



# **Master's degree thesis**

**IDR950 Sport Management**

**“Marketing Mountains for the future of Geilo”:  
Co-creating value by including stakeholders in the  
sustainable development process of a ski resort**

**Benjamin Moeyersons**

**Number of pages including this page: 100**

**Molde, 14/05/2018**



**Molde University College**  
Specialized University in Logistics

## Mandatory statement

Each student is responsible for complying with rules and regulations that relate to examinations and to academic work in general. The purpose of the mandatory statement is to make students aware of their responsibility and the consequences of cheating. Failure to complete the statement does not excuse students from their responsibility.

|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Please complete the mandatory statement by placing a mark <u>in each box</u> for statements 1-6 below. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1.                                                                                                     | I/we hereby declare that my/our paper/assignment is my/our own work, and that I/we have not used other sources or received other help than mentioned in the paper/assignment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2.                                                                                                     | I/we hereby declare that this paper <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has not been used in any other exam at another department/university/university college</li> <li>2. Is not referring to the work of others without acknowledgement</li> <li>3. Is not referring to my/our previous work without acknowledgement</li> <li>4. Has acknowledged all sources of literature in the text and in the list of references</li> <li>5. Is not a copy, duplicate or transcript of other work</li> </ol> | Mark each box:<br>1. <input type="checkbox"/><br>2. <input type="checkbox"/><br>3. <input type="checkbox"/><br>4. <input type="checkbox"/><br>5. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.                                                                                                     | I am/we are aware that any breach of the above will be considered as cheating, and may result in annulment of the examination and exclusion from all universities and university colleges in Norway for up to one year, according to the <a href="#">Act relating to Norwegian Universities and University Colleges, section 4-7 and 4-8</a> and <a href="#">Examination regulations</a> section 14 and 15.                                                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4.                                                                                                     | I am/we are aware that all papers/assignments may be checked for plagiarism by a software assisted plagiarism check                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 5.                                                                                                     | I am/we are aware that Molde University College will handle all cases of suspected cheating according to prevailing guidelines.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 6.                                                                                                     | I/we are aware of the University College's <a href="#">rules and regulation for using sources</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                  |

# Publication agreement

ECTS credits: 30

Supervisor: Harald Dolles

## Agreement on electronic publication of master thesis

Author(s) have copyright to the thesis, including the exclusive right to publish the document (The Copyright Act §2).

All theses fulfilling the requirements will be registered and published in Brage HiM, with the approval of the author(s).

Theses with a confidentiality agreement will not be published.

**I/we hereby give Molde University College the right to, free of charge, make the thesis available for electronic publication:** ☒yes ☐no

**Is there an agreement of confidentiality?** ☐yes ☒no

(A supplementary confidentiality agreement must be filled in)

- If yes: **Can the thesis be online published when the period of confidentiality is expired?** ☐yes ☐no

**Date: 14/05/2018**

## **Preface**

This master thesis is the conclusion of my two years of being a master student at Molde University College. The two years of sport management have taught me a lot and I'm glad to be able to deliver this thesis as a product of my degree.

The thesis development process has been exciting and interesting, both on a professional as well as academic level. I have always had an interest in marketing and a passion for snowboarding. The topic of this thesis therefore developed when moving to Geilo for a job as head coach of the snowboard club. Seen that the whole ski resort is under new management now, I got intrigued by the developments which further lead to the topic of my thesis.

In cooperation with my supervisor Harald Dolles, whom I am really grateful, I have been able to fulfill this thesis. He has been there along the way to guide me in my thoughts, develop concrete structures out of brainstorming sessions, and be critical to the drafts I came up with. So I would like to thank him, along with all the other people that have helped me along the way: Geilo IL, the interviewees, the tourists, and everyone else who has enabled me to write this thesis.

I would like to show my gratitude towards SkiGeilo for giving me the opportunity of writing my thesis about their developments. My aim is to provide an overall perspective from various parties involved in the developments with the hopes of contributing to the overall development of the unique mountain destination that Geilo is.

Benjamin Moeyersons,  
Molde, 2018.

## Summary

Sustainable development has become an important topic in both sports as well as tourism, especially in winter tourism. Seasons have become less predictable, a maturation of ski resorts is visible, and an overall increase in tourism is ongoing. This has put a big pressure on the overall management of ski resorts having to perform to the best of their abilities and continuously improving themselves to sustain the tourism flow. Several processes lead into the sustainable development of a destination. Value co-creation is one of the most accessible competitive advantages to compete appropriately in the business of winter sports. This due to its importance on both a consumer experience level as well as on a sustainable development level. Strategic performance can therefore be achieved by sustained value creation in winter sports destinations, where sustained value creation reflects the combined community, stakeholder, and business goals of strategic success in a destination. Consequently this thesis focusses on how ski resorts can develop themselves into co-creating a sustainable future. Marketing strategies have been deemed crucial for effective management and overall development, and will therefore be more looked into which strategies are needed. Also the inclusion of the local community and stakeholders is investigated as research showed that a multi-stakeholder concept should be included in the tourism development planning of destination management. This because one can achieve a long-term sustainable competitiveness on the market when connecting stakeholders with different interests within a tourism destination. Drawing from the findings of this thesis overall marketing and management strategies have been discussed as well as the inclusion of the local stakeholders. This thesis offers a qualitative approach making use of a conceptual framework linking sustainable development, value creation, and stakeholder management. The processes and outcomes show that effective management is needed and inclusion of the local community is wanted. The thesis concludes by giving a reflection of the developments as well as recommendations to co-create a sustainable future for ski resorts.

Key words: sustainable development, winter sports, winter sports tourism, sustainable tourism, marketing strategies, value co-creation, stakeholder management, community participation, destination marketing, effective management

# Contents

|       |                                              |    |
|-------|----------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.0   | Introduction & Research questions .....      | 1  |
| 1.1   | Evolution of winter sports and tourism ..... | 1  |
| 1.2   | Research questions .....                     | 2  |
| 1.3   | Thesis outline .....                         | 3  |
| 2.0   | Case description .....                       | 4  |
| 2.1   | Brief history of Geilo .....                 | 4  |
| 2.2   | Brief history of SkiGeilo .....              | 6  |
| 2.3   | Current situation .....                      | 7  |
| 2.3.1 | Geilo as a destination .....                 | 7  |
| 2.3.2 | SkiGeilo .....                               | 9  |
| 3.0   | Theoretical framework for research .....     | 10 |
| 3.1   | Developing the necessary components .....    | 10 |
| 3.1.1 | Sustainable development .....                | 10 |
| 3.1.2 | Value creation .....                         | 12 |
| 3.1.3 | Stakeholder management .....                 | 14 |
| 3.2   | Research framework .....                     | 17 |
| 4.0   | Methodology .....                            | 18 |
| 4.1   | Abductive approach .....                     | 18 |
| 4.2   | Research design .....                        | 19 |
| 4.2.1 | Case study .....                             | 19 |
| 4.2.2 | Qualitative approach .....                   | 19 |
| 4.2.3 | Participant observation .....                | 19 |
| 4.3   | Data collection .....                        | 20 |
| 4.3.1 | Choice of stakeholders .....                 | 20 |
| 4.3.2 | The interview process .....                  | 21 |
| 4.4   | Data Analysis .....                          | 24 |
| 5.0   | Findings .....                               | 25 |
| 5.1   | SkiGeilo .....                               | 25 |
| 5.1.1 | Geilo Holding .....                          | 25 |
| 5.1.2 | Slaatta Skisenter .....                      | 31 |
| 5.2   | Stakeholders .....                           | 34 |
| 5.2.1 | Directly involved actors .....               | 34 |
| 5.2.2 | Indirectly involved actors .....             | 45 |
| 5.3   | Tourists .....                               | 56 |
| 6.0   | Discussion .....                             | 59 |
| 6.1   | Sustainable development .....                | 59 |
| 6.2   | Value creation .....                         | 67 |
| 6.3   | Stakeholder management .....                 | 69 |
| 7.0   | Conclusion .....                             | 70 |
| 8.0   | References .....                             | 76 |
| 9.0   | Appendices .....                             | 81 |

## Figures

|                                                                                                                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: Amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol Kommune from 2000-2017 in the period June-August (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017) .....   | 7  |
| Figure 2: Amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol Kommune from 2000-2017 in the period January-April (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017) ..... | 8  |
| Figure 3: Tourism stakeholders Gutierrez et al. 2005 .....                                                                                   | 14 |
| Figure 4: Research framework .....                                                                                                           | 17 |
| Figure 5: Categories of the interviewees .....                                                                                               | 20 |
| Figure 6: Strengths of the destination as summarized from the interviews .....                                                               | 61 |
| Figure 7: Applied research framework for SkiGeilo.....                                                                                       | 72 |

## Tables

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: List of expert interviews ..... | 22 |
| Table 2: Demographics tourists .....     | 23 |

## **1.0 Introduction & Research questions**

In this chapter, I will introduce you to the thesis, its topic, and the importance of the matter. The twofold development starts with some background information regarding the topic. This evolves into theoretical questions and the research gap. On the other hand there is also a practical relevance to the topic which will be explained further.

### ***1.1 Evolution of winter sports and tourism***

“The ski and snowboard industry has experienced remarkable growth in the last fifty years. It is estimated that today there are some 120 million skiers and snowboarders worldwide, with around 2,000 ski resorts in 80 countries catering to this important market” (Hudson & Hudson, 2015, p. 7). Looking at the current situation one can ask what the parameters of a ski resort are. This with the rise of artificial snow as well as artificial slopes and resorts. When adding all the different small ski resorts, artificial slopes, and snow “domes” as they are called, the number could be even five times bigger. While some destinations have become already well established, other new locations are upcoming and competing for future generations of skiers and snowboarders. The continuous development of innovative technology and equipment has also contributed to the development of winter sports and their resorts (Wingle, 1995). This has for example been taken into account by the Chinese bid on the Winter Olympics 2022. With an increase of 23.48% of total ski resorts compared to the previous year there is a significant increase in ski resorts (Bont, 2017). Several investors have shifted their focus and started to see the ski industry as a long-term investment. “The ski industry is seen as a capital intensive and long-term investment but the profit potentials over long periods tend to be quite large as the cost of creating facilities and the limited geographic and climatic factors limit the alternatives.” (Bont, 2017, p. 1).

However, at the same time, those climatic factors and climate changes have been posing challenges to ski resorts all over the world (Yang & Wan, 2010). Seen that winter sports and its tourism depend heavily on climate conditions, global concern has been raised. The loss of skiable areas, the shortening of skiing seasons, and the drop of ski visitors in low altitude and latitude ski areas are some of various problems that might occur. Those changes require a new look on this continuously evolving and dynamic industry.

These ongoing developments and changes imply the need for the application of a sustainable development strategy for these destinations. Various studies have been conducted already with regards to ski resorts and their impact on tourism development (Dengler, 2013; Lasanta, Laguna, & Vicente-Serrano, 2007), the sustainability of both winter sports events (Osterwalder, 2015) as well as ski resorts (Turner & Kasnet, 2005). What all of these former research articles have in common is that they all call for an improvement in decision-making regarding sustainability (Bonzanigo L. , 2016). In Norway sustainable tourism has even become a superior goal of the governmental tourism policy (Aall, 2014). Although the theoretical concept of sustainable development has been around for years, the applicability in the corporate world still remains to be explored.

Sustainable development involves trade-offs among several objectives: narrow-scope economic goals, social objectives and environmental impacts (De Brucker, Macharis, & Verbeke, 2013). Here is mentioned that to ensure an effective project implementation the objectives should reflect the interests of stakeholder groups such as project developers, consumers, and third parties affected by the project. The stakeholder management approach corroborates to this statement and proposes that organisations should broaden their objectives to address the interests of a wide variety of salient stakeholder (McGee, 1998). As mentioned by Maroudas, Kyriakaki & Gouvis (2011, p.1) “one of the most important prerequisites of the effective management of mountain destinations is the direct involvement of local communities in the decision-making process”.

## ***1.2 Research questions***

This study aims to identify how a ski resort interacts with its stakeholders and how this influences the success, growth, and sustainable development of the resort and the overall destination.

More specifically, the main research question can be formulated:

“ How can ski resorts develop themselves into co-creating a sustainable future?”

Divided into more specific sub-research questions:

- What kind of management and marketing strategies are necessary to develop a sustainable future?
- How are stakeholders included into the development of a sustainable future?

In this case I'm going to look more closely into the ski resort of Geilo, namely SkiGeilo.

SkiGeilo is no different than any other ski resort in the world in the sense that it also deals with the developments in winter sports and tourism and will have to continue to do so in the future. In this specific case Geilo has coped with a constellation of owners throughout the years and ended up going closer and closer to bankruptcy as a winter sports provider. Seen that Geilo is a small community, the influence of stakeholders might be even more important when setting forth big projects. Geilo as a destination gains a big percentage from its tourism and thus sustaining that tourism flow is a must. This with substantiated sustainable development - and marketing strategies to improve the business and portray these developments.

### ***1.3 Thesis outline***

The practical relevance and the research gap will be developed in the case description and theoretical framework respectively. This to provide a better overview of both the practical - as well as the academic side why this topic is important. From there I will continue with the methodology of how I conducted my research, towards findings and discussion, and to end with my overall conclusion on the matter.

## 2.0 Case description

### 2.1 *Brief history of Geilo*

“Nestled between two of Norway’s majestic national parks, Geilo attracts adventurers from all over the world. But its beauty is more than skin-deep: Geilo isn’t just a thriving town, but the civic embodiment of a different mode of being” (Medhus P., 2016, p. 13). Located right between Hallingskarvet national Park and Hardangervidda national park in Hallingsdal valley, Geilo is situated 794 meters above sea level (Visit Geilo, 2017a). A map of Geilo, SkiGeilo and the brochure of the destination can be found in appendix (Appendix 1-4). Geilo has a population of approximately 2500 inhabitants in Geilo itself and 4700 in the whole municipality called Hol. It is known for its nature and activities, and is part of the county Buskerud (Hol Kommune, 2017). Besides its year-round inhabitants there are 6000 cabins to be found in the area.

Dating back to the prehistoric and historic times many cultural relics have been found at Fekjo by Ustedalsfjorden in Geilo. These burials in the area come from the Viking Age (900’s) (Visit Geilo, 2017a). Several other artefacts have been found as well telling tales about the Haugafolken. You can find different varieties of them all over Norway, and there are different stories of how they came to be. In this area there are a lot of stories of people that have seen and experienced things. The Haugafolken live in a parallel universe of humans and take care of the mountain farms when there are no humans there. So when humans come back in summer they have to make noise to let them know that they’re back (interview 8). Before the modern times and tourism-related industries Geilo’s two main industries were the tool making industry and farming. It started off as a mountain farm village, where the people down in the valley had their mountain farms up here during summer. Numerous coal pits and ironworks have been discovered from back in the day that were used for iron production or for smithies on the farm. Especially in the Viking and medieval times a high activity in iron production was to be found. Smithies like Brødrene Øyo (1882), Brusletto (1896), and Skaugum Bestikk (1943) used this iron to produce scythes and tools in the late 1800’s and 1900’s (Visit Geilo, 2017a). Even today the primary employer of Geilo, besides tourism, is the tool making industry. There is a long tradition of producing qualitative tools, cutlery, and knives (Hol Kommune, 2017). Therefore the coat of arms is from the smithies. Farming has also been a long lasting traditional industry in the area, with mostly sheep and cattle.

Located almost in the middle between Bergen and Oslo, Geilo has been an important stop already for several hundred years along the old routes across Hardangervidda. Traders transporting goods and animals for sale would make a stop in Geilo. Later on this led into more developments of the area. In the 1800's the destination was really popular for British barons to travel here to hunt in the mountains and fish for salmon. That is where a lot of the stone cottages come from (Interview 8). The opening of "Bergensbanen" (Bergen Railway) was in 1909 together with the opening of several hotels in that time period. Geilo hotel, the oldest hotel in Geilo, opened in 1890 and Dr. Holms, which started off as a sanatorium for people with lung diseases, opened in 1909. Later on hotels like Bardøla Høyfjellshotell opened in 1948 (Visit Geilo, 2017a). The build and opening of Bergensbanen is seen as one of the most important factors that started the development of Geilo as a tourist destination.

The now called Geilo Idrettslag (Geilo sportsclub) was founded in 1917 as Gjeilo Skiklub, and was the first alpine ski club in Geilo. Modern ski tourism started to grow a little later with one of the first slalom races in Norway in 1935, and the first chair-lift which opened in 1954. As one of the first ski areas in Norway Geilo became more and more famous due to its high mountains and big woods giving opportunities for both downhill – and cross country skiing. Also the first grooming machine in Norway came from Geilo. In the 1980's and early 90's Geilo used to be one of the best ski areas in Norway. Later on ski resorts like Hafjell and Kvitfjell were raised for the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994. Trysil, now Norway's biggest ski resort, first got together in 1991 as Trysilfjellet Skisenter after numerous conflicts in the past. Another ski resort in the county of Buskerud is Hemsedal. Hemsedal Skiheiser opened in 1961 and is now part of Skistar together with Trysil, and three other Swedish ski resorts (Bryhn, 2009). With the upraise in tourism and ski resorts in Norway one might think that Geilo would only get bigger and better as well. However, due to a privatisation and division of the different parts of Geilo as a ski resort it didn't quite work out that way in the recent history. Pål Medhus, the former tourism chief of Geilo said: "Geilo er jo et av de klassiske skistedene i Norge, men i en periode var vi alt for passive i forhold til konkurrenter som Trysil og Hemsedal. Men for noen år siden skjedde det noe." [Geilo is one of the classic ski places in Norway, but we have been way too passive for a certain period of time to be able to compete against competitors like Trysil and Hemsedal. But a couple of years ago something happened] (translated by the author of this thesis) (Andersson, 2016, p. 1)

## **2.2 Brief history of SkiGeilo**

Before SkiGeilo was formed earlier in 2017, it had been split into four parts under the latest constellation of owners. Havsdalen, Kikut, Vestlia and Slaatta were all owned and governed by different organizations, as well as the bigger part of the sport and tourism facilities in Geilo. This did not have a positive influence on the tourism in Geilo and the overall image of Geilo, formerly being one of the best resorts for skiing and snowboarding in Norway. It went even further than that. There was a big pressure on the ski resort with regards to sustainability, effectiveness of their marketing strategies, and overall management of the resort.

In 2011, after the closing down of Geilo Taubane, did Geilo Taubane AS, and Geilolia Skisenter AS go together to form Geilo Skisenter AS (Geilo Holiday). “Lenge så Geilo ut til å sakke akterut i kampen om skikundene. Men takket være en unik avtale mellom kommunen, private investorer og ikke minst et knippe viljesterke geilinger er den klassiske skidestinasjonen tilbake på banen for fullt.” [For a long time it looked like Geilo was losing the battle for ski customers. But thanks to a unique agreement between the municipality, private investors and not to forget a strong will of the Geilingers, the classic ski destination is back on track.] (Andersson, 2016, p. 1).

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April in 2017 Geilo Skisenter was bought by Geilo Holding, which owned Kikutheisen. Slaatta is still separately owned but under the SkiGeilo umbrella. Geilo Holding is a real estate company owned by Arne Pålgardhaugen who, since the middle of the nineties, has bought and developed cabins in the Kikut area. Together with Ivar Tollefsen they bought up three out of four ski resorts. Ivar Tollefsen bought out the other shareholder of Geilo Skisenter and bought 50% of the shares in Geilo Holding. Together they bought out the 45% of the rest of Geilo skisenter. So now they own 90% of the ski resort revenue and 10% is for Slaatta. That is how SkiGeilo is formed. To portray Geilo as a whole again to the outside world and market it with the new concept of SkiGeilo. Together with the change in name came a change in management with regards to the overall resort. The expansion of the resort, the upgrades being made, and the whole new marketing concept of SkiGeilo is part of the big plans these two gentlemen have for Geilo.

## 2.3 Current situation

### 2.3.1 Geilo as a destination

#### Summer

In summer Geilo has numerous things to offer. Starting from experiencing the national parks Hardangervidda and Hallingskarvet, to activities for the more or lesser active people. Activities like hiking, fishing, mountainbiking, horsebackriding, and rafting are some of many things you can do in summer in and around Geilo. In October many people make it to Geilo for conferences with the big conference halls available. With the early snow Geilo used to be an attraction for both national and international training teams in autumn holidays. In figure 1 an overview is given of the amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol municipality from 2000 – 2017 in the period from June – August.

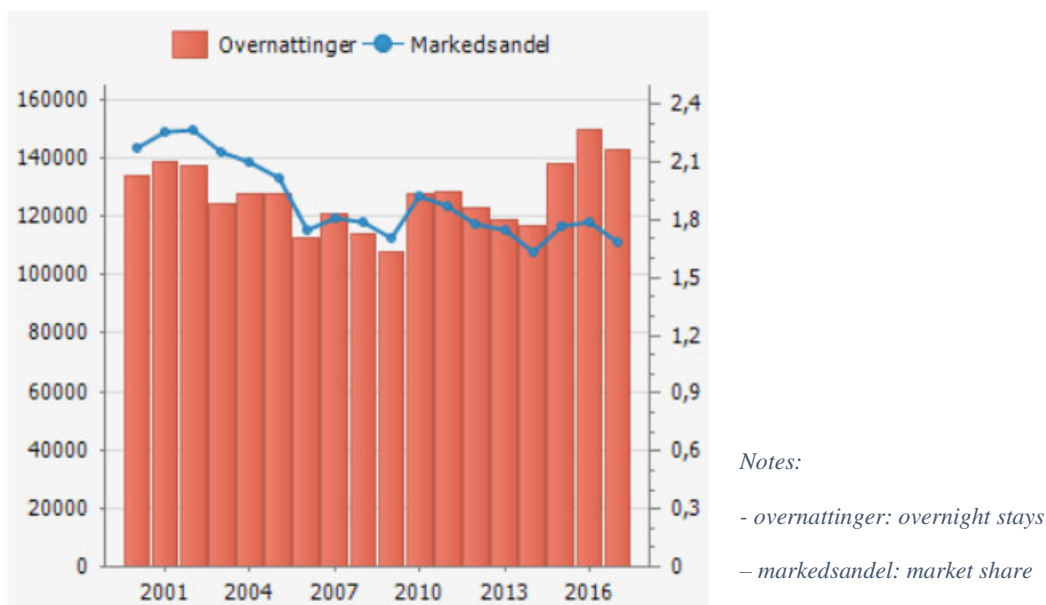


Figure 1: Amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol Kommune from 2000-2017 in the period June-August (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017)

#### Winter

Geilo is still one of the biggest skiing destinations in Norway with 550 kilometres of cross country ski tracks as well as 22 ski lifts, and 37 skiing - and snowboarding slopes. On top of this there are approximately 40 shops to be found as well as a variety of choices of places to eat both on mountain and in the valley. Also in Easter holidays big families make it to Geilo with different interests like shopping, concerts, spa, cross country skiing, snowboard, and alpine skiing. In May it depends on how much snow there is still left. Hardangervidda becomes an attraction again and Geilo offers a total package.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol municipality from 2000 – 2017 in the period from January – April.

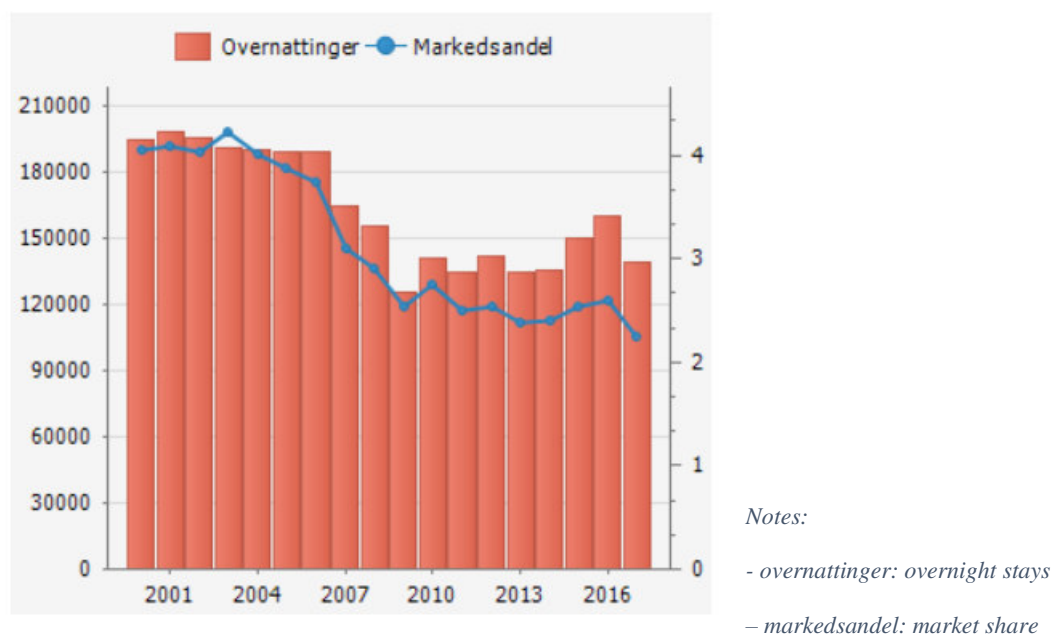


Figure 2: Amount of overnight stays in hotels in Hol Kommune from 2000-2017 in the period January-April (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017)

## Visit Geilo

Visit Geilo AS is Geilo's destination marketing organization. The main goal of the company is to promote Geilo as an attractive tourist destination and has two major tasks: running of the tourist information, and marketing Geilo as a destination. Visit Geilo AS is owned by its members and has now over 200 members in the municipality of Hol. Seen the potential of the area and the decrease over the years of the skiing product, Visit Geilo has tried to develop itself as a wide activity provider for all tourists.

"Strained by the seemingly inexorable global trend of populations gravitating from the countryside to the city, Geilo has pioneered a model of sustainable tourism, one aimed at sustaining not just the precious local ecology, but the local community too." (Medhus P., 2016, p. 15). Visit Geilo has worked hard and continues to work hard to be certified as an Eco-lighthouse and sustainable destination (Visit Geilo, 2017b). Therefore it has put forward a plan of action for sustainable tourism development in 2017 in Geilo (Visit Geilo, 2017c).

With the overall objective of securing a long-term development of Hol municipality as a tourist destination, it is mentioned that: “Geilo shall be the spearhead in the tourism municipality of Hol, and the leading, year-round mountain destination in Norway” (Visit Geilo, 2017c, p. 1). Divided into four sub-goals:

- The partnership shall develop desirable, local communities with a sustainable development socially, economically, culturally, and environmentally.
- The partnership shall develop desirable and inclusive local communities throughout the whole municipality, with rich, cultural and outdoor activities, and where as many as possible work within tourism and are residents of the municipality.
- The partnership shall develop safe, local communities that give both permanent residents and visitors meaningful experiences.
- The development of tourism shall be locally anchored and knowledge-based.

The major points in the plan of action are: preservation of nature, culture, and environment; strengthening of social values; and economic viability. With the scope of the thesis only a couple of principles will be mentioned due to the broadness of the plan. Strengthening of social values is divided into four principles: local life quality and social wealth creation; local control and involvement; job quality for tourism employees; and guest satisfaction and safety, quality of experiences. Economic viability has two principles that are followed, namely: economically viable and competitive tourism destinations through local value creation; economically viable competitive tourism companies.

### **2.3.2 SkiGeilo**

With the unification of Geilo Skisenter and Kikutheisen into SkiGeilo numerous changes have been made once again. Geilo Skisenter was bankrupt in 2017 and Kikutheisen decided to buy them and unify the ski centres for a better future. Along with the new owners and the concept of SkiGeilo came various managerial and marketing changes. One of the main goals is, according to Kevin Eikrehagen (Interview 1): “brand image; looking at the other ski resorts in the area you see that villages are portrayed as skiing destinations. Both Trysil, Hafjell, Hemsedal, to name a few, are all known in Norway and abroad as skiing destinations whereas Geilo is more known for its side activities. Visit Geilo has done a great job creating an all year round tourist destination but this also had an inverted influence on Geilo as a skiing - and snowboarding destination.”

### **3.0 Theoretical framework for research**

In order to sustain and further develop ski resorts like SkiGeilo several aspects have to be taken into account. Below you can find an overview of former conducted research related to the topic and the current research gap.

#### ***3.1 Developing the necessary components***

A literature review has been conducted, which is summarized in a literature table in the appendix (Appendix 8). A selection of this extensive literature review, which deemed to be most relevant with regards to the topic, has been elaborated upon below in order to identify the research gap and further establish the research questions. This section is structured into sustainable development, value creation, and stakeholder management.

##### **3.1.1 Sustainable development**

In order to gain a better understanding of how to sustain ski resorts, sustainability as a concept and development tool should be looked at first. Over the years numerous researchers have attempted to define sustainability. Even when defining the concept with relevance to the human environment ambiguities still arise. As Gatto (1995, p.1) mentioned: “sustainability has become a fashionable word in the last few years, not only among the scientists but also among the general public”. Leaving the fashionable aspect aside, the importance of the matter is still unquestionable, especially in the continuously growing and developing world we live in. That is also how the first articulation of sustainable development was formed. In 1987 the Brundtland Report stated the Brundtland definition of sustainable development: “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robert, 2007, p. 60). Ever since the development of this concept sustainability has evolved and has become a hot topic in both the professional - as well as the academic world. It should be noted that this concept of development is a normative matter. The concept says more about how we ought to behave for both our current fellow citizens as well as towards future generations (Hedenus, Persson, & Sprei, 2015). Even though that is not a scientific question, we can still use scientific knowledge to determine which actions have which type of consequences relative to our normative goals. This lead to sustainability being a concept that can be universally-applicable at all scales, disciplines and aspects of human endeavour (Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robert, 2007).

Due to the scope of this thesis I will focus more on the managerial side of sustainable development. Sustainable development encompasses both environmental, social, and economic aspects of development (United Nations, 2002). With the rapid development of the economic system, the environmental changes, and the social aspects of the latter sustainable development has proven its importance in numerous fields. These range from environmental impact studies, to tourism strategies, to managerial improvements of sustaining sports, to name a few. The three pillars of sustainable development, as well as the intertwining of those aspects, created a broadness of interpretations (Fadeeva, 2003). Due to the breadth of the concept several attempts have been undertaken already by former researchers to come up with a clearer definition. Even though a clear, fixed, and articulate definition remains elusive, the openness to interpretation enables researchers and professionals to apply it at multiple levels and across sectors (Kates, Parris, & Leiserowitz, 2016). To become a useful tool, researchers argue that the concept must be clearly defined (Holden, Linnerud, & Banister, 2014).

Seen that SkiGeilo is an activity provider for sportsmen as well as tourists I opted for the definition from the World Tourism Organisation. Here they defined sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 1993) as such: “sustainable tourism is defined as a model form of economic development that is designed to:

- improve the quality of life of the host community
- provide a high quality of experience for the visitor
- maintain the quality of the environment on which both the host community and the visitor depend

This because the three pillars of sustainable development have been implemented into the definition and specified more thoroughly with regards to the context of tourism. This will make it more accurate to evaluate and research the latter. Its practicality can be found in e.g.: governmental strategies. Norway as a country has put a strong emphasis on sustainable development in the government’s tourism strategy (Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012). Sustainable development, together with an increase in collaboration and long-term and effective efforts to boost the industry are mentioned as ways to increase the value creation and productivity of the industry.

A similar trend can be found in sports, and more specifically outdoor sports. Outdoor sports, e.g. snowboarding/skiing, have always been weather dependent. Climate changes, amongst other factors, have had a significant impact on sports over the years. When looking closer into the winter season we have seen that winters have become less predictable and with more variable conditions both in the same season as well as between seasons. Former research has claimed that the industry must find strategies to encourage broader participation in sustainability frameworks to ensure the future of skiing and snowboarding (Prendergast, 2011). This has put a big pressure on ski resorts regarding their sustainable development, effectiveness of their marketing strategies, and overall management of the resort. Taken these circumstances into account, sustainable development has become a goal for many ski resorts both from a sports perspective as well as from a recreational tourism perspective.

### **3.1.2 Value creation**

From a traditional point of view, profit or non-profit organizations in the field of sports or tourism were focussed on making effective use of the organization's resources in order to create high quality products or services which would lead to high value for the customers (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). This idea was based on the assumption that managers were able to control the service processes, and consequently the outcome of their customers. Most of the marketing models have been developed in the nineties and had a dominant logic focused on tangible resources "goods", embedded value, and transactions. However, over the past several decades a shift in focus can be seen both among academics as well as practitioners. This towards the increasing significance of service networks, consumers and other firms and organizations, for the creation of high quality services. New perspectives arose of which the Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) is one of the most pertinent. Here a revised logic emerged focussing on intangible resources, the co-creation of value, and relationships. Vargo & Lush (2004, p. 1) believe that "the new perspectives are converging to form a new dominant logic for marketing, one in which service provision rather than goods is fundamental to economic exchange". Several shifts in focus can be found (Vargo & Lusch, 2004):

- From the consumer being the recipient of goods towards consumers being co-producers of services where marketing is a process of interacting with the consumer.
- From value being determined by the producer as an embedded resource towards value being perceived and determined by the consumer on the basis of "value in use" where firms can only make value propositions

- From consumers who supposed to create transactions with resources towards consumers being active participants in relational exchanges and coproduction.

As Woratschek, Horbel & Popp (2014, p.1) stated: “Managers must be aware of the fact that value creation is no longer confined to the firm, but takes place in a collaborative process among the firm, the consumer and other parties.”. That co-creation can be defined as “the enactment of interactional creation across interactive system-environments (afforded by interactive platforms), entailing agenting engagements and structuring organizations.” (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018, p. 200). These interactive platforms can be seen as a locus of value creation. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004, p. 15) corroborated to this definition by stating that “co-creation experiences are the basis of value and the individual is central to the co-creation experience”. Not only is this important for the overall customer experience but also for the sustainable development. With the increasing competitive intensity, firms will have to fall back on the need to find something that sets them apart, a sustainable competitive advantage. Value co-creation seems to be one of the most accessible competitive advantages to compete appropriately. This not only due to its ease of implementation but also due to its positive effects on customers’ loyalty (Cossio-Silve, Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vazquez, & Palacios-Florencio, 2016). It is not just about forming strategies to create competitive advantages in this dynamic market but at the same time meeting criteria for sustainable tourism (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). Strategic performance can be achieved by sustained value creation in winter sports destinations, where sustained value creation reflects the combined community, stakeholder, and business goals of strategic success in a destination.

So in order to find that sustainable competitive advantage, value-creating assets should be recognised as critical in tourism management (FitzPatrick, Davey, Muller, & Davey, 2013). Consequently, sustainable destination management is imperative for tourism development (Aleksandrov, 2013). Turner & Kasnet (2005, p.1) claimed that sustainable development for a destination resort requires “a calculated and streamlined approach, specifically, a clear vision of success and a comprehensive plan to achieve success”. DMOs, or destination marketing organizations, became primary units of analysis in the domain of tourism research, stressing the importance of effective management and marketing of a destination (Pike & Page, 2014). As Justin Downes said “Tourism is the driver, cooperative spirit is the key” (Downes, 2015, p. 1).

In pursuance of achieving the strategic goals of e.g.: Destination Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012), which are:

- increase of value creation and productivity within the tourism industry
- increase the number of year-round jobs and develop more robust companies, especially in rural areas
- increase the number of unique, good-quality experiences that attract more guests with a high willingness to pay

they have to be backed up by effective strategies and promotions. The effective management is of key importance in the destination and in the overall success of a country's tourism product due to the range of stakeholders involved (Leask, 2010).

“Ski resort development invariably revolves around managing varied agendas” (Downes, 2015), taking these different aspects and actors into account might be the biggest challenge of them all.

### 3.1.3 Stakeholder management

In the previous section I have only discussed the manager (organization) – consumer relationship. However, as Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004, p. 237) noted: “it does not matter whether we are dealing with a consumer, an employee, an investor, or a supplier. The centrality of the individual must dictate our approach.”. Value co-creation can be seen from the perspective of individuals as the experiencing actors. This ranging both from consumers to employees, to partners, and to stakeholders (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018).

In the world of tourism numerous stakeholders can be found, as seen in figure 3 below:

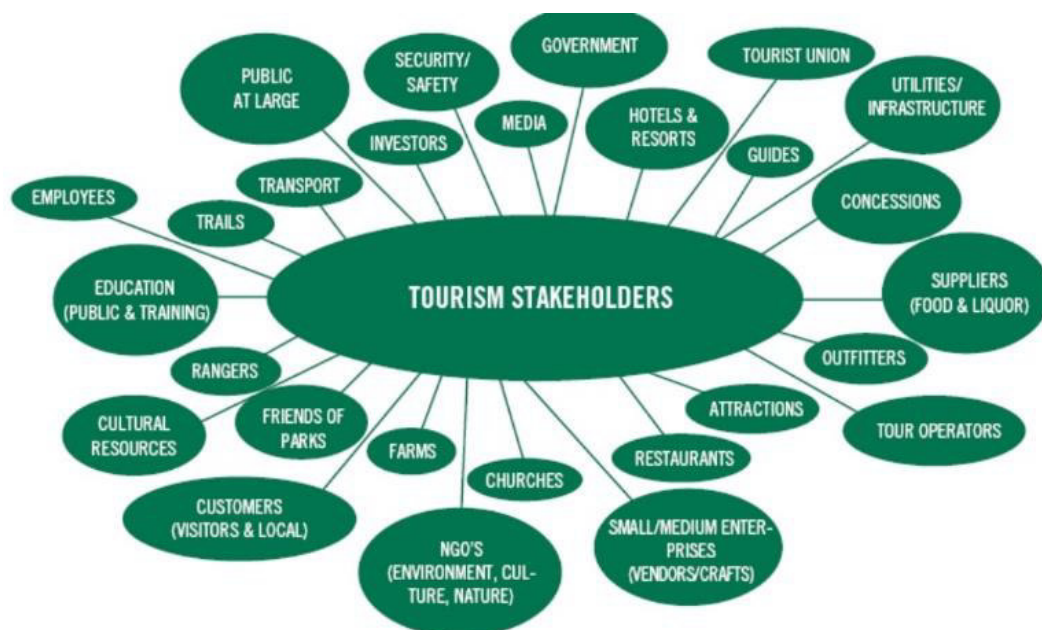


Figure 3: Tourism stakeholders Gutierrez et al. 2005

Due to the variety of stakeholders, the limited amount of time and resources, and the scope of this thesis, some of these stakeholders will be investigated further. Corroborating with the definition of sustainable tourism and the World Tourism Organization these stakeholders have been chosen (World committee on tourism ethics, 2005):

- Host community
- Tourism establishments and tourism enterprises
- Tourism employees and tourism professionals
- Travellers, visitors to tourism destinations
- Local population

Stakeholder theory, or the argument that “companies have obligations not just to shareholders but to other groups that are affected by its conduct, and that companies should accordingly be managed in a way that maximises outcomes for all stakeholders” has been around for about 30 years (Baumfield, 2016, p. 1). The next step now is to use stakeholder theory as a way to redefine our thoughts about value creation (Freeman, 2010). In his article he states three interconnected ideas about stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2010, p. 8):

- No stakeholder stands alone in the process of value creation. The stakes of each stakeholder group are multi-faceted, and inherently connected to each other.
- The primary responsibility of the executive is to create as much value as possible for stakeholders. Where stakeholder interests conflict, the executive must find a way to rethink the problems so that these interests can go together, so that even more value can be created for each.
- Stakeholders have names and faces and children. Executives and academics must understand that business is fully situated in the realm of humanity.

Residents and local actors might be one of the most important players into co-creating value for the tourists. This due to the high involvement of local inhabitants working in the tourism sector and the social interactions between resident and tourist. Research shows that residents' perceived economic and social-cultural benefits of tourism development have positive effects on both value co-creation and life satisfaction, while perceived costs have negative effects (Lin, Chen, & Fillieri, 2017). This is where the challenge lays for the managers. From a managerial perspective Machado, Lourenço, Jorge & Rodrigues (2002, p.3) go even further by stating: “The local communities of stakeholders should play a central role in identifying resources, defining development priorities, choosing and adapting technologies and implementing management practices”.

Even though the core function of destination marketing organizations is marketing, stakeholder management is likewise an essential facet of strategic destination marketing Line & Runyan (2014). Moreover, previous research claims that the key to a destination's competitiveness is actively fostering collaboration between the stakeholders (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014).

Challenges arise when taking all stakeholders into account, and trade-offs are faced on a daily basis in contemporary management, especially when thinking about sustainable tourism. When evaluating projects that devote their attention to the three pillars of sustainable development at the same time, three challenges are faced according to De Brucker, Macharis & Verbeke (2012, p. 1):

- 1) Project evaluation by definition entails making choices, whereby not all projects considered contribute equally to sustainable development. Large-scale project evaluations nearly always involve trade-offs among multiple objectives, such as narrow-scope economic goals, broader social objectives and environmental considerations.
- 2) In complex cases, specific subsets of objectives typically reflect the interests of stakeholder groups, such as project developers, consumers, and third parties affected by the project. These interests must ultimately be aligned to guarantee effective project implementation.
- 3) In most cases the selection of specific projects typically has distributional consequences, with different stakeholder groups affected in an idiosyncratic way, and becoming 'winners' or 'losers', i.e., enjoying net benefits or incurring net costs as a result of project implementation. Often this also implies excessive weight given to narrow-scope economic considerations, at the expense of the social and environmental elements.

At the local community level research suggests that, due to the unavoidable impact of major projects, seeking local community opinions in the initiation phase of the project can help the project performance (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017). Moreover, due to the fast pace of tourism development in nowadays' society a sustainable development has become a necessity. Therefore, a multi-stakeholder concept in destination management should include all interest groups in their tourism development planning (Miočić, Razović, & Klarin, 2016, p. 1).

They go further by saying: “When connecting and coordinating stakeholders with different interests within a tourism destination, one can achieve a long-term sustainable competitiveness on the market”. Especially in mountainous regions tourism develops incredibly fast due to the increase of accessibility and economic development. Winter sports and mountain adventure tourism have contributed to this tourism development (Maroudas, Kyriakaki, & Gouvis, 2011). However, it is stressed here that care should be taken with these developments. They mention that direct involvement of local communities in the decision-making process is one of the most important drivers towards effective management in mountainous regions. With the purpose of contributing to the creation of sustainable communities their goal should be to provide resilience to survive the sometimes volatile tourism demand on one hand, and the ability to support the welfare of all the stakeholders in the community on the other hand (Maroudas, Kyriakaki, & Gouvis, 2011). Coming back to the definition of the UNWTO (1993) strategic success should therefore be related to the economic development, while integrating the quality of life for the local community, quality of visitor experience, and environmental concerns.

### 3.2 Research framework

When putting these three aspects of sustainable development, value creation, stakeholder management together I have come up with this framework on which I will base my thesis on.

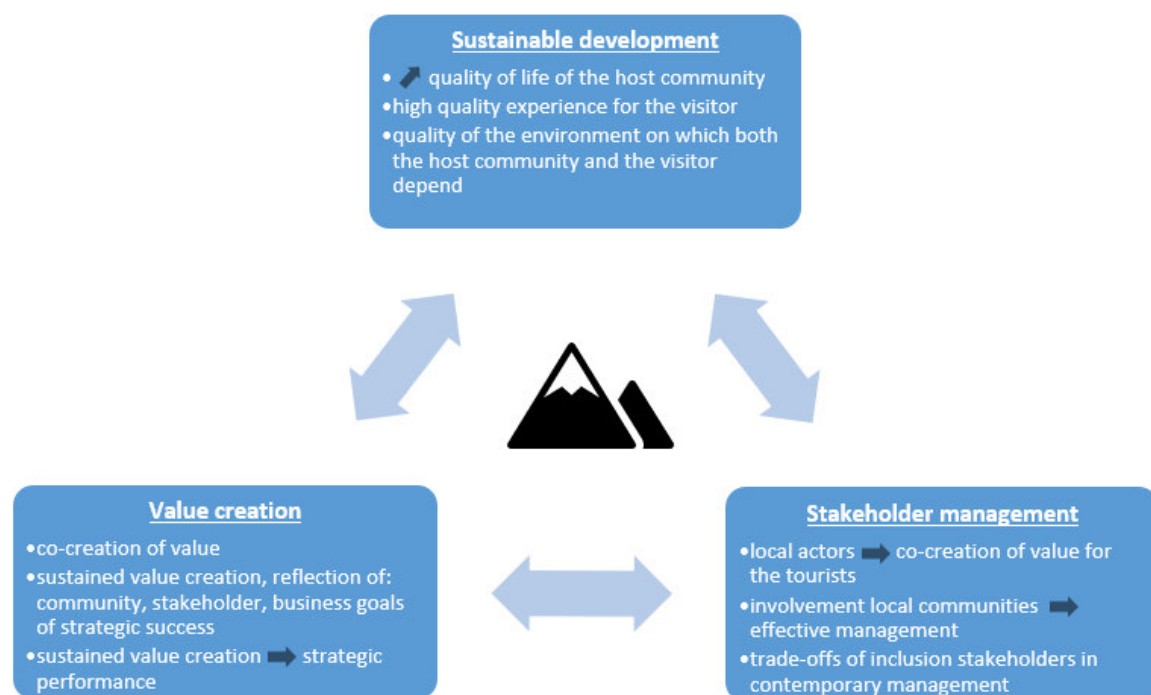


Figure 4: Research framework

## **4.0 Methodology**

### **4.1 *Abductive approach***

An abductive approach has been used for theory building. The abductive approach can be seen differently than just a mixture of deductive and inductive approaches. “An abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher’s objective is to discover new things, other variables and different relationships. This approach creates fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality.” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). My position as head coach of Geilo IL Snowboard enabled me to form insights about the destination and local community. When learning about the environment I got intrigued by the ongoing developments. Using my background as coach together with the knowledge gained in my current studies as sports marketer and manager I conducted a literature review. At the same time I started talking to various people. A combination of my pre-knowledge in the field, the observations, and the current literature has driven me into a certain topic. This approach enabled me to go back and forth between the theory and reality in order to come up with the right research questions and overall topic of my thesis. This type of research is common in the area of sports and tourism due to the relative newness of the field, the changing nature of the phenomena being studied, and the frequent gap between research and action (Darcy & Veal, 2014).

A literature review has been conducted based on an exploratory literature review analysis. This with the aim of finding out, and consequently describing what former research has been conducted thus far with regards to this topic. Exploratory research is often used for problems that have not yet been clearly defined and is cautious in terms of conclusions. Even though sustainable development has been researched extensively, it is still a normative aspect which is open for interpretation. Literature and other relevant information were gathered making use of databases such as Oria, Limo, Pro-Quest, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. Search words included ‘winter sports tourism’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘sustainable tourism’, ‘value creation’, ‘co-creation of value’, ‘stakeholder management’, ‘local community’, ‘management and marketing strategies’, ‘effective management’, ‘destination marketing’. Consequently, I made a literature table, which can be found in appendix with an overview of all the literature that has examined for this thesis (Appendix 8).

However, due to the scope of the thesis, only the most relevant literature has been implemented in the thesis. As a result the research questions could be formed and the research framework was developed.

## **4.2 Research design**

### **4.2.1 Case study**

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the developments in the ski resort SkiGeilo, how value can be created, and how the local stakeholders are both included and influenced by the developments. This in order to co-create a sustainable future. In this perspective we will use SkiGeilo as a case to perform the analysis on. Even though it is argued by some researchers that case studies provide little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 1994) other researches have stressed the importance from learning from a particular case. As Dubois & Gadde (2002, p. 554) stated: “Learning from a particular case, conditioned by the environmental context, should be considered a strength rather than a weakness. The interaction between a phenomenon and its context is best understood through in-depth case studies”. Moreover, the case study approach offers a more holistic overview.

### **4.2.2 Qualitative approach**

Case studies are often investigated by making use of qualitative approaches, such as observations or open interviews (Johannessen, Tufte, & Kristoffersen, 2010). The purpose of this thesis is to create a better overview of how and in which way various actors are included or influenced by the developments in SkiGeilo. In order to capture these experiences and thoughts, qualitative methods should be used as these are unique intangible values that every actor experiences differently. Qualitative methods is a naturalistic approach which seeks to understand context-specific settings, in this case a real world setting in order to extrapolate it to similar situations (Golafshani, 2003). Using a stakeholder approach, the focus is twofold: on one hand I am looking more closely into the management and marketing strategies under the new management; on the other hand I will try to achieve the input of both local actors as well as tourists who are involved and influenced in various ways. This to explore an overall picture of value-creation with regards to sustainable tourism.

### **4.2.3 Participant observation**

It should be mentioned here that I have been actively working as a snowboard coach for the last five years on both a national as well as international level. Moreover, I am currently

employed as head coach for the snowboard group of Geilo IL. It is this participation in the club, and local community, that has enabled me access to both tourists as well as key players in the local industry. I am aware of the fact that my involvement in both the sport of snowboarding as well as the local community might be considered as a biased approach. However, as a coach I have travelled to over 30 ski resorts, spread over Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, giving me extensive pre-knowledge about both the sport as well as ski resorts in general which can be considered as an advantage from an insider's perspective (Dibben & Dolles, 2013). Participant observation was also possible due to the fact that I spend my everyday life in the ski resort, both for work as well as for pleasure.

### 4.3 Data collection

#### 4.3.1 Choice of stakeholders

A stakeholder approach was chosen to examine the current situation of SkiGeilo. Here I developed three different groups, according to their relation to the developments in order to address the research questions as accurately as possible. The first group is the management as such: Geilo Holding currently owns 90% of the ski resort whereas Slaatta Skisenter offers the remaining 10%, resulting in a total of 100% called SkiGeilo. The second group are the directly involved actors. This group consists out of both resort staff, which are the people currently working under the new management, as well as Visit Geilo, which is the destination company of Geilo, and as third actor Geilogruppen, the biggest constellation of hotels and hot beds in Geilo. The last group handles about indirectly involved actors with a focus on the local community. Here Geilo IL and NTG (Norges Toppidrettsgymnas) [Norwegian elite school for sports] have been interviewed. Both these actors play a big part in the community of Geilo and have stakes in the ski resort.

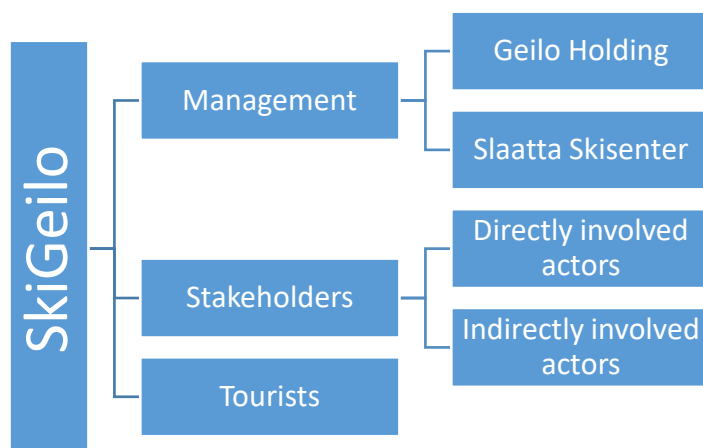


Figure 5: Categories of the interviewees

### **4.3.2 The interview process**

All interview questions have been developed in collaboration with my supervisor. Three different interview guides have been developed, following the guidelines for interview protocols in qualitative research (Seidman, 2006). Each guide matches the relationship to the developments, with the focus on addressing the research questions: one for the management group, one for the local actors, and one for the tourists (Appendix 5-7). All interviews have been conducted face-to-face, while being recorded at the time, enabling transcription and data analysis afterwards. I made use of semi-structured interviews with open questions. This to make use of the topics that needed to be covered according to the interview guide, but also being able to follow up on topical trajectories in the conversation that may drift away from the guide and still be of interest with regards to the case. Semi-structured interview guides can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews are conducted in both English and Norwegian, and all quotes in the thesis have been translated into English by myself. A possible limitation should be noted with regards to the translation. However, seen my language proficiency in both languages open interpretation is kept to a minimum. Even though English was the main language in the interviews, all interviewees were given the opportunity of explaining themselves in Norwegian when preferred. Since this is a case study about SkiGeilo all interviews and research have been conducted in Geilo, Norway. All expert interviewees are shown in Table 1 with the organization they work for, position, date, duration of the interview, and language spoken. Throughout the thesis, these interviews will be referred to according to their number in the table.

Table 1: List of expert interviews

| Nr. | Stakeholder              | Interviewee               | Position                                            | Date Interview | Time interview | Language  |
|-----|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1   | <b>SkiGeilo</b>          | Kevin                     | Marketing                                           | 15/12/'17      | 20min          | English   |
| 2   |                          | Eikrehagen                | Manager                                             | 20/03/'18      | 2h1min         | English   |
| 3   | <b>Geilo IL</b>          | Espen Nordby Andersen     | CEO                                                 | 14/03/'18      | 48min          | English   |
| 4   |                          | Atle Kleivdal             | VP Geilo IL Snowboard                               | 15/03/'18      | 33min          | English   |
| 5   |                          | Disa Haukur Tor Bjarnason | President Geilo IL Alpine Head coach alpine ski NTG | 29/03/'18      | 1h8min         | English   |
| 6   | <b>NTG</b>               | Torgeir Skrede            | CEO/ Sports director                                | 20/03/'18      | 19min          | English   |
| 7   |                          | Christian Christensen     | Head Coach Snowboard                                | 24/03/'18      | 26min          | English   |
| 8   | <b>Visit Geilo</b>       | Line Ramvik               | Tourism chief                                       | 7/03/'18       | 56min          | English   |
| 9   | <b>Resort Staff</b>      | Mike McKernan             | Park shaper                                         | 10/03/'18      | 25min          | English   |
| 10  |                          | Knut Erik Hallingstad     | Lift operator                                       | 15/03/'18      | 38min          | English   |
| 11  | <b>Geilogruppen</b>      | Roger Espeli              | CEO                                                 | 27/03/'18      | 38min          | Norwegian |
| 12  | <b>Slaatta skisenter</b> | Anne Brusletto            | CEO                                                 | 28/03/'18      | 40min          | English   |

Several interviews have been undertaken with tourists as well, of whom the demographic info is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographics tourists

| <b>Country of origin</b>        | <b>Alone/friends/family</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age group</b>       | <b>Duration of stay</b> | <b>First time/repaeat</b>       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Scotland, Norway (Oslo)</b>  | Couple of two               | 1M, 1F        | Fiftees                | Ten days                | Every year the last seven years |
| <b>Sint Maarten (Caribbean)</b> | Couple of two               | 1M, 1F        | Thirtees               | One week                | First time                      |
| <b>Oslo</b>                     | Family of three             | 1F, 2M        | Thirtees, under ten    | One week                | The past fifteen years          |
| <b>Bergen</b>                   | Family of six               | 3 F, 3 M      | Thirtees, under twelve | Six days                | Once a month the last two years |
| <b>Bergen</b>                   | Family of four              | 3M, 1F        | Thirtees, under ten    | Six days                | First time                      |
| <b>Oslo</b>                     | Family of three             | 3 M           | Thirtees, under twelve | Five days               | Many years                      |
| <b>London, Norway</b>           | Group of five               | 2 M, 3F       | Thirtees, fiftees      | One week                | Second time, many years         |
| <b>Hampshire UK</b>             | Family of five              | 2M, 2F        | Thirtees, under ten    | Four days               | First time                      |
| <b>Denmark</b>                  | Group of six                | 4 F, 2M       | Twenties               | Four days               | First and second time           |

When interacting with people and performing face-to-face interviews several ethical challenges arise. Various ethical dimensions have to be taken into account every time when performing scientific research (Jacobsen, 2005). Informed consent, right to privacy, and correctly rendered results are the most important dimensions that should be addressed, according to Jacobsen (2005).

All of the interviewees have been made aware of the research purpose and topic beforehand. All of the respondents participated voluntarily after being contacted either via phone, email, or in person. When performing the interviews all of the participants have been asked for their consent to record the interviews. Any sensitive information that the interviewees mentioned not to be included in the transcription has been left out of the thesis. Moreover, the question for anonymity has been asked after every interview whether I was allowed to use their names in the thesis. I sought to render the results of the transcription of the interviews completely and in the right context.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

For evaluation of the qualitative data sample, I implemented the three step method of qualitative content analysis as proposed by Mayring (1995). First I have formulated structural categories for interpretation deducted from the research framework and the research questions. Besides the info gathered with the interviews, I also searched for relevant information, statistics, and literature for the purpose of data triangulation. This was used to form a practical and academic overview to be used for the structural categories. In the second step of my qualitative content analysis I have extracted definitions, examples, and rules for codification of the structural categories across the interviews. In this last step, critical analysis, I have compiled all the data by attaching parts of the interviews to the structural categories.

Working with interviews in a qualitative methods setting, over 20 interviews have been conducted with both experts as well as tourists. The collected data in the interviews for this thesis has to meet the requirements of validity and reliability. This entails that the data should be relevant and trustworthy (Golafshani, 2003). Seen that the interviews have been conducted in a face-to-face individual setting, notion should be taken to the open interpretation of the questions as well as the answers. Data triangulation is: “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126) and is implemented in this thesis. These multiple sources, such as observation, and interviews amongst others, will lead to a more valid and reliable depiction of reality. Data triangulation is also a good tool to eliminate bias and increase the truthfulness regarding the phenomenon (Denzin, 1978).

## **5.0 Findings**

In this section I will give a summary of the interviews of both SkiGeilo as well as the directly and indirectly involved stakeholders. Following the structure of the different interview groups the main points highlighted here are: marketing and management strategies, developments in relation to the ski resort, positive and negative developments, inclusion in the process, strengths of the destination, target groups, and future developments.

### **5.1 *SkiGeilo***

#### **5.1.1 Geilo Holding**

##### **Kevin Eikrehagen (Interview 1,2)**

Geilo Holding is a real estate company owned by Arne Pålgaardhaugen, who is a Geilinger, citizen of Geilo. Since the nineties he has bought and developed cabins in the Kikut area. Kevin Eikrehagen has been working for Geilo holding for several years. His current position is the one of marketing manager in SkiGeilo.

##### **Case description**

In order for me to start investigating the overall picture that can lead into a sustainable future for ski resorts, it is important to know what is already there at the moment. The idea of SkiGeilo at the moment is:

There are two main reasons why Geilo is probably going to succeed in becoming one of the best resorts in Norway and Scandinavia:

- We collected the skisenters (SkiGeilo) and hired a good leader in Andreas Smith-Erichsen (CEO) who has good insight in the core alpine business
- Pål Gunnersen: He owns three hotels (Geilogruppen) and plans to build a fourth hotel, Haugs alpine hotel, which would be a signal of luxury and strategy of that hotel type.

According to Kevin, there are two main actors now in Geilo: Geilogruppen & SkiGeilo:

Together we have the investment capital, the willingness to succeed, and we collaborate very well. We have seen a path to walk together for the benefit of Geilo with the rest of Geilo on our path. If the biggest actors do not take responsibility and are not willing to pull the train then it probably won't get up to a good speed. The two biggest actors have to understand and respect that some of the other companies in Geilo will only lay in the waters behind when it's calmer and don't have to take initiative

Their belief is:

If we focus on the ski resort and the alpine product in Geilo and make that the travel reason number one reason to Geilo, there will be many more customers to visit shops and activities and beds, and that's okay for us that other people make money out of our success. Smaller companies are better at activities than we are, that just means that they should nurture their focus and we should leave them to that and nurture our focus, we should be fewer things and most of all the alpine product.

Geilo Holding started SkiGeilo in 2017 and started developing and improving on several levels. The aspects below have been mentioned to be the biggest changes and developments after the start of SkiGeilo:

The main reasons that have heightened the quality of the product are: structure, experience, and destination marketing. We have invested about 25 million kroners to clean up the forest, paint the buildings, and maintain the lifts.

These new developments can be categorized into three aspects:

- Structure: the unification of the ski resorts, expansion in infrastructure, installation of a bus system, overall upgrades in and around the ski resort.
- Experience: because of the impression we want people to leave with. It doesn't matter how good your slopes are if the mother of four goes to the toilet during lunch break and finds out that the toilets are as dirty as they can get. We are also planning on implementing more events and activities both on and besides the slopes to increase the engagement of the people. I often tell my crew that we are selling BMW's every day, no VW. We have to be outside of the lifts every day welcoming the people!
- Destination Marketing: this from the perspective of portraying Geilo as a skiing and snowboarding destination again. Not for the side activities, but for the skiing and snowboarding itself, so that the side activities can be a good plus. Due to the separation of ski resorts and different owners for different organizations it has always been hard to find cooperation. This due to the fact that in the end everybody wanted to make a profit and couldn't see the benefit of working together yet. The accommodation started losing faith in the alpine product and started to sell other activities, all of the different activities that should complete the skiing product. Now with the constellation of the resorts and hotels we want to market Geilo as a whole.

### Marketing & management strategies

It starts with a simple mathematical equation of the amount of days on the snow in Geilo times the amount of money people spend on average per day. At the moment we come from a deficit of 10 million and want to go to 3 million in plus. Seen that there is a fixed amount of days on the snow we need to find a way to make people spend more. One of the main goals is brand image. Looking at the other ski resorts in the area you see that villages are portrayed as skiing destinations. Both Trysil, Hafjell, and Hemsedal, to name a few, are all known in Norway and abroad as skiing destinations whereas Geilo is more known for its side activities. Visit Geilo has done a great job creating an all year round tourist destination but that this has also had an inverted effect on Geilo as a skiing and snowboarding destination.

Looking at the strategies on a longer term:

We are still in a phase where we look at how we should develop. We have to look at the real estate as a whole, big investments: ski lift development, a snow production system so that the season can start in November in the future, but we haven't come this far yet. Andreas, the CEO of SkiGeilo, is a key element in our strategy. He has confidence in the alpine product and knowledge about how to run a successful ski company. Moreover, we have hired exceptionally good companies to help us with these strategies:

- Story launch: a company that is doing a brand audit. They are specialists in marketing, market communication and creating a story for a destination. They are performing interviews now with several actors both in and outside of the company to discover if there is someone who sees a different picture for the future than we are. They will help us with our general strategies for the future.
- Mountain works and Eco sign: Mike Larsen from Mountain works wants to make Geilo his signature project. He occupies himself with creating efficient slopes, lifts, and real estate. This to develop slopes and lift systems that suit our customers and he also advises us on how we should place buildings so that everything is ski in ski out and with the correct amount of parking spaces etc. Together with Eco sign we form development plans for the future in a correct order and as efficient as possible suiting our customer group.
- Quality support: This company will help us structure, conceptualize, and strengthen the serving aspect of our company. Down in Europe the revenue

of serving is ascending a lot faster than lift tickets. Serving local food in the ski resort is more and more important for people, and a part of the experience. This is something that we want to develop further; be really good at local products but not overdo it. Quality support will therefore help us rise the level of quality in our dining areas.

We are in the phase that we are trying to organize everything and seeing everything as a whole, and this process takes a lot more time than a year. You have to do the right thing because you can screw yourself up with just investing.

Another key element to the positiveness for the future which was mentioned is:

Arne Pålgaardhaugen, one of the two owners, is a local. He has used the last 20 years to prove that he is a hard worker, and that he can fulfil his dreams. His local commitment to the community is really important to him. He supports the new churches, the iddretslag (sports club), he is a local patriot who knows everyone, and a down to earth guy who is aware of his position in the community. Arne's personality and his connection to the local community is a reason why people want him to succeed.

### Strengths of the destination

Seen that brand identity, brand image is one of their main goals I asked how SkiGeilo sees themselves, what they see as their identity:

There are a lot of myths in Geilo and we are tackling them one by one:

- “We will never be good enough in comparison to other resorts”: We tend to compare ourselves to e.g.: Hafjell. Hafjell has a 845 meter vertical drop, why do we price at the same amount as Hafjell if we don't have as long slopes? Ski busses are the solution.
- “We will never be good on the international market because we are not located close to an airport”: The accessibility of Geilo is probably one of the best in Norway.
- “Cross country is important”: You really get the guests that you market for. The biggest competitor for the alpine product is cross country tracks. We are trying hard to agree with the other actors that alpine is the focus that Geilo should have in the focus. We have to heighten ourselves that when you wake up you're willing to use 400 kroners to go downhill skiing instead of cross country.

So to continue on this identity question I followed up with what he thinks are the strengths of SkiGeilo and Geilo as a whole:

SkiGeilo is nothing for ourselves, how can you ever compete with other destinations with only the skisenter. Everyone in Geilo teaming up to show that Geilo is at least the height of any other ski resort in Norway like Hafjell for example. But we are also best at none ski activities, that is probably the biggest strengths that Geilo has. It's a year round destination, with lots of activities. The strength is the location and all the activities. However, you need to have some activities to focus on and for Geilo that should be alpine.

### Target groups

The ski resort contributed to visit Geilo for doing international campaigns with innovation Norway with projects like 'Norway home of skiing' for the UK and the Dutch market. When we asked the accommodation to join in on the projects their answer was that they do their own things. Doing your own things actually means that you are competing against each other. When competing against each other the Geilo logo and destination gets lost in all of the talking. A big change in marketing is that we are collaborating more under the Geilo logo, the name of the destination that we are campaigning internationally.

The target groups are still the same:

- Western market (including Bergen)
- Eastern market
- Foreign markets
  - UK
  - The Netherlands
  - Denmark
  - Sweden

To continue on the target groups I wondered about the freestyle park, cabin owners, training teams as a focus:

We should market the park a lot more, that was the complexity between Kikut and Tiril parken. Tiril had all the marketing and visibility. I was aware that when we shut down Tiril parken that it would have an influence, but that Tiril said that she didn't have any faith (Reinton, 2017) what so ever was a big blow for the marketing.

We weren't sure what Havsdalen could deliver. I've been really careful with marketing it because it would open a discussion of why Tiril parken is shut down. This season was more of a test. Next year we'll go harder on park marketing. Let's see what Havsdalen can do, let's connect with the sport. Feedback was that Geilo IL and NTG were never asked what they wanted. Cabin owners are not really a part of the target group and training teams are a consumer, but they are more important for the accommodation than they are for us because they come with big groups.

### Summer business

In summer, we plan for the winter! The problems with those previous projects is that there is hardly any money to make there. It is really marginal what you can earn: 40 or 50 days to run the early snow, the revenue would be lost if it's bad weather and would be the same for that whole period as one day in Christmas period. Tourism companies are not really good at calculating capacity and usage of the ski resort: The early snow has about 150 skiers, active alpinists who are not our target group. In Christmas we have 5500 tourists, and the weakest weeks in January around 600 people.

When looking at the total income of the summer park, the potential of income is ten times more midweek January than operating the summer park. That's why we have to focus on how to fill up the destination when the running costs in January are the highest. We are too big of an organisation to ever be able to get any reasonable amount of income out of the summer park.

### Inclusion of stakeholders

With the Story launch project they are interviewing different people in the destination, how to talk together to make sure that everybody can see the best way for the future of Geilo. Line, the tourism chief of Visit Geilo should also be included in the strategy for the future and we have to find out how to involve people in a way that they're securing our decisions and our perception of the future.

### Future developments

We are sustainable, we are in the snow business after all. Sustainability is important but we are not right there yet. Seen that sustainability is such a broad term, for us it is the way you plan future projects. The whole area of Vestlia, a part of the plan was a concept analysis: sustainability for transport, the ski busses, having consciousness of the development and routines and instructions for the employees to make sure that Geilo as a destination and the snow is something that our kids can benefit from as well. Collaborating and teaming up is also sustainability.

What we would like to improve in the future is customer knowledge, that's the key to everything! Knowing your customer is the key to getting more of them, and we are very bad at customer knowledge in Geilo. The profile of the slopes, the offers of activities, the whole of the destination is specially built for the biggest target group of them all: families. There will always be new families. The main thing is to keep developing, and renewing ourselves. In order to do that in a proper way we should know more about our customers. We should also collaborate a lot more, we won't be visible at all under our own logos, we have to use the destination name, that's really important.

### **5.1.2 Slaatta Skisenter**

#### **Anne Brusletto (Interview 12)**

Slaatta skisenter was built in 1959, and started as the only ski resort together with the old lift, Taubane. Anne Brusletto's father ran the skisenter until 2004 and Anne became CEO in 2002. As Anne said: "I'm born into it".

### Case description

We had much more people before. In January we had as many people in week 7 today, this was before Hafjell and Kvitfjell came in '94. It was Oppdal, Voss, Norefjell, and Geilo, we were the four big ones in Norway. Hafjell had the country in their back, paid by the government and they could grow because they had the money, and then Skistar came. I feel like all the ski lifts worked together in Geilo, but we didn't own any beds so the hotels wanted to go in one direction, and we wanted ski guests. That was the main problem. Everybody always says that we have always been fighting within the ski community, but I don't feel that way. We had a

good cooperation. Over the years a lot of changes have happened in and around Geilo; ranging from big fancy hotels to pubs and youth hostels in certain periods leading up to the biggest question “Hva er Geilo og for hvem?” (What is Geilo and for whom?).

#### Developments in relation to the ski resort

Relation is too early to say, it's the first season, so we don't really know how it's going to be. We have two main differences between us:

- We live of the lifts, ski hire, the ski school, and the cafeteria: so we live just from skiing
- They are developing beds and apartments, I think that they bought the ski lifts to get bigger in Geilo, to build more, so that they can sell land so that they have money to invest. We don't have that, we have our income and the costs are getting higher and higher. Vi har bare et bein å stå på, de har flere bene å stå på (we have only one leg to stand on, they have several legs to stand on)

If you had a business running, being your life, your family, would you just sell it? As long as they let us live. As long as we go in the same direction, there shouldn't be any conflicts.

#### Marketing & management strategies

We still have our own strategies but it can be difficult in the future, because they are big and they can just be like this is how we want it and you have to follow, like David and Goliath. I'm more fond of the small, I believe in individuality. We want to keep our identity as long as possible, because we stand for something, and we have heard that from guests as well. You have to stay outside, don't go into the big business because everything will change then.

#### Strengths of the destination

All the things you can do, the diversity of things you can do: cross country in beautiful nature. I don't think we will be a big alpine destination because we don't have the mountains. We can't compare us to Hemsedal or Trysil. However, we have a city: you can go shopping, dining, hotels, spa, and all these things make Geilo unique. Even though it's a small community, it still doesn't feel small when you walk

around. If you go to Myrkdalen or Trysil, it's up there, but there is nothing else to do. We have to keep our personality.

### Target groups

We all know that Andreas doesn't like cross country skiers, but who buys cabins? Who is up in Kikut? The children are skiing and the parents are doing cross country. If they have the feeling that they are not welcome or wanted, that is a really bad way to go. They are our guests, if you are a guest in Geilo, make it as good as possible so that they want to come back, no matter what kind of guest you are.

My goal is: I want to have a good and safe company where you are happy to go to work. We work together and we are trying our best and we have such good staff. We need to have service in focus!

They are not running the ski lifts for the ski lifts, they have it for developing apartments and cabins, because there is not a lot of money in only this business. That is why I think they have a different focus than we have.

### Summer business

It has been only winter. My father was a hobby farmer, so he had bulls in the summer, and also had a tool factory. If I was not alone, I would love to have animals. We could have animals in the barns, and all the kids could come in and see the animals.

### Inclusion in the process

We didn't actually have that much communication this winter so I can't really answer that question. Maybe they have been looking at Geilo as a whole but we are not involved in this process this winter. Next year I want to have it more open, more dialogue, that we are more involved, you should maybe listen to some old birds. We didn't do everything wrong. So that we can all learn from the developments throughout the history.

### Future developments

I hope that they succeed, but I hope that they succeed with heart and not only with the pocket. I think that that is the only way to survive. I hope that they make it liveable for us on the side for as long as we want to because I think we need this individuality.

## **5.2 Stakeholders**

### **5.2.1 Directly involved actors**

#### **5.2.1.1 Resort staff**

##### **Knut Erik Hallingstad (Interview 10)**

Knut Erik started working in 1987 in the ski resort. He has always worked with the lifts and has received more and more responsibility over the years. He is now responsible for creating the work schedules for the lifties and is involved with the snow production.

##### **Developments over the years**

When I started I worked just in Vestlia, then there was a fusion with Taubane and now Kikut bought everything, so I worked for three different owners, and this is the first time working for Geilo Skisenter. We all worked separate but there was a cooperation on the tickets, so all the money got to one place and was then distributed to how many people you had in the lift and what kind of lift it was. Slaatta now only gets a fixed percentage of turnover.

The last five years were very bad, in 2017 the owners couldn't pay their employees any longer, nor the governmental taxes so we went bankrupt. The reason of going bankrupt was not necessarily the skiing part, but more that they were spending money on things we didn't necessarily need. It is very strange because we were getting more and more people but it was just running very bad so luckily for us Geilo holding bought it.

##### **Current situation**

A lot of things have changed, but not necessarily for the worst. One of the problems was that in the last ten years we had about 100million NOK in deficit. Now we got new money to rebuild the lifts and the ski resort.

Two things people in Geilo are not happy with:

- Taking away early skiing: it took a lot of work to create this early skiing, it cost about 1 million in deficit, in the last three years it cost at least 3-4 million to run it.
- Taking away Tiril parken: it was a very good park, but the one problem was that you needed a lot of snow to build it up. It cost a lot of money and you couldn't open it before February. It cost about 1 million just to make snow,

so it was a very expensive park and a bit too big for normal people, only good for NTG and Geilo IL.

The new company also wants to give Geilo IL something, they needed something that was open early, a bigger park in Havsdalen and a long park in Kikut. This park is easier to make because it doesn't need as much snow.

The biggest changes are new money to rebuild the lifts, and an investment in new lifts in the upcoming years. In two years' time there is probably going to be a new lift to Geilotoppen, and probably also a new chairlift in four years from Halstensgård to the top to replace the T-bar. They also want to build a new lift up to Kikut. Hopefully Geilo IL can also come in here and find a good area to build a park so that we can build a park that can stay.

A few employees have changed to seasonal but of course some people have gone out in the higher management, not really people in the lifts. They did not fire anyone so far. However, there were people who have quit by themselves. The new management prefers people working seasons because people working all year are more expensive.

#### Positive/Negative side of the development

For us, the lifties, we were very lucky with the new owners, and it will benefit everyone in the future. Of course they took away things that were very good, but if people could just see how bad the previous company was, then they probably would change their mind. I think the best days are yet to come. Now it's a bad situation because we took away two 'babies' from them, and a lot of rumours came up.

#### Strengths of the destination

They are talking about making it the best family place in Norway, and focus only on the winter. I built up the summer park, and it is really important. If people want to buy cabins here there should be something here also in summer. SkiGeilo has rented out the area to different companies for biking, climbing park, zipline,... Small companies are better at finding ways to make money.

#### Future developments

They are going to continue to build parks. Emil, the current park manager, wants to build more. The most important thing is to have a good dialogue with the owners. I think the company is very interested to give back to the local community.

### **Mike McKernan (Interview 9)**

Mike has been working at the ski resort for the last four years. His function in the ski resort has always been the one of a park shaper. The first three winters he worked for Geilo Holiday and now he works for SkiGeilo.

#### **Developments over the years**

The last year or two there seemed to be a lot of positive changes. Three years ago they started the pre-season park, last year they built the zip line and started working on the ice cafe project. It seemed like they were making various changes to develop Geilo further and from my end they only seemed positive.

#### **Current situation**

Now with the change of management it seems like we are cutting down on everything to save money. My department, although under a new boss with a new team, hasn't changed too much. I previously built Tiril Parken and Havsdalen. I now build Kikut and Havsdalen so change in park and change in boss for me. However, we are still able to produce, in my eyes, some pretty amazing parks and with an incredible selection of rails. We are losing a lot of small things which is a little unfortunate. However, it is understandable with new management and them trying to run a successful business.

#### **Positive/Negative sides of the development**

It seems that a lot of costs have been cut and various new projects have been shut down, like the pre-season park. We are still running the zip line over summer. This is a new development that went in last year under the old management and is continuing to run under new management so that is one positive development. Another negative is this decision to close the lifts a week earlier because it is not very busy. For freestylers this is crazy as this is the best time of year for us, warm slushy weather. It will cost a lot to maintain so I do understand. However, a huge asset of ours is how long we can run for. I feel this should be utilised a lot more.

#### **Strengths of the destination**

We have an incredible opportunity where we can run the park from October. This is amazing as the first glacier in Europe opens for Autumn the first weekend in October

and last year we were open even before that! To be able to run a park at that time of the year to that standard is amazing. This has all been achieved with no marketing at all. I feel very strongly if this were to run again it would be more popular once again as more people hear about it and if it was marketed correctly it could be a huge asset to put Geilo on the map, not just in Norway but in the European scene.

#### Future developments

For me the biggest thing I would like to see is the pre-season park returned. It is an incredible thing we can do and it has shown to be more popular each year. We do not have a lot of varied terrain here so I don't think we can be seen as the best mountain to come and ski or snowboard. However, we most certainly do have one of the coolest parks out there and we can run it for an extremely long period of time. I would love to see this utilised and I would love to see it marketed. With the craziest amount of snow this winter we could run a small park here for another few months easily, possibly the summer. I would love nothing more than to see that happen.

### **5.2.1.2 Visit Geilo**

#### **Line Ramsvik (Interview 8)**

Line is currently employed as tourism chief of Visit Geilo. She has taken over the position from Pål Medhus since 2017 and has been involved with Visit Geilo for various years.

Visit Geilo is the destination marketing company of Geilo and has an agreement with the municipality. It is owned by its shareholders with mainly the hotels, and also has 250 members that pay an annual fee but don't own any shares. They are responsible for development projects, the tourist centre, international campaigns and marketing. The marketing of Geilo as a destination in Norway and abroad is their main task.

#### Developments over the years

Visit Geilo as it is today started in 2013. It has had various names over the years with periods of good and bad economy. The board wants Visit Geilo to be owned by fewer shareholders but more members. SkiGeilo has also been struggling. Around 2010 the tourism here dropped dramatically after the financial crisis. There was no strong destination company to encourage people to collaborate and everybody used their own money in different ways with nobody to coordinate it. Pål Medhus managed to

get people to collaborate and put their money in Visit Geilo and start to use Geilo as destination as the main aspect you communicate to the outside world.

### Current situation

The municipality has reduced our funding from 1.7 million NOK to 900k NOK. Visit Geilo is going to be more like a destination marketing organization, where the membership fee will be used to do national and international campaigns of marketing. Visit Geilo will act here then as administrative secretary for the marketing board in the future. It's not up until now that SkiGeilo is taking a part of it and directing it more than they have before. The challenges according with that are twofold:

- Very positive for the destination that they want to improve the ski resort and slopes
- I truly believe that our strength is that we have so many different things to do here, also in summer. However, they are now focussing only on alpine and are trying to make all the others push for alpine as well.

It's lovely that SkiGeilo says that they want to promote Geilo as a destination but they are mainly forcing me to promote SkiGeilo. They are not promoting a full destination. They write it: Welcome to Geilo, the complete winter destination, but the picture says alpine only.

### Positive/Negative sides of the development

Visit Geilo has been working quite hard with the sustainable destination brand focussing on whole-year tourism and jobs. Now it seems like they are moving in the complete opposite direction. Together with the sustainable destination brand comes the idea of 'shop with your neighbour, give your neighbour some benefits', but it seems like they are not thinking of their neighbours. An example is that only alpine guests were welcome to park on the parking during Easter holidays, and no longer cross country guests. We have become so strong with cross country because there was/is someone with an interest. Moreover, the ski resort didn't deliver prima skiing it was natural to develop cross country tracks of a certain quality. Also, having NTG in Geilo that is an important factor.

The bus tourists in summer are increasing as well as accommodation at hotels. For those selling property it was important to offer a good product and being involved

with the development of cross country tracks was a necessity. There are 6000 cabins in the area, and many more ready to be built. The best properties have been approved as holiday homes and not for the people that actually live here, so that's why I hope we can have a change in focus so that Geilo will stay as a living village all year round.

### Inclusion in the process

We are supposed to collaborate very well, and I'm doing my very best, but I'm not very happy because they have an attitude that is a little damaging. It creates an internal fight which our guests will sense immediately. I'm trying to be positive, change is always difficult, it could be that it is a good change. They need to have some time and they are developing a strategy now and they are very inclusive in that work. I'm just terrified that they will destroy our identity as a complete winter destination and won't understand it until it's too late. This because if they keep making it difficult for our cross country guests then they won't come back and then they won't come back with alpine skis either. As Andi from Ski Safari said: "Geilo is strong in so many things that you don't find in other destinations, why don't you show your cross country tracks, and all the different restaurants you can eat in, and the activities and dogsledding and ice fishing; if you just want to go alpine skiing you can go where ever, you should start showing people why they should choose Geilo and that is not because of alpine skiing but because of the other things". I was a little surprised when I heard about the story launch project who will help to develop a destination strategy for the future. This because it is brought up in the board of Visit Geilo that the destination needs a strategy and then SkiGeilo comes up with a destination strategy. So we were discussing that we could at least collaborate so that we don't have two different strategies. However, they have the money and I don't so I'm a bit put down in a corner.

### Strengths of the destination

With its rich cultural heritage Geilo has a lot to offer both on activity level, cultural level as well as social level. The big history of Haugafolken for example could be told on guided tours and overall tourism in the area to create a unique value for the people that come here. I want to work towards a living community where people

enjoy to live so that it will be attractive for tourists as well. When experiencing happy people living here, it will only add to the overall experience of the tourist.

#### Marketing/Management strategies

We are part of Visit Norway on the website and it's always clever to follow the trends of Innovation Norway because that's where the money is, but in the end there is nobody really above us. We are free to do whatever we want. Visit Geilo doesn't have a strategic plan at the moment but we're working towards it, together with a marketing plan for a longer perspective. When we come to that point it will be interesting to see where SkiGeilo wants to go compared to where the other companies want to go. This because Roger, CEO Geilogruppen, needs to have guests all year round so he might be interested in other markets than SkiGeilo would so we have to find a balance. The strategic document we follow is the sustainable destination plan from Innovation Norway. We made an action plan for 2017 as well to follow up on the 2013-2016 sustainable destination plan.

#### Future developments

We have been working a lot with development projects in the history, but now the board wants Visit Geilo to be more of a marketing company, so that the member fee goes to running the company. You are dependent on someone outside your company to see the bigger picture and make people collaborate and develop things. If Visit Geilo is not supposed to be that company I'm very curious of what will happen in the future. Also to find extra money from Innovation Norway, the businesses don't have time for that to think about development, I'm not sure that thinking that Visit Geilo should be a pure marketing company is a good idea. It might be that there won't be any progress on a more overall level if there is nobody to push that, so perhaps Hol municipality should then take over some of the development projects because now we might have spoiled them by doing all of that work.

I would want a SkiGeilo that does really well because they employ a lot of people, and if they do well they can employ more people and also all year round. My hope is that Geilo can be a living community where people have safe jobs year round and where there is room for the small companies where people can do what they like so that we can have happy people and good products to our guests and that we are better at using our history and buying cheese from Hol instead of Norvegia. The ultimate

would be that all the restaurants in Geilo would use local meat and cheese, by that the community that you are a part of would generate more in comparison to buying things from outside and so are you able to build your own eco-system.

The goal for Visit Geilo is: Geilo should be the most sustainable destination in Norway, it's about everything, taking care of nature,... it will force you to become a better version of yourself on all levels.

### **5.2.1.3 Geilogruppen**

#### **Roger Espeli (Interview 11)**

Roger is the current CEO of Geilogruppen since 2014. Before that he worked as CEO of Bardøla until 2010 and as CEO of Geilo IL from 2010-2014.

Geilogruppen is the gathering of Vestlia, Highland, and Bardøla. They are the owners of the property around the hotels that is to be developed as well as property in the city centre which is to be developed.

#### **Developments over the years**

We are depended on and have traffic the whole year round, which has developed over the years. In the 1970's were several of the hotels only open for a limited amount of time in the year. This concentrated summer business developed further in the 80's and 90's. However, now summer traffic already starts right after Easter holidays up until October. Conference traffic is not as big anymore in all the hotels but in Bardøla and Vestlia it is still a reasonable part of it seen that they have a big conference hall available.

#### **Current situation**

I'm very happy with the new owners because we have a very good relationship with the ones who own and run the business now. We will work together closely which is a big difference from before. The hotels were not as eager to sell lift passes before because we thought that they were not as good, bad slopes, old lifts, and bad service. We are going to collaborate a lot with SkiGeilo to make a plan on how to attract many alpine tourists to Geilo. The focus will be on alpine tourists seen that that market brings along the biggest potential. SkiGeilo said that they were not going to operate the summer park any longer: zipline, bike park,... but they distributed it out

to smaller companies now. It remains to be seen if they are willing to invest also in summer or not, because we don't have the best cycling tracks. That's why I hope that they will see that it is also important for them to further develop the summer business. They are talking about developing beds for themselves as well, and if that comes through then they need traffic the whole year round and won't be able to close the doors after winter. Now they have a job to do to get the winter business back up and running and then we will see.

#### Positive/Negative side of the development

I think that we will succeed in attracting many alpine tourists to Geilo, because we will collaborate closely and the ski resort will become better in the future. However, that is on pure winter tourists from England and Denmark. Moreover, we have been made aware that they have a strategy where the danger is that those that come for training camps in November, will be gone; those who play around in Havsdalen up until the end of May, will be gone; or those that are staying here and train at Halstensgård, will be gone as well. So they're cutting pieces out there, and I can't do anything with that, and I'm not sure if that's the right thing to do. This because I think that Geilo as a destination loses a lot from that! Then all the youngsters will start going towards Uvdal or Hemsedal and Geilo will be out of that market and so will we be left with hotels, a ski resort, and no guests so I'm very negative towards that!

It's a myth that we are a winter destination, for our part at least. The hotels don't live off only ski and snowboard tourists from Norway and abroad. We live off at least as much from Norwegian companies that come here for conferences. What is important to take into account is that we are an all year round business with numerous different target markets, and where every market is as important as the other. If you look at the people who come here the most, our biggest group is Chinese people, many more than for example British or Danish tourists. It doesn't help for me to make a lot of money during Easter if I lose everything in June. It is therefore very important for the hotels that it balances out over the whole year. This because hotels are very demanding to hold up an organization throughout the whole year. I won't get good employees here if they can only work in the winter. Employees want to be able to work all year round, make okay money, and have a proper attendance. That is something you only achieve if you manage to create a year-round business.

### Inclusion in the process

I'm pushing SkiGeilo the whole time because I want the early snow up on Havsalsgrenda but they're not going to do that. I'm also pushing them to open until the first of June but they're closing already on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. I can't just live from the people that come in February, March, and April. I need to have people the whole time. That's what I'm not happy with. That is what I keep on saying to Andreas: Remember, you are one of the activity providers that is opened from November until April, I can't just lend myself to that because then we will have underbookings. We need summer traffic, we need cross country people here in April and May because the lifts will be closed, and what do we have to do in October now that there will be no early snow? Then we have to find something new.

Up until now we haven't had so many people here on early snow, but we had people staying over, and there is a potential here as well. A lot of national as well as international teams have trained here and over the past three years the growth has doubled each year! And then they cut that off, so now Hemsedal or Kvitfjell or Ål will start with it, which is not good at all! The same with training groups, that would not be a focus any more, they don't want that. But remember this, training groups need a place to stay, and a group of 40 people that stays here for two weeks, I make money from that, especially because it's not easy to attract other people here in November. But they're not going to focus on that because the lifts have to be accessible for tourists. Tourists are not here anyway in November, so I don't know what happened there.

### Strengths of the destination

Bergensbanen and R7 make it easy to come here and we have many nice hotels which makes your stay here even more enjoyable.

The strengths change in the course of the year:

- Summer: Hardangervidda, Hallingskarvet, trips in nature, cycling, or fishing
- Winter: always snow here, not that much, but always snow. We are not Verbier or any other big ski resort. That's why it's important to build up activities and services for our guests like beginners and families
- Autumn holiday: other things that are important to get guests
- October: conference guests
- May: Hardangervidda and total package

- Easter: big families that come here with different interests: shopping, concerts, spa, cross country, snowboard, alpine ski. We can't afford to focus only on the alpine product, then people would rather travel to Verbier or Hemsedal or Trysil

I think that we have to find them who are concerned about that every member of the family can do what they want to because there are so many unique things that you can do here that provides a total winter package.

The ones who buy cabins for example, perhaps later on with SkiGeilo, they buy them because they know that they can do different things here year-round, not just for alpine skiing, so the total package is very important. I will cooperate with SkiGeilo, as said before, but now I have to cooperate with many more in addition as well.

### Marketing/Management strategies

We need to have a common strategy in a way, but we also need to be honest with ourselves. SkiGeilo doesn't think about conference traffic, but I have to; SkiGeilo doesn't think about cross country skiers, but I have to; SkiGeilo doesn't think about May, but I have to. They see themselves as the boss in Geilo now, but it's me who is the boss. They have opened from November until April now during daytime, but I have opened 365 days in the year, 24 hours a day. So they are only one of the providers I need, and they are depended on me. They won't be able to sell lift cards if people don't have a place to stay, so that's something we have to figure out. I'm not just going to do what they put forward regarding strategies, because if it was up to them then the destination would be closed from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April until the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, and that is very unreal!

So we have a lot to discuss. It's very good that they are now improving the winter business and invest in the future of the ski resort, so I have to manage it on my own the rest of the year. I respect that they don't think about what people will come here in the summer.

### Future developments

The resort should be open for as long as possible throughout the year for as many target groups as possible, especially because we are very popular as a total package. I do not let the ski resort instruct me what to do, we can't only have alpine guests here, then my turnover will be 20% of what it is today. I'm not going to let the ski

resort decide on what type of target groups Geilo will have in the future. However, I will collaborate with them, the same way I collaborate with those who run dog sledding or any other activity in Geilo. They are one of the unique things that attract guests to Geilo but I need guests all year round.

## **5.2.2 Indirectly involved actors**

### **5.2.2.1 Geilo IL**

#### **Espen Nordby Andersen (Interview 3)**

Espen has been working as CEO of Geilo IL since 2014. Geilo IL is the biggest sports club in Geilo. It started off as an alpine skiing club in the early 1900's and was named Geilo Alpin Klubb. Over the years more sports developed and now they have eleven sports of which alpine skiing is the mother of the club.

#### **Place in the community**

Geilo IL has always been a big part of the community. We have more than 1600 members, whereas Geilo itself only has about 2500 inhabitants. We are lucky that a lot of people care about sports in general and the club in particular. Skarverennet, our biggest event of the year, started in 1974 and makes everyone come together and work voluntarily. We have 1100 volunteers for the whole event. It makes both the money as well as people come together. Skarverennet is a unique thing that builds the feelings about Geilo. The turnover is around 115million NOK for the whole community, so it means a lot to Hallingdal and especially Hol and Geilo and is a big push for the sports club. That's why I have a job and we have a budget for the sports activities for the rest of the year. We believe in multi-sport development and offer therefore now 11 different sports in the club.

#### **Development in relation to the ski resort**

The club has always had a close connection with the owners of the ski resort but now it's a challenge for us. But they would like to have a good relationship with us. Before we could go training midday, whereas now it's not allowed anymore. This year we can only go skiing in the evenings, before we could do it when we wanted, also in holidays or weekends we're not allowed to train anymore. Before it was easier to do what we want, but they have a good eye for us to help us. There have been some changes and it takes time to adjust to the changes. So far the feeling in the club is

that we didn't know anything, especially before Christmas. I think they have to play game with the local people, but we also need to understand that they need to make money to get out of the deficit. If they don't change anything there will be nothing left for us either. The worst part was when they closed Tiril parken, and the second worst thing was times for training for the different groups. In the long term perspective I think they have good plans, but they have not been very good to show them to the local community. On the other hand I also understand that they need time to develop the plans. I hope that in one year they will be able to show that they want good things for Geilo and also for the local community.

#### Positive/Negative sides of development

When you take something away from people, there will always be a small riot. Now we speak well with SkiGeilo and almost have a good deal with them. They help us with the evening trainings and they help us to make tracks for Skarverennet. What we lost is Tiril parken, training times and amounts, and the dugnad (volunteer work) for Paaskeparkering, which was a big part of income for the snowboard and freeski group.

#### Inclusion in the process

In the beginning we didn't know anything. It took too long time before we got any answers, and I was not able to say anything to all of the sports groups. I think they know very well what kind of part we play in the community and what kind of deals we had before. Now it seems to be better. We are not finished with the deal yet. We started in august and still haven't reached a deal yet so hopefully by next year we will have a deal.

#### Strengths of the destination

They will never be the best alpine destination, but it can be better than today. It could be the best place for families. The area in Geilo is quite compact and a good place for families, I think they also have to develop other activities together with skiing and also in summer, maybe it's expensive but it will develop tourism in summer here as well.

### Future developments

We asked SkiGeilo about which plans they have about the slopes and lifts and bigger park and hopefully we will take part in the process to look in the future what kind of priorities they have. Of course they decide in the end but we have a dialogue about that we should be heard in the process for the future so hopefully they will do that. I am positive but the last ten months we didn't know anything. I think in the future it will be better. It doesn't seem like they're going to use money on the park, the profile for them now is alpine skiing. But we have to make sure that they want to do something for snowboard and freeski as well. For us it's important that we make sure that we can do what we want to do, Havsdalen is okay but we need more. Next year they will quit the early snow and spring sessions. For me it seems like that they don't see that prolonging the season makes money for them, and the reputation or the name Geilo doesn't seem as important to them.

### **Atle Kleivdal (Interview 4)**

Atle started Geilo IL Snowboard together with some other parents in 2001. When NTG started they had some young riders who started snowboarding who they wanted to provide training for. "We had a good cooperation with NTG, they had the knowledge and we had all the people, so together we organised the Norwegian Championships in 2002, 2005, 2008". Ever since there hasn't been any Norwegian championships in Geilo because the respective owners found it too expensive.

### Place in the community

Snowboard has been a big part in SkiGeilo before, the previous owners put a lot of effort in it. We had a good cooperation with the resort before. We had some contests here before called the Nordic Rookie tour where many good riders came here from all over Scandinavia who now ride on a world class level. Geilo was the snowboard metropole in Norway. After NTG started up and the superpipe was built, Geilo took over again from Hafjell and Kvitfjell who became bigger after the Olympics and raised the snowboard level in Norway.

### Development in relation to the ski resort

Even though the previous owners already took down the halfpipe, they have always been good to snowboard and freeski in Geilo. Now the new owners say that they are good to snowboard but I'm not so certain. This winter is the first winter that we don't have a Norwegian cup for seniors, because we didn't want to have a competition with small kickers. Last year, under the old management, they organized Norwegian championships in Geilo for freeski and there was live coverage of six hours on national television.

### Positive/Negative sides of the development

Now there are only locals riding here and nobody else still makes their way to Geilo. Why do all the riders travel to Saas-Fee and Flachau? Because they have a good park. In Norway Trysil is number one, Hafjell is building a good park and other ski resorts as well. If you want riders to come to Geilo you have to offer them more than this. Now with the new owners I'm very worried, I don't know how the future will be. I think it's sad that a destination as Geilo will not have a park for the good riders. In the early season park there were still known riders who made their way to Geilo but ever since the other parks in different resorts got up and running nobody came here any longer.

Earlier we had a very good cooperation between the ski company and Geilo IL, this winter there is much less cooperation. The alpine group wanted to build a new finish house for the alpine races, even came up with the money (400k NOK), but they were not allowed to. The management didn't want anyone else to invest in their property. This even though earlier Geilo IL has spent a lot of money in the ski resort already. In Havsdalen the light and snow machines are paid by Geilo IL. It cost one million NOK, because we wanted an early park and a training area for the club and the youngest riders. I don't know if it will be like this for the future or if it's only the first year of new management. Tryvann has done a research study of how many freeski/snowboards and how many alpine skiers, and in the evening it was 50% park riders, and I think it's strange that that 50% is not important for Geilo. So I hope that they will talk to us and ask us for our input of what we would like.

### Inclusion in the process

We had some meetings with the previous owners in the late summer where all the plans for the winter were discussed. We wanted an early competition for the Nordic rookie tour so that they have to build the park early, we had it in late December or early January. The Finnish and Swedish said that this was the best park in Scandinavia, we had about a hundred riders for the competitions, no seniors, only young riders. I'm sad, I don't think it's so expensive as the current ski company says it is. If they do it the right way, they don't need that much snow. Perhaps it's been too expensive because they didn't do it the right way.

### Strengths of the destination

Riders like Ståle Sandbech made their way to early season park and brought out an edit. Øystein Bråten, who now earned a Olympic gold medal, has been here many times in early season. Last year we had spring sessions, I think Myrkdalen will have spring sessions now and a lot of others probably as well. Earlier, if you listened to the European Open, they talked about NTG in Geilo all the time, and all the good riders came from here: Ståle, Bergrem, Horgmo. It was very hard to get into the school, very good riders started here.

### Future developments

To be included in the future and new snow machines for Tiril parken, so that we can have Havsdalen for training and Tiril for guests and advanced.

Evening slopes: earlier we had Wednesday in Vestlia where you could go in the park, I hope that there will be more opening times in the evenings, and I heard that many of the hotels want that as well.

### **5.2.2.2 NTG Geilo**

#### **Torgeir Skrede (Interview 6)**

Torgeir started working at NTG Geilo in '91 as a cross country ski coach. This up until 2001 when he took over the role of CEO of NTG, which is still his current position.

#### **Place in the community**

NTG is a big part of the sports community in Geilo, it helps to develop the sports for the kids who are performing the sports that we provide as well as provides an economic and social value for the community. We help with competitions, and push to have good arenas for sports and bring around 100 students to Geilo which creates jobs and is good for the local community at the same time.

#### **Positive/Negative sides of the development**

Not necessarily negative but it's their first year and every change will hurt a little. If we want some positive development it has to hurt and in the future it will be positive. If we do some changes it will be better, if not no improvements will come from it. For us it doesn't hurt at all, for us it's not a problem to have that dialogue. I know that the early snow project cost a lot of money. However, I think that for Geilo, the whole community, it would be positive to have pre-season skiing. I understand that if the owners want others to share the bill, but for Geilo it would be positive to have both pre-season as well as spring skiing because we have a stable winter. Geilo as a ski resort is quite good, but we can do better. I think that the alpine slopes are good, the park can be improved, but I think it's important to have a good dialogue with SkiGeilo with them and not in the media. From the cross country side we have good tracks all over the area, we can perhaps have more signs and maps to tell our guests what to do.

#### **Inclusion in the process**

We have a good dialogue, definitely. We know a lot of them and we talk good together. I think that's maybe the most important. We knew the previous owners as well but now it's only one owner so it's easier than talking with three different owners.

### Strengths of the destination

If we want to be a good training resort we could be it, we could be number one! Alpine, snowboard, freeski cross country and biathlon, no problem! We have good infrastructure for all the different sports and a community who knows what it means to be involved in sports. There are national and international groups that come here to train. They know we have good conditions, so we could be number one, if we want to!

### Future developments

If we would upgrade to a training resort, then we need the early snow, that has been a success! It means that you can start skiing in the first half of October and it's easier to invite training groups because they know that we can start very early. I think there can also be a market in May. In Beitostolen they will prepare cross country tracks in the first half of May or until the snow starts melting. Even in the alpine slopes and snowboard park we could be able to say that we can train until the end of May. If not we have to go to a glacier, and why should we go to a glacier when we can stay here at home? And we know that it will be good conditions the first half of May. Why shouldn't we invite other training groups to join? They can take a part of the bill.

### **Christian Christensen (Interview 7)**

Christian has been working in Geilo for the past four years. He started as coach for the snowboarders from NTG and over the years combined it with a part time coaching job for Geilo IL.

### Developments in relation to the ski resort

I've seen the developments that are important for my job. The main thing for me is the park, and I've become more and more involved over the years. It's been a little up and down for the ski resort for different reasons. The first year the park was really good and early up and going. Havsdalen which was good as a training park that came up in October, and Tiril parken that had black jumps early as well so we could train well. With the new owners they wanted to change the focus, to take away one park and focus more on the two others and I think they also have a smaller budget to build the park.

### Positive/Negative sides of the development

It was really sad to hear that the early park was closing down because that was a project that started with the previous management. They got publicity on national television many times, they got famous snowboarders filming and putting it up on social media and got a lot of attention that way which can be helpful in the long term. So I think it's a bad move to take that away, especially after this short period of time. I think it's a really bad thing for the community, especially the freeski and snowboard kids but also for Norwegian skiing and snowboarding.

For us, NTG, it takes a lot of training time away and also takes away the foundation of building the park and the alpine training area. Spring sessions and Mega park were two other aspects that have been developed under the old management. However, both of them got cancelled. They both brought a lot of people to Geilo and built the reputation for Geilo. I think that they're changing their focus towards being a regular ski resort with a fun park in Kikut and a training park in Havsdalen. The previous owners had a bigger park focus. They had a big budget and team, big events like Norwegian cups, and national championship for freeski last year before the change of owners.

### Inclusion in the process

I don't know how much we were included in the decision process but we were at least allowed to say what we thought about the things and the dialogue about it so that they explained what they wanted to do and what we needed, and we got to an agreement that we needed a training park. With Emil this year it's been really good, we had a meeting with him and the owners early in the season to plan the park for this year. After that we had a good collaboration with Emil so it has been a pretty good relationship. He has done most of the things that we wanted and we cooperate in a good way.

### Strengths of the destination

Geilo has a big strength with their long winter, and quite a big resort in Norway to build it into whatever they want to. My priority is to have a good training area, I want a good park here. I think the ski resort is the main thing that drives the little town of Geilo and they have a responsibility to give back to the community. It's important to

give back to the kids and people who work in the resort, of course make money but if they could do it without losing money it could be a really good thing.

#### Future developments

Regarding future improvements I'd like a better and bigger park, and some more possibilities with that regard. I think that early season park was a very good thing, if not economically for the ski resort, I think it's very good for the community.

#### **Disa and Haukur Bjarnason (Interview 5)**

Disa is the leader of the alpine group of Geilo IL. She has been working in this position already for almost five years. Haukur is the head coach of the alpine group at NTG already for the last seven years. Before that he has been on and off in Geilo since '89. He has always been involved with skiing, starting off as an athlete and then working with skiing at NTG in Oslo, Lillehammer, and the Norwegian national team.

#### Positive/Negative sides of the development

The new management has made some very good improvements for the tourists. The busses, and the people who work in the lifts who now come out and say Hi to you, that has been really good! But when it comes to active training competition then there are several strange developments that have occurred. In general there are slopes for everybody. There are two big spots for freeski and snowboarding, but no offer for active alpine skiers, just no gates on the slope what so ever, so they are serving more or less everybody but are excluding the active alpine skiers. This is in contrast with how big the sport is and how many people take part in it. A lot of cabin owners have kids that race here who now don't have a possibility to train anymore, so that's a strange development. It feels like we, as active alpinists, are no longer a part of the target groups. The last weekend before Christmas we had a big training camp in Geilo with many alpine racers from various places in the world who got an email one day in advance that there will be no training longer even though all the trainings and accommodation were booked for everyone. For us this is not the way to do it. We are very motivated and want to help where ever possible, but now there is so much negative talk about Geilo in the active community in Norway which is not pleasant at all.

The thing with Geilo is that there is a community here. In the morning a lot of people go cross country skiing and go on the slopes afterwards. You can't isolate and say you have an alpine thing here, it's a mountain thing. Geilo IL prepares 8km of snowmaking for free. Hol municipality pays for the preparation of the slopes, why should a lift pay for everything and only get the lift tickets, why doesn't the community come in there and help with the snow production?

### Inclusion in the process

I have never been in a meeting with them, before we always used to have a meeting with the previous owners at the start of the season where we go over the season planning and wishes for the season. That's why we have been nervous for the whole season seen that several activities and events got cancelled last minute and there is no direct communication.

### Strengths of the destination

The resort is family friendly and offers slopes for almost everybody as a tourist attraction. For alpine skiing it's cold up here which enables the resort to open early in the season. There is a business in racing, I know that they are narrowing the scope, but at the same time they are missing a business opportunity which is quite big. Before when we could open earliest of everyone, just the income from the racers for November already paid for the snow production for the whole area. To get Asle løyva ready takes around 800k NOK which is a lot less than getting a park ready. Geilo was known as alpine racing destination all over Europe. However, they are now thinking of going to other places because they have no place to train any longer. Alpine skiing is a big sport, and therefore it's sad because people are now even selling apartments because they were here to come and train and feel welcome, but now they're looking for other places. Geilo has a huge potential as a training resort in periods. Concerning the early snow, it was almost tripled in income compared to the previous year so it almost paid itself off according to production. What I think is strange is that they only think about the income in the ski resort, and not also for the overall income for the community. If you pay a certain amount for the lift passes and training, it will probably be tripled in the overall community for accommodation, food, gas, stores, shops... and also looking at the period, how hard it will be to find people to fill up accommodation in October and early November. It's strange that

the community doesn't come up with the question of why they closed it down, and that they don't want to do it together. They also have a social responsibility with regards to eg. the kids who grow up in Geilo. As a racing area in the period October-November it's no question it was one of the best in the world!

Another strength that could be used is spring training, this year they have a lot of snow, so a possibility could be eg. from the end of April opening 4 days a week a training arena on the shadow side so that people don't have to go to glaciers. It takes about three years' time to build it up so it takes time. Early season snow got really known now after three years, and now the whole investment is gone, so it seems that all the investments and money spent are in vain. So now Kvitfjell is going to have early snow. For us it's not even a question of letting the ski resort do it. We'd love to do it as well, even pay for the services, so that we at least can prolong our season.

#### Future developments

For Geilo not to develop into a sleeping town but a place that offers the numerous possibilities it has to offer for both our kids as well as the tourists that come to enjoy the attractions of Geilo.

### 5.3 Tourists

Below a short overview will be given of the responses to the open questions set up for the tourists.

Open Questions:

- What made you decide to come to Geilo
  - o We love skiing and the more alternative locations. We checked other locations which would make sense first like Colorado, Wyoming but they are all expensive and developed, not authentic anymore
  - o We've been here a couple of times before and liked it so we bought an apartment here
  - o My best friend has a cabin here
  - o We wanted to give the kids a snow experience. It looked like a good family orientated place to learn, a bit more fun than the traditional Alps. The combination of all the activities was very important
  - o We wanted to go to a place where you could do both cross country and downhill skiing
  - o The place where I work has a few apartments here
- Background info, how did you learn about SkiGeilo?
  - o Always known Hallingdal as a kid
  - o A friend in Sint Maarten who is Norwegian who always tells about Norway
  - o I went to the British Airways website and just looked for places to go skiing and this was one of the undiscovered skiing destinations
  - o Because of work
- Developments
  - o Interesting this year, new lift. Last two years it was going down, runs closed, lifts closed, to me it seemed like they didn't spend much money in maintaining it. At least they're upgrading things now. Changes made in the last 30 years haven't really changed that much. They've been struggling a lot over the last years and it was disappointing
  - o Improvements with the catering and the park has been improved over the years
- Likes about the ski resort and overall destination
  - o It's nice and friendly, there are good restaurants, it's not aggressive, people don't smash into you in cues, it's cool for the kids

- Geilo is not overcrowded, not overdeveloped and there is snow everywhere, winter wonderland kind of feeling. The train was beautiful, when we arrived here it was quiet and peaceful and very friendly people. It's quiet in the slopes as well, no queues at the lifts
- I like the skiing here, both downhill and cross country, and the overall atmosphere in Geilo. There are other ski resorts that are better with better possibilities as to slopes and hills but the combination here with downhill and cross country is excellent
- It's nearby, you have a combination of cross country and downhill in winter, and in summer you can bicycle and hike in the mountains. It's an important factor that there are activities all year round and also the weather is much better than in Bergen. It's easy to have the children with us, it's a small place so they can ski and we always know where they are
- Accessibility, you can get anywhere pretty easily, in the Alps you need to take 10 lifts to get anywhere and here you can just walk out the door. There are very nice restaurants in Geilo
- Brilliant hotel with a lot of activities. It's great for them to have some snow time, but there are also other things to occupy them with. The main reason to come here was the overall offer of activities, not just the skiing but the overall snowy winter experience. Ski in ski out without commuting like in France
- Part of the group wants to go cross country skiing and some of us want to go downhill skiing so it's a good mix. It's nice that it is so quiet here without many people
- The kids can learn downhill skiing and we can do cross country skiing
- It's a nice place for the kids because we can go outside and do activities but we can also go to the pool and do other activities. So you can be here for more than just a weekend because there are a lot of things to do
- Dislikes/Improvements
  - No updated weather information, to know when lifts are closed/opened,...to keep people up to date. Access to information about what's open/closed. You need more good runs, the best run is only accessible by a T-bar
  - More expensive than Europe. The bus system, now it drives between the resorts already but not from other places to the resort. Lockers for your

equipment where you can store your equipment so that you don't have to take it with you everyday

- Better ski lifts, there are a lot of T-bars now
- Too short slopes and haven't got the best slopes for the small children, it's somewhere in between level. If I would go skiing only for the enjoyment of skiing I would go to another ski resort like Trysil or Hemsedal. There are a lot of T-bars here. Make it better to ski off-piste because people who want to ski off-piste will never come to Geilo
- The ski school only had one instructor and I couldn't get my kid to get ski classes
- Big cues in the rental
- Pricing, if we would have to pay for real accommodation and not have the cabin then we would only be able to come for a weekend
- We can't eat our own lunch in the cafeteria
- Changes new management
  - Have to buy new lift cards, don't want to swap the old ones for free
  - Haven't experienced any changes from last year to this year, over the last ten years I've only experienced improvements on Vestlia side but not on Geilo side. I've noticed that they have refurbished the cafeteria but that is not the main reason why I'm here
  - Haven't experienced any changes in comparison to last year
  - It was easier to get the ski cards, usually you had to cue for ages
  - When I went online to check I found out that it was one place and I think that's an easy way to solve it, so that you can just choose skiing in Geilo and then pick where you could choose rental and everything
- Motives for repeated visit
  - Free accommodation and the most amazing cabin, hotel, spa
  - Apartment/ Cabin of my friend
  - The town is nice and the slopes are nice for the kids
  - The stability of the snow conditions the whole season
  - I would only come back to also do cross country skiing because it's a lot of waiting on the lifts if you only do downhill skiing
  - Skiing, because in Bergen the conditions are not good. Also in summer it would be nice to go hiking here

## **6.0 Discussion**

In this section I will elaborate further on my findings following the three aspects from the theoretical framework: sustainable development, value co-creation, and stakeholder management. This by compiling parts of the different interviews together with those structural categories developed in my research framework.

### **6.1 *Sustainable development***

Starting from the first articulation of sustainable development: “Developments that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robert, 2007, p. 60) one can see that this is a normative matter. It is how we ought to behave for both our current fellow citizens as well as for future generations (Hedenus, Persson, & Sprei, 2015). Scientific knowledge can be used to determine which actions have which type of consequences relative to our normative goals. These developments can be divided into three aspects: environmental, social, and economic, being the three entities of sustainable development (United Nations, 2002).

Looking at sustainable development for the case of this research I should form an overview of where Geilo as a mountain destination came from. Going back in time Geilo has been active with winter sports from the very start in Norway. With Gjeilo Skiklub which was founded in 1917, the first slalom races in 1935, and the opening of the first chairlift in 1954 it's safe to say that Geilo has been one of the pioneers in winter sports in Norway. In the nineties it used to be one of the typical ski destinations in Norway. As mentioned by Anne (Interview 12): “ Before Hafjell came in '94, it was Oppdal, Voss, Norefjell, and Geilo. We were the four big ski resorts in Norway”. However, over the last decade or two it has been very hard for Geilo to develop itself further. As mentioned by Andersson (2016, p.1): “For a long time it looked like Geilo was losing the battle for ski customers”. Several reasons have been given by different actors in Geilo. “Due to the separation of ski resorts and different owners for different organizations it has always been hard to find cooperation. This due to the fact that in the end everybody wanted to make a profit and couldn't see the benefit of working together yet” (Interview 2). Anne on the other hand said (Interview 12): “I feel like all the ski lifts worked together, but we didn't own any beds. That was the main problem. The hotels wanted to go in one direction and we wanted ski guests. Everybody always says that we have always been fighting within the ski community, but I don't feel that way, we had a good cooperation.” Roger corroborated to this by saying (Interview 11): “We didn't

want the previous owners to succeed. We were not as eager with the hotels to sell lift passes before because we thought that they were not as good: bad slopes, old lifts, and bad service”. So over the years a lot of changes happened in Geilo. “The changes ranged from big fancy hotels to pubs and youth hostels in certain periods leading up to the biggest question: Hva er Geilo og for hvem?” [What is Geilo and for whom?]

 (Interview 12). This goes together with the brand identity and image of the resort and the overall destination. These are two concepts used extensively in positioning (Barbu, 2016). Many brands or destinations underwent a rebranding process over the course of time. This mostly to improve their positioning. Mismatches can appear between the desired identity and brand image (Barbu, 2016).

Line, the tourism chief of Visit Geilo mentioned (Interview 8): “We have become so strong in cross country and other activities both because there was someone with an interest, and because the ski resort didn’t deliver prima skiing. That’s why it was natural to develop different activities.” This in order to continue to provide high quality experiences for the visitors. After the financial crisis in 2010 the tourism dropped dramatically in Geilo. “At that time there was no strong destination company to encourage people to collaborate and everybody would use their own money in different ways with nobody to coordinate it” (Interview 8). She continues with: “Pål managed to get people to collaborate and put their money in Visit Geilo and start to use Geilo as the main attraction what you communicate to the outside world”. Kevin goes further here with: “Visit Geilo has done a great job creating an all year round tourist destination, but that has also had an inverted effect on Geilo as a skiing destination” (Interview 2). Line there says that: “It’s not up until now that SkiGeilo is taking part in it and directing it more than they have before. They were not able to before due to bad economy, they didn’t have any resources to say how they wanted things” (Interview 8). Brand image is something that is quite persistent and takes a considerable amount of time to change it. This creation of identity is a core topic in marketing theory. Previous findings suggest that an identity is co-created by interactions between the brand, the individual consumer, and the brand community (Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

In order to find out the answer to what Geilo is and for whom I asked all of the interviewees what they think the biggest strengths of the destination are.

Following the findings of identity co-creation of Black & Veloutsou (2017) three entities are formed: the brand (Geilo Holding, Slaatta Skisenter), the brand community (Community), and the individual consumer (Tourists):

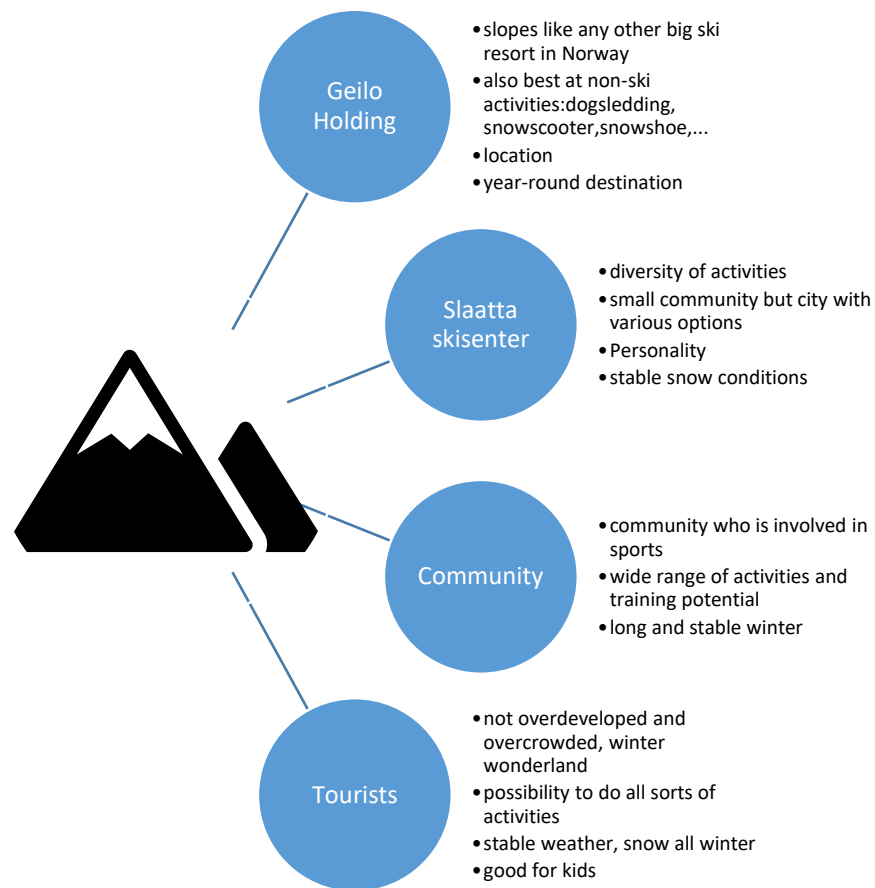


Figure 6: Strengths of the destination as summarized from the interviews

Looking at the different answers to the question about identity one aspect pops out. There is no big mismatch between the resort, the community, and their consumers. However, there is a difference in focus on what qualities the environment has on which both the community, tourists, and management depend. As Kevin said: “You need to have some activities to focus on and for Geilo that should be alpine” (Interview 2). Whereas Roger mentioned: “I think that we have to find them who are concerned about every member of the family being able to do what they want to do. There are so many unique things you can do here that provides a total winter package” (Interview 2). One of the tour operators mentioned: “Geilo is strong in so many things that you don’t find in other destinations, why don’t you show your cross country tracks, and all the different restaurants you can eat in, and the activities and dogsledding and ice fishing? If you just want to go alpine skiing you can go where ever, you should start showing people why they should choose Geilo and that is not because of alpine skiing but because of the other things.” (Interview 8).

This also comes back in the interviews with tourists: “If I would’ve travelled only to do downhill skiing I would’ve gone to the Alps”, “It’s great for the kids to have snow time, but

there are also other activities to occupy them with, the main reason to come here was the overall offer of activities”, “Accessibility, you can ski in ski out”, “ A good mix of downhill skiing and cross country skiing”, “Nice and friendly, with many activities besides skiing to occupy everyone with”. Ski resorts can benefit from detailed consumer information, and information on consumer segments can be used to develop targeted marketing strategies in winter tourism (Konu, Laukkanen, & Komppula, 2011).

Moreover, one of the strengths that came up most in the interviews was the long and stable winter in Geilo. However, now that they have taken away the pre-season skiing as well as spring sessions the winter season is reduced from eight months to five months. Tjorve, Lien & Flognfeldt (2015) did a study with more than 3000 respondents from Sweden, Denmark, and Germany about their image of Norwegian ski destinations and criteria for winter vacation selection. Here they came to the conclusion that stable snow conditions, and combining alpine and cross-country skiing are some of Norway’s competitive but seldom marketed advantages.

The new management also distributed the summer park to other small companies. As Knut Erik mentioned: “They’re talking about making it the best family place in Norway, and focus only on the winter. I built up the summer park, and it’s really important, if people want to buy cabins here there should be something here also in summer.” (Interview 10). The reasoning here is: “In summer, we plan for winter! The problems with those previous projects was that there is hardly any money to make there. We are too big of an organisation to ever be able to get any reasonable amount of income out of that” (Interview 2).

From a sustainability perspective it is important to look at tourism from an all year perspective. Roger mentioned here: “The ones who buy cabins for example, perhaps later on with SkiGeilo, they buy them because they know that they can do different things here year-round, not just for alpine skiing, so the total package is very important.”(Interview 11). He went further by stating that: “It doesn’t help for me to make a lot of money during Easter if I lose everything in June. It is very important for the hotels that it balances out over the whole year. This because they are only open for a limited amount of time during the day for a limited period of the year. I am opened 365 days in the year, 24 hours a day” (Interview 11).

I think this is a really important statement. Even if we look at sustainable tourism only from an economic development perspective, it is strange to cut down on one of the best strengths Geilo has to offer. Moreover: “I won’t get good employees here if they can only work in the winter. Employees want to be able to work all year round, make okay money, and have a

proper attendance. That is something you only achieve if you manage to create a year-round business” (Interview 11). Even though Roger is talking about the hotel business, from a sustainability perspective it is clear that every player in the tourism world benefits from creating year round businesses, increasing the quality of life of the host community. Coming back to the brand identity, as one of the interviewees mentioned: “We have an incredible opportunity where we can run the park from October. This is amazing as the first glacier in Europe opens for Autumn the first weekend in October and last year we were open before that. To be able to run a park at that time of the year to that standard is unique.” (Interview 9). As well as another interviewee who said: “As a racing area in the period of October-November it is no question that it was one of the best in the world!” (Interview 5). Moreover Torgeir adds to this by saying: “If we want to be a good training resort we could be it, we could be number one! Alpine, snowboard, freeski, cross country, and biathlon, no problem!” (Interview 6). From a social point of view several interviewees came with similar statements of: “I think that early season park is a very good thing, if not economically for the resort, it’s very good for the community. It was a good concept that would help the resort in the long run.” (Interview 7) and “I know that it costs a lot of money. However, I think that for Geilo, the whole community, it would be positive to have pre-season skiing. I understand that if the owners want others to share the bill, but for Geilo it would be positive to have both pre-season as well as spring skiing because we have a stable winter” (Interview 6).

All of this comes down to target market selection. As Kevin said: “We’re trying hard to agree with other actors that alpine is the focus that Geilo should have in the future. We’re not trying to shut down or degrade the cross country product. We just have to heighten ourselves that when you wake up you’re willing to use 400nok (price of a day pass) to go skiing instead of doing cross country.” (Interview 2). This in collaboration with Roger: “We are going to collaborate with SkiGeilo to make a plan on how to attract many alpine tourists to Geilo. The focus will be on alpine tourists seen that that market brings along the biggest potential so we will collaborate to achieve that.” (Interview 11). The interviews showed an incongruence with that profile marketing approach seen that the bigger part of the interviewed tourists did not travel to Geilo only for alpine skiing. A segmented marketing approach could benefit the resort as Roger stated: “The resort has to be open for as long as possible throughout the year for as many target groups as possible” (Interview 11).

Looking at the responses about identity and the strengths of the destination, upscaling to a training resort could have a big potential for the resort!

Up until now we have only discussed brand identity. Below I will go more in depth in the positive and negative developments experienced under the new management.

Positive:

- “One of the problems was that in the last ten years we had about 100million NOK in deficit, now we get new money to rebuild the lifts and the ski resort. I think the best days are yet to come!” (Interview 10)
- “Very positive for the destination that they want to improve the ski resort and slopes.” (Interview 8)
- “I think it’s going to be good, I’m very happy with the new owners because we have a very good relationship with the ones who own and run the business now. We will work together closely which is a big difference from before.” (Interview 11)
- “It’s a good change that they are now local owners. I understand that they have to change to earn money.” (Interview 3)
- “Now we have a good dialogue with SkiGeilo and almost have a good deal with them. They help us with the evening trainings and they help us to make tracks for Skarverennet.” (Interview 3)
- “They have made some good developments for the tourists with the busses and the people that work in the lift that now come out, which has been really good.” (Interview 5)
- “The last two years it was going down, it seemed like they didn’t spend much money in maintaining it, at least they’re upgrading things now!” (Tourist)

Negative:

- “Visit Geilo has been working quite hard with the sustainable destination brand focussing on whole-year tourism and jobs and now it seems like that they are moving in the complete opposite direction.” (Interview 8)
- “I can’t just live from the people that come in February, March, and April. I need to have people the whole time, that’s what I’m not happy with. I’m pushing SkiGeilo the whole time because I want the early snow up on Havsdaalsgrenda but they are not going to do that, and I’m pushing them to open until the first of June but they’re closing already on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April.” (Interview 11)
- “Up until now we haven’t had so many people here on early snow, but we had people staying over, and there is a potential here as well. A lot of national as well as international teams have trained here and over the past three years and the growth

has doubled each year! And then they cut that off, so now Hemsedal or Kvittfjell or Ål will start with it, that's not good at all! (Interview 11)

The same with training groups, that would not be a focus any more. They don't want that. But remember this, training groups need a place to stay, and a group of 40 people that stays here for two weeks, I make money from that. Especially because it's not easy to attract other people here in November. But they're not going to focus on that because the lifts have to be accessible for tourists, even though tourists are not here anyway in November." (Interview 11)

- "So far the feeling in the club is that we didn't know anything, especially before Christmas. Last summer we got to know that there are new owners, but we didn't get any information." (Interview 3)
- "The worst part was when they closed Tiril parken and the second worst thing was times for training for the different groups. We also lost dugnad for Påskeparkering, which was a big part of the budget for both snowboard and freeski in Geilo IL." (Interview 3)
- "The Alpine group of Geilo IL wanted to build a new finish house for the Alpine races, also had the budget of 400k NOK to build it but they did not allow it. Earlier Geilo IL has invested a lot of money in the ski resort like the lights and snow machines in Havsdalen for example." (Interview 4)
- "I think it's a mistake to take away the early snow. Also for my job and the kids that I'm managing. It takes a lot of training time away and also takes away the foundation of building the park and the alpine training area. There were several national teams that came to train and also several other snowboard clubs and gymnasiums that came to train". (Interview 5, Interview 7)
- "In general there are slopes for everybody now, there are two big spots for freeski and snowboarding, but no offer for active alpine skiers, just no gates on the slope what so ever, so they are serving more or less everybody but are excluding the active alpine skiers. This is in contract with how big the sport is and how many people take part. A lot of cabin owners have kids that race here who now don't have a possibility to train any longer, so that's a really strange development" (Interview 5)
- "We are not allowed to train in the weekend anymore, we always have to travel to Ål, Hemsedal, or even further. We can only train three times a week and that's all, so it's more expensive for the families now because we have to go to other places to train." (Interview 5)

It is as Torgeir says: “If we want some positive development it has to hurt and in the future it will be positive.” (Interview 6). However, from both sides of the developments we can derive that everyone is happy with the investments in the ski resort and feels like that was a necessity. From the negative sides of the developments I classified it into two categories: difference in focus and overall communication with the community.

So in the current situation the idea of the new management is: “You really get the guests that you market for, the biggest competitor for the alpine product is cross country tracks” (Interview 2). Even though it is true that effective marketing leads to more customers, the question remains whether those customers are the right fit for the resort and the overall community. Roger mentions here: “I think that we’ll succeed in attracting many alpine tourists to Geilo, because we’ll collaborate closely and the ski resort will become better in the future. But that is on pure winter tourists from England and Denmark.” (Interview 11). However, on the other hand he stresses a big concern: “We’ve been made aware that they have a strategy where the danger is that several other target groups will be gone. I’m not sure if that’s the right thing to do, because I think that Geilo as a destination loses a lot from that, and Geilo will be left with hotels, a ski resort, and no guests so I’m very negative towards that!” (Interview 11). His opinion is that: “I think we have to find them who are concerned with every member of the family being able to do what they want to do. I’m not going to let the ski resort decide on what type of target groups Geilo will have in the future. But I will collaborate with them, the same way as I collaborate with those who run dog sledding or any other activity in Geilo.” (Interview 11). Overall strategies, which are right for the destination, is what I get out of these quotes the most. Strategies that will create value for both the tourists as well as the local community.

Looking at those strategies, Turner & Kasnet (2005, p.1) claimed: “sustainable development for a destination requires a calculated approach, specifically, a clear vision of success and a comprehensive plan to achieve success”. In order to form these comprehensive plans, it is very important to know your consumer, plan on a long-term basis, and be effective in your management and marketing. This is what has come up most in future developments as well. For SkiGeilo the biggest wish for the future is: “Customer knowledge” (Interview 2). Visit Geilo is working on a strategic plan together with a marketing plan for a longer perspective but up until now they’ve only worked from year to year. Roger said: “We need to have a common strategy in a way, but we also need to be honest with ourselves. I’m not just going to do what they put forward regarding strategies, because if it was up to them then the

destination would be closed from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April until the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, and that is very unreal! The resort has to be open for as long as possible throughout the year for as many target groups as possible, especially because we are very popular as a total package” (Interview 11). As Line continued: “It will be interesting to see where SkiGeilo wants to go compared to where the other companies want to go. This because Roger needs to have guests all year so he might be interested in other markets than SkiGeilo would so we have to find a balance.” (Interview 8).

The last word is key in future developments, finding a balance. Even though the ski resort is almost completely gathered now under one management, it is as Roger said: “Remember, you are one of the activity providers that is opened from November until April, I can’t just lend myself to that because then we will have underbookings. We need summer traffic, we need cross country people here in April and May because the lifts will be closed, and what do we have to do in October now that there will be no early snow?” (Interview 11). If SkiGeilo wants to become a big actor again in Geilo and create value with both their consumers as well as the local community finding a balance will be crucial.

## **6.2 Value creation**

In order to achieve those strategic goals value should be co-created. As Woratschek, Horbel & Popp (2014, p.1) mentioned: “Managers must be aware of the fact that value creation is no longer confined to the firm, but takes place in a collaborative process among the firm, the consumer, and other parties.”. As mentioned by Kevin: “One of the biggest goals now is customer experience, to heighten the quality of the product and increase the engagement of the people” (Interview 1). This goes together with the Service Dominant Logic which focusses on intangible resources, the co-creation of value, and relationships. Co-creation experiences are the basis of value. Not only is this important for the overall consumer experience but also for the sustained value creation. Geilo has developed itself over the years from the 1970’s where only several of the hotels were open for a limited amount of time in the year towards hotels and the overall destination driven year-round. As Roger stated: “What is important to take into account is that we are a year-round business with numerous different target markets, and where every market is as important as the other.” (Interview 11). In order to be able to perform effective destination marketing the different target markets should be known and interacted with.

With regards to destination marketing challenges have arisen over the years as Kevin stated: “Due to the separation of ski resorts and different owners for different organizations it has always been hard to find cooperation. Now with the constellation of the resorts and cooperation with the hotels we want to market Geilo as a whole. This so that everyone sees the mutual benefit of marketing Geilo not as a gathering of separate entities but as one destination.” (Interview 2). He continues by saying that: “We should also collaborate a lot more, we won’t be visible at all under our own logos. We have to use the destination name, that’s really important.” (Interview 2). As destination marketer Line responded to this with: “It’s good that SkiGeilo says that they want to promote Geilo as a destination. However they’re continuously asking me to put alpine pictures everywhere, they are not promoting the complete destination. Change is always difficult. It could be that it is a good change, they need some time to develop a strategy. I’m just worried that it will destroy our identity as a complete winter destination.” (Interview 8). Visit Geilo as destination marketing organization is unique in the sense that it exerts little control over neither the destination infrastructure nor the privately owned tourism products, even though they are still in charge of managing the destination’s value proposition (Line & Runyan, 2014). With Hol municipality now reducing the funding from 1.7 million NOK to 900k NOK Visit Geilo is turning into a marketing company and will be no longer responsible for the development projects on which they’ve been working the last couple of years. Line follows up here with: “You are dependent on someone outside your company to see the bigger picture and make people collaborate and develop things. If Visit Geilo is not supposed to be that company I’m very curious of what will happen in the future.” (Interview 8). So without the ability to control the product or its attributes, however, DMO’s should create value by coordinating the efforts of those stakeholders that directly control the destination’s core and supporting resources (Line & Runyan, 2014).

Not just from an organization-customer perspective but also organization-employee perspective value should be co-created in order to achieve strategic performance. As Roger said: “This because hotels are very demanding to hold up an organization throughout the whole year. I won’t get good employees here if they can only work in the winter. Employees want to be able to work all year round, make okay money, and have a proper attendance. That is something you only achieve if you manage to create a year-round business.” (Interview 11). The ski resort is one of the unique things that attracts both employees as well as guests to Geilo but guests are needed all year round to become sustained value creation.

### **6.3 Stakeholder management**

Sustainable development has become a topic even on a global scale. With the SDGs, or sustainable development goals, numerous countries have adopted a set of goals that should be achieved by 2030 (United Nations, 2018). Here it is mentioned that: “for the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, private sector, civil society and people like you” (United Nations, 2002, p. 1). From a tourism perspective sustained value creation reflects the combined community, stakeholder, and business goals of strategic success in a destination. Therefore I opted a stakeholder approach to figure out how the different stakeholders from the local community are involved and included in this process of managerial changes and overall developments of the destination.

SkiGeilo is currently busy with the Story Launch project where a company is interviewing different people to make sure that everybody can see the best way for the future of Geilo. Knut Erik corroborated here by stating that: “The most important is to have a good dialogue with the owners. I think the company is very interested to give back to the local community.” (Interview 10). Different reactions have come out when asking about their involvement under the new management of the resort. Anne mentioned: “Next year I want to have it more open, more dialogue, that we are more involved.” (Interview 12). Line said: “We are supposed to collaborate very well, and I’m doing my very best!” (Interview 8). Roger continued with: “I’m very happy with the new owners. It’s very good that they are now improving the winter business and invest in the future of the ski resort.” (Interview 11). From the side of Geilo IL several of the reactions were: “In the beginning we didn’t know anything. It took too long time before we got any answers. We have a dialogue now but are not finished with the deal yet, so hopefully by next year we will have a deal.” (Interview 3); “I hope that next winter will change and that they will talk to us and ask us for our input of what we would like.” (Interview 5); “With the previous owners we always used to have a meeting at the start of the season where we would go over the season planning and wishes for the season, now we have not been included at all.” (Interview 4). NTG as other big actor also had similar reactions: “We have a good dialogue, we knew the previous owners as well but now it’s only one owner so it’s easier than talking with three different owners.” (Interview 6); “I don’t know how much we were included in the decision process but we were at least allowed to say what we thought about the plans and the dialogue.” (Interview 7).

The two main aspects that come out of the responses of how the actors are included in the process are communication and (lack) of inclusion. Existing research corroborates to these responses. “Despite evidence that attraction managers increasingly recognise the salience of local residents in their decision making, evidence from the interviews suggests that they tend not to favour deep engagement with local residents.” (Garrod, Fyall, Leask, & Reid, 2012, p. 1). Even though research showed that the involvement of local communities leads to effective management (Maroudas, Kyriakaki, & Gouvis, 2011). Moreover, local actors can also be used to co-create value for the tourists. Even though the focus might now be on narrow-scope economic goals, in order to ensure a lucrative future they will have to consider the broader aspects as well. So also here it is shown that the ski resort faces trade-offs about the inclusion of stakeholders in their contemporary management. These stakeholder groups might be of big importance to SkiGeilo seen that Geilo itself only has a population of about 2500 people.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

In the beginning of my thesis I put forward the research question:

*“ How can ski resorts develop themselves into co-creating a sustainable future?”*

It can be concluded, that at the moment a lot of positive and negative developments have occurred in the ski resort as well as in the community of Geilo. All of these developments corroborated to the statement that the basis of value is to co-create experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This both on a business to business/community level as well as on a business to consumer level. The importance is stressed that value co-creation is not only important for the overall consumer experience but also for the sustainable development. That is why managers should be aware of the fact that it is not them anymore who solely create value, but that value should be co-created in a collaborative process between the firm, the consumer, and the other parties involved. Tourism goes wider than only forming strategies to achieve competitive edges, you also have to meet criteria for sustainable tourism. These three levels of sustainable tourism have been shown to be a hard combination in this thesis. Trade-offs are made between the economic, social, and the environmental aspects of development. This thesis has showed that, not only is there a trade-off between the three pillars of sustainable development, there also is a big challenge in brand identity and the congruence between the portrayed image with the perceived image of the resort and overall destination.

The main research question was divided into two sub-research questions:

*“What kind of management and marketing strategies are necessary to develop a sustainable future?”*

In order to further develop and sustain the lucrativeness of the business and overall destination a brand identity should be formed. There was no mismatch of image but an incongruence among SkiGeilo, the community, and the tourists. Co-creation also plays a role here. You only get what you market for, if that is your right market. So it is not just a matter of profiling the consumer with the highest willingness to pay, it also has to match the destination you apply it on. This is why I recommend, in line with Tjorve, Lien & Flognfeldt (2018), a shift from profile marketing towards a segmented marketing approach making use of Norway's seldom marketed advantages: stable snow conditions, and the combination of alpine and cross-country skiing. Currently in the case of SkiGeilo numerous changes have happened: cancelling of the early snow, spring sessions, mega park, Tiril parken, summer park which is now distributed to different companies. All of this comes down to cutting out target groups. This goes together with the profile marketing approach. A clarifying representation of this marketing approach is shown on one of the banners in Geilo which says: “Welcome to Geilo, the complete winter destination!” But the picture has alpine only nowadays. As previous research shows, brand identity is not something made up by the company. My findings suggest that the interactions among the company, the individual consumer and the community co-create their identity. From the moment that the right identity is found the destination managers can start further developing the strengths of the destination and start to find the right target market for their identity. Moreover, as seen from the interviews, making use of a segmented marketing approach could further develop Geilo as a training resort. Several of the big actors in Geilo have mentioned the huge potential for Geilo as a training resort. Here was stressed that, in certain time periods, the resort could be on a world class level when it comes to training resorts. That development could develop inclusive local communities as well as meaningful experiences for both the residents as well as the tourists in the long-term, which is in line with the plan of action for sustainable tourism development from Visit Geilo.

*“How are stakeholders included into the development of a sustainable future?”*

Residents and local actors are one of the most important players into co-creating value for tourists. Also on a managerial level this research suggests that the local communities of stakeholders should play a central role in implementing management practices, which corroborates to the statements of Line & Runyan (2014). Even though the key to a destinations competitiveness is actively fostering collaboration between the stakeholders, trade-offs are faced on a daily basis in contemporary management. Several stakeholders were not involved in the decision processes and those who were involved wished they would be involved more and would have a more open dialogue. So even though direct involvement of local communities in the decision-making process is one of the most important drivers towards effective management in mountainous regions, evidence also here suggests that managers tend not to favour deep engagement with local residents. Putting all of these aspects into the original research framework, an applied research framework for SkiGeilo is developed in figure 7:

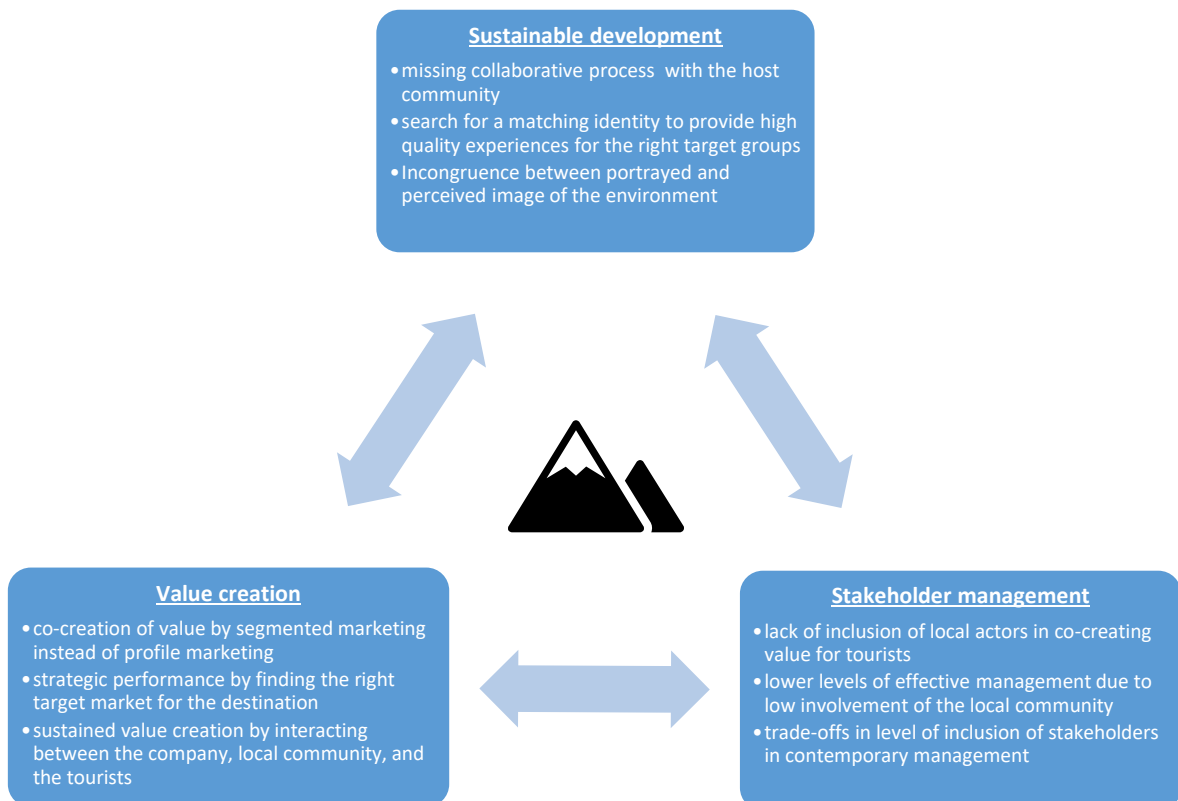


Figure 7: Applied research framework for SkiGeilo

## **Contributions by this research**

### *What can be recommended towards SkiGeilo?*

The most important aspects that have come out of these interviews about SkiGeilo is co-creation of value by brand identity and inclusion of stakeholders. When having found the right identity for the resort and the overall destination there is no doubt that Geilo will continue developing. As shown in the interviews, everyone wants the ski resort to succeed, they just hope it will happen in the right way. The past season has been the first season under new management and a lot of changes have already been made without first evaluating how the constellations of ski centres would have performed in the first season. Moreover, decisions have been made from an economic perspective, seen that they came from a deficit of 10million NOK. However, in that process the social and environmental aspects of sustainable tourism seemed to be forgotten. In order to improve the quality of life of the host community and co-create value with the customers it will be important to include the local stakeholders in the future and a segmented marketing approach is suggested. With the high percentage of inhabitants involved in Geilo IL it can be stated that Geilingers know what it means to be involved in something, especially when it comes to sports opening up a potential of strengthening the social values of the community.

Tourism has become a year-round business of which SkiGeilo has now become a bigger part of again. However, it should be noted, as stated in the interviews, that in the end they are one of the activity providers in a whole spectrum of activity providers. That is why I think it will be crucial in the future that the whole community will work together to come up with a solution. Both the ski resort, as well as the hotels, Visit Geilo, Hol municipality, Geilo IL, NTG, all the activity providers, shops,... This to actually work under and work together for the Geilo destination logo and continue to be the complete mountain destination that it is. That way both sustained value can be co-created as well as an increase in local life quality and consumer satisfaction.

### *What can other ski resorts learn from this case?*

What is important here is to look at the whole picture. In the case of SkiGeilo, the management only owns the lifts and cold beds. This obligates them to work together with all the other actors in the community in order to form a lucrative front together. No competitive edge can be formed without cooperation and inclusion in the current winter sports tourism business. This can of course differ in other situations where the management of the ski resorts owns more than only the lifts. However, even then research shows that in

mountainous areas the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process is one of the most important drivers towards effective management. Winter sports is an ever changing aspect in both sports and tourism so it will be incredibly important for all the ski resorts around the world to find the right fit between their brand identity and target groups in order to achieve sustained value creation.

*What are new insights towards the methods applied in this research?*

More than a normal case study with a qualitative approach I have implemented other methods which have provided new insights. My results differ from someone who would just come to do the interviews due to a participant observation approach and an insider's perspective. Actually working and living here myself has enabled me to get to know the area better, the people who live in it, and experience the overall atmosphere of the community. This has not only been advantageous for me to get that access to key players in the related businesses and organizations, but also enabled me to perform better interviews with tourists and other actors. Knowing what is where, how it is experienced, which people are involved, etc. has given me the ability of conducting much more wholesome interviews with all the interviewees. When a normal interviewer would have come from outside of the community and conducted the interviews they would not have been able to come up with the same results as they don't know how it is to actually live here and experience all the developments. Moreover, my experience as a coach has helped me to bring my own expertise into the topic. These two aspects combined, made it so that my findings perhaps differ from someone who might just come to Geilo to perform the interviews.

*What are new insights towards the theoretical concepts applied in this research?*

The co-creation of value is a concept that is already investigated by numerous researchers. However, achieving sustained value creation with the inclusion of stakeholders on both the organizational as well as the community level has provided new insights. Moreover, I hope to have contributed to the continuous theory development in order to understand and develop these concepts even more.

*Limitations and recommendations for future research?*

I have to be realistic in the sense that this is only one case study, so caution should be taken when generalizing findings from interviews. Therefore further cases are needed in order to form an even better overview of how ski resorts can develop themselves into co-creating a

sustainable future. Due to the timeframe and limited interviews this thesis is therefore limited with regards to external validity. However it can be seen as a start for future research to investigate this matter further. Moreover, I am aware of the fact that the findings section is quite detailed. This has been done deliberately in order to create better value for both the interviewees as well as the reader to understand the full picture seen the complexity of the matter. That is why I hope to have contributed not only towards future theory development but also in advancing the industry practice with regards to value creation, and the stakeholder approach towards the sustainable development of ski resorts.

## 8.0 References

- Aall, C. (2014). Sustainable tourism in practice: promoting or perverting the quest for a sustainable development?. *Sustainability*, 6(5), 2562-2583.
- Aleksandrov, K. (2013). Management model for sustainable development of the tourist destination. *Management, economic engineering in agriculture and rural development*, 13(2), 21-26.
- Alves, H., Fernandes, C., & Raposo, M. (2016). Value co-creation: concept and contexts of application and study. *Journal of business research*, 69(5), 1626-1633.
- Andersson, T. (2016, April 23). Geilos mange ansikter. Retrieved from ABC Nyheter: <https://www.abcnyheter.no/reise/2016/04/23/195211701/geilos-mange-ansikter>
- Audubon International. (2010, January 1). A ski resort's plan for success. Retrieved from <https://www.auduboninternational.org/success-stories>
- Barbu, C. M. (2016). Aligning the brand identity and brand image after rebranding. *Management & Marketing*, 14(2), 180-187.
- Baumfield, V. S. (2016). Stakeholder theory from a management perspective: bridging shareholder stakeholder divide. *Australian Journal of Corporate Law*, 31(1), 187-207.
- Bediova, M. (2018). *Main factors influencing the satisfaction and loyalty of ski resort customers*. Brno: Mendel University.
- Begic, N., & Duman, T. (2013). Strategic Marketing Management of ski-resorts in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a competitive analysis. *International journal of academic research in business and social sciences*, 3(8), 496-505.
- Black, I., & Veloutsou, C. (2017). Working consumers: co-creation of brand identity, consumer identity and brand community identity. *Journal of business research*, 70, 416-429.
- Bont, D. (2017, July 25). *Winter Olympics 2022 to boost Chinese ski industry - opportunities for Swiss Smes*. Retrieved from Switzerland global enterprise: <https://www.s-ge.com/en/article/global-opportunities/winter-olympics-2022-boost-chinese-ski-industry-opportunities-swiss>
- Bonzanigo, L., Giupponi, C., & Balbi, S. (2016). Sustainable tourism planning and climate change adaptation in the Alps: A case study of winter tourism in mountain communities in the Dolomites. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(4), 637-352.
- Brey, E., Klenosky, D. K., Lehto, X., & Morrison, A. (2011). Understanding resort marketing practices. *Journal of tourism insights*, 2(2), 1-22.
- Broman, G. I., & Robèrt, K.-H. (2017). A framework for strategic sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 140, 17-31.
- Bryhn, R. (2009, February 14). *Hemsedal Skisenter*. Retrieved from Store Norske Leksikon: [https://snl.no/Hemsedal\\_Skisenter](https://snl.no/Hemsedal_Skisenter)
- Catino, E. (2011). *Ski resort sustainability: evaluating environmental programs at ski resorts partnered with the NSAA sustainable slopes program*. Poultney: Green Mountain College.
- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006, July 1). *Semi-structured interviews*. Retrieved from Qualitative Research Guidelines Project: <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Cossio-Silva, F. J., Revilla-Camacho, M. A., Vega-Vazquez, M., & Palacios-Florencio, B. (2016). Value co-creation and customer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(5), 1621-1625.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry . *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-131.

- Darabos, F. (2018). *Assessment of tourist groups visiting a remarkable international ski touristic centre*. Hungary : University Kautz Gyula Faculty of Economics.
- Darcy, S., & Veal, A. J. (2014). *Sport studies and Sport management - a practical guide*. Routledge.
- De Brucker, K., Macharis, C., & Verbeke, A. (2013). Multi-criteria analysis and the resolution of sustainable development dilemmas: a stakeholder management approach. *European journal of operational research*, 224(1), 122-131.
- Del Matto, T. (2007). *Conceptualizing a sustainable ski resort*. Waterloo: University of Waterloo.
- Dengler, L. (2013). *A sustainable ski resort? Tourism development in Valemout, BC*. Valemout: UBC Geography.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The reserach act: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Di Maddaloni, F., & Davis, K. (2017). The influence of local community stakeholders in megaprojects: rethinking their inclusiveness to improve project performance. *International journal of project management*, 35(8), 1537-1556.
- Dibben, M., & Dolles, H. (2013). Participant observation in sport management research: collecting and interpreting data of a successful world land speed record attempt. In S. Söderman, & H. Dolles, *Handbook of research of sport and business* (pp. 477-494). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Downes, J. (2015). *Resort Development*. China: IMG ski resort management.
- Dubois, A., & Gadde, L. E. (2002). Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research. *Journal of business research*, 55(7), 553-560.
- Fadeeva, Z. (2003). *Exploring cross-sectoral collaboration for sustainable development*. Lund: Lund University.
- Faullant, R., Matzler, K., & Füller, J. (2008). The impact of satisfaction and image on loyalty: the case of Alpine ski resorts. *Managing service quality: An international Journal*, 18(2), 163-178.
- Ferrand, A., & Vecchiatini, D. (2002). The effect of service performance and ski resort image on skiers' satisfaction. *European journal of sport science*, 2(2), 1-17.
- FitzPatrick, M., Davey, J., Muller, L., & Davey, H. (2013). Value-creating assets in tourism management: applying marketing's service-dominant logic in the hotel industry. *Tourism Management*, 36, 86-98.
- Flagestad, A., & Hope, C. A. (2001). Strategic success in winter sports destinations: a sustainable value creation perspective. *Tourism management*, 22(5), 445-461.
- Fotiadis, A. K., Vassiliadis, C. A., & Stylos, N. D. (2012). Strategic Marketing Management at ski centers: the SMMP concept. *Singaporean journal of business economics, and management studies*, 51(1104), 55-67.
- Freeman, R. E. (2010). Managing for stakeholders: trade-offs or value creation. *Journal of business ethics*, 96(1), 7-9.
- Garrod, B., Fyall, A., Leask, A., & Reid, E. (2012). Engaging residents as stakeholders of the visitor attraction. *Tourism Management*, 33(5), 1159-1173.
- Gatto, M. (1995). Sustainability: is it a well defined concept?. *Ecological Applications*, 5(4), 1181-1183.
- Gibson, R. B. (2005). *Sustainability Assessment: Criteria and Processes*. Earthscan.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, 8(4), 597-606.
- Hedenus, F., Persson, M., & Sprei, F. (2015). *Sustainable Development: History, Definition & the role of the engineer*. Gothenburg: Chalmers university of technology.

- Hol Kommune. (2017). *English info*. Retrieved from Hol kommune: <http://www.hol.kommune.no/english/>
- Holden, E., Linnerud, K., & Banister, D. (2014). Sustainable development: our common future revisited. *Global Environmental Change*, 26, 130-139.
- Hotham resort management. (2013). *Strategic management plan 2013-2018*. Hotham: Hotham Resort Management.
- Hudson, S., & Hudson, L. (2015). *Winter Sports Tourism: working in Winter Wonderlands*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.
- Jacobsen, D. I. (2005). *Hvordan gjennomføre undersøkelser?: Innføring i samfunnsvitenskapelig metode*. Kristiansand: Høgskoleforlaget AS.
- Johannessen, A., Tufte, P., & Kristoffersen, L. (2010). *Introduksjon til vitenskapelig metode*. Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.
- Johnston, P., Everard, M., Santillo, D., & Robert, K. H. (2007). Reclaiming the definition of sustainability. In D. Santillo, *Environmental science and pollution research* (pp. 60-66). Ecomed.
- Joppe, M., Elliot, S., & Durand, L. (2013). From ski market to ski traveller: a multidimensional segmentation approach. *Anatolia*, 24(1), 40-51.
- Kates, R. W., Parris, T. M., & Leiserowitz, A. A. (2016). What is sustainable development? Goals, Indicators, Values, Practice. *Environment, science and policy for sustainable development*, 47(3), 8-21.
- Konu, H., Laukkanen, T., & Komppula, R. (2011). Using ski destination choice criteria to segment Finnish ski resort customers. *Tourism management*, 32(5), 1096-1105.
- Koop, D. (2015). *The resilience of a ski tourism destination in the face of climate change and demographic transformation*. Heverlee: KU Leuven.
- Kyle, G. T., Theodorakis, N. D., Karageorgiou, A., & Lafazani, M. (2010). The effect of service quality on customer loyalty within the context of ski resorts. *Journal of park and recreation administration*, 28(1), 1-15.
- Lasanta, T., Laguna, M., & Vicente-Serrano, S. M. (2007). Do tourism-based ski resorts contribute to the homogeneous development of the Mediterranean mountains? A case study in the Central Spanish Pyrenees. *Tourism Management*, 28(5), 1326-1339.
- Leask, A. (2010). Progress in visitor attraction research: towards more effective management. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 155-166.
- Lin, Z., Chen, Y., & Fillieri, R. (2017). Resident-tourist value co-creation: the role of residents' perceived tourism impacts and life satisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 61, 436-442.
- Line, N. D., & Runyan, R. C. (2014). Destination marketing and the service-dominant logic: a resource based operationalization of strategic marketing assets. *Tourism Management*, 43, 91-102.
- Machado, C. R., Lourenço, N., Jorge, M. d., & Rodrigues, L. (2002). Sustainability: importance of social networks in the decision-making processes. *Policies and tools for sustainable water management in the EU* (p. 4). Venice: Venice International University.
- Maroudas, L., Kyriakaki, A., & Gouvis, D. (2011). A community approach to mountain adventure tourism development. *International journal of tourism and hospitality research*, 15(1), 5-18.
- Matzler, K., Füller, J., Renzl, B., Herting, S., & Späth, S. (2008). Customer satisfaction with alpine ski areas: the moderating effects of personal, situational, and product factors. *Journal of travel research*, 46(4), 1-11.

- Mayring, P. (1995). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundfragen und Techniken*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverslag.
- McGee, J. (1998). Commentary on 'corporate strategies and environmental regulation: an organizing framework'. *Strategic management journal*, 377-389.
- Medhus, P. (2016). *Sustainable Tourism Destinations Geilo*. Geilo: Innovation Norway.
- Miočić, B. K., Razović, M., & Klarin, T. (2016). Management of sustainable tourism destination through stakeholder cooperation. *Journal of contemporary management issues*, 21(2), 99-120.
- Miragaia, D., Conde, D., & Soares, J. (2016). Measuring service quality of ski resorts: an approach to identify the consumer profile. *The open sports sciences journal*, 9(1), 53-61.
- Moilanen, T. (2008). *Network brand management: study of competencies of place branding ski destinations*. Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics.
- Nepal, S. K., & Chipeniuk, R. (2005). Mountain Tourism: toward a conceptual framework. *International journal of tourism space, place and environment*, 7(3), 313-333.
- Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry. (2012). *Destination Norway: National strategy for the tourism industry*. Norway: Ministry of Trade and Industry.
- Osterwalder, R. (2015). Communicating sustainability in green winter sport events. *Thesis, department of urban and rural development*, 44.
- Osterwalder, R. (2015). *Communicating sustainability in green winter sport events*. Uppsala: Swedish university of agricultural sciences.
- Pike, S., & Page, S. J. (2014). Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: a narrative analysis of the literature. *Tourism Management*, 41, 202-227.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: the next practice in value creation. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 18(3), 5-14.
- Prendergast, K. M. (2011). *The evolution of ski resort sustainability: from on-mountain efficiency to environmental activism*. Pennsylvania: Allegheny College.
- Ramaswamy, V., & Ozcan, K. (2018). What is co-creation? An interactional creation framework and its implications for value creation. *Journal of Business Research*, 84, 196-205.
- Reinton, H. (2017, August 1). *Helt forferdelig*. Retrieved from Fri Flyt: <https://www.friflyt.no/Ski/Helt-forferdelig>
- Sanela, Š. (2010). Application of sustainability principles in winter sports tourism. *20th Biennial International Congress "Tourism & Hospitality Industry 2010"*, (pp. 1237-1250). Opatija.
- Santillo, D. (2007). Reclaiming the definition of sustainability. *Environmental science and pollution research*, 14(1), 60-66.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Skjeggedal, T., & Overvåg, K. (2011). *Tourist destinations and place development in Norwegian mountain areas*. Geilo: Institute of Mountain Research .
- Škorić, S. (2010). Application of sustainability principles in winter sports tourism. *Tourism & Hospitality Management, Conference Proceedings*.
- Spector, S. (2012). *Socially constructed environmental issues and sport: a content analysis of ski resort environmental communications*. Ontario: Brock University.
- State government Victoria. (2014). *Alpine resorts strategic marketing plan 2014-2018*. Victoria: Tourism Victoria and the Alpine Resorts coordinating council.
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2017). *Statistikknett reiseliv*. Retrieved from Statistikknett: [www.statistikknett.no](http://www.statistikknett.no)

- Tjorve, E., Lien, B., & Flognfeldt, T. (2018). Properties of first-time vs. repeat visitors: lessons for marketing Norwegian ski resorts. *Current issues in Tourism*, 21(1), 78-102.
- Turner, C., & Kasnet, A. (2005). *How can a destination resort development company be strategic in sustainable development?*. Karlskrona: Blekinge institute of technology.
- Tuulentie, S., & Mettiäinen, I. (2007). *Local participation in the evolution of ski resorts: the case of Ylläs and Levi in Finnish Lapland*. Rovaniemi: Finnish Forest Research Institut.
- United Nations. (2002). *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations Publication.
- United Nations. (2018, April 13). *Sustainable development goals*. Retrieved from United Nations: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- UNWTO. (1993). *Sustainable tourism development, guide for local planners*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17.
- Vassiliadis, C., Priporas, C.-V., & Stylos, N. D. (2011). Sustainability and marketing practices at greek ski centers. *Third Biennial International conference on services marketing* (p. 9). Turkey: BBIC.
- Visit Geilo. (2017a). *About Hol municipality and Geilo*. Retrieved from Visit Norway: <https://www.visitnorway.com/places-to-go/eastern-norway/geilo/good-to-know/>
- Visit Geilo. (2017b). *Visit Geilo*. Retrieved from Visit Norway: <https://www.visitnorway.com/places-to-go/eastern-norway/geilo/good-to-know/visit-geilo/?lang=uk>
- Visit Geilo. (2017c). *Sustainable destination Geilo*. Retrieved from Visit Norway: <https://www.visitnorway.com/places-to-go/eastern-norway/geilo/good-to-know/geilo-a-sustainable-destination/>
- Visit Geilo. (2017d). *Plan of action for sustainable tourism development in Geilo and Hol municipality*. Geilo: Visit Geilo.
- Volgger, M., & Pechlaner, H. (2014). Requirements for destination management organizations in destination governance: understanding DMO success. *Tourism Management*, 41, 64-75.
- Wingle, P. H. (1995). *Planning considerations for winter sports resort development*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota.
- Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2014). Value co-creation in sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(1), 1-5.
- World committee on tourism ethics. (2005). *report on the WTO survey on the implementation of the global code of ethics for tourism*. Madrid: World Tourist Organization.
- Yang, J., & Wan, C. (2010). Progress in research on the impacts of global climate change on winter ski tourism. *Advances in climate change research*, 1(2), 55-62.
- Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

## 9.0 Appendices

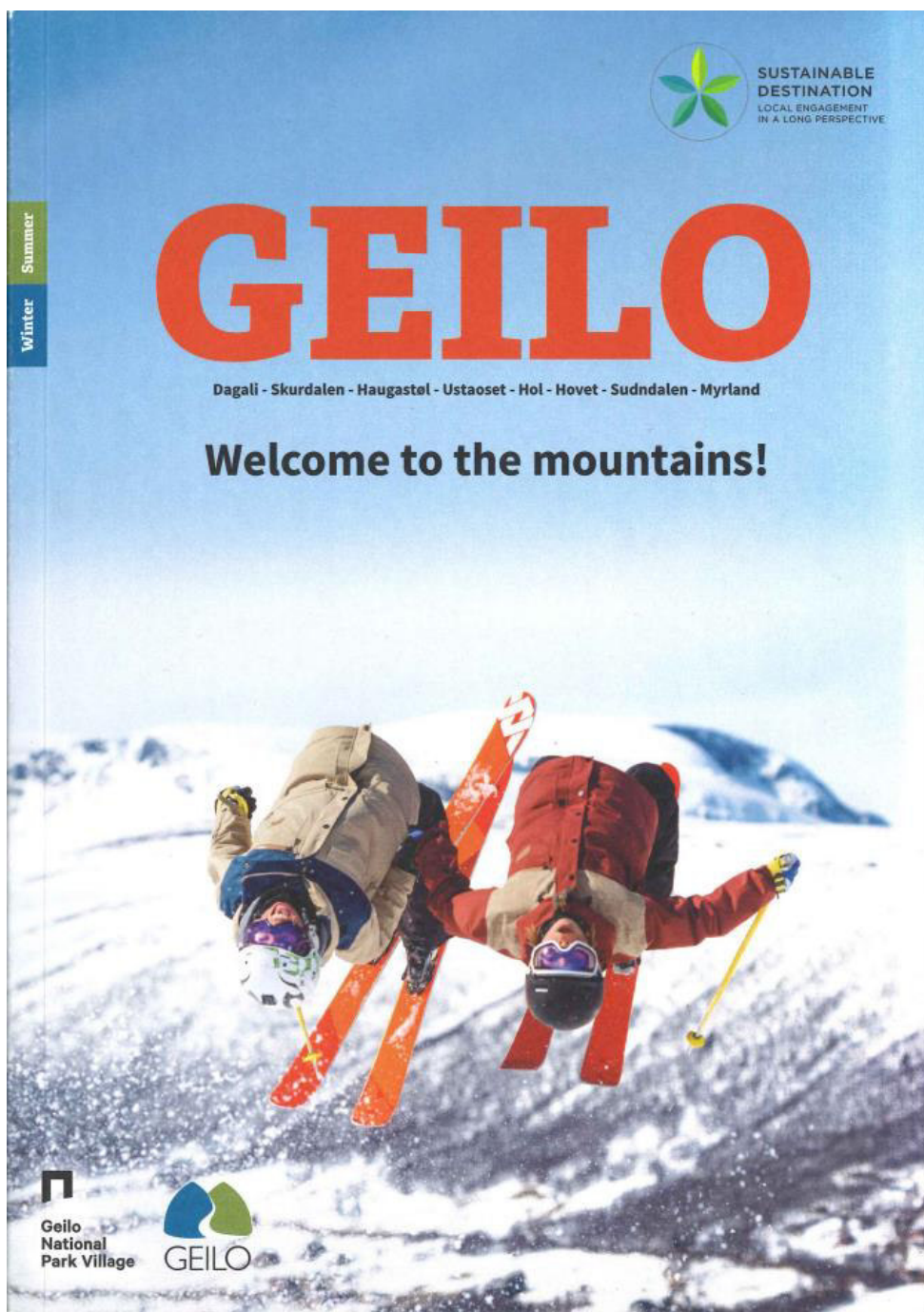
*Appendix 1:* Map of Geilo and its location in the south of Norway



*Appendix 2: Map of SkiGeilo, the ski resort in Geilo*



Appendix 3: Cover of the tourism brochure of Geilo, made by Visit Geilo



Appendix 4: First page of the winter section in the tourism brochure of Geilo



#### *Appendix 5: Interview guide for the management: Geilo Holding, Slaatta Skisenter*

- Case description
  - o History of owners
  - o General info about the resort and management
  - o How has the season been thusfar?
- Management/Marketing strategies
  - o Which new developments in comparison to previous years
  - o Market research
  - o Brand identity
  - o Strategies for the season
  - o Strategies longterm
  - o How have the developments been thusfar
  - o Sustainable plan of Visit Geilo part of the strategy
- Relationship with other stakeholders in Geilo
  - o Included in the process?
- Future
  - o What would you like to improve?

#### *Appendix 6: Interview guide directly and indirectly involved stakeholders*

- Case description
  - o Job description
  - o Brief history about the organization/company
- Stakeholder
  - o Organization/company as part of the community/tourist industry
  - o Relation with the ski resort
    - Developments in comparison/relation with the resort over the years
- Positive/Negative sides of the development
- Current situation
  - o Differences under new management
  - o Identity of Geilo
  - o Strengths of Geilo
- How included in the process of the new management
- Future
  - o How do you see the development for the future
  - o What would you like to improve

#### *Appendix 7: Interview guide tourists*

- Demographics
- Open questions
  - o What made you decide to come to Geilo
  - o First time or repeated visit
  - o Background motivation, how did you learn about SkiGeilo
  - o Likes about Geilo
  - o Dislikes about Geilo/What could be improved
  - o Motives for repeated visit

Appendix 8: Literature table

| Category       | Title                                                                                                    | Type of study                  | Location         | Year | Basis of inquiry                                    | methods used                           | Reference                               |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Sustainability | A ski resort's plan for success                                                                          | Case study                     | Vermont          | 2010 | Environmental impact                                | Comprehensive plan                     | (Audubon International, 2010)           |
|                | A sustainable ski resort? Tourism development                                                            | Literature review              | Valemount, BC    | 2013 | Tourism development                                 | Literature review                      | (Dengler, 2013)                         |
|                | Communicating sustainability in green winter sport events                                                | Master thesis, case study      | Uppsala          | 2015 | Sustainable development & CSR                       | Participant observation                | (Osterwalder, 2015)                     |
|                | How can a destination resort development company be strategic in sustainable development?                | Examination thesis, Case study | Whistler, Canada | 2005 | Sustainable development                             | Interviews                             | (Turner & Kasnet, 2005)                 |
|                | Sustainability and marketing practices                                                                   | Exploratory study              | Greece           | 2011 | Holistic tourism destination product                | In depth interviews                    | (Vassiliadis, Priporas, & Stylos, 2011) |
|                | The resilience of a ski tourism destination in the face of climate change and demographic transformation | Master Thesis, case study      | Belgium, Germany | 2015 | Effective governance efforts, community involvement | Interviews, participatory observations | (Koop, 2015)                            |
|                | Conceptualizing a sustainable ski resort: a case study of blue mountain resort in Ontario                | Master thesis Case study       | Waterloo, Canada | 2007 | Decision making sustainability                      | Interviews, participant observation    | (Del Matto, 2007)                       |
|                | Sustainable tourism in practice                                                                          | Literature review              | Sogndal, Norway  | 2014 | Sustainable tourism, triple bottom line approach    | Literature review                      | (Aall, 2014)                            |
|                | The evolution of ski resort sustainability                                                               | Senior thesis                  | Meadville,       | 2011 | Environmental conditions                            | Interviews                             | (Prendergast, 2011)                     |

| <i>Category</i>       | <i>Title</i>                                                           | <i>Type of study</i>  | <i>Location</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                       | <i>methods used</i>   | <i>Reference</i>                                 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Sustainability</i> | Ski resort sustainability: evaluating environmental programs           | Master thesis         | Poultney VT     | 2011        | Evaluation environmental programs ski resorts | Survey                | (Catino, 2011)                                   |
|                       | Destination Norway: National strategy for the tourism industry         | Tourism strategy      | Norway          | 2012        | National strategy tourism                     | Strategic plan        | (Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012) |
|                       | Socially constructed environmental issues and sport                    | Master thesis         | Ontario         | 2012        | Impact of sport on the environment            | Content analysis      | (Spector, 2012)                                  |
|                       | Exploring cross-sectoral collaboration for sustainable development     | Doctoral dissertation | Lund            | 2003        | Cross-sectoral collaboration                  | Explorative study     | (Fadeeva, 2003)                                  |
|                       | Reclaiming the definition of sustainability                            | Journal article       | Exeter          | 2007        | Definition sustainability                     | Review                | (Santillo, 2007)                                 |
|                       | Application of sustainability principles in winter sports tourism      | Conference proceeding | Opatija         | 2010        | Sustainability in winter sports tourism       | Exploratory study     | (Sanela, 2010)                                   |
|                       | A community approach to mountain adventure tourism development         | Journal article       | Anatolia        | 2011        | Community approach to tourism development     | Development framework | (Maroudas, Kyriakaki, & Gouvis, 2011)            |
|                       | Sustainable tourism planning and climate change adaptation in the Alps | Journal article       | Italy           | 2016        | Sustainable tourism planning                  | Case study            | (Bonzanigo, Giupponi, & Balbi, 2016)             |
|                       | Tourist destinations and place development in Norwegian mountains      | Rapport               | Norway          | 2011        | Place development Norway                      | Rapport               | (Skjeggedal & Overvåg, 2011)                     |

| <i>Category</i>                                      | <i>Title</i>                                                               | <i>Type of study</i> | <i>Location</i>    | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                                         | <i>methods used</i>                   | <i>Reference</i>                        |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Sustainability</i>                                | Plan of action for sustainable tourism development Geilo                   | Action plan          | Geilo              | 2017        | Sustainable tourism development                                 | Monitoring and reporting              | (Visit Geilo, 2017d)                    |
|                                                      | Sustainable tourism destinations in Geilo                                  | Presentation Medhus  | Geilo              | 2016        | Sustainable tourism                                             | Destination presentation              | (Medhus, 2016)                          |
|                                                      | Sustainable development: history, definition & the role of the engineer    | Book                 | Gothenburg         | 2015        | Overall sustainable development                                 | Book                                  | (Hedenus, Persson, & Sprei, 2015)       |
|                                                      | A management model for sustainable development of the tourist destination  | Journal article      | Bucharest          | 2013        | Sustainable destination management                              | Interdisciplinary scientific approach | (Aleksandrov, 2013)                     |
| <i>Strategic marketing/<br/>Effective Management</i> | Alpine resorts Strategic marketing plan 2014-2018                          | Marketing plan       | Victoria Australia | 2014        | Joint year round destinations                                   | Marketing plan                        | (State government Victoria, 2014)       |
|                                                      | From ski market to ski traveller: a multidimensional segmentation approach | Journal article      | Quebec, Canada     | 2013        | Sophisticated marketing to grow white tourism                   | Questionnaires                        | (Joppe, Elliot, & Durand, 2013)         |
|                                                      | Strategic management plan 2013-2018                                        | Marketing plan       | Hotham Australia   | 2013        | A strategy for sustainable growth and development of the resort | Management plan                       | (Hotham resort management, 2013)        |
|                                                      | Resort development: tourism is the driver- cooperative spirit is the key   | Marketing plan       | China              | 2015        | Potential of Chinese growth in tourism                          | Marketing plan                        | (Downes, 2015)                          |
|                                                      | Strategic marketing management at ski centres: the SMMP concept            | Journal article      | Singapore          | 2012        | Development marketing strategy of ski centres, SMMP concept     | Conceptual methods                    | (Fotiadis, Vassiliadis, & Stylos, 2012) |

| <i>Category</i>                                      | <i>Title</i>                                                                                                     | <i>Type of study</i>                          | <i>Location</i>                         | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                                                                                                     | <i>methods used</i>       | <i>Reference</i>                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Strategic marketing/<br/>Effective Management</i> | Strategic success in winter sports destinations: a sustainable value creation perspective                        | Journal article tourism management            | Norway, new Yorkshire                   | 2000        | Strategic performance, sustained value creation,                                                                            | Development of two models | (Flagestad & Hope, 2001)                         |
|                                                      | Strategic marketing management of ski resorts                                                                    | Competitive analysis                          | Bosnia                                  | 2013        | generic competitive strategies                                                                                              | Qualitative analysis      | (Begic & Duman, 2013)                            |
|                                                      | Progress in visitor attraction research: towards more effective management                                       | Journal article                               | UK                                      | 2010        | Effective management                                                                                                        | Framework development     | (Leask, 2010)                                    |
| <i>Customer experience</i>                           | Assessment of tourist groups visiting a remarkable international ski touristic centre                            | Essay                                         | Obertauern, Austria                     | 2018        | Market research for destination marketing                                                                                   | Questionnaire             | (Darabos, 2018)                                  |
|                                                      | Customer satisfaction with alpine ski areas: the moderating effects of personal, situational and product factors | Journal article                               | Austria, germany, Italy and Switzerland | 2008        | Personal, situational, and product factors moderate the relationship between attribute performance and overall satisfaction | Questionnaire             | (Matzler, Füller, Renzl, Herting, & Späth, 2008) |
|                                                      | Main factors influencing the satisfaction and loyalty of ski resort customers                                    | Comparative study                             | All over the world                      | 2018        | Customer satisfaction and loyalty as driver of performance                                                                  | Questionnaire             | (Bediova, 2018)                                  |
|                                                      | Measuring service quality of ski resorts: an approach to identify the consumer profile                           | Journal article, Open sports sciences journal | Portugal                                | 2015        | Consumer profile using degree of satisfaction with services                                                                 | Questionnaire             | (Miragaia, Conde, & Soares, 2016)                |

| <i>Category</i>            | <i>Title</i>                                                                        | <i>Type of study</i>                      | <i>Location</i>   | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                                       | <i>methods used</i>    | <i>Reference</i>                                    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Customer experience</i> | The effect of service performance and ski resort image on skiers' satisfaction      | Journal article, journal of sport science | Italy             | 2002        | Resort image and functional attributes                        | Questionnaire          | (Ferrand & Vecchiadini, 2002)                       |
|                            | The impact of satisfaction and image on loyalty: the case of alpine ski resorts     | Research paper, managing service quality  | Innsbruck Austria | 2008        | Customer satisfaction and loyalty                             | Moderator analysis     | (Faullant, Matzler, & Füller, 2008)                 |
|                            | The effect of service quality on customer loyalty within the context of ski resorts | Journal article                           | Northern Greece   | 2010        | Effect of service quality on skier's satisfaction and loyalty | Testing of a model     | (Kyle, Theodorakis, Karageorgiou, & Lafazani, 2010) |
| <i>Value Creation</i>      | Value co-creation in sport management                                               | Journal article                           | Denmark           | 2014        | Co-creation of value                                          | Literature review      | (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014)                  |
|                            | Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing                                      | Journal article                           | Maryland          | 2004        | SDL                                                           | Theory development     | (Vargo & Lusch, 2004)                               |
|                            | Co-creation experiences: the next practice in value creation                        | Journal article                           | Michigan          | 2004        | Co-creation of value                                          | Exploratory study      | (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004)                        |
|                            | What is co-creation? An interactional creation                                      | Journal article                           | Marywood          | 2018        | What is co-creation definition                                | Definitional framework | (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018)                           |
|                            | Value co-creation: concept and contexts of application and study                    | Journal article                           | Portugal          | 2016        | Perspectives and context of usage of co-creation              | Bibliometric analysis  | (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016)                  |

| <i>Category</i>              | <i>Title</i>                                                                       | <i>Type of study</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                        | <i>methods used</i>                      | <i>Reference</i>                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <i>Value Creation</i>        | Value co-creation and customer loyalty                                             | Journal article      | Sevilla Spain   | 2016        | Value creation customer loyalty                | Empirical study                          | (Cossio, Revilla, Vazquez, & Florencio, 2016) |
|                              | Resident-tourist value co-creation                                                 | Journal article      | UK, China       | 2017        | Resident-tourist perspective co-creation value | Survey                                   | (Lin, Chen, & Fillieri, 2017)                 |
|                              | Value-creating assets in tourism management                                        | Journal article      | New Zealand     | 2013        | Value creating tourism management              | Coding framework                         | (FitzPatrick, Davey, Muller, & Davey, 2013)   |
| <i>Destination marketing</i> | Local participation in the evolution of ski resorts: the case of                   | Case study           | Finnish Lapland | 2007        | Local involvement in destination development   | Interviews                               | (Tuulentie & Mettiäinen, 2007)                |
|                              | Network brand management: study of competencies of place branding ski destinations | Master thesis        | Helsinki        | 2008        | Brand management competencies , place branding | Empirical observation, development model | (Moilanen, 2008)                              |
|                              | Properties of first-time vs repeat visitors                                        | Journal article      | Norway          | 2018        | Profile marketing and segmented marketing      | Online panel interviews                  | (Tjorve, Lien, & Flognfeldt, 2018)            |
|                              | Understanding resort marketing practices                                           | Journal article      |                 | 2011        | Better understanding resort marketing          | On-site interviews marketing executives  | (Brey, Klenosky, Lehto, & Morrison, 2011)     |

| <i>Category</i>               | <i>Title</i>                                                                             | <i>Type of study</i> | <i>Location</i>    | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                                    | <i>methods used</i>             | <i>Reference</i>                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <i>Destination marketing</i>  | Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing                            | Journal article      | England, Australia | 2014        | DMO                                                        | Literature review               | (Pike & Page, 2014)                           |
|                               | Destination marketing and the service-dominant logic                                     | Journal article      | USA                | 2014        | Destination marketing and SDL                              | research classification schemes | (Line & Runyan, 2014)                         |
|                               | Requirements for destination management organizations in destination governance          | Journal article      | Italy              | 2014        | DMO governance                                             | Survey                          | (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014)                   |
| <i>Stakeholder management</i> | Commentary on corporate strategies and environmental regulation: an organizing framework | Journal article      | Coventry           | 1998        | Stakeholder management link sustainable development        | Theoretical framework           | (McGee, 1998)                                 |
|                               | Multi criteria analysis and the resolution of sustainable development dilemmas           | Journal article      | Belgium, Canada    | 2013        | Sustainable development, a stakeholder management approach | Stakeholder-oriented approaches | (De Brucker, Macharis, & Verbeke, 2013)       |
|                               | Sustainability: importance of social networks in the decision-making processes           | Conference article   | Venice             | 2002        | Importance social networks and local community             | Literature review               | (Machado, Lourenço, Jorge, & Rodrigues, 2002) |
|                               | Managing for stakeholders: trade-offs or value creation                                  | Journal article      | Charlottesville    | 2010        | Stakeholder theory and value creation                      | Theory development              | (Freeman, 2010)                               |
|                               | Stakeholder theory from a management perspective                                         | Journal article      |                    | 2016        | Stakeholder shareholder                                    | Literature review               | (Baumfield, 2016)                             |

| <i>Category</i>               | <i>Title</i>                                                                  | <i>Type of study</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Basis of inquiry</i>                         | <i>methods used</i> | <i>Reference</i>                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Stakeholder management</i> | Management of sustainable tourism destination through stakeholder cooperation | Journal article      | Czech republic  | 2016        | Sustainable tourism stakeholder cooperation     | Focus groups        | (Miočić, Razović, & Klarin, 2016)    |
|                               | Engaging residents as stakeholders of the visitor attraction                  | Journal article      | UK              | 2012        | Residents as stakeholders in visitor attraction | survey              | (Garrod, Fyall, Leask, & Reid, 2012) |