

Tourism Dynamics and Economic Growth in Norway: A Dual-Perspective Survey Analysis

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Abstract

The Travel & Tourism sector is a significant component of the global economy, contributing substantially to GDP and employment. Norway, known for its natural beauty relies heavily on tourism as an economic pillar. This paper evaluates the economic contributions of tourism to the Norwegian economy, explores tourist spending behaviors, and assesses the perceptions of residents on tourism's impact. The study provides insights that can guide sustainable policy-making and development in the tourism sector.

Keywords

Norway, Tourism, Economics, Sustainable Policy-Making

1. Introduction

In 2023, the Travel & Tourism sector composed 9.1% of the global GDP and 313 million jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024) (NHO Reiseliv, n.d.). From food costs to lodging fees, the travel and tourism industry provides a plethora of opportunities to stimulate economies, generate revenue, and create jobs. For nations that are reliant on their terrestrial landscapes and natural beauty, tourism is a key pillar of their economy. Norway, the country home to most fjords in the world, generated 541.5 billion Norwegian kroner in 2022 from the tourism industry alone (López, 2024). Cities and attractions such as Oslo, Bergen, Geirangerfjord, and Tromsø are among the most popular places for tourists to visit (VisitNorway, 2024). Due to the variety of backgrounds tourists come from, the definition of tourism may be ambiguous. Tourists are most often defined as people who travel to an area because of vacations, as well as people who travel to an area because of work, etc. (Lundberg, Krishnamoorthy, & Stavenga, 1998). Note that this definition of a tourist is activity-based and purpose-driven. Despite the tourism indus-

try's clear economic benefits, the tourists' overall impact is multifaceted. Although tourism does improve infrastructure and the circular flow of money in an economy, the increased population of foreigners could raise living costs. From 16 cities (Mexico City, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Brussels, Lisbon, Dubai, Lagos, Amsterdam, Berlin, Mumbai, Jakarta, Shanghai, Hong Kong SAR, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore) that have a higher share of travel and tourism revenue than GDP, a 1% increase in overnight stays is associated with 0.03% increase in rental prices (*Economist Impact*, 2023). Understanding the holistic impact of tourism is key to efficient policy-making and sustainable development. The objectives of this study are to (1) evaluate the economic contributions of tourism in Norway, (2) understand tourist spending behaviors and satisfaction in Norway, and (3) gauge Norwegian residents' perceptions of tourism's impact. This study aims to holistically analyze the economic impact of tourists by considering both the tourists themselves and the Norwegian residents who are affected by their presence.

With the results of this study, local governments, tourism boards, and businesses could learn more about the benefits and challenges associated with tourism. Insights from this research can help develop and modify initiatives to maximize the positive impacts of tourism while mitigating its negative consequences. The scope of this study encompasses major Norwegian attractions over the past five years, with a focus on both economic indicators and quantitative and qualitative perceptions from key stakeholders.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study aims to be holistic in its data collection approach, considering both qualitative and quantitative data. The primary research questions are as follows:

- 1) To what extent does tourism impact the Norwegian economy?
- 2) What are the spending patterns among tourists, and how satisfied are they?
- 3) How do Norwegian residents perceive the impact of tourism?

2.2. Data Collection, Limitations, and Processing

Quantitative survey responses were analyzed using percentages and distributions. Qualitative data were examined for recurring themes and patterns. Efforts were made to address potential biases through systematic sampling and pilot testing. Survey questions were asked to every tenth tourist the author encountered and every tenth resident the author encountered. Samples were sourced in an in-person interview format where the author encountered tourists and residents at hiking trails, restaurants, visitor's centers, and camping sites near the tourist hotspots:

Geirangerfjord, Tromsø, Bergen, and Oslo. The nationalities of the tourists were not collected for anonymity purposes; however, Germany, the United States, Sweden, Netherlands, and Denmark represent the top 5 nationalities for overnight

tourism in Norway as of 2023 (Statista, 2023). These interview samples were collected from July 17th, 2024 to July 29th, 2024, and fifty American tourists who previously visited Norway from June to August were also given the tourist survey in March of 2025 to complete; therefore, the data is only representative of summer tourism in Norway. Seasonal variability may alter tourist spending, length of stay, activities that tourists perform, job dynamics, and the frequency of local interaction with tourists. In total, 100 tourists and 50 local residents were surveyed. Although the sample set is limited by its size, it is diverse and representative of the Norwegian tourist spots as 12 samples for both tourists and residents each were collected from Geirangerfjord, 12 samples for both tourists and residents were collected from Tromsø, 13 samples for both tourists and residents were collected from Bergen, 13 samples for both tourists and residents were collected from Oslo, and 50 samples were collected from American tourists who visited all of these key destinations. Interactions between tourists and locals were defined as a conversation of 1 or more minutes. No attempt was made to gauge the quality of these interactions as the quality of a local-to-tourist interaction would be reflected in quantitative question 2 (Positive interactions would result in more 'strongly agree' responses that tourism is better for the economy and vice versa) and qualitative question 1, where the locals could discuss anything about their experiences with tourism.

Surveys were designed for primary data collection to address these questions. Pilot testing was conducted to refine the survey questions, optimizing clarity and relevance.

3. Results

Table 1. Tourist spending during stay in Norway. (Tourist spending includes all expenses that a tourist incurred while present in Norway.)

Spending Amount (\$)	# of Tourists
100 - 200	7
200 - 500	47
500 - 1000	29
1000+	17

Table 2. Frequency of residents' interactions with Tourists. (Each interaction was defined as a 60-second or longer conversation with a tourist.)

Interaction Frequency	# of Residents
Daily	22
Weekly	12
Monthly	8
Rarely	5
Never	3

Table 3. Residents' opinion on whether tourism is positive for the economy. (Perceptions of tourism's economic impact on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to agree.)

Resident Perception	# of Residents
Strongly Agree	7
Agree	21
Neutral	18
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	1

Table 4. Residents' perceptions on whether there has been an increase in job opportunities due to tourism. (Resident perceptions may not accurately reflect employment statistics.)

Resident Perception	# of Residents
Increased	10
Decreased	6
No Change	9
Not Sure	25

Table 5. Tourists' length of stay in Norway. (One day counts as 24 hours in Norway; hours were rounded to the nearest whole day in tourist responses.)

Recorded Answers (In days)	# of Tourists
3	2
4	9
7	32
12	11
14	14
15	9
17	7
19	3
20	6
23	4
25	3

Table 6. Activities that tourists spent the most money on. (The listed answers were the only answers that tourist answered with on the survey; no "other" category was required.)

Activities	# of Tourists
Hiking	7
Food and Lodging	59
Transportation	25
Fishing	4
Museums and National Parks	5

4. Discussion

As a country renowned for its natural beauty, Norway's tourism industry plays an integral role in its economy. Tourism contributes significantly to the Norwegian economy, accounting for 3.6% of GDP and 6.1% of employment in 2020 (OECD, n.d.). This GDP contribution is reflected in **Table 1**, which shows that 47% of surveyed tourists spend \$200 - \$500 during their stay in Norway (**Table 1**). Although Norway benefits economically from tourism, this potential has not been fully optimized—tourism provides 6.1% of Norway's total jobs, yet 50% of residents have not noticed changes in local job opportunities due to tourism. This discrepancy could be due to the fact that many tourism-related jobs are concentrated in specific urban areas as 84% of Norwegians live in cities (**Trading Economics, 2025**). While employment in the tourism sector is available, many rural Norwegians are unaware of these job opportunities. Promoting jobs in the tourism industry for residents can help mitigate the 4.1% unemployment rate and enhance the tourist experience by having more residents guide tourists (**YCharts, 2024**). Specifically, offering tax benefits to tourist companies that recruit from rural areas and establishing training programs for rural residents is an economical move to drive down the unemployment rate. An evaluation of Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs), government initiatives designed to help people find and maintain employment, in Norway conducted by Thomas Lorentzen and Espen Dahl found that these ALMPs yield positive and significant effects on subsequent employment and earnings, both in the short and long term up to five years later (2005).

When asked, "Do you have any suggestions for improving the tourist experience in Norway?", one tourist responded, "Having more guidance on places to park, sights to see, or camping spots would be great!". Encouraging residents to provide this guidance would have significant economic benefits. Specifically, establishing more information centers throughout Norway and having residents serve at those centers with effective outreach about employment opportunities would be beneficial. With more residents involved in the tourism sector, they could play a more active role in how tourism affects their homeland. Of all the residents surveyed, 44.2% interact with tourists daily (**Table 2**), and 56% either strongly agree or agree that tourism is beneficial for the economy (**Table 3**). This is due to the demographic of the sample set: all of the samples were collected near tourist hotspots where revenue from tourist services supports the lives of local residents; therefore, a majority of residents believe that tourism is beneficial for the economy. However, the other 44% that are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree (**Table 3**) may not be aware of the economic benefits that tourism brings to their region as 50% of residents reported that they were unsure whether there has been an increase in job opportunities (**Table 4**). The percentage regarding resident perception of positive economic benefits could be further increased by improving the satisfaction of residents with tourist behavior. Providing information on what to do or not do when touring Norway could ensure that all stakeholders are satis-

fied, as the residents' homeland is treated respectfully and tourists receive information that will improve the quality of their trip.

One goal that residents have emphasized is sustainability in the tourism sector. When asked, "What are the main challenges or negative impacts of tourism in your community?", 52% of interviewed residents expressed concerns about the sustainability of tourism and preserving the natural beauty of their homeland. Additionally, seven residents focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions when asked, "How could the local government better manage tourism to benefit the community?". Although Norwegian tourism meets sustainability demands at a satisfactory level, a major unresolved problem is the reduction of GHG emissions, primarily caused by the aviation industry and cruise line activities (Fayzullina 2021). Addressing this concern by encouraging carbon offset programs with tax benefits and exploring Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAFs) and Liquefied Natural Gases (LNG) for airlines and cruises, respectively, could reduce the 44% of residents who are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree that tourism is beneficial for the economy.

When analyzing tourist satisfaction, it is essential to consider both the length of stay (LOS) and spending patterns. A longer LOS provides more detailed information about the tourist experience in Norway and spending patterns, allowing for connections to be made between spending and tourist sentiment. In this study, the majority of tourists stayed in Norway for 7 - 15 days, providing them with ample time to experience the country fully (Table 5). Sixty-two percent of these tourists spent the most money on food and accommodations (Table 6), which corresponds to the World Travel and Tourism Council's findings that food and accommodation account for the first and second highest tourist expenditures, respectively (2024). Although tourists spent the most money on food and accommodations, the most complaints were received regarding the transportation situation, in which only 22% of tourists spent the most money (Table 6). Several tourists interviewed, particularly those from the U.S., complained that at certain commercial centers, such as gas stations, they were required to enter a PIN to make a credit card transaction. However, in the U.S., this is not necessary, so these tourists were unaware of their PIN and were unable to purchase fuel at several gas stations they visited. To address this, Norway could explore expanding mobile payment options similar to those in the United States of America, allowing tourists to bypass PIN-related issues by using mobile wallets or tourist-friendly credit card systems. Furthermore, 24% of tourists reported experiencing some form of property theft when asked, "Do you have any suggestions for improving the tourist experience in Norway?". This corresponds with 111,584 reported cases of property theft in the past year (Statistics Norway, 2024). This issue is not unique to Norway—other major tourist destinations have faced similar challenges and successfully implemented preventive measures. For example, in Barcelona, where pickpocketing is notorious, authorities launched the "Beware of Pickpockets" campaign, which combined several strategies to curb theft. The initiative included placing highly

visible warning signs in multiple languages at high-risk locations such as metro stations, major tourist attractions, and crowded markets. Police presence was also increased in theft-prone areas, with officers patrolling in both uniform and plain-clothes to deter criminals. Additionally, an official mobile app, “My112,” was introduced, allowing tourists to report thefts and suspicious activity instantly while receiving real-time alerts about high-risk zones. Norway could adopt similar measures to improve tourist safety. For instance, Oslo’s central train station and Bergen’s popular Bryggen Wharf—both high-traffic tourist areas—could benefit from clear signage warning tourists about potential theft hotspots. Furthermore, an awareness campaign, in collaboration with local businesses and hotels, could educate tourists on common scams and preventive measures, such as using anti-theft backpacks and avoiding distracted behavior in crowded areas. Hotels and hostels could also play a role by providing secure storage options and distributing brochures with safety tips. Norway could also explore the use of a mobile reporting system, similar to Barcelona’s “My112,” allowing tourists to report lost or stolen property quickly while providing law enforcement with real-time data to target high-theft areas.

5. Conclusion

Although Norway’s tourism sector plays a pivotal economic and social role, contributing significantly to GDP and employment, its potential in these areas has not been fully optimized. Environmental concerns about GHG emissions from tourism persist among Norwegian residents, tourists face crime and transaction difficulties, and many Norwegian residents are unaware of the employment opportunities available to them. Nonetheless, the emphasis that Norway places on tourism cannot be overlooked, with initiatives such as Co2rism and the National Tourism Strategy. Addressing the specific concerns mentioned would help improve the tourism experience for all stakeholders and position Norway at the forefront of the global tourism industry.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

A.1. Tourist Survey

The tourist survey was designed to gauge tourist satisfaction, spending habits, and the recreational activities they engage in. It included both quantitative and qualitative questions, with tourists responding to multiple-choice and open-ended items:

A.1.1. Quantitative Questions

1) How much did you spend on accommodation during your stay (USD)?

- <\$50
- \$50 - \$100
- \$100 - \$200
- >\$200

2) How many days are you staying in Norway?

3) Which activities did you spend the most money on?

- Sightseeing
- Dining
- Shopping
- Outdoor Activities
- Other:

A.1.2. Qualitative Questions

1) What did you enjoy most about your visit to Norway?

2) Do you have any suggestions for improving the tourist experience in Norway?

A.2. Local Resident Survey

The local resident survey aimed to assess the frequency of tourist interactions with local residents and how these residents perceived the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism on their communities:

A.2.1. Quantitative Questions

1) How often do you interact with tourists in your city?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely
- Never

2) Do you believe tourism positively impacts the local economy?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3) Have you noticed changes in local job opportunities due to tourism?

- Increased
- Decreased
- No Change
- Not Sure

A.2.2. Qualitative Questions

1) What are the main challenges or negative impacts of tourism in your community?

2) How could the local government better manage tourism to benefit the community?