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Tourism Seasonality on the Island of Senja

Adaptation of Local Businesses to Seasonal Variations

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Master thesis in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas
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Abstract

A growing interest among Norwegian and international tourists in visiting the island of Senja has been leading to a rapid development of the tourism industry on the island. Breath-taking nature and remote location are motivating travellers to visit Senja and have a far-from-civilisation experience. Increasing the number of visitors is beneficial for economic development of the area and entrepreneurial thriving activity. However, it is challenging for the private sector to avoid the negative impact of the flourishing tourism industry. Local businesses focusing on tourism are dependent on the level of demand and thus face various challenges when this level reduces. In Norway, the issue of unbalanced tourism activity is quite common. The problem of high seasonality is usually aggravated in remote, rural, and coastal destinations and Senja is not an exception.

This research is aimed to analyse the adaptation to seasonal variations on Senja from the perspective of local businesses and detect common methods and solutions to maintain economic balance. Furthermore, this study evaluates the degree of seasonal variations, examines main tendencies of seasonal patterns, and inspects major causes and effects of tourism fluctuations on Senja. Existing policy implications are discussed in the research along with the recommendations for further actions and consecutive tackling of seasonality.

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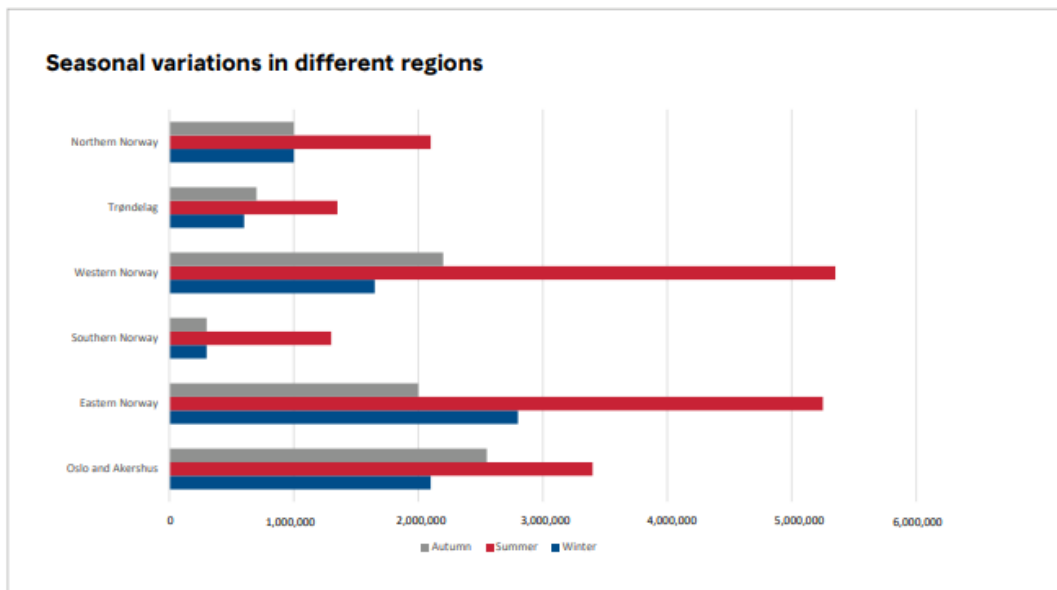
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1 Introduction

Tourism industry has been rapidly developing for several last years in Norway. A significant part of Norway's visitors is attracted to unique nature, sublime landscapes, and dramatic seasonal phenomena such as aurora borealis in the winter and midnight sun in the summer. Various seasonal activities and nature facilities serve as a major attraction for not only international but domestic tourism as well. Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, and Prebensen (2015) describe Norway as a destination with quite a cold climate on par with other places on the same latitude. Xie (2020) emphasizes that in comparison to for example Alaska or Siberia, Norway is considered a significantly warmer destination due to its coastal location and proximity to the warm ocean current Gulf Stream. However, the summer months remain the most popular among travellers. A rapid and intensified development of tourism brought not only apparent benefits to local communities but additional challenges to overcome, such as seasonality and maintenance of sustainable development. For a long time, seasonality in tourism has been an issue discussed and analysed by a significant number of researchers (Amelung, Nichols & Viner, 2007). Seasonal variations are recognized as a matter tremendously affecting tourism in most destinations worldwide. However, seasonality remains an issue that evidently lacks clarity. (Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Senbeto & Hon, 2019). Natural and institutional factors of seasonal fluctuations define tourists' choices, in particular, pleasant climate and school or work holidays during the summer season (Xie, 2020). According to Innovation Norway (2022) "tourism in Norway is largely seasonal, with more than half of all commercial overnight stays in the summer months of May to August" (Figure 1).

In comparison to the most visited and well-known destinations of Northern Norway (Tromsø, Lofoten and Vesterålen), the Island of Senja reached a rather moderate level of popularity among tourists. However, travellers' recognition of the location has been increasing significantly in recent years. A lot of small businesses that were established based on the increase in tourists' interest had to face common challenges along with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of undertourism in the winter season made it impossible for companies to keep their activity level the same as in the summer season (Mimir, 2020)

Figure 1. Four-monthly distribution of commercial overnight stays and cabin rental nights per region



Note. Innovation Norway, National Tourism Strategy 2030

https://assets.simpleviewcms.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/norway/Nasjonale_Reiselivsstrategi_original_ny_en_cbbfb4a4-b34a-41d4-86cc-f66af936979d.pdf

1.1 Research question

Increasing interest in Senja as a touristic destination certainly leads to economic gain for the region, including profit from other industries development stimulated by tourism growth.

However, unevenly distributed flow of tourists throughout the year results in periods of time with very low or no demand. Entrepreneurs focusing on providing all kinds of services to travellers might become reliant exclusively on tourist customers, which can lead to inevitability of economic risks. Furthermore, financial commitments and liabilities create additional pressure for local companies. Thus, there is a common need in gaining more control over demands' fluctuations or in other words – seasonal variations in tourism. In private sector a lot of attention is paid to increasing demand during low or off seasons.

Some business owners are motivated by this need; therefore, they attempt to actively search for solutions and apply various tactics to influence the tourism demand on both micro- and macro-level. However, this approach requires certain amount of available resources and willingness to use them. Other entrepreneurs are bounded by shortage of their capacity and are not able to be fully involved in conquering tourism seasonality on macro-level. Finally, there are some representatives of local companies who are quite unconcerned with the current seasonal imbalance due to their financial independence, personal choice, or contentment regarding seasonal differences. Regardless these

discrepancies, all tourism businesses on the island have been experiencing various challenges related to economic stability, employment, customers' satisfaction, and attitude of local community. Significant number of local entrepreneurs recognise the relevance of the issue and aim to alleviate the negative impact by introducing and using various methods. The objective of this project is to determine what measures and tools are utilized by local tourism-based entrepreneurs on Senja to adapt to the issue of seasonality and attempt to retain economic balance all year round. Moreover, the significance of public sector involvement and public-private cooperation is examined. The focus of this research is directed on low season challenges and solutions; however, it also inspects factors and effects of seasonality on Senja with regards to peak-seasons and off-seasons. Furthermore, this study analyses the spatial aspect, namely influence of location on Senja. The research suggests that this holistic approach to analysing and understanding tourism seasonality on the island is beneficial for future research and development of effective methods to conquer or alleviate seasonal variations. Thus, both demand and supply sides must be taken into consideration. Tourists' behaviour, motivation or reluctance to travel also are important aspects in handling seasonality.

2 Research context and background

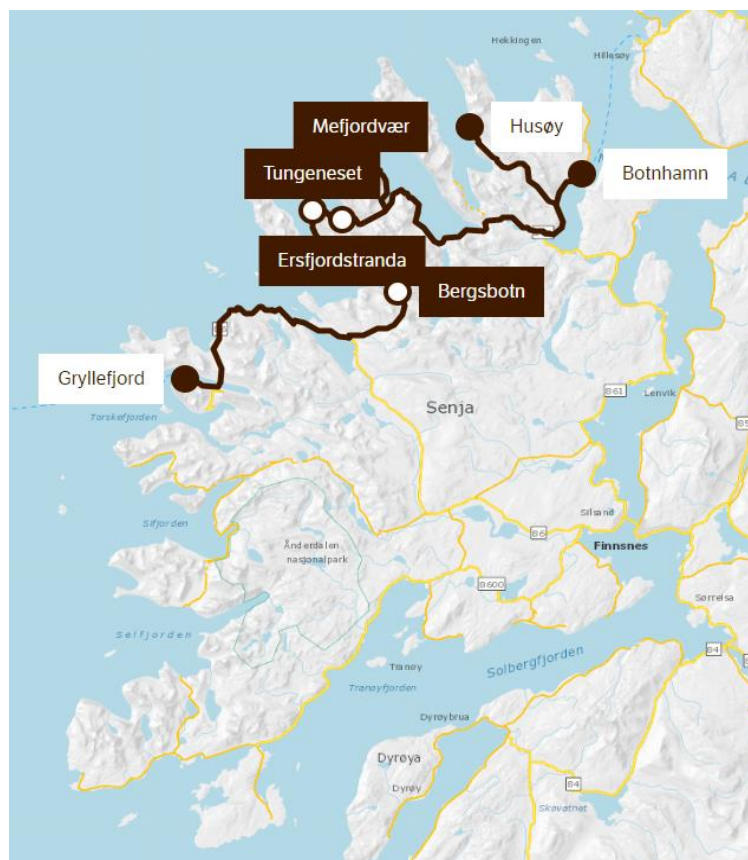
2.1 The island of Senja

The geographical context of this research is focused on the island of Senja. Senja is the second biggest island in Norway and a part of Senja Municipality in Troms and Finnmark County (Thornæs, 2020). In 1972, when the bridge 'Gisundbrua' between Finnsnes and Senja island was built, the island was connected to the mainland by a road. 7679 people inhabit the island of Senja (Øderund, 2020), while Senja Municipality has 14 738 inhabitants, according to the Statistics Sentral Bureau in 2021. There are several industries that are leading in creating jobs and economic income for the area. According to Habberstad and Knudsen-Dabbadie (2022), municipal income from personal income tax from employees within the seafood industry, food production industry and growing tourism. One-fifth part of the population is employed in secondary industries, such as construction, power and water supply, waste disposal, etc (Mælnum, 2022). Another industrial activity is focused on graphite mining and is located in the north of Senja.

2.2 Tourism industry

Tourism in Senja tends to increase majorly during the summer months (June, July, and August), while experiencing a significant decline in winter months (December, January, and February) due to a lack of visitors' interest (Engebreetsen & Jakobsen, 2020). Amundsen (2012) in her research on nature-based tourism in Northern Norway analyses the case of Berg Municipality, which from 2020 is included in Senja Municipality along with Tranøy, Torsken, and Lenvik municipalities. The author claims that seasonal variations, in particular, peak season during summer months have been quite pronounced in Berg Municipality and are a typical issue for all areas and tourist destinations in Northern Norway. Furthermore, according to the Masterplan by Menon Economics and Visit Senja Region, the magnificent nature of Senja has been the major motor for tourists' motivation to visit the island (Helseth, Engebreetsen & Iversen, 2019). The most popular tourist attraction of Senja is the 102 km long Norwegian Scenic Route Senja that stretches throughout the north of the island between Botnhamn on the eastern part and to Gryllefjord on the west coast (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Scenic Route of Senja

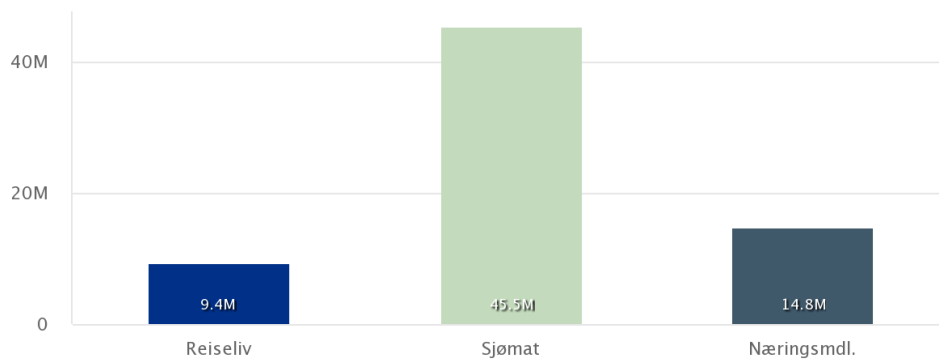


Note. Scenic Route Senja. Nasjonale turistveger – Norwegian Scenic Routes
<https://www.nasjonaleturistveger.no/en/routes/senja/>

It is connected with the Norwegian Scenic Route Andøya by the ferry from Gryllefjord (Scenic Route Senja, n.d.). The route is considered the most important 'reason to go' in Senja (Mimir, 2020). In their research on the economic effect of national scenic routes, Menon Economics (2019) emphasize that businesses located along the Scenic Route of Senja have quadrupled their added value from 2010 to 2017. Ånderdalen National Park is another considerably popular attraction of the island located closer to the south (Figure 4). The part of the long trail that goes through the whole island, the Norwegian Tourist Association "Senja Traverse", is located in the National Park (About Ånderdalen National Park, n.d.). Ånderdalen has "alpine coastal nature, pine forest, ancient cultural monuments, and Sami reindeer husbandry" (Menon Economics, 2019). The park has several cabins and fireplaces that can be used by hikers. Another must-see attraction of the island is the mountain Segla, located in the North, in proximity to the Scenic Route.

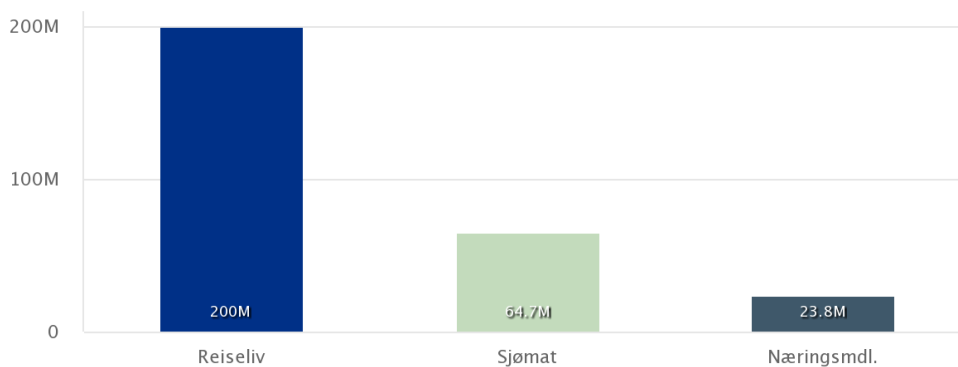
Located between two extremely popular destinations, Tromsø and Lofoten Islands, Senja has become one of the stops for many transit tourists between them (Mimir, 2020). The profit generated by these short-term visitors is distributed mostly among entrepreneurs in the north of Senja, due to the ferry connection between the north of the island and Lofoten. This feature creates specific conditions for businesses depending on their location on the island. According to the research by Mimir (2020), poor infrastructure in the region creates additional challenges for businesses in remote areas of Senja, especially in the winter season. Poorly maintained roads, lack of toilets and parking spaces are the commonly recognised issues (Mimir, 2020). Therefore, a lot of Senja entrepreneurs focused on tourism are compelled to adjust in the low season and find solutions to stay economically stable. Although the number of travellers who are eager to visit Senja island grows, statistics provided by NHO Reiseliv and Menon Economics in 2019 show that profit from the tourism industry is less significant for Senja Kommune in comparison to fishing and food production industries (Habberstad & Knudsen-Dabbadie, 2019). While in Tromsø the tax income from employees in the tourism industry is approximately 200 million NOK, in Senja it is 9,5 million NOK (Figure 3; Figure 4). However, the tax amount per capita is still quite significant for the Senja region.

Figure 3. Senja Municipality. Municipal income from personal income tax from employees within tourism, seafood industry, food industry



Note. Habberstad, M. & Knudsen-Dabbadie, T. (2019). Tall og fakta om: Skatteinntekter fra reiselivet. NHO Reiseliv. <https://www.nhoreiseliv.no/tall-og-fakta/tall-og-fakta-om-norsk-reiseliv/#skatteinntekter>

Figure 4. Tromsø Municipality. Municipal income from personal income tax from employees within tourism, seafood industry, food industry



Note. Habberstad, M. & Knudsen-Dabbadie, T. (2019). Tall og fakta om: Skatteinntekter fra reiselivet. NHO Reiseliv. <https://www.nhoreiseliv.no/tall-og-fakta/tall-og-fakta-om-norsk-reiseliv/#skatteinntekter>

2.3 Visit Senja Region recommendations

In 2020 Visit Senja Region in collaboration with Mimir AS created a plan for Senja Region sustainable tourism development. The lack of proper infrastructure is one of the major problems analysed in the masterplan. As a solution, the authors recommend following ‘Sustainable visitor management in Mid-Troms’ Regional Plan or ‘Bærekraftig besøksforvaltning i Midt-Troms’ that contains regional plan for parking spaces, information boards, toilets and waste management (Olsson, 2020).

Seasonal variations are a part of the discussion as well and the following recommendations were made to improve the current situation:

- To increase demand that can serve as a basis for future all-year traffic and consequently all-year jobs by increasing the total accommodation capacity
- To focus on 'reason to go' - strategy, based on various target groups and their interests
- To offer full service to guests, including transport, accommodation, activities, and food

Thus, a lot of responsibility is given to private sector, and it's expected that companies will act accordingly. Almost no attention is paid to public financial aids for local entrepreneurs focused on tourism industry.

3 Methods and data

Tourism on Senja has been growing significantly for the last several years. Unique nature and location between two popular destinations – Tromsø and Lofoten, creating a lot of interest and curiosity from visitors. Although the increasing number of tourists is evident, the unbalanced distribution of tourists' flow throughout the year created a lot of concerns among local community, shareholders, and government. Seasonality is inherent to a major part of destinations in Norway and its Northern part, in particular (Innovation Norway, 2022). Worldwide seasonal variations on tourism have been widely discussed in previous research and various possible solutions have been identified, however it is prominent that these solutions are not always useful in practice. A lot of research has been done on seasonality in general, its causes, effects, and methods to tackle it. Nevertheless, it has been noted by researchers that more case studies are necessary to be executed in order to identify and understand as many factors as possible (Martín Martín et al., 2019).

Sustainable tourism development and mitigation of tourism seasonality on the island of Senja is challenging based on several characteristics. It has been indicated in previous research that rural areas are more vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations than urban areas (Butler, 1998; Commons & Page, 2001). Remoteness and coastal location are also aspects that might aggravate the negative impact of high and low seasons (Martín et al., 2020). High-latitude location has also been identified as a factor influencing the level of seasonal

variations (Lundtorp, Rassing & Wanhill, 1999). Senja has all the mentioned features, thus is prone to high level of tourism seasonality.

The main reason for tourists to visit Senja is certainly its nature (Mimir, 2020). The prospect of full year stable tourism might seem realistic due to unique natural attractions being available during all the seasons (midnight sun, northern lights, conditions for hiking and skiing in mountains). However, a major part of travellers prefers to visit the island during summer months, which has its impact on the local community and private sector.

The aspects of tourism seasonality on Senja can be analysed from the perspective of local entrepreneurs that are focusing their activity on tourism. It is interesting to look at what aspects of the area are influencing business activity and why. A lot of challenges are caused by low and off seasons on the island and companies are handling them differently. This research aims to create an overview of local businesses activity in low tourism seasons. Enterprises' methods of adaptation to low seasons are important to be identified and analysed. In order to understand all aspects of seasonality, this element has to be examined. The following study contributes to the future research on alleviating tourism seasonality on Senja.

3.1 Method

This research is based on qualitative data gathered by conducting 9 interviews with representatives of local businesses on Senja Island focusing on various activities within the tourism industry. All of the respondents have been notified that the interviews are anonymous, and the result of the study will be shared with them after. Participants were informed that the general information about enterprises' activities of focus and approximate location on the island is mentioned in order to emphasize important distinctions and features of each company influencing the degree of seasonality, its causes, impacts, and methods of avoiding seasonality's negative consequences. All the respondents agreed to the named conditions. The following questions were the part of interview guide:

1. Can you define the low season and high season for your business?
2. What seasonal challenges do you face most often and what causes them?

3. How are these challenges affected by your location on Senja (South, North or East of the island)?

4. What areas of activities do you focus on in the low season? How is it different from the high season?

5. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Senja in terms of future sustainable tourism development?

All interviews were conducted by phone and transcribed after the call. Limitations of this study can be reflected in the method of communication. Moreover, some respondents seemed not very eager to share information about the difficulties that they experience. However, most of the interviewees were quite open to communicate. Average time of interviews duration was 30 minutes.

Table 1. List of respondents

Respondent #	Type of activity	Location on Senja	Seasonal employees
1	Accommodation / Food & Beverage	North	Yes
2	Food & Beverage	North	Yes
3	Accommodation / Food & Beverage / Activities	North	Yes
4	Activities	East	No
5	Food & Beverage	East	Yes
6	Accommodation / Activities	South	No
7	Accommodation / Activities	South	No
8	Food & Beverage	South	Yes
9	Accommodation / Activities	South	Yes

4 Literature Review

4.1 Definitions

Tourism seasonality is a “temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which may be expressed in terms of such elements as numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on high dimensions ways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions” (Butler, 2001). According to Hylleberg (1992), seasonality is a “systematic, although not necessarily regular, intrayear movement caused by changes in the weather, the calendar, and timing of decisions, directly or indirectly through the production and consumption decisions made by the agents of the economy. These decisions are influenced by the endowments, the expectations and the preferences of the agents, and the production techniques available in the economy”.

4.2 Seasonality patterns

Seasonal variation patterns are frequently categorized as a single peak, two-peak, and non-peak (Butler, 2001). Senbeto and Hon (2019) define peak season as a time when demand for tourism resources is reaching the highest level and low season or off-season as the opposite. The term shoulder season is also frequently used in literature to describe the time between peak or high season and off or low season. “Single peak seasonality occurs where the seasonal pattern of demand in a generating region matches the seasonal pattern of the attractiveness of a destination, tending to produce extreme seasonality” (Butler, 2001). Vergori (2017) emphasizes that one-peak seasonality is typical for most touristic destinations. Two-peak seasonality is inherent to destinations that are able to keep the supply and demand balanced during two periods of time during the year. This type of seasonality “occurs in the destinations which meet at least two types of tourist needs” (Vergori, 2017). For instance, mountain landscape destinations attract summer and winter visitors due to their ability to offer demanded activities during both seasons (Butler, 2001). Non-peak seasonality is common for destinations that have the capability and capacity to provide a demanded product for travellers regardless of the time of the year. According to Vergori (2017), urban destinations have the advantage of offering facilities that are not affected by seasonal factors, for instance, cultural resources. Butler (2001) argues that such

areas have this privilege, however, there is still a certain extent of seasonal influence affecting the level of demand in cities.

4.3 Factors of seasonality

The identification and description of factors influencing seasonality were initially presented by Raphael Bar-On in 1975 and subsequently supplemented by various researchers (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). The causes of seasonal variations were segregated by characteristics of origin into two primary categories: natural and institutional (Bar-On, 1975; Commons & Page, 2001; Jang, 2004; Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Pegg, Patterson & Gariddo, 2012). In order to clarify the definition of terms, it has to be noted that seasonal variations caused by natural or institutional factors can be named a natural and an institutional seasonality respectively.

4.3.1 Natural factors

Natural factors are represented by climate-, weather- and nature-related features of a location (Goulding, Baum & Morrison, 2005; Senbeto & Hon, 2019). According to previous research executed by numerous scientists, natural factors significantly affect the fluctuations of tourists. For instance, adverse weather conditions such as low temperature, extreme precipitation, or strong wind gusts can influence the noticeable decrease in the flow of tourists (Hinch & Jackson, 2000). The reduction in visitors due to unfavourable climate- or weather-related factors is often caused by the reluctance of certain groups of tourists, represented by outdoor or adventurous travellers, for instance, campers and hikers. In addition, it was argued that the referred group of tourists represents a significant part of total visitors to rural areas, and “landscape and natural environment are the main reasons tourists choose rural destinations” (Martín Martín et al., 2020). Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005) refer to several studies asserting that the tourism market in countryside destinations is notably vulnerable to climate-related variations due to its remarkable dependence on outdoor activities. According to Tkaczynsky, Rundle-Thiele, and Prebensen (2015), a similar dependence is inherent to nature-based tourism, therefore this type of traveling is frequently tightly connected to the issue of natural seasonality. However, apart from activities that depend on the climate, the weather, and the season, there are several of them that can be performed regardless of natural factors, for instance, boat cruises or hiking in certain areas (Tkaczynsky et al., 2015).

4.3.2 Institutional factors

Another category that is influencing seasonal inconsistency is institutional factors. “These factors are typically based on religious, cultural, ethnic, social, and economic considerations, epitomised by religious, school, and industrial holidays” (Hinch & Hickey, 2000). Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff (2005) argue that public, school, and work holidays are one of the most influential institutional factors. According to Butler (1994), the scheduling of summer school vacation was initially connected with the workforce shortage in the agriculture industry during summertime and as a result a demand for additional assistance from students (Hinch & Hickey, 2000; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Although there is no such demand any longer in the contemporary world, summer school vacation has become a tradition worldwide. Consequently, the immutable custom has become a constraint for mitigation of seasonality (Butler, 1994; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Pegg et al., 2012). Hinch and Hickey (2000) add that a combination of tradition and favourable climatic conditions cause the major tourism influx during the summer months.

Senbeto and Hon (2019) claim that institutional causes are determined by the human factor, thus they are more erratic than natural causes. Butler (1994) discerns three auxiliary factors: social pressure or fashion, sporting season and inertia or tradition (Hinch & Hickey, 2000; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Tkaczynski et al., 2015). However, it has been alleged that forenamed factors can be included in the category of institutional factors (Amelung et al., 2007). Social pressure influences tourists’ choices of location, time of the year and activities; sporting season factor causes scheduling of vacation in accordance to favourable conditions for various sports; inertia or tradition determines visitors’ decisions to travel in particular time, i.e. high season (Butler, 1994; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

4.3.3 Push and pull factors

Lundtorp, Rassing, and Wanhill (1999) analyze the causes of seasonality from another perspective and emphasize that they have different origins and are induced either by tourists or the destination itself. “In order to tackle the seasonality problem efficiently in a destination it is therefore important to realise where seasonality is generated” (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2000). Therefore the causes are distinguished between push-factors (institutional, calendar-Easter and public holidays, inertia and tradition, social pressure or fashion, transport costs and time) and pull-factors (climate, sporting seasons, events)

(Lundtorp et al., 1999). Authors claim that there is quite limited understanding of whether tourists' lack of motivation to travel is more or less influential than insufficient conditions in destinations (Lundtorp et al., 1999).

4.3.4 Spatial Aspect

The problem of seasonality is in general inherent to various destinations, however "it is clear from many studies that overall intensity of tourism varies spatially very widely" (Butler, 1998). There have been some indications in literature implying that the negative impact of seasonality variations is higher in rural rather than urban areas (Butler, 1998; Commons & Page, 2001).

However, the homogenisation of rural areas regarding the effect of seasonal fluctuations in rural areas was criticised and refuted in further research (Martín Martín, Salinas Fernández, Rodríguez Martín & Ostos Rey, 2020). The criticism's reason is an excessive number of individual factors and characteristics among rural locations that do not allow to combine them into one group and generalize the repercussions of seasonality on them (Martín Martín et al., 2020). In overall, there is an evident lack of research regarding seasonal variations in rural and remote areas (Senbeto & Hon, 2019).

Moreover, it was noted by researchers that "systematic fluctuations in tourism phenomena throughout the year" are more conspicuous "in the higher latitudes" and experience a "dramatic tourism peak during the summer months" (Hinch & Jackson, 2000). The aforementioned tendency is caused by the more pronounced cyclicity of various natural processes in the areas adjacent to geographical poles (Hinch & Jackson, 2000). Lundtorp, Rassing and Wanhill (1999) emphasize that seasonality is quite common for all locations worldwide, however, in high latitudes it is more challenging to mitigate the negative effect of seasonal variations. The aspect of remoteness also deteriorates adverse repercussions of seasonality and hinders the recovery process (Lundtorp et al., 1999). Butler (2001) also indicates that "in some destinations, remote areas are climatically marginal, and visitation may be attractive, or even practical, only at specific and limited times of the year, e.g., polar regions". Goulding, Baum and Morrison (2005) argue that the transport accessibility has to be taken in consideration as a factor of seasonal variations as well. It is evident that in remote areas transportation can be less available and as a result, it influences the development of the infrastructure in the area and potential tourist influx.

4.4 Effects of seasonality

Although most researchers are discussing seasonality as a problem that hinders the stable development of tourism (Butler, 2001), there is another perspective that is focused on the positive impact of seasonal variations (Amelung et al., 2007; Pegg et al., 2012). In existing literature there is a common notion that “the effects of tourist seasonality can be classified into the following categories: economic effects, effects on the labour market, sociocultural effects, and ecological effects” (Martín Martín, Salinas Fernández, Rodríguez Martín & Ostos Rey, 2020).

4.4.1 Economic effects

The economic impact of seasonality in tourism is commonly analyzed from the perspective of demand and supply (Butler, 2001). The initial idea was implemented by Bar-On (1975), who emphasized that seasonality leads to economic instability (Senbeto & Hon, 2019). The decreased flow of tourists in low-seasons results in insufficient income for local businesses and underuse of resources (Butler, 2001; Commons & Page, 2001; Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2000; Pegg et al., 2012; Senbeto & Hon, 2019). The lack of revenue in the low season decreases private investors’ eagerness to contribute to tourism businesses (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2000; Senbeto & Hon, 2019; Vergori, 2012). Potential shareholders’ idleness usually causes insecurity of return on capital. This leads to excessive activity in the high season that does not correspond to the capacity of the business and to a minimal level of utilization in the low season (Butler, 2001; Pegg et al., 2012; Vergori, 2012). Therefore, financial support from the public sector can function as an instrument for enterprises to mitigate drastic changes between seasons (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000). Vergori (2017) argues that there is a tendency of increasing prices during the peak season. Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2000) provide an example of accommodation providers attempting to manage the economic imbalance issue during low seasons. They emphasize that some businesses can afford not to function at all during unpopular months, but a significant part of them has to compensate for monthly costs and therefore keeps the low-capacity activity. The destination's reputation can also be negatively affected by the inactivity of businesses during the low season (Martín Martín et al., 2020). Nevertheless, enterprises that are open all year round use the low season for their benefit and execute all the necessary maintenance and repairs, additionally provide work to their highly

qualified employees (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000; Pegg et al., 2012). The matter of variable employment due to seasonal fluctuations is extremely prominent and is tightly connected to the economic impact of seasonality (Vergori, 2017). However, it is identified and analysed as a distinct type of effect, because it influences not only economic stability, but the surrounding society as well (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000).

4.4.2 Employment

A significant number of researchers argue that seasonality complicates the process of employment and causes various issues with regards to management of the workforce during high and low seasons. Seasonal variations generate plenty of vacant positions in tourism, however the job opportunities are limited due to temporal demand (Hinch & Jackson, 2000). Butler (2001) claims that there are two commonly discussed perspectives on employment instability in the areas susceptible to seasonal fluctuations. The difficulty of seasonal recruitment and workers retention is widely discussed as a negative aspect (Butler, 1998; Butler, 2001; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2000). Frequently, working in tourism during high season can barely provide any opportunity for future promotion and possible career development due to its temporality (Pegg et al., 2012), which is especially pronounced in rural destinations (Commons & Page, 2001). Butler (2001) and Lundtorp, Rassing and Wanhill (1999) provide an example of the high summer season's negative influence on agricultural employment in rural areas, since high demand in both sectors creates the competition. As soon as the level of demand is majorly decreased during low seasons, the level of job security lowers as well (Pegg et al., 2012). However, there is another aspect of seasonal employment that is considered rather positive. Temporal jobs in main seasons can be beneficial for some people who prefer it due to higher salary and lack of long-term commitment (Butler, 2001; Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000; Pegg et al., 2012; Vergori, 2012). Particular groups of society that are occupied with alternative activities out of peak seasons, as for instance students, artists or people who have a stable job in low seasons, can be satisfied with opportunities of seasonal work (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000; Pegg et al., 2012; Vergori, 2012). According to Pegg, Patterson & Gariddo (2012), for some people, the choice of seasonal work can be explained by their special lifestyle, for example winter sports instructors or tour guides (Flognfeldt, 2001). Butler (2001) adds evidence counterweight to the previous statement which is derived from several research projects

where it was demonstrated that tourism seasonal jobs can be quite effectively combined with work in other traditional sectors in the destination, as for example fishing, agriculture and oil industry. Flognfelt (2001) argues that seasonal jobs can be suitable for employees with combined work, students and foreigners who seek to have a short-term position. Martín et al. (2020) support the idea that temporary work in tourism can be beneficial for some members of society, however authors argue that the temporality factor makes it more difficult to provide proper training to staff and it results in poorly qualified personnel. Pegg et al. (2012) assert that a lack of skills is frequently caused by increased demand of employees due to high number of visitors and overutilisation of facilities. As a result, the decline of services' quality level in the destination can occur, which causes dissatisfaction not only from visitors but also from the local community (Pegg et al., 2012).

4.4.3 Socio-cultural effects

Butler (2001) emphasises that the impact on “traditional social patterns in a community” and “cultural activity” is certain. Overcrowding and excessive use of the local facilities, roads and parking places during peak seasons may cause negative and even hateful attitude of local community towards tourism development in the destination (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000; Pegg et al., 2012; Vergori, 2012; Vergori, 2017). According to Díaz-Pérez, García-González, and Fyall (2021), “communities might endure for a short period each year the negative effects of a highly concentrated flow of tourists, such as on traffic congestion, water supply, and waste management”. Moreover, a significant increase in a number of visitors requires more capacity in terms of healthcare, safety, security and sanitary services, which may entail higher taxes for residents (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000; Martín et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is a positive impact of seasonality that is often mentioned in literature. Following Butler (2001), low season is the only time when the local community has a chance to recover from all the negative repercussions of high season.

4.4.4 Ecological effects

The tourism industry in general has a tremendous impact on the environment, especially in the areas with vulnerable ecosystems and small islands (Díaz-Pérez, García-González & Fyall, 2021). Overuse of local resources “generates sewage pollution, wastewater that pollutes rivers, lakes, or hinders marine biological cycles” (Díaz-Pérez et al., 2021). Overcrowding during the high season causes similar consequences for the environment as for other

aspects of local life. Namely, an excessive amount of visitors concentrated in one period entails increased pressure on local nature, wildlife, and environmental resources (Amelung et al., 2007; Butler, 2001; Martín, Aguilera & Moreno, 2014). "Seasonality impacts the environment due to the massive concentration of visitors in confined spaces, which leads to the overexploitation of resources, interference with flora and fauna, and the excessive production of waste, among others" (Martín et al., 2014). Ecological sustainability and conservation are becoming challenging with overuse of water, waste of food, and significant carbon footprint during high seasons. Following one of the research and examples provided in it, "a wedding with 300 attendees would consume as much water as 17,000 people in a normal residential daily life situation" (Caponi, 2022).

The economic benefits from tourism activities in destinations are certainly considered beneficial for the maintenance and development of all aspects of destinations, including the environment. "Tourism has the capacity to generate external benefits from the environment, contributing to environmental protection and conservation" (Díaz-Pérez, García-González & Fyall, 2021). Martín, Aguilera and Moreno (2014) claim that in addition to positive economic impact, tourism also tends to increase the interest in nature conservation.

In terms of low season's impact, with the number of tourists minimized, there is an opportunity for the environment to restore (Butler, 1994; Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000). There is an assumption that areas with seasonal tourism variations might have the advantage of having a pause from tourism flow and as a result having time for nature to recover, while destinations with visitors evenly distributed throughout the year don't have this benefit (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000).

4.5 Policies and solutions

Seasonal variations are often considered an impediment to the sustainable development of tourism due to the occasionally calamitous negative impacts (Butler, 2001). In various destinations, and especially in remote, rural, and coastal areas that are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of seasonality, there is a necessity to tackle the issue by introducing various policies by the private and public sectors (Martín et al., 2020). "The responses to seasonal impacts have generally focused on three main areas – costs and

facilities, employment, and an additional area of environmental protection and safety” (Pegg et al., 2012). Baum and Hagen (1999) structuralize the measures for overcoming seasonality into four categories: events and festivals, market diversification, product diversification and structural and environmental response. Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005) emphasize several approaches to overcoming seasonality from the perspective of balancing supply and demand at various times of the year. Authors propose six major strategies: increase demand outside the peak season, reduce demand in the peak season, redistribute demand, increase supply in the peak season, reduce supply and redistribute or restructure supply. However, it is common that most efforts are made in order to increase demand outside the peak season, including the creation of new seasons and extension of the existing high seasons. Goulding, Baum and Morrison (2005) emphasize that possible responses to seasonality can be divided into those initiated by private sector and public sector (Figure 2). Reaction of both sectors can be motivated by a willing to follow status quo as well (Goulding et al., 2005). For instance, businesses might decide to reduce supply in order to avoid overcrowding in the peak seasons and to be able to limit costs during low seasons (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2000).

Table 2. Supply-Side Responses to Seasonality

Business Responses	Public Sector Policy Measures
<p><i>to boost off-season demand :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>seasonal pricing</i> - <i>market diversification</i> - <i>product diversification</i> - <i>promotional activity</i> - <i>distribution mix</i> - <i>service level differentiation</i> 	<p><i>to boost off-season tourism :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>labour force incentives (eg. training)</i> - <i>staggering academic holidays</i> - <i>business support services such as marketing, financial planning</i> - <i>participation in seasonal extension programmes – (eg. destination events strategy)</i> - <i>fiscal incentives</i> - <i>subsidisation of transport services</i>
<i>Acceptance of seasonality</i>	<i>Acceptance of seasonality</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer reduced capacity - full seasonal closure - temporary seasonal closure (eg. during lowest revenue period) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enviromental regeneration initiative - focus business support on existing seasonal trading pattern - support off-season community initiatives (eg local arts festivals)
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Note. From "Seasonal Trading and Lifestyle Motivation," by Goulding, P. J., Baum, T. G., & Morrison, A. J., 2005, Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 5(2-4), p. 215 (https://doi.org/10.1300/J162v05n02_11)

4.5.1 Increase demand outside the peak season

Vergori (2017) argues that expanding the duration of the high season or in other words, increasing demand during low or shoulder season is a commonly used approach. Butler (2001) provides the following examples of possible effective measures: "trying to lengthen the main season, establishing additional seasons, diversifying markets, using differential pricing and tax incentives on a temporal basis, encouraging the staggering of holidays, encouraging domestic tourism in off-seasons, and providing offseason attractions such as festivals and conferences".

4.5.1.1 Diversification

Diversification of the market and the product is a strategy widely discussed in the literature. According to Vergori (2012), utilizing the same resources but focusing on different target groups is a frequently used approach due to its accessibility. "New or alternative sources of demand for existing products and facilities include, for example, senior citizens, business travellers, incentive and conference market travellers, short break holidaymakers, and affinity groups, as these are most able and willing to travel in the shoulder or off-peak seasons" (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Although this strategy might seem simple, it needs special conditions of destination, proper and efficient policy planning, involving all aspects functioning well in symbiosis (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Vergori, 2012). Baum and Hagen (1999) provide an example of Mediterranean countries that manage to attract more senior tourists for off-season vacation only by lowering their prices, number of available facilities, and attractions considerably. However, the authors claim that this strategy is not likely to increase the number of low-season visitors in the areas highly dependent on climate factors and with obstinate resources. Moreover, the pricing must be adjusted

significantly in the low season. This method is not considered to be a sustainable long-term solution and might as well influence the destination's reputation (Baum & Hagen, 1999). Alternatively, Baum and Hagen (1999) propose to focus on identifying target groups for the low season, analyzing their needs and interests, and promoting destinations accordingly, which might lead to diversification of products as well.

Product diversification is a strategy that usually works in combination with market diversification. Butler (2001) asserts that numerous attempts to attract travellers during the low season have been made focusing only on the adjustment of destinations' qualities, frequently omitting analysis of demands' characteristics. Tourists that are willing to visit a destination during the low season might have different characteristics that are necessary to be examined to create new demanded products (Baum & Hagen, 1999). Tkaczynski et al. (2015) argue that product diversification is an efficient method of attracting new groups of tourists during the low season to climate-dependent destinations, such as ski resorts. There are various alternative services to be provided for tourists that are flexible or independent from institutional constraints and are able to travel in off- or shoulder-season. "Examples include special interest weekends, getaway breaks, health, sport and activity-based holidays, culture and heritage tourism or educational tours" (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

4.5.1.2 Festivals and events

Vergori (2017) describes events and festivals as a part of product and market diversification strategy. However, according to Baum and Hagen (1999), events and festivals are the most common method to overcome seasonal variations and can be considered an individual strategy on a par with product and market diversification. There are numerous examples from various destinations, where organizing festivals and events contributed to the extension of peak season or even the creation of another high season eventually, such as Oktoberfest in Munich (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Although Vergori (2017) argues that events and festivals can influence the level of demand and attract more visitors during the off- or shoulder season, they cannot generate another season alone. Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005) provide an example of research on Swedish festivals that revealed the tendency of increased the length of stay in connection to events. Festivals and events can attract attention to a destination and contribute to an image of a place as full of social

activities and thus promote visiting outside the high season (Baum and Hagen, 1999). Moreover, the execution of events must be made in correspondence with other facilities such as accommodation and various attractions being available for travellers (Baum and Hagen, 1999; Vergori, 2017).

4.5.1.3 Structural and environmental response

Baum and Hagen (1999) differentiate five categories of the structural and environmental response to seasonality:

1. Financial support provided by the public sector
2. Import of employees
3. Adjustments of school and university holiday season
4. Prioritizing full-year employment rather than seasonal employment
5. Utilizing tools created by cooperation of public and private sectors to stimulate full-year employment

The aforementioned measures are characterized by a holistic approach and are based on the collaboration of local businesses and government (Baum and Hagen; 1999).

4.5.2 A dualistic model of seasonality in tourism

Senbeto and Hon (2019) introduce an alternative view on the seasonality issue and claim that the seasonal patterns should be discussed and analyzed from the perspective of tourists' behavior. Authors claim that majorly the literature focusing on tackling and alleviating seasonal variations proposes implementing supply-related adjustments such as "pricing, attractions, and product and/or market diversification" (Senbeto & Hon, 2019). However, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of factors that provoke an increase or decrease in demand in order to utilize well-functioning strategies for mitigating seasonality. The authors propose to follow two theories explaining human behavior. Approach-avoidance theory is based on notions of pleasure and pain and suggests that actions and idleness are motivated by anticipated positive and negative repercussions respectively. The motivation is classified by regulatory focus theory into two groups: promotion- and prevention-based. "A promotion-focused strategy is associated with development, excitement, and seeking pleasure and is mostly led by the ideal self, whereas

a prevention-focused strategy pays attention to safety, protection, and obligations and is directed by the actual self” (Senbeto and Hon, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned theories, researchers emphasize four factors that affect the patterns of behaviour and as a result seasonal fluctuations in tourism. Structural factors are based on tourists' willingness to travel and can be limited by various social and economic characteristics. For instance, families have to take a vacation during the school holidays, while seniors are more flexible and more likely to travel all year round. Fruition-based factors are encouraging tourists to visit destinations in order to reach certain goals. For example, traveling connected with visiting family and friends is not associated with the high or low seasons, but the intention to achieve an objective of meeting people. Another category is unforeseen factors, which are represented by unexpected natural, social, or economic external cataclysms, such as epidemics and crises. These factors are considered to cause visitors unwillingness to travel due to alertness and doubt. Climate-based factors also influence the tourists' behavior and determine the traveling patterns of particular types of visitors. For instance, those who aim to spend a vacation by the sea prefer higher temperatures, while visitors focusing on the cultural aspect of the destination would rather choose a milder climate.

5 Analysis

5.1 Seasonal calendar

Interviewees identified different times of the year as high, low and shoulder seasons for their business. Respondent no. 4, representative of an activity provider company, named January, February and March as high season, April as a shoulder season, November, and December as an off-season, and having some low activity the rest of the year. The other participants of the research mentioned June, July, and August as months with the highest demand and activity. Respondent no. 3 noted that another growing peak season is prominent from middle February to the end of March. “Before the pandemic, we started to build up another high peak season between mid-January and mid-March and it was about to stretch even longer” (Respondent no. 1). Respondents no. 1,3,5 and 8 mentioned another

peak from middle November till the Christmas holidays, however, respondents no. 6 and 9 acknowledged that November and January are considered the quietest time for them. 8 out of 9 companies mentioned May and September as periods of shoulder season, and April and October as the low season with some rare activity.

5.2 Natural and institutional factors

All the respondents mentioned the magnificent nature of Senja island that brings tourists to visit the area. “We call Senja ‘Norway in miniature’ because here you can see all kinds of landscapes and experience absolutely different nature in different parts of the island” (Respondent no.9). Natural factors are relatively significant for local entrepreneurs. Focusing on outside activities can create a severe dependence on the time of the year, climate, and weather. “When it comes to activities, you have to have plan A, plan B, and even plan C” (Respondent no. 1). Respondent no. 2 mentioned that they experienced cancellations because of the bad weather. “Weather conditions are deciding everything for me. It can be a struggle when it’s raining for several weeks in high season” (Respondent no. 4). Respondents no. 1 and 2 mentioned that the Norwegian ‘fellesferie’ or summer holiday typically increases domestic tourism during this time. “Last year we had a high season only for four weeks when Norwegian tourists were traveling. It was difficult to attract more international tourists, people were still scared because of a pandemic” (Respondent no. 1). Respondent no. 9 mentioned that September, when the demand starts to decrease, is usually booked mostly by German tourists, as soon as in some parts of Germany summer holidays stretch to September. Summer holidays are also helping to attract seasonal employees, for example, students.

5.3 Spatial aspect

Several respondents acknowledged their advantageous location on the island of Senja. “Our business plan strategy was based on location because we knew it’s a hotspot of Senja and a bucket list place for tourists. South of Senja has much fewer visitors because people have to decide to come there” (Respondent no. 1). The remoteness was also mentioned by several as a challenge. “We are close to popular attractions on Senja, it’s an advantage of course, but we are still remote. We have food deliveries only twice per week. When demand is high and something wrong happens with delivery, you have to wait till the next one” (Respondent no. 2). However, remoteness is also considered an authentic characteristic and

experience component of visiting Senja. “When you are an hour away from the city, you have to adapt your lifestyle to these circumstances. That’s why we are working on facilitating our guests with everything that they need, but at the same time explain to them that you have to slow down and get in rhythm with nature. We still have TVs in the rooms, but I am against it. You don’t need a TV when this magical nature surrounds you” (Respondent no.3). Respondent no. 4 mentioned that their business is not affected by location on Senja or remoteness. Respondent no. 5 emphasized the importance of being located close to the city due to being able to keep activity high enough based on the local market. “We are further from all transport connections, and it makes things difficult” (Respondent no. 6). Respondent no. 7 was not quite concerned about their location on the island, but as already mentioned, expressed satisfaction with their close position to the speed boat terminal. “Of course, remoteness doesn’t help. The more remote you are, the more seasonality you would experience. The difference between the north and the south is obvious only in high season when it is much more crowded in the north. But the low season is almost the same there” (Respondent no. 8). Respondent no. 9 expressed their frustration due to remoteness and therefore “difficult access for tourists and suppliers”.

5.4 Economic impact

The unbalanced revenue distribution throughout the year was mentioned by all the respondents as the most distressing consequence of seasonal fluctuations. Research participants noted that the challenge of generating more income during low visitation months has been relevant before and especially after the start of the pandemic. “We still have fixed costs to pay regardless of the season” (Respondent no.3). Respondent no. 5 mentioned that the income level is lower during the off-season, but there is still a lot of activity initiated by local customers all year round. Respondents no. 2, 8, and 9 indicated the importance of other industries’ activities in the area, creating a lot of full-year jobs, and consequently, new clients for local businesses. Respondent no. 2 mentions the positive economic effect of the local fishing industry: “They are coming here for lunch every day”. The same effect is evident for respondent no. 9 whose company is serving meals to local construction workers. Accommodation providers also temporarily benefit from local industrial activities: “business comes from a large construction project in the area, but we can’t fully rely on it” (Respondent no. 8). None of the interviewees mentioned the necessity

to completely shut down the business due to seasonal variations but aiming to minimize variable costs during the low season is common. Frequently, this goal is reflected in lowering salary and administrative costs by keeping a minimal number of employees. For instance, the company represented by respondent no. 8 must limit opening hours during the season of lowest demand to avoid unnecessary staff costs. Respondent no.1 mentioned that the company had to close for one summer season completely due to the pandemic restrictions. Respondents no. 3 and 9 acknowledged the convenience of low season in terms of executing all necessary maintenance and reparations.

5.5 Employment

Seasonal variations cause several challenges for local entrepreneurs in terms of employment. Most of the respondents expressed their frustration regarding this issue. Respondents no. 4,6 and 7 mentioned that they are not experiencing any problems with employment due to the absence of the necessity to hire seasonal workers. "I am managing everything by myself, it can be difficult sometimes, but it works for me" (Respondent no. 4). Respondent no. 7 mentioned that has one local part-time employee for regular help during the busiest time during the summer season, but the rest of the time there is no problem with managing the work process alone. There are several challenges that the other 6 interviewees pointed out in terms of hiring and retaining employees. The fluctuations of demand between low, shoulder, and peak seasons on Senja primarily induces difficulties in finding qualified personnel for the high seasons and retaining permanent workers for future seasons. "It can be very frustrating to hire extra staff for the summer, train them and then watch them disappear" (Respondent no. 3). Moreover, respondent no. 8 mentioned the challenge of hiring locals due to the average low education level in the area and expressed their disappointment with the inability to attract educated young people to work on Senja. They suggested that the island and the region would benefit enormously from establishing a higher education institution in the area. "To provide a good service you should have some local knowledge and be able to give advice to tourists" (Respondent no.1). Respondents no. 8 and 9 expressed disappointment regarding attempting to have enough work for employees in the low season to keep them permanently hired, while respondent nr. 5 mentioned the necessity to pay compensation for permanent employees who happened to not have enough work. "It's difficult to find young hard-working people here, but it's good

that locals are willing to work in high season when they have a summer vacation at their permanent job” (Respondent no. 2). Additionally respondent no. 3 mentioned the benefit of hiring students in summertime, and being fortunate with rehiring them for several seasons. Respondent no. 5 recognised the difficulty of hiring committed young people living in local areas. “It’s common for locals to have several jobs here. Also, pensionists often decide to do some seasonal work” (Respondent no. 8). Respondent no. 1 conveyed the complications in the employment situation caused by the pandemic, in particular the inability to hire seasonal employees from abroad due to national restrictions. “Usually, we were lucky to have some people from different places coming to work for two or three summers, but it was not possible for many of them to enter Norway when covid restrictions were on”. Respondent no. 2 emphasized that they are managing every part of the work by themselves outside the peak seasons. Some processes could be automatized and don’t require a full-time employee, for instance, respondent no. 1 mentioned self-check-ins for visitors during low season, especially during the pandemic, however it creates another challenge of keeping the service quality level the same.

5.6 Social impact

General opinion among interviewees on the socio-cultural effect of seasonal tourism in Senja is that the industry is beneficial for the area. “Local people make half of your journey. Usually, people here are very helpful and nice to every tourist. In general, they are positive about tourism development” (Respondent no. 4). However, there is a certain level of frustration expressed by local communities that participants of this research also indicated. “Not all local people are happy with the situation. Many are scared by the Lofoten overcrowding experience and are saying that Senja is overcrowded as well, but it isn’t. There are less than 400 beds available here and it’s full only 4 to 6 weeks a year. Some people are not happy at all about tourists parking beside private entrances, poor garbage handling, and toilet issues. Officials are usually not as quick as tourism development, so by the time they make some decision about improving the situation, locals’ resentment already exists” (Respondent no. 1). Respondent no. 9 also mentioned a high number of campers who are parking in areas that are not intended for it and it causes some dissatisfaction among the local population.

5.7 Infrastructure and transport

Major infrastructure issues named by all interviewees are poor quality roads, lack of public parking and toilets, and poor waste management. “There are not enough toilets and all of them are closed in wintertime. So, people come here and use the toilet without even buying a coffee, but I have to pay for the water, electricity and toilet paper” (Respondent no. 2). “The problem is that they are trying to make public toilets so fancy, but it’s expensive and takes time” (Respondent no. 8). Additionally, respondent no. 7 was also concerned about no available toilets and poor roads maintenance in winter, that usually causes car accidents. The lack of public transport is an issue that was emphasized by every participant of this research. “There are no airport buses, it’s very difficult to rent a car in Finnsnes or Bardufoss, very little amount of public bus routes are available, and in winter ferries and speed boats are much less available” (Respondent no. 6) Simultaneously, several ferry and boat connections were mentioned as a tool stimulating visitors’ increase. “A ferry from Brensholmen to Botnhamn brings many customers” (Respondent no. 2). “It’s working great with speed boat connection to Tromsø and Harstad” (Respondent no. 5). “I keep telling my marketing team to advertise speed boats not only as a transport but also as an activity. It is like taking a sightseeing tour” (Respondent no. 3). Respondent no. 3 also mentioned that it’s important to stretch the high season and create an additional demand for ferry from Gryllefjord to Andenes: “we told the municipality that it has to be open in September, but we should be prepared to wait before we see results. We are working on marketing strategy two years in advance, and it is always a challenge to make politicians understand that decisions like this have to be made in advance as well”. Other interviewee acknowledged the benefit of speed boat connecting Harstad and south of Senja but added that “there was a plan to upgrade Harstad speed boat to ferry, but I don’t think it’s a good idea. With the ferry we get not only positive but all the negative effects of tourism” (Respondent no. 7).

5.8 Low season adaptation and modification

Low season is a challenge for all local businesses. “You have to bring people in winter, in summer they come by themselves” (Respondent no. 9). During the low season significant part of companies are focusing on alternative activities or products. “During winter there is a higher demand for renting equipment and booking guided tours, so that’s what we offer more in the low season. In summer people don’t need guidance while hiking and camping,

they know how to do it without any help, so it's difficult to sell guided trips. Our goal is also to find the right guests for the product that we offer" (Respondent no. 1). For respondent no. 4, summer season is a low activity season, thus they are focusing on alternative types of activities, which include guided tours. However, the interviewee mentioned that it is challenging to find enough customers to visit in low season. Respondent no.3 also mentioned higher concentration on marketing and providing guided winter activities in unpopular months. "We are also working on attracting more MICE-tourists (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) by hosting various events in shoulder or low seasons. We also focus on advertising packages, create new products, and collaborate with local winter activity providers" (Respondent no.3). Respondent no. 5 did not mention any modifications or actions taken with regards to the low season except focusing on the local market. "Locals have been very supportive in low season and there are always people from the coming boats who need food" - mentioned respondent no. 2, that has a fishing industrial area in proximity to the company location. Respondents no. 6 and 7 did not acknowledge any changes in their normal activity in the low season. However, respondent no. 7 mentioned that they would like to have more visitors not only in summer: "Tourism is an all-year-round activity, but the municipality and local entrepreneurs think that it is only for the summer". Diversification of products is a common strategy for local businesses. "We use wintertime for administration and mainly planning the peak season. We focus also on selling imported goods and making our own production of food and drinks" (Respondent no. 8). Respondent no. 9 mentioned attempting to focus on longer rentals during the low season by collaborating with other companies and offering accommodation to temporary employees in surrounding industrial projects.

6 Discussion

6.1 Common tendencies

It is evident from research participants' answers that enterprises located on the north and providing full packages of service to tourists were having a benefit of an additional growing season in springtime which was however disrupted by COVID-19 pandemic. Entrepreneurs on the south of Senja did not report any growth in spring before or after quarantine times. Another significant difference is reflected in food and beverage focused businesses having

another peak season in November and December. This can be explained by hosting and providing catering of Christmas parties for organisations, companies etc.

Global COVID-19 pandemic tremendously influenced tourism activity on the island.

According to Senbeto and Hon (2019), it is a part of unforeseen factors that cause fear and anxiety among travellers and as a result decrease significantly the flow of tourists. While all private companies were getting prepared for the summer season, the first lockdown in Norway happened. This caused an unexpected chain of economic losses for all respondents. Despite the fact that there are currently no active national restrictions in Norway, the tourism industry is still not on the same level as it was before, and it is recognised by all interviewees.

The natural factors are playing a significant role for all tourism-based businesses but have a more positive impact on the companies located in the North. The most advertised areas around the Scenic Route, along with the most famous hikes including Segla, attract a major part of visitors in high season, and benefit all entrepreneurs located around. Research participants recognise the less favourable position of companies located in the south. Summer holiday is the most common institutional factor influencing the number of visitors on Senja.

Another important type of tourism that was briefly noted by some of the respondents is northern lights tourism. It is recognised by interviewees as an activity with growing popularity, however it is evidently not a 'reason to go' for travellers yet. Many respondents noted that it should be properly promoted and used as a part of marketing strategy in order to alleviate seasonality's level.

There is a tremendous importance of other industries creating jobs and bringing temporary workers to the area as potential customers for some local businesses. This brings additional profit to entrepreneurs and can be extremely useful during low tourism season. However, some businesses have to adapt and reduce their capacity in accordance with demands' level. Seasonality causes a lot of disbalance in terms of employment and the issue of not being able to retain high-qualified workers seems permanent for all the respondents, who recruit seasonal employees.

All the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the status of infrastructure. Many emphasized that this issue demands more involvement from the public sector and tight collaboration with private sector. As it is evident from literature, lack of facilities can bring a lot of disappointment among the local community and visitors as well. Ecological consequences are also highly possible because of heavy use of nature and for instance, absence of proper waste management on Senja in the summer season. The lack of public transport is recognised by all respondents as one of the major weaknesses for keeping high standard during high season and making other, not so promoted areas on Senja easily accessible. The profit generated by short-term transit visitors is distributed mostly among entrepreneurs in the north of Senja, due to the ferry connection between the north of the island and Lofoten. This feature creates specific conditions for businesses depending on their location on the island. According to the research by Mimir (2020), poor infrastructure in the region creates additional challenges for businesses in remote areas of Senja, especially in the winter season.

Therefore, a lot of Senja entrepreneurs focused on tourism are compelled to adjust in the low season and find solutions to stay economically stable. All the research participants mentioned the willingness to expend high season or attract more interest during low season. The most utilized measures are product and market diversification. Several respondents mentioned that they are focusing on certain target groups and building communication with them. Organising or hosting events was mentioned only by one respondent.

6.2 Discrepancies

Several discrepancies were recognised in the analysis of interviews. Some respondents mentioned that strong collaboration between local companies is a significant advantage for future sustainable tourism development including mitigating seasonality in the area. However, there is a disagreement in terms of it among the interviewees. Three research participants recognised the lack of cooperation and mentioned its negative effect on the tourism industry on Senja. It's important to mention that all representatives of companies located in the north were quite positive about status of companies' collaborations.

Another aspect that was evident from interviews is the eagerness of companies that hire seasonal workers to be more active in expanding the peak seasons or creating new growth outside the high season. The focus on new products, new target groups and alternative activities to stimulate the level of tourists' interest is more evident among these companies. Entrepreneurs that do not have seasonal employees expressed their willingness to change the situation but did not provide any information on their actions towards the change. These companies seem more reluctant about creating new demand. For instance, in one of the interviews, the respondent expressed their resistance to open the ferry connection from the city to south Senja, although it would attract more visitors to a relatively unpopular area.

7 Conclusion

The following study focused on tourism seasonal variations on the island of Senja and adaptation of local businesses to low activity in off-season. The qualitative research based on interviews of local entrepreneurs was executed and analysed. The study revealed similarities and differences between seasonality causes and impacts on various enterprises depending on their location and field of activity. The main objective of the research was to identify how local businesses focused on tourism industry are adapting to low seasons, and what methods they utilize to maintain economic stability.

According to data received from the interviewees, the attitude towards seasonal fluctuations is commonly negative, however the level of willingness to decrease it by taking actions is not the same. The location on the island and necessity to have seasonal employees influence the level of motivation to act. This difference is reflected in the level of activeness during low seasons and either accepting status quo or attempting to diversify product and market.

Additionally, the research covered theoretical background of seasonality in tourism, including causes, effects, and policy measures of tackling seasonal fluctuations. The context of Senja island and its exposure to seasonal variations was discussed and analysed.

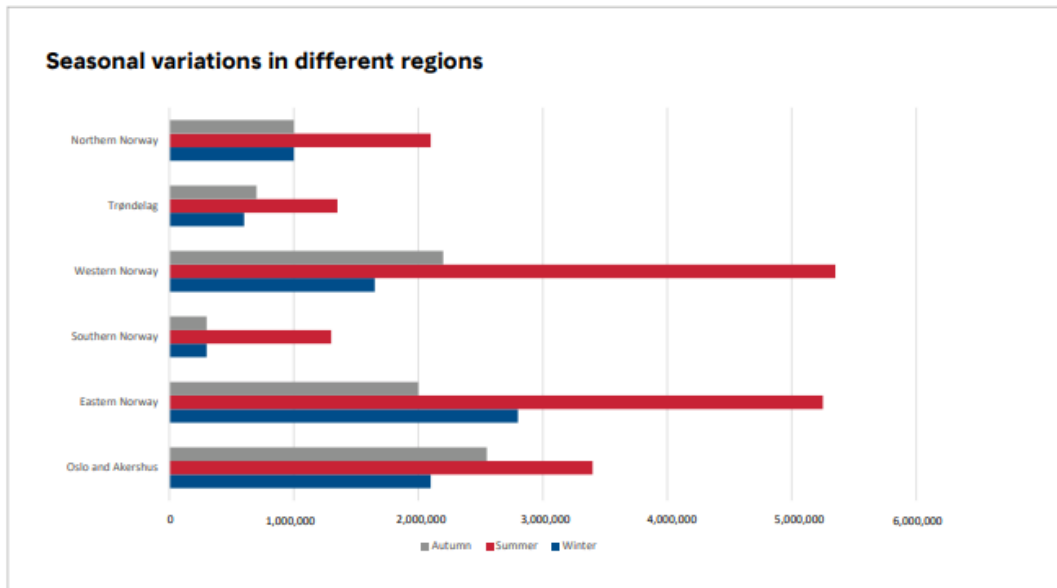
7.1 Recommendations

Although the objective of this study is to show what measures entrepreneurs use to keep their business stable in circumstances of low and off-season, it reveals a lot of additional

details that can assist in decreasing the tourism seasonality level on Senja. There is a necessity for local businesses to cooperate more, create new offers together and assist to each other for future positive changes. Communication and collaboration of the north and the south might have a positive influence on development of tourism on the whole island and not exclusively the north. It is also important to focus more on the marketing of winter season activities, since there is a significant potential in development of winter tourism, for example skiing and northern lights tourism. Another essential issue that must be resolved is infrastructure challenges. By following 'Sustainable visitor management in Mid-Troms' Regional Plan (2019) a lot of improvements can be made to increase tourists' satisfaction level with local facilities and open more possibilities for winter tourism. These changes will also have a positive impact on local community's attitude towards tourism development, thus stimulate switching to sustainability.

Tables and Figures

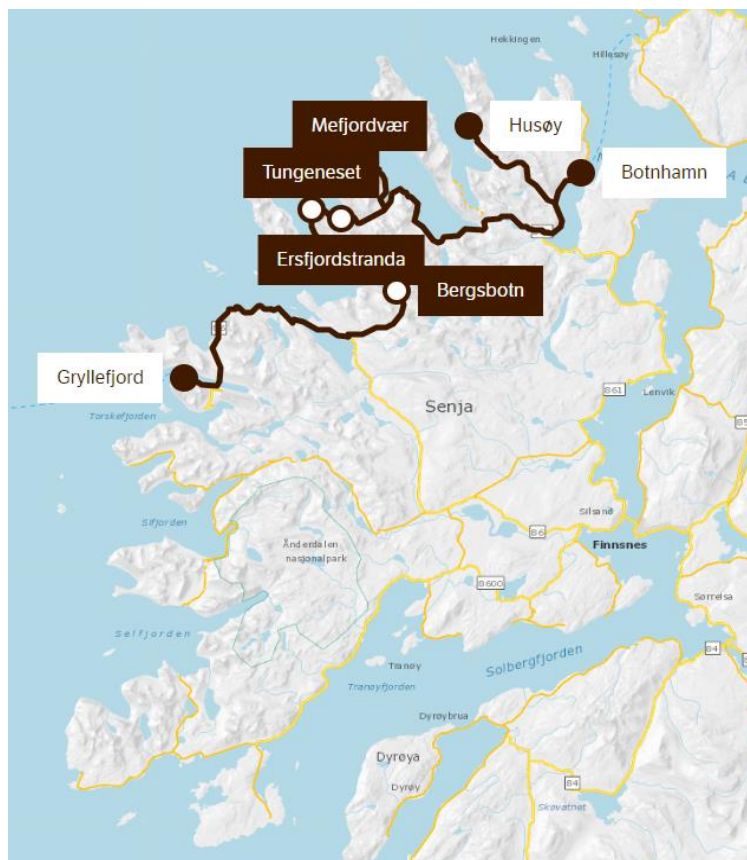
Figure 5. Four-monthly distribution of commercial overnight stays and cabin rental nights per region



Note. Innovation Norway, National Tourism Strategy 2030

https://assets.simpleviewcms.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/norway/Nasjonale_Reiselivsstrategi_original_ny_en_cbbfb4a4-b34a-41d4-86cc-f66af936979d.pdf

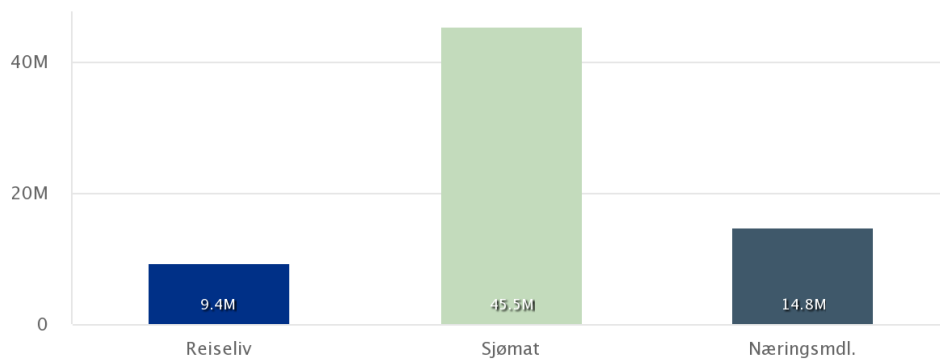
Figure 6. Scenic Route of Senja



Note. Scenic Route Senja. Nasjonale turistveger – Norwegian Scenic Routes

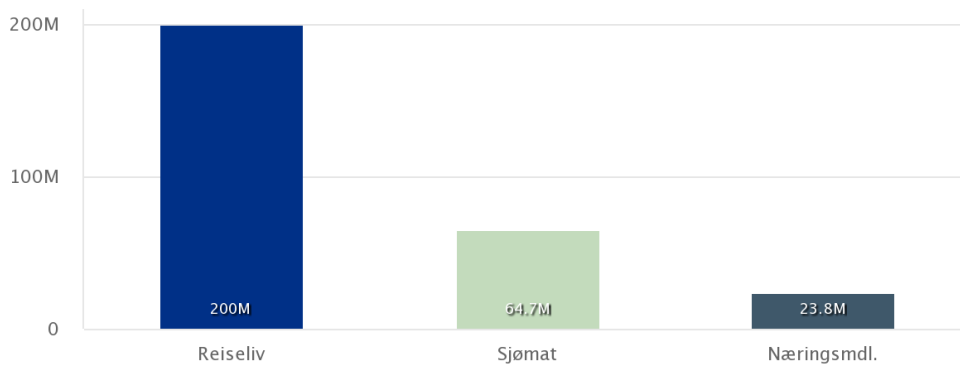
<https://www.nasjonale turistveger.no/en/routes/senja/>

Figure 7. Senja Municipality. Municipal income from personal income tax from employees within tourism, seafood industry, food industry



Note. Habberstad, M. & Knudsen-Dabbadie, T. (2019). Tall og fakta om: Skatteinntekter fra reiselivet. NHO Reiseliv. <https://www.nhoreiseliv.no/tall-og-fakta/tall-og-fakta-om-norsk-reiseliv/#skatteinntekter>

Figure 8. Tromsø Municipality. Municipal income from personal income tax from employees within tourism, seafood industry, food industry



Note. Habberstad, M. & Knudsen-Dabbadie, T. (2019). Tall og fakta om: Skatteinntekter fra reiselivet. NHO Reiseliv. <https://www.nhoreiseliv.no/tall-og-fakta/tall-og-fakta-om-norsk-reiseliv/#skatteinntekter>

Table 1. List of respondents

Respondent #	Type of activity	Location on Senja	Seasonal employees
1	Accommodation / Food & Beverage	North	Yes
2	Food & Beverage	North	Yes
3	Accommodation / Food & Beverage / Activities	North	Yes

4	Activities	East	No
5	Food & Beverage	East	Yes
6	Accommodation / Activities	South	No
7	Accommodation / Activities	South	No
8	Food & Beverage	South	Yes
9	Accommodation / Activities	South	Yes

Table 2. Supply-Side Responses to Seasonality

Business Responses	Public Sector Policy Measures
<p><i>to boost off-season demand :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seasonal pricing - market diversification - product diversification - promotional activity - distribution mix - service level differentiation 	<p><i>to boost off-season tourism :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - labour force incentives (eg. training) - staggering academic holidays - business support services such as marketing, financial planning - participation in seasonal extension programmes – (eg. destination events strategy) - fiscal incentives - subsidisation of transport services
<p><i>Acceptance of seasonality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer reduced capacity - full seasonal closure - temporary seasonal closure (eg. during lowest revenue period) 	<p><i>Acceptance of seasonality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - environmental regeneration initiative - focus business support on existing seasonal trading pattern - support off-season community initiatives (eg local arts festivals)

Note. From "Seasonal Trading and Lifestyle Motivation," by Goulding, P. J., Baum, T. G., & Morrison, A. J., 2005, *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 5(2-4), p. 215 (https://doi.org/10.1300/J162v05n02_11)

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