



EXPLORING THE CONTEXTUAL
CONDITIONS FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN
OVERCOMING SEASONALITY
WITHIN TRAVEL DESTINATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF ÅRE & ISABERG
MOUNTAIN RESORTS

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Abstract

The vast majority of contemporary literature and research disregards the impact of entrepreneurship within a tourist destination for overcoming seasonality. Therefore, our research focuses on, “*exploring the contextual conditions for entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality within travel destinations.*” We have used a comparative research design, which we have applied to our two selected cases, Isaberg and Åre Mountain Resorts. Through the use of snowball sampling, we selected our sample size and used the qualitative research methods to collect the data. In order to do this effectively, we traveled to both Åre and Isaberg (Hestra) Sweden to conduct numerous in-depth interviews as well as to gain a better understanding of the resort’s culture. The data was then analyzed through the content analyzing method by coding the interviews to define themes and draw connections between various topics. The research conducted has illustrated that a resort’s development is highly dependent on whether an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurship is present. Furthermore, ski resorts, with limited budgets, are able to overcome seasonality by collaborating with local entrepreneurs who contribute to the investments and development of year-round tourist activities. Our research also indicates that this is highly dependent on the coordination amongst local stakeholders and leadership associated with the seasonal resort.

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1. Introduction

According to the 2015 Swedish Trade and Council official report, the Swedish tourism sector is the fastest growing service industry. In addition, revenues from international visitors have doubled in the last ten years (Jonsson, 2015). The same report also highlights the growing popularity of the Swedish ski resorts and states that this growth can be attributed to, “more direct flights [from abroad] and charter to the larger ski resorts” (Jonsson, 2015). Furthermore, it is clearly evident that tourism continues to play a crucial role in Sweden’s economy and the popularity of seasonal tourism (specifically skiing) is projected to increase (Jonsson, 2015).

However, similar to the majority of ski resorts around the world, challenges attributed to global climate change are a stark reality for the Swedish ski industry. These challenges include, diminishing winter seasons, lack of snow, and unpredictable weather patterns, which ultimately lead to a decrease in the total amount of visitors and negatively impact the operational revenue generated for the resort. Tourist attractions, or resorts, that operate to provide activities within certain seasons (months) of the year can be classified as seasonal resorts and thus seasonality can be a threatening factor. According to prior research, seasonality is defined as, “a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism (Butler, 2014, p.2). These effects of seasonality can be detrimental to both the resorts and/or surrounding communities as growth is determined by the stage of development and the amount of revenue generated on an annual basis (Butler, 2014). It is widely agreed upon that seasonality is caused by, “changes in the weather, the calendar, and timing of [consumer] decisions” (Radić, 2017, p.106).

Minimal research has been conducted on general entrepreneurship within the tourism sector. For example, between 1986-2006 only 2% of all articles published in leading tourism journals related to the term, ‘entrepreneurship’ (Cheng, et al., 2011; Solvoll, et al., 2016). It has also been acknowledged that the most effective research of tourism entrepreneurship will hence build upon the theoretical concepts of mainstream entrepreneurship (Haugh, 2007; Zahra et al., 2009; Radić, 2017). The term tourism entrepreneurship is often defined as companies offering a variety of services in the tourism industry to customers. This includes all commercial organizations and activities independent of size, area, and ownership (Lordkipanidze, 2002; Rusu, et al., 2017).

In order to effectively conduct this research, we have chosen to conduct a qualitative analysis focused on two comparative case studies in Sweden: Åre Mountain Resort and Isaberg Mountain Resort. These two resorts were identified as ideal comparisons because both have a winter sports culture that is deeply entrenched within their histories and have been regarded as unique skiing destinations. Furthermore, due to unpredictable winter seasons both resorts are forced to look into alternative activities to generate revenue and remain economically viable throughout the year. Sweden was identified as the ideal country to conduct this research because of the fact that winter tourism, specifically skiing, is an important cultural activity and demand for resort opportunities is growing, but the realities of seasonality are still an issue. Therefore, we believe that various innovative entrepreneurial strategies, specifically related to seasonal destinations, will be the most beneficial at generating year-round sustaining revenue and overcoming the negative implications of seasonality.

Differences such as size, management or operation, community embeddedness, and culture exist when comparing Isaberg and Åre. However, we chose to analyze these two resorts because they are both facing similar obstacles in regards to the process of development as a tourist destination. This paper applies relevant concepts and theories in the field of entrepreneurship studies to the two identified cases in order to understand the entrepreneurial opportunities for overcoming the effects of seasonality. Thereby, in conducting this research, we have explored the contextual conditions of entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality within travel destinations.

1.1. Thesis structure

This master's thesis will commence with a theoretical framework identifying theories, concepts and models that provide a well-rounded understanding in regards to the specified topic and its current status. The data presented is based on extensive literature research and has provided us in-depth knowledge about the topic and future research directions. We will state our research question and proceed to define theory relative to entrepreneurship and tourism. We will continue by giving a short introduction on winter tourism and its relation to ski resorts within Sweden. The phenomenon of seasonality will be investigated as well as the life cycle model and the operational structure model. This will give the reader insights from multiple dimensions and domains of

research. This thesis will highlight methods used to collect data and will present our empirical findings collected throughout the qualitative research process. We will continue discussing the theory and empirical findings and thus a conclusion will be drawn in light of our defined research question.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Research question

“Exploring the contextual conditions for entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality within travel destinations: A case study of Åre & Isaberg mountain resorts”

2.2. Concepts, theories and models

2.2.1. Tourism entrepreneurship

It is understood that tourism businesses, such as ski resorts are, “quite commonly initiated by entrepreneurs who play significant roles in modifying the supply of leisure and recreational opportunities” (Chang, 2011, p.467). Our intention in defining the term entrepreneurship is to illustrate how the ideal conditions for entrepreneurial endeavors can help travel destinations to overcome seasonality. In addition, respected scholars like Schumpeter (1911) have noted that entrepreneurship and innovation are closely connected and contribute to economic development in a wide array of industries. However, by applying these terms to the conditions for entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality, we must also define the term tourism entrepreneurship in the context of this paper. Lordkipanidze defines tourism entrepreneurship as complicated events at macro and micro-economic levels; companies offering its customers services in the tourism industry and which are responsible for the development, production and marketing of local tourist products (Lordkipanidze, 2002; Rusu, et al., 2017; Rusu, et al., 2012). This involves all commercial companies and activities independent of size, area and ownership (individual, groups, private, limited liability) (Lordkipanidze, 2002; Rusu, et al., 2017; Rusu, et al., 2012). Therefore, not only hotels and tour operators are considered tourism entrepreneurs, but

also the companies that sell products or services (Rusu, et al., 2017). Examples of services offered by tourism entrepreneurs include transportation, hospitality, travel agencies, tour providers, entertainment, local produced art and craft products, and sport activities (Lordkipanidze, 2002; Lordkipanidze, et al., 2005; Rusu, et al., 2017; Lee-Ross & Lashley, 2010; Pirnar, 2015).

Tourism entrepreneurship has been stimulated and grown by the motivation of the entrepreneurs, which is typically based on lifestyle and non-financial benefits (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Haber & Reichel, 2007; Pirnar, 2015). However, one should not consider lifestyle and the focus on profitability as two objectives which combined can't be held by an entrepreneur (Nilsson, et al., 2005; Hallak, et al., 2015). Tourism entrepreneurs are often characterized by the following characteristics: risk taking, willingness to be financially independent, strategic vision, innovative, customer focused and they are often looking for new adaptations. These characteristics are relatively similar to entrepreneurs operating in other industries (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Pirnar, 2015). They do however have often unique social, PR, marketing and communications skills (Hollick & Braun, 2005; Pirnar, 2015) Tajeddini adds to this set of skills the ability to identify high quality performances (Tajeddini, 2010; Pirnar, 2015). Entrepreneurship has recently become a common practice for SMEs and multinationals within the tourism industry (Pirnar, 2015).

In the early stage of tourism development large chains and franchises are not yet interested in investing and communities completely rely on the SMEs for tourist development (Chang, 2011; Pirnar, 2015). According to Rusu, et al, an entrepreneurial economy can be considered successful when it is easy for people to begin a startup without being bound to slow and expensive bureaucratic formalities (Rusu, et al., 2017). The development of the tourism industry can positively impact local economies and SMEs play often a dominant role, 90% of tourism entrepreneurship activities in the EU, USA and Australia are offered by SMEs family companies, and are a driving force of economic success in tourism destinations (Morrison, et al., 1999; Rusu, et al., 2017; Getz, et al., 2004; Hallak, et al., 2015). This is merely caused by the effects of SMEs implementing their innovative products and solutions to the tourism industry and are representing the innovative entrepreneurship spirit (Ateljevic & Page, 2009; Rusu, et al., 2017) The interest for tourist products and services are constantly developing and changing and competition is a constant challenge (Pirnar, 2015). SMEs are often responsible within travel destinations for the tourism

products and services, tourism satisfaction, and creating a positive travel destination image (Kozak & Rimmington 1998; Hallak, et al., 2015). These factors are critical aspects of the tourism industry and for the livelihood within a travel destination (Hallak, et al., 2012; Hallak, et al., 2015)

The main challenge for the SMEs is to be able to grow and often entrepreneurs are missing the combination of different skills necessary to compete with larger organizations. Companies that survive can adapt their organization according to the demand in the market (Rusu, et al., 2017). Managerial, innovative, marketing and communication skills are the key for a successful entrepreneurship process (Moriarty, et al., 2008; Pirnar, 2015). Owners should position their enterprise strategically to be able to compete within the tourist market (van Zyl & Marthur-Helm, 2008; Rusu, et al., 2017).

The literature review we have conducted shows that defining tourism entrepreneurship is heavily debated amongst tourism and entrepreneurship scholars alike. For example, scholars have noted that the lack of research in regards to entrepreneurship within the tourism industry illustrates the fact that, “mainstream entrepreneurship has not embraced the tourism industry as a relevant context for entrepreneurship research.” (Radić, 2017, p.125) Therefore, we have noted that significant research on the contextual conditions for entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality within travel destinations has been neglected by past researchers. Nevertheless, we have concluded that entrepreneurship, as defined by Schumpeter (1911), largely focuses on the role of innovation. Similar to any industry, the tourism sector relies on attracting customers through innovative offerings or products as, “Tourism as an industry is subject to changes due to shifts in consumer preferences and emergence of new technology (Hall & Williams, 2008; Solvoll, et al., 2016, p. 120).

2.2.2. Winter tourism Sweden

Winter tourism in Sweden attracts a significant percentage of individuals annually from within Scandinavia and abroad; in addition, there are over 200 ski resorts available for hosting winter recreation opportunities (sweden.se, 2018). Scholars have identified a variety of reasons to enjoy outside winter recreation activities, such as: exercising, relaxation, enjoying the surrounding nature and spending time with friends and family (Landauer, et al., 2009). Furthermore, skiing and other

forms of winter tourism in Sweden are popular because of the abundance of nature, open spaces, and mountains available throughout the country. Sweden is ranked among the top ten countries in the world for having both the highest number of ski resorts and ski visitors per year (Moen & Fredman, 2007). Defining winter tourism will ultimately enable us to better understand the culture of ski resorts in Sweden, which we have chosen to conduct our case study on.

2.2.3. Seasonality and its effect on seasonal tourism

Seasonality is described as a systematic and temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism which does not have to be regular, caused by the weather or vacations periods, and is based on consumer behavior which may be expressed in terms of the number of visitors, traffic on the highways, employment, and admissions to the attractions” (Butler, 2001, p.5; Hylleberg, 1992). Seasonal tourism is specific to a destination that attracts visitors and generates the majority of its revenue during a specified season of the year (Butler, 2001, p.5). It can be recognized through a pattern, which occurs on a regular basis in the same period of each year (Butler, 2014). Therefore, certain season(s) are considered to be high seasons (busy) while others are considered “low” or “off-seasons” (not busy). Seasonality is often a predictable phenomenon making it easier to respond more accurately (Hartmann, 1986; Butler, 2014). Seasonality can have negative and positive effects on a resort in correlation with the number of visitors and revenue that is generated. When seasons are tightly linked, a small seasonal gap might actually be necessary for some resorts to address repairs and maintenance within the resort Butler, 2014). In some cases, seasonality is unpredictable causing the risk of the loss of annual revenue (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001). These unpredictable seasonal changes, which heighten the effects of seasonality, are largely caused by global climate change. For example, temperatures in North Europe are rising and causing a reduction of snow-days (Jylhä et al. 2004; Landauer, et al., 2009; Carter, Kankaanpää, 2003). Climate change and global warming will continue to negatively affect destinations (Scott et al. 2009; Landauer, et al., 2009).

Supply and demand need to be managed to overcome seasonality and only a few destinations have been successful. In order to implement these adaptations on multiple levels, there need to be integrated and coordinated efforts (Butler, 2014). This will affect facility and service suppliers, which need to become available throughout the year. In addition, as outlined below, Butler (2014) introduces four alternatives for overcoming seasonality.

Seasonal extension

Seasonal extension is the most common alternative. Prices are reduced before and after the high season. The aim is to improve the attractiveness of the resort to generate new customers. This strategy depends on visitors being able and willing to visit the destination during this period and the attractiveness of the destination at that time. This approach is popular because it does not involve major investments in the accommodation facilities, but it does require the guarantee that most facilities will be open for business throughout the year (Butler, 2014).

Different activities in the low season

When central activities are unable to take place in the low season due to circumstances such as inclement weather, alternative activities should be offered to attract visitors. These substitute activities should not be weather dependent. This strategy could include activities such as festivals, competitions (events) and displays to attract people. This strategy is more complex considering organization, marketing, and investments. (Butler, 2014).

Revamping the destination

Another option is changing the image of the destination by investing in the facilities and the market. It allows the destination to attract a new group of visitors during a different season. This strategy is not often applied because it requires redevelopment of the destination, which involves large investments, marketing efforts, and legislative changes. Success is based on the competition and being the first implementing this strategy. It can be expected that competitors will follow which forces new investment in development. Development is continuously occurring and due to the high costs, the resort activity must effectively generate income throughout the year (Butler, 2014).

Making the destination unique and prestigious

With this approach a destination is differentiating itself from alternative resorts in order to attract visitors who are looking for a unique experience, want to visit something prestigious or something which is for a limited time available. Considering the later, for most destinations this will be not the case. Destinations could add supplements or adjust the current activities attracting early adopters, creating a trend and appealing other tourists as well. To be able to make this strategy a success; time, substantial money and marketing are required (Butler, 2014).

Adding a second main season

This strategy involves the destination creating a second main season when conditions permit this. The most common approach is to establish winter activities for a traditional summer destination or the other way around. Both have been successfully applied around the world. Resorts have been using the existing facilities creatively throughout the year such as using ski lifts for hikers. This could increase the target market of both summer and winter activities and likely increase the number of permanent residents due to the fact that visitors can enjoy the area the entire year. The strategy is only successful when the right climatic and physical factors are in place (Butler, 2014).

Adding non-conventional tourist activities

A destination is promoted amongst different target groups, which are business travelers or residential visitors.

For the business-oriented customers; convention centers, large hotels, casinos and sport facilities need to be established. Destinations need to invest largely in transportation, destination awareness/branding, and additional activities for the business visitors and potentially their families (Butler, 2014).

A resort can also become a retirement destination offering a unique environment with the necessary facilities. This might involve pensioners turning their vacation home into a permanent residence and the destination offering housing facilities for pensioners.

Another type of residential development involves activities that make the destination more attractive such as offering facilities for sports (i.e. golf). This approach involves well developed and easily accessible facilities, which suits the often expensive taste and needs in an overall wealthy target group (Butler, 2014).

2.2.4. Tourism life cycle model (Butler, 1980, 2006)

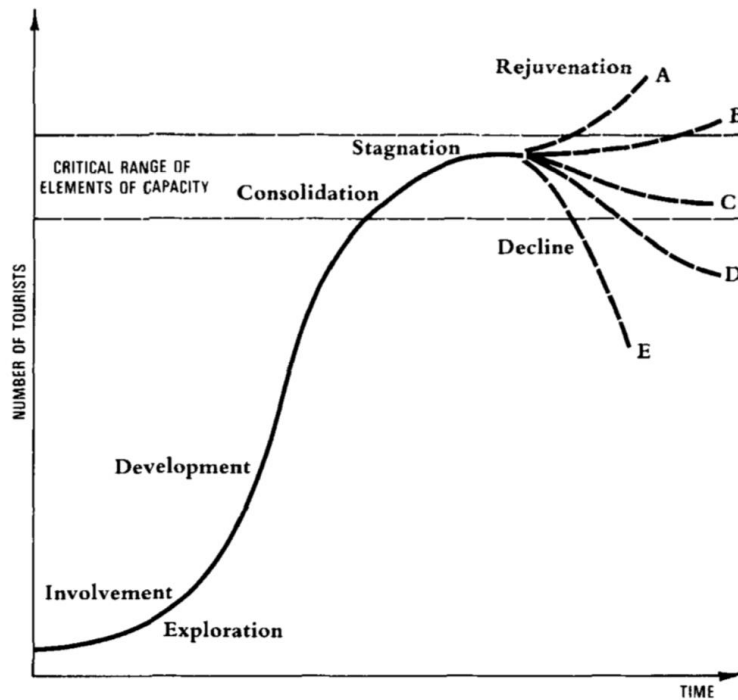
After defining seasonality, tourism entrepreneurship, and winter tourism in Sweden, the authors of this paper believe that a model for measuring growth within a resort is necessary to further develop the relevant analytical framework for exploring the contextual conditions of entrepreneurship within a seasonal resort. According to previous research, Butler's life cycle model (Butler, 1980, 2006) serves as a tool for analyzing the historical development and growth

in popularity of a tourist destination (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). In accordance with our own research, we feel that applying Butler (Butler, 1980) to our own findings is much more effective than merely comparing general ticket sales of each resort. For instance, ticket sales or revenue generated can be skewed simply because Åre is a bigger resort and thus receives a larger number of visitors per year than Isaberg. Therefore, Butler (1980) provides us with a tool for cross-comparing the development between Åre and Isaberg to effectively conduct an analysis.

According to Butler's model, there are six stages of development when analyzing a tourist destination: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and ultimately either rejuvenation or decline of the resort (Butler, 1980; Nordin & Westlund, 2009) (see figure 1). These stages occur linearly and often help to categorize the development process of a specific tourist destination. The first two stages of the model, exploration and involvement, often occur when there is local use or ownership of the resort (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). During the involvement stage, there is a transformation period that is initiated by growth and the overall number of tourists begins to increase rapidly (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). This proceeds the transformation into the third stage of growth or development, which is categorized by an increase in infrastructure investments made by external companies (Butler, 1980; Nordin & Westlund, 2009). Then the growth begins to subdue and that is when the consolidation period takes effect, which is categorized by Butler's fourth stage of the model. Then, "growth continues until it reaches its peak and becomes more mature and even saturated in the fifth stage: stagnation. The destination may now face economic, social and environmental issues" (Nordin & Westlund, 2009, p.262). The final stage of this model is either stagnation or rejuvenation and is measured in terms of annual revenue incurred by the resort (See figure 1).

Figure 1

Butler's life cycle model (1980): stages of development



(Butler, 1980)

Authors (Nordin & Westlund, 2009) have successfully applied Butler's development model to Åre Mountain Resort in their prior research. When analyzing Åre through the framework of Butler's life cycle model, the authors were able to conclude that by the early 1990's the ski resort had already reached the sixth stage of the model; rejuvenation or decline (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). Due to a series of mild winters, characterized by a lack of snow, and a nationwide economic recession in Sweden, the Åre ski resort was negatively affected (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). However, by the late 1990's after the Stockholm-based company, SkiStar AB, purchased the resort, the destination entered a rejuvenation period and during the early 2000's drastic expansion of the resort occurred (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). Since the early 1980's ski lift turnover (lift ticket sales) has clearly mirrored the life cycle model previously described, and when analyzing the lift ticket turnover, it is apparent that the early 2000's can be characterized as an upward trend in sales and overall tourist visits to Åre Mountain Resort (see figure 5) (SLAO model; Nordin & Westlund, 2009). Butler's life cycle model, as illustrated above, will help us when measuring the

development progress between Åre Mountain Resort and Isaberg Mountain Resort and thus analyzing the entrepreneurial opportunities in overcoming seasonality.

2.2.5. Operational structure of resorts

The management of the specified tourist resorts is an aspect that we have researched for both of the cases. Many of the same concepts, developed for strategic development of a business, can also be applied to the strategic management of a destination and pertain to the success of the resort (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). According to past scholars, sustainable competitive advantage is fundamental to strategic management; however, when identifying the success factors in winter sports tourism, it is necessary to analyze additional elements and therefore, we have borrowed the concepts, “community model” and “corporate model” (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). These concepts will enable us to thoroughly explain how Isaberg and Åre Mountain Resorts differ in regards to operation and management aspects and provide a better understanding when comparing the two cases. Also, in addition, these operational concepts are critical in highlighting the aspect that although the resort’s competitive advantage is crucial for attracting visitors and generating revenue, it is not the only factor.

Community model

Within a specified destination, the community model is made up of decentralized independent suppliers, and thus the coordination amongst private businesses, interdependent on the resort, is inexistent (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). However, “strategic leadership, which does exist, is anchored in a stakeholder-oriented management, and concerned with issues of sustainability and the environment, destination planning, product development, destination marketing, particular cooperation projects, etc” (Flagestad & Hope, 2001, p.452). In addition, the power behind the destination is allotted to political institutions or a local destination management organization (DMO) embedded within the local community (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). The community model can be identified as performing better than the corporate model in respect to social and ecological sustainability through strong stakeholder management (Flagestad & Hope, 2001).

Corporate model

Also referred to as the “North American model,” the corporate model differs from the community model in that, “such corporations manage for profit a strategic selection of business units of service providers incorporated by ownership and/or contracts” (Flagestad & Hope, 2001, p.452). In addition, the corporate model implies that the resort destination is managed by a registered corporation (Flagestad & Hope, 2001) and is driven first and foremost by profits. In addition, it can be noted that the corporate model may be more successful in achieving customer satisfaction and, “customer-oriented destination development” than the community model per se (Flagestad & Hope, 2001).

3. Methodology

3.1. Geographical region sample selection

While writing our thesis proposal, we decided that our research should be conducted in Sweden. This is where our University is located and where we would be writing our thesis. It provided us with easy access to contacts, local information about the subject and the knowledge and understanding of our supervisors.

The sample selection was done in close collaboration with our supervisor Caroline Wigren. In our proposal multiple topics of interest were stated including winter tourism in Sweden. Caroline highlighted that this topic had the most potential due to the variety of ski resorts in Sweden and the availability of contacts within this industry complementary to our own knowledge regarding this topic. She proposed a case study on the resorts of Åre and Isaberg, communities in which her contacts played key roles. The cases would offer a large learning opportunity (Stake 1995; Bryman & Bell, 2011), due to their differences and because they can be compared regarding their geographical location, development, and methods used for overcoming seasonality. The topic is applicable to entrepreneurship as these aforementioned resorts are forced to look into alternative ways of generating revenue. Åre and Isaberg differ in their development, geographical locations and different type of operating cultures. Details about both cases can be found in the empirical

evidence chapter. Caroline also highlighted that the variances in size and management style would be interesting. In regards to Åre previous research has been conducted, this is not the case for Isaberg. This makes it interesting to identify the current position and developments of Åre and compare it to Isaberg in order to explore how their contextual conditions considering entrepreneurship are used to overcome seasonality within travel destinations.

3.2. Comparative design

We have used a comparative research design for researching the two selected cases: Åre and Isaberg. Comparing cases that are different, which is the case of Åre and Isaberg, tend to provide in-depth research opportunities to explore (Edmond & Wiklund, 2010, p.157). By applying the comparative approach also seen by Maxwell as a process approach we will be able to understand the, “people, situations, events and the process that connect these” within both travel destinations” (Maxwell, 2013; Bartletti & Vavrus, 2017). We will be able to identify the unique features of both cases and understand the commonalities. The comparative design allows to reflect upon the chosen theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.3. Qualitative research

A qualitative research method was used to collect our data. This method allows to gain a sufficient understanding of the social aspect influencing both destinations, thus by examining and interpreting the current environment and its participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, our research has been conducted from within the targeted communities (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p.498 cited by Caroline Wigren). The majority of our interviews were in-person during extensive site visits at both resorts. This method provided a better understanding of the actual situation and we could adjust our direction slightly when respondents gave new insights. Allowing to investigate certain topics in detail and shift the focus from topics which became of less importance.

3.4. Participant sample selection

To be able to collect data we used snowball sampling to select interviewees in Åre and Isaberg. This approach was chosen because we had a number of valuable initial contacts, in both communities, provided by our thesis advisor Caroline. We also strived to contact people that we otherwise would never had been able to reach, such as those in leadership positions. Our key network provided contact details of other persons that were interesting to incorporate in the research based on their personal attributes or relation to our identified topic of research. Our sample criteria consisted of: (1) entrepreneurs active in the tourism industry or (2) entrepreneurs/activists necessary for the local community in overcoming the seasonal gap. This sampling method is highly suitable for research focused on the impact of communities (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). Contacts were slowly acquired and the most relevant were contacted by email. After the interviews, the contacts were asked to introduce interesting and representative people in their communities. In the beginning we did not get any responses. However, when we started referencing names, and got directly introduced we were able to get participants. Our contacts connected us with senior members of both communities, who brought us in contact with a variety of members within their inner-communities to gain a broad perspective of the “population.” We contacted approximately eighteen potential interviewees and were able to interview twelve. The list with interviewees can be found below in (table 1). Our knowledgeable contacts provided a diverse empirical study in relation to the researched phenomenon (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Table 1: List of interviewees for both Åre and Isaberg

Reference	Name	Company/Organization	Location of Interview	Date of Interview
A	Anonymous	Multisport Endurance Event Coordinator	Åre, Sweden	28-Mar-18
B	Eriksson, A.	House-Be	Åre, Sweden	27-Mar-18
C	Eriksson, M.	Isaberg Mountain Resort	Lund, Sweden	26-Feb-18
D	Friberg, A.	Roupéz Ski Shop	Hestra, Sweden	16-Mar-18
E	Lexhagen, M.	Mittuniversitet	Lund, Sweden	16-Feb-18
G	Magnusson, J.	Hestra/ Martin Magnusson & Co. AB	Hestra, Sweden	16-Mar-18
H	Nilsson, M.	Isaberg Mountain Resort	Hestra, Sweden	4-Apr-18
I	Sjögren Berg, N.	SkiStar AB	Åre, Sweden	27-Mar-18
J	Sjölundh, T.	Destination Åre	Åre, Sweden	28-Mar-18
K	Söderlund, L.	Isaberg Mountain Resort	Lund, Sweden	13-Feb-18
L	Svensson, M.	Holiday Club	Åre, Sweden	27-Mar-18
M	Vickman, J.	Isaberg Mountain Resort	Hestra, Sweden	16-Mar-18

3.5. Data collection

As described above we used the comparative case study approach allowing to combine multiple options of qualitative data collection. Aside from interviews, we utilized documentary data collection by using information gained from annual reports (Knights & McCabe, 1997; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Twelve interviews were conducted either by phone or in-person (at the resort), which lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour. A semi-structured approach was applied to collect data through semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were contacted by email, allowing to provide background information on our research. When requested, interview guidelines were sent in advance which were also used during the interview to ensure consistency and focus. The interview guide was based on our collected literature, information from our conversations with Maria Lexhagen, our key contacts and Pierpont's experience in the tourism industry. The interview guide can be found in the appendices (figure 2). Interviews were an effective and an efficient strategy to collect empirical information (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Roles were divided during the interviews to ensure both researchers knew their responsibility. Pierpont was in charge of asking the questions and Anouk was in control of recording the interviews and taking notes to ensure that information would not get lost. All recordings were transcribed in detail to ensure no assumptions were made and researchers personal opinions were not incorporated.

3.6. Analyzing collected data

The aim of analyzing the data is to identify a pattern, understand the meaning, establish a theory, and ultimately draw a conclusion based on the findings (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003). As previously stated, we relied on a qualitative approach in respect to the data collection. To be able to interpret the findings a qualitative content analysis was applied (Gioia, et al., 2012). Content analysis is often used when narrative text, such as interviews, is analyzed (Trace, 2001).

In the early stages of the research, we identified key themes, topics, and central questions within the collected data extracted from the transcript, and these themes needed to emerge naturally (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hartley, 1994; Hartley, 2004; Trace, 2001; Gioia, et al., 2012). As outlined, we started with the 1st order analysis, in which we stuck to the terms used by the interviewees (Gioia, et al., 2012). After we transcribed the interviews, the categories were examined and the

substantive quotes were categorized (Gillham, 2000; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, in the beginning there were a large number of naturally occurring categories (Gioia, et al., 2012) as we had ten different themes emerge. Within the large number of categories, however, we began to highlight the similarities and differences, reducing the number of categories to approximately five (Gioia, et al., 2012). As noted, we had to examine if the data collected correlates with the defined categories (Hartley, 2004). This is the stage when the categories were labeled using definitions from the interviews. The main focus was to identify new concepts, which were not available in the current literature, or existing concepts that are linked to categories (Gioia, et al., 2012). After a small number of categories were established, it was then reduced from the, “2nd order categories” into “2nd order aggregate dimensions” (Gioia, et al., 2012). At this point, the information was further analyzed and we retained a deeper understanding of the concepts as we began to see patterns and draw correlations. When we established the 1st and 2nd order categories as well as “the 2nd order aggregate dimensions” we created a variation of a data structure (see figure 4) (Gioia, et al., 2012). The data structure allowed us to visualize the data (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010), and furthermore to interpret the collected information theoretically (see figure 3).

Figure 3

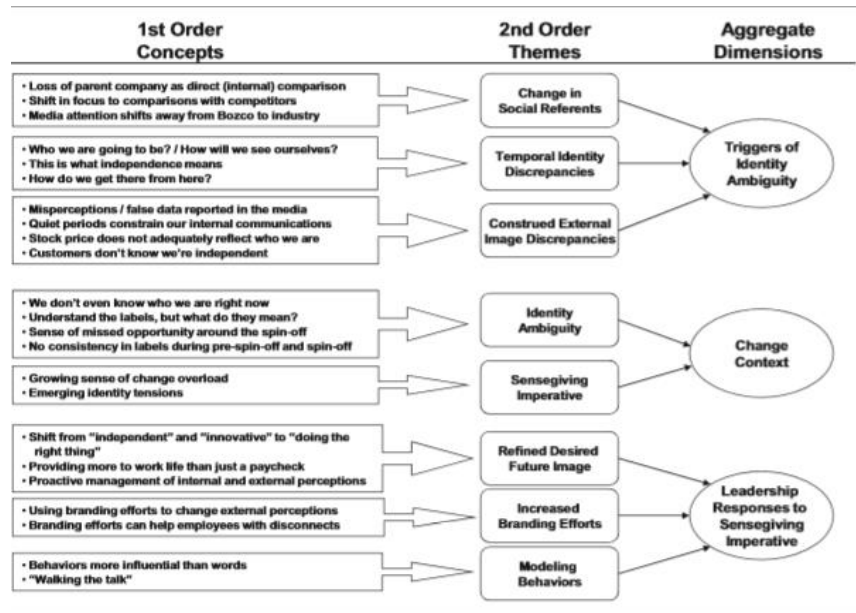
Analysis of development stage and tourist entrepreneur's role in overcoming seasonality

Case	Stage of Development (Butler, 1980)	Entrepreneur's Role in Overcoming Seasonality	Resort's Role in Overcoming Seasonality
Åre Mountain	Rejuvenation phase	Using the effects of coordination to innovate and provide opportunities for attracting guests year-round	Coordinating efforts (with Destination Åre and Holiday Club) to provide an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial development. In addition, provide year-round infrastructure on the mountain.
Isaberg Mountain	Stagnation phase within consolidation phase	Minimal: Provides amenities to guests mostly during the winter ski season.	Provides vast majority of amenities/activities to guests year-round without the help of external entrepreneurship. Innovation implemented within the resort.

At this stage, we reviewed the different categories, dimensions, and related literature to identify if the data collected was relevant to the concepts discussed or is unique (Gioia, et al., 2012). The established model (see figure 3 & 4) displays the correlations between concepts and connects the empirical evidence with theory while also providing relevant insights (Gioia, et al., 2012).

Figure 4

Content analyzing method



(Corley & Gioia, 2004)

3.7. Constraints and limitations

Establishing a theory based on cases can be considered less explicit than when compared to testing a hypothesis on a larger scale (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). A reliance on cases studies also poses the issue that our sample is not representative of the studied population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Although, through case studies we were able to build a stronger theory as it is considered to be a much more complex approach by some researchers. Also, as noted by past researchers, when conducting a case study on a subject yet to be previously analyzed, such as Isaberg Mountain Resort, it is impossible to dismiss the fact that the topic may be unique and thus no conclusions can be made (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). Furthermore, case studies, “lack statistical

representativity and analytical control” (Nordin & Westlund, 2009, p. 264). Due to the method used for gathering and analyzing our data, no statistics were generated from this research. It is also important for us to note that the data collected through interviews can be considered as partly biased due to the preconceived notions held by the interviewers and from the context of the interview (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Qualitative research can often be considered as too much of a subjective method of data collection. One of the critiques is that this method relies heavily on the researchers’ perception of the case. Qualitative research is considered a method that is not easily replicated because it is often unstructured and heavily relies on the inventiveness of the individual researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the scope of the qualitative research results are considered to be sometimes limiting.

For this research, a snowball sampling method was applied. The main limitation of this sampling method is that it's unclear regarding the size of the sample population. Therefore, snowball samples are often not considered as representative of the population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As mentioned earlier, we utilized this method because of our limited contacts in each resort location.

A semi-structured interview method was applied to collect the data. With this approach interviewees are likely to express their expectations and views more openly as the conversation can occur fluidly. However, semi structured interviews can create confusion when analyzing data because they provide a space for new topics to emerge (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One limitation unique to our research was the fact that we noticed a contrast in the information collected between Isaberg and Åre. For example, the contacts at Isaberg varied and were overall harder to reach. In addition, the information provided was limited, with fewer valuable quotes, and few secondary sources were obtainable.

The collected data was analyzed through the content analyzing method. The quality of the analysis was highly dependent on the quality of the data and, since the coding is done by the researchers, it is almost impossible to guarantee that the researchers own interpretation and knowledge is omitted from the analyzing process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The quality of the coding is also heavily

dependent on the coding skills of the researcher. This method of coding is considered by some as “atheoretical” because it tends to focus on the aspects that can be measured rather than on the aspects that retain theoretical significance (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4. Empirical findings

4.1. Case studies

4.1.1. Isaberg Mountain Resort

Isaberg is a mountain resort, located in the town of Hestra, which is part of the municipality of Gislaved in the region of Smålands, Sweden. The first guest house in Isaberg was opened in 1914 after the community developed as an attractive tourist destination. In 1950 the number of annual visitors grew exponentially from approximately 3,000 to 10,000 people. In the winter of 1935-36, a slalom-hill was established on Isaberg mountain (see figure 5), which caused an enormous interest in skiing. Due to the popularity of skiing in the 1950s and early 1960s, the skiers requested a ski-lift, which would require a large initial investment. In the winter of 1971-72 the first snow machines were installed at the mountain and the first cottages were built to accommodate overnight guests. In 1998 the main lodging facility was restored after it was damaged by a fire. In addition to the original building, a restaurant and conference center were added at the time of the restoration. Throughout its lifespan, the resort has developed largely by expanding the slopes and investing in new winter technology such as snow machines and ski lifts. As recently as 2009, the resort was committed to exploring alternative opportunities for guests, which were not directly linked to skiing (About, Isaberg Mountain Resort website, accessed April 2018). According to one interviewee, “the winters were getting milder and milder, there was also a need to also increase during the summer and focus on the year-round activity-based resort” (Interview K). The mountain started by promoting hunting activities for the fall and summer seasons. Soon after, a Moose Park was established in the fall of the same year, which opened in 2010. Additionally, in 2010 a restaurant and ski rental company were established on the slopes of Isaberg, however, all of these investments were mildly successful in attracting year-round visitors and overcoming seasonality (Interview K). In 2013 more efforts were made to implement year-round activities by

constructing a zipline/ropes adventure park and a mountain bike center, which were followed by provided Segway adventures in 2016 and a multisport arena was built in 2017 (Interview M). Further improvements include an extensive WIFI network, and a new lodge that has been built with renovations of the existing cottages (Isaberg Mountain Resort, 2017). For the summer of 2018, the resort is planning to implement another non-winter activity; Adventure (Mini) Golf, which will be marketed towards the family visitors (Interview H). The resort strives to increase activities and earnings in the nine green months of the year (Interview K).

In 2017, “the mountain resort received 90,000 visitors in the winter” (Interview M) whom are mostly from Sweden and Denmark (Interview D; H). The alternative seasons attract approximately 10,000-15,000 visitors who are mostly, “from Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Holland in the summer” (Interview H). According to one employee interviewed, the visitors of Isaberg are wealthier nowadays in comparison to the past and this can be observed, “since a lot of the activities are quite expensive, and people want to do it all when they are here” (Interview H). In addition, the majority of the guests are coming for a day trip or weekend trip (Interview D) and visit due to the fact that the resort is closely situated to Denmark and the South of Sweden (Interview H). Isaberg is a resort, which is attracting families due to it’s small setting (see figure 5) and ski slopes suitable for beginner-intermediate skiers as well as the family-oriented summer activities. The resort saw a drastic increase in overall summer activities after the arrival of Louise Söderlund as General Manager in 2012; thereby, “the challenge was to increase business in the 9 green months of the years. Whereas if we had three white months we always had tourists coming. But for the green months, which was [for the] most part of the year there were very little attractions so we needed to change this to develop why they [tourists] travel to us” (Interview K).

4.1.2. Åre Mountain Resort

Åre Mountain Resort is located in Jämtland county, northwest of Stockholm, in the town of Åre. Since the 1880’s tourists came to Åre, “from afar in the summertime and they came for reasons of fresh air and that then developed into a village that provided health care facilities for people with various lung diseases” (Interview E). The mountain was almost purely a summer destination until 1976 (Interview J). However, this changed when the first tram was installed and, “after that the cable track was built and focus [shifted] almost to 100% on winter tourism” (Interview L).

After the first winter resort investment was made to install the tram, Åre then transformed into a purely winter destination until the mid-1990's when year-round tourism began to slowly increase (Interview J). In the late 1990's, when SkiStar, AB purchased Åre, "they [the resort] began to heavily invest in the infrastructure as to make it a more appealing destination, modeled to the Alps" (Interview I). One interviewee mentioned that the turning point in year-round investment was in 2004 when Holiday Club (hotel and attraction) was built in Åre as a summer accommodation and attraction for tourists visiting the town (Interview L). Similar to Isaberg, Åre Mountain, specifically SkiStar, has built an extensive network of mountain bike trails; however, unlike Isaberg, Åre continues to operate the chairlifts on the mountain throughout the summer and therefore, the resort charges customers for a lift ticket to generate direct revenue throughout the non-winter months (Interview I). Åre Mountain Resort is the largest ski resort within Sweden regarding vertical meters and elevation (see figure 6); however, Salen Resort, which is also owned by SkiStar receives more visitors annually (Interview I).

4.2. Tourism entrepreneurship

4.2.1. Isaberg Mountain Resort

Within the resort boundaries, Roupéz Ski Shop and Restaurant Höganloft are the only two businesses owned by entrepreneurs not connected with the resort (Interview D). However, there is a clear benefit for each of these existing businesses due to the fact that the foundation currently prohibits other businesses from entering the resort (Interview D). According to an employee at Roupéz Ski Shop, "It won't be easy to be an entrepreneur on the mountain due to the foundation" (Interview D). The foundation consists of members representing the interest of the community and the resort. Roupéz Ski Shop is only open during the winter and, aside from selling ski-oriented gear, the shop also manages ski rentals and the ski school. Therefore, the store employs 80 people during the winter and retains only a handful of employees during the summer (Interview D). Roupéz does not rent mountain bikes during the summer months simply because the mountain resort has reserved that opportunity in order to generate revenue and therefore, Roupéz focuses exclusively on winter sports such as skiing. However, Höganloft Restaurant is open year-round and has seen an increase in year-round guests largely due to the summer activities now offered by

the resort (Interview D). The two businesses, which are able to operate within the boundaries of the resort and under the approval of the foundation, see a direct benefit from the guests attracted to the resort.

Isaberg provides accommodations as well as a wide array of activities throughout the summer months to overcome seasonality and retain year-round staff. The Segway tours, mountain bike activities, ziplines, and facility investments all qualify as tourism entrepreneurship and are helping to solve the issue of seasonality. For instance, as stated by one interviewee in regards to the seasonal expansion of the resort, “it is within five years that the other seasons have grown thanks to mountain bike and the Tree Top Adventure. We have more activities now on the green seasons [spring/summer/fall] than before, that is why we have grown so much” (Interview H).

4.2.2. Åre Mountain Resort

The entrepreneurial community is thriving within the resort community of Åre. As noted, “Åre is a 4-season destination with 250 companies that are 100% privately financed” (Interview J). In multiple interviews conducted, we noted that entrepreneurial development was widely regarded as contributing to the success of Åre (Interview B;I;J;L). For instance, as one interviewee stated, “the density between people, creative people, creates more ideas and new innovations. You need the closeness between people. There is a very thin line between competition and cooperation” (Interview J). The density of private entrepreneurs, who rely on the attraction and brand of Åre, creates a level of competition that results in better accommodations and innovative opportunities for guests. In addition, “Year-round seasonal tourism is a more sustainable platform at least from an economic point of view for the businesses, therefore there is room to grow and to add new entrepreneurs from an all year around perspective” (Interview E). “These entrepreneurs are often the driving force for new activities and innovative measurements such as the first cog railway, the world championship events hosted by the resort, and House Be [entrepreneur hub]” (Interview J).

In addition to the small entrepreneurial stakeholders within Åre, the village is also reliant on corporations such as SkiStar, Holiday Club and Åre Destination. Niclas Sjögren Berg, Destinationschef SkiStar Åre, noted “I would estimate that SkiStar owns approximately 50% of

the sport shops”(Interview I) and, “In Åre we own 11 boutique shops and a webshop, which gets 15 million unique viewers per year”(Interview I). Similar to Isaberg, mountain biking has been successful in attracting visitors throughout the non-winter months and helping the resort to overcome seasonality. SkiStar provides the infrastructure necessary for entrepreneurs to attract visitors, but “to get our [SkiStar] support, they [guests] need to use the lifts, to use the hotel the shops and other activities so we can make money”(Interview I). Åre Destination’s approach to overcoming seasonality can be seen as the following, “we do not really innovate, we ask the private companies to do this and if they have ideas we support them...we try to find ways to not take ownership in projects because in the long run that does not really work”(Interview E). In 2006, Åre began to heavily invest in the mountain biking and is now the third largest mountain bike park in the world while also successfully hosting the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup events (Interview I). Also, “we [SkiStar] make money by selling lift tickets to hikers and bikers”(Interview I). Shorter winter seasons and unpredictable weather patterns still threaten Åre’s winter tourism market and therefore, innovative opportunities are necessary to help generate a steady stream of revenue to overcome the impact of seasonality (Interview I).

4.3. Seasonality and its effect on seasonal tourism

4.3.1. Isaberg Mountain Resort

Even after the investment of providing year-round activities to guests, the issue of seasonality continues to exist because the winter months still attract almost 75-80,000 more visitors than the summer (Interview K; M). One interviewee noted that, “we can see a clear gap between the winter and summer visitors, however, the summer tourism is steadily growing and therefore, decreasing the margin of time between seasonality”(Interview M). In 2012, when Louise Söderlund took the position as General Manager of the resort, there were virtually no summer activities offered, and the mountain solely relied on winter ski tourism. However, due to the milder winters and unpredictable snow, Louise pushed for increased investment in summer activities, which included a change in the marketing strategy thus depicting Isaberg Mountain Resort as a four-season destination and investing approximately 5 million SEK per year in cottages and summer accommodations (Interview K). The resort owns and maintains “73 houses or rental cottages and all together 350 beds”(Interview K) and the first step in increasing the seasonal attractiveness was

to improve the lodging conditions (Interview K). In the past, seasonality typically consisted of all non-snow months, when the mountain generated no revenue and was entirely closed. With the investment of year-round accommodations, the growing popularity of mountain biking, and the Treetop Adventure, as well as the other aforementioned summer activities, the period where no revenue is generated is currently only a few weeks (April 2-April 14) (Interview M).

Employment

After conducting extensive interviews and research in Isaberg, and talking with resort management in various departments, we understand that the summer activities include mountain biking, golf, and what is referred to as “treetop adventure” (ropes and swings fixed within the tops of trees). These activities are growing in popularity amongst tourists, however, they still equate to a small percentage of the overall annual visitors. For example, Josefine Vickman, the Restaurangchef and Sportchef at Isaberg, told us that circa 2017 the tree top adventure received 10,000 people, which is a significant increase compared to 5 years prior when it was first implemented and received only 3000 visitors (Interview M). Therefore, in correlation with the mountain biking, the growth of the summer activities has grown exponentially (Interview H). It is important to note, however, that the mountain does not charge a ticket for the use of the twelve mountain bike trails available for guests (Interview K) . Instead, the mountain generates revenue from the mountain bike rentals, access to the “Arena” (mountain bike center and obstacle course), and the opportunity to hire a tour guide.

Levels of employment variate from season to season, and this can be a negative effect of seasonality as staff is hired for the busy months, but then laid-off when the resort sees a decrease in visitors. According to an interview, “we [Isaberg Resort] have 20 employees all year around and another 120 during the winter and 60 in the summer” (Interview M). The year-round employees change jobs each season and begin to assist in the roles conducive to the operation of the summer resort (Interview H; M). “For us, it [year-round openness] makes it easier to keep staff from season to season.” (Interview H). Therefore, the resort is able to maintain a significant proportion of its staff year-round, reduce hiring costs, retain the knowledge and expertise of the staff, and make the transition from winter to summer activities easier (Interview H).

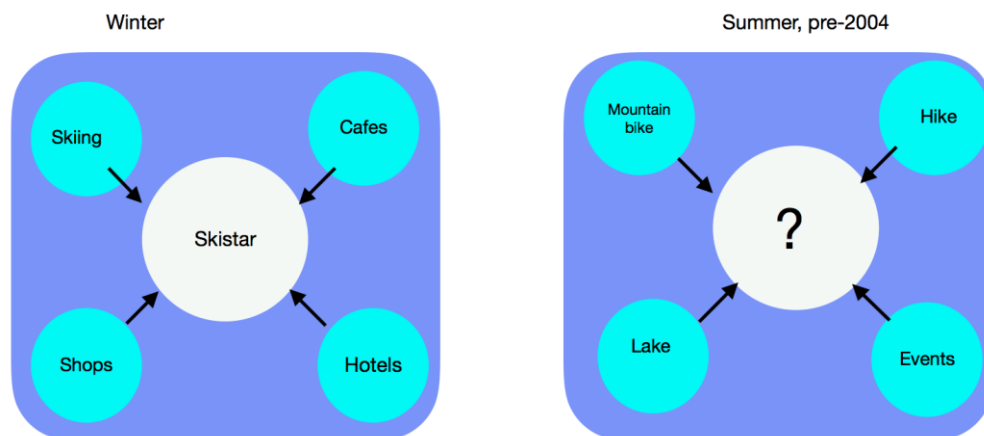
4.3.2. Åre Mountain Resort

SkiStar has implemented innovative measures to overcome seasonality and has benefited from an increase in its overall annual earnings. In 2006, Åre started investing in the mountain biking network (Interview I; J). Similar to Isaberg, the mountain biking has been key in attracting visitors throughout the non-winter months and decreasing the effects of seasonality. However, this was not an easy process and took coordination amongst the community's leadership. As noted, “now we have implemented cross country trails (winter skiing and mountain biking), but we need to figure out how to make money” (Interview I) and thus the resort, “decided to put the trails higher on the mountain, so people need to take the ski lift up the mountain [buy a lift ticket] and benefit from the views unique to Åre” (Interview I). The interviewee also stated that, “Implementing the mountain bike park costs money at first (investments), but since 2009 has been profitable each summer” (Interview I). Another interviewee explained that, “we [Åre] don't really innovate, we ask the companies to do this and if they have ideas we support them” (Interview J). These companies consist of event coordinators, guiding services, and activity investments, which in turn attracts year-round tourists.

The arrival of Holiday Club and Åre's summer attraction

Holiday Club's chairman of the board, Mats Svensson, described the year 2004 as the turning point in Åre when summer tourism began to increase due to the construction of the hotel (Interview L). Holiday Club Resorts is a Finland based vacation company that owns 35 resorts worldwide (Company Info, Holiday Club Website, accessed April 6, 2018). During the financial year, 2014-2016, Holiday Club recorded a turnover of 183 million euros and employed 782 people (Holiday Club, 2018). Although Mats currently works for Holiday Club, he has held prior positions at SkiStar Åre and has been involved within the development of the community, and operation of the ski resort for over two decades (Interview L). The interviewee describes the role of summer tourism in Åre as instrumental to both the overall growth of the community and tourism industry (Interview L). It was noted that there are three reasons why a tourist may visit a resort town such as Åre; the tourist may “just happen to stop,” “make a detour,” or make the resort a “travel destination” (Interview L). After the events in 1976 (the construction of the tram) and the mid 1990's (the involvement of SkiStar), Åre became a travel destination for many skiers and winter visitors. However, the resort community had not identified a summer seasonal attraction that could

make Åre a unique travel destination (see figure below) (Interview L). A “travel destination” differs from “just happening to stop” and a “detour” because it is what generates significant revenue for the resort and the community (Interview L). For example, it is ideal when a visitor makes the effort to travel to the destination, stay at an accommodation, and take advantage of the local offerings, while also supporting the shops and restaurants (Interview L). Mats described Åre, pre-2004, as lacking the main component, which could turn the resort and the community into a travel destination and furthermore stated “in Åre we had at the time 17,000 beds, but everything was closed and there were no hotels, shops or restaurants that remained open during the summer” (Interview L). He attributes this void within the summer season as the main reason why Åre was unsuccessful in promoting year-round tourism in the past (Interview L). Furthermore, the model outlined below can be applicable to other seasonal resorts, which are trying to expand and generate sources of revenue outside their typical busy season. This was also noted by another interviewee as, “20 years ago winter was the only time when most companies had business, so all the hotels and restaurants were only open in the winter” (Interview E).



Source: Mats Svensson (Interview L), March 27, 2018

As mentioned, Holiday Club has successfully filled this summer void and helped the resort of Åre to overcome the effects of seasonality by, “trying to get as many activities in as possible for the summer to build the travel reason as strong as possible” for tourists (Interview L) and by offering a reliable accommodation with a specific focus on summer recreation. These activities consist of both indoor and outdoor options, which is a useful strategy for overcoming seasonality, but also offering a value to guests that they can experience year-round and that is independent from the

weather (Interview E). Furthermore, SkiStar was able to capitalize on this increase in summer visitors by offering additional activities and accommodations to guests unique to the mountain. Multiple interviewees mentioned that restaurants and shops in Åre now remain open throughout the summer and generate significant revenue (Interview A;B;I;J;L). For instance, in the past, “100% of the guests were here in the winter, now it’s 85% winter 15% summer. The shops have higher turnovers because of people in the summer” (Interview J). As of now, the three key influential actors in Åre are: SkiStar, Destination Åre, and Holiday Club (Interview L) (Interview J). In order to coordinate the efforts of these three actors and promote long-term sustainable development, Åre Vision 2020 and Vision 2035 have been implemented. Åre Vision 2020 states, “The overall target is to make Åre ‘the most attractive European alpine all year destination’ through development of three areas: unique experiences year-round, concern for the environment, a borderless welcoming Åre” (Åre Kommun Website, 2018).

Events

An entrepreneurial measure that is specific to Åre, is the role that innovative events play in diminishing seasonality. One interviewee at Destination Åre stated that, “the events are very important for us, we have 30 events per year” (Interview J). Events such as the Åre Extreme Challenge (ÅEC), the Åre Bike Festival, and Workout Åre are all held throughout the spring and summer and generate significant revenue for the town in a variety of ways. For example, “the Åre Extreme challenge is great for attracting participants but also for attracting support people [family] who spend money in town” (Interview A; I). The large number of visitors, brought to Åre by the ÅEC, at the end of June helps to generate revenue for local restaurants, shops, and hotels, and has been recognized as a form of innovation that contributes to the prosperity of the resort community (Interview A). SkiStar provides some support to this event, however, the city does not provide any financial or marketing support (Interview A). For example, as one interviewee associated with the event noted, “SkiStar is a sponsor that provides funding and allows us to use their land and limited marketing channels to promote the ÅEC” (Interview A). Events organized during the low season such as, “the fall market or the summer events are more important than events that happen during Easter [or winter ski season], because big amounts of people visit us at times when we actually need people” (Interview L). The interviewee also stated that there should be a change in the city’s involvement with these types of events and that, “Sweden is very backwards compared

to other destination areas. Other destinations have a tourist tax. That tax revenue is used for events, which attract more people” (Interview A). For instance, this is a tax applied to hotel invoices and restaurant bills, designed to tax a tourist’s stay and generate revenue for the municipality around the resort. The revenue generated by this tax can assist in the development of the town, and in some cases can help to assist in the organization of tourism events. Also noted is the reality that, “A ski resort our size, a mountain village, usually has 5 or 6 times the budget that we have for doing the same type of job” (Interview J). Two of the interviews we conducted stated that a tourist tax would be beneficial for Åre, however, it is currently a contentious issue because many local businesses feel that it would negatively impact the tourism industry as whole (Interview A).

Another major event that has proved successful in attracting tourism and generating revenue is the Alpine Skiing World Cup. In 2019 Åre will host the Federation International Skiing World Championships, which will reach approximately 17 million viewers worldwide and provide valuable marketing channels for SkiStar (Interview I). Although this event occurs during the winter at the height of the busiest season, we believe it is worth mentioning since it plays a critical role in the branding of Åre Mountain Resort. To our knowledge, events do not play a major role at Isaberg Mountain Resort in overcoming seasonality. Seasonal events were not mentioned in any of the interviews conducted nor promoted by the foundation.

Employment

Similar to Isaberg, the effects of seasonality impact Åre’s employment structure throughout the year. For example, “In the winter there are 600 employees and in the summer approximately 300 employees” (Interview I). There is, as noted by an employee of SkiStar, a “huge return rate of employees as well, which is cheaper because you don’t need to retrain” (Interview I). Furthermore, “since we are now a year-round resort, we can hire employees for one year, which attracts better quality workers and people who are willing to settle in the community for long-term rather than just for a season” (Interview I).

4.4. Resort development; the tourism life cycle model

4.4.1. Isaberg Mountain Resort

The empirical evidence we have gathered shows that Isaberg is growing and expanding its resort structure with the intention of overcoming the issue of seasonality through the use of innovative activities. Although minimal, development is occurring, as one interviewee stated that, “the average occupancy in the cabins for January/February/March 2017 was 64%” and “for June/July/August it was 78% in 2017. The winter period this year, January/February/March, we have 69% occupancy” (Interview H). Also, due to the increase in visitors to the mountain, “the grocery store in Hestra has expanded their store to handle the bigger demand” (Interview H). It is apparent that Isaberg achieved a crucial level of development in 2012 when Louise Söderlund became the new general manager of the mountain and implemented various innovative strategies, such as revamping and investing in the accommodations for guests (Interview K). According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), the population of Hestra is approximately 1,300 permanent residents (SCB, 2010), and according to our empirical evidence, the total number of annual visitors to Isaberg Mountain Resort is approximately 100,000 people annually (Interview M). Therefore, we can observe that the number of tourists far outweighs the number of permanent residents. This is a critical stage of development for the resort and, assuming innovative measures are continuously implemented to overcome periods of stagnation, the mountain will have to work hard to continue to attract year-round visitors. The foundation was specifically noted in three of our interviews (Interview D; H; K), however, it was viewed as a positive attribute to the resort. Our empirical evidence illustrates the fact that the foundation was effective in the past for enabling the resort to grow sustainably by reinvesting the profits earned (Interview K).

4.4.2. Åre Mountain Resort

Åre’s process of development is advanced due to the coordination of stakeholders and with the arrival of sophisticated businesses. For instance, “In a destination, if there is property development in the area than that brings with it also other types of development” (Interview E). In addition, this successful and mature development (Interview L) is heavily reliant on coordination between local stakeholders and, “improving development relies on continuing the work on compromising/coordination efforts of what would be the future strategy of growth” (Interview E). Development of the resort and overcoming the effects of seasonality are interconnected. The

empirical evidence we have gathered proves this to be true as, “development” and “seasonality” were two key themes mentioned in the majority of the interviews conducted (Interview A; E; I; J; L). It should also be noted that the two themes, “effects of seasonality” and “entrepreneurial development” were closely linked in the evidence gathered through the interviews, specifically in the case study of Åre.

4.5. Operational structure of resorts

4.5.1. Isaberg Mountain Resort

Foundation

All summer and winter activities at the resort are overseen by a foundation, which was established by the municipality of Gislaved in 1938 and still operates today (Interview D). The foundation consists of a board of directors whom have been politically chosen and represent the interests of both the community and resort. The entire mountain is owned by the foundation including the restaurant (cafeteria), the lifts, the cottages, and activity facilities (Interview K). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, only the ski store, Roupéz Ski Shop, and the restaurant, Höganloft, are privately owned by entrepreneurs, who respectively rent the buildings from the foundation (Interview D). The foundation is self sufficient and does not receive any grants from the government. All the earnings from its facilities and activities are directly reinvested into the operation of the resort (Interview K; H). As one employee noted, “we are a foundation, we stand alone, we don’t have any extra grants from the government or kommune. Everything we earn must be reinvested again and we need to be self sufficient” (Interview K). The foundation protects the mountain from aggressive external players, but on the other hand makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to enter or disrupt the current market (Interview D), which minimizes the competitiveness within the resort’s tourism entrepreneurs. A financial report for Isaberg Mountain Resort was unable to be obtained.

4.5.2. Åre Mountain Resort

Corporate

In contrast to Isaberg, Åre is very different in respect to the operating structure of the resort. The municipality of Åre has a small number of inhabitants, therefore tax revenue is insufficient for covering the investments related to the tourism industry (Interview J). Therefore, the responsibility of development lies almost completely on SkiStar, Destination Åre, and Holiday Club as well as a few local tourism entrepreneurs (Interview A; I; J; L). As a listed company, SkiStar, AB operates in the interest of the shareholders to maximize profit and remain competitive. Profits after tax for 2017 rose by 26% to 386 million SEK and this, “allows [the resort] even greater scope for future development at our destinations” (SkiStar Annual Report, p.7, 2017). This continued development enables the resort of Åre to also expand the market reach and, “in Åre we [SkiStar] own 11 boutique shops and a web shop, which gets 15 million unique viewers per year” (Interview I). The annual report also highlights the fact that, “everything is packaged under skistar.com to simplify the booking and purchasing process and to inspire and reinforce the alpine skiing experience” (SkiStar Annual Report, 2017, p.11).

5. Analysis

5.1. Tourism entrepreneurship

In our literature review we identified the term tourism entrepreneurship. Tourism entrepreneurship relates to all companies that offer products and services focused on the tourism industry. Tourism entrepreneurs are not solely hospitality companies, but involves all commercial companies and activities independent of size, area and ownership (individual, groups, private, limited liability) (Lordkipanidze, 2002; Rusu, et al., 2012; Rusu, et al., 2017). Based on our empirical findings we argue that in Isaberg and Åre the phenomena of tourism entrepreneurship have been identified in different forms and size. Isaberg is managed by a non-commercial foundation, which therefore cannot be considered as tourism entrepreneurship (Interview D; H; K). Roupéz Skishop and Restaurant Höganloft are the only two commercial organizations focused on the tourism industry operating at the Resort outside of the foundation which can be considered as tourism entrepreneurs

(Interview D). As noted in our empirical findings, tourism entrepreneurship within Isaberg is discouraged rather than encouraged in order to protect the foundation from competition (Interview D). Åre's tourism industry, in contrast to Isaberg, is mainly based on large commercial enterprises in collaboration with smaller local organizations (Interview I; L; J; E). Based on the literature Åre's is considered as a municipality rich of tourism entrepreneurial activities even though many of the enterprises are not SMEs.

Based on our empirical findings it can be understood that the majority of the entrepreneurial tourism activities are offered by SMEs family companies (Morrison, et al., 1999; Rusu, et al., 2017; Getz, et al., 2004; Hallak, et al., 2015) In Isaberg, SMEs can offer the necessary innovative activities, however, this opportunity is not yet been acknowledged by the foundation (Interview I; L; J; E). As stated in our literature review, one of the main challenges for the SMEs is to be able to grow, often entrepreneurs are missing the combination of different skills necessary to compete with larger organizations (Rusu, et al., 2017). When looking at the support the SMEs get to be able to grow than this differs significantly between Isaberg and Åre. In Isaberg entrepreneurship is not stimulated, but seen as competition and a threat to the viability of the foundation. An interviewee stated that it will be difficult to establish as an entrepreneur on the mountain, making growth even a more complicated challenge for entrepreneurs (Interview D). Åre has an opposite mentality, entrepreneurial competition is seen as complementary services and an encouragement to rise the standards through the entire community. SMEs that want to grow are often supported financially and skills, knowledge and facilities are shared by the large organizations and Destination Åre allowing SMES to make the necessary steps to become successful enterprises and benefiting the multinational and the community as well (Interview I; L; J; E). Interesting in Åre is that the municipality in contrast to Isaberg is not involved in the support of the tourism activities and almost solely relies on the entrepreneurs to develop and maintain the tourism activities in the community (Interview A; E; I; J; L).

The literature presented in this paper highlights that tourism entrepreneurship has been stimulated and grown by the motivation of the entrepreneurs, which is typically based on lifestyle and non-financial benefits (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Haber & Reichel, 2007; Pirnar, 2015). This is a motivation often mentioned by interviewees in Åre but it was never mentioned in Isaberg, showing

differences in mentality. When looking at Åre it is also clear that the argument of Nilsson, et al., is true in which is stated that one should not consider lifestyle and the focus on profitability as two objectives which combined can't be held by an entrepreneur (Nilsson, et al., 2005; Hallak, et al., 2015). The interviews showed that the lifestyle was an important motivation, but interviewees also described the importance of commercial success for their operations (Interview A; B; I; J). Entrepreneurial characteristics were also more seen by the interviewees from Åre, they were more likely to take risks by investing in projects such as Holiday Club, House Be and events, whereas in Isaberg risks have been reduced with the foundation absorbing risks when they occur. Actions such as placing the hiking trails high on the mountain show that Åre applies innovative measures to overcome seasonality and adapt its winter operations that they are also applicable in the summer (Interview A; E; I; J; L). Isaberg on the other hand is less entrepreneurial and is not trying to commercialize most of their current winter facilities during the other seasons.

The effects of tourism entrepreneurship are identified when comparing Isaberg and Åre. Our literature review states: The development of the tourism industry can positively impact local economies and SMEs play a dominant role (Morrison, et al., 1999; Rusu, et al., 2017; Getz, et al., 2004; Hallak, et al., 2015). When looking at the municipality of Isaberg people will only find tourism products and services offered at the mountain resort, but little to no companies related to tourism can be found outside the mountain down in the village of Hestra. It can be concluded that the Isaberg's surrounding community does not benefit from the tourism industry. However, Åre's dependence on tourism is clearly evident. Interviewees described the city feel within the village as the success factor of Åre, which is not seen in Isaberg.

5.2. Seasonality and its effects on seasonal tourism

Our empirical evidence indicates that the overall fluctuation in the levels of employment and year-round visitors for both resorts is underlying proof that seasonality still impacts the resorts. However, as each resort continues to overcome the effects of seasonality, the fluctuation is minimized and thus the transition between seasonal offerings becomes smoother.

According to the literature review, seasonality occurs when destinations earn their annual earnings only from a specific period of the year (Butler, 2001) and is often caused by the weather, public vacations and consumer behavior (Hylleberg, 1992). Therefore, certain season(s) are considered to be high seasons (busy) while others are considered “low” or “off-seasons” (not busy). (Butler, 2014). Seasonality is often a predictable phenomenon making it easier to respond more accurately (Hartmann, 1986; Butler, 2014). The empirical evidence clearly illustrates that Isaberg is coping with seasonality. The resort is experiencing winters, which are becoming milder on average and, although investments have been made in summer activities, winter activities still attract almost ten times the number of visitors (Interview K; M) but this is starting to change. For example, the tree top adventure offered at Isaberg grew in 5 years from 3000 to 10,000 visitors (Interview M). When looking at Åre between 1979 and 2004 there was no development considering spring, summer, or fall activities and everything was closed after the winter (Interview E; J; L). Seasonality after 1979 meant it was hard to survive when the winter ski season was dismal due to lack of snow (Interview L), and the single season focus is less sustainable from an economic point of view (Interview E).

Multiple sources have shown that temperatures in North Europe are rising and causing a reduction of snow-days (Jylhä et al. 2004; Landauer, et al., 2009; Carter & Kankaanpää, 2003). Therefore, for some destinations seasonality can be unpredictable because of the changing climate (Carter & Kankaanpää, 2003; Landauer, et al., 2009). This is also a challenge that Isaberg is facing as the winters have become less predictable than in the past (Interview K).

When looking at Åre, the winter season is considerably more predictable than when compared to other destinations, such as Isaberg, because Åre is located farther north latitude (Interview D). However, in the summer the destination has to cope with unpredictable weather and cooler temperatures not conducive to summer activities (Interview L). Åre implemented innovations to reduce seasonality and the risks of unpredictable weather by the emergence of Holiday Club in 2004. Holiday Club successfully offers activities, which are not affected by weather such as an indoor pool and a waterpark (Interview E; L). Unlike Åre our empirical findings did not identify measures taken in Isaberg to overcome the unpredictability of the winter weather other than investments in the snow making machines (Interview K; Isaberg Mountain Resort website, 2017). The same accounts for the summer activities, which are mainly outdoor focused and no indoor

activities are offered as a replacement activity in case of inclement weather (Isaberg Mountain Resort website, 2017). When seasonality is unpredictable, the destinations are much more vulnerable to the loss of revenue (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001), which will be the case for Isaberg based on the empirical evidence we have gathered.

Seasonality has advantages and disadvantages considering the number of visitors and revenue that is generated (Butler, 2014). When seasons are tightly linked, a small seasonal gap might actually be necessary for some resorts to address repairs and maintenance within the resort (Butler, 2014). Due to the success of the summer period, and the reduction of the seasonal gap, Isaberg purposefully closes for a couple of weeks to check the mountain bike trails and conduct annual maintenance (Interview M). In Åre a small gap exists from the beginning of May to the middle of June when only a small number of guests visit Åre (Interview I). In Isaberg, the main disadvantages of seasonality are that it reduces the profitability during the low season due to the unused facilities. Furthermore, seasonality forces the resort to hire temporary employees losing their expertise at the end of the season (Interview C). In the case of Isaberg, the advantage of seasonality is designated time for facility maintenance, which no time is available during the high season (Interview C).

Butler highlights multiple strategies for overcoming seasonality, which can be found in the literature review. Isaberg started to use since 2013 a combination of “revamping the destination” and “adding a second main season.” Åre started much earlier, in 2004, with implementing techniques to overcome seasonality. Åre implemented a combination of strategies, such as: “revamping the destination”, “adding a second main season” and providing “different activities in the low season” to reduce the off-season effects (Butler, 2014).

Isaberg has revamped its destination to make it more attractive for visitors. The image of the destination has changed from winter tourism destination to a year-round destination by investing in the implementation of numerous summer activities and marketing to spread this new image. The summer activities have attracted new main target groups, which include mountain bikers and their families. Åre chose to revamp the destination by making major investments in the construction of Holiday Club in 2004 and by offering summer activities and activities not dependent on the weather (Interview E; L). The marketing image of Åre was also adjusted, additionally to the images

of skiing in the winter, pictures representing the nine green months of the year were spread to imprint in people minds the new style of resort (Interview J).

Isaberg can also be connected to the concept of “adding a second main season” strategy because the resort added summer activities to their original winter destination. Isaberg did not take a very innovative approach considering their use of existing facilities. Although they use some of their winter accommodation facilities for summer visitors they are not using the lifts for hikers or mountain bikers, which could ultimately generate additional revenue. Furthermore, due to the control of the foundation, little entrepreneurial activity occurs within the resort for identifying innovative opportunities. The resort is innovative in the management of their employees and now due to the year-round activities, Isaberg is able to maintain employees throughout all the seasons. Most employees change roles in accordance to the season and this helps the resort operate efficiently (Interview C; H; K; M). This strategy was executed much thoroughly in the community of Åre. The village was a traditional winter resort, which out of necessity added a summer season. The resort has been using the ski lifts during the summer for mountain biking and hiking activities. They have placed the trails on the mountain to force people to use the existing facilities and generate an income for the resort (Interview I).

In addition, Åre also used the strategy of applying, “different activities in the low season” whereby events in the off season were stimulated and supported by SkiStar to attract more year-round visitors to their facilities (Interview I; J). SkiStar executes this strategy by only financially supporting the events during the off-season and by using the existing facilities to enable the resort to benefit from these off-season events (Interview I; J).

Only a small number of resorts have overcome the negative effects of seasonality due to the fact that it’s very difficult to involve and cooperate with all service suppliers necessary to run a seasonal resort (Butler, 2014). This was certainly the case of Åre as traditionally most company owners and employees moved away during the summer to generate income elsewhere in Sweden (Interview J). Also, when the off-season is quiet, “it is the most logic and efficient thing to close everything down because you have so little people here, we had people in the summer, we always had, but it was at such a low scale so it [summer tourism] really did not get going” (Interview J).

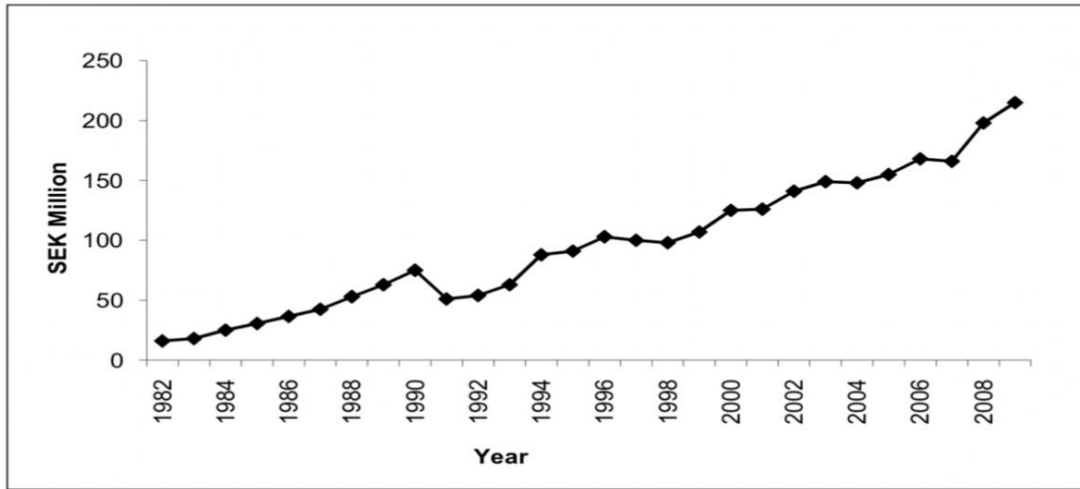
At first, business owners had to remain open throughout the non-winter months for the greater good of Åre and they did not generate significant revenue (Interview J). Now, although year-round tourism has increased, the destination still has a long way to go with 85% of the visitors in the winter and 15% in the summer, but companies are benefiting from increasing turnovers (Interview J). Also, revenue generated in the summer is growing at a faster rate compared to the winter (Interview I).

5.3. Resort development; the tourism life cycle model

Åre resort's development can be seen as a contributing factor to the entrepreneurial opportunities in overcoming seasonal gaps. As outlined in the empirical findings chapter (chapter 4), we know that the growth attributed from ski lift-ticket sales rose from 100 million SEK to 200 million SEK between 2000 and 2008 (SLAO report) at Åre Mountain Resort (see figure 6). In addition, we also know that past scholars have previously categorized Åre Mountain Resort as reaching the final phase of "decline" in the mid-1990's, but after the change of ownership to SkiStar, the mountain entered a period of rejuvenation (Nordin & Westlund, 2009). However, it has become apparent that although winter lift ticket sales were steadily rising, the early 2000's can be characterized as a period of stagnation in the resort's year-round and thus overall development. The threats to development posed by seasonality were becoming apparent, and according to an interview with the management at Holiday Club, "in the early 2000's there was a big job placed in Åre as the top executives from the municipality (Destination Åre), SkiStar, and Holiday Club formed a group to find solutions to the small problems, but the big problems of seasonal spreading [seasonality] were not being discussed" (Interview L).

Figure 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKI LIFT TURNOVER IN SEK MILLION FROM 1982-2009 IN THE SKI AREA ÅRE-EDSÅSDALEN



(SLAO; Nordin & Westlund, 2009)

Soon after Vision 2011 was implemented there was, “coordination between all organizations so everyone looked at the same main points” (Interview L) and in addition, “In 2006 Holiday Club opened and that enabled the opening of the Åre Bike Park, which was part of the five-year strategy plan” for growth (Interview I). The implementation of the mountain bike facilities, along with the entrance of Holiday Club to the market in 2004, were the first innovative endeavors, characterized by the definition of tourism entrepreneurship, that enabled the resort to flourish beyond the winter season and therefore transformed Åre from a “travel stop” to a “travel destination” and also generated significant revenue (Interview L). The coordination efforts of the leadership, embedded within Åre Mountain Resort, also enabled the resort to overcome the effects of stagnation and re-enter the rejuvenation phase (as characterized in the model- see figure 1), which was largely due to the expansion of the summer activities offered. Furthermore, while conducting the interviews in Åre, we were able to see a distinct correlation between the words “development” and “coordination” as over half of our respondents noted the importance of these two terms within both the community and resort for overcoming seasonality (Interview L; I; E; J). The stages of this model occur linearly, but overall it is a cyclical process (Butler, 1980). The resort needs to innovate or develop new offerings constantly even after it has reached the crucial phase of rejuvenation thereby, “allowing the areas [resorts] to experience year-round tourist industry” (Butler, 1980, p.9). Popular brands such as *Stadium*, *Espresso House*, and *Audi* are heavily marketed and offered

to visitors; some critics see this as evidence that the resort has lost its uniqueness and could be on the path of overall decline. According to one interviewee, however, this type of development actually has the opposite effect and is proof that Åre has matured as a destination. By attracting the big organizations, the resort is better at fostering year-round development (Interview I). For instance, the interviewee states, “Now after the winter season, owners aren’t too tired from waiting tables themselves and can continue operation throughout the summer.” (Interview I).

The in-depth qualitative analysis we conducted in Åre, in correlation with the theoretical framework developed by Butler life cycle model has illustrated the necessity that improving development heavily relies on the coordination efforts of the leadership within the resort community (Interview E). In this respect, it is apparent that Destination Åre, SkiStar, and Holiday Club act as the influential members within the resort. Therefore, they must provide an ecosystem that is conducive for tourism entrepreneurs to seek opportunities to capture the value of the Åre brand and thus help the resort to overcome the challenges of seasonality. In line with the method outlined in the content analyzing method (Gioia et.al, 2012), the collected data was compared and cross referenced to theory in order to gain a better understanding of the entrepreneurial development within Åre for overcoming seasonality (see figure 4).

As noted in the empirical section of our paper (chapter 4), we see that Isaberg Mountain Resort has entered the consolidation phase of the tourism life cycle model (Butler, 1980). Unlike Åre, however, Isaberg still needs to develop through the stagnation phase and, thus will likely enter the phases of either rejuvenation or decline depending on the type of development pursued. The stagnation phase, however, is a critical part of the life cycle model as it is when, “capacity levels for many variables [offerings] have been reached or exceeded” (Butler, 1980, p.8). Thus, it is how the resort manages this development that determines the next stages of the model, critical for the longevity of the resort and its attractiveness. Similar to Åre, coordination efforts amongst the leadership have been implemented within the resort and this has enabled a certain level of growth to provide various entrepreneurial opportunities for overcoming seasonality. Our interviewee stated that, “before 2012, all the investments were put in the winter season” (Interview K). This winter-oriented investment was clearly not sustainable for the future interest of the resort, and year-round activities needed to be offered to generate revenue (Interview K). With the arrival of

Louise Söderlund as General Manager of the resort in 2012, investments were made in summer activities such as mountain biking, ziplines, and Segway tours and slowly the resort began to expand its seasonal offerings. However, unlike Åre, Isaberg is operated as a foundation, which entails that any development is tightly controlled and monitored. Aside from the attraction of the ski resort in the winter, there are currently only two private tourism entrepreneurs, who directly benefit from the resort visitors: Roupéz Ski Shop and Höganloft Restaurant. As one interviewee noted, “It won’t be easy to be an entrepreneur on the mountain due to the foundation” (Interview D). We also understand that out of these two privately owned businesses (offerings) associated with the resort, only one (Höganloft) is open year-round. Therefore, unlike Åre, which provides the attraction and encourages entrepreneurs to develop the complimentary offerings for tourists, Isaberg Mountain Resort attempts to provide the full experience to the visitors, which also includes the mountain bike rentals, entertainment, and accommodation. Our analysis indicates that coordination, although varying, exists within both identified resorts; however, the foundation’s control of Isaberg makes it harder for entrepreneurship to occur, and therefore, the innovative strategies for overcoming seasonality are lost and thus business opportunities foregone.

It is important to note that when analyzing these two resorts, there is a clear difference in the number of visitors and revenue generated. For example, as noted in the empirical section (chapter 5) 90,000 people visit Isaberg annually (Interview M) while Åre receives approximately 400,000 guests per year (Interview J). However, the tourism life cycle model (Butler, 1980) has enabled us to analyze the development process of each resort beyond simply looking at the number of visitors that each resort receives. Our analysis indicates that Åre is slightly ahead of Isaberg in respect to the development model (see figure 4). Furthermore, Åre has proven to be more successful at identifying entrepreneurial opportunities for overcoming seasonality largely due to the attractions offered, the coordination strategy implemented by the resort, and the innovative opportunities identified by tourist entrepreneurs. The operation structure and resort management are also contributing factors to this dichotomy between the two resorts, which will be outlined in the next section.

5.4. Operational structure of resorts

As noted in both the theoretical section (chapter 2) and the empirical evidence (chapter 4), when analyzing Isaberg and Åre, it is necessary to consider the operation structure and management of the resort. One interviewee noted that in general there are small differences between ski destinations. For example, all modern resorts have similar lift services, snowmaking technology, and grooming equipment, however, “the operation (management) is the main difference amongst resorts” (Interview I). Therefore, we will utilize two definitions when looking at the operation structure of a ski resort: the community and corporate models (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). The community model promotes a certain level of coordination within Isaberg Mountain Resort, however, it is not as effective at attracting tourism entrepreneurship largely because it discourages investment from outside stakeholders. In line with Åre, the corporate model implies that the resort destination is managed by a registered corporation (Flagestad & Hope, 2001) and is driven foremost by profits and earnings. When asked about tourism entrepreneurship within the resort, one interviewee responded that, “Isaberg bring guests to the area and that way more people profit from it. The grocery store in Hestra has expanded their store to handle the bigger demand, partly from our guests. Most people in Hestra are very proud of “their” mountain” (Interview H). This shows that the community model is an effective start in attracting year-round tourism to the resort, and therefore overcome aspects of seasonality.

In order to remain competitive and identify innovative opportunities, SkiStar has proven that the corporate model is effective. In order for this, it is also dependent on a strong brand identity within the resort. For example, “we [Åre] have the town feeling, the café’s etc. the city life, but the mountains are in our backyard...a combination of wilderness and city life” (Interview J). To be successful, “you have to structure your product and implement the correct marketing strategies to brand your product” (Interview L). The management of the resort has promoted an opportunity focused ecosystem, conducive to tourism entrepreneurship, to thrive. In addition, the coordination amongst the resort’s key players has provided the necessary infrastructure for attracting year-round visitors and thus for overcoming seasonality. For example, the coordination amongst the resort and tourism entrepreneurs can be seen as, “We sell lift tickets, which is the main revenue generator, however, we also work with accommodations [entrepreneurs], which is the second biggest money

maker, ski school is the third important factor. Deals with accommodation owners to rent beds to the right guest, which is the guest who will ski and buy a lift ticket at the resort.

The community model applied in Isaberg is less effective when creating an environment that is beneficial to tourism entrepreneurs and fostering continued development. We can see that, regardless of the annual earnings and profits generated, the stage of the resort's development is reliant on tourism entrepreneurship, which is thus dependent on the coordination of the resort's leadership. We can now also note that this coordination is dependent on the management of the resort. In light of the theoretical structure of resorts (Flagestad & Hope, 2001), if the resort is too connected internally (i.e. foundation) it can actually discourage outside actors from investing in the seasonal activities and identifying marketable combinations. On the contrary, the corporate model has enabled Åre Mountain Resort to utilize this structure of coordination, which has proved largely successful in the winter, to overcome the effects of seasonality and attract year-round tourism.

6. Conclusion

This master's thesis explores the contextual conditions of entrepreneurship in overcoming seasonality within travel destinations. Certain variations of entrepreneurial activity exist within both resorts; however, it is evident that Åre is more effective at utilizing entrepreneurship to overcome the negative implications of seasonality. There are three identified reasons for Åre's success: the coordination amongst influential stakeholders (evident in Vision 2020/2035), Åre's stage of development and maturation, the collaboration amongst SMEs and larger entities of entrepreneurs, and the resort's corporate operational structure (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). Each of these factors conclude that Åre is able to promote an environment more conducive to attracting tourism entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Isaberg's growth is reliant on the foundation, or community model (Flagestad & Hope, 2001); evidence that this model has prevented the resort from growing beyond its current stage of development. It is evident that Isaberg's operational structure has enabled the resort to grow through the early stages of development, pre-2012, but

due to the lack of coordination and outside entrepreneurial development, the mountain will continue to face certain challenges for developing as a year-round tourist attraction and thereby overcoming the negative implications of seasonality.

Our research also indicates that both resorts have effectively developed into winter destinations. Åre is at the stage of rejuvenation as a resort and Isaberg resides at the stage of stagnation (Butler, 1980). Specific actions taken to overcome seasonality differs for both resorts; for example, Åre has focused on developing outdoor summer and weather independent (indoor) activities, whereas Isaberg has mainly focused on adding new outdoor summer activities to the resort. Therefore, it can be concluded that Åre is better prepared and protected from the effects of unpredictable weather, which correlates with our analysis of effective year-round development.

In light of our research, we can conclude that tourism entrepreneurship is instrumental for the development of seasonal destinations and is described as the activities that are involved in the development of companies aiming to meet the tourist needs (Rusu, et al., 2017). However, limited research in the past has focused on the relation between seasonal tourism and entrepreneurship (Cheng, et al., 2011; Solvoll, et al., 2016). Although, not critical at the early stages of the resorts life, entrepreneurial endeavors, specifically those that innovate to generate business are crucial for overcoming seasonality. Furthermore, when needing to expand to overcome seasonality, and without being vulnerable to unpredictable weather patterns, the destination needs major investments often only possible with the support and coordination of external stakeholders, which our research indicates includes that of the SMEs and larger corporations. This effectively attracts tourism entrepreneurship, which brings a level of competition and thus improves the quality of the offerings provided. This competition also has a positive spillover effect on other tourism companies within the destination considering the increase of visitors utilizing the available facilities. We can conclude that the connection of tourism entrepreneurship within a travel destination is critical for the resort's overall year-round development and for overcoming the negative implications of seasonality.

7. Future research

In light of our own research and our extensive conversations with Professor Maria Lexhagen, we have identified pertinent areas for future research. We suggest the focus be central to the continued development process of both Isaberg and Åre in respect to maturation of year-round investments by the resort. In addition, identifying the specific strategies for tourism entrepreneurs to collaborate and the benefits and challenges for mainstream entrepreneurs to collaborate with tourism entrepreneurs and the resort community would be beneficial for future research. In light of our analysis, the effects of tourism entrepreneurs for promoting long-term development within the resort community would be of relevance as well; however, a study of this nature would well-exceed the timeline of our own master's thesis.

8. Appendices

Figure 2

Interview guideline for semi-structured interviews conducted in Åre and Isaberg

1. Your profession and involvement within the organization?
2. Can you provide a timeline with specific innovations that may have helped the organization develop in a positive manner?
3. Innovations you see for the future development of the resort?
4. Your view of entrepreneurial activities within seasonal tourism?
5. How has general tourism developed within the resort?
6. Is seasonality (lack of snow) an issue for the resort?
 - a. If so, what does Isaberg/Åre do to overcome seasonality? Major milestones achieved?
7. Have you seen an increase in permanent residences within the resort community?
8. Is it possible for entrepreneurial development to occur within the resort?
9. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a tourism entrepreneur in Isaberg/Åre?
10. How dependent is the Isaberg/Åre resort area on tourism?
 11. What has the resort community done to support and stimulate entrepreneurship/tourism in Isaberg/Åre?
12. What is the municipalities involvement with Isaberg/Åre?
 13. In your opinion, what are the points of improvement for tourism and/or entrepreneurship in Isaberg/Åre?
14. How could Isaberg/Åre resorts impact the surrounding communities or vice versa?
15. Do you have 2 or 3 contacts who you think would be willing to talk to us in Isaberg/Åre?

Figure 5



Figure 6



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