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Determinants of revisit intentions

The main determinants of revisit intentions to Norwegian skiing resorts

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This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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Abstract

What are the repurchase intentions of winter tourists in Norway in 2016? What makes them satisfied and what are their motivations? This thesis aims to clarify these themes. Existing theories and models of repurchase intentions in travel and tourism, as well as interview data from visitors, will be used to identify the main determinants of revisit intentions.

The inspiration for this study came from the vision of the cluster Arena Usus. The Arena Usus network consists of 100 companies within the travel-, experience- and culture business in the south of Norway and they focus on repurchase within travel and tourism and its value. Their goal is that 90 percent of all visitors should want to return to Southern Norway. Due to their engagement, I will too look further into repurchase. More specifically; repurchase intentions of ski tourists vacating in Norway 2016.

This thesis reports results from 74 personal interviews of slalom skiers during the winter of 2016. These interviews are conducted at the skiing resorts at Hovden, Hemsedal and Ål. In addition, I will use data from a quantitative survey from 2012 at Hovden ski resort in the analysis. This data belongs to Visit Sørlandet and were collected as part of the Usus project. When analyzing the collected data, I will try to answer the following three questions:
1. What are the motivations of ski tourists in Norway?
2. What makes them satisfied?
3. What makes them revisit?

Given the fierce competition in the tourism and travel industry, it will be beneficial for all travel companies to obtain a deep understanding of tourist satisfaction and consumer behavior. This way, attractive tourist destinations can be offered, efficient market strategies can be created and one can to a larger extent prepare for future behavior. For this, the presented data is needed. The results show what factors that have the largest effect on satisfaction, repurchase intentions and for choosing a winter sport destination.
Although former studies have shown clear tendencies, so far no such study has been conducted in Norway. I hope this thesis will create a foundation for further research and help companies to better understand the intentions of repurchase.

Key words: revisit, customer satisfaction, loyalty, travel, tourism, skiing, Norway

Preface

This master thesis is written as a final part of the master program in Business and Administration, at School of Business and Law at University of Agder, the spring 2016.

This thesis comprises the concept of repurchase in fields of travel and tourism and includes the themes repurchase, customer satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty.

Without doubt, this has been a very demanding and challenging. Six months is a very limited time period, which has made time a scarce resource. In addition to this, there were also great academic challenges. However, to master these have been very motivating. I am very pleased with my work and the result. Over the last six months, I have learned a great deal on this subject and I hope this is visible in my thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Ellen Nyhus, for excellent advice and guidance through the whole process. Your feedback, ideas and knowledge have been invaluable. I would also like to kindly thank Elisabeth Hauge at Agderforskning and Visit Sørlandet for letting me use their data. I thank Hovden Ski resort for their cooperation. Finally, I wish to thank my parents and friends for encouragement and support.

Kristiansand, May 30th 2016

Hilde Kristin Steen

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Tourism dates back over 2000 years (Swarbrooke, 2007), and has developed into one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy (Crouch, Perdue, Timmermans & Usyal, 2004). In 2015, the tourism and travel industry contributed with 7.2 trillion dollars to the world GDP, according to the yearly Economic Impact-report from the World Travel & Tourism Council[1]. This contribution represents 9.8 percent of global GDP and is, in spite of great uncertainties in the world economy, expected to grow further with 3.3 percent in 2016. If so, this will for the sixth year in a row, be higher than the general economic growth. With 7.2 million new jobs in 2015, there are now 284 million jobs in the sector, and globally 1 of 11 employments is within travel and tourism. Tourism, hospitality, and leisure are some of the largest and fastest growing parts of consumer spending (Crouch et al., 2004).

In spite of this development, Norway has lost market shares every decade since 1970. In 1970 the oil adventure started, and Norway went from being an average rich European country and a net exporter of tourism to one of the richest countries in Europe and a net importer of tourism. Even though the revenue from international tourists from 1975-2008 tripled, Norway lost market shares. This is a consequence of the national economic growth being greater than the growth in other European countries and the world economy. This economic growth has had enormous effects on the tourism industry in Norway. It resulted in higher salaries, which increased the spending on tourism and travel, but the increased salaries also led to higher costs in a labor-intensive industry. As a result, most traveled abroad where it was relatively cheaper to vacate (Jakobsen & Espelien, 2011). According to Tuftin, the Division Director of Innovation Norway, we might have seen the end of this development (2015). The level of formal competence in the tourism and travel industry increases, and stronger cluster properties that create closer links between the businesses are observed (Jakobsen & Espelien, 2011). This contributes to acquisition and exchange of knowledge and experiences. With this, the tourism and travel industry might be able to turn the tendencies from the 70s and rather increase repurchase in Norway. Hauge and Svarstad (2012) define repurchase as *"the activity*

[1] https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/2016%20documents/economic%20impact%20summary%202016_a4%20web.pdf

where the customer comes back and buy the seller's product, service or experience several times".

1.1 Arena Usus and their goal of high repeat visitation

Usus is a business cluster of companies within the travel, experience and cultural industries in Southern Norway and Telemark. Usus was one of several Arena-programs, which is a national initiative for the development of regional business communities, arranged by Innovation Norway, Norwegian Research Council and Siva. Usus are dedicated to repurchase and the value of existing customers. Consequently, they rather focus on the existing customers, than constantly work to attract new ones. Their belief is that existing and satisfied customers are the best form of marketing. Their goal of increased retention to become more competitive is consistent with the conclusion of Shoemaker and Lewis (1999); they do not believe the constant search for new customers will be enough. Their solution is rather to practice loyalty marketing, by customer recognition and tailored offers to achieve repurchase.

1.2 Hovden, Ål and Hemsedal Ski Resort

One of the members of Arena Usus is Hovden ski resort. It is one of 200 ski resorts in Norway (Vanat, 2016, p.54) and is situated in Setesdal, 200 km north of Kristiansand. With 32 slopes for slalom and 170 km for cross-country, Hovden is one of the most visited attractions in Agder. Given that Hemsedal and Hovden are two of the ten biggest ski resorts in Norway, I wanted to compare my results with a smaller ski resort. Ål ski resort is located in Hallingdal, 200 km from Oslo and 275 km from Bergen. It has 6 slalom slopes, 1 park and 4 lifts. Hemsedal, "the Alps of Norway", is located 60 km from Ål. It is Norway's second largest ski resorts with 49 slopes, 20 lifts and 3 parks. In addition, there are 229 km with cross-country skiing.

Figure 1.1 The ski resorts' geographical location

Do Hovden ski resort's customers intend to return and visit them again? If so, what are the reasons? And are these reasons different from other big and small ski resorts in Norway? By interviewing ski tourists at Hovden, Ål and Hemsedal ski resort, I aim to clarify this.

1.3 Outline

This study is motivated by the interest of tourism and consumer behavior. In addition, skiing is a central part of Norwegian culture and it has been for over 4.000 years (Vanat, 2016). The purpose of this thesis is to identify the most influential aspects of repurchase intentions, main motivations and antecedents of satisfaction among ski tourists. I intend to answer these three questions:

1. What are the motivations of ski tourists in Norway?
2. What makes them satisfied?
3. What makes them revisit?

For a thorough understanding of repurchase in tourism I have based my analysis on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For the possibility of generalization, I analyzed quantitative data collected during the winter 2012 by Agderforskning. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of why people return to certain ski resorts, I conducted 74 qualitative interviews. The interviews took place at Hovden, Ål and Hemsedal ski resorts. Even though the analysis is based on tourists at these ski resorts, I believe the results are transferable to other tourist destinations.

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. Firstly, in chapter 2, I explain the topic and its relevance, before I introduce the industry both globally and nationally. Thereafter, I provide a theoretical framework in chapter 3. Based on this, I explain my research model. This is followed by an elaboration of the used methods in chapter 4. My findings are presented in chapter 5. Elements of their motivations, satisfaction and intention to revisit are elaborated in this chapter. I have also suggested a research model, which is presented here. This is followed by a discussion and the revealed conclusion in chapter 7.

Chapter 2 Relevance and industry

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the term repurchase and the tourism and travel industries, with their relevance and importance. I will do so by firstly explain repurchase and its benefits. Thereafter, I will describe travel products, followed by an introduction of the tourism and travel industries at both a global and national level. I will also present ski tourism in particular. Lastly, the current situation in the tourism and travel industry is described.

2.1 Repurchase

Identifying customers' most valued attributes are fundamental to attract and keep satisfied customers (Miragaia & Martins, 2015). This, and knowledge of what makes consumers return and buy again is essential for a long-term operation.

Repeat visitation is desirable for tourism companies for several reasons. It is a well-known strategy to increase a company's revenue and it is considered a stable source of income. It is also assumed that marketing expenses can be spared by not spending money on those who definitely will or will not come. There is a saying it is up to six times less expensive to keep existing customers than to attract new customers. Although this statement has no empirical support (Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004), it is still likely that a high ratio of repeat visits will reduce the need for a large marketing budget.

Repeat visitation is also likely to increase brand loyalty, and it is seen as an indication of satisfaction. A high level of satisfaction may lead to a positive attitude that in turn creates a positive word of mouth effects and free marketing. Neither the positive nor negative word of mouth effects should be underestimated. This is a source many find reliable since it comes from friends or family and not a seller with an agenda.

It is useful to have knowledge of customer's expectations and behaviors to develop efficient market strategies facilitating repurchase. Sources of information, consumer characteristics, images and attitude should be integrated for achieving effective marketing of travel products (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006). Lastly, to fully exploit the potential of repurchase, companies need to understand the industry in which they operate and the nature of travel products.

2.2 Travel products

I will now introduce a thorough description of travel products and travel purchases.

Travel products differ from consumables, and even though there are many similarities between travel theory and consumer theory, there are also significant differences (McDonald, Oates, Thyne, Alevizou & McMorland, 2009). Ryan (1997) emphasized that the tourists are heterogeneous and the importance of having a nuanced picture of the travel industry:

> *"The context, meanings and experiences of tourism can vary from holiday to holiday, from tourist to tourist. To talk of the 'tourist experience' seems to imply a homogeneity which, in reality, is not always present."*

First of all, the variations among tourist purchasing are vast. One day in a theme park, one night in a hotel and an eight-week tour around the world are all tourism products. Secondly, compared to consumables where the customers buy a clearly defined product, the tourists buy an overall experience when purchasing a tourism product (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2002). This is due to the fact that tourism products consist of both tangible (for example hotel beds) and intangible (for example service) elements. This results in low to no feeling of ownership compared to purchasing consumables, yet the feeling of satisfaction may be higher and may have emotional significance.

In travel, the customers are also to a large degree a part of the production process meaning that their attitudes, moods and expectations will influence their experiences and level of satisfaction. The service and subsequent experience is the result of co-creation between supplier and customer (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008). The other tourists on the trip or at the destination can also affect the holiday.

The intentions regarding travel are several and subject to temporal effects. Travel can be work related, visiting friends and family, recreation, hospitality or leisure. In one way, work related travel and visitation should be held out of destination loyalty research. Still, they are often combined with pleasure and should, according to Oppermann (1997), be included.

Lastly, travel will be influenced by external factors that no one can control, such as weather and war (Smith & Eadington, 1992, p.193). All these elements make tourism purchases unique. The uniqueness of travel and hospitality offer both challenges and opportunities (Crouch et al., 2004).

A three-stage model can describe the purchasing of travel products, like any other products. By reviewing these stages, consumer psychology is conceptualized (Crouch et al., 2004). The stages are pre-purchase, purchase and acquisition, and post-purchase. The pre-purchase phase is the planning of the holiday. A series of decisions need to be taken and assembled to make the desired holiday. Each tourist destination offers a variety of services, and each tourist has the opportunity of choosing under the influence of variables, such as age, income, cost, risk, distance, etc., from a several available alternatives (Kozak, 2001). Examples are; where to travel, how long, travel routes, activities and attractions, eating options, package tour or not, etc. However, many people enjoy this phase due to the anticipation it brings.

25 percent of trips made by Norwegians are booked 4-6 months in advance despite the increase in last-minute holidays (Innovation Norway, 2012). This means that the customer is in another state when booking compared to when the holiday is and the consumers have to predict the future to know what they would want in half a year. An example of this is ordering the summer vacation during winter (Um, Chon & Ro, 2006; Swarbrooke, 2007).

The purchase and acquisition phase is the actual consumption of the holiday. A trip is normally very complex and individual due to the decisions listed above and given the different experiences and possibilities. The travelers are greatly involved in a much customized production process.

The post-purchase is the phase that comes when the holiday is over, however the experience is not yet over. Significantly pleasure will be gained by telling stories from the holiday, showing pictures, giving souvenirs and so on. This stage affects their level of satisfaction, the word of mouth effects to potential visitors and the likelihood of revisiting (Crouch et al., 2004).

2.3 The tourism and travel industry

This subchapter will firstly present reasons for the fluctuations prevailing in this industry. Norway as a destination will then be elaborated, and lastly are the global and national ski industries to be described.

Tourism and travel are industries with many fluctuations. This is especially due to the economic situation and climate changes. In regard to the first factor, Falk (2015) studied the economic situation and the effect on tourism demand caused by the depreciated Euro on Swiss franc. What he found was that Swiss winter tourists are very sensitive to the changes in exchange rates. The estimated result of this was 173.000 overnight stays in addition over the last four winter seasons. According to E24.no, it has over the last year become 7.87 percent cheaper for citizens of Euro-countries to travel to Norway due to the depreciated Norwegian currency on the Euro (Gjendem, 2016).

The second reason for fluctuations is climate changes. The climate situation is debated among many researchers in several fields. Mountain areas are sensitive to climate changes and the results can be seen in the increased temperatures, reduced amount of snow, moved glaciers and less precipitation, according to Dar, Rashid, Romshoo and Marazi (2014). This is a serious threat to many stakeholders; where one of them is winter sport. Walters and Ruhanen (2015) emphasize the importance of adjusting to changes, which in Australia are shorter winters. They suggest for ski resort managers to diversify their product portfolio by developing alternative activities.

Nordic nations already have well-established tourism industries where people holiday in spite of unfortunate or unpredictable weather. Climate and weather expectations are only one of many factors that influence tourists' decision and their level of satisfaction (Nicholls & Amelung, 2015).

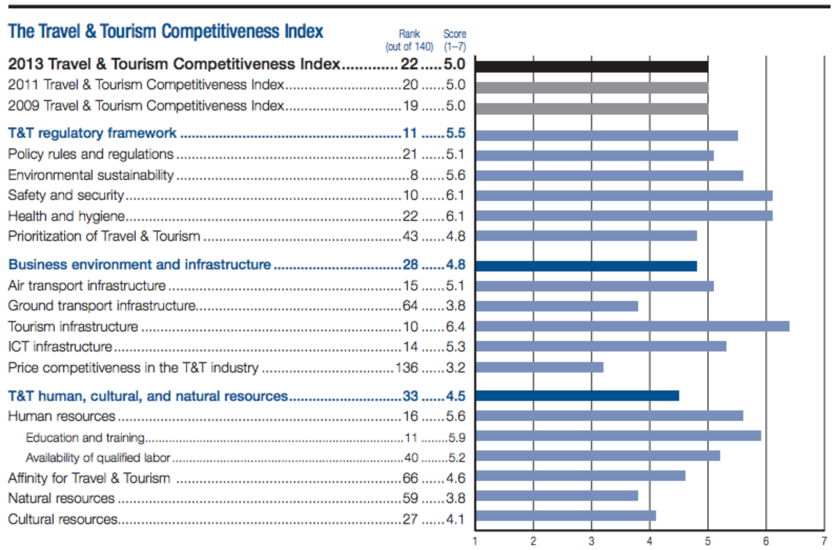
Changes in economies and climate can cause big variations in the demand for tourism and travel experiences. It will therefore be greatly beneficial for companies to be able to predict this demand in a larger extent. This way, they can apply a proactive approach rather than be left with acting reactively. To do this, many factors are essential to comprehend and the market in which one operates is one of them.

2.3.1 Norway as a destination

From 2002-2010 the Norwegians' consumption of holiday has increased with 25 billion NOK, an increase of 49 percent. As initially mentioned, mostly was spent abroad. The Norwegians holiday consumption in Norway has increased by only 13 percent, which attributes the inflation during the period (Innovation Norway, 2012). Vacations in Norway have lost market shares every decade since 1970 (Jakobsen & Espelien, 2011), while the travel abroad increases. According to Innovation Norway, 30 percent say barriers for choosing Norway is due to lack of knowledge about possible activities and experiences. Norway is also perceived as an expensive country.

The World Economic Forum wrote an Insight report named "*The travel & tourism competitiveness report 2013*", ranking 140 countries on different aspects. Concerning price competitiveness, Norway is ranked as 136 of 140 countries. When it comes to the environmental sustainability, Norway is ranked as high as 8. In total, this results in Norway being rated as 22 of 140 countries in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index in 2013[2], with a score of 5 on a scale from 1 to 7. In 2011, Norway was number 20 (Blanke & Chiesa, 2013). See table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2013 and 2011 comparison



Source: Blanke & Chiesa, 2013, Word Economic Forum

The Statistical Central Bureau did a survey for Innovation Norway of both Norwegian and foreign winter tourists from January to April 2014. Of 3582 respondents, 1237 tourists were traveling for vacation and 2345 traveled with business as prime purpose. During January to April 2014, there were about 7.2 million lodgings, in which 9 out of 10 stayed in East Norway. This led to enormous regional differences in the spending pattern. Of the overall consumption of 16.4 billion NOK, only 560 million was spent in Southern Norway, which includes 430 million NOK from holiday tourists and 130 million the business spent in the given period. Compared to the East Norway, the total is 6.88 billion NOK (Innovation Norway, 2014).

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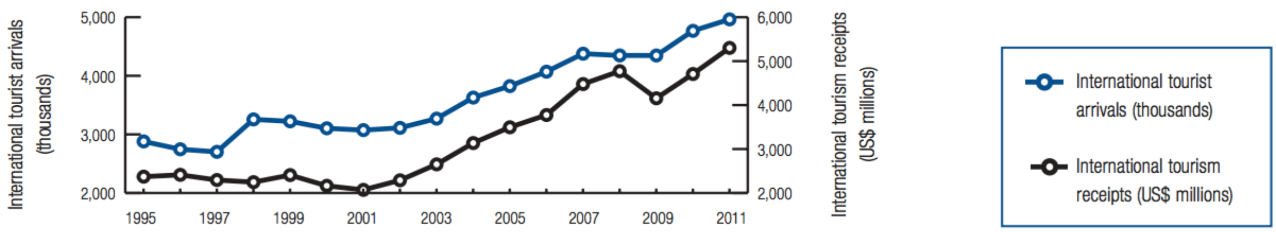
[2] http://www.fitzroy.cl/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Travel-and-Tourism-Competitiveness-2013-Fuente-WEF.pdf

Figure 2.1 below describes the development of the number of international tourists arrivals in Norway, which have doubled between 1995 and 2011. In addition to this, the international tourism receipts have increased by more than double (Blanke & Chiesa, 2013).

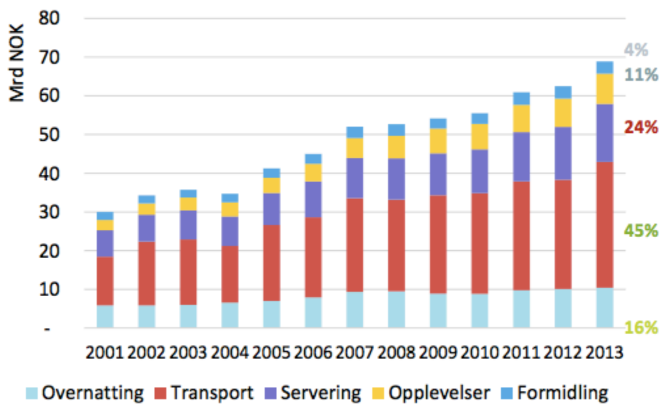
Figure 2.1: International tourists arrivals and receipts



Source: Blanke & Chiesa, 2013, Word Economic Forum

This expansion is seen in the different businesses. Table 2.2 below illustrates the effect on different businesses in Norway.

Figure 2.2: Value creation in Norwegian tourism industry from 2001-2013 over five businesses. Numbers are in billions NOK.

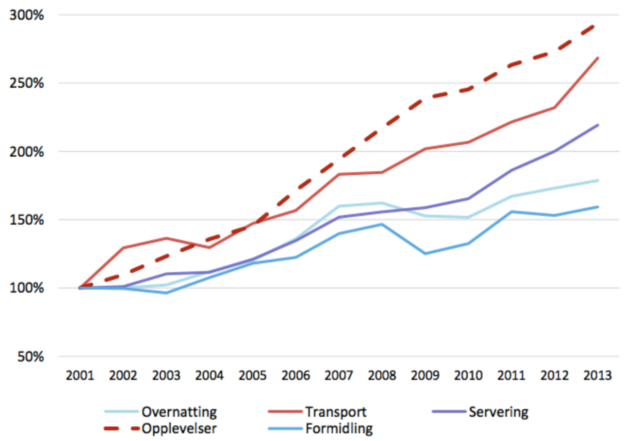


Source: Innovation Norway, 2014

Table 2.2 above shows the development in the Norwegian travel industry from 2001 to 2013 on five different color-coded businesses. The lower light blue is accommodation and is stable at 16 percent. The red is transport and has more than doubled to 45 percent. The purple is serving and dining (24%), and the yellow is experiences, which have increased to 11%, see figure 2 below. Lastly, the top blue is dissemination (4%).

Given that 2014 also was a good year for the tourism and travel industry, why was 2015 even better? First of all, the Norwegian krone is weak, which makes sales easier. Even though Norway is still expensive, it is beneficial when our markets have an improved and a more stable economy, and an increased purchasing power. The transport capacity to Norway has enhanced with e.g. more direct flights to Norway. In addition, the budgets for international marketing has over the last years experienced a boost, and tourism companies have improved the developing of Norwegian experiences. A survey conducted by Bloom Consulting on behalf of Innovation Norway shows that Norway as a holiday destination has a strong brand and several specific searches on Norwegian experiences. From 2001 to 2013 "experiences" has nearly been tripled, see figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: The increase in experiences



Source: Innovation Norway, 2014

2.3.2 Ski tourism globally and nationally

The ski tourism is a major global market holding 400 million skier visits in 2010 and includes 2.000 ski resorts in 80 countries. 82 percent of the world's major ski resorts are in the Alps with 44 percent of the skier visits. Western Europe captures 11 percent (Vanat, 2016). Scotland, Finland, France and Italy are among many European countries where the ski industry plays a significant role in their economies (Miragaia & Martins, 2015). In Norway, the industry had 140.000 employees in 2014 and a yearly value creation of NOK 70 billion (Innovation Norway, 2015). Norway has ideal conditions for both cross-country and downhill skiing with high terrain dominated by mountains, a long season and excellent childcare facilities. In Norway, there are 213 ski areas with five lifts or more, 30.000 km suitable for cross-country skiing and 1.180.675 national skiers in 2015 (Vanat, 2016, p.55-56).

Up until now, the past has been elaborated. The past is the only thing that can be described with confidence. In the following paragraph, I will discuss the present situation.

2.4 The current situation of tourism and travel

The current economic market consists of low oil prices, an increasing unemployment rate, a low interest rate and low pay settlements. However, this appears not to affect the demand for travel products. This season, Trysil and Hemsedal, the two largest ski resorts in Norway, have experienced a 12 percent increase in sales of beds. Only a third of these are Norwegian while the Danish are the decidedly biggest customer segment according to E24 (Gjendem, 2016). Over the last year, the Danish currency has strengthened 7.18 percent to the Norwegian krone.

2015 was a great year for the tourism industry with an increase in commercial guest nights of 4 percent from 2014, and consequently, the spending increased from 60.4 billion to 67.4 billion NOK. This growth is due to more tourists, and they spend more (Innovation Norway, 2014). Tuftin, the Director of tourism in Innovation Norway, believes this will continue in 2016 with a growth of 7-8 percent while the director for Reise Utland at Virke disagrees and believes 2016 will be a stable year regarding travel despite a weak Norwegian krone.

The average Norwegian is not worried about the economic situation of 2016. Virke conducted a study of 1.900 households. It revealed that on average, Norwegian families plan to spend 45.800 NOK on vacation this year, an increase of 23 percent from 2015, where they planned to spend 38.200 NOK (Wig, 2016).
According to E24.no (Gjendem, 2016), new numbers from the Ministry of Commerce show that the winter tourists, in particular, are important for the Norwegian tourist industry. While the summer tourists travel in groups of 3.1 persons and spend NOK 4.960 per day, the winter tourists travel in groups of 4.7 persons, spending NOK 5.593 per day.

The last decade has been a good decade for the industry and some factors indicate future growth despite the current economic situation. The tourism and travel industry can come well off due to two things; the weak Norwegian Krone, and the unemployment rate of high-qualified workers is currently increasing, which suit an labor intensive industry well. Knowledge, cooperation and a thorough understanding of tourism behavior are needed to capture future demand. This thesis aims to identify the main influential aspects by repurchase behavior, and I will in the following chapter closely elaborate this.

Chapter 3 Theoretical framework

The prime objective of this chapter is to create a theoretical foundation to identify factors influencing repurchase intentions in tourism. For this purpose, I will present related theory and previous research.

Chapter 3.1 includes certain aspects of the decision-making process and describes the tourists by their travel patterns and motivations.

Chapter 3.2 follows with explanations of ten possible antecedents of repurchase.

Chapter 3.3 will continue discussing elements of repurchase regarding ski tourists in particular and the factors influencing their choice of a ski resort. Previous findings on this topic come from Dickson & Faulks, Hudson & Sherphard and Richards'.

Chapter 3.4 concludes this chapter with a theory-based model.

3.1 The customers

This part will describe central aspects of the consumers' decision-making process when choosing a holiday, before elaborating the two types of tourists and their travel motivations.

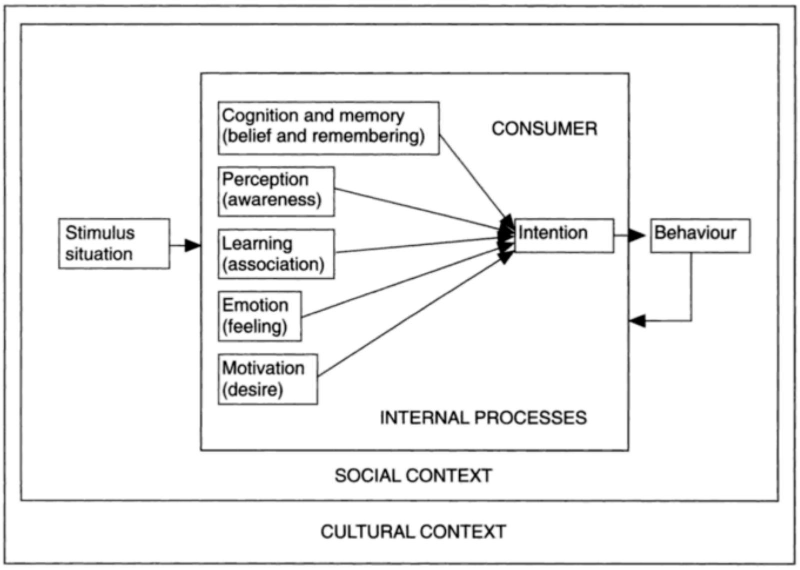
3.1.1 Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior in tourism has the following definition *"consumer behavior is the study of why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision"* (Swarbrooke, 2007). An empirical study of Cronin, Brady and Hult (2000) verified that service value, service quality and satisfaction are directly related to behavioral intentions when they are considered together. The results also showed that indirectly, quality and value enhance the impact on behavioral intentions.

Understanding human behavior is the most fundamental level of psychology. Consumer psychology is defined as "*the scientific study of the behavior of consumers*" (Crouch et al., 2004). The link between attitude and behavior is consistency. 'The principle of consistency' assumes that people act rationally at all times and thus, their behavior will be consistent with their attitudes. As figure 3.1 on the next page shows, the consumer's choice is illustrated as a self-involved sequence of affective, conative and cognitive changes, which are antecedents of the outcome. The outcome is either to purchase or not to purchase. The affective component involves emotions and feelings about an attitude towards an object (*I am happy on holiday*).

The conative component is how the attitude influences the behavior and how we act (*I go on holiday to be happy*). Lastly, the cognitive component is belief and knowledge about an attitude object (*holidays makes people happy*) (Crouch et al., 2004).

Figure 3.1 Elements of consumer psychology



Source: Crouch et al., 2004 refers to Mullen and Johnson (1990)

Social psychologists have a common understanding that most of the humans' actions are goal-directed. This way goals and plans guide our behavior. However, our actions are also controlled by our intentions and in cases of unforeseen events, people are expected to act in accordance with them. Still, not all activities require a detailed implementation plan. For example, cycling or driving a car is already designed situations, and we automatically act accordingly when we are in them (Ajzen, 1985, p.11-12).

Children as co-decision makers

Families traveling with children are an important customer segment. To please the children is an essential part of tourism. Consequently, the children receive power in the travel decision-making process. Research shows that parents perceive their children to have only a moderate impact on the decision-making while the children think they have a high level of impact. They do have significant influence in various ways, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously. In the early stages of the decision-making process, recognition of problem and information search, the children have the most influence, but they have less impact when the final decisions are made (Gram, 2007).

Consumer behavior online

People are concerned about making the right choices regarding travel and tend to be highly influenced by their friends, family and reference groups (Swarbrooke, 2007). Additionally, consumers tend to ask questions on the Internet and they trust the answers and advice they receive there. Thus, a shift from word of mouth, WOM, to eWOM was created (Baka, 2016). On the Internet, tourists are reviewing, listing and rating destinations and attractions. With 350 million monthly visits, Trip-Advisor is the biggest travel site in the world including 290 million reviews of 5.3 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions. Regarding Hovden ski resort, there are 20 reviews with headlines as follows: "*Magnificent*", "*WOW*", "*Easy and convenient"* and *"Great skiing and excellent facilities*". The latter is dated January 13, 2016. Hemsedal ski resort has 73 comments while Ål has three. In May 2016, Hovden ski resort has 14.960 likes on Facebook, Hemsedal has 48.100 likes, and Ål ski resort has 3.500 likes. Because of this, it is beneficial for tourism organizations to understand and be aware of the effects social media and the Internet, can have on the decision-making process.

The last paragraphs have explained some parts of consumer behavior. How affective, conative and cognitive changes are antecedents of purchases, how children affect the decision-making process and the role of Internet for recommendations and advice. The next paragraphs continue to describe the customers; how to categorize them and what their motivations are.

3.1.2 Customer categorization and motivation

Customer categorization

Travelers can be classified as first timers/switchers/explorers or regulars/repeaters. Regulars prefer visiting places they have been before, whereas explorers visit new attractions. While first timers are a homogeneous group, the repeat visitors are not. A person who has been there once 20 years ago and one that has traveled there yearly the last decade, have different characteristics and reasons for returning. Consequently, it is challenging to define repeat visitors (Oppermann, 1997).

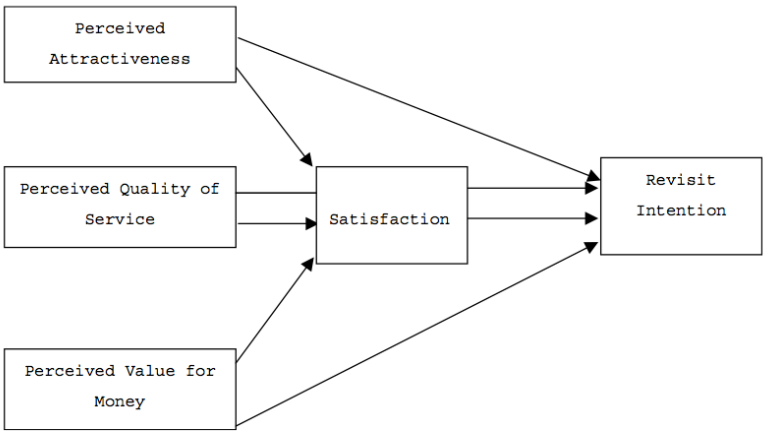
The interesting part is that many see themselves as explorers and overlook the fact that they have been there more than once before and are regulars (Hauge & Svarstad, 2012). It can appear that traveling to new places is more appealing than the lifestyle of a regular.

By looking at these two groups, research shows the following characteristics (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006):

- Repeaters travel more often than first-timers.
- The length of stay tends to be longer for repeaters.
- The more times repeaters return, the greater is their tendency to revisit the same area.

Due to the differences between repeaters and non-repeaters, companies need to create uniquely different marketing efforts and strategies to be successful (Gitelsen & Crompton, 1984). Oppermann (2000) supports this by emphasizing that loyalty segmentation must consider the enormous differences there are between first time visitors and repeat visitors.
It is argued that perceived quality, image perceptions and revisiting intentions are different for repeaters and first-timers (Tosun, Dedeoglu & Fyall, 2015).
"Antecedents of revisit intention" is a study conducted by Um, Chon and Ro (2006). See figure 3.2. The data was conducted by interviewing 2115 tourists and an omnibus survey from 2001-2003. The results revealed that perceived attractiveness, perceived quality of service and perceived value for money were higher for first timers compared to repeaters. Also, overall satisfaction was higher for first comers. However, intention to revisit was higher for repeaters over all the four years, 2000-2003. Perceived value for money affected both satisfaction and revisit intention significantly.

Figure 3.2 A model of revisit intention



Source: Um et al., 2006

Su, Swanson and Chen (2016) support this conclusion by arguing; "customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and repurchase intentions".

Customer motivation

According to Swarbrooke (2007), there are six motivations for travel and holiday: physical, emotional, personal, personal development, status and cultural. One might have more than one motivation at a time. They are affected by lifestyle, past experiences and personal circumstances, such as family situation and disposable income. Further, tourists' motivations are related to their personalities: impulsiveness, planning, self-confidence, action-orientation, and intellectualism.

First-timers' revisit intentions may be influenced mainly by the destination performance as a whole. They are motivated by external factors, e.g. price of the holiday. Repeaters' intentions however, may be influenced by promotional efforts to recall their positive memory. They also tend to have more diversified and detailed demands for information (Oppermann, 2000). Additionally, repeaters favor factors inherent in the destination, e.g. the quality of the surroundings or accommodations, and express a high degree of identification with the destination (Oppermann, 1997). Also Su et al. (2016) states that customers who identifies with the hospitality providers tend to create positive results.

Push and Pull motivations

Ryan (1995) did a study highlighting the role of past experiences in determining holiday choice and loyalty to Mallorca among British tourists over the age of 55 during the winter of 1993. The identification the travelers felt with the island is emphasized. Ryan found that the three most common reasons for visiting the island among tourists were; to escape the British winter, looking forward to have a winter holiday and because the island is peaceful at that time of year. This is what Alegre and Juaneda (2006) call "push and pull factors". Push factors are consumers' internal motivations, their internal desire that 'pushes' them to travel, such as the wish of a winter holiday or a cold winter at home. Pull factors are more external and associated with attributes of destinations that might influence a persons' decision to visit them, like the peacefulness, beaches, cultural attractions, shopping, nature etc. (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Pull factors can also be a search for rest, experiences, excitement, adventures, or to be together with friends and family, but it can also be seen as a desire to escape everyday life (Crompton, 1979).

Yoon and Uysal (2005) proposed a hypothesis that travel-motivations affect repurchase intentions directly. Their results confirmed this hypothesis. Especially the motivations that are closely related to internal/emotional aspects or push motivations have an impact on the intentions of repurchase. I will now present a more closely description of repurchases intentions and its antecedents.

3.2 Intentions of repurchase

It is essential to identify both direct and indirect antecedents of revisit intentions, to achieve repeat visitation. Given the purpose of this thesis is to determine the primary determinants of revisit intentions, I will in the following comprehensively describe ten frequently discussed elements in the literature.

3.2.1 Satisfaction

The relation between tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit or recommend the destination has been studied and analyzed over the last 40 years. Gitelsen & Crompton (1984), Kozak & Rimmington (2000), Baker & Crompton (2000), Kozak (2001), Petrick (2004), Yoon and Uysal (2005), Alegre and Cladera (2006) and Um et al., (2006) have all studied the impact of satisfaction on revisiting intentions. They found a positive relation between the tourist satisfaction level and the likelihood of returning to the same destination (Alegre & Cladera, 2009).

There are three reasons for why satisfied customers are highly desired. Firstly, by turning satisfied customers into repeaters, one will create a segment that provides a stable income with no marketing expenses. Secondly, customer complaints are costly and time-consuming to handle, and they create a bad reputation for the company (Swarbrooke, 2007). Lastly, satisfied customers are free marketing in terms of positive word of mouth and recommendations. There is a common agreement that satisfaction has a positive influence on post-purchase behavior (Alegra & Cladera, 2009), such as intention to buy and positive word of mouth. Kozak and Rimmington (2000) states *"satisfied people do not necessarily return, but they still can help the destination attract new customers."*

There are two ways to analyze satisfaction. Either with equity theory, that compares the cost or effort to the value received (Armario, 2008), or whether or not the perceived outcome meets the expectations (Hauge & Svarstad, 2012). By this means, the customer is satisfied if the perceived performance exceeds the expectations, and is dissatisfied if the perceived performance is less than the expectations. Though, there is no conclusive evidence that expectations lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This model has limitations by implying that the lower expectations one has, the more likely one is to be satisfied; if a customer has low expectations and the performance is poor, the model says that the customer should be satisfied (Petrick, Morais & Norman, 2001). Even though expectations traditionally have been used to measure satisfaction, the travel products are ambiguous by nature, which make tourists difficult to satisfy.

Satisfaction has traditionally been used to predict whether or not a customer would repurchase the product or return to the destination. Dolnicar, Coltman and Sharma (2015) argue why this is not necessarily the case. A family that every year returns to the same place for a certain holiday knows the place, the people and what to expect. They might rate their satisfaction only as moderate due to lack of positive surprises or for not getting their preferred cottage. According to traditional models, they would not return; nevertheless, they do. They continue to revisit due to tradition. This group is called repeaters.

- *'The reason we come here is that we always come here, we are familiar with the place, and this is where we come to relax.'* (Woodside & MacDonald, 1994)

A cultural tourist can, on the other hand, be entirely satisfied and rate a place highly but still not come back. He would like to experience as many different cultural locations in the world as possible, and do not return to any of them. This group is called explorers and first-timers when visiting a destination.

- *'The reason we are not going there is that we've been there, we've seen it, we've done [destination name].'* (Woodside & MacDonald, 1994)

Hence, satisfaction is an unsuitable parameter of repurchase, at least if it is used isolated.

A valuable element in the study of tourist behavior and destination performance is satisfaction (Kozak, 2001). Several aspects of a destination contribute to the overall satisfaction in different degrees (Alegre and Cladera, 2006). Consequently, satisfaction is a complex concept that consists of the tourist perception of many different items and a subjective measurement (Um et. al., 2006). Furthermore, satisfaction is only a perception of the tourist's mind, not a fact (Swarbrooke, 2007).

Over the last years, satisfaction measurement has received attention both in the business world and within the field of tourism. A multi-item scale can measure tourist satisfaction. The visitors evaluate different attributes separately, such as accommodation, restaurants, shops, cultural events and natural environment. These aspects shape overall satisfaction. This kind of tourist satisfaction is discussed as 'quality of destination performance' (Um et al., 2006; Baker & Crompton, 2000).

Crouch et al. (2004) propose that: *"service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction and therefore evaluation of service quality leads to customer satisfaction"*. Nevertheless, there was not found any evidence supporting the opposite relationship. The findings also revealed that: *"attitude does not only serve as an antecedent of customer satisfaction but also a consequence"*. Accordingly, customer satisfaction and attitudes should both be concerned when predicting repurchase intentions and word of mouth effects (Crouch et al. 2004). Another factor discussed by Um et al. (2006) is travel distance, which influences the level of satisfaction on revisiting intentions. As a result, the revisiting intentions of tourists traveling long distances are less affected by satisfaction, then tourists traveling short distances. Agderforskning has also researched this phenomenon and found in their winter report from Hovden that intentions of revisit decrease with geography; the further away from Hovden, the lower is the probability for revisiting (Hauge, 2012).

A study conducted by Wen (2012) identified customers' attitudes and satisfaction as factors influencing purchase intentions to travelers. The third factor is the quality of the travel website design. Kim and In (2013), described the following result*: "the quality of the travel agency's website influence the customer satisfaction, and also the intention to repurchase."*

Given that satisfaction affects the destination choice, consumption and the decision to revisit, it is among the main variables when examining tourist behavior. Therefore, tourist's satisfaction has been a priority of research over the last decade. Notwithstanding the amount of research on the degree of tourist satisfaction with the overall trip, only a few studies have concentrated on the level of tourist's participation in activities available at each destination as a relevant antecedent of their degree of satisfaction. It is reasonable to assume that their satisfaction level is depending on the expectations to the activities and the perception of the outcome of those attributes. Consequently, it is essential for the industry to understand that the activities performed during the stay and the experiences during these activities are clear sources of satisfaction for the tourist. There are two reasons why the diversity and sort of activities available are of great importance. First, they enable social interaction, and secondly, they represent one of the main factors when the tourists choose a holiday destination (Armario, 2008).

3.2.2 Previous visits

'The guest of repurchase' written by Hauge and Svarstad (2012) is a project report based on the reflections of guests staying at the companies in the Usus network, which operate within the travel-, experience- and culture business in the south of Norway. The report discloses that respondents who have visited the destination before are more likely to return, especially if the visits are in the near past. Already in 1996, Juaneda confirmed that repeaters are expected to be more likely than first-timers to choose the same destination (Kozak, 2001). After this, many have come to the same conclusion. Oppermann (2000) states that there is a close relationship between the past and current actions. Petrick et al. (2001) found that the number of previous visits is one of the most important elements for intention to revisit. Um et al. (2006) and Tosun et al. (2015) believe that the number of previous visits is the most effective indicator of revisit intention.

Over the last 20 years, different research has found that previous visits have a significant role in affecting the decision to revisit the same destination. Since a vacation consists of several elements, the uncertainty and the need for information increase. However, the experience of previous visits is one of the primary sources of information (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006), affecting the decision to revisit.

Kozak's research (2001) was of Britons visiting Spain and Turkey. He found that first-timers were more likely to switch to other destinations than repeaters. However, the number of earlier visits to a particular destination had a negative relationship with the tendency to go to other destinations in Mallorca, meaning the more visits to the same specific destinations, the lower chance to visit other destinations in the area. The results from Turkey showed that the satisfaction level influences future intentions more than what past experiences do.

3.2.3 Perceived attractiveness

The attractiveness of a destination is defined as *"one that reflects the feelings, beliefs, images and opinions that individuals have about the perceived capacity of a destination to provide satisfaction"* (Um et al., 2006). A study by Um et al. (2006) found perceived attractiveness to be a better indicator of intention to revisit, than overall satisfaction. Revisiting intention was more affected by what they were attracted to than satisfied by.

Perceived attractiveness was also found to be the most important indicator of satisfaction and the component that influences the intention to revisit the most. In addition to perceived attractiveness, the two elements Um et al. (2006, p.1146) concluded as the most important to indicate satisfaction, were quality and value for money. These three factors together accounted for 47 percent of its variances.

3.2.4 Risk reduction

Ryan (1995) proposes that high degree of loyalty is consistent with theories of risk aversion. Further, he emphasizes the importance of previously satisfied vacation experiences in determining destination choice (Oppermann, 2000).

Gitelsen & Crompton (1984) conducted one of the earliest studies in the area of repeat visitation. Their study consisted of two Texas Highway visitor centers. 62 percent of the respondents had visited the place before. The high percentage of visitation supports the theory that previous visits increase the likelihood of return. Moreover, they found five factors contributing to repeat visitation.

1. To reduce risk regarding the destination and to know what they will get when they arrive.
2. To meet "their kind of people".
3. If one has developed an emotional attachment to a place, they are more likely to return.
4. Want to further explore the destination.
5. Want to show the destination to friends and family.

3.2.5 Customer involvement

Chen, Chen and Wu (2014) conducted a survey of 11 financial insurance companies in Taiwan, with both depth interviews of managers and 454 questionnaires from customers. The study explains how customer commitment is a good indicator of their intent to repurchase. Customer involvement through relational value generates positive effects on satisfaction and commitment. Satisfaction and commitment are consequently a result of participation. However, no relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intent were found (Hauge, 2015; Chen et al., 2014).

3.2.6 Perceived quality and perceived value

> *"Quality and value are not well differentiated from each other and from similar constructs such as perceived worth and utility"* (Petrick & Backman, 2002).

Perceived value

The definition of perceived value both inside and outside of the tourism literature, is *"the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given"*. Perceived value is also significantly related to satisfaction (Gallarza and Saurab, 2006; Um et al., 2006).

Chen and Chen (2010) identified perceived value as a direct determinant of satisfaction. Further, both perceived value and satisfaction have considerably direct and positive effects on intention to purchase. Their results supported the following relationship series; from quality to perceived value to satisfaction and finally to behavioral intention.

Value is perceived differently according to which of the stages it is in, pre-purchase, purchase or acquisition or post-purchase. Perceived value varies between countries and cultures (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez & Moliner, 2006). It also varies at different times, which makes it dynamic.

Perceived value is related to satisfaction, which can later lead to repeat purchases and brand loyalty. Loyalty leads to customer recommendations and further repurchase (Hauge, 2015).

Agderforskning found perceived value to be the most suited indicator for repeat visitors, whereas quality is turned out to be the best indicator to predict the repurchase intentions for first-timers (Hauge, 2015).

Perceived quality

Customers' perception determines the perceived quality of a service. While, perceptions about quality are based on long-term evaluations of a service delivery, customer satisfaction is rather a short-term emotional reaction to a particular experience (Um et al., 2006).
Earlier literature has suggested that perceived quality has a direct effect on their intentions to repurchase a certain item. However, a study of He and Song from 2008 (Hauge, 2015) shows that consumer satisfaction intervenes this relation. Customers' expectations, experienced quality and perceived price level for the particular product have measured satisfaction, assuming these three variables leads to guests' loyalty to the product.

Satisfied customers do not necessarily return (Hauge & Svarstad, 2012). In fact, one of the findings of Um et al. (2006) was intentions to revisit were influenced more by the quality of the particular destination than the overall satisfaction.

Over the last years, service quality has received increased attention and seen as necessary to gain and keep a competitive advantage. It is claimed that high service quality leads to a more positive purchasing experience (Tosun et al., 2015).
For example, a study of 250 Chinese visiting Korea showed that the service quality of the travel agency had a positive influence on customer satisfaction, simultaneously as service quality had no substantial effect on repurchase intention. The results also showed a major positive impact satisfaction have on repurchase intentions (Kim, Li & Yu, 2014).

Tosun et al. (2015) found the importance and benefits of language skills to be larger than expected. In their study, components related to language communication services were the most influential elements of quality perception. Further, the study concludes *"tourism organization should focus more on accommodation services that can affect the destination image positively for repeat tourists."* Quality perception of the accommodation is central for repeaters. And given that accommodation is one of the most important elements of a destination, this should be seen as a possible competitive advantage among tourism companies (Tosun et al., 2015).

3.2.7 Image

Destination image analysis has received attention from the academia over the last 30 years (Hallmann, Zehrer & Müller, 2015). Tosun et al. (2015) proposed that image plays a significant role in the decision-making process of travel choice and revisiting intentions. They describe the following results: "*tourists with a positive perception of the image to the destination will also perceive the service quality positively*". Though, the image perception may change after the experience.

Bigneé, Sánchez and Sánchez (2001) conducted a study concluding: *"Tourism image is a direct antecedent of perceived quality, satisfaction, intention to return and willingness to recommend the destination."* The image also influences the process of choosing a destination. Lastly, the destination images held by the tourists' affect the post-purchase stage with possible word of mouth and repurchase intentions. Consequently, destination image plays a bigger role than first expected and is something that should receive more attention.

The image is different for first-timers and repeaters. The number of past visits makes an impact on a tourist's image (Alegre & Cladera (2009) refers to Fayeke & Crompton, 1991), the level of satisfaction and intentions to revisit.

3.2.8 Loyalty

> *"The degree of tourists' loyalty to a destination is reflected in their intentions to revisit the destination and in their willingness to recommend it"* (Oppermann, 2000).

Several companies have remarked defection among customers in spite of a high level of satisfaction ratings. A natural concern is if there is a need for a 'paradigm shift' in the management where loyalty replaces satisfaction as a strategic goal (Chi & Qu, 2008).

There are companies that wrongly believe that customer loyalty is the same as customer satisfaction. While satisfaction is based on customer's expectations and whether or not they are met (Hauge & Svarstad, 2012), is loyalty to what degree a customer is likely to repurchase and engage in partnership with the company. To conclude, we can have satisfaction without loyalty, but it is hard to have loyalty without satisfaction (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999).

“The guest of repurchase” is a project rapport by Hauge (2012) explains the ‘repurchase barometer’ development for the Usus-cluster. Loyalty is a three-folded element and contains attitude loyalty, expressed loyalty and behavior loyalty, which together is the formula for repurchase.

1. *Attitude loyalty* is affected by the guest treatment during the stay and whether the expectations were met or not. We differentiate between three types of purchases: The guest takes the decision based on a positive impression, from for example media, and has high expectations. Or, the guest has been recommended the product or destination due to their positive experiences. Lastly, the guest has had a positive experience with the product or destination previously, meaning repurchase.
2. *Expressed loyalty* is what the guests say about the visit afterward. In this way, they function as an ambassador.
3. *Behavioral loyalty* is the guest’s intentions of repurchase. The complexity of tourism appears here. Future visits are harder to predict than future consumable purchases where routines control the actions to a larger extent.

Are loyal visitors desired visitors?

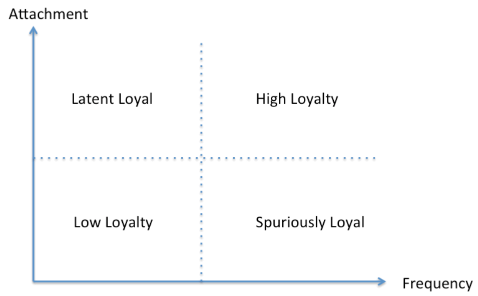
As the topic of this thesis is repurchases, a natural question to ask is if they, in fact, are desired. To keep current visitors are assumed to be more desirable and profitable compared to attracting new ones. Oppermann (2000) states that so far, no empirical evidence has proven that loyal customers are superior to new visitors.

A study from 1991 conducted by Backman and Crompton, found that those who exhibited higher levels of loyalty would be more intrinsically motivated, be more involved and be less price-sensitive than those with lower levels of loyalty. Alegre and Juaneda (2006) also found a relationship between brand loyalty and price sensitivity; loyalty reduces consumer sensitivity to price variations. A business with loyal customers would be able to maintain higher prices than its rivals. Satisfaction can result in loyalty, which in turn increase business profit. Nevertheless, no link has been confirmed between satisfaction and profitability. Petrick (2004) concluded with the opposite; first-timers are less loyal, but also less price-sensitive and will, in fact, spend more. Further, he found that loyal customers are more likely to return, to spread positive word of mouth and provide a lower risk to their profitability. Given that the more affectively loyal (attachment) customers are, the more price-sensitive they are. A marketing campaign to the affectively loyal customers should include price and value to a larger extent than to the less affective customers (Petrick, 2004). As a result, a discount trip is likely to bring affective travelers. The question is then, is the loss in income due to the discount worth it to attract previous customers? On the other side, given that first-timers spend more per person per day, a tourist company can rely on first-timers and harvest this group. However, one should not forget that even though it is substantial, it is also more volatile and can cause revenue variations. Petrick concludes with marketing for first-timers are not a sustainable strategy, even though it can create a short-term success.

Is all loyalty the same?

Some customers travel back to a destination they have been before, due to other reasons than their level of satisfaction. Revisits can be a consequence of routine behavior (Oppermann, 2000) or a way to reduce the risk of a bad holiday – "why go someplace new with an unknown outcome when we know we will have a good holiday here?" Repurchase can also be due to time convenience, monetary rewards, lack of substitutes and information about them and psychological costs of discontinuation (Oppermann, 1997). This group of customers is loyal, but they have no attachment to the destination; they can easily travel someplace else if a campaign and the prices are tempting enough. They are called spuriously loyal, which is one of four types of loyalty. Loyalty is a two-parted concept and includes one part of psychological attachment, which is affective loyalty, and one part of behavioral commitment (Backman & Crompton, 1991). Backman (1988) utilized this concept into a segmentation tool with four cells as the figure below shows; spuriously loyal, latent loyal, high loyal and low loyal (Petrick, 2005). Travelers with a high degree of attachment, but low user-intensity are latent loyal. Those who have low attachment and also seldom travel to the destination, have a low level of loyalty. Customers with high physiological attachment to the destination and visit frequently, are highly loyal. Repeat visitation deduces loyalty (Petrick, 2004). See figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3 A loyalty matrix



Source: Backman & Crompton, 1991

The results of Petrick's research (2004) showed that the more behaviorally loyal visitors are, the more likely they are to revisit. Affectively loyal is positively related to word of mouth and intention to revisit.

3.2.9 Perceived price

"Perceived price is what a consumer gives up or sacrifices to obtain a product"

(Petrick & Beckman (2002) refers to Zeithaml, 1988).

Some customers remember the specific price of their holiday while others remember it as either expensive or inexpensive compared to previous trips. There are also non-monetary costs associated with a vacation, such as time, search costs and convenience. Consequently, it is the combination of these two costs that results in the overall perceived sacrifice that in turn will influence how the consumer perceive the service value (Petrick & Beckman, 2002).

Choosing a destination based on its price has a negative impact on intention to revisit. Consumers who base their purchase decision on price are more likely to accept competing offers (Alegra & Caledera, 2009). Travelers use price information as an indicator of quality (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006).

Up until now, this chapter has shed light on repurchase in general as I aim to identify the main determinants of its intentions. Chapter 3.2 described the two types of customers, first-timers and repeaters. Also, the push and pull effects as motivations for travel were thoroughly explained. The two main components of repurchase intentions, namely satisfaction and previous visits, were examined together with perceived quality and value, image, risk, loyalty and price. They are either direct or indirect influences of repurchase intentions. The following subchapter presents previous research on tourists in Norway, followed by research on ski destinations and ski tourists.

3.3 Previous research

This section will continue to present previous research. In the first part, the topics will regard satisfaction and preferred kinds of holiday amongst tourists in Norway. The next part will concern ski tourists in particular and key attributes at ski destinations.

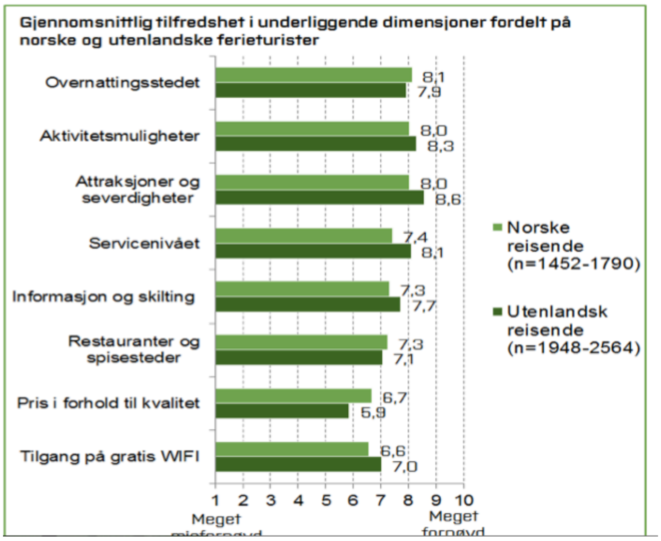
3.3.1 Satisfaction and motivations among tourists in Norway

Given my research question includes revisit intentions among tourists in Norway, I will in this subchapter focus on them; what makes them satisfied and motivated?

Satisfaction

The figure below shows the factors that satisfy Norwegians and the foreign tourists the most. On the x-axis, one is very dissatisfied, and ten are very satisfied. According to Innovation Norway's report "Norwegian tourism ahead" (2015), they are the most pleased with the accommodation, activities and attractions. Further, the foreign tourists are satisfied with the level of service, free Wi-Fi, restaurants and available information. Another element common to both groups is that "price compared to quality" scores higher than "price level", meaning they feel they receive quality for money, even though they find the price level high.

Figure 3.4 Average satisfaction on underlying dimensions for Norwegian and foreign tourists.

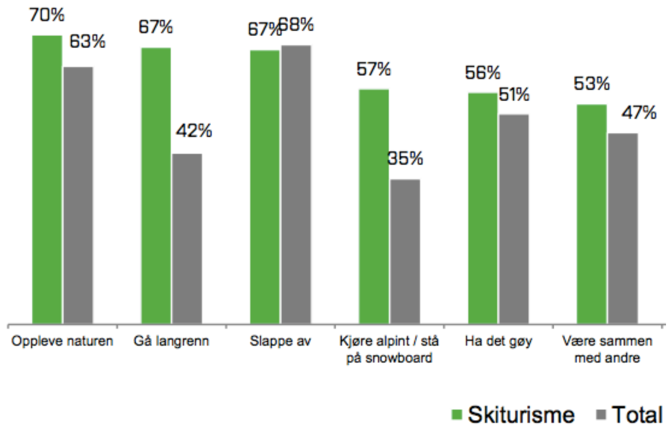


Source: Tuftin, Innovation Norway, 2015

Motivation

The main holiday motivation for Norwegian ski tourists in 2014 is to experience the nature. In fact, of a sample of 788 respondents, 70 percent of the ski tourists answered that this is what they expect to do during the holiday. See figure 3.5 below. The next two most crucial motivations are to go cross-country skiing and to relax, which 67 percent have answered. Slalom skiing and to have fun is preferred for 57 and 56 percent of the ski tourists in Norway. The green columns are ski tourism, and the gray columns are the total amount of travelers.

Figure 3.5 Preferred activities, N=788



Source: Innovation Norway, 2014

3.3.2 Valuable attributes among ski tourists

As my research question incorporates revisit intentions to skiing resorts in particular, I will present central factors in previous studies. What are ski-tourists looking for when they choose a ski resort and which factors do they value the most? These are questions I aim to answer.

"Repurchase studies in Hemsedal" was a regional survey in 2015 about the attraction Hemsedal Ski Resort conducted by Marit Engeseth for the University College in Buskerud and Vestfold (Hauge, 2015). The companies involved used the results to improve their services. The data classifies as sensitive business data and I do not have access to them. However, their main finding is that personal service is crucial for loyalty, both on a business and destination level.

Miragaia and Martins (2015) did a study on Portugal's only ski resort, and the two main results of the survey are that slope quality is the most important factor when deciding on a winter sports destination. Also, "other resort services" such as restaurants, shops and supermarkets are the element that generates the greatest satisfaction among the visitors.

Klenosky, Gengler, Mulvey (1993) found these six factors to have the most influence:

1. Variety and challenges of the hills, which create fun and excitement
2. Snow conditions, this create safety
3. A social atmosphere, created by friendly people and entertainment, create a feeling of belonging.
4. Location and time saving. To be close to home means more time to ski.

5. Money saving
6. Local culture

Dickson & Faulks (2007) did an online survey of 364 Australians doing snow sport. They found that the most important factor was snow conditions and the reliability of snow. Secondly are powder and off-piste areas. Availability of other on-snow activities and nighttime entertainment were found to be less important. Other elements with low scores are “visiting someplace new” and “experience a different culture”. See table 3.2.

Table 3.1 Mean scores for importance of country attributes

Country Attributes	Extremely Important	Very Important	Mean Score*
Reliability of snow	62%	33%	4.23
Powder	48%	32%	4.17
The country is relatively safe/secure	27%	36%	3.68
Low cost of travel	22%	40%	3.64
Visiting somewhere new	11%	49%	3.50
Experiencing a different culture	11%	35%	3.44
Availability of English language information	7%	32%	3.07
Travel distance/time from Australia	6%	22%	2.75

**5=Extremely important, 4=Very important, 3=Neutral, 2=Not important, 1=Not important at all*

Source: Dickson & Faulks, 2007

The table 3.2 below summarizes the results from Dickson and Faulks’ study. They apprised of the study being conducted in a poor snow season and that this may have influenced the results. What we can observe is that 41.3 percent of the respondents believe the reliability of natural snow is extremely important and only a very few, 0.6 percent, thought it was unimportant. 22.9 percent of the participants, were neutral to the cost of traveling to the resort. The importance of price is less than what we might think and demonstrates one of the several ways travel products differ from consumables.

Table 3.2 Items related to continued snow sport participation in Australia

	Extremely important 5	Very important 4	Neutral 3	Not important 2	Not at all important 1	*Mean score*	*Net importance[1] %*
Reliability of natural snow	41.3%	43.0%	13.2%	1.7%	0.6%	*4.2*	*82.1*
Use of snowmaking	38.0%	39.7%	13.8%	4.7%	3.3%	*4.0*	*69.7*
Price of lift tickets	41.3%	30.9%	17.9%	5.5%	4.1%	*4.0*	*62.5*
Crowding on the slopes	27.6%	45.7%	18.2%	5.5%	2.5%	*3.9*	*65.3*
Customer service in the resort	20.1%	45.2%	24.8%	6.6%	3.0%	*3.7*	*55.7*
Behaviour/attitudes of other skiers/snowboarders	17.4%	33.1%	32.8%	12.4%	3.9%	*3.5*	*34.2*
Cost of travelling to the resorts	19.3%	32.0%	29.2%	13.2%	5.8%	*3.4*	*32.2*

[1] Net importance = (Extremely important + Very Important) - (Not important + Not at all important)

Source: Dickson & Faulks, 2007

To conclude, the findings showed that advanced terrain, off-piste areas and the number of lifts/runs are the three most important attributes. Neither nighttime entertainment nor activities for children seemed to be of importance. See table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Factors influencing overseas resort choice

Resort Attributes	Extremely Important	Very Important	Mean Score*
Advanced terrain	29%	47%	3.98
Off-piste areas	37%	45%	3.97
Number of lifts/runs	21%	65%	3.92
On-piste areas	18%	62%	3.91
Lift ticket prices	22%	35%	3.62
Night-time entertainment	4%	26%	2.87
Other on-snow activities (e.g. sleigh rides)	3%	13%	2.46
Terrain parks or half pipes	5%	17%	2.33
Employment opportunities	3%	6%	2.14
Activities for children	9%	11%	2.01

***5=Extremely important, 4=Very important, 3=Neutral, 2=Not important, 1=Not important at all*

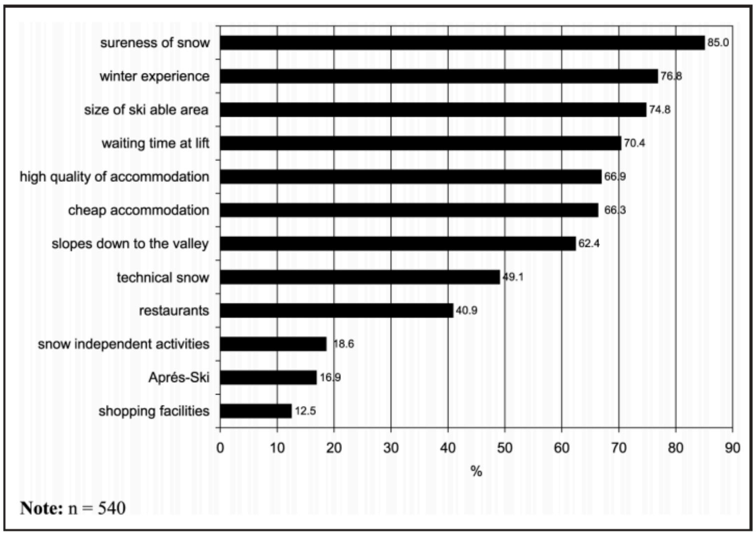
Source: Dickson & Faulks, 2007

The findings above are consistent with Godfrey (1999), who found that the two most important factors were snow quality and diversity of skiing terrain**.** Richards' (1996), supports this by identifying snow conditions, the slope quality and terrain diversity as the most important factors. Other factors that Richards' found influencing the choice of ski resorts are access to ski slopes, closeness to accommodation, off-hill facilities and the general atmosphere (Konu, Laukkanen & Komppula, 2011). In contrast to Dickson and Faulks, Richards' also found that after-ski, the possibilities of fine dining, pubs and clubs and shopping is important.

Price on lift tickets was very or extremely important to 72.2 percent of domestic skiers (see table 3.2) and extremely or very important for 57 percent of overseas skiers (see table 3.3). Unbehaun, Pröbstl and Haider (2008) wanted to examine to what degree people accept an increase in the price level for a more secure snow destination. The results showed that the majority of the group (N=538) approved a 10 percent increase in price level, and a 20 percent increase is the threshold. With a 50 percent increase in the price, people would choose a different ski resort.

Hudson & Shephard (1998) did a study with depth interviews, focus groups and questionnaire with 97 attributes answered by 151 skiers in Switzerland. They found that in addition to accommodation, ski shops, ski slopes and tour operator services, also tourist information services are important for ski tourists. Moreover, they concluded the study with identifying the most important determinant of destination choice, which is secureness of snow and great winter experiences.

Figure 3.6 Important destination choice determinants



Source: Hudson & Shepard, 1998

Snow quality and snow secureness, have proven to be of great importance. Unbehaun et al. (2008) examined the impact of climate changes on winter sport tourists and their destination choice. Their study involved a total of 540 skiers from Austria with an online questionnaire including a discrete choice experiment with trade-off behavior. The results showed strong preferences for destinations with natural snow conditions. They also studied artificial snowmaking, and the results revealed that artificial snow is not seen as a positive attribute. The results further disclosed that it is accepted for a short time, but not for the whole holiday. Over the last decades, the number of repeat visitors and the length of the holiday have decreased. More than 70 percent answered they have experienced insufficient snow conditions. While some had already changed their ski destination accordingly, 68 percent of the ski tourists answered that they would give up their loyalty to another ski destination with more secure snow conditions (Unbehaun et al., 2008).

According to Unbehaun et al. (2008), ski tourists are sensitive to the distances and travel time. However, in winters with poor snow conditions, the travel time lose some relevance. With increasing ski skills, their demands for the destination increase accordingly. People are more willing to travel further, due to improved transportation possibilities and increased travels in general. The study showed a threshold of two additional hours driving. In their study, 36 percent answered that they would travel more than 500 km to a snow guaranteed destination, yet only 14 percent did travel more than 500 km.
Travel time to the destination has a dual role, either perceived as a discouraging element or representing a factor of attraction. How tourists choose close or distant destinations depends on their desires and available time (Armario, 2008). No broad agreement exists within the literature about its effect. Travel distance to the final destination is a key element in the relation between the level of satisfaction and the motives to go on the trip. In the decision-making process, the distance to the destination is clearly an important variable (Armario, 2008).

Chapter 3.3.1 described tourist satisfaction, their travel pattern and motivations for different kinds of holiday. The latter part focused on ski tourism and emphasized the importance of snow conditions, diversity of slopes and off-snow activities. These attributes are identified as important elements when choosing a ski resort for the holiday. I have made a theoretically model based on the presented theory. This model includes the most significant findings in research over the last 20 years: satisfaction, previous visits, perceived price level, convenience, slopes and snow conditions. It is very challenging to create a model that will illustrate and explain consumer behavior. In the next subchapter, this will be further described.

3.4 Theory based model

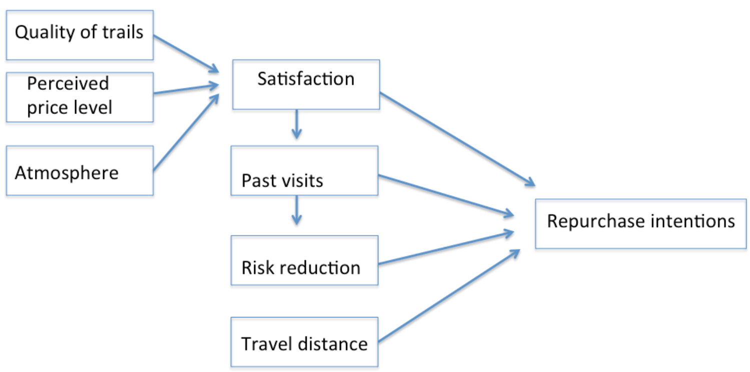
Travel decisions are complex decisions that involve a range of interrelated factors such as satisfaction, motivation, experiences, expectations, etc. Many of the best models of consumer behavior are at least 25 years old and since the industry is constantly changing, the models ought to adjust accordingly. According to Swarbrooke (2007), the current purchase decision models in tourism are not adequate. They tend to view tourists as a homogenous group making rational decisions when they in reality are very heterogeneously, and making understandable but not always rational decisions. Also, the models are difficult to apply to marketing strategies (Swarbrooke, 2007). Consequently, creating a model regarding consumer behavior is a great challenge. Nevertheless, based on the previously explained theory and my research question, I have suggested a model.

My research problem is:

"The main determinants of revisit intentions to Norwegian skiing resorts"

My respondents are ski tourists so the findings will firstly apply to them. However, most of the findings can be applied to other tourists as well. Except for 'travel distance', all relations are positive.

Figure 3.7 Research model



From the examined theory in this chapter, I have chosen four elements as the main antecedents of repurchase intentions. These will now be presented:

1. Satisfaction

Several studies have tried to measure the level of tourist satisfaction, but few studies have emphasized on examining its antecedents and possible relations between them. In such a competitive market as tourism, having a deep understanding of satisfaction and consumer behavior, such as how they choose among destinations, is essential to offer an attractive destination (Armario, 2008).

Satisfaction is a complex concept. I have selected three aspects that I believe determine the level of satisfaction; quality of slopes, the perceived price level and the atmosphere.

I want to examine the importance of diversified slopes with varying difficulty, and good snow conditions making it possible. Previous research emphasizes the importance of possibilities for powder, off-piste and newly prepped slopes.

Price plays a major role in purchase decisions of consumables. I want to look further into the role of price regarding travel products.

Previous research at big ski resorts has identified fine dining, shopping and night-time entertainment such as pubs, clubs and after-ski as influencing factors due to the atmosphere it is creating. I wanted to know to what extend this matters for their motivation and satisfaction.

2. Previous visits

There is broad agreement that past visits can indicate future repurchases. If this turns out to have a significant influence, the theory is confirmed.

3. Risk reduction

According to Gitelson and Crompton (1984), the most common factor predicting why travelers repeat a vacation is that experience reduces the “risk that an unsatisfactory experience is forthcoming.” Also, Oppermann (2000) supports the importance of risk reduction.

Do the tourists travel back to for example Hovden ski resort even if they are only moderately satisfied, just to avoid the risk of having a bad ski vacation someplace else? According to behavioral economics, one is risk prone in gain-framed situations, while one is risk averse in loss-framed circumstances.

4. Travel distance

Agderforskning found that intention to revisit decreases with geography; the further away from Hovden, the lower is the probability for revisiting. And the longer geographical distance

it is to the ski resort, the higher is the likelihood of the respondent being a first-timer (Hauge, 2012).
Some find it practical to go someplace nearby while others find it more exotic to travel far. Research shows that ski tourists are sensitive to the distances and travel time; only 14 percent would travel more than 500 km. Many tourists would not go on a ski holiday if the travel distance increased (Unbehaun et al., 2008).

Together these four elements; satisfaction, previous visits, risk reduction and travel distance; will hopefully explain the repurchase intentions. I will test this model in my quantitative and qualitative research. First, I will describe the relevant methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter 4 Method

"The scientific method is the way researchers go about using knowledge and evidence to reach objective conclusions about the real world"
(Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013, p.6)

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the foundation of the chosen method. I will present my research objective, and cover topics as research design, data collection and the conduction of the study. The research process is long with several stages taken over time (Jacobsen, 2005) and I will in the following go through each step.

4.1 The development of research question

A concept describes a phenomenon (Zikmund et al., 2013). My concept is repurchasing, in the industry of travel and tourism and the goal of this thesis is to explore why tourists choose to revisit a destination. To clarify the chosen concept, I have used the following definition of repurchase in this thesis;*"the activity where the customers buy a product, service or experience several times"* (Hauge, 2015).
According to Jacobsen (2005), the problem definition is three-parted. The first is to define the wanted research units. The second is to define how to measure the specific phenomena by chosen variables while the third is to decide the context and the precise setting. I aim to understand the repurchase intentions of skiing tourists, the factors affecting the destination choice the most, and their motivations. I will focus on ski tourists in Norway, identifying the determinants of their revisit intentions, collected at three skiing resorts February and March 2016. My research question is as previous presented:

"*The main determinants of revisit intentions to Norwegian skiing resorts.*"

4.2 Research Design

A research design represents a framework of how to collect and analyze data (Jacobsen, 2005). There is not only one standard or correct research design. The research design needs to be carefully chosen to fit the purpose, goal, size, resources and strategy for data collection. To be successful the research design must suit the context (Zikmund et al., 2013).

There are three main methods: explorative, descriptive and causal.
The exploratory research design is used to define the problem precisely, clarify and get in depth of the concept. This way, new contexts', patterns and ideas of a phenomenon can be revealed and used for further research (Hair, Money, Samuel & Page, 2007). Methods for exploratory research are literature search, focus groups, individual depth interviews, and experience survey. Given that the purpose of this study is to understand and identify the antecedents of repurchase intentions, I used exploratory research design and conducted personal interviews. The understanding requires flexibility, time and openness, which makes the exploratory research design the most suitable.
Descriptive describes current situations where the phenomena are known. The study presents a clear answer to the research question.
The causal design tries to identify relations and cause-affect relations between variables and see if one phenomenon causes another (Hair et al., 2007). In social science, this is defined as "If X occurs, there is a given probability for Y to occur" (Jacobsen, 2005). Causal design is the chosen design for the dataset received from Agderforskning. I wanted to see whether previous visits, satisfaction and other variables would cause intentions to revisit or willingness of recommendation.
Conclusively, I chose an explorative research design for the qualitative research and a causal design for the quantitative research.

4.3 Methods

Qualitative or quantitative research approach?
In social science methodology, there are two main categories: qualitative and quantitative. They differ significantly by being the opposite of each other. *Qualitative research* emphasizes understanding, usage of words, content and is appropriate to understand a phenomenon in depth and to identify human motivation (Jacobsen, 2005). It is suited for small samples and

often in natural settings. A consequence of the thorough elaboration and the depth provided is the reduction of possibilities for generalization. Another limitation of qualitative research methods is that the researcher to a large extent is involved both in data collection and the data analysis. Different researchers can draw different conclusions from the same interview. As a result, the qualitative research method more subjective and researcher-dependent compared to the quantitative research, which is more objective. *Quantitative research* emphasizes amount and use numbers rather than words. The large sample makes generalization possible. However no explanation behind the answers is provided and there is a risk of the study being superficial. Quantitative research is structured and normally provides categories while qualitative research is more adaptable and has free forms (Jacobsen, 2005).

In conclusion, qualitative research can accomplish what quantitative cannot, and the other way around. Therefore, I analyzed the dataset I received from Agderforskning first, and supplemented it with personal interviews from three ski resorts.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to personal interviews (Ryen, 2002). One of the advantages is the opportunity for feedback. Both parties can receive a clarification of questions and answers. There is also a possibility to use visual aids. Another advantage is the high participation rate. However, a drawback with personal interviews can be the non-anonymity, and can be unsuited for certain themes. I assume this will not be a problem since my topic is neither private nor sensitive. Another disadvantage is the interviewer's effect on the respondent. One cannot overlook the interaction effect between the interviewer and the respondent (Ryen, 2002). Lastly, personal interviews can be difficult to collect regarding geographical limitations, and it is time-consuming and costly. The next subsection will elaborate the process of data collection more closely.

4.4 Data Collection

Given the deadline of the master thesis being in June, I based my research on winter tourists rather than on summer tourists. The aim of this thesis is to understand tourists' personal motivation for choosing a ski destination and identify aspects influencing their intention to revisit or not. I chose to triangulate. That is to use different data collection methods in the same study to ensure the data is understood correctly and to be more confident with the results (Hair et al., 2007, p.425; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p.146).

4.4.1 Primary and secondary data

Data gathered from the personal interviews are my primary data. The advantage of primary data is that it is collected for this specific purpose, which eliminates the "noise" from sources with different objectives than me. The disadvantage is that the process of collecting primary data is dependent on available and willing respondents who answer truthfully (Zikmund et al., 2013). In addition, it can be costly and time-consuming to collect. My 74 interviews of ski tourists are my primary data.

Secondary data is acquired from research in which the data are not directly assembled for the purpose of the given project (Hair et a., 2007, p.425). In this thesis, I use secondary data from Agderforskning. The advantage of secondary data is that it is fast available, given it already is gathered. Limitations are that the author could influence the data and it is suited for another study.

4.4.2 The quantitative dataset and data preparation

Agderforskning had a highly relevant dataset from Visit Sørlandet I could use. This data was from a survey conducted in the winter holiday 2012 of tourists visiting three companies at Hovden; Hovden Fjellstoge, Bjåen Fjellstove and Hovden ski resort. It contained 108 variables and 507 answers. I analyzed it in SPSS.

The survey comprises three sections. The first part describes the respondents' characteristics (age, nationality, who to vacate with, etc.). The second part is about Hovden as a destination. The third part is about the specific company and involves the level of satisfaction, intention to return, estimated spending, motivations for the holiday, the willingness of recommendations, etc.

From the total of 507 respondents, I deleted 149 answers from the two other companies, to only be left with the company that is relevant for my study, Hovden ski resort. After this, the dataset contained 358 answers. Further, I wanted to study only the traveled tourists, since cabin-owners have a very high likelihood of returning. In question 8 "accommodation while vacating at Hovden" I deleted "own cottage" (99 customers) and "at home, I live here" (7 customers) and 252 respondents retained for analysis.

The questionnaire was very useful to my study. However, it was not tailor made for Hovden ski resort. So, as often is the case with secondary data, the data are not optimal for answering the research questions. Nevertheless, it may provide some useful insights.

I find the questionnaire to be slightly too general. Of a total of 108 variables, there are only three statements regarding the ski slopes. Question 13 consists of three statements the respondents are asked to answer by using a 7-point Likert scale: the ski slopes at Hovden are fantastic, the slalom slopes at the ski resort are well organized, and the terrain park at the ski resort is well organized. The first statement is unclear if it refers to cross-country, slalom or both. Moreover, given that a substantial part (358 of 507) of the respondents belongs to Hovden ski resort, I would recommend future surveys to include questions concerning snow-conditions, valuation of powder and off-piste possibilities, convenient location, the atmosphere and off-snow facilities as after-ski, shops and dining. I believe it would be useful to know which factors that in particular are important for choosing a destination and which are affecting the intentions to return.

Furthermore, some questions and clarifications that could have been improved, such as:

- "*Can you imagine traveling back?"* The response alternatives are yes, no and do not know. 93.6 percent answered yes, resulting in little variation in this variable.
  There are no follow-up questions to describe why. If the respondent does not intend to come back, is it due to him/her being an explorer who always travel to new destinations, or is it due to lack of service and quality? The same goes for those who intend to come back- is it due to tradition or the high level of service and quality?
- *"Have you been here before? If yes, when was last time?"* These answers do not say anything about frequency and travel pattern. If one answer is that s/he has been at the destination four times before and last time were 2014, there are significant differences between a respondent visiting in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and a respondent sporadically visits e.g. 1980, 1995 and 2001. Two identical answers can therefore, be perceived similar even though they are enormously different.

Lastly, certain aspects remain unclear. For example:

- *"On a scale from 1-7 where 7 is completely agreed, to what extend do you agree with the following statement: I am visiting the company today because I have been here before."* Does a score equal to 1 mean that previous visits do not matter for the choice of current destination or does it mean that one has never been at the destination before?

I will examine these questions closer in the qualitative interviews.

Except these elements, the survey was useful and provided relevant data. The results are presented in chapter 5.2.

4.4.2 The qualitative research

I contacted Hovden Ski Resort in September 2015 and told them about my thesis and that I wanted to write about why their guests have chosen them as a ski resort. I asked if it was possible for me to interview some of their guests, and the CEO granted me access. The interviews took place in the period 13th and 14th of February 2016.
In March 2016, I contacted Ål and Hemsedal ski resort and asked if I could interview some of their guests. I was granted access to both resorts, and the interviews took place March 23rd and March 25th, 2016.

The purpose of these interviews is to understand antecedents of repurchase intentions better and identify the elements that ski tourists value the most. In addition, the purpose of the interviews was to fill in the information I did not obtained from the quantitative dataset.

In total, I conducted 74 interviews of about 5-12 minutes each. My interviews consisted of two parts. The first part was to describe the context; personal characteristics such as age, nationality, if they have been here before, how far they have traveled and their choice of accommodation. The second part aims to identify the key factors for returning and achieving a high level of satisfaction.

My interview guide included the following questions:

1. Have you been here before?
    a. If yes, when and what made you come back?
    b. If no, what made you choose this ski resort?
2. What was important to you when selecting a ski destination?
3. What will make you satisfied after a day in the ski resort?
4. Do you intend to come back? Why/why not and when?
5. What does it take for you to travel someplace else?
6. Have you put something on social media from here?
7. Will you recommend this ski resort to others?

The first four questions are the core of this thesis. They are to identify the repurchase intentions. I will see if this empiricism can support the theory in chapter 3. These questions also answer the three questions I addressed in the introduction; motivation, revisit intentions and antecedents of satisfaction. Question 5 assesses the level of loyalty. Questions 6 and 7 were planned as a supplement for those who did not intend to return but perhaps wanted to recommend the place and market it via social media.

To reduce possible risk with few respondents at Hovden, I wanted to schedule the interviews before I arrived. On January 24 the market director at Hovden ski resort sent out an e-mail, in both Norwegian and English, to everybody staying there the weekend 12th -14th of February. For the text, see appendix 1.

In addition to this, a link to a doodle calendar was attached, for them to book the interview time that suited them the best. They could not see each other's answers, and they could only choose one time. I had scheduled two interviews per hour.
By February 10, no one had booked an interview and a reminder email was sent out.
At the date of arrival February 12, only two had scheduled time. Consequently, I randomly approached people at the ski resort. I believe this makes the sample more valid than what the scheduled doodle calendar would.
The welcome center is where the ski cards are bought and the check in/out of rented cottages is being done. I used this as a base and approached people on their way in or out, told them shortly about my thesis and if I could ask them some questions. Of 32 respondents, only 9 received a day pass. The reason for this is that most said yes to the interview without knowing about the day pass and some had just purchased one. I do not believe the day pass has influenced their answers. I will discuss this further in section 4.7.

For my interviews at Ål and Hemsedal in March, I employed a simpler strategy with no doodle-link and no day passes. I approached random skiers outside of the resort between noon and 3:30 pm. The interviews were conducted outside at the end of a slope, between a restaurant and a lift.

4.5 Unit selection

Sampling is to select respondents from a population and to be later able to infer something about them, making sample a group of chosen respondents, which is representative of the population. A population is the total amount of those that fulfill certain specifications. (Sekaran & Bourgie, 2013).

My theoretical population is all tourists, either traveling alone, with family or friends. Since this is close to unlimited, I had to make constraints: ski tourists at Hovden, Hemsedal and Ål ski resort, February and March 2016. This is my actual population.

In many interview surveys, the number of interviews is relatively limited. This is due to the number of available and interested tourists, time required, available resources and 'the law of diminishing returns' (Ryen, 2002, p.93 refers to Kvale, 1996).

> *"In the end, sampling size adequacy is subject to peer review, consensual validation and judgment. What is crucial is that the sampling procedures and decisions be fully described and justified so that information users have the appropriate context for judging the sample". (Ryen, 2002, p.92 refers to Patton, 1990)*

Seidman (1998) highlights two criteria for a qualitative sample, sufficiency and satisfaction (Ryen, 2002). Sufficiency means the number of the sample is sufficient enough to be able to reflect on the width among the respondents regarding characteristics or variables. Second, adequate information, which means the saturation, is reached and no new information will appear.

The sample of my qualitative research is 74 respondents. I believed this balanced nicely between the possibility to conclude, meet saturation, and achieve a variance in the answers.

4.6 Strength and weaknesses of the chosen methods

As to any form of research methods, one needs to be aware of certain limitations. The next section will discuss three aspects; reliability and viability, the response rate and the analyze techniques.

4.6.1 Reliability and viability

Reliability refers to the degree the study yields consistent findings (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, we examine whether or not we obtain the same answers if we did the survey again (Zikmund et al., 2013). One can conclude the study is reliable if others or we did it again and acquired the same answers, or if the same results are obtained on other occasions (Saunders et al., 2012). The result should be possible for others to try and verify.

Validity is synonymous with accuracy or correctness. The validity of a measurement is defined by the degree we measure what we intend to measure (Jacobsen, 2005; Saunders et al., 2012). The literature describes different types of validity:
Internal validity is according to Zikmund et al. (2013) only present if the independent variable is responsible for the observed variance in the dependent variable. Valid as a concept express the relation between what we wish to measure and what we actual measure. The validity is high, if the measurement is relevant and the concept is covered. High validity is conditional on whether the respondents understand the questions the way we want it to be understood and that we understand the answers the way it is supposed to be understood (Saunders et al., 2012). It is therefore necessary to clearly define the concept, by professionals or literature. As previously explained, certain questions in the questionnaire I found to be unclear. However, in the personal interviews both the respondent and myself got the chance to ask for clarification during the interviews.
External validity is a measure of the extent to which we can generalize the findings to apply for the rest of the population (Jacobsen, 2005). If they can, the results are generalizable (Saunders et al., 2012). In regard to the qualitative research, I strove to achieve a high degree of external validity through randomly selecting the respondents.

If a measure is valid, it is reliability. However, if a measurement is reliable, it does not necessarily have to be valid. Validity and reliability are critical, regardless whether we use a qualitative or a quantitative method.
Regarding my quantitative research, Hauge (2012) states in their report that representativeness has been guiding for if the individual companies' data have been presented in the report. The companies that have been brought forward and presented with their own data, needed for satisfying measure of accuracy, reliability and representativeness through a confidence level less then +/- 10 percent. The estimated visitation at Hovden ski resort was

38.000 and the number of respondents was 357. The total margin of error is given to be +/- 5.2 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent.

Concerning the validity of my quantitative research, the literature mentions the following as threats: history, testing, instrumentation, mortality and maturation (Saunders et al., 2012). In respect to my research, I rather believe these five elements could affect the validity:
1. The day pass. When conducting personal interviews, it is normal to gesture the respondents with some kind of compensation. As a tool for either convincing them to participate and/or a way to say thanks, some of the respondents at Hovden ski resort received a free day pass. This is not without further concerns. First, it may have influenced the answers to be more positive than they would have been otherwise. Second, it may have affected the sample to consist of only those who already intended to return, since they would be in need of a day pass. However, most people were in a good mood and seemed happy to help. I did not notice any differences between those who got and those who did not receive a day pass. Furthermore, the majority of the interviews were conducted before noon, meaning the ones who received a day pass were able to use it that particular day. This reduces the possibility of only those with an intention to revisit accepted to an interview. Only 9 of 31 respondents received a day pass. Of those nine respondents, only six of them knew about the day pass on beforehand. The rest, 25 interviewees, said yes without me mentioning the day pass.

2. Duration. At Hovden ski resort, I sensed that some of the interviewees were stressed about being inside rather skiing outside during the interview. And at all three ski resorts, the respondents had a family, friends or children waiting for them. The disruptions shortened some interviews and reduce the elaboration of the answers. This appeared when asked about aspects they had not yet considered, they quickly said *"I don't know"* and *"maybe a little"*. Many were happy to take a break and took the time to consider their answers. From these I got long answers.

3. Place. The location of the interview can affect the respondents' feelings and also the answers. For my interviews at Hovden, I had received a meeting room at the ski resort to create a neutral place. However, I did not use it. It was easier for them to accept to an interview where they already were. Some interviews I did outside, but most were conducted inside at the welcome center.

At Ål, I approached them while they were taking breaks outside. This break spot has several tables, and is located between the children area and the steeper hills, and outside of the cafeteria and the rental shop. During their break they were relaxed and patient making it easy to interview them.
At Hemsedal, I stood between two lifts and slopes, outside of a restaurant. Here, the skiers were meeting and waiting for their friends/family before a new round, and I approached them while they did so.

4. *Weather.* The weather at Hovden that particular weekend was extraordinary. Sun and clear sky all three days. Very cold, in fact coldest in Norway, but in return it resulted in great snow conditions. I believe the answers would have been different with cloudy weather and plus degrees causing bad snow conditions. The day I spent at Ål was cloudy, but luckily sunny around noon and lunchtime. In Hemsedal it was similar.

5. *Time*. Regarding the time of interviews at Hovden, it was the first weekend of the winter holiday for Rogaland. To the question "do you intend to come back?" some of the skiers were a bit unsure given they have not tried the facilities fully out. Simultaneously, it was a sunny weekend with good atmosphere and newly prepped slopes, which is a context it can be difficult to imagine to not wanting to come back.
I also have the impression that the time of the day of the interviews influenced their answers. For example, at Ål were several interviews conducted during the respondents' lunch break. When I asked about factors of satisfaction and important elements in any given ski resort, the answers were; a good lunch break, available tables outside, the possibility to bring and buy food, and a wish for more healthy and inexpensive food. Answers regarding food were also observed at Hemsedal, where some of the interviews were conducted at 1 pm just after their lunch break.

4.6.2 Response rate

In concern of the quantitative research, some questions had rather high missing values. To the statement "the company exceeded my expectations" only 206 of 252 answered, and in the correlation between estimated consumption and level of satisfaction, the missing value was 92.

In regard to the qualitative research, most people I asked said yes. At Hovden ski resort 31 said yes to a short interview, whereas nine said no. At Ål and Hemsedal ski resort, only 1 and three said no. Given the size of Ål, the sample of 11 respondents is a relatively correct size compared to the other two samples from the big resorts.

4.6.3 Analysis techniques

This paragraph concerns the quantitative research. I have used one-way ANOVA, chi-tests and calculated mean.
When measuring the covariance between variables, we use a correlation analysis and Pearson correlations (Pearson's r). The covariance can be positive, neutral or negative and between 1 and -1. 1 means there is an absolute positive covariance and -1 is absolute negative covariance. 0 means there is no covariance between the variables (Midtbøe, 2007).
There is no clear answer for what is a high or a low correlation, however in the field of social science methodology, ±0.2 is perceived as a weak covariance, moderate is between ±0.3 to ±0.4 and strong covariance is ±0.5 and higher (Johannessen, Tufte & Kristoffersen, 2006, p.259).
1 percent, 5 percent or 10 percent is the most common level of significance in analysis in social science. The level of significance decides whether or not we will accept or reject our hypothesis. The analysis in chapter 5 has a significant level of 1 percent meaning we can with 99 percent security prove a relation between the variables included in the analysis. With such a low number of respondents, it can be accepted with a high level of significance.

This chapter has explained the research process. The research question, the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, primary and secondary data, and characteristics of exploratory, descriptive and causal design have been clarified together with insights of the data collection process. The findings are provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of my research. I will firstly introduce the three ski resorts and their market situation. Thereafter I will start with the analysis of the dataset collected by Agderforskning. Next I will present my primary data, the findings from the qualitative research, which are 74 personal interviews at Hovden, Ål and Hemsedal ski resorts.

5.1 Introduction

The three chosen ski resorts differ greatly from each other when it comes to size, customer segments and market conditions, and I will in this subchapter clarify these differences.

Hovden ski resort is located north in Aust-Agder and is one of the most snow-secure destinations in Norway. The diversified terrain makes it attractive for people with varying skills and preferences. Concerning activities, the ski resort offers a ski-school and ski guided mountain trips. Most visitors are families, and the ski resort has a ski area for children, and offers ski school and childcare.
Ål ski resort is a small resort in Buskerud. They have two customer groups; cabin owners in the area and the national team. The first group visits due to the location while the latter comes for the steep slopes. In 2014, the ski resort had an operating income of NOK 5 million and an operating profit of NOK 230.000 resulting in a return on equity of -12.9 percent (www.purehelp.no).
Hemsedal ski resort is part of SkiStar AB, a Swedish corporation that owns and runs winter sport resorts in Norway and Sweden. The facilities include restaurants, shops, after ski, ski-school, rental cabins, etc.

Table 5.1 Facts of the ski resorts

	Hovden	Hemsedal	Ål
Number of slopes	32	49	6
Number of lifts	8	20	4
Number of parks	2	3	1
Km of slalom slopes	34.4 km	45 km	15 km
Km of cross country slopes	170 km	250 km	400 km

The market conditions are very different for the three ski resorts. Hovden ski resort is the biggest in its region of Vest-Agder, Aust-Agder and Rogaland. The skiers travel there due to satisfaction on previous visits, but also due to lack of close alternatives. This is not how the situation is in the area around Buskerud and Oslo; the competition is fierce. Within a radius of 210 km from Oslo, is Hemsedal with 48 slopes, Geilo with 38 slopes, Hafjell with 32 slopes, and Norefjell with 28 slopes located, to only mention the big ski resorts. Ål ski resort is neither the best nor biggest in its region. Still, they experience this fierce competition in the region from both big and small ski resorts. I have placed the three resorts in a matrix. See figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 A market matrix

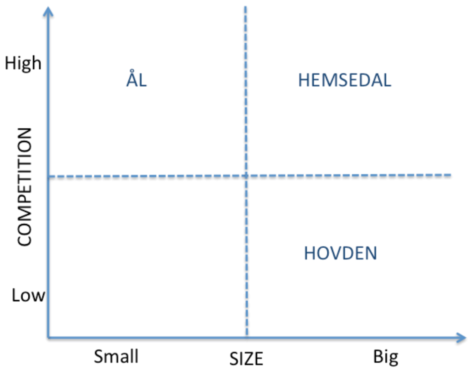


Table 5.2 on the next page shows the revenue of the largest ski resort in Norway, Trysil Skistar, compared to Hemsedal and Hovden ski resort. They have all experienced a growth from the year before.

Table 5.2 The largest ski resorts in Norway and their revenue in NOK

	2014/2015	2013/2014	*Change*
1. Skistar Trysil	200.232.000	178.315.000	*12%*
2. Skistar Hemsedal	114.375.000	105.562.000	*8%*
9. Hovden ski resort	27.287.000	25.122.000	*9%*

Source: http://www.alpinanleggene.no/statistikk/omsetning-for-de-14-storste-alpinanlegg-norske

5.2 The quantitative research: Hovden ski resort, February - March 2012

This analysis is based on a dataset Agderforskning collected on behalf of Visit Sørlandet in 2012. Their own analysis and conclusions are to be find in their "project rapport nr.4/2012 *Repurchase –winter season*" Hauge (2012). See Agderforsking's webpage[3]. For the questionnaire, see appendix 2. Output is on request.

I aim to answer the three questions regarding motivations, influences of satisfaction and revisit intentions among ski tourists in Norway, with analysis from the dataset. I will first present the sample, N=358.

- Average age: 33,4 years
- 15 percent said this was their main holiday for the 2012
- Most of the tourists traveled with children and/or youth, only 15 percent of the respondents traveled only with other adults (Hauge, 2012)
- 63 percent stayed a week at Hovden and stayed on average 3.7 days at the company (Hauge, 2012)
- Of N=358, did 7 stayed at home and 99 at their own cabin. A prerequisite is that those who live or own a cabin there will return. After deleting the 106 respondents staying at home or at their own cabins, there were 252 visiting respondents left. 22 percent of them had never been there before, while 29 percent had been there 7-9 times before. Of those who had visited Hovden ski resort before, 17 percent had been there earlier that year
- 229 respondents of 310 replies (N=358) agreed they had received a lot for their money at Hovden and 221 agreed they had receive a lot for their money at Hovden ski resort

[3] http://www.agderforskning.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Gjenkj%C3%B8p-Vintersesong.pdf

5.2.1 What are the motivations of ski tourists in Norway?

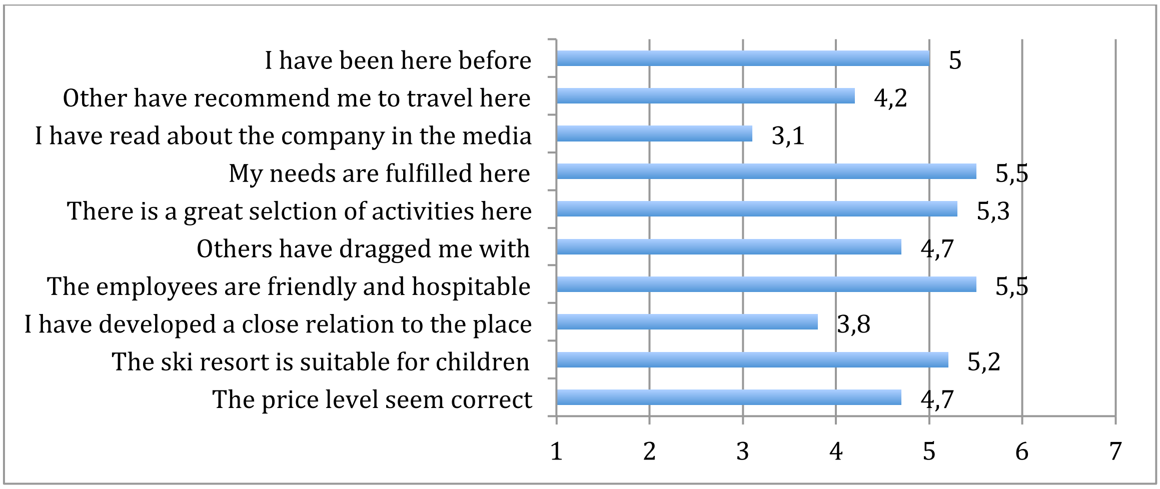
Question 12 aims to identify the customers' motivations for this vacation. Since this is a general question concerning Hovden as a holiday area, all respondents are included, N=507. The survey clearly shows that the main motivation for visiting Hovden is skiing. 57 percent traveled to Hovden for alpine skiing. To the statement "the ski slopes at Hovden are fantastic", 63.7 percent score 6 or 7 on a 7-point Likert scale. "The ski resort is suitable for children" receives a main score of 5.2, while 61 percent score 6 or 7 to "the slopes are well organized at Hovden".

Question 19 "I visit the company today because…" (N=252)

This question is company specific and the sample is therefore reduced to N=252, as is the case for the other following questions.

Question 19 entails 10 statements where the respondents are to say to what degree they agree on a 7 point Likert scale as the table 5.4 below illustrates. The first alternative is "I have been here before". The results showed that 55 percent scored 6 or 7. This means the last visit plays a major role for half of the returning travelers. However, as previously discussed there are some uncertainties in respect to this question, since it is "double barreled". 24 percent scored 1. Does this mean that for 24 percent, previous visits did not matter or does it mean that they have not been here before? The theory in chapter 3 states that previous visits positively influence repurchase. This is supported in this study.

Table 5.3 Motivations from the quantitative research



As we can read from the table above, the most important motivations are that their needs and desires are fulfilled, the employees are perceived as friendly, there are many different activities offered and the resort is child friendly. Also the importance of previous visits gets a high score.

Armario (2008) emphasizes that the available activities at the given destination impact the level of satisfaction. I will in the following examine closer what affects the level of satisfaction the most.

5.2.2 What makes ski tourists in Norway satisfied?

Question 1c and 29 “Where are you from” and “level of satisfaction”
I wondered if geographical location of the customer had any effect on their level of satisfaction. 85.6 percent of the 252 tourists at Hovden ski resort are Norwegians. The results revealed that the tourists from Mid- and West-Norway are the most satisfied, and the tourists from South Norway, even though Hovden lies in their region, were the least satisfied. According to Hauge (2012), 78 percent of the Usus guests live in South-Norway and they said they would return to Hovden next year. The second biggest customer group comes from Western Norway, where half of the tourists said they would return to Hovden next year.
In regard to revisit intention, Agderforskning found that revisit intention decreases with geography; the further away from Hovden, the lower is the probability for revisiting. Further, the longer geographical distance it is to the ski resort, the higher is the probability for the respondent being a first-timer (Hauge, 2012).

Question 13 and 29 “The slopes are well organized” and “level of satisfaction”
There were a clearly positive relationship between the level of satisfaction and how well organized the downhill slopes were perceived. Those that perceived the slopes as well organized had a significantly higher satisfaction level compared to those who did not perceive the slopes as well organized. This might be related to the strong motivation for skiing.

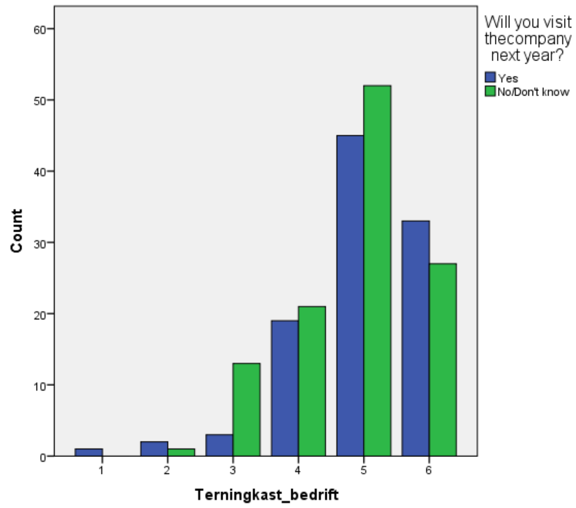
Question 20 and 29 “Exceeded expectations” and “level of satisfaction”
Satisfaction is built on expectations, and not surprisingly; the more the tourists feel that their expectations are met or exceeded the more satisfied they are.

Question 25 and 29 “Recommendation” and “level of satisfaction”
I wanted to see to what degree satisfaction affects the respondents’ willingness to recommend the destination to others. According to Hauge (2012), higher attitude loyalty will result in the respondents being more likely to recommend the experiences at the company via Trip-Advisor, Facebook, blog etc. (Hauge, 2012).
The dataset showed that of N=252, 196 respondents would recommend Hovden ski resort. Their average level of satisfaction is 5 on a scale from 1 to 6. Only 5 respondents did not want to recommend Hovden ski resort, and their satisfaction level is 4.4. The conclusion is clear; the higher level of satisfaction, the more likely are the tourist to recommend the destination to others.
The dataset did not ask what medium the respondent would use for the recommendations. I looked further into this in the qualitative interviews.

Question 27 and 29 “Predicted budget” and “level of satisfaction”
Since perceived price is a part of my theoretically based model, I wanted to analyze if this is correct and to what extent their spending mattered for their level of satisfaction.
Of the 507 respondents, the average revenue of those over age 18 was 807.590 NOK (Hauge, 2012). They estimate to spend 47.811 NOK, which is 6 percent, on vacation that year. Further, they assume 1 percent of their annual revenue, 7.812 NOK, will be spent on the particular holiday at Hovden (Hauge, 2012). My results showed that budgeted spending has little influence on the level of satisfaction. This can imply that other elements such as weather, diversity of slopes and running lifts affect the overall satisfaction more than perceived price level. I will look further into antecedents of satisfaction in my qualitative research.

Finally, does satisfaction affect the intention to revisit next year?
Question 23 and 29 “Revisit intention next year?” and “level of satisfaction”
232 of 252 respondents have answered. Figure 5.2 on page 59 illustrates the satisfaction level divided over six levels. It shows that only the completely satisfied (score 6 on a scale from 1 to 6) has a majority who intend to revisit next year. This is illustrated with the blue column being higher than the green. Among the scores 3, 4 and 5, has a majority of respondents answering no/don’t know, and the green column are higher than the blue ones. The very small groups of score 1 and 2 are excluded.

Figure 5.2 Satisfaction and revisit intention



Further, the mean score for satisfaction of those who will revisit next year is 4.98 on a scale from 1 to 6 (N=103, missing values=7). The average satisfaction level of those who will not revisit next year or do not know is 4.798 (N=114, missing values=8). See table 5.3. By looking at the satisfaction level on average, we see it is slightly higher among the group with intention to revisit compared to those with no intention to revisit.

Table 5.4 Mean satisfaction level and revisit intention

Will you visit next year?	*N=252*	*Mean satisfaction*
Yes	103	4.98
No	23	4.74
Don't know	91	4.81

I will now continue to further assess the intentions to repurchase.

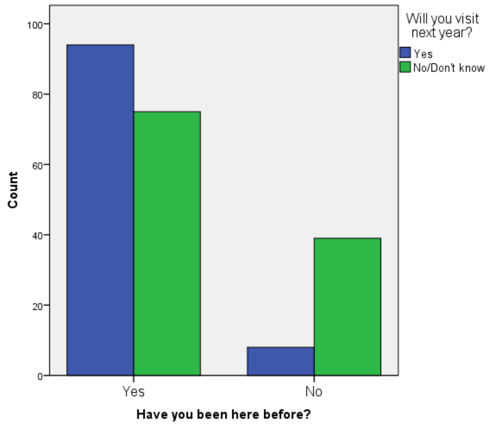
5.2.3 What makes ski tourists in Norway revisit?

Questions 22−24 "Will you consider revisiting again/next year/within three years?"
93.6 percent of 252 answered they will return to Hovden ski resort, 65.6 percent will return within three years and 47.4 percent said they would return next year. I will therefore use the latter later in the analysis. These results indicate high levels of loyalty.

Question 18 and 23 “Have you been here before” and “I will revisit next year”
Do the ski tourists who have been at Hovden ski resort before, especially in the near past, intend to revisit? If there is a close relationship between the past and current actions, the results of this analysis are in accordance with the existing theory. Previous visits are in this context a predictor for future visits, not an explanation of current visits.
I conducted an independent sample t-test (N=252) to see whether previous visits affect revisit intentions. For this analysis, I combined the reply options. Revisit intentions had originally three reply options; yes, no, don’t know. I merged the latter two. Regarding “have you been here before”, I merged the latter four options to only be left with yes and no. Given that yes = 1 and no = 2, a mean of 1.5 would mean just as many saying yes as no, <1.5 more people say yes than no and with >1.5 the majority say no. The null hypothesis is that past visits do not affect future revisit intentions. The results revealed that 169 of 216 had been there before and their mean of revisit intention next year was 1.4438. The group of first-timers had a mean of 1.8298. To conclude, the ones who had visited Hovden ski resort before, had a higher mean and intend in a larger degree to return compared to the first-timers. With a significant level of .00 < 0.05 I can reject that there is no relation between the two variables, “equal variances not assumed”.
On average, previous visits affect revisit intention positively; $t(94.63) = -5.729$, $p = .00$.

In addition, I conducted a chi-test to further look into the relationship between the two variables. I observed a strong association between previous visits and revisiting intention, $\chi^2(1) = 21.984$, $p = 0.000$.
Figure 5.4 below shows the different revisit intentions among first-timers and regulars, N=216. Among the regulars, the majority wants to return. This is illustrated with the blue column (intend to revisit next year) being higher than the green (no clear intention of returning next year). Among the first-timers, the majority does not intend or do not know if they will return next year. This is illustrated with the green column being significantly higher than the blue.

Figure 5.3 Previous visits and revisit intention



Question 20 and 23 "I receive a lot of value for my money" and "I will revisit next year"
Lastly, I will see to what extent perceived value for money affects the intention to revisit. "I receive a lot from the money I have spent here" is a statement on a 7-point Likert scale. Of N=252, 105 respondents said they intended to return (missing value=35). Their mean score on the statement is 4.7. 21 respondents do not intend to revisit next year. Their mean of agreement is 3.8. Conclusively, the ones who intend to return perceived the highest value for money.

Chapter 5.1 showed that 47.4 percent intend to return next year and that the two main factors influencing this are previous visits; the intention to revisit was higher among regulars than first-timers, as illustrated in figure 5.3, and satisfaction; satisfied visitors do have a stronger intention to return than those who are not, as illustrated in table 5.3. To supplement this analysis, I did a qualitative survey with 74 personal interviews, see chapter 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

5.3 The qualitative research: Hovden ski resort, February 2016

This section will describe and examine the findings I received from the 31 interviews at Hovden ski resort. The sample is described as followed:

- 15 women and 16 men
- Age 21 (1995) to 58 (1958)
- 7 came from the region around Stavanger, 12 traveled from Kristiansand, 2 from Haugesund and 10 from Denmark
- 18 traveled with children
- 3 traveled with an organization

- Last time they were here (N=26): this season 8, last year 8, two years ago 5, four years ago 1, 20 years ago 1 and never before 3

5.3.1 The interview process

I randomly approached ski tourists outside and inside the reception area of the ski resort. The interviews lasted between 5-12 minutes each. See chapter 4.4.4 for my interview guide.

1. Have you been here before? Why did you choose Hovden ski resort?

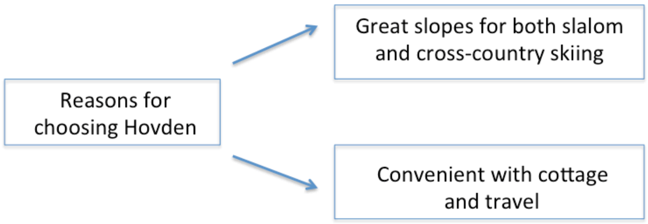
"Because it is easy with transportation. Also, we know the area and it is easy with children." Woman, Denmark.

"We are used to come here – have been here since my childhood" Woman, Kristiansand.

"We are used to Sirdal, but it is better here. Also, my company had a cottage we could use. And we have heard the cross-country trails are good here and we would like to try them" Man, Stavanger.

Of the 31 respondents, 26 had been at Hovden ski resort before.
The statements above are some of the most common answers to what made them come back. The absolute main reason for why they were at Hovden ski resort was the great slopes. They valued the slopes and facilities for slalom, but also the high-quality trail network for cross-country. 13 specified the possibility to combine these two. The combination provides flexibility to families that have diverse preferences of ski types, to those who find several days with slalom too expensive or for them who simply desire variation.
Another frequent reason for what made them come back was the convenience, which is due to both accommodation and travel time. An available cottage they could rent cheaply through friends, family or work, appeared to be very important. Nine rented a cottage, and five stayed at a company-owned cottage, and four stayed with friends. Another central element was an easy journey. It is perceived as easy to pack the car and drive 3 hours from Kristiansand or 4.5 hours from Stavanger. Several respondents said they would come more often if the location were closer.
Consequently, the two most frequent reasons for choosing this resort were slopes and convenience.

Figure 5.4 Main reasons for previous visits



2. What was important for you when choosing a ski destination for your holiday?

This question had great similarities to the previous question.

"Off-piste possibilities." Man, Stavanger.

"Good slopes and an available cottage close to the facilities. Naturally, it is also very important that the children are pleased" Man, Denmark.

- High-quality and diversified slopes (20). The respondents mentioned various sorts of requirements concerning the slopes: long, crossings, central, height, powder, prepped, off-piste, many and challenging enough to stay five days, small enough so no one loses the group, diversified and suited for all levels.
- Available cottage: except from the nine staying at their cabin, the rest is dependent of a company-owned cottage (6) or a rented cottage (12).
- Suited for children. *"If the kids are happy, so are we"* were a common statement among the 18 parents traveling with children.
- Possible to combine cross-country and downhill skiing (13). Many find the possibility to do both types of skiing valuable
- Snow security (9). Hovden is one of the most snow-secure destinations in Norway, and several of the respondents knew Hovden had excellent snow conditions.

3. What makes a day perfect and you satisfied?

"To be left with good experiences" Woman, Denmark

"Great slopes, few people and short queues" Man, Kristiansand

"If I am traveling with adults, it is challenging slopes and off-snow activities for adults. If I travel with children, it is important with nice weather and children activities" Man, Stavanger

Newly prepped slopes for slalom were important to 20 respondents. 10 of these specified good snow conditions. To have satisfied children is a key element to be satisfied for 18 of the parents. Both open lifts with short queues (12) and beautiful weather (8), makes children and everybody else satisfied. 6 emphasized travel companions as necessary for a great day. 13 stated that off-snow activities like restaurants, shops and waterpark was unimportant, while eight found it important and the rest were indifferent. 11 believed nature was an important factor. Six of these were tourists from Denmark and valued the nature itself and the view. The five Norwegians valued the mountains in terms of the height and long slopes.

4. Do you intend to come back? Why/why not?

Only one of the 8 visitors last year considered not returning. The respondent was Danish and said the family considered either Hemsedal or Austria next year due to the high prices at Hovden. The other 30 respondents said possible, probably or yes to if they intended to come back, either next year or within the next three years. The main reasons they want to come back were often the same reasons as why they came now. I do not aim to understand the reasons for the current visit, but to clarify intentions for future visits.

The majority has been here recently. According to the theory in chapter 3, this increases the likelihood of future revisits.

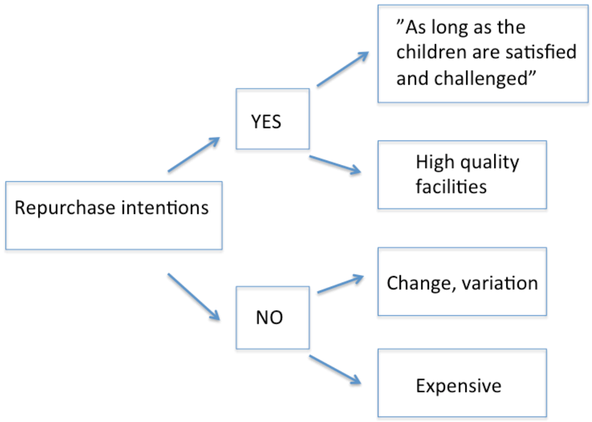
5. What does it take for you to travel someplace else?

The most common answers to if they had considered any alternatives, were:

- We travel here because it is the best in the area.
- Why I am here? It is too far to travel to Geilo.
- Yes, we travel to the Alp once a year, but without the children (4).
- No, I could rent a cottage through work, which makes this a cheap holiday (6).
- The children like it here and it is a great place for them to learn slalom skiing.

The respondents traveling in groups said they most likely would not be here alone; the companionship is determining whether they come back or not. For the other respondents, the common answers were a desire of variation and change. 4 said they would travel here "*as long as the children find it challenging"* and 2 respondents explained they would not be here if it were not for the children. From this, I divide the returning customers into two groups, as figure 5.5 illustrates: among the respondents who intend to come back, some intend to come back only as long their children are satisfied and find the slopes challenging. Consequently, their revisit intentions are limited for a certain time period (6 respondents). The others in this group are determined to return due to their satisfaction level. Among the respondents who do not intend to return, there are two reasons for this. Either they are initially satisfied with Hovden ski resort, yet they need change and consider other options. Or, due to low perceived value compared to price, they have reduced satisfaction (1 respondents).

Figure 5.5 Reasons for revisit intention



6. Do you intend to upload something on social media from Hovden?

16 said they either would do it themselves or someone in the travel companion would to it. As Agderforskning states *"satisfied customers are the best form of marketing."* Pictures from sunny days with newly prepped slopes and people having fun are good marketing. Most women planned to upload pictures on Facebook and/or Instagram while the men tended checked in on Facebook at the arrival. Those who do not intend to use social media during this vacation do not normally use it either, meaning it is not due to the ski resort.

7. Will you recommend Hovden ski resort to others?

Except from two respondents, all respondents said yes.

To better portray some representative ski tourists at Hovden ski resort, the next section will describe three typical respondents.

5.3.2 Typical respondents

The next part will describe three respondents I find representative and illustrative. They come from Kristiansand, Denmark and Stavanger.

Woman, age 31 from Kristiansand travels here with her family

She is one of the six respondents who rent a cottage via work. When I asked her what made her come back to Hovden, *"well, it is what we are used to."* She has been here since her childhood and intends to go back once or twice during the current season. She finds the high-quality slopes for both cross-country and slalom very important. It is also important that the children are happy during their stay here and family togetherness in important to her.

Woman, age 37 from Denmark travels here with her family

This was their fourth time in a row they have been here and it has become a tradition to come here every winter vacation. They have Norwegian friends they stay with, which makes this a convenient, cheap and social holiday. Secondly, it is suitable for children with possibilities to attend arranged shows and other children activities. The children have via the ski-school here learned how to ski. They come here during the summers too. As a result, they know the area pretty well, and *"it is like coming home when they are coming to Hovden."* To the question, if they intend to come back, she said, *"Yes, as long as the children find it exciting and challenging".*

Another typical respondent was a Norwegian father.

Male, around age 40, from Stavanger, traveled with his daughter and two other families

This was his 3rd time here, last time was two years ago, both times with the same two families. He would not travel here without them. The travel time is 4.5 hour. They would have come here more often if it were closer.

Challenging slopes for slalom and great trails for cross-country makes him satisfied. The combination is highly appreciated. He also values the snow security that makes it possible. Open lifts with short queues make the ski resort suited for children. To return, they need an available and big enough cottage, which is preferably located close to the resort. Lastly, he wished for some activities for the adults in the evenings.

Once a year he travels to the Alps without children. It is only once a year due to convenience; it is time-consuming and it is more practical with a 4-hour drive here.

I will present the findings from Ål and Hemsedal ski resort. With these findings, the model will be adjusted and described after a subchapter of comparison of the three ski resorts.

5.4 The qualitative research: Ål ski resort, March 2016

This paragraph will examine the findings I received from the interviews I did at Ål ski resort. The sample, N=11, is described as followed:

- 3 women and 8 men
- Age 23 (1993) to 73 (1943)
- 10 have been here before
- 9 have cottage here. 8 of them emphasized the closeness of the ski resort
- 7 traveled with children

5.4.1 The interview process

The interview process was simpler at Ål compared to Hovden; no emails beforehand, no day passes or other rewards, and no agreed meeting room. Since Ål ski resort does not have any welcome center, the interviews were conducted outside during the skier's breaks. However, the interviews had great similarities to the ones at Hovden ski resort. These are the five questions I did emphasize the most at both resorts:

1. Have you been here before? What made you come (back)?

The four most common motivations for visiting Ål ski resort were:

- Location (7). That the ski resort is close to their cabins appear to be a strong motivation for visiting the ski resort. The closeness makes the trip easy.
- Slopes (4). Good and prepped slopes are naturally motivations for ski tourists.
- Few people and short queues (4)
- It is steep (3). The steepness was associated with challenging, fun and excitement.

"I like it here. We have kids and the children area is good, but also without kids, I have always liked it here due to the steep slopes"

Man, Oslo. Further in the interview he said,

"If Hemsedal was closer, I would have traveled there more often".

"We stay at a hotel in Geilo. We come here since the slopes are so much better and steeper." Man, 1993, Bergen.

2. What dictates a good day in a ski resort for you?

To the question, what makes you satisfied after a day in any given ski resort, these were the most common answers:

- Varied slopes (6), Nice weather (6)
- Suited for children (4)
- Snow conditions (3), Running lifts (3), Travel companionship (3), Lunch breaks (3). The latter was elaborated as plenty of tables outside, preferably close to the children area, and the possibility to both bring and buy food. A good lunch break makes the skiers happy. Please note that these three respondents were interviewed during their lunch break.

3. Do you intend to come back?

All respondents wanted to return, either during the current season or next holiday.

4. What does it take for you to travel someplace else?

Regarding alternatives, most of the respondents had considered other ski resorts. Some went to Hemsedal or Geilo once or twice during their holiday or where planning to go there. Others found it highly convenient to travel to Ål ski resort- it is easy, close and small, they are satisfied and intend to return. Typical answers were:

"Hemsedal and Geilo are both bigger and better than Ål ski resort, but this is so close, only 15 minutes from the cottage." Woman, Oslo

5. Will you recommend Ål ski resort to others?

All wanted to recommend Ål ski resort further to friends, however, not unconditionally. A common answer was:

"Yes, if they are already in the area. I would not recommend them to travel here only to stay at the ski resort".

They would recommend their friends to try out the ski resort if they had a connection to the area or were already at Ål. In this regard, the recommendation of Ål ski resort differs from the recommendations of Hovden and Hemsedal ski resort.

5.4.2 Typical respondents

Up until now, only single quotes from skiers at Ål have been provided. This section will shortly describe two representative customers more comprehensively.

Woman, Asker

Over the last 12 years, she has had a cottage here and now she teaches her two children to ski. "*We have a cottage here, so we come here. And then this ski resort is the offer.*" She explained if they are at Ål for longer than a weekend, they tend to spend one day at Geilo, which has more varied slopes and a chairlift that makes it more child-friendly. "*I would not say it is child-friendly here.*"

Man, Oslo

He stays at Ål during the holiday with his wife and two children. I ask why he/they chose Ål ski resort for the day: *"First of all, we have a cottage here. But also, the facilities are good and the different difficulties suit the whole family. Plus, it is few people here. The only disadvantage is the price. It is quite expensive since the prices are similar to the big ski resorts with better offers."* I ask about alternatives to Ål ski resort and if he has considered Geilo, he said *"No, never. We stay here."* He tells me the only real competition is cross-country skiing.

Ål ski resort is a small resort in Buskerud. I wanted to examine if there were any significant differences from another ski resort nearby. Only 60 km from Ål is Hemsedal located.

5.5 The qualitative research: Hemsedal ski resort, March 2016

My sample consists of 32 respondents.

- 15 women, 14 men, three families
- Age 14 (2002) to 67 (1949). Ten were born in the 1990s and 6 in the 1970s making the sample remarkable younger than the population at both Hovden and Ål
- 16 stayed at their cabin
- Seven traveled with a group of friends
- Ten respondents emphasized the importance of after-ski. Nine said they currently do not go on after-ski due to small children, but that they used to go there and that they would go there if they traveled without children
- Nine emphasized child friendliness

5.5.1 The interview process

All interviews were conducted outside; at the bottom of a trail, close to an elevator, and right outside of a restaurant, thus many people arrived. These are the five questions I prioritized:

1. Why did you choose Hemsedal ski resort?

The ski tourists acknowledged that their main reasons for choosing or returning to Hemsedal were:

- Slopes: varied, suited all levels (20)
- Facilities: well organized, big and room for many (13)
- Child-friendly: great children area, suitable for families (7)
- After-ski (5), Height and peeks (5)

"The total package is good for us; the youngest child stays in kindergarten, the older jumps in the park, and there is also a party for my husband and me" Woman, 1979, Oslo.

"Very good slopes here. We enjoyed it so much last year; we just had to come back now" Man, 1994, Hadeland, traveling in a group of 15

"It is my favorite ski resort in Norway. This is where I learned to ski and I have many good memories from here. I come here as often as I can" Girl, 1995

2. What dictates a good day in a ski resort for you?

"Sun, friends, music, beer, atmosphere, after-ski, activities and concerts"
Woman, 1994, Oslo, travels in a group of 6.

This respondent mentioned later in the interview the quality of slopes and snow conditions. At Hovden and Ål slopes and snow were significantly higher ranked, and it was interesting to observe the difference. Four others answered similarly.

These are the most frequently mentioned elements:

- Nice weather (12)
- Good slopes (16)
- Short queues (8)
- Good snow conditions (5), Travel company (5), Atmosphere (5), After-ski (5)
- Satisfied children (4)

I find it interesting that the segment that values after-ski is almost the same size as the group that values satisfied children and child-friendliness. This clearly differentiates Hemsedal's customer segment from Hovden and Ål ski resort's where the second group has a significant majority.

3. Do you intend to come back?

"Yes, next year" were a common reply among the groups traveling together. It seemed they had a visit cycle of visiting once a year, like every Easter holiday. The revisit intentions among the cabin owners were naturally a constant.

4. What does it take for you to travel someplace else?

The common answers among cabin owners were an invitation. Since half of them already have a cottage here, they do not feel the need to travel to another ski resort. Among the ones traveling in a group, the answers were if the rest wanted to.

"I don't see why we would go someplace else. We like it here and have a cottage here"
Woman, Oslo

5. Are you on social media while you are here?

"Yes, of course. I brag to everyone that I'm here" Man, 1995

12 said they use social media during their stay. Half of these are born in the 1990s. They said that Instagram and SnapChat are the channels they use. The three respondents born in the 1970s using social media said they use Facebook.

6. Would you recommend Hemsedal ski resort to others?

"Yes, I do it all the time" Woman, 1995

"No, it is enough people here. I tell them Trysil is good" Man, Drammen

Except for the last quoted respondent, all respondents would recommend the ski resort to their family and friends. This question loses some of its value given that repurchase appeared to be a constant.

5.5.2 Typical respondents

The next paragraph will present two representative ski tourists at Hemsedal ski resort.

Man, 1996, Drammen, travels with 9 other young men.
"Beer, girls, snuff. And I also have to add good slopes and nice weather" He traveled with 9 other friends from school and stayed at a rented cabin. After-ski is highly valued. They say it is great, in fact, it is the best after-ski they have ever been to, and they would not have been here if there were no after-ski party. *"It is always a good vibe here."* In addition, they meet many they know here, which is another element they appreciate.

Husband and wife, Oslo, own a cabin here.
Why did you choose Hemsedal ski resort? *"I like the variety in the slopes and different difficulty".* Also, they are here due to their cabin is located here. Regarding after-ski, they attend very seldom due to their small children, but they used to go there before they become parents. *"It has become very child-friendly here the last years"* and she strongly disagrees that the party factor is too high. To the question of what it takes for them to go somewhere else, the husband said, "*If there are no snow here anymore"*.

All the findings are now presented. Due to the revealed information, I adjusted the model accordingly. The changes are closer described with further analysis of the findings.

Chapter 6 Empirical based model

In the abstract I addressed three questions to be answered. These questions were:

1. What are the motivations of ski tourists in Norway?
2. What make them satisfied?
3. What makes them revisit?

I will answer these whilst explaining my empirical research model.

6.1 Question 1: What are the motivations of ski tourists in Norway?

Given the findings from the quantitative research are discussed in chapter 5.2.1, this paragraph will be based on the qualitative research.

I found the motivations at the three ski resorts to have some similarities and differences. I directly asked a few about their motivation for the holiday, but most respondents said it as part of other answers.

Table 6.1 Motivations from the qualitative research

	Hovden	Ål	Hemsedal
Relaxation and togetherness	V	V	V
Big resort with high-quality trails	V		V
After-ski and parties			V
Be social and meet people they know	V		V
Closeness and easiness		V	
To join an organized group	V		
Teach their children how to ski	V	V	V
Stay at their own cabin		V	V

At all three ski resorts, motivations as relaxing with the family and teaching the kids how to ski, were mentioned. At Ål ski resort the closeness to their cabin was a motivation for most of the respondents. At Hemsedal ski resort, there were rather big variations between their motivations; emotional connection, the facilities and after-ski. A frequently mentioned motivation at Hovden and Hemsedal ski resorts was to be social. A substantial number of respondents explained that one reason for being there is that people they know from home are also traveling there. The ski tourists at all the ski resorts emphasized travel companions as a reason to travel and an element of satisfaction. Some traveled with another family, others traveled on an arranged trip with an organization or in a group of friends, and some also traveled there to randomly meet people they know. In total, 20 percent of the respondents traveled with a group and valued travel companionship. Quotations from Hovden ski resort:

"I always meet people I know here" Woman, Kristiansand

"The ski resort is suited to big groups" Woman, Denmark

"I would not be here without the other family" Man, Stavanger

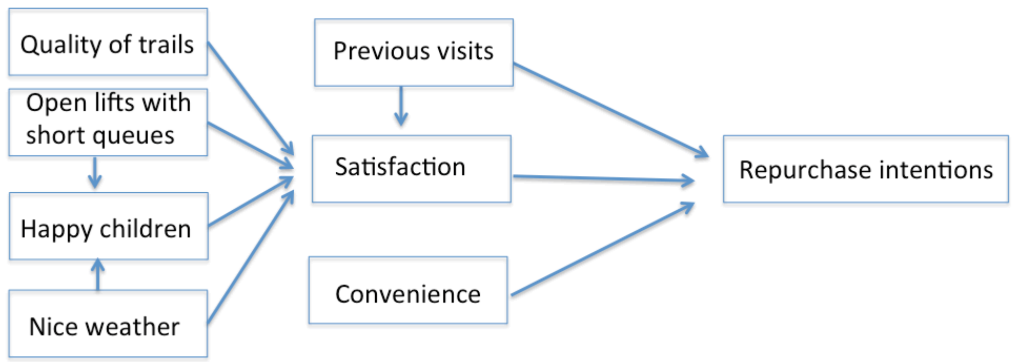
Empirical based model

Before answering question 2, I will present the empirically based model, and the conducted changes due to the revealed, new information.

Even though all the respondents believed the day passes were expensive, they perceived the price as normal compared to other ski resorts. The price had little to say for the level of satisfaction, their intention to revisit or willingness to recommend the ski resort. Consequently, the variable 'price' was deleted. Also the variable 'risk reduction' was deleted. It did not appear as an influencing factor for a significant portion of the group. Moreover, nice weather played a bigger role than first expected. This replaced the variable "atmosphere". Also, travel distance seemed not to be an important factor alone, however, it was often mentioned together with an available cabin. Therefore, convenience replaced travel distance. Lastly, the value of pleased children among a third of the guests is not to overlook, this variable was added.

After analyzing a dataset with over 500 respondents and interviewing 74 ski tourists, I have suggested the following model. See figure 5.8 below.

Figure 6.1 Empirically based research model



The next paragraphs will explain the model. The four factors influencing the level of satisfaction will firstly be described. This is question 2. Thereafter, the two remaining elements of repurchase intentions; previous visits and convenience, will be elaborated and answer question 3.

6.2 Question 2: What makes ski tourists in Norway satisfied?

Satisfaction

What does it take for you to revisit? At all three resorts, common answers were "if we are satisfied". I wanted to examine the antecedents of tourist satisfaction and possible relations between them and asked what factors made them satisfied. In the following, I will go through each of the four elements that are the most frequent reasons for being satisfied.

Table 6.2 Elements of satisfaction

	Slopes	*Child friendly*	*Weather*	*Lift*
Hovden	68% 21	58% 18	26% 8	39% 12
Ål	73% 8	55% 6	55% 6	36% 4
Hemsedal	50% 16	28% 9	38% 12	28% 9
Sum	61% 45	45% 33	35% 26	34% 25

Slopes

The slopes were clearly of great importance. This was normally the answer to both "why did you choose this ski resort?" and "what makes you satisfied?" The respondents elaborated what good slopes are to them: possibilities for powder and off-piste skiing, that the slopes are connected, long, broad and with room for everybody, challenging and with varied difficulties. In addition, at Hovden and Ål the respondents also emphasized the importance of prepped trails for cross-country and the possibility to combine these two forms of skiing.
An interesting discovery is that the trail quality was important to 70 percent of the respondents at Ål and Hovden, while only important to 50 percent at the ski tourists at Hemsedal. Nevertheless, it is the most common element for all the three ski resorts.

Child-friendly

A child-friendly ski resort is characterized by activities, such as familiar cartoon figures skiing with them, plays, other children to ski with, option for ski school and slopes suited for their skill level.

Over half the respondents at both Hovden and Ål emphasize the importance of a child-friendly ski resort. The level of child-friendliness clearly impacted all three stages of their travel product; their choice of ski resort, the level of satisfaction during the stay and intentions to repurchase.

> *"My father has a cottage in Sirdal so we could have traveled there, but it is more suitable for children here"* Man, Rogaland, visiting Hovden

Weather

Nice weather leads to satisfaction among adults and children. During the times of the interviews, the weather was good at Ål and Hemsedal and extraordinary at Hovden.

Lifts

Short lift queues also lead to satisfied adults and children. Especially, chair lifts are perceived as comfortable, luxurious and child-friendly.

6.3 Question 3: What makes ski tourists in Norway revisit?

Previous visits and convenience were found to be the two most influential antecedents of revisiting intentions in addition to satisfaction. The next paragraphs will clarify.

Previous visits

Past visits do not explain why the respondents are at the particular resort now. It predicts whether they will revisit in the future or not.

Table 6.3 The number of first-timers in absolute numbers and percentages

Hovden	Ål	Hemsedal	Total
5 (16%)	1 (9%)	4 (12.5%)	10 (13.5%)

Respondents with intentions to return to Hovden ski resort answered differently. Of those who have made it a tradition to go to Hovden and those who have been there since their childhood

were the most secure of their intentions to return; "yes, definitely". The first-timers and some of the sporadic visitors seemed to have a higher degree of uncertainty regarding their revisit intentions, and used words such as "probably", "I guess" and "not impossible". Some also had conditions for returning; "we might if". They would revisit if the children were happy, if they find a cottage big enough for the whole group or just simply if they are satisfied.
Since the respondents who have been there the most, also are the ones with the most secure intention to revisit, we can support the existing theory; previous visits is an important variable in predicting future visits.

Convenience

Convenience played a significant role for destination choice among the tourists at all three ski resorts. In this context, convenience is a two-parted term, including accommodation and travel.

Accommodation

The total amount of respondents staying at their own cottage was 46 percent with a distribution as illustrated in table 6.4.

Table 6.4 The percentage of respondents owning a cabin

Hovden	Ål	Hemsedal
29%	82%	50%

At all three resorts, many emphasized the need to find rather big cottages and preferably close to the facilities. Renting a cottage through work makes it an inexpensive holiday. 16 percent of the respondents at Hovden stayed at company-cottages. Those who do not own a cottage or work at a company with a cottage are dependent on available cottages on the rental market. Accommodation is consequently important for repurchase.

"When choosing a ski resort we need a cottage with room for the whole family of 10, a resort suited to children, good snow conditions and varied slopes"

Man, Sweden, 1949, visiting Hemsedal

Travel

The convenience and travel time affected the decision of revisiting a destination significantly. Travel time was frequently mentioned during the interviews. It has to be easy, not too far nor expensive. Closeness makes it easy with children, no impatience or carsickness. Also, Hauge

(2012) reached a similar conclusion: intentions of revisiting decrease with geography and the longer geographical distance it is to the ski resort, the higher the probability that the respondent is a first-timer (Hauge, 2012).

6.4 Repurchase intentions

I have now presented the three elements influencing repurchase intentions the most. They are written in bold letters above; satisfaction, previous visits and convenience.

The results showed that most ski tourists want to return to the ski resort. In the quantitative research, of the sample of N=252, 93.6 percent want to revisit Hovden ski resort again, and 47.4 percent wants to revisit next year. In the qualitative research, of the sample of N=74, 98.6 percent want to revisit the company again. Due to the little variance in repurchase intentions, I considered the willingness of recommendation.

6.4.1 Recommendation

The variable, willingness of recommendation, had little variance at all three ski resorts.

Table 6.5 The percentage of willingness to recommend

Hovden quantitative	Hovden qualitative	Ål	Hemsedal
89%	94%	91%	97%

The real challenge for tourism companies is to make them go from intentions of repurchase and thoughts of recommendations to actually revisit the destination and recommend it further. However, to make all customers regulars, is not necessarily an aspired goal according to Oppermann (1997). He believes to combine both first-timers and repeat-visitors in their customer base is a more sustainable strategy. Another sustainable strategy is to evaluate their competitors.

6.4.2 Competitors

As previously mentioned, the market conditions are different for the three ski resorts. However, they have one competitor in common. Several of the skiers interviewed at all three resorts have either been to the Alps, still going once a year or are considering going there.

When I asked respondents at Hovden ski resort why they chose Hovden over the Alps, they answered the same things:

1. Convenient. It is easier with a four-hour drive to Hovden compared to traveling to Austria.
2. Price. The combination of commercial accommodation and higher travel costs makes a vacation at the Alps expensive.

"It takes the same time to come here as go to the Alps, but it is cheaper here" Man, Denmark

"If I had the money for it, I would have rather gone to the Alps" Woman, visiting Hemsedal

3. Time. They do not have the time to go to Austria more than once a year.

"I travel to the Alps once a year, but I come here 10 times a season"

Woman, visiting Hovden ski resort

This chapter revealed the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative research. They are discussed in the following chapter. The data from 2012 and 2016 showed that repurchase intentions are high, and in our samples there is little variation in this variable. Since we lack a comparative group who do not intend to revisit, it is difficult to analyze the determinants of repurchase intention. However, I have been able to identify reasons for revisiting a company and important elements when choosing a ski resort. This is further elaborated in the conclusion.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

Only historical transactions can be examined with security. What happens in the future is uncertain, resulting in most studies to be retrospective rather than predictive. They do not predict future travel pattern or the like, which can question their predictive validity (Oppermann, 1997). Nevertheless, the World Travel & Tourism Council have made the following estimate for the next 10 years:

Travel & tourism will outperform the global economy throughout the next decade. It contributed with 9.8% of the global GDP in 2015 and is expected to grow by 3.6% in 2016, which will be more than the general economic growth.

World Travel & Tourism Council, Economic Impact Report 2015[4]

In spite of the current economic situation, which is unfortunate for certain sectors, oil and gas in particular, it serves well for the tourism and travel industry. The increasing unemployment rate suites a labor-intensive industry such as tourism. The oil prices are lowest in a decade and forecasted to keep low throughout 2016. The weakened Norwegian krone makes a holiday in Norway relatively cheaper. The low oil prices will also affect the strength of the US dollar and affect global travel tendencies. The household finances are improved and the airfares are low. This supports a continued growth in travel. Prospects from World Travel & Tourism Council support this and indicate that 2016 will be a good year for all tourism companies.

This chapter will firstly compare the presented findings to main conclusions from theory and previous research discussed chapter 3, and see to what extent they fit. Thereafter I will present the final conclusion. Lastly, implications, limitations and future research are explained.

[4] https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/2016%20documents/economic%20impact%20summary%202016_a4%20web.pdf

7.1 Discussion of findings

In this subchapter, I will compare my findings to both existing theory and previous research.

7.1.1 Findings & theory

Antecedents of repurchase as a topic have interested several researches. Chapter 3 described ten elements that directly or indirectly affected repurchase. They were satisfaction, previous visits, attractiveness, risk reduction, customer involvement, perceived value and quality, image, loyalty and price. The first two have been proved to influence repurchase directly by several researchers. The results from the qualitative and quantitative research have supported this. The others affect repurchase directly or indirectly through satisfaction and loyalty. I will now go through the most central elements.

The first factor was satisfaction- a complex and subjective measurement influencing repurchase intentions. Kozak (2001) identified the level of customer satisfaction as one of the most significant elements in explaining intentions to revisit to the same or other destinations (Um et al., 2006). Also Backman, Crompton and Petrick, Gitelsen, Rimmington, Baker, Yoon & Uysal, Alegre & Cladera and Um et al., are all supporting satisfaction as an antecedent of repurchase.

The quantitative research revealed that the average level of satisfaction is slightly higher among the group with an intention to revisit compared to those with no intention to revisit. Besides, when I asked the respondents what it takes for them to come back, they said:

"If we all are satisfied here and have great experiences"

Woman, Denmark, visiting Hovden

"We enjoyed it so much here last year, we just had to come back. I guess we will return next year too" A group of young men visiting Hemsedal

My findings support the theory; satisfaction can influence intention to revisit and indicate future repurchase. To end the discussion regarding the influence of satisfaction on revisiting intentions: a satisfied customer does not necessarily come back, but a dissatisfied customer does certainly not come back.

Previous visits were the second element. The theory describes a broad agreement of the positive relation between previous visits and intentions of repurchase: respondents that have visited the destination before are more likely to return (Oppermann, 1997; Tosun et al., 2006; Hauge, 2012). This is fully in accordance with my findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research. The dataset revealed that among the ski tourists who had been at Hovden ski resort before, the majority intended to return, while in regard to the first-timers, the majority did not intend to return. The qualitative research disclosed that only 10 of the 74 respondents were first-timers and only 1 considers not coming back. Conclusively, repeat visitation influences the intention to return, both directly and indirectly by its impact on overall satisfaction.

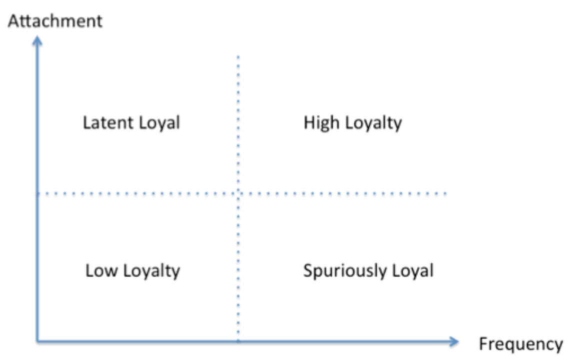
Risk reduction was the fourth factor explaining the intention of repurchase. Gitelsen & Crompton (1984) listed 5 factors contributing to repeat visitation, where in particular two were in accordance with my qualitative research. First, the tourists wish to meet "their kind of people". This was observed as they explained the value of the other families with small children at the ski resort, or the importance of other young people at after-ski. Secondly, several expressed an emotional attachment to the place such as childhood memories.

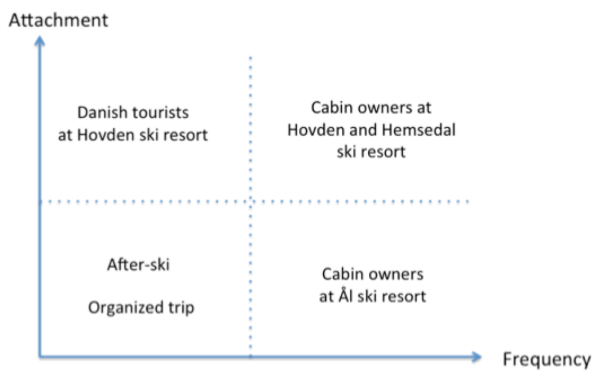
Perceived quality is the seventh element and is determined by customers' perception. Um et al. (2006) believe revisit intentions were influenced more by the quality of the particular destination than the overall satisfaction.
In the dataset, the respondents were asked how they perceived quality at Hovden on a Likert scale from 1 to 7. Of N=335, 117 said 7 and 83 percent said 5, 6 or 7. This is a good result and Hovden appears to be perceived as a high-quality destination. During the interviews, quality of the slopes and facilities was frequently mentioned at all three resorts.
Tosun et al. (2015) found language communication services to be the most influential element of quality perception. At all three ski resorts, tourists come from outside of Norway.
"I can talk to you Norwegians, it is so practical" Woman, Denmark, visiting Hovden.

Loyalty is the ninth listed factor. Oppermann (2000) states, *"The degree of tourists' loyalty to a destination is reflected in their intentions to revisit the destination and in their willingness to recommend it"*. What kind of loyalty do the respondents express? I placed the respondents in the loyalty matrix in accordance with their attachment and believed frequency. The ones who value after-ski more than the general facilities at Hemsedal, and the ones who travel on an organized trip, are placed in the lower right square. They visit rarely, have no tradition and with a good campaign they could easily go someplace else, meaning their attachment is low.

The cabin owners at Hovden and Hemsedal are placed in the upper right square. This is due to statements, such as "*we will not go to any other ski resorts*" and the supported assumption of high revisit rate among cabin owners. The Danish visiting Hovden are placed in the upper left. This is due to seldom visits, perhaps once a year, however they have a tradition to come back every year, and statements such as *"We always say we are going 'home to Hovden'"* indicate a high level of attachment. Lastly, the cabin owners at Ål ski resort are placed in the lower right square. This is caused by low attachment, since they visit mainly due to the location, not their level of satisfaction or the perceived quality, and that they plan to go to other resorts during their holiday. However, they visit frequently, every weekend or vacation they spend at their cabin.

Figure 7.1 The three ski resort in the loyalty matrix





Finally, the last and tenth element is the price, which played a surprisingly little role. It is the monetary and non-monetary costs that together constitute the overall perceived sacrifice that in turn will influence how the consumer perceives the service value (Opperman & Beckman, 2002). My quantitative research revealed that 221 of 310 replies (N=358) agreed they had received a lot for their money at Hovden ski resort. In terms of the qualitative research, most respondents perceived their ski resort as expensive, however, it seemed they have accepted that NOK 350-450 is the market price for a day pass.

7.1.2 Findings & previous research

This subchapter will examine to what extent my findings fit the existing research.

When it comes to winter holidays specifically, the two most important factors for choosing a ski resort were identified as snow quality and diversity of skiing terrain by Klenosky et al., Miragaia & Martins, Dickson & Faulks, Godfrey and Hudson & Shephard. This is in accordance with my research were one-third emphasized snow conditions and two-thirds valued diversified slopes of high quality. Good snow conditions create a feeling of security, but also make excellent ski terrain possible.

Miragia and Martins (2015) found off-snow activities to be vital, in addition to trail quality. While the latter is very consistent with my findings, there is no broad agreement regarding the first element, off-snow activities, in my research. 31 percent of the respondents at Hemsedal attended the after-ski while 28 percent used to attend before they had children. Moreover, there were no after-ski at either Hovden or Ål and only a few wished for it. 8 used the restaurants at Hovden; a similar portion would perhaps use the after-ski if that were an option? Richards found after-ski, shopping and dining to be of value, only 26 percent of my respondents at Hovden agree.

My research at Hovden supports Dickson & Faulks (2007) who found the following three factors to have low importance; nightlife, local culture and the need to go “someplace new”. At Hovden, a few were missing after-ski and concerts, and the facilities’ size eliminates the need to go “someplace new”. However, the first element, need for nighttime activities, does not fit with Hemsedal where a third highly valued the after-ski. Moreover, the latter element does not fit with Ål. Several of the respondents normally went elsewhere once during the holiday, like Hemsedal or Geilo.

My findings are also in accordance with both factors Hudson and Shepard (1998) emphasized. They found the size of the facilities and lift queues to be important factors.

Engeseth found personal service to be important (Hauge, 2015). Service level was one factor that few at Hovden ski resort had considered. It can seem like it will not be noticed as long as it is above a minimum level, however, it will be noticed if it is below. No respondents complained about low service level, and only a few complimented it when they were asked about it.

Klenosky, Gengler, Mulvey (1993) found the location as one of six elements to be of value. This is what I categorize as ‘convenience’ in my model. Respondents at the three resorts described the closeness of the resort and emphasized how crucial it is for an easy travel.

Unbehaun et al. (2008) study the impact of changes in distance and price. They argued that most ski tourists could accept two hours additional drive for a holiday and a 20 percent increase in price. I believe Ål ski resort is too small for Unbehaun's conclusions to be applied there. Moreover, my findings from Hovden ski resort do not completely support this. The results show that 7 characterized their travel time as long or too long. 14 found the resort to be expensive, while the rest, 55 percent, believed the price was average.

This chapter has discussed my findings to reviewed theory and previous research from chapter 3. For the most part, my findings are in accordance with the theory on this topic and it can support existing research. This includes the view on satisfaction and previous visits, also the importance of varied slopes and good snow conditions. My research, as the existing theory, has a diverse view on the importance of after-ski and off-snow activities. The final conclusion will now be presented.

7.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the main determinants of revisit intentions to Norwegian skiing resort. This study has found support for that satisfaction, previous visits and convenience are the three most important reasons for revisiting a Norwegian ski resort. There was also a close relation between satisfaction and previous visits. The second finding of this study is the identification of the main determinants of choosing a ski resort. They are high-quality slopes, open lifts, nice weather and child friendliness.

7.2.1 Conclusion of the quantitative research

I found that the majority of the ski tourists who had been there before, intended to return, while the majority did not intend to return among the first-timers. I also discovered the average satisfaction level to be slightly higher among the group with intention to revisit compared to them with no intention to revisit. Regarding their motivations, these were ranged on a 7-point Likert scale. "The ski resort is child-friendly" and "I have been here before" received 5.2 and 5.

7.2.2 Conclusion of the qualitative research

61 percent mentioned the importance of high-quality slopes. This is the single factor that the most wanted at all three resorts. At Hovden, 45 percent at the respondents valued the combination of slalom and cross-country. This was also important for approximately one-

third of the respondents at Ål, while it was not mentioned by any of the respondents at Hemsedal.

45 percent traveled with children and valued child-friendly facilities. This element has rather big differences; almost 60 percent emphasized the importance of child-friendly facilities at Hovden ski resort while at Hemsedal it was less than 30 percent.

26 respondents emphasized nice weather. Hovden has in this regard the lowest percentage, even though they had the greatest weather during the interviews.

These are the attributes that ski tourists value the most:

Table 7.1 Main attributes ski tourists value in a ski resort

	Trail quality	Child friendly	Weather	Companion-ship	Queues	Snow conditions	After-ski
Hovden	68% *21*	58% *18*	26% *8*	19% *6*	39% *12*	29% *9*	26% *8*
Ål	73% *8*	55% *6*	55% *6*	18% *2*	36% *4*	27% *3*	18% *2*
Hemsedal	50% *16*	28% *9*	38% *12*	28% *9*	28% *9*	31% *10*	31% *10*
Total	**61% *45***	**45% *33***	**35% *26***	**23% *17***	**34% *25***	**30% *22***	**27% *20***

The answers to the two questions of why they had chosen that particular ski resort and what makes them satisfied had more similarities at Hovden and Hemsedal, compared to Ål where the answers between them varied to a larger degree. This means that the big resorts, Hovden and Hemsedal, to a larger extent meet the demands of the ski tourists. They are big enough to provide a variety of offers.

In addition, I found companionship to be a central element. This is not mentioned much in previous research. Having a travel companion seemed to be essential for both the level of satisfaction and intention to revisit.

20 respondents valued after-ski or missed the opportunity to go to after-ski. At Hovden, the 8 respondents in the table are the ones using the restaurants and bars. Some of them said they missed more nightlife for the adults. It is reasonable to believe they would also attend the after-ski if it were an option. Lastly, the importance of convenience is not illustrated in the table. Convenience was emphasized at Hovden and Ål ski resort in particular.

This chapter has so far elucidated what satisfies a ski tourist in Norway. Also, the main factors that influence customer's choice of a specific ski resort are identified. A big part of research is to support and prove our assumptions. The importance of slopes for ski tourists might not be surprising, though my sample of 74 respondents at three ski resorts have supported it. This and other contributions to this growing field are creating a foundation for further research. I will now present the implications of my findings.

7.3 Managerial implications

To better utilize the potential in tourism, and capture as much as possible of this demand, Innovation Norway (2014) suggest to focus on experiences and to commercialize activities in nature. They also believe it lies a potential in cooperating with other tourism operators to create whole packages. These two pieces of advice are fully possible to implement for Norwegian ski resorts. Further implications will be discussed in the two next paragraphs.

Hovden ski resort

It is beneficial for the ski resort that their tourists like the area outside the ski resort, as revealed in chapter 5.2.1. This might make collaboration for further development in the region easier. Both Arena Usus and Innovation Norway stress the importance of companies being dependent on each other and to cooperate for regional development and competitiveness.

All managers should examine their customer groups; which customers they have and who they desire to reach. Hovden could try to attract the youth to a larger degree to achieve a more diverse customer base. For this, some activities need to be arranged, such as concerts, after-ski or for example a PR-stunt from RedBull. The resort could offer either a student price on the day-passes or a student package for a given number of friends traveling together. A suggestion with low requirements is to play music outside the restaurants and in the lift queues. This seemed to be well received at Ål and Hemsedal. Given a substantial part of their customers are families with children; they should still be given attention to. A suggestion for improvement is sitting areas with serving by the children slopes. This was desired by some respondents, and valued at Ål and Hemsedal.
In regard to all-year activities, this is something Hovden already have implemented.

Ål ski resort

To develop a sustainable strategy, their competitive advantages need to be identified. Ål ski resort could use their steep slopes in their marketing as a point of difference. Two respondents traveled to Ål ski resort (from Geilo) due to the steepness, and also other skiers valued this.

They could achieve having a professional image using the potential of the steep trails. The families staying at their cottages are still an important segment. One example of a child-friendly activity with low requirements is to have a mascot skiing with the children. This was perceived as popular at Hovden and Hemsedal ski resorts.
Most of their customers are very loyal. Even though they travel to Geilo or Hemsedal once during their holiday, they return more frequently to Ål. As one respondent suggested, why do they not cooperate with other small and local ski resorts? He and his family use their local ski resort at home, which is about the same size as Ål ski resort. They found it expensive to pay for two ski resorts, one for the weekdays and one for the weekends. Perhaps such cooperation could attract the customer segment that already has a season pass at home? This underpins their professional image.
Concerning round-year operations, they do not have any summer activities. However, other actors in Ål provide activities as bicycling. If they too want to take part of this, they could either cooperate or compete on this.

Hemsedal ski resort

They have successfully managed to serve two very different market segments: families with children and youth wanting to attend after-ski. While one respondent said this was the best after-ski he had ever attended, a woman told me the resort is great for children and has become very child-friendly over the last years. If these are the two segments they want to attract, they have succeeded.
During the summer, Hemsedal Aktiv offers mountain cart (NOK 1.000,- a day) and mountain biking in the ski resort.

7.4 Limitations

I acknowledge there are some limitations to my study. In this paragraph, I will address some of these and discuss their impact on the results.
Regarding the qualitative research, the limited time reduced the possibility of a more extensive research. The total sample of 74 respondents might be enough to support tendencies that apply to the ski resorts, though I believe it is a too small sample to draw conclusions at the specific resorts in certain concerns. Also, my selection was random approaching. There is no proof that the sample is representative regarding where they are from, gender, age, skills level, etc.

Limitations concerning both the qualitative and the quantitative research are mainly due to time constraints. The six months I could use on this project is a very limited period, which has eliminated the option for a time-series study. I have in this thesis only examined intentions, not actual customer behavior. I was not able to see to whether they really returned or just said so at the moment of question. Repurchase intention turned out to have little variance while actual repurchase has an uncertain amount of variance.

The interviews presented in this thesis have revealed elements that a survey could not do. One example is all the different demands for great slopes (powder, off-piste, long, wide, connected, central, varied, demanding, suited all levels, etc.). The reasons for repurchase were not entirely captured in the survey. Moreover, the survey was able to systematically rate their level of satisfaction, which is difficult to measure during interviews. The next section will describe the limitations.

7.5 Future research

My interviews revealed clear tendencies that high-quality slopes, running lifts, nice weather, and child-friendliness affect satisfaction the most. Further, the results support satisfaction, convenience and accommodation as important determinants of selecting a ski resort and intention to return. Given that the sample consists only of 74 respondents, a more extensive researched can be performed and prove these tendencies. So far, little research on motivation, satisfaction or repurchase intentions among ski tourists in Norway exist. The results from this study may have implications for future research on ski tourism, and satisfaction and motivations among ski tourists.

While repurchases of consumables have received much attention, research on repurchases of tourism products and the relations between the antecedents, have received less. My results from the personal interviews showed that 73 of 74 intended to return. Future studies could focus on visitation over time and examine whether the ones who intend to return in fact do so. I have also identified the most common reasons for revisits. Also, this can be proved by a bigger sample. A study of repurchase and actual consumer behavior is more complex and requires more time and resources than what is available during one semester. Future research on repurchases in tourism should, as emphasized by Arena-Usus, include two important parameters; frequency and recently (Hauge, 2012).

It would be beneficial if the literature to a larger degree emphasized active tourism and vacations with experiences. Prospects indicate that holidays with experiences will increase in popularity over the next years, which create a need for updated research. Both tourists and the tourism industry are dynamic and heterogeneous, and should also be presented so in the literature.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Email sent out to request personal interviews

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the quantitative research, Hovden 2012

Appendix 3: Reflective Note

Appendix 1: Mail sent out to tourists at Hovden

Hello,

I study at Agder University and write my master thesis this semester. The topic is repurchase in tourism, where I analyze the factors influencing tourists' choice of destination.

In this occasion, I wondered if you had ca. 20 minutes to spare for a interview Friday, Saturday or Sunday February 12th-14th regarding your choice of a ski resort?

The respondents receive a free day pass from Hovden Ski Resort ☺

In advance, thank you very much for your help.

Best regards,
Hilde Kristin Steen

Appendix 2: Questionnaire from Agderforskning

Questionnaire from Agderforskning

Kjære gjest!

Vi ønsker at du skal ha en god opplevelse i høyfjellet. Derfor vil vi gjerne vite mer om hvordan du har opplevd oppholdet. Vi håper at du har lyst til å hjelpe oss til å bli enda bedre ved å svare på noen spørsmål. Det tar ca. 10 minutter. Undersøkelsen er anonym, men dersom du ønsker å være med i trekningen av et weekendopphold på Hovden må du oppgi navn, telefonnummer, eller e-postadresse på siste side i skjemaet.

Hovden Fjellstoge

BJÅEN FJELLSTOVE
Heimslege gleder og gamle draumar

HOVDEN Alpinsenter

VRI Agder

Visit Sørlandet

arena

SUS

Del A. Litt om deg

1. Jeg er

a) Kvinne: ☐ Mann: ☐

b) Alder: ……………………………

c) Mitt postnummer er (bosted): ………. Land: ……………………………..

2. Jeg besøker Hovden sammen med

- antall voksne: ……….
- antall barn (opp til 12 år): ………… antall ungdom (mellom 13-18 år): …………

3. Hvor lenge skal du feriere på Hovden?

Dagstur ☐ Weekend ☐ 1 uke ☐ Lenger ☐

4. Er dette din hovedferie i 2012? **Ja** ☐ **Nei** ☐

5. Hvilken bedrift besøker du?

Bjåen Fjellstove ☐ **Hovden Fjellstoge** ☐ **Hovden alpinsenter/ Lagg** ☐

6. Hvor lenge skal du være på bedriften som du besøker i dag? ………. dager

7. Viktigste informasjonskanaler før denne reisen? *Du kan gjerne sette flere kryss*

Egne erfaringer		Facebook		Brosjyre/annonse		Hjemmesider internett	
Anbefaling fra andre		Trip Advisor		Avis/tv		Annet	

8. **Bosted mens du ferierer på Hovden?** *Kryss av for det mest korrekte svaret*

Hjemme, jeg bor her		Telt/hytte på campingplass		Hotell	
Egen hytte		Campingvogn		Pensjonat	
Leid feriehus/hytte		Hos slekt/venner		Annet	

9. Med hvilket transportmiddel kom du til Hovden? *Du kan gjerne sette flere kryss*

Bil		Color Line / Fjordline		Motorsykkel	
Buss		Sykkel		Annet	

10. Har du feriert på Hovden tidligere? *(sett kryss)* **Hvis ja, når var du her sist?** *(sett kryss)*

Nei		Tidligere i år (i 2012)	
Ja, 1-3 ganger		I 2011	
Ja, 4-6 ganger		I 2010	
Ja, 7 – 10 ganger		I 2009	
Svært ofte fordi jeg har hytte/ bor på Hovden		Tidligere enn 2009	

11. **Hva var viktigste bestillingskanaler for denne turen (overnatting, billetter, reise)?** *Du kan gjerne sette flere kryss*

Hotels.com		Visitsorlandet.com		TripAdvisor.com		Bedriftens egen nettside	
Hovden.com		Bestilte via telefon		Expedia.com		Har ikke bestilt på forhånd	
Booking.com		Bestilte via mail		Finn.no		Annet:	

Del B: Hovden som feriested

12. **Hvor enig er du i følgende påstander? (på en skala fra 1 (svært uenig) til 7 (helt enig)):**

Hovedårsak til at jeg besøker Hovden er fordi jeg…	**1**						**7**
skal stå på langrenn							
skal stå på alpint på alpinsentret							
skal få skiopplæring med skiinstruktør							
skal nyte vinteren							
skal besøke slekt/venner							
skal på hytta							
er på skoletur							
deltar i en gruppe med et sosialt opplegg							

13. **Hvordan opplever du Hovden som feriested? (på en skala fra 1 (svært uenig) til 7 (helt enig)):**

Påstander om Hovden:	**1**						**7**
Hovden står for høy kvalitet							
Det er mye å finne på om vinteren på Hovden							
Aktiviteter er synlig og godt tilrettelagt							
Skiløypene på Hovden er fantastiske							
Alpinbakkene på alpinsenteret er godt organisert							
Terrengparken på alpinsenteret er godt organisert							
Det er dyrere å feriere på Hovden enn andre steder i Norge							
Jeg føler meg som en verdifull gjest							
Jeg synes at jeg får mye igjen for pengene som jeg bruker på min Hovden ferie							
Hovden leverer over mine forventninger							
Hovden er et godt sted å feriere							

14. **Kan du tenke deg å reise til Hovden igjen?** Ja ☐ Nei ☐ Vet ikke ☐
15. **Kommer du til å reise til Hovden til neste år?** Ja ☐ Nei ☐ Vet ikke ☐
16. **Kommer du til å reise til Hovden innen 3 år?** Ja ☐ Nei ☐ Vet ikke ☐
17. **Vil du anbefale andre å reise til Hovden?** Ja ☐ Nei ☐ Vet ikke ☐

Del C: Om bedriften du besøker i dag

18. Har du vært her tidligere? *(sett kryss)* **Hvis ja, når var du her sist?** *(sett kryss)*

Nei		Tidligere i år (i 2012)	
Ja, 1-3 ganger tidligere		I 2011	
Ja, 4-6 ganger tidligere		I 2010	
Ja, 7-9 ganger tidligere		I 2009	
Oftere fordi jeg har hytte/ bor på Hovden		Tidligere enn 2009	

19. Hvor enig er du i følgende påstander? (på en skala fra 1 (svært uenig) til 7 (helt enig)):

Jeg besøker bedriften i dag fordi…	**1**						**7**
jeg har vært her før							
andre har anbefalt meg å reise hit							
jeg har lest om bedriften i media							
jeg får oppfylt mine ønsker og behov her							
det er godt utvalg av aktiviteter her							
andre (famille/ venner og liknende) har dratt meg med							
de ansatte er hyggelige og gjestfrie							
jeg har utviklet en nær kunderelasjon til bedriften jeg besøker							
det er barnevennlig							
prisnivået er riktig i forhold til hva jeg får igjen for oppholdet							

20. Hvor enig er du i følgende påstander? (på en skala fra 1 (svært uenig) til 7 (helt enig)):

Påstander om bedriften:	**1**						**7**
Renholdet på denne bedriften er godt							
Denne bedriften er godt vedlikeholdt							
Det er lett å finne informasjon om bedriften							
Jeg blir oppfordret til å komme med ris og ros							
Jeg føler meg spesiell når jeg besøker bedriften							
Jeg får mye igjen for pengene som jeg har brukt her							
Jeg har spist god mat på bedriften							
Jeg har blitt positivt overasket over bedriften							
Bedriften har overgått mine forventninger							
Jeg mener bedriften tilbyr en helt unik opplevelse							

21. **Hvor enig er du i følgende påstander? (på en skala fra 1 (svært uenig) til 7 (helt enig)):**

Når jeg forlater bedriften som jeg besøker i dag…	**1**						**7**
vil jeg fortelle andre om mine opplevelser på Trip Advisor							
vil jeg fortelle andre om mine opplevelser på Facebook							
kommer jeg til å fortelle andre om mine opplevelser i bloggen min							
vil jeg gi tilbakemelding til bedriften hvordan oppholdet har vært							

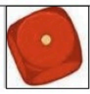
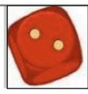
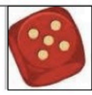
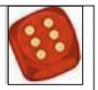
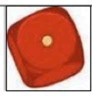
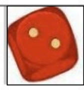
22. **Kan du tenke deg å reise til bedriften igjen?** **Ja** ☐ **Nei** ☐ **Vet ikke** ☐
23. **Kommer du til å reise til bedriften til neste år?** **Ja** ☐ **Nei** ☐ **Vet ikke** ☐
24. **Kommer du til å reise til bedriften innen 3 år?** **Ja** ☐ **Nei** ☐ **Vet ikke** ☐
25. **Vil du anbefale andre å reise til bedriften?** **Ja** ☐ **Nei** ☐ **Vet ikke** ☐

26. **Hva er ditt feriebudsjett for hele 2012?** **Ca** ………………………………………………………………. **kroner**

27. **Hvor mye regner du med å bruke på dette oppholdet?** **Ca** …………………………………… **kroner**

28. **Hva er din husholdningsinntekt (dekker hele hjemmets inntekter)? Ca** ……………………………………………….. **kroner**

29. **Hvilket terningkast gir du totalopplevelsen av:** *(sett ring rundt terningen)*

Hovden						
Bedriften du besøker						

Tusen takk for at du ville svare på disse spørsmålene! Undersøkelsen er anonym, men skriv inn kontaktinformasjon dersom du ønsker å være med i trekningen av:

- Et weekendopphold på Hovden for 2 personer som inkluderer 2-dagerspass på alpinsenteret, overnatting og middag på Hovden Fjellstoge.

Navn:

Mail:

Telefon:

Appendix 3: Reflective Note

Reflective Note

Over the last six months I have worked on my master thesis regarding revisit intentions in tourism and travel *"The main determinants of revisit intentions to Norwegian skiing resorts."* Questions I sought answered were: 1) What are the motivations among ski tourists in Norway? 2) What makes them satisfied? 3) What makes them revisit? After analyzing a dataset with answers from over 500 respondents in addition to 74 personal qualitative interviews, I have suggested a research model. This illustrates how the quality of slopes and lifts, satisfied children and weather affect the level of satisfaction the most. Further is satisfaction, together with previous visits and convenience, the most important predictors of repurchase intentions.
I also found the customer segments at the three ski resorts to be very different and with varied motivations for revisit. At Hovden, many of the visitors were families with small children traveling together with other families. They valued high-quality trails and a good children area. At Ål, most respondents traveled only with their own family, their motivations for being there were the closeness to their cabin and the steep trails. At Hemsedal, the sample was significantly younger and in addition to families, many visitors were parts of groups of 8-10 young adults. Their motivations for visiting the resort were big facilities, varied trails, but also after-ski and parties.

Over the next three paragraphs, I will discuss my thesis and my learning outcome over the last five years with the three cornerstones of School of Business and Law; international trends, innovation and responsibility.

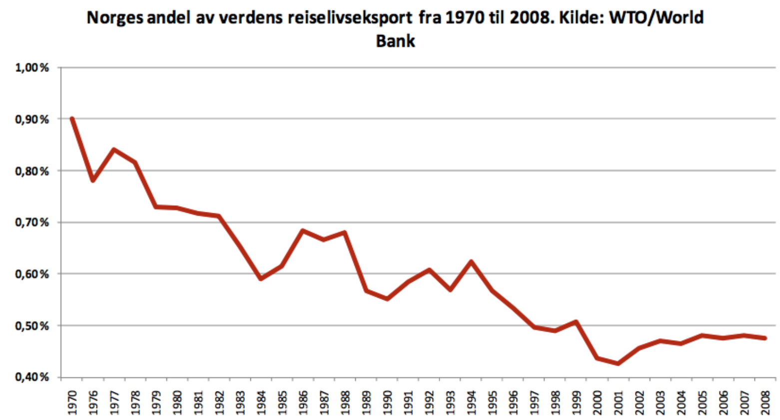
Internationalization
Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. World Travel & Tourism Council states in their Economic Impact Report 2015[5] the following:

"*The tourism & travel will outperform the global economy throughout the next decade by growing by an expected 4% on average annually over the next ten years*"

[5] https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/2016%20documents/economic%20impact%20summary%202016_a4%20web.pdf

In spite of this growth, Norway has lost market shares every decade since 1970. That is when the oil adventure started and our economy grew faster compared to other European economies and the world economy. Norwegians could afford to travel more, but it was relative cheaper to vacate abroad. Unfortunately, Norwegians spend more abroad than foreign tourists did in Norway (Jakobsen&Espelin, 2011).

Figure 1: Norway's market shares of international tourism export 1970-2008



Source: Jakobsen&Espelien, 2011; Innovation Norway, 2012, referring to World Tourism Organization/World bank

From 2002-2010 the Norwegians holiday consumption increased with 49 percent, an increase of 25 billion NOK. Unfortunately, holiday in Norway has only increased with 13 percent, which equals to the inflation during the period. In 2009 tourism and travel in Norway decreased with 1 percent, while it simultaneously increased with 11 percent abroad. Also this year, studies indicate we plan to increase out holiday consumption. A study of 1.900 households conducted by Virke revealed that on average, Norwegian families plan to spend 45.800 NOK on vacation this year. This is an increase of 23 percent from 2015, where they planned to spend 38.200 NOK. The survey did not reveal if the spending were planned in Norway or abroad. What I found in my research is that many plan a winter vacation both inside and outside of Norway in close future.

Skiing is an international activity. While all three ski resorts had foreign tourists, Norwegians at all three resorts talked about skiing in Austria. As we ski more frequently and start younger, our skiing skills improve and our demands increase accordingly. With international experiences, such as heli-skiing in the Alps, the Norwegian ski resorts must compete not only with each other, but also with ski resorts abroad. This is supported by more frequent and cheaper direct flights and a generally improved transportation system. Several respondents at all three resorts I visited, mentioned skiing in the Alps.

"If I had the money for it, I would rather be there"

"We travel to the Alps once a year"

"I am here only due to my children, alone I would go to the Alps"

"We stay here only as long the children find it challenging, later we might travel to the Alps"

Simultaneously with the increased consumption and travel tendencies, more of us are also focused on the environmental consequences. Social responsibility and innovate solutions with both economical and ecological benefits, have received more attention over the last years.

Innovation

In respect to this industry, I have chosen two directions I believe it is the most important with innovation. They are steady working places and care for the environment.

First, travel and tourism are labor-intensive industries. 7.2 million new jobs were created in 2015, resulting in a total of 284 million jobs in the sector. Globally are now 1 of 11 jobs within travel and tourism[6]. This industry functions as a buffer in situations with decreasing unemployment rates in other sectors, as we currently witness with the oil and gas sector. However, due to variations over the seasons, it has so far been difficult to create more permanent jobs, which are necessary to be able to attract and retain skilled labor and for further development. The industry needs to acquire knowledge about their customers to be innovative and create attractive destinations. Only this way, they can create year-round operations and find new customer segments. Due to the high Norwegian wages, employment-based sectors as tourism and travel are less competitive. The survived sectors can be characterized by having labor-intensive activities outsourced. As a result, the remaining industry has turned toward a knowledge-based direction, where the companies compete on quality and innovation rather than price. The sector needs to become more knowledge-based and innovative to meet the customers increased demands, attract and retain employees and attract competent capital.

[6] https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/2016%20documents/economic%20impact%20summary%202016_a4%20web.pdf

The second direction in need for innovation and more knowledge is the possibilities for green tourism. Environmental changes such as increased sea level, more extreme weather, shorter winter seasons etc., will have enormous consequences, where tourism is one sector of many being affected.

Figure 2: Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA writes about CSR on their web page

← Selskapet

Samfunnsansvar

Norwegians strategi for samfunnsansvar er primært basert på hvordan Norwegian som flyselskap kan bidra til mindre forurensning ved å benytte nye, drivstoffbesparende fly.

In Norway, the term delingsøkonomi (sharing economy) is highly popular and combine environmental effects with economical benefits. It is based on rental rather than owning. In regard of transportation, a very popular travel-app for renting transport vehicles is Nabobil. You can earn money on your car by lending it out via Nabobil Company when it is not in use. Or, if you are in a sporadically need of a car, you can rent one, rather than buying one. In regard to accommodation, Airbnb is another example of the sharing economy. Airbnb were established in 2008, and have now expanded to include 2 million rental places in 190 countries. 200.000 Norwegians used Airbnb in 2015 (Flaatten, 2016[7]).
Convenience is one of the three variables I found in my research that influences repurchase intentions the most. As explained in my thesis, convenience is in this context a two-parted term including both travel and accommodation. These innovative options can reduce travel costs and increase flexibility for them who do not own their own car or cabin.
An innovative solution that may appear as a perfect solution for this industry is indoor ski resorts. It makes the sport independent of shorter seasons and extreme weather, and it offers the possibility to run operations all year. The number of indoor ski resorts is increasing and in 2015 there were around 50 indoor snow centers operating in 20 countries around the world (Vanat, 2015, p.11). One ought to ask, how environmentally responsible is it to run such a resort? Ski Dubai is one of these, and is the first indoor-ski resort in the Middle East. They keep -4 degrees inside, as it can reach +55 degrees outside. Each night they create 30 tons with snow. Ski Dubai will not publicize their energy consumption. A paradox is that ski

[7] https://www.airbnb.no/about/about-us

resorts are huge emission generators and those very emissions, may be what puts them out of business.

Responsibility

Responsibility and innovation can go hand in hand. Possibility for responsibility in the fields of tourism and travel are close to endless. In addition to fulltime jobs and the environment as already discussed, I will focus on public health.

Tourism that fosters activity, contributes to reduce lifestyle illnesses and overweight. Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the main cause of death globally. In 2012, approximately 17.5 million people died from a CVD, which is a third of all global deaths (source: WHO). In Norway, 600.000 have a CVD. Most of them can be prevented by a healthy lifestyle and regular physical activity.

Kiting, rafting, canoeing, bicycle, golf, yoga in addition to skiing are examples of popular activities for vacations. The findings of a study conducted by Sato, Jordan & Funk (2013) suggested that physically active leisure improve the quality of life through involvement in activities.

Tourism is a concept with vast variations, from a day in a theme park to an eight-week tour around the world. Even though paradigms have happened, something is still the same: tourism and travel is seen as prestigious. It requires time, money and travel companionship – three elements valued by the society. In this aspect, travel can cause or continue to maintain social diversities, with difficulties for placing responsibility.

Internationalization, innovation, and responsibility are three terms that in certain perspectives overlap each other. Is it possible to approach one of these strategies, without approaching the other? Innovation is to take responsibility, but like everything else, this happens in an international world. As a consequence, the companies experience that their strategy and market position are influenced, and they need to adapt to external development. The managers ought to consider their offers and their customer base, as both their challenges and possibilities not only comes from their home market but also the global market. One of the results of both the qualitative and quantitative research revealed that the needs and desires of ski tourists are the same regardless of nationality. They all aspire high-quality slopes, child-friendly facilities, and good atmosphere.