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## Importance-Performance Analysis of Ski Destinations in Sweden – Comparison between Two Destinations

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**Summary.** The aim of this study was to investigate the tourists' level of satisfaction concerning different factors at two ski destinations in Sweden in order to find key attributes that can create tourism development in the region. At the destinations, tourists are co-creators of value and it is therefore important to take their opinions into account. The data was collected by quantitative questionnaires consisting of 40 attributes that were graded on a Likert scale from 1 to 6. The questionnaire was handed out and responded by 373 tourists at the selected ski destinations. For most of the attributes the results indicate that tourists are satisfied with the performance of the tourist service providers at the destination. There are five attributes on each of the destinations that need further development in order to improve the overall experience of the destination. The result can be used for tourist producers in order to develop the destinations by addressing the issues raised by tourists. It is not only important for the tourists with the ski experience but also other attractions and offers at the destination that contribute to the overall experience.

### Introduction

The tourism sector is Europe's largest industry representing over 60 per cent of all the tourism in the world and it is expected to grow even more (UNWTO,

2014). The resources within tourism are limited due to environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects and previous research shows that these limited resources will not survive continued growth without negative consequences for the earth (Tao, Wall, 2009; Sörensson, 2011, 2010). Nevertheless, tourism is most often seen as a survivor of economic development in regions and communities that are sparsely populated. In the increasingly competitive tourism industry, tourists have an unlimited choice of destinations (Murdy, Pike, 2012) which indicates that tourism service providers at the destination must work hard to satisfy their tourists needs and wants. Especially in regions where tourism is the main industry it is of great importance that the tourists are satisfied with the quality of the experience (Wilkins, Merrilees, Herington, 2007; Grönroos, 2007). Providing satisfying visitor with experiences is the goal of tourist destinations in order to build strong relationships with tourists (Ziegler, Dearden, Rollins, 2012). The strategy of a destination is to create ongoing relationships with tourists in order to create loyalty and stimulate a repeat purchase (Murdy, Pike, 2012). By creating loyalty, value is added for tourists and the need for marketing is reduced. The Service-Dominant logic (S-D Logic) pays attention to the fact that a tourist plays an active key role in co-production of activities and in the co-creation of value (Spohrer, Maglio, 2006; Vargo, Lusch, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008). While it is a common focus from a "traditional" management perspective on tourism production that tourism service providers are selling products and services, there is recent research that argues that tourists do not buy solely services and products. They buy different types of experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that in a contemporary economy firms no longer sell services but different experiences to tourists.

For a tourist destination, tourists are experiencing complete destination experience when visiting the site. It is therefore of great importance that tourists are satisfied with the experience in order for them to return or recommend the destination to other desirable customers. It is also important to offer what the tourists value and find important at a destination. If the experience at the destination meets the tourists expectation, then tourists will be satisfied and might return to the destination or seek similar experiences (Ziegler, Dearden, Rollins, 2012). It is therefore central to understand tourists' motivations and their needs. At the destinations it is of vital importance to understand not just the needs and wants, but also what satisfies tourists and what could be improved (Yoon, Uysal, 2005). Satisfaction is the ability of the tourism service providers at the tourist destination to meet the expectations of a tourist. It is the way to measure the quality of tourist's experience. By gathering this information, tourism service providers can try to fulfill the expectations from tourists. Tourists are also a part of the process as a co-creator of value. The experienced value of an offer depends on tourist's participation since the value is created during consumption. It is important to gather as much information as possible about tourists in order to create sustainable relations. Only by

good knowledge of the needs, wants and behavior of tourists can the management organize co-created experience that will meet tourists' expectations of value. Tourists have different needs which depend on their subjective service quality needs. Destinations therefore need, more than ever, to create methods for continuing knowledge about the expectations, needs and behavior of tourists (Vargo, Lusch, 2004a; Kristensson, 2009). For destinations, it is vital to have satisfied tourists that will return to the destination in the future.

The aim of this study is to investigate tourists' level of satisfaction at two ski destinations in Sweden, and compare them, in order to find key attributes that can create tourism development in the region. In order to fulfill the aim Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) is applied in a study of these two ski destinations. The study uses IPA to identify possible strengths and weaknesses in the performance at the destination. This technique is used to understand tourists' level of satisfaction with regard to their expectations of service performance (Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy, Fyall, 2007). The results of the study contribute to the marketing theories and can also be used within destination management to improve their performance and work more efficiently making use of the factors tourists think are the most important.

### **Tourist destination and value creation**

For many tourism destinations, tourism is an essential part of the development and growth of the region and many countries are heavily dependent on tourism to maintain and increase their level of income and employment (Archer, 1996; Sharpley, 2002). Tourism is considered to be the savior for economic wealth and development in many countries and regions and it is becoming a 'base industry' in some countries (Visita, 2013). Consequently, destination stakeholders must find strategies for keeping their destinations attractive for tourists, as well as for investors (Buhalis, Fletcher, 1995; Weaver, 2012). Tourism, as an industry, differs from most traditional industries since tourists must be imported to the destination in order to take part in the offer. Tourists are co-producers in the tourism offering which means that they take an active part in the production, delivery and consumption. At the tourist destination offered experience involves many co-operative collective bodies, but at the same time there are individual business competitions at the site (von Friedrichs Grängsjö, Gummesson, 2006).

Elbe (2003) argues that the offer at a destination is divided into attractions and facilities. The attractions represent the motives of the trip whereas the facilities make the trip possible. The combination of these two creates the complete tourist experience (von Friedrichs Grängsjö, 2003, p. 146). At a ski destination the main attraction is the mountain with ski slopes but since there exist many ski destinations it might be other factors or facilities that convince a tourist to choose

a certain destination. Different tourists could have various purpose of the trip and so could also different stakeholders and tourism producers, i.e. public and private sector could have a variety of motives with their investments at a tourist destination. The optimal situation for keeping tourism destination attractive would probably be if the tourist perception of the destination from their assessment of importance was compatible with the performance of the stakeholders at the tourist destination. According to Wahab and Pigram (1997) the tourist map will be different tomorrow when compared to today. The difficulty lies in predicting where tourists want to go in the future and what will be the main value for the customers. Consequently, destinations need to find tools to create a more attractive but yet sustainable tourism from various perspectives. By listening to tourist the destination's stakeholders can learn more about which factors are important.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) argues that there is a difference between services and experiences. "An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event" (Pine, Gilmore, 1998, p. 98). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) discuss co-creation and its relation to experiences. It is important to "create an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogue and co-construct personalized experiences; product may be the same but customers can construct different experiences" (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2006) together with Payne, Storbacka and Frow (2007) see tourists not as a passive audience but instead an active partner. By listening to what tourists find important it is possible to create memorable experiences. When tourists travel to a certain destination it is the tourist's personal value that decides if s/he is satisfied. In that sense value creation is embedded in personalized experiences. Morgan, Elbe and Curiel (2009, p. 201) argue that "the experience economy concept is closely related to tourism both in its origins and its implications". A customer goes from being passive to an active participant in the experience (Morgan, Elbe, Curiel, 2009; Pine, Gilmore, 1999). At a tourist destination there will therefore be a need for a wider choice of things to do like shopping, restaurants, cultural and sporting activities due to different segments among tourists (Morgan, Elbe, Curiel, 2009). Abe (2005, p. 6) argue that "the increasing importance of services is not limited to the service industry" but that added value through added services has become crucial for tourist companies which are competing. Services are not only a business of its own, the total offer made to a customer involves different kind of value-deliveries at the destination. Organizing the total co-produced offer to different tourists is more problematic at a tourist destination than in many other industries since there are several tourist producers that have to cooperate in order to provide a valuable experience to tourists (von Friedrichs Grängsjö, 2003, p. 145). A tourist considers a destination as the experience and it is difficult to separate the value delivered by different

experience-providers during holidays. Therefore it is crucial to ask tourists what they find important and what they think of the performance of the destination. Only by asking them will destinations have the possibility to offer a high service quality on their tourist experiences.

## **Research design**

The study was conducted during the end of December 2012 – beginning of January 2013 at two tourists destinations of Vemdalen and Åre in Jämtland, Sweden. Both destinations have a clear focus on alpine skiing. Data collected could be reflected for this chosen period but cannot illustrate tourists experience during the whole year. The research design was constructed as an explorative study on the development of tourist destinations. Two destinations were selected based on several aspects. Åre is the largest destination in northern Europe and Vemdalen is the fourth largest in Sweden. They are both situated in the same county and the lift system is owned by the same company, Skistar (see [www.skistar.com](http://www.skistar.com) for more info).

A questionnaire was designed and handed out to tourists at two destinations hotels, restaurants and in the village. The focus area of the questionnaire consisted of 40 attributes, deriving from previous research (Hudson, Shepard, 2008; Sörensson, von Friedrichs, 2013). Five main fields were selected concerning 40 attributes; accommodation, activities, food, travel and environment at the destination. The questionnaire also had some demographical questions. Tourists had to grade, on a scale from 1–6, their satisfaction and the level of importance. This paper is based on the data received from 373 questionnaires; 243 from tourists in Åre and 130 from tourists in Vemdalen. We conducted an Importance-Performance Analysis (see more about IPA in chapter 4) to detect which attributes tourists consider to be the most important and the destination's performance in that respect.

## **Two destinations**

Two destinations that were selected will be described more in detail in the following section. Åre and Vemdalen are both situated in the same county, Jämtland in Sweden, and 34.5% of all ski tourism in Sweden is in that county (Figure 1). There are around 250 different ski areas in Sweden ([www.slao.se](http://www.slao.se)). For the county tourism is a major economic industry with a yearly turnover at 3.9 billion Swedish crowns (<http://www2.jamtland.se>). Both ski destinations are owned by Skistar (it also operates ski destinations in Salen, Trysil and Hemsedal).

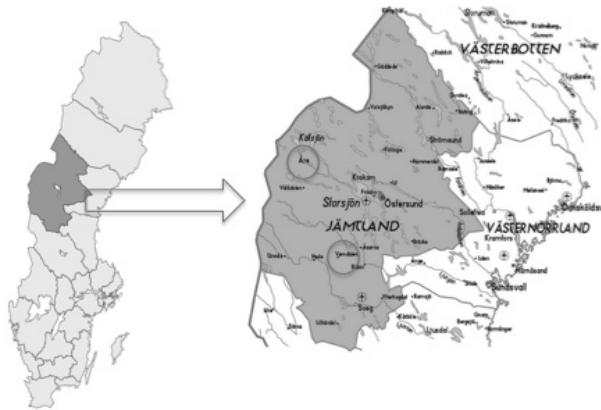


Figure 1. Location of two destinations Åre and Vemdalen

Source: <http://stadskarta-sverige.blogspot.com/2011/06/jamtland-karta-over-staden.html>.

Vemdalen is situated in southern parts of the county and consists of four villages (three ski areas) shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Four villages of Vemdalen

Source: [www.skistar.com/vemdalen](http://www.skistar.com/vemdalen).

The destination has long traditions as a popular destination and is one of Scandinavia's most snow- sure ski destinations, but the area is becoming a year-round destination. A growing number of people realize how much the destination has to offer also during snow free season. Vemdalen ski destinations are all included in the same ski pass. The system consists of 33 lifts and 54 slopes. In 2010/2011 Vemdalen had 516,000 ski days (sold ski passes according to [www.skistart.com/vemdalen](http://www.skistart.com/vemdalen)). A unique investment was finalized before the season 2011/2012: Vemdalskalet is the first Scandinavian ski destination to build a modern six-seat

chairlift in the children's and novices' ski area ([www2.jamtland.se/index.php/en/destinations/vemdalen](http://www2.jamtland.se/index.php/en/destinations/vemdalen)).

Åre is the largest winter ski destination in northern Europe. The destination has a long history going back as early as in the 12th century, thousands of pilgrims from all over Europe visited the village on their way to St. Olaf's grave in Nidaros, nowadays Trondheim. Åre and its surroundings as a destination for tourists was developed in the later part of the 19th century, initiating the transformation of Åre from a farming village to an international ski destination. In the early days the main focus was on summer tourism and, as late as the 1970s Åre had just as many visitors during summer as during winter ([www.skistar.com/en/Åre/About-Åre/History/](http://www.skistar.com/en/Åre/About-Åre/History/)). Nowadays, tourism is by far the most successful industry in Åre with around 450,000 visitors per year and about 32,000 beds, there are plenty of hotels and cottages. Åre is the leading Nordic mountain destination all year round ([www.åre.se/naeringsliv/naeringslivsutveckling](http://www.åre.se/naeringsliv/naeringslivsutveckling)). Åre ski area consists of 47 lifts (including 5 treadmills) and 114 runs and has a total capacity of approximately 50,000 people per hour. In 2008, Åre got a new record for a number of ski days, i.e. 1,088,000. Åre consists of five villages (Åre, Björnen, Duved, Tegefjäll and Rödkullen) that are shown in Figure 3.

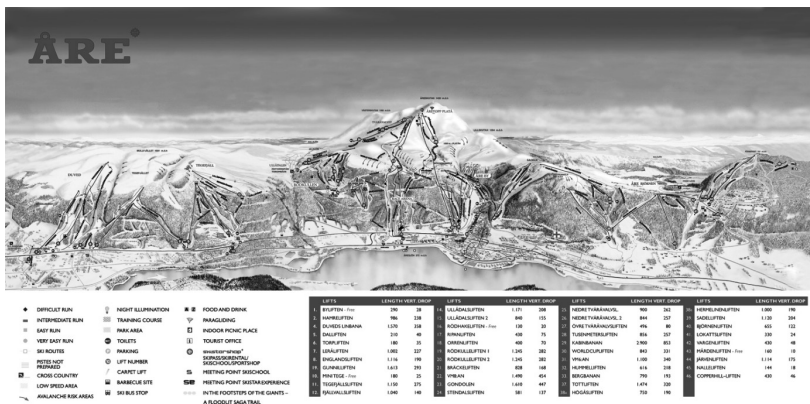


Figure 3. Åre five villages and ski system

Source: [www.slao.se](http://www.slao.se); [www.skistar.com/are](http://www.skistar.com/are).

## Importance-Performance analysis

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) is an effective model dating back to the 1970s (Chu, Choi, 2000; Deng, Kuo, Chen, 2008; Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, Pichler, 2004; Oh, 2001; Caber, Albayrak, Matzler, 2012; Taplin, 2012). The IPA technique has been successfully used in different research fields, such as

the service industry and automobile industry and lately within the tourism research (Martilla, James, 1977; Sethna, 1982; Chu, Choi, 2000; Oh, 2001). It is a popular managerial tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses; the technique is used to understand the tourists' level of satisfaction that comes from their expectations of a service's performance. Within the service industry the IPA technique has been used as an alternative to the SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988; Chu, Choi, 2000). Many studies are conducted using the IPA model in tourism studies (Hemmasi, Strong, Taylor, 1994; Evans, Chon, 1989; Keyt, Yavas, Riecken, 1994; Hsu, Byun, Yang, 1997; Lewis, 1985; Lewis, Chambers, 1989; Almanza, Jaffe, Lin, 1994; Martin, 1995; Sörensson, von Friedrichs, 2013). The IPA model is graphically presented as a grid divided into four quadrants (see Figure 4). The X-axis illustrates the tourists' perceived performance and the Y-axis illustrates the importance in relation to the attributes.

IMPORTANCE	<b>Q1: Concentrate Here</b>  High Importance  Low Performance	<b>Q2: Keep up the Good Work</b>  High Importance  High Performance
	<b>Q3: Low Priority</b>  Low Importance  Low Performance	<b>Q4: Possible Overkill</b>  Low Importance  High Performance
PERFORMANCE		

Figure 4. Important-Performance Analysis

Source: Chu, Choi, 2000, p. 365.

**Q1:** Attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents, but performance levels are fairly low. This suggests that improvement efforts should be concentrated here.

**Q2:** Attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents, and at the same time, the organization seems to have a high level of performance in these activities. The message here is to keep up the good work.

**Q3:** Attributes here are rated as having low importance and low performance. Although performance levels may be low in this cell, managers should not be



overly concerned, since the attributes in this cell are not perceived to be very important. Limited resources should be expended in this low priority cell.

Q4: This cell contains attributes of low importance, but where performance is relatively high. Respondents are satisfied with the performance of the organization, but managers should consider present efforts on the attributes of this cell as being superfluous/unnecessary. (Chu, Choi, 2000, p. 356; Zhang, Chow, 2004, p. 83; Sörensson, von Friedrichs, 2013, p. 17).

A critical point of the IPA analysis is the selection of attributes (Martilla, James, 1977; Caber, Albayrak, Matzler, 2012). When developing the attribute list, focus must be on previous research, focus groups and unstructured personal interviews (Griffin, Edwards, 2012; Caber, Albayrak, Matzler, 2012). At the first stage of the analysis, destination attributes are determined from previous studies (Hudson, Shepard, 2008; Sörensson, von Friedrichs, 2013). These attributes are then being scored by the respondents on a Likert scale (Griffin, Edwards, 2012; Caber, Albayrak, Matzler, 2012). It is then based on mean performance and mean importance for each of the attributes of a service (Taplin, 2012). Tarrant and Smith (2002) argue that IPA should be modified and that it should include a measure of statistical variance in addition to mean values. In this article it has been used on mean value.

### **Demographic characteristics**

For these 373 respondents, 130 were tourists of Vemdalen and 243 were tourists of Åre. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents for both destinations.

#### **Vemdalen**

Majority of the respondents were female (53.5%) and 46.5% were male tourists. Almost 90% of tourists were between the age of 24–53. Almost half of the tourists have visited Vemdalen more than seven times (46.2%), meanwhile 14.6% have been first time visitors. 32.3% have been to Vemdalen before and up to four times. A third of the tourists stay for 3–4 days (33.5%) and another third stay for around a week (35.9%). 17.2% stay for up to two weeks. That many tourists in Vemdalen (17.2%) staying for up to two weeks can be explained by the questionnaire being handed out during December-January when many tourists have a longer holiday. They travel mainly by their own car to the destination (90.8%). 1.5% travel by airplane, less than 1% by train and the rest comes by bus (6.9%). For Vemdalen over 90% come by car which can be explained by a lack of train station at the destination. The tourists stayed in rented apartments or houses (51.1%) or in a hotel (9.2%). Almost a third of them stayed in their own house or apartment (31.3%). Many of them also travelled with their family (76.3%) and almost a fifth

with friends (19.1%). The main reason for the trip is alpine skiing (89.3%) and 3.8% want to hang out with their family or friends.

### Åre

Majority of the respondents were male (55.6%). The tourists are young with almost 63% being 33 years old or younger. A large amount have been to Åre seven times or more (42%) and almost a third have been there 1–4 times before. 14% are first time visitors. A fifth of the tourists are one-day tourists (20.6%) and 28.3%

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the respondents (%)

Demographic characteristics	Tourists of Vemdalen	Tourists of Åre	Demographic characteristics	Tourists of Vemdalen	Tourists of Åre
Sex			Travel companions		
Male	46.5	55.6	With family	76.3	41.1
Female	53.5	44.4	With friends	19.1	41.5
Born			Conference	2.3	13.7
1940–1949	3.9	4.2	Other	2.3	3.7
1950–1959	3.9	8.8	Main reason for the trip		
1960–1969	34.4	9.6	Alpine skiing	89.3	49.0
1970–1979	24.2	14.6	Cross country skiing	0.8	10.5
1980–1989	20.3	29.3	Hang out with family/friends	3.8	11.7
1990–1999	13.3	33.5	Relaxation	2.3	10.0
Number of stays at the destination			Other	3.8	18.8
Never	14.6	14.0	Travel to the destination		
1–2 times	10.8	21.8	Airplane	1.5	10.1
3–4 times	21.5	14.4	Own car	90.8	63.9
4–6 times	6.9	7.8	Train	0.8	21.0
7 times or more	46.2	42.0	Bus	6.9	5.0
Duration of stay			Accommodation type		
1 day	11.0	20.6	Hotel	9.2	49.0
2 days	1.6	11.2	Own house or apartment	31.3	10.5
3–4 days	33.5	28.3	Rented house or apartment	51.1	11.7
5–6 days	17.1	11.6	Guesthouse/bed and breakfast	2.3	10.0
1 week	18.8	18.5	Other	6.1	18.8
8 days–2 weeks	17.2	4.8			
More than 2 weeks	0.8	5.0			

Source: own elaboration.

are there for 3–4 days. 30% of the tourists stay for 5 days up to a week. 41% travel with friends and 41% travel with family. 14% are in Åre due to a conference. The main reason for travelling to Åre is due to alpine skiing. Around 10% to hang out with family or friends, 10% for cross country skiing and 10% for relaxation. 63.9% travel by their own car to Åre, 10.1% come by airplane and 21% take a train. In Åre, over one fifth take a train which has a train station in the center of the village. Half of the tourists stay at a hotel, 10.5% stay in their own house or apartment and 11.7% have rented a house or an apartment.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were Table 1.

### **Importance-performance analysis of two ski destinations in Jämtland**

The results of this study provide some clear indications regarding tourism from the tourists' perspective at these two ski destinations. The study of the tourism in Jämtland should be considered as a first step towards gaining more knowledge about the factors tourists think are important when they visit a winter destination. There are some important results that will indicate what tourism destinations should think about when developing an attractive and sustainable destination. For these destinations in Jämtland, with a long history of tourism based on nature experience, it is important to keep the destination attractive for both returning tourists and also for new tourists at such destination. This may affect the destination in several ways and one example is managing the balance while depending on different tourists' valuable perceptions. This is a common issue that concerns different stakeholders at a destination; stakeholders such as tourism service providers, public bodies and civic society holding different agendas. Another example is to find common strategies for the performance of desired values by the collective of stakeholders at the destination. The theoretical view of sustainable tourism must be adjusted to practice so that it can be applied successfully in the tourism industry. One way to do this is to investigate the factors that are important for different kinds of tourists.

For the tourists at destination Vemdalen the results showed the following.

*Q1: Concentrate here.* This quadrant is important to address for a destination since it is of importance for the tourists but the destination has low performance. In Vemdalen tourists think that there are few restaurants to choose from. There is also an issue concerning food stores and the queues there. Tourists also find health care to be an attribute that the destination should concentrate on. Finally, tourists would like the destination of Vemdalen to focus on the environment concerning waste collection.

*Q2: Keep up the good work.* "Keep up the good work" attributes are quite many. The accommodation and its service is fine. The destination also offers relaxation, good information signs, good ski shop and a good service delivery at

restaurants. The same opinion is shown for food stores service as regards the staff. The destination has good snow shoveling and parking. The main attraction, ski system, is also scoring high. Attributes in “Keep up the good work” concerning lifts, different slopes, lift queues, opening hours, slope up and service in the lifts are perceived as fine. There are also good amount of toilets and the treatment by other skiers is good (social factor). Finally, the tourists think that they get a good value for money and the overall impression of the destination is good.

*Q3: Low Priority.* “Low priority” attributes for the destination of Vemdalen are also quite a few. Transportation at the destination, after ski activities, shopping and local food are of low priority. Other sport activities, spa, cinema, babysitting and off-piste are also perceived as low priority. Environmental issue focusing on water saving and restaurants in the ski pistes are not important.

*Q4: Possible overkill.* There are attributes that are possible overkill for the destination to focus on. Entertainment, tourist information and ski school are graded as such by the tourists.

The result for Vemdalen is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Importance-Performance analysis of the destination of Vemdalen

Attribute	Vemdalen		IPA
	performance	importance	
	mean	mean	
1	2	3	4
Accommodation	4.86	5.04	keep up the good work
Service at accommodation	4.60	4.95	keep up the good work
Transport at destination	3.79	3.97	low priority
Entertainment	5.07	3.18	possible overkill
After ski activities	3.71	3.47	low priority
Shopping	3.71	3.31	low priority
Local food	3.71	3.86	low priority
Relaxation	4.29	4.37	keep up the good work
Tourist information	4.14	3.93	possible overkill
Signs at destination	4.26	4.78	keep up the good work
Restaurants	3.72	4.41	concentrate here
Restaurant service	4.45	4.84	keep up the good work
Ski shop	4.72	4.51	keep up the good work
Health care	3.93	4.90	concentrate here
Food store	3.49	4.54	concentrate here
Food store queue	3.91	4.70	concentrate here
Food store service	4.18	4.46	keep up the good work
Sport activities	3.48	3.43	low priority
Spa	3.22	3.19	low priority

1	2	3	4
Activities	3.37	3.19	low priority
Snow shoveling	4.50	4.62	keep up the good work
Parking	4.23	4.94	keep up the good work
Baby care	3.05	2.39	low priority
Cinema	2.54	2.04	low priority
Lifts	4.58	5.29	keep up the good work
Different slopes	4.49	5.12	keep up the good work
Number of lifts	4.62	5.05	keep up the good work
Lift queues	4.38	5.11	keep up the good work
Off-piste	2.88	3.42	low priority
Lift opening hours	4.20	4.99	keep up the good work
Slope up	4.46	5.33	keep up the good work
Lift service	4.75	4.97	keep up the good work
Toilets	4.09	4.71	keep up the good work
Other skiers	4.17	4.47	keep up the good work
Restaurants in ski slopes	3.70	4.27	low priority
Ski school	4.51	3.83	possible overkill
Environment - waste	3.51	4.36	concentrate here
Environment - water	3.69	4.25	low priority
Value for money	4.24	4.93	keep up the good work
Destination as a whole	4.76	5.36	keep up the good work
Mean value	405	431	

Source: own elaboration.

For the tourists at destination Åre the results showed the following.

*Q1: Concentrate here.* This quadrant is important to address for a destination since it is of importance for the tourists but the destination has low performance. For the destination of Åre there are five attributes that are important to address in order to satisfy tourists. Parking and lift queues are issues that need to be improved. There is also an issue with the food store, toilets at slopes and health care in Åre.

*Q2: Keep up the good work.* “Keep up the good work” attributes are quite many in Åre. Accommodation, its service there, restaurants, service level of restaurants and relaxation are attributes that are satisfactory and important for the tourists. Attributes concerning the ski system are also fine, but the lifts, different slopes, amount of lifts, opening hours at the lifts, slope up and lift service are important. Finally tourists believe that travelling to Åre gives them value for money and the destination as a whole is good.

*Q3: Low Priority.* “Low priority” attributes, for Åre, are environmental aspects such as waste collection and water saving. Low priority refers to transport at the destination, shopping, use of local food, queues at food stores, sport activities, other activities and snow shoveling. Other activities like cinema, babysitting

and ski school are less important. Attributes connected to alpine skiing like off-piste, behavior of other skiers on slopes and the amount of restaurants in the lift system are of low priority.

*Q4: Possible overkill.* Finally tourists of Åre think that entertainment, after ski activities, tourist information and signs are possible overkill. Attributes like ski shops, spa and service level at food stores are also not important for tourists in Åre.

The results for Åre are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

## Importance-Performance analysis of the destination of Åre

Attribute	Åre		IPA
	performance	importance	
	mean	mean	
Accommodation	4.98	5.12	keep up the good work
Service at accommodation	4.72	5.17	keep up the good work
Transport at destination	3.95	4.41	low priority
Entertainment	5.02	4.34	possible overkill
After ski activities	4.59	4.31	possible overkill
Shopping	3.59	3.50	low priority
Local food	3.98	3.83	low priority
Relaxation	4.64	4.58	keep up the good work
Tourist information	4.38	4.32	possible overkill
Signs at destination	4.38	4.37	possible overkill
Restaurants	4.56	4.89	keep up the good work
Restaurant service	4.69	5.10	keep up the good work
Ski shop	4.67	4.25	possible overkill
Health care	4.03	4.96	concentrate here
Food store	3.60	4.51	concentrate here
Food store queue	3.80	4.37	low priority
Food store service	4.27	4.35	possible overkill
Sport activities	4.06	3.83	low priority
Spa	4.54	4.23	possible overkill
Activities	4.08	4.14	low priority
Snow shoveling	4.16	4.32	low priority
Parking	3.68	4.78	concentrate here
Baby care	3.30	3.08	low priority
Cinema	2.25	2.81	low priority
Lifts	4.72	5.20	keep up the good work
Different slopes	4.82	5.31	keep up the good work
Number of lifts	4.71	4.99	keep up the good work
Lift queues	4.18	4.93	concentrate here
Off-piste	3.94	4.07	low priority

Lift opening hours	4.81	4.72	keep up the good work
Slope up	4.63	4.90	keep up the good work
Lift service	4.53	4.74	keep up the good work
Toilets	3.65	4.68	concentrate here
Other skiers	3.91	4.28	low priority
Restaurants in ski slopes	4.08	4.43	low priority
Ski school	3.95	3.49	low priority
Environment - waste	3.81	4.35	low priority
Environment - water	3.57	4.31	low priority
Value for money	4.32	5.15	keep up the good work
Destination as a whole	4.94	5.48	keep up the good work
Mean value	4.21	4.47	

Source: own elaboration.

## Discussion

The aim of this study is to investigate the satisfaction level of tourists concerning different factors at two ski destinations in Sweden. By finding these key attributes they can contribute to the creation for tourism development in the region. There are several aspects to take into account from this study. When tourists travel to destinations they come with their needs and wants expecting the destinations to fulfill them. The tourism service provider cannot on its own create tourism experience – it is created together with tourists. What tourists value as important is therefore of great concern for the tourism service provider.

Both destinations are mature in the destination's lifecycle. This affects tourism development since tourism is constantly developing. Tourists have higher expectations than before and they are not just going skiing when travelling to a ski destination. The main activity at both destinations is alpine skiing. It is therefore very important that the lifts and slopes give the tourist a high value. That is the key experience for holidays, despite there are many aspects that are co-creating the complete offer. Lifts and slopes are attributes that are good according to the tourists' opinions. Number of lifts, great opening hours, good slopes and service-minded staff in the lifts are also good. Tourists are not that interested in off piste skiing since it is of low priority at both destinations. Other attributes concerning activities are spa, sport activities, ski shop, babysitting, cinemas and health care. There is a low priority for many of these except health care that both destinations should concentrate on. Skiing experience is the main reason but tourists are also searching for other things to do at the destination like dining, shopping, swimming and so on. It is therefore important to have an active dialogue with tourists to learn more about their needs and wants. Together with them the experience is created. There are many ski destinations that tourists could choose

from and there is a strong competition between them. Therefore it is important to have satisfied and loyal tourists. Two destinations belong to the same company (Skistar) and thus they should have different tourist segments. Vemdalen is known as more family oriented destination compared to Åre.

The result from this study has shown that there are high amounts of returning tourists (over 42% respectively, 46% have been at the destinations more than seven times). This shows that the destination is well-established (e.g. mature) and probably has quite satisfied tourists. It also makes it even more central to address the factors raised by the tourists as important. It is good for tourist producers to have a large amount of returning tourists since they do not have to focus their effort on attracting new ones but rather satisfy those that return to the destination.

The destinations also have different segments shown by tourists' travel companions where Vemdalen has a larger amount of families (76%) compared to Åre (41%). 76% travel with families to Vemdalen, meanwhile only 41% to Åre. It is important to study different segments since they might have different view on what they see as valuable for the destination.

The IPA showed that attributes concerning accommodation are good at both destinations. Accommodation consists of houses and apartments that tourists own at the destinations. Also, a large amount rents a house or an apartment or stays at hotels. These tourists are therefore of importance since they are owners of houses or apartments and have a strong tie to the destination. Attributes that addresses food are restaurants and their service. In Åre tourists are pleased with both, but in Vemdalen there is a focus on too few restaurants to choose from. This is an important attribute that Vemdalen should address. The use of local food is low prioritized which is an interesting result especially since the county is current food capital of Sweden. In Vemdalen there is also an issue about the queues in food stores.

Environmental issues are not of significant importance despite the fact that destinations nowadays try to be more sustainable and contribute more to the community-based entrepreneurship. The above excludes waste collection in Vemdalen since this destination should concentrate on it. Tourists do not value sustainable tourism especially high despite that it is of great importance for the tourism to survive in the future. The use of data from tourist questionnaires is important for destinations to raise the service quality. Since tourists are co-creators of value, their opinions are of great importance for the destination to have more satisfied tourists. Data can be used for quality improvement, managing tourists expectations and higher overall satisfaction. An important result is that tourists at both destinations believe that they get a high value for money and they are satisfied with the destination as a whole.



## Conclusions

The conclusion is that the satisfaction level of tourists at two studied ski destinations in Sweden is quite high and similar. This study has found key attributes such as for instance that tourists do more than just ski, and that they are overall satisfied with most of the factors. The results can and should be used as a first step to find more knowledge about what tourists prefer in order to give them experience that is fulfilling. It is of great importance that destinations address the attributes that would make tourists a more satisfied customer so that they would return to the destination in the future.

The result of this study can be used by destination planners in the ski destinations in order to improve performance in the factors important for tourists but which have low performance. Other destinations could conduct similar studies to gain knowledge regarding their tourists and their perspectives on tourism. The most important aspect to take into account in this processes is the recognition of a distinction of various attributes from the consumers' perception and producers' performance. The service quality of destinations is a key factor in differentiating service products as well as building a competitive advantage in tourism. For destinations, the IPA is a method that can be easily understood but at the same time statistically valid. One of the major benefits of using IPA is the identification of factors for service quality improvement (Hudson, Shephard, 2008).

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### **Analiza IPA (importance-performance analysis) destynacji narciarskich w Szwecji – porównanie między dwiema destynacjami**

**Słowa kluczowe:** turystyka, rozwój turystyki, analiza IPA (importance-performance analysis), destynacja narciarska

**Streszczenie.** Celem zaprezentowanych w artykule wyników było zbadanie poziomu zadowolenia turystów biorąc pod uwagę różne czynniki w dwóch ośrodkach narciarskich w Szwecji, celem znalezienia kluczowych cech, które mogą przyczynić się do rozwoju turystyki w regionie. W destynacjach turystycznych turyści są współtwórcami wartości, dlatego ważne jest uwzględnienie ich opinii. Dane zebrano za pomocą kwestionariuszy ilościowych składających się z 40 czynników w skali Likerta od 1 do 6. Kwestionariusz rozdano i otrzymano od 373 turystów w wybranych destynacjach narciarskich. Dla większości atrybutów wyniki wskazują, że turyści są zadowoleni z usług świadczonych przez usługodawców turystycznych w miejscu docelowym. W każdej z destynacji istnieje pięć atrybutów, które wymagają dalszego rozwoju, aby poprawić ogólne wrażenia z miejsca docelowego. Wyniki badań mogą być wykorzystane przez dostawców produktów turystycznych w celu rozwoju destynacji przez rozwiązanie problemów poruszanych przez turystów. Jest to nie tylko ważne dla turystów z doświadczeniem narciarskim, ale także dla innych atrakcji i ofert w miejscu docelowym, które przyczynią się do ogólnego doświadczenia usługobiorcy.

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