

Travel Motives of German Tourists in the Scandinavian Wilderness: the case of Fulufjället National Park

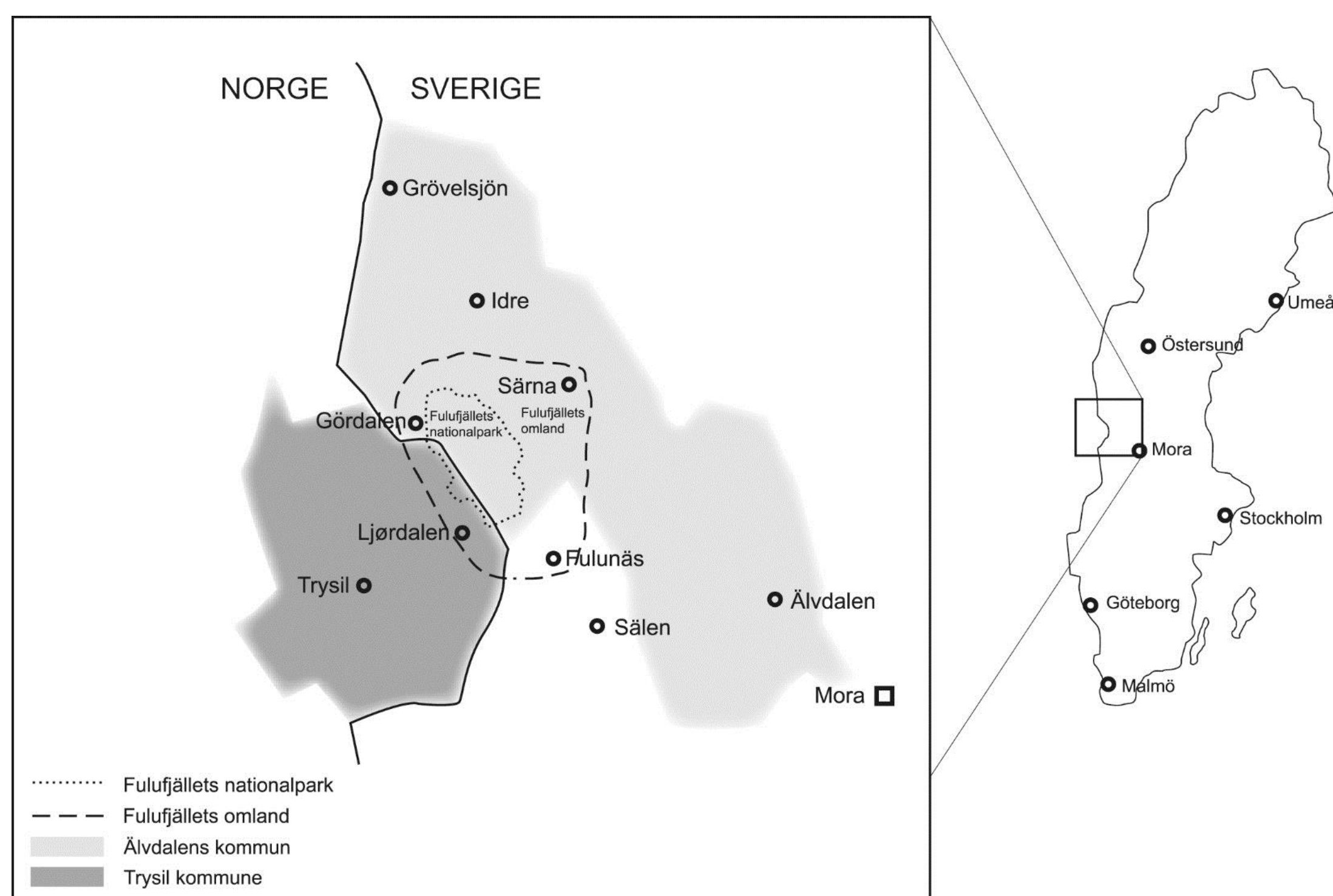
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Background

It has long been acknowledged that tourism can be a beneficial and effective instrument for the management and protection of national parks. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism operations, protected area managers have to pay increasing attention to the type and quality of visitor experiences. The investigation of motivations builds the foundation for further behavioral examinations because of an inseparable connection with the travel decision process, including on-site perceptions, experiences, and the satisfaction level. The development of effective and comprehensive management strategies based on customized knowledge contributes to maximize visitors' nature experience, to ensure the enjoyment of recreational opportunities, and the sustainment of the tourism resource itself - the valued status of the natural setting.

Study Area - Fulufjället National Park (FNP), Sweden

- "Fjäll" National Park with Sweden's largest waterfall (Njupeskrä)
- Established in 2002, Municipality of Älvdalen, Dalarna County (Sweden)
- Size: 385 km² (230 km² wilderness zone), Height: 500 - 1042 m



Material and Methods

To meet the targets of the exploratory study, data were collected with a mixed-method research design where a quantitative and a qualitative approach were combined. The mixed-method design thereby has a complementarity purpose in the sense of triangulation. Hence, the quantitative results provided the identification of five motivational factors and gave information about the level of importance, while the qualitative data provided a better understanding of these survey results. The two approaches were conducted simultaneously during the high-use summer season from early June to late September in 2014.

Quantitative Research

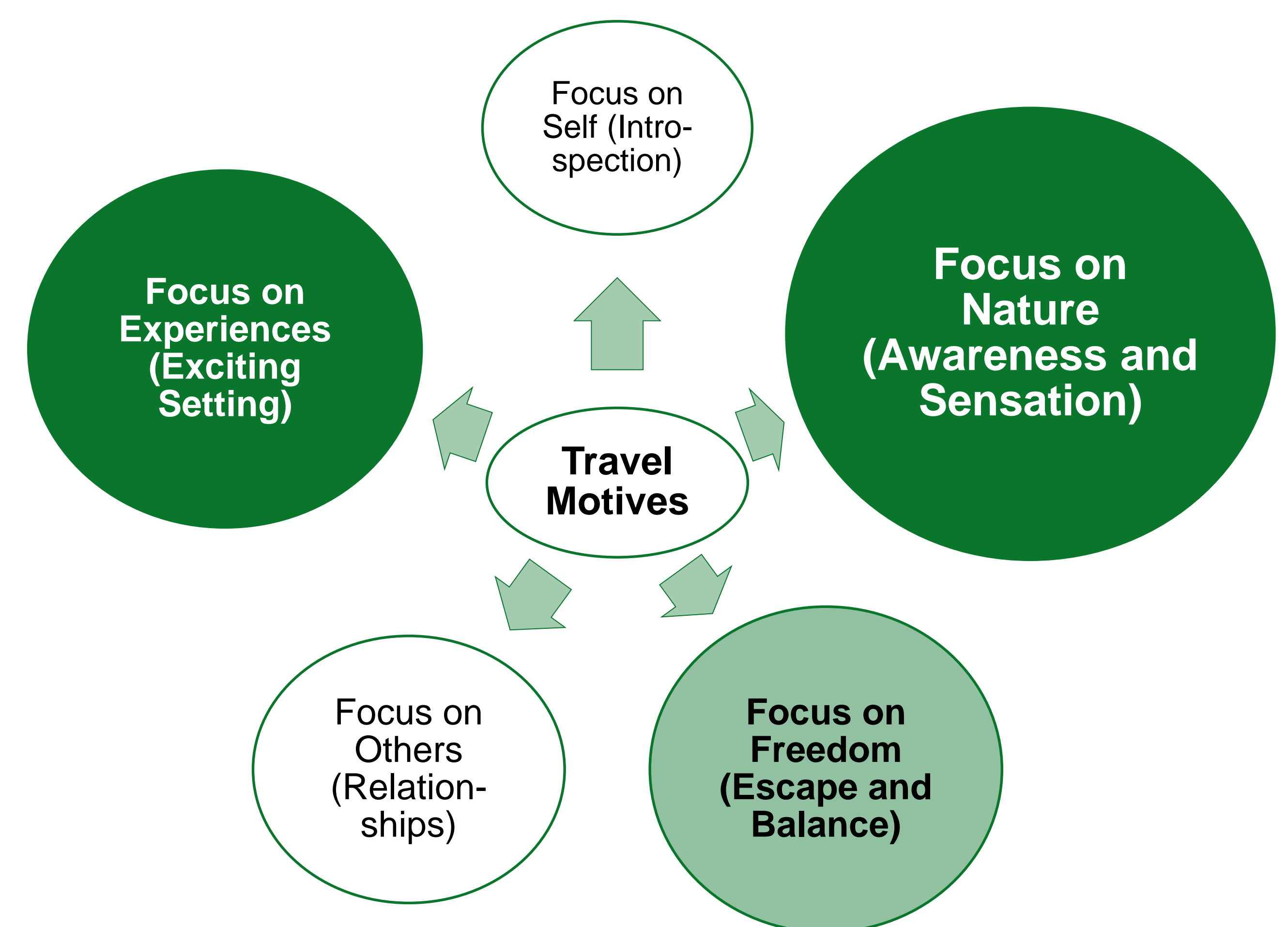
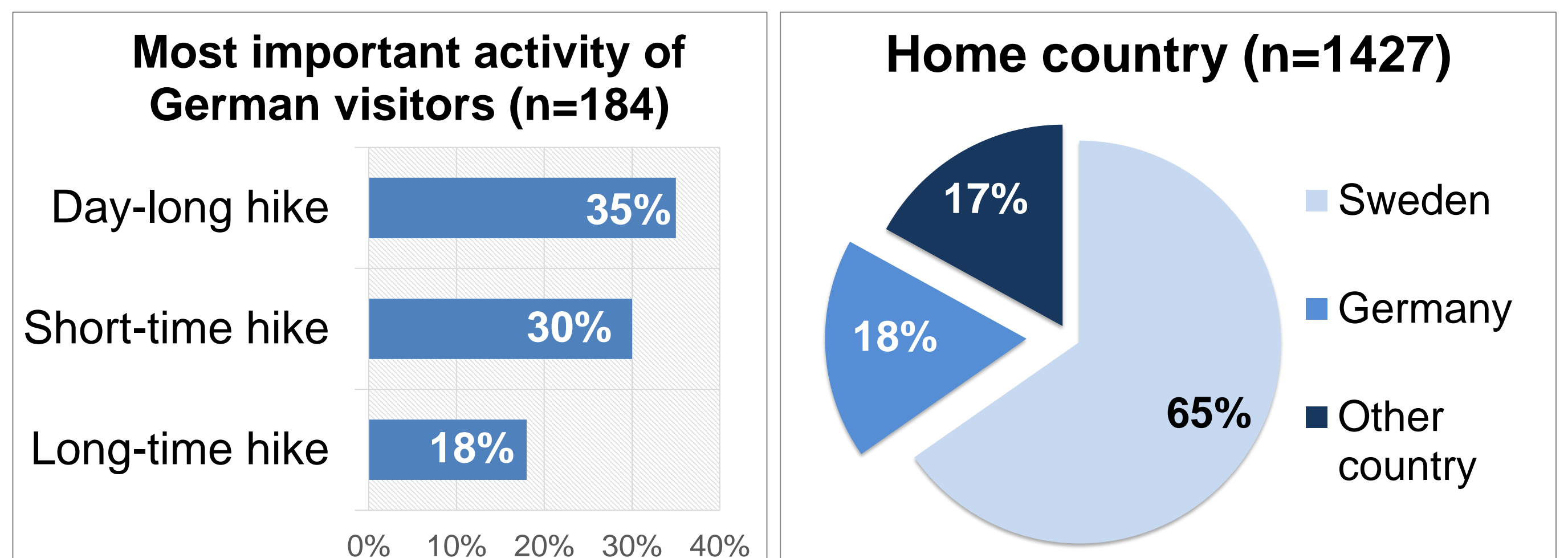
- Self-registration boxes at 8 locations in the National Park
- Online Survey (2.711 visitors)
- Response rate of about 50 % (255 German visitors)

Qualitative Research

- Semi-structured interviews with 30 German visitors
- Sample of National Park Centre visitors
- Age from 14 to 77 years

Results

Factor and reliability analysis revealed, along with the usage of **recreational experience preference scales**, five motivational factors with an appropriate internal consistency including focus on self, nature, freedom, others, and experiences. As a result, the self related and socialness factors play a subordinate role within the travel decision of German visitors. Instead, it is the outstanding scenery of FNP that provides German visitors with rewarding experiences in the Scandinavian "wilderness".



Discussion

Through the quantitative study, it was demonstrated that travel motivation could be identified as patterns and combinations of multiple motives that are influenced by previous travel experiences and activities. It is noticeable that the determined motivational factors show interrelations and interdependencies and that "push" and "pull" travel motives work in tandem. Follow-up visitors felt attracted by the quality of nature (naturalness, unspoiled, and primitive state). Short-time hikers and long-time hikers had a reversed motivational profile. The aesthetical value of nature seems to be the main attracting factor for short-time hikers, while a hiking tour of several days is the crucial instrument for the profound purpose of temporal escape from home with an inner reflection and social cohesion in mind.

