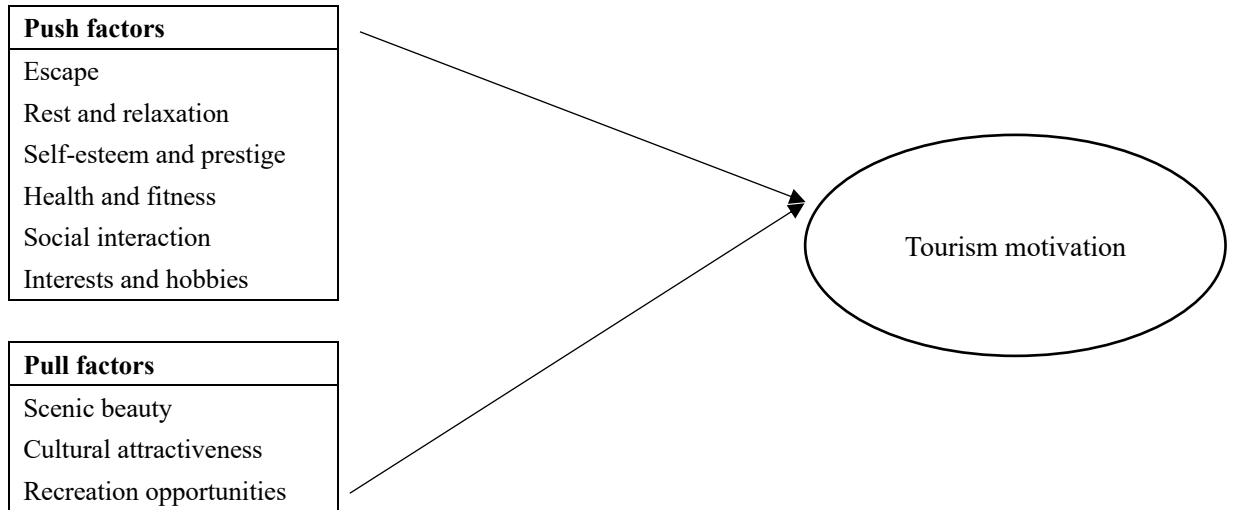
3. Methodology

3.1 Research method: Netnography

Originating in ethnography, netnography is regarded as a helpful research instrument to collect and analyze data about customers from online sources (Kozinets, 1999). Netnography has been a widely used technique in the field of online marketing research to provide consumer insights (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). It proves to be an effective method to investigate in-depth research questions (Kozinets, 2010) and is especially suitable for Internet-based study (Kozinets, 2002). As a research method, netnography is thought to be faster, simpler, and less expensive than traditional ethnography and more naturalistic and unobtrusive than focus groups or interviews (Kozinets, 2002). Different from ethnography, netnography is usually conducted in an unobtrusive manner, which can bring a view of customers' everyday lives to the researchers (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). Besides, netnography is an accommodative and flexible method for qualitative study since it has been proven useful in a variety of research settings (Kozinets, 2015). It is also compatible with other research methods, such as interviews (Walther and Sandlin, 2013), ethnography (McGrath et al., 2013) and even surveys (Adjei et al., 2010).

In the past few years, travel websites have become increasingly popular. Many tourists share their travel experiences in forums and blogs. For instance, Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2012) studied tourists' perceived risks by collecting the data from TripAdvisor forum (the world's largest travel site). Another example is that Pearce & Wu (2015) took information from Qyer.com (China's largest travel site) to investigate the motivation of road trip takers in Australia. Netnography becomes a popular method among those researchers who focus on hospitality and tourism (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018).

The reason for choosing netnography as a research methodology for this study is three-fold. Firstly, netnography is regarded as a helpful research implement to collect and analyze data about customers from online sources (Kozinets, 1999), which will work for our present topic, investigating Chinese independent tourists' travel motivations to the Nordic region. Second, it is considered effective in collecting natural sharing, posts that are rarely manipulated by other reasons (Mkono, 2011; Kozinets, 2010), which can contribute to authenticity of this study. Third, due to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, collecting information directly from travelers has become a difficult task. However, on travel websites, it is possible for me to collect Chinese independent traveler's motivations for travelling to the Nordic region.

3.2 Data source and data collection

3.2.1 Data source

Identification of a suitable data source for data collection of netnography is critical. First, it is to figure out potential data sources suitable for the research problems of the study (Kozinets, 2002).

Given that my research purpose is to understand Chinese independent travelers' travel motivations to the Nordic region, I find several travel websites, including TripAdvisor and Mafengwo.com, suitable to be potential data sources for this study. Then, it is necessary to use criteria to select a data source for this study. The criteria suggested by Kozinets (2002) include, (1) a more focused and research question-relevant segment, topic or group; (2) higher "traffic" of postings; (3) more detailed or descriptively rich data; (4) more between-member interactions of the type required by the research question; and (5) being able to reflect the voices of the market leaders whose behavior may be followed by a large population. Following the five criteria, I chose Qyer.com as the data source for my data collection. The reasons are briefed as follows:

(1) "Qyer.com", established in 2004, is the first and largest online travel community of Chinese independent travelers. At the beginning it was aimed especially at Chinese travelers who were interested in exploring Europe independently, and was called "go2eu.com". Therefore, qyer.com records the experience of Chinese tourists visiting Europe with a long history and rich content. Now it is the most abundant and focused online tourism community, and it provides a variety of information about tourism services, destination information, and user guided contents. In qyer.com, the sharing of travel experience covers all continents and major travel destination countries in the world. Among these, there's an independent section of the Nordic area (including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland) for travelers to share relevant information.

(2) "Qyer.com" has a lot of posts and visitor traffic. In the Nordic section of "Qyer.com", there are currently more than two hundred pages of posts in the main section that can be viewed publicly (15 posts per page), and about 15% of the posts (31 pages) are selected as high-quality posts by the forum operating managers. The rich collection brings a lot of data and multiple voices to this research, which can make the content of this research more substantial and comprehensive.

(3) Travelers who share their experiences on "Qyer.com" usually share all the content of their travel in every detail. From the preliminary preparations to the actual journey, many bloggers tend to post their experiences, thoughts, and hearings in detail on the forum for everyone's reference and appreciation. Most blogs are expanded on the basis of day by day schedule, so the readers are able to follow up clearly and accurately, which also brought convenience to this research. The blogs usually cover all aspects of the traveling, including visa policy, flight ticket booking, accommodation booking, worth-visiting sightseeing, distinctive restaurant, etc. These detailed blogs enable this research to collect more abundant and detailed materials for understanding the tourists' motivations.

(4) "Qyer.com" is a community with active users and an encouraging atmosphere for interactions. Every registered user can ask questions and respond to the posters. Users can bookmark posts that are considered to provide more useful, attractive and fruitful information. Those posts with many responses will continue to be topped on the homepage and are more likely to be selected as the best posts. The number of views, replies, likes, and favorites of each post will be recorded in detail, which can also help this research to screen out more representative content that can attract everyone's attention as a data source. Besides, to a certain extent the quality of this

research can be ensured through objective facts reflected by those indicators reflecting interaction.

(5) According to Qyer & iReserach (2020), over 80% of the users of Qyer.com have a bachelor degree or above, The users group are composed mainly by people born in 80s and 90s with comparably high incomes, living in first-tier cities. People in this group not only have ample economic conditions, but also have independent thinking ability and leadership. They usually act as planners, leaders, and decision-makers in a trip, can play a decisive role in family trips, and can extend their personal influence on other users through blogs.

To get familiar with Qyer.com, I registered as a user in "Qyer.com" and posted what I wrote about my travel experience in Europe. Also I viewed a variety of blogs about different travel experience, destinations and special activities. This kind of real participation is also essential to netnographic research (Kozinets, 2010).

3.2.2 Data collection

In Kozinets (1999) 's previous research, the online bloggers are categorized into four different types, tourists, minglers, devotees, and insiders. The criteria for dividing this category mainly depends on the user's participation level of involvement in the community and their consumption behavior. Tourists refer to those who lack strong social ties and deep interest in the activity, and they usually post casual questions. Minglers refer to those who are not so interested in the consumption activities while having strong social connections. Devotees refer to those who are willing to participate in consumption activities but have few attachments to the online group. Insiders are those who are most involved, not only having strong ties to the online group but also having long-standing interest in participating consumption activities. As such, devotes and insiders are both interested in consumption interests. The only difference is their degree of participation in online community.

In this study, the author took "Nordic", "Scandinavia" as the keywords to search for relevant posts in "Qyer.com" in October and November of 2020. This should have been a good timing to research on that topic because it's right after Chinese national holidays. However, due to the travel restrictions brought by the pandemic, the recent blogs about tourists in Nordic areas are limited.

A wide range of contents have been viewed, varying in seasons, lengths of travel, transportation, travel routes and travel companions. The selection of high-quality blogs is done by community operators, mainly considering the reference value of the content shared by the author on the blog to other travelers, such as the rationality of the itinerary, the level of details of the shared content, and the degree of combination of text and pictures (Qyer & iResearch, 2020). These high-quality blogs can usually reflect a certain degree of interactivity. People in the forum are interested in this type of posts, leaving messages below the post and interacting with the author to express their appreciation to the author. In the process of collecting data, the author collected the key information of each blog, paying particular attention to several indicators (i.e. number of views, likes, saves, and comments) that are meaningful for research to ensure the quality of the data (See Appendix 1). Different parts of the same journey published by the same blogger will be merged and classified into one blog.

As with many qualitative techniques, netnographies are usefully subject to rules of saturation, such that the collection of netnographic data should stop once new insights on important topical areas related to the research focus or question seem no longer to be generated by the engagement" (Kozinets, 2015). After tracking more than 100 blogs, 22 blogs were selected by the author because there are some certain trends obtained by reviewing the blogs and the 22 blogs are selected as representative. The content in these blogs is mainly shared in the form of text and pictures. All of these blogs were widely read by other online members, with an average number of 80,056 reviews and 221 Q&A interaction incidents. As such, the author asserted that these 22 blogs can be categorized as devotees and insiders in Kozinets' (1999) classification. Since these 22 blogs provide ample descriptive material and can be interpreted in crucial details, it can be considered that the data obtained from these blogs can effectively facilitate exploratory research on a novel phenomenon. By reading these blogs, some trends and patterns are found.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Manual coding-based method

In this study, manual methods were used to process data. Because the size of the data set in this study is appropriate, it is suitable for manual input and analysis (Kozinets, 2010). And this is conducive for the author to complete the entire process of manual data coding from screening, collection to analysis and classification, and can make the author more familiar with the research context (Kozinets, 2010). Regarding data analysis, the author followed Berg (2007)'s qualitative data analytic process. The steps are to be introduced in detail in 3.3.3, together with how first and second-order theoretical analysis is applied to fit manual coding-based method.

In this process, according to the common practice of collecting materials through the Internet for research, there is no need to make extra notifications to the bloggers involved (Wu & Pearce, 2014). If the photos published by the bloggers are quoted, the publisher will be contacted through Qyer.com for authorization. In this study, the author made continuous efforts to ensure the consistency of the research content and the appropriateness of classification and coding of the materials.

3.3.2 First-order theoretical analysis and second-order theoretical analysis

First-order theoretical analysis and second-order theoretical analysis are to be applied in the following analysis part.

First-order theoretical analysis is based on validated descriptive analysis. Concepts and ideas are to be found in this step from the descriptive categories (Shkedi, 2004). This step is important for translating contents from the frames of social actors to the frame of theoretical discourse (Araujo, 1995). The researcher thinks critically and definitively to discover, identify and question the theoretical potential of the categories about what is implicit in the categories of data (Shkedi, 2004).

The second-order theoretical analysis will be explained and illustrated on the basis of a research example. The process of second-order theoretical analysis is a kind of ongoing 'dialogue' between

the conceptual perspectives (which are based largely on the critical literature) and the empirical data collected from the informants and the site (Shkedi, 2004).

In my analysis process, I applied first-order theoretical analysis and second-order theoretical analysis to analyze the reasons why Chinese tourists choose the Nordic region as the tourist destination. The reasons are preliminarily sorted with the appliance of first-order theoretical analysis and are analyzed with the introduction of push-pull model and appliance of second-order theoretical analysis in the following step.

3.3.3 Analysis steps

As mentioned above, manual coding-based method has been adopted with the application of first and second-order analysis. In the following part, the details about how the coding is done will be presented, followed by the qualitative data analytic processes (Berg, 2007).

First, the author made a basic arrangement of the collected data and arranged the quotes that may be relevant to this research; In this step, some basic information about the blog is recorded (see Appendix 1), including blog name, transportation, travel season, number of review & like & save, travel route, travel length in days, post time and original link. Discourse considered useful for subsequent content analysis is recorded and translated (See quotes in Chapter 4.2).

Secondly, contents were categorized with labels and themes. That is dedicated to translating contents from the frames of social actors to the frame of theoretical discourse for the purpose of first-order theoretical analysis (Shkedi, 2004). In the process of browsing content, some themes were identified, such as "nature", "culture" and "weather", facilitating the subsequent analysis. Take "nature" for an example, some discourses from blog no. 1, 3, 8 and 12 particularly discussed this theme (See 4.2.1 for detailed discourses). Another theme is "culture", blog no. 4, 5, 10, 14, 16, and 19 emphasized on this aspect in particular (See 4.2.1 for detailed discourses). The identification of the themes is also informed by the previously established theoretical model (see Chapter 2.4).

Next, by identifying similar phrases, frequently mentioned words, patterns, relationships, commonalities or disparities, the sorted materials were examined to detect meaningful patterns and processes. This step is crucial for the development of first-order theoretical analysis, since it leads to discover, identify and question the theoretical potential of the categories critically and definitively about what is implicit in the categories of data (Shkedi, 2004). For example, when heading down to the discourses categorized by the theme "culture", the author found that "IKEA" has been mentioned by 3 (blog no.5, 10 and 16, See details in Chapter 4.2.1) out of 6 bloggers, who view IKEA as an important embodiment of Nordic culture. As a result, this was noted in the first-order analysis.

Finally, the identified patterns were considered based on previous research framework push-pull model, and a summary made. In this step, it reflects the process of second-order theoretical analysis as an ongoing 'dialogue' between the conceptual perspectives (which are based substantially on the critical literature) and the empirical data collected from the informants (Shkedi, 2004).

3.3 Research Quality

Validity, reliability and generalizability are three gold criteria that apply for both qualitative and quantitative study when assessing research quality (Leung, 2015). It is necessary to ensure reliability and validity to eliminate bias and increase the truthfulness of a proposition about a social phenomenon (Denzin, 1978).

In qualitative research, validity refers to "appropriateness" of the tools, processes, and data. To be detailed, validity is about whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is proper for answering the research question, and the research design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is suitable, and lastly the results and conclusions are valid for the context (Leung, 2015). In this research, all appropriateness is developed around the research question. According to the research question, the author found a suitable data source for further analysis. Based on previous studies on travel motivation, a suitable theoretical framework has been chosen as inspiration and is applied to further analysis. The selected research method was partly due to the epidemic and partly also because using this method to study this research question is conducive to obtaining the most natural data. Thus, this research method is also suitable for this research.

In qualitative research, the core of reliability lies in consistency (Grossoehme, 2014). To achieve this goal, the author applied the method suggested by Silverman (2013) and made constant data comparison to ensure the accuracy in terms of form and context. The collected data were presented honestly and objectively without any kind of bias or plagiarism (Bryman & Bell, 2018). The qualitative data and analysis are performed to assess reliability (Allmark, 2003). In this process, because the analysis content is obtained through web blogs, the opinions of some bloggers are inevitably reflected in the content they write. On the premise of choosing high-quality analysis content, the author chose to cover the data of visiting Nordic region in different ways in different seasons as much as possible, so as to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese tourists in the Nordic region.

Generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute, since most qualitative research studies are meant to study a specific issue or phenomenon in a certain population or ethnic group (Leung, 2015). A pragmatic approach to assess generalizability for qualitative studies is to use systematic sampling, triangulation and constant comparison, proper audit and documentation, and multi-dimensional theory. In this study's data extraction and analysis stage, I adopted the triangulation method to enhance the validity; also, I compared the primary data with secondary data and theories to examine whether the collected data was helpful to solve my research question (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010).

3.4 Limitations of the study

Narrow scope is the first limitation need to be pointed out about this study. Limited by qualitative research methods and relatively small amount of data, this research is more indicative and not

conclusive.

There are also some certain limitations about adopting netnography as the main methodology. A main concern is about the authenticity and quality of the data material (Xun and Reynolds, 2010). Besides, it is hard to establish the demographics of informants. Moreover, as an innovation of traditional ethnography, netnography is faced with limitations in terms of generalizing its findings to customer groups outside the online platforms or online communities studied (Kozinets, 2002). Taking into account the specific conditions of this research, the existence of language barriers and cultural differences cannot be ignored. Due to the existence of these objective problems, the expression of some opinions may be more subtle, and the existence of ambiguity caused by language barriers may make it difficult to accurately define what the publishers want to express.

Although there are some shortcomings and limitations in this research, this research is still instructive. Some of the findings in this research can enable us to think about the marketing of Chinese tourists in the Nordic tourism industry from different perspectives, and also see issues that have not been covered in the previous literature. Future subsequent research can be conducted to make more conclusive results through more extensive collection of data, and it can further improve the generalizability of the research.

4. Empirical data presentation

In this chapter, the empirical data is presented. First, an overview of the collected data is given. After this, the reasons for Chinese independent travelers to the Nordic region are described based on the data.

4.1 Empirical data overview

In the process of data collection, the author mainly focuses on the Nordic section of "Qyer.com". The layout of "Qyer.com" is very friendly to readers. For example, every day's itinerary is placed at the forefront to play a guiding role, and a table of contents is automatically generated on the side for easy browsing.

More than 100 travel blogs are browsed, out of which 22 blogs are chosen for this study. The selection criteria is clarified in Chapter 3.2.2. Overall, these selected blogs have high reading volume and high interaction volume (with a high number of likes, favorites and interactions in the board). **Table 3** shows the detailed number of reading volume and interaction indicators of all 22 selected blogs.

Among the 22 blogs, three are professional travelers or key opinion leaders. The authors of the blog no.5, no.15 and no.16 have 730,000, 170,000 and 1.63 million followers on Weibo (microblog) respectively. Compared with other ordinary travelers, they have more experience in traveling and sharing journeys, so the content of the notes will be more professional and richer.

Blog Nr.	Reviews nr	Likes Nr	Favorites Nr	Comments Nr
1	109361	1600	1273	42
2	89032	1359	1135	23
3	19336	322	253	5
4	48180	999	606	13
5	109548	1661	1323	23
6	39224	504	733	52
7	158548	210	1445	693
8	50854	661	1035	105
9	51994	675	660	253
10	47341	647	681	6
11	51467	601	1170	83
12	12505	88	251	84
13	19413	199	348	26
14	21881	260	292	153
15	81998	198	1150	269

16	13055	171	170	65
17	112082	1133	3505	417
18	94838	652	1532	211
19	100665	976	2570	211
20	33504	296	935	57
21	64028	789	1544	187
22	428853	619	3068	1876

Table 3 Number of reviews and interactions of 22 selected blogs

The Nordic region is mature travelers' choice. Among the 22 bloggers, nearly everyone had experience with traveling independently (without support form travel agencies, see Chapter 2.3.1 for definition) to other foreign countries, since many bloggers mentioned previous experience. It indicates that the Nordic region, as a travel destination, is the choice of relatively *mature* travelers. In other words, Chinese travelers to Nordic countries usually already have some experiences in overseas independent travel. In general, bloggers tend to divide the blogs into two parts: practical information sharing and daily routes, supplemented by photos to help readers to know more about their journey, e.g., the challenges they are faced and the pleasures aroused by the trips.

The key information about the trips, i.e., the transportation mode, travel season, itinerary overview and travel length are summarized in **Table 4.**

Blog Nr.	Main transportation	Travel season	Travel route overview	Travel length
1	road trip	winter	Guangzhou-Rovaniemi-Kirina-Absiko-Narvik-Tromso-Muonio-Helsinki-Guangzhou	11
2	public transport; road trip	summer	Beijing-Oslo-Wizard Road-Atlantic Road-Alesund-Geiranger-Bergen-Odda (Demon's Tongue)-Sermon Stone-Stavanger-Copenhagen	8
3	road trip	autumn	Shanghai-Copenhagen-Bergen-Tromso-Lofoten-Trondheim-Oslo-Reykjavk-Iceland-Copenhagen-Shanghai	17
4	public transport	summer	UK-Denmark-Sweden	30
5	public transport	summer	Copenhagen-Scania	6
6	public transport	autumn	Helsinki-Iceland-Stockholm-Copenhagen-South Norway-Lofoton	21
7	public transport	summer	Copenhagen-Norway-Stockholm	16
8	road trip	winter	Lapland: Kiruna (Sweden) → Rovaniemi (Finland) → North Cape (Norway) → Tromso (Norway) → Lofoten Islands (Norway) → Kiruna	20
9	road trip	summer	Iceland-Norway	25
10	public transport	summer	Finland-Sweden-Norway-Denmark	10
11	public transport	autumn	South Norway-North Norway-Stockholm	12
12	road trip	autumn	Lapland-Iceland	18

13	public transport	winter	Finland-Sweden-Norway-Denmark	13
14	road trip	autumn	Copenhagen-Stockholm-Norway-Iceland	26
15	road trip	summer	Iceland	14
16	public transport; road trip	winter	Copenhagen-Gothenburg-Malmo-Stockholm-Lapland	18
17	public transport; road trip	autumn	Lapland-North Norway-Stockholm-Iceland	19
18	public transport	spring	South Norway-Stockholm-South Denmark-Oslo	13
19	public transport	winter	Helsinki-Rovaniemi-Stockholm-Tromso-Oslo	13
20	public transport	autumn	Copenhagen-South Norway-North Finland	11
21	public transport	spring	Lapland	8
22	public transport; road trip	summer	Copenhagen-South Norway-North Norway-Stockholm	17

Table 4 Detailed information about transportation choice, travel season choice, travel route overview and travel length

It can be inferred from Table 2 that the importance and degree of involvement of the five Nordic countries is very uneven in the itinerary of those bloggers. No travel route in any blog can completely cover all the tourist attractions in the Nordic region. In the choice of specific destinations, these bloggers also show different preferences. By reading through these 22 travel blogs, I summarized the specific destination preferences of tourists in the 5 Nordic countries. Here I would like to give out an overview about the high-frequency visits mentioned in the blogs. The main choice in each Nordic country is to be presented in **Table 5**.

Nordic country	Travel destinations preferred in this country
Denmark	Copenhagen and Odense
Sweden	Stockholm and the Lapland region represented by Kiruna and Abisko in the north
Norway	The Bergen-Oslo line in the south, the fjord and National Tourist Routes in the middle, the Lofoten Islands and the Arctic Circle represented by Tromso
Finland	Helsinki and Turku in the south and Lapland region represented by Rovaniemi in the north
Iceland	Reykjavik is the only major city mentioned in the travel blogs. However, since there are a lot of natural attractions in Iceland, tourists tend to make a comprehensive round trip.

Table 5 Specific destination choice in each Nordic country

In terms of demographic information, the author intended to present more detailed demographic information of the bloggers. However, due to the bloggers' need for privacy protection, some personal privacy-related information is not disclosed. But through reading the statements of the travel bloggers, it still can be inferred that most of chosen bloggers are young people (post 80s) and only a few of them are retired people who have a lot of time for traveling. Regarding the source of origin, many bloggers did not mention where they came from, but only mentioned where they took the flight.

4.2 Why travel to the Nordic region?

In this section, the author presents the bloggers' motivations of visiting the Nordic region based on the data. According to the data, there are several internal and external reasons for the Chinese independent travelers to the Nordic region. Internal reasons mean the reasons that are generated internally and driven by endogenous needs, and external reasons refer to the reasons provided by external attraction.

4.2.1 Internal reasons

1)   Chinese travelers want to see the unique scenery of Nordic, especially the aurora
Nordic countries are well known for its beautiful landscape, that is an important reason for those travelers to choose the Nordic region as a destination. It is found that the bloggers who are motivated by natural scenery are more likely to spare time for Norway, Lapland area and Iceland. Some of the bloggers shared:

> *"I am very happy to come to this clean place to satisfy my long-awaited feelings for Norway, and I am glad that what I have seen and heard meets all my previous imagination; I am very happy to see the mountains and the sea, the river and the bay, the cabin, the fallen leaves and the first snow; I am very happy to finally step into the Arctic Circle, wrapped in the thickest protective clothing of my life in the early morning, shaking my head up to praise the aurora. There are regrets. Time is limited. Our trip is in a hurry. There are still many sceneries that we haven't seen, nor can we experience the slow train in Norway. But life can never be perfect, and we would like to come again in the future." (blog no.12)*

> *"The reason that attracted me to come to Tromso was the panoramic view of the snow-capped city of Tromso I saw on the Internet. So when I was planning for this year's National Day holiday, I was very entangled, and finally considered. In the end, considering various reasons, I compromised and chose to complete this journey during the National Day holiday in autumn. But I was thinking about coming back to Tromso in winter anyway together with Svalbard. (blog no.3)."*

It was noticed that among all the natural landscapes and natural phenomena, the aurora, as a phenomenon only found in high latitudes, has a unique attraction for Chinese tourists who usually live in middle and low latitudes areas. Chinese tourists have shown great interest in aurora, a unique natural landscape that can only be found in high latitudes. They are willing to spend a lot of time and money to prepare and learn to observe and photograph the aurora. The following data quotes show the fanatical hobby of Chinese tourists for auroral observation:

> *"The dance of the goddess of aurora across the sky is the most eye-catching light and shadow of nature. In order to see the ethereal green, on the day before Chinese New Year, we started our journey to have a second visit to Nordic region (blog no.1)."*

Through reading the blog, the landscape of the Nordic region has a lofty status in the hearts of

Chinese tourists. Wanting to go to this place to explore the natural scenery has become a major driving force for Chinese tourists to travel to the Nordic region.

2)   Chinese travelers have a strong interest in Nordic culture

Through reading the data, Chinese tourists also have a certain degree of awareness of Nordic culture. In the blogs, many authors mentioned their previous endorsement of local culture, history, and business activities. Among the cultural factors, bloggers emphatically mentioned the influence of film and literature. There are also examples of having a good impression on the Nordic countries because of their work experience in related companies. In addition, the developed game industry in the Nordic region also reflects its cultural appeal in this respect. Some gamers get to know the Nordic region through games.

These bloggers who pursue cultural experiences also tend to spend more time in well-known cities in various countries, seeking local experiences and travel experiences related to cultural activities. The following discussion shows a glimpse:

> *"Before going to Denmark, my impression stayed in the fairy tales written by Andersen. The famous "The Little Mermaid" and "The Little Match Girl" are memories of many people in their childhood (blog no.4)."*

> *"In the past WeChat, my teacher mentioned Sweden and Denmark more than once. And Greta Garbo, Hans Andersen... (blog no.14）."*

> *"In recent years, I have watched many Nordic movies, such as "Hunting", "Headhunting Game", "A Man named Ovi decides to die", "Cube", and the Korean movie "Men and Women" with a Nordic background. The coldness, beauty and secrecy in the movie scene, as well as the unique sense of literature and art of the Nordic people, all attracted me deeply. So, in this February of 2018, in this long and cold winter, together with my sister SuperSuci, who also had traveled to Iran with me together, set out again with a heart to embrace the coldness and a dream of chasing the aurora ... Many years ago, one of my best friends came back from Rovaniemi, showed me a picture of hugging Santa, and told me 'There is no crime in Lapland.' The warm lights and fairy-tale snow are fascinating. (blog no.19)"*

3)   Chinese travelers want to escape their daily life by traveling to a totally different place from Chinese cities, such as the Nordic cities

Some bloggers mentioned in their blog posts that they felt "trapped" by their daily lives and felt tired and heavy in their daily lives. Therefore, they urgently needed to take a unique trip to get them out of daily life, so as to get the energy to face life again. Blogger no.17 has shown extraordinary strong willingness to escape. According to the information blogger no.17 indicated in her microblog (https://weibo.com/u/2144485701?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1#_0), she is engaged in the financial industry, which makes her very busy at work. However, she is passionate about life. She loves cooking and traveling. She is a very dedicated travel blogger and trip planner. She has 1154 and 2677 fans on Weibo and "Qyer.com" respectively, which shows her significant influence.

"I work as a white-collar migrant worker who works during the weekday and live a 7×24-hour uninterrupted "work" life for child-rearing as a wife at night and weekends. After a long time, I always feel like I am blindfolded, forgetting my purpose and myself, just being forced by life to keep moving forward. No direction is just going around the circle in vain... After being trapped in life for a long time, people are likely to get lost, and they would have to jump out of their regular life and get stimulated by many different stuff before they are able to regain energy, to open eyes to see the world, understand themselves, experience life, and seek for transformation.(blog no.17)"

In the blog no.10, there was a poem written by the blogger to express the same feeling about escape:

"Life is always endless looping

If you are tired

Please tell yourself

There is still a whole world waiting for you to explore. "(blog no.10)

These bloggers who mentioned the tired and heavy daily life tend to share some details about the daily tedious life. It is reflected that planning a Nordic trip is a choice they made to get away from the current life and take a breath.

4) Chinese travelers want to participate in unique activities offered by the Nordic that they would not normally encounter

Unique activities that can only be carried out in the Nordic region are also attractive to travelers. Travelers usually learn about these activities through some TV programs, so they get interested in such unique activities, and then have a desire to travel in the Nordic region. It can be seen from the bloggers' statement that they would like to participate in some special activities, especially those activities that can only be found in the Nordic region, such as sauna, dog sledding, and special hotel experiences to get relaxation.

"Later, I watched Nicholas Tse's variety show " The Twelve Ways of Feng Taste ", the glass igloo in Rovaniemi, the gorgeous aurora and ice fishing, husky sleigh driving, etc., which opened the door to my yearning for the Nordic region. (blog no.19)"

Besides, travelers also showed that participating in some specific activities brought them great excitement. These activities are greatly based on local natural conditions, special landforms, special weather and their combinations. Blogger no.2 shared his experience of hiking on the TrollTunga, a well-known attraction in Norway:

"Before the alarm clock went off in the early hours of the morning, I woke up slightly, feeling a burst of excitement inside. But I tried to sleep until the alarm clock went off. Everyone got up one after another and set off on time … This is the official route map at the gate. Not only can you hike, but there is also a route to climb the cliff, my god … After the 5 of us got out of the car, we checked our equipment and gathered together, shouting the stupid slogan "The Prodigal Son Doesn't Look Back" compiled by Brother Luo, and then set off with full morale! For both of us, it was the first time in our lives that we walked such a long distance, and we were very excited to challenge a new thing ... In fact, we thought we were not the kind of people who would like to hike very much, but after experiencing this day, we seem to look forward to trying more hikes in the future (blog no.2)."

5)   Some Chinese tourists want to show their own uniqueness by traveling in niche destinations like the Nordic region

It is noticed that some experienced tourists demonstrate their uniqueness and professionalism by discovering or practicing new activities in niche tourist destinations. Those travelers so-called "sophisticated tourists" usually have visited more than 15 Chinese destinations on average, and a foreign destination is a seemingly natural choice for their travel career in the next step (Xiang, 2010). As such, they tend to seek for achievement, mental stimulation, self-development, growth and even self-actualization by taking independent outbound journey, which is diffusely observed from their travelogues (Xiang, 2010). Let's take blogger no.8 as an example:

"According to my limited knowledge, no one has been found to have taken this route before. If so, please tell me immediately to remove the "first" in the title haha.

Kiruna (Sweden) → Rovaniemi (Finland) → North Cape (Norway) → Tromso (Norway) → Lofoten Islands (Norway) → Kiruna

The entire itinerary is within the Arctic Circle, and the southernmost place is Rovaniemi, the hometown of Santa Claus, which happens to be on the Arctic Circle. So I boldly named this route "Arctic Circle Nordic Great Loop"（blog no.8）."

We can read from this illustration that the blogger no.8 thought highly of being the "first", which in his own words represented extraordinary creation. He even named this route that he thought was his exclusive initiative. From his description, we can know that for him to be a pioneer in a sense has brought him extra excitement and satisfaction, and it is enough to become part of his motivation for planning this trip.

6)   Traveling in Nordic and the social interaction with it can bring satisfaction to bloggers

When reviewing the blogs, it has been detected that people tend to communicate with others when planning for a trip. On the one hand, many bloggers mentioned references to the content of other travelers' blogs; on the other hand, the sharing of other bloggers planted the seeds of these travelers'

wish to choose the Nordic region for travel. Blog no.14 emphasized on this factor as:

"At that time, I was intensively finishing off my trip to West America in late May, and I was busy reading hundreds of posts in the Nordic section in qyer.com. I happened to read the hot blog posted by "Simplicity is Happiness" named "Three Kingdoms at a glance, Charm Norway! A Family of Three Norwegian Driving in 2016". I saw that Jane007 also has a plan to go to Nordic region. We had a talk in private, and I was told that she had already prepared a strategy for her Nordic journey. So, for the first time I enjoyed the service brought by reaching out. Jane007 generously sent a 137-page road book with pictures and text. On such a solid foundation, I quickly finalized my schedule.

Thank you Jane007, and also special thanks to the following bloggers on Qyer.com, your essence posts have given me great help in all aspects of the preparation stage (blog no.14)."
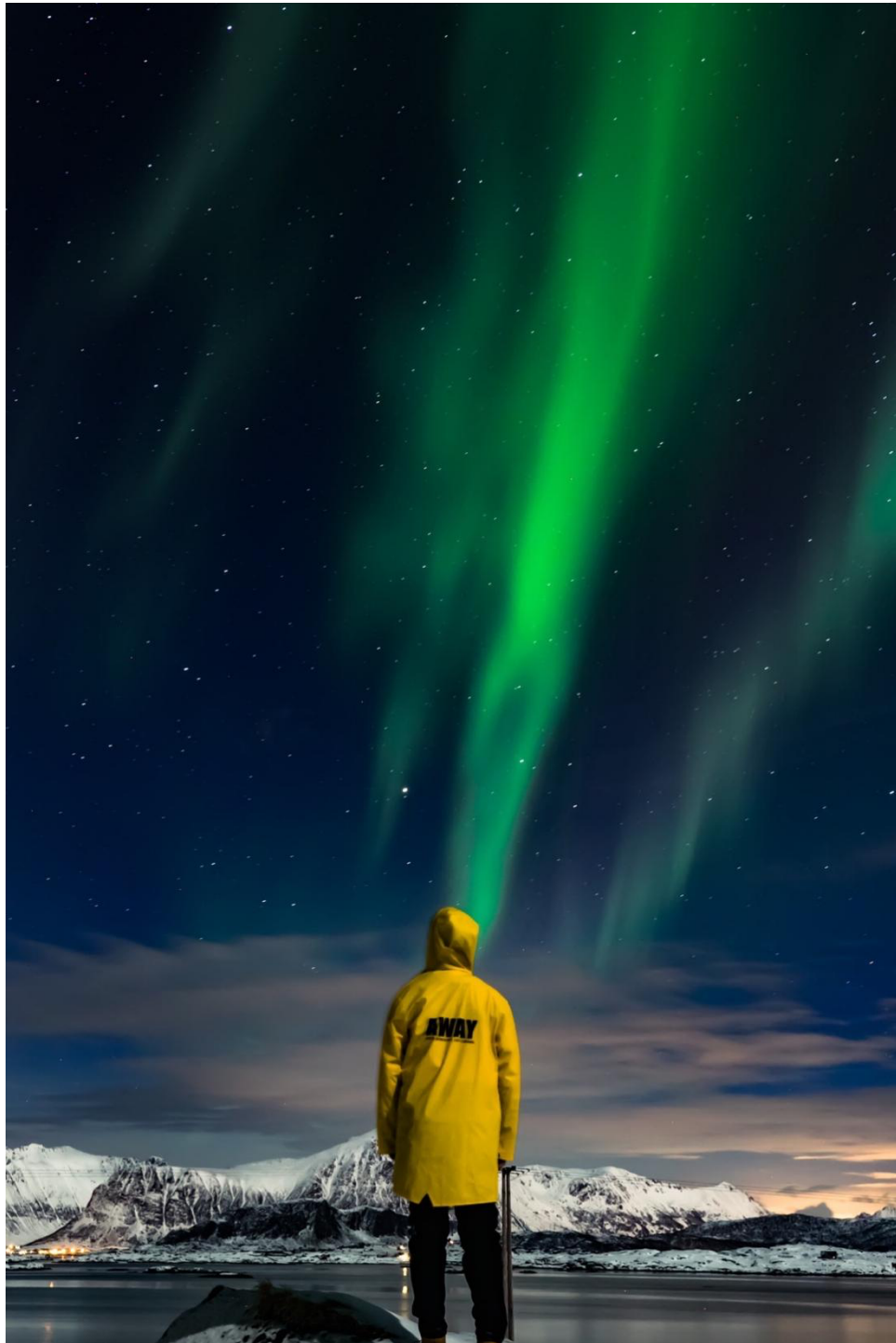
In addition to the above-mentioned directly quoted content, frequent interactions in the comment part also reflect that sharing content after travel brings social satisfaction to bloggers. The detailed content has brought huge views to bloggers, and their travel masterpieces have been widely recognized. At the same time, they are also very happy to interact with people in the community and actively strive to bring their experience to more people.

7)   Activities in the Nordic region allow some bloggers to meet their hobbies, such as photography
It is reflected in the blogs that interests and hobbies factor plays a very important role. It is frequently mentioned that people regard traveling itself as a hobby. Besides, some specific natural conditions in the Nordic region provide people with very good conditions for completing other hobbies at the same time.

One of the most well-recognized hobbies are photography. Among Chinese tourists, there are many photographers with advanced equipment and technical expertise. They are obsessed with photographing the unique natural scenery and special city sights of the Nordic region. The shooting content includes special geological landforms, ancient historical buildings, local life and unique natural phenomena represented by the aurora. Blogger no.8 is a typical example of that point. In his blog, he mentioned his detailed preparation process and his passion and excitement for this journey. Also, he's strongly passionate about sharing his photography technique and achievements.

"I am looking forward to the paradise for landscape photographers-Lofoten Islands … Aurora shooting actually depends on the situation, mainly depends on the strength of the aurora. The first thing to do is to focus manually, because the aurora needs to be in a very dark situation, so the auto focus is not right. Manual focus should be adjusted to infinity and then back a little bit. Infinity is to shoot the starry sky, and the aurora is a little closer than the starry sky … When I came here to shoot the aurora, I picked up an uncle who specially brought the local aurora group here. He is very experienced in shooting aurora and is very willing to help and teach. The heart in the picture is his drawing. We shared our pictures with each other.   I was also inspired by him to learn to take portraits under

the aurora … The most important parameter for aurora shooting is that the ISO. The ISO can be adjusted to the maximum value of the post-processing noise reduction. This camera is slightly different. My 6D2 is used at around 1600-4800. The shutter time can be relatively short. The shorter the shutter time, the more realistic the aurora will be, because the aurora is always moving, and if the exposure time is too long, it will melt together. The shutter time can be tested from 5~10 seconds, 5s if the aurora is strong, and 10s if the aurora is weak, and then adjust after seeing the film. (Blog no.8)."

Aurora shoot by blogger no.8 (https://photo.qyer.com/32173450/allphoto)

Subway station by blogger no.8 (https://photo.qyer.com/32173459/allphoto)

Other bloggers also mentioned their photography hobbies. For example, blogger no.5 mentioned in the self-introduction that he was a contracted photographer of "Visual China", and blogger no.2 also emphasized that taking pictures and photography is one of his own favorite things to do. Bloggers usually share hundreds of photos in their blogs, and many of them are professional and amateur photographers. This also reflects that Nordic region has a high status in the heart of travel photography lovers. The desire to take photos in Nordic region is a key driver to take them from home.

4.2.2 External reasons

1) The natural scenery of Nordic region is unique and is regarded by many travelers as a photographer's paradise

The beautiful scenery and unique natural landscapes of the Nordic region are well-known, which is a huge attraction for ordinary tourists and photography hobby tourists. Regarding how Nordic natural scenery work in the minds of travel photography enthusiasts, blogger no.8, who has previously been regarded as a tourist greatly driven by the interest of photography, even wrote a poem to recall his experience. As blogger no.8 said in the blog, the Nordic region, with its beautiful scenery, impressive natural ecological environment, and excellent natural scenery combination, will become somewhere he will never forget:

> *"I often think about every moment there:*
>
> *Witness the Arctic pink dusk on the Torna River where Sweden and Finland join,*
>
> *I found the aurora in a wild lake I found on map by accident in Rovaniemi,*

In the forests of northern Finland, I looked at the drone screen on my phone with no words to describe my excitement.

Driving at the speed of a turtle in the snowstorm in Nordkapp,

At the entrance of Nordkapp, vehicles lined with a sense of collective ritual towards Nordkapp in the wind and snow.

In the obscure but most surprising fjord from Alta to Tromso, I stopped by the beautiful scenery for countless times.

At the top of the mountain in Tromso, I was frozen into old popsicles by the sudden wind and snow,

On the way to Ledingen, I was taken aback by the three Norwegian soldiers on the side of the road who were anti-rocketing rockets (a group of armored vehicles next to them),

Was awakened by the fire cloud full of floor-to-ceiling windows in Ledingen's homestay,

In the wilds of Bøstad, an aurora pierced through a hole in the clouds.

In Reine, I was surprised by the panoramic view of Reine in the drone.

I often miss them.　（blog no.8）"

2)　The cultural influence and appeal of Nordic region

In recent years, through the social media of Nordic tourism bureaus and the projects carried out by co-working media accounts, the Nordic culture and the life of the Nordic people are likely to gain more exposure in the Chinese online communities and social platform. In consequence, more people can get access to and learn about this area's culture and arise interests in visiting there. From the discourses in blogs, it can be inferred that the cultural celebrities in Nordic region plays a key role in travelers' yearning for Nordic region. Other cultural-related stuff includes games produced by Nordic Electronic Game Company. These games will make game fans interested in the country of origin of the games. To take a look at how bloggers write about those cultural influence:

"Thinking of Sweden, what will come to your mind? Nordic, coldness, neutral, design... As the hometown of the Nobel Prize in Literature, as the third largest music exporter in the world after the United States and the United Kingdom, as the hometown of IKEA and Absolute Vodka, in my opinion, this remote country in Nordic region is full of vitality and vitality and is also covered with a veil of mystery. (blog no.5)"

"I remember that I knew about Denmark a long time ago from Andersen's fairy tales, and I knew about Copenhagen because of the colorful houses. (blog no.10)"

"Many of us have played games made by Nordic companies: masterpieces include

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Battlefield, Mirror's Edge, etc., as well as masterpieces such as Minecraft. In the past few years, when the capacitive screen was just popular, there were more players of Angry Birds game.

...

In Rovaniemi, people built a physical exercise site into the Angry Birds theme park. The snow-white ground is set against brightly colored birds and cute green pigs. Not only babies, but also old fathers and mothers. The childlike innocence has been stimulated. The facilities in the park highly restored the game scene. I suddenly realized that because Rovio Entertainment is a Nordic developer, the game will have ice bird and ice cube designs. (blog no.16)"

3) Nordic architecture and design

Travelers' interest in Nordic architecture and design is also reflected in their blogs. This also makes the Nordic architectural style another manifestation of cultural attraction. From the illustration of bloggers, it is noticed that the reputation of Nordic design and architecture makes many travelers come here, full of yearning for Nordic architecture and design art. Those travelers and are willing to spend a lot of time exploring and exhibiting works in this area. There are several examples of blogs that mentioned such kind of attractiveness:

"There are also more familiar Nordic design and Nordic style, so in this trip, we not only chased snow and aurora, but also followed the footsteps of national treasure-level architects to see many wonderful modern buildings (blog no.13)."

"Before I came, I had three must-have wishes for Copenhagen: visiting the Danish Design Museum, checking in the organ church, and visiting household goods stores in the whole city (blog no.14)."

"About design

When I came to Sweden this time, I finally felt the Nordic style, which is admired by everyone. In the streets and lanes of Sweden, various buildings have typical design styles that originated in Scandinavia, simple, pure, no noise, it perfectly combines practical design ideas with industrial efficiency and functionalism (blog no.5)."

As shown in the blogs, it is well recognized that Nordic architecture and art has a fame of paying attention to the dialogue between architecture and environment, drawing unlimited creative inspiration from nature, and giving the works extremely strong vitality, dynamic and smooth spatial form. As such, people admire the Nordic design and architectural style.

4) Local life of Nordic people

For tourists, the Nordic lifestyle with local characteristics is also one of the attractions of this region. Travelers are interested in the lives of locals and are eager to get experiences with local characteristics. As shown in blogs, travelers would like to compare the lives of locals with the place

where they originally live, so as to have a feeling of the habits and characteristics of the locals more realistically and directly. Through reading the blog, I found that people tend to do very daily activities to get close to the lives of the locals, so that they can put themselves into this kind of life to have more effective and direct feeling about that.

> *"I think travel should not only be a rush to see what is on the surface, but also an experience that blends into the local area. (blog no.5)."*

> *"In China, the vegetable market is lively, crowded, and noisy, but it is the place with the most vibrant life. In Stockholm, the vegetable market is rarely seen. We saw a local vegetable market Hötorgshallen here, and there is also a cinema called FILMSTADEN SERGEL next to it. It is said that this market has a history of 800 years. The name Hötorgshallen began in the 17th century. (blog no.6)"*

> *"The best way to feel the life of the locals is to ride a bicycle around Helsinki. (note no.10)*

5）Unique appeal of Nordic brands——IKEA as an example

The good reputation of well-known Nordic brands allows Chinese tourists to associate the brands with the image and attractiveness of these countries. While reading the blog, I found that Chinese tourists have a good impression and a keen interest in the Swedish home furnishing brand IKEA. This good impression left by the brand has become part of the unique attraction of tourist destinations in the minds of tourists.

For people who have lived in the Nordic region for a long time, many brands that are common in the local area may be just a part of life, and people will not even notice the special influence of these brands. Take IKEA as an example. As a national brand in Sweden, IKEA is an affordable furniture solution provider for everyone, and it is the same in other parts of Europe. But for Chinese tourists, IKEA is a presence with special significance. Blogger no.10 especially spent a day to get a feeling of what it is like to visit IKEA in IKEA's hometown:

> *"It suddenly occurred to me that IKEA originated from Sweden. I personally like to decorate my home, so I plan to go to IKEA in Stockholm to see if there is any difference between IKEA in China and IKEA in Sweden in terms of items and prices?*

> *IKEA in Stockholm is still a bit far away from the city. I took the bus for almost an hour. After I arrived, I discovered that the local IKEA was much smaller than the domestic (Chinese) one. Indeed, a province in China has a larger population than the entire country of Sweden. After walking around IKEA, I found that there are still many well-designed products. Many people in the Nordic countries pay attention to the practicality of daily necessities, especially when it comes to storing items. The Nordic design we often say is very famous, because a lot of their design sense comes from life and nature. (blog no.10)"*

To brief how IKEA was introduced in China, there is a history of over 20 years. In 1999, IKEA entered Chinese marketing by opening its first store in Beijing. By September 2019, IKEA has

opened 27 shopping malls, 2 experience centers, 4 logistics distribution centers and 7 distribution centers in 21 cities in mainland China. IKEA is one of the first Nordic brands to enter China, and the things it sells are closely related to everyone. Therefore, it has the symbolic meaning of Nordic life, and it is also the word comes to mind when Chinese tourists thinking about what relates to Sweden. Cultural imprints will affect people's travel behavior as a result. In the blogs, there are bloggers mentioned their interest in "visiting IKEA in Sweden". For example, when the blogger no.5 talked about Nordic style and Nordic design, she said:

"My biggest feeling is that they really value life more than work. The Nordic people only work 37 hours a week. The most prolific nation in the world always pays attention to the concept of "home", so they indoor overall design is bright and warm. In terms of functions, it also pays special attention to one-stop family-like services. The most typical example of this is the Swedish brand-IKEA. (blog no.5)"

Blogger no.16 also showed same type of interest:

"It is Älmhult in Sweden, the IKEA headquarters, a place where you can lie down at any time.

Today, we spend New Year's Eve in the birthplace of IKEA (in fact, it is more likely to be on the train from Malmo to Älmhult), to explore its origin and the secret of success, and experience the IKEA brand's "one park, two food"." (blog no.16)

6) Traffic condition is considered when making decisions
Traffic condition is an important external reason that Chinese tourists will consider when arranging routes. This traffic factor includes the arrangement of the flight route and the convenience for road trip.

a. Road trip traffic condition is considered
Reliable infrastructure for car drivers created recreational opportunities for those who love self-driving road trips. It is worth noting that the mature traffic and road conditions in the Nordic region are uniquely attractive to self-driving road trip enthusiasts, given the fact that 10 out of a total of 22 bloggers chose to rent a car for at least part of the trip.

"Friends who are familiar with me know that I love self-driving road trip and enjoy freedom. I have long heard that Skåne in southern Sweden is an excellent place for self-driving. The superior geographical location and natural environment make this a "back garden" for Nordic family to enjoy vacations. So I made a plan for the trip, rented a car, and started another self-driving journey (blog no.5)."

Some bloggers mentioned that they would not include a certain country in the itinerary because the self-driving policy of that country is not friendly to Chinese travelers.

"Although it was a Nordic trip, Finland was excluded from the beginning because Finland did not allow Chinese people to rent a car for self-driving (this year, it is possible to rent a car with a Chinese driver's license and translation)." (blog no.14)

b.   Big cities are considered when flights are suitable

Regarding whether to visit some big cities in the Nordic region, people's choice may be optional. The choice of which cities to visit may be related to the city's transportation convenience, the price of flight tickets and the convenience of flight arrangements. If the airport can provide intercontinental flights with fair price and can well connect the whole itinerary, then people are likely to consider the city with such an airport to visit as a transit point.

"There are many options for going from Shanghai to Nordic region, and the most common choices are to enter Copenhagen, Denmark and Helsinki, Finland. I originally thought that I could drop by from Copenhagen to Legoland, and then take a cruise to Oslo. However, I found this route was too far away from the Arctic Circle and would waste a lot of time. It would be better to go straight in, enter directly from Helsinki, Finland, head all the way to the Arctic Circle, go around to Iceland and then go back to Oslo without repeating the itinerary. "(blog no.12)

4.2.3 Other concerns

1)   Language problem

The bloggers mentioned that although the Nordic language looks a bit similar to English, it is actually not the same, which makes it difficult for them to remember place names. In addition, if the destination can provide some Chinese services accordingly, it will be able to bring them great convenience.

Blogger no.17 illustrated how difficult she felt about preparing for this trip due to language problem:

"To be honest, this trip to Nordic region is the most difficult one I have done in many years. For this trip, I started making plans in February, until the preliminary completion in early July, and finally confirmed everything at the end of September. I set out... 7 months.

...

The first big hit in the Nordic itinerary is... the language is not working, the place name, the building name... are all in the local language... the spelling can't be read, and I can't remember it. Sometimes I can't find it when I type in the map in English. (blog no.17)"

When choosing a restaurant, blogger no.2 chose the one with Chinese service:

> *"Then came our long-awaited seafood dinner session. We chose the one by the pier with a Chinese waiter. (blog no.2)"*

2) Dietary habit

It is interesting to notice that "Chinese stomach" is a frequently mentioned concept by bloggers. Those who mentioned this concept explained that they are not used to Nordic food, so they tend to look for Asian dishes when looking for food. This preference also influenced their accommodation choice. In order to cook for themselves, they tend to stay in where they can cook their own food, for example, Airbnb apartment with a kitchen. They are also likely to bring food such as Chinese seasonings and instant noodles on their way to satisfy the "Chinese stomach" during the trip. In the travel notes, several tourists said:

> *"It is recommended to live in a homestay here, it is more cost-effective and can save money for cooking and also satisfy the Chinese stomach. (blog no.8)"*

> *"Before I set off, I specially prepared 5 packs of instant noodles. As a result, I had eaten them before Sweden was over. No way, who would give me a Chinese stomach. These Nordic countries also have Chinese restaurants, but there are still some gaps between prices and tastes and domestic ones. (blog no.10)"*

5. Discussions

In this chapter, the motivations for Chinese independent travelers to the Nordic region are discussed in the light of the push-pull model mentioned in Chapter 2.

5.1 Push factors analysis

Since the push factors are based internally and connected with emotional and affective content, they are harder to measure while staying relatively stable over an individual's travel history (Pearce, 2011). Through literature review, a series of push factors have been premised, including escape, rest and relaxation, self-esteem, prestige, health and fitness, adventure, social interaction, interests and hobbies. In the analysis process, it is noticed many statements are consistent with push factors premised in the literature review, which also align Hsu & Huang (2008)'s leading tourist studies that push factors are fairly consistent.

1) Escape

Crompton (1979) pointed out that the motive for traveling due to escape stems from people's desire to escape from daily life. In the cumbersome daily life people are under pressure from family, workplace, interpersonal life and various relationships, and travel has become an outlet to release this pressure and escape from daily life. Jamrozy & Uysal (1994) completed the concept by pointing out one's willingness to escape can be due to the pressure, stress caused by personal life or interpersonal life with colleagues, employers or even family.

In the process of reading the blog, I found that some bloggers are obviously troubled by the daily tedious life. They usually show the tedious details of life in the blog. But at the same time, they also showed that they use travel as a belief to help them temporarily get rid of the repetitive daily life, and they gain energy by preparing for a new journey. This shows that the push factor is playing a role.

2）Rest and relaxation

Rest and relaxation is another important factor for Chinese travelers. Relaxation means that people engage in activities that they do not usually participate in during travel to get spiritual relaxation (Crompton, 1979). People in the blogs also showed a strong desire to go to a different place and do something different from daily activities.

Blogger no.19 became interested in Rovaniemi's special activities while watching this television show, hoping to pursue relaxation through adventures. These activities that he desires are to obtain relaxation during travel and are not related to his own hobbies. He would like to participate simply because he has time to engage in these activities during the travel, thereby obtaining a sense of relaxation. These activities are difficult to carry out in his daily life. Only during travel can he obtain these special experiences.

3）Self-esteem and prestige

A pleasure vacation may be viewed by some people as an opportunity for re-evaluating and discovering more about themselves or for acting out self-images and in so doing refining or modifying them (Crompton, 1979). The prestige factor means that people are eager to gain the attention and appreciation of others by enriching their knowledge and experience and highlighting their own differences, which inspires the joy of travel and helps travelers achieve personal growth (McIntosh et al., 1995). Prestige factor is associated with self-esteem and personal development, which can be reflected when the journey has been published by the bloggers. Some bloggers mentioned their originality and pioneering of the journey, which also allowed them to gain self-recognition to a great extent.

In addition, for the KOLs (key opinion leaders) in this study mentioned above, more travel experience can help them enrich their blog content, and excellent travel content will also contribute to their reputation in travel channel. Once they have received more attention and a stronger reputation, more people are likely to pay attention to them. Since the Nordic region is still niche and can make travelers appear stylish, individual, and tasteful, choosing Nordic as a tourist destination will naturally allow fans to deepen their positive impression on KOLs. This also reflects from another aspect that choosing to travel to Nordic region has brought prestige value to KOLs.

Furthermore, it is found that the travelers have a special hobby for sharing special tips and strategy. In doing so, they can bring great convenience to those who plan to travel to the Nordic region in the future, while at the same time satisfying their desire to share. This reflects their desire to maintain social interaction and shows self-esteem and prestige. This finding is similar to Hua & Yoo (2011)'s study on the motivation of Mainland Chinese travelers traveling to the United States that for Chinese outbound tourists, traveling long-distance, especially to those well-recognized developed countries, is a source of pride for Chinese people. Long-distance, independently planned outbound travel has some special social significance for Chinese tourists.

4）Health and fitness

Travelers achieve health goals through certain sports activities during the journey (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). During analysis, it is noticed that many tourists participate in sports activities that are beneficial to their health, such as climbing several representative routes in the Norwegian fjords (such as Kjeragbolten, the Pulpit Rock, TrollTunga). But it seems that health and fitness is an achievement by the way, not a direct stimulator.

To be specific, travelers showed that participating in some specific activities brought them great excitement. These activities are greatly based on local natural conditions, special landforms, special weather, and their combinations. The health gains embodied by the bloggers are obtained through some high physical consumption local activities, such as hiking. However, the health and fitness brought about by participating in outdoor activities are just additional gains from participating in non-daily activities, not the purpose of these activities themselves.

5） Social interaction

Social interaction is one of the commonalities of Chinese tourists' and their western counter- parts' vacation values, suggested by Fu, Lehto, and Cai (2012). For Chinese travelers, their social interaction is led by curiosity and a desire to know others outside of their travelling unit (Fu et al., 2012).

As mentioned previously in 4.2.1, social interaction makes an impact in travel decision. Through the interactive content such as forwarding, favorites, and comments, blogs with rich contents will gain a high degree of popularity in the community. Other travelers or people who are interested in this destination are likely to model after those bloggers. Another phenomenon is that bloggers learn from each other's trip arrangement.

But from another point of view, this level of social activity is not limited to Nordic region travelers, but widely exists among independent travelers. Besides, there is no direct evidence from the statements can show that social interaction plays a decisive role in the travel decision-making process. Usually, people emphasize more on the satisfaction brought by sharing, instead of any other visible value.

6)   Interests and hobbies

Scholars believe that travelers are likely to meet their hobby needs through some specific activities in the travel destination. Travelers tend to pursue for hobbies and interests that are taken separated from rest and relaxation factor through such activities (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Yuan and McDonald, 1990).

It is reflected in the blogs that interests and hobbies factor plays a very important role. It is frequently mentioned that people regard traveling itself as a hobby. Besides, some specific natural conditions in Nordic region provide people with very good conditions for completing other hobbies at the same time. As mentioned in Chapter 4.2.1, one of the most well-recognized hobbies are photography. Among Chinese tourists, there are many photographers with advanced equipment and technical expertise. They are obsessed with photographing the unique natural scenery and special city sights of Nordic region. The shooting content includes special geological landforms, ancient historical buildings, local life, and unique natural phenomena represented by the aurora. For example, blogger no.8 was intoxicated with shooting aurora, but also happy to shoot the special stuff in the city. Blogger no.5 mentioned in the self-introduction that he was a contracted photographer of "Visual China", and blogger no.2 also emphasized that taking pictures is one of his own favorite things to do during travel.

5.2 Pull factors analysis

As mentioned in the previous review, people travel because they are "pushed" into travelling by internal reasons or factors, or because they are "pulled" by external factors, such as destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). As such, pull factors emphasize on the specific characteristics of destinations (Compton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981). Pull factors are external factors to tourists, which are about benefits provided by particular destinations

(Uysal and Hagan, 1993).

Chinese independent tourists usually have the habit of "doing their homework" when preparing for a travel (Xiang, 2013). This habit encourages them to learn about the various characteristics of the destination and the preparations they need to do during the trip, and in the process they better understand the unique tourist attraction of the destination. Compared to push factors, pull factors are more diversified and contextual. That is why they are more helpful in marketing new activities to new markets (Wu & Pearce, 2013). In this part, I discuss the pull factors.

1) Scenic beauty

Since natural scenery is an important feature that distinguishes different travel destinations (Yangzhou Hu, J.R. Brent Ritchie, 1993), the natural scenery of the travel destination has become an important selling point of the travel destination (Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Hanqin and Lam,1999; Jang and Cai ,2002). Through the analysis of the blog, I found that the natural landscape is the most important part of the tourist attraction of the Nordic region. Scenic beauty mainly includes natural environment, unique natural phenomena (such as aurora), unique geography (such as Norwegian fjords) and winter snow scenes. The unique weather conditions and geography of the Nordic region have created a unique landscape and famous scenery, which makes Chinese tourists particularly interested in Nordic region.

2) Cultural attractiveness

Cultural experience is what travelers are eager to have while destinations happen to be capable of providing cultural experience as a pull factor for travelers (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Oh, Uysal, and Weaver, 1995). Through the development and dissemination of cultural industries in the Nordic region over the years, more Chinese tourists have gained more knowledge of the Nordic region's culture, history, lifestyle, cultural industries, and other cultural heritage.

Some variety shows and joint activities in the Nordic region also contributed to the cultural exposure of Nordic region and made more Chinese people understand the Nordic region and are willing to consider the Nordic region as a future travel destination. The design and architectural style in Nordic countries is something particularly impressive for Chinese tourists who gained knowledge about it from a variety of channels. In addition, the well-known Nordic brands represented by the Swedish brand IKEA also played an important role in cultural attraction.

3) Recreational opportunities

Recreational opportunitie, as a concept derived from the subsequent application of the classic push-pull model in tourism motivation study (Uysal and Hagan, 1993), it refers to the leisure and recreational activities created by the travel destination for tourists under its own tourism resource endowment, so as to provide tourists with leisure and relaxation through such activities.

The tourism industry in the Nordic region has gone through some years of development and can provide a wealth of activities for tourists to choose. Many scenic spots or popular tourist destinations have combined local characteristics, providing tourists with a rich selection of recreational activities, and bringing them opportunities for leisure and entertainment. Take aurora-related tourism activities

as an example. Aurora and other local characteristics are bundled together to become a distinctive tourism product, allowing tourists to have an interesting experience.

5.3 Demotivations - findings out of the model

In the previous literature on travel motivation, demotivation is rarely considered as a part of the theoretical model. But in this study, it is noticed that some demotivation would bring concerns to travelers and make them feel some difficulties in the planning process of travel. The thinking about demotivation is an extension based on previous travel motivation research and further improvement of the theoretical framework of this article, which can play a stimulating role for theoretical research on travel motivation.

1) Language problem

For Chinese tourists, language problems can cause many difficulties in preparing for the itinerary. This problem is not only reflected in Chinese tourists in Nordic, but a common problem that Chinese outbound tourists need to face (Xiang, 2013). In Xiang (2013)'s study about the characteristics of independent Chinese outbound travelers, it has been found that destinations with webpage in Chinese, which can eliminate the language obstacle for Chinese tourists, would become more welcomed by Chinese tourists.

In this study, the condition is a bit different. It is not a problem only about the lack of Chinese guidance. The bloggers mentioned that although the Nordic language looks a bit similar to English, it is actually not the same, which makes it difficult for them to remember place names. In addition, if the destination can provide some Chinese services accordingly, it will be able to bring them great convenience.

It can be seen from the descriptions of bloggers that these tourists have a certain demand for language services when they travel in the Nordic region. They have a natural preference for the options that can provide Chinese services. As for the complexity of local languages, it is difficult to say that only Chinese tourists are facing it and it happens only in Nordic. But since it has been noticed, it still gives the local tourism department a certain tip – to provide language convenience to outcoming travelers as much as possible.

2) Dietary habit

In the blogs, Chinese tourists have shown a general discomfort with Nordic food styles. Their interest in Nordic food is limited so that they want to try a little bit. Unfortunately, they tend to prefer familiar eating styles. It is interesting to notice that "Chinese stomach" is frequently mentioned concept by bloggers, especially when they are considering accommodation issue.

6. Conclusions

This research mainly focuses on understanding the motivations of Chinese independent travelers visiting the Nordic region for tourism purposes from both internal and external perspectives. A solid literature review on related concepts and model (including tourist motivation, push-pull theoretical model and Chinese independent travelers) has been done to guide data collection.

Considering the fact that direct data collection from travelers can be challenging during this special time under epidemic, netnography is adopted, which has been proven suitable for travel study.

The empirical data has been presented in detail with proper categorization in Chapter 4.1, and the data source is "Qyer.com", the largest independent tourists online forum in China. Through extensive collection and in-depth understanding of empirical data, some phenomena, which mainly reflects internal reasons and external reasons for Chinese independent travelers to choose Nordic region as travel destination, have been summarized and supported by data. In this step, directly quoting is applied to present the findings with the corresponded evidence one by one, so that readers can have a more intuitive understanding. This step also laid the foundation for subsequent in-depth analysis.

Based on the previous literature review and empirical data presentation, push-pull model is considered in the analysis stage. The push factors and pull factors introduced in the previous literature review stage are applied and combined with the data presented in Chapter 4 for analysis.

Through the analysis of the selected blog content and combined with the push-pull theoretical model, I found that the motivations of Chinese tourists to visit the Nordic region are aligned with the classic push and pull factors. Push factors include: escape, rest and relaxation, self-esteem and prestige, health and fitness, social interaction, interests and hobbies. Pull factors include: scenic beauty, cultural attractiveness, recreational opportunities.

In addition, it is found there are factors not involved in the theoretical framework also have an impact on the travelers' motivation. The study also finds that there are specific factors that can demotivate the tourists to travel to the Nordic region, such as language problem and dietary habit.

7. Managerial implications

The possible implications are based on the findings through the analysis of empirical data. According to Som (2010), the analysis about the tourist motivation can contribute to thriving marketing destination. Tourists' attitude towards a destination may be a measure of the destination's ability to attract tourists (Brayley, 2010). In this part, I will make a summary of the discussion using the first and second order analysis in the previous part, combined with the blog contents and the theoretical model. Besides, I would like to put forward my creative thoughts in some new aspects beyond the model.

Through first-order analysis, the blog discourses are preliminarily considered. The information found in the empirical data is presented in detail and has been effectively summarized. The characteristics of some Chinese tourists in Nordic region are considered in two dimensions, internal and external. Through second-order analysis, the complete push-pull model, especially each and every of push and pull factor, is analyzed in detail with the appliance of findings from the first-order analysis. It has been verified that push-pull model is an effective classical model applicable for the research about the tourism motivation of Chinese travelers who shared their travel experience online. Through the analysis of push and pull factors, the research question raised in the beginning - what are the internal and external reasons for Chinese tourists to choose the Nordic region as their travel destination can be answered. In addition, some demotivation is considered after the discussion applied push-pull theoretical model to this motivation study. Discoveries in this study can help improve the development of the research framework, and at the same time provide some new insights to the Nordic tourism industry.

In terms of possible suggestions based on the previous discussion, there are several points I would like to emphasize:

First, I suggest that the tourism bureaus of the Nordic countries make more efforts to promote Nordic tourism attractiveness online. It is suggested to post on various social platforms in the form of texts, images and videos. Besides, to attract more potential tourists to visit Nordic region, interaction with influential KOLs (for example famous travel bloggers) can be effective. Through such kind of social media cooperation and promotion, people will have more chances to get access to the Nordic attractiveness.

Second, since the influence of well-known international brands in tourism promotion is reflected in this study, the two can be combined in the follow-up tourism promotion. Regarding how to use the appeal of those brands to make it part of the tourist attraction, several measures can be taken step by step. For example, the IKEA headquarters mentioned in the blogs can be promoted as a unique tourist destination. Besides, to satisfy tourists' desire of visiting IKEA in IKEA's hometown, the IKEA buses the reservation system can be opened for tourists gradually together with proper tourism promotion. Through such actions, well-known brands such as IKEA can play a more comprehensive role in tourism promotion, which can also bring win-win to the brand and the tourism industry.

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Third, regarding the different eating habits, it is recommended to use travel social media accounts to promote some restaurants that can reflect local characteristics and meet the needs of Chinese tourists, so as to increase the range of choices for Chinese tourists. A good example is sushi restaurants. The ingredients for sushi are often high-quality seafood caught in the North Sea, but culturally speaking, sushi originates from Japan, so this combination may be able to combine local advantages and taste recognition.

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Appendix 1

Blog Nr.	Blog Name	Region	Transportation	Travel Season	Review nr	Like Nr	Favourite Nr	Comment Nr	Travel route	Travel Days	Post time
1	极地 永夜 纯白：记一场追逐极光的雪域自驾之旅（北欧极光之优选自驾环线）	Guangzhou	road trip	winter	109361	1600	1273	42	Guangzhou-Rovaniemi-Kirina-Absiko-Narvik-Tromso-Muonio-Helsinki-Guangzhou	11	2020/4/17
2	初夏，尝一口北欧的清甜（挪威公路峡湾之行+丹麦城市漫步）	Beijing	public transport; road trip	summer	89032	1359	1135	23	Beijing-Oslo-Wizard Road-Atlantic Road-Alesund-Geiranger-Bergen-Odda (Demon's Tongue)-Sermon Stone-Stavanger-Copenhagen	8	2020/2/24
3	Nordic影像纪| 一路风雨北欧行		road trip	autumn	19336	322	253	5	Shanghai-Copenhagen-Bergen-Tromso-Lofoten-Trondheim-Oslo-Reykjavk-Iceland-Copenhagen-Shanghai	17	2020/9/21
4	北欧之夏| 古老与现代交融的哥本哈根	UK	public transport	summer	48180	999	606	13	UK-Denmark-Sweden	30	2019/10/5
5	【阿拉蕾环省自驾游瑞典】在这里，感受现代设计和北欧田园的美妙交融	Beijing	public transport	summer	109548	1661	1323	23	Copenhagen-Scania	6	2019/11/22
6	北纬59度，邂逅秋日斯德哥尔摩	Hong Kong	public transport		39224	504	733	52	Helsinki-Iceland-Stockholm-Copenhagen-South Norway-Lofoton	21	2019/4/2
7	太阳去哪儿了---三口之家十五天非自驾两中游北欧（哥本哈根，挪威缩影，盖朗厄尔，lofoten，斯德哥尔摩）绝对详细	Shanghai	public transport	summer	158548	210	1445	693	Copenhagen-Norway-Stockholm	16	2016/10/13
8	冬季北极圈北欧大环线自驾极光大纪行|首创自驾线路（芬兰罗瓦涅米，挪威北角、特罗姆瑟、罗弗敦群岛）		road trip	winter	50854	661	1035	105	Lapland:Kiruna (Sweden) → Rovaniemi (Finland) → North Cape (Norway) → Tromso (Norway) → Lofoten Islands (Norway) → Kiruna	20	2019/4/25
9	北欧的深深深呼吸【记2019年5月底6月初冰岛&挪威的24个日夜，全程自驾，含冰川徒步、冰河湖泛船 & 罗弗敦】	Shanghai	road trip	summer	51994	675	660	253	Iceland-Norway	25	2019/7/16
10	盛夏的北欧是什么颜色？【芬兰，瑞典，挪威，丹麦15日自由行】		public transport	summer	47341	647	681	6	Finland-Sweden-Norway-Denmark	10	2019/10/13
11	人生圆满系列之北欧极光——十一非自驾挪威峡湾•罗弗敦群岛•特罗姆瑟深度游及斯德哥尔摩一瞥	Shanghai	public transport	autumn	51467	601	1170	83	South Norway-North Norway-Stockholm	12	2018/10/28
12	北欧苍穹，寒冬如冰，幸运如火——邂逅欧若拉的20天蜜月行（芬兰、瑞典、挪威、自驾冰岛）【详细全攻略完结】	Shanghai	road trip	autumn	12505	88	251	84	Lapland-Iceland	18	2019/4/26
13	如果在冬季：北欧四国驯鹿极光和鲸鱼，还有国宝级大师的建筑们！（斯堪的纳维亚半岛芬兰/瑞典/挪威/丹麦4国15天）		public transport	winter	19413	199	348	26	Finland-Sweden-Norway-Denmark	13	2019/3/16
14	2017年初秋，我们与北欧四国相约	Shanghai	road trip	autumn	21881	260	292	153	Copenhagen-Stockholm-Norway-Iceland	26	2018/8/29
15	【AERO4400】野性冰岛的14天疯狂 47天自驾北欧之冰岛篇		road trip	summer	81998	198	1150	269	Iceland	14	2015/11/1
16	【小大旅行】第3季：细味斯堪的纳维亚原色，体验冬日拉普兰，北欧十二城游记及攻略	Beijing	public transport; road trip	winter	13055	171	170	65	Copenhagen-Gothenburg-Malmo-Stockholm-Lapland	18	2019/2/18
17	【首页贴】那么清冷 如此热烈 路过北欧的一些（完结 17年秋 冰岛 挪威 瑞典 芬兰 12万字1200图海量信息）	Beijing	public transport; road trip	autumn	112082	1133	3505	417	Lapland-North Norway-Stockholm-Iceland	19	2018/1/15
18	挪威的峡湾，瑞典的城堡，和丹麦的童话（北欧10日）	Shanghai	public transport	spring	94838	652	1532	211	South Norway-Stockholm-South Denmark-Oslo	13	2017/6/6
19	【光之门】非自驾玩转北欧，拥抱漫天风雪、繁星与幻光（芬兰|爱沙|瑞典|挪威，6万字攻略+800张美图+视频，已完结！）		public transport	winter	100665	976	2570	211	Helsinki-Rovaniemi-Stockholm-Tromso-Oslo	13	2018/4/2
20	丹麦不高冷，挪威不森林，精芬不精分（完结-深秋初冬北欧三国11日自由行+3万字海量干货友情大放送）	Shanghai	public transport	autumn	33504	296	935	57	Copenhagen-South Norway-North Finland	11	2018/12/22
21	【纯白北欧X芬兰挪威】听一篇浪漫的圣诞童话，看迷人的极光洒满天际|附海达路德游德轮体验	Shanghai	public transport	spring	64028	789	1544	187	Lapland	8	2018/5/31
22	【对世界上瘾】一眼三国，魅力挪威！2016 三口之家挪威自驾-布道石/四大峡湾/罗弗敦岛/哥哈/斯德哥尔摩 详细攻略				432370	624	3095	1882	Copenhagen-South Norway-North Norway-Stockholm	17	2016/9/22