



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
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**Destination Management Organizations**  
**And Their Effect on Japanese Tourism to Norrbotten County**

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# Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to study the work of destination management organizations, henceforth called DMOs, in Norrbotten, Sweden's northernmost county. Specifically, the thesis examines how the work of these organizations has affected the Japanese tourism to the region, which has been growing in the last few years.

To accomplish this, previous research on destination development, DMOs, and factors for attracting Japanese tourism to rural regions was turned into a model for DMO success. The model consists of three categories of activities that DMOs should work with: *Marketing*, *Cooperation* and *Development*. The thesis takes on a qualitative approach and the empirical data gathered was based on semi-structured interviews undertaken with representatives from four DMOs that all had an outspoken focus on the Japanese market. The questions concerned these categories, and factors within them aimed at the Japanese market. The empirical data collected in these interviews was complemented with bed night statistics from Statistics Sweden, henceforth known as SCB, and previous studies and reports that were relevant to the research.

The data show that the DMOs engaged in work that fitted into all three of the model's categories. The DMOs worked with jointly marketing their destinations, ensuring cooperation between a range of actors and each other, and supporting the development of their destinations in a variety of ways. For the Japanese market, the DMOs promoted the attributes that, according to theory, are considered attractive by Japanese tourists, worked directly with Japanese actors at the destination and in Japan, maintained contacts with these actors, and aided in the development of the destination for the Japanese market by upgrading human resources for work towards the Japanese market.

The main conclusions of our research are that the DMOs have worked with all the important factors in the model, especially in the categories cooperation and marketing. Work with joint marketing and cooperation between the destinations has arguably helped attract Japanese tours to the region. As such, the DMOs have achieved some success in their work towards the Japanese market.

However, research involving other actors than DMOs, and research that take on a quantitative approach are needed to conclude to what extent the DMOs' work has affected Japanese tourism to the region.

Keywords: Destination management organization, Norrbotten, Destination development, Place marketing, Cooperation, Japanese tourism, Tourism.

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# Introduction

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The travel industry is in constant change. Its evolution has meant that the industry and its actors have to deal with all the more long-distance and niched travel opportunities (Kvarnström & Syssner 2013). Tillväxtverket, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, (2013) discuss how the Swedish industry has seen significant growth since the turn of the millennium, and holds a great deal of untapped potential.

During the last two winters, chartered flights from Narita, the main international airport of Tokyo, to Kiruna, the northernmost city of Sweden in the county of Norrbotten, have been in operation (Karlsson 2014). We believe that this is a great example of a travel opportunity that embodies the numerous changes that has taken place in the industry and utilizes the potential of this destination in a new way, and as such we find it interesting to look at the Japanese market.

These types of travel opportunities have changed the structures of the industry and the roles of the actors within it. These actors are many and varied. Some of them are public actors while others are private and profit actors that range from large to small. There are also non-profit organizations and local heritage societies, who work to promote and look after local culture. The mutual dependence that exists between these actors with an interest in destination development often leads to the formation of Destination Management Organizations, tourism organizations that work with promoting a single destination or region, henceforth called DMOs (Kvarnström & Syssler 2013).

In the last decade, Sweden has seen a growth in the number of DMOs. These organizations have taken on an important role in destination development and are increasingly forming strategies for how the tourism and hospitality industry should advance in their respective regions (ibid).

When doing research into tourism it is important to clarify what perspective one represents and which actors are included. Some research takes the traveling human's perspective, others the businesses that receive them (ibid). In this thesis we will take a DMO perspective on destination development.

## Problem Description

In the past, Norrbotten has had little focus on the tourism industry. In 2000, the local tourism organization was dismantled due to the difficult economic situation that the county faced. Currently, a number of forces such as the County Administration, County Council, and many small tourism companies within the county are working to promote tourism (Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten), and in the forefront of this endeavor are the numerous DMOs, which makes it interesting to research their activities.

The county's popularity amongst Japanese tourists has been increasing the last couple of years, as seen through the large increase in Japanese bed nights. A good example of this is the municipality of Jokkmokk, where the number of bed nights has increased almost fivefold in the last four years (SCB 2014a). In 2012, SAS, a Swedish airline company, started operating

direct flights between Tokyo and Kiruna. These were chartered flights that carried Japanese tourists traveling with Japanese travel agencies, for instance H.I.S. and JTB. The tourists mainly go to Norrbotten to see the aurora borealis, or northern lights. The flights were a success, and as such they continued in the 2013/2014 season as well (Karlsson 2014).

There have been other case studies on DMO cooperation in similar Swedish regions (Eriksson & Svensson 2013), on tourism in the Norrbotten city of Gällivare (Karlsson & Kull 2012), this city's DMO Visit Gällivare Lapland (Anestedt & Westberg 2012), and the tourism industry in the Norrbotten city of Jokkmokk (Brouder 2012). This clearly shows that tourism in Norrbotten, and DMOs in particular, is an area of interest for research. The needs and future of tourism in Norrbotten has been examined by the County Administration a few years ago in a way that makes one wonder if these predictions and issues, which concern both destination development and DMOs among other things, has been realized (Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten 2008).

Competition among tourism destinations puts increased pressures on DMOs to successfully promote their destinations on an international market (Bornhorst. et. al. 2010). There is no denying that the Japanese tourism to Norrbotten has increased, and some DMOs in Norrbotten have for a long time worked to create a demand on the Japanese market for the services and products that are provided in Norrbotten. The fact that Norrbotten has seen such an increase in Japanese tourism could potentially indicate that great feats have been performed by the DMOs in the region. The promotion of Japanese tourism is yet to be explored, especially from an international business point of view. How have the DMOs worked for this development?

# Definitions

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*In this chapter we will define some of the key terms that will be used throughout the thesis: The difference between destination & place, destination development, and place marketing.*

## Destination & Place

The main difference between destination and place is according to Aronsson (2007), that *place* is a more overarching term as it includes all social life and activity in a geographical area, while *destination* is where the actual tourism activities are undertaken. Aronsson (ibid) paints a clear picture by saying that (2007 p. 107):

*“The place is the foundation for the destination”*

Furthermore, Aronsson (ibid) states that place and destination development are in many ways interlinked. The development or marketing of one can affect the other, and vice-versa.

## Destination Development

Böhn & Eriksson (2007) states that places and regions are discovered and developed in many different ways. Destination development is thus a diverse research area that has been studied from many different perspectives: SME, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, networks (Tinsley & Lynch. 2001), eco-tourism strategies (Dehoorne & Tatar 2013) and the roles of entrepreneurs (Mottiar, Ryan & Quinn. 2012) to mention a few.

Haugland et. al. (2011. p.270) defines tourism destination development as:

*“The activities involved in developing an overall strategy for the destination that generates value for the individual actors.”*

The authors discuss how this development needs to include several organizations and take into account the multi-level character of a destination. This type of destination development perspective will be central in this research as it incorporates the role of the DMOs.

Butler (1980) presented a theory that sees destination and its development as a product by a tourism area lifecycle model, which we will get back to. From this perspective it is important to note that destination development is not necessarily positive for a destination as it incorporates *all* changes. Destination development should be seen as, Gibson (2006 p. 65) stated:

*“a process rather than to see it as a steady linear progression. Processes include both increases and decreases and a combination of intended change and unpredictable events”*

## Destination Management Organizations

Holloway (2006) describes tourism organizations as promoting tourism in general. DMOs on the other hand are defined as promoting a certain destination or region. We will use the terms in this manner throughout the thesis. Pike (2004) similarly defines DMOs as sellers of a specific place, and interconnecting different sectors of the tourism industry.



## Place Marketing

According to O'Dell (2002), the constituents of place marketing should include:

- Local history and culture
- Clean environment
- Shopping opportunities
- Nightlife

Aronsson (2007) assesses the combination of calm and hectic life as attractive, and mentions events as another way of place marketing.

Contents aside, most importantly place marketing is about creating and conveying a positive image of a certain place (Aronsson 2007). When marketing it is an “image” that it is projected, this is defined by (Heldt Cassel 2007 p. 149) as:

*“A comprehensive picture of a place that is shown outwards and built up by a number of associations to landscapes, forms of production, culture and traditions that is thought of as typical for the place in question”*

# Research Range

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*In this chapter we will present the purpose of the research, the questions we aim to answer, and how we will limit our research.*

## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of if the DMOs in Norrbotten have affected the increasing Japanese tourism to the region, and how. In order to do this, we need to understand the DMOs work in general to promote their destinations on the international market, and specifically their efforts on the Japanese market, both which have yet to be explored.

## Research Question

The main question of this thesis is:

- How do the DMOs work with Japanese tourism and has their work been successful?

In order to answer this question, we first need to look at the following supporting research question:

- How do the DMOs work for destination development?

## Limitations

Although the tourism area of Lapland stretches across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia we have limited our research to the part that is represented by the Swedish county of Norrbotten. Norrbotten County is the first stop for the Japanese tourists who arrive in the area by the SAS chartered flights and is thus a logical region to look at. There are also a number of practical reasons to choose Norrbotten County:

Firstly, this is motivated by reasons of practicality as our main method of data gathering is personal interviews. This is a time-consuming method that would also be very costly if the interviewees were to be spread out over the entire area of Lapland. We perform this research under a significant time-and-budget constraint.

Secondly, the region we are focusing on holds more than enough DMOs for us to analyze. There are both smaller local ones, and a regional representative that will be included in the research.

Furthermore, this thesis will not include other actors than DMOs nor effects beyond change in tourism. The reason for this is that the focus of our research is on the work and effects DMOs. If we were to include more actors and effects the scope of the thesis would be too broad and the theoretical framework we intend to use inapplicable.

Finally, this thesis takes on the increase of the Japanese market. We will therefore not examine other tourism markets. This is due to several reasons:

- Looking at tourism from more than one country would give us too many variables to be able to explain any change as the internal factors that affect travel will be different for each country, and make it hard to draw conclusions.

- The increase in Japanese tourism is not well studied, giving us an incentive for choosing this particular country.
- We have an interest in this particular subject as we are both students of Japanese and the Japanese society, thus giving us better tools to discuss this particular market.
- The Japanese market is, unlike other growing Asian markets, specifically pointed out as a targeted tourism market by both the region's overarching DMO and by several of the local DMOs.

# Background

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*In this chapter we will offer a short overview of the region that we refer to as “Norrbotten” in this thesis, and the advance of regional tourism promotion in Sweden. Finally, we provide a description of DMOs and their position in tourism promotion.*

## Norrbotten

Syssner (2006) maintains that, in order to study regional processes, one first needs to answer the question - What constitutes a region? Region as a term can be used to define many types of areas, and regions can overlap or even cover each other. At a given point on a Swedish map one can be in a municipality, a county, a county administration, and a European Union leader area. Syssner (2013) suggests that researchers of tourism should clearly define and decide on the what the term “region” means and where it ends, otherwise there will be confusion as to what region is referred to and in what way it is a region.

A common way of defining a region is that it is the decision-making level between state and municipality. This level is represented by the Swedish counties, which are sometimes even called regions. The governance of these regions varies throughout Sweden and is subject to change (Syssner 2013). Currently, Norrbotten County is represented by the County Administration (Norrbottens Läns Landsting 2012). It is the county as a geographically delimited area that is concerned, and this is the region we refer to as “Norrbotten”. For a map, see page 12.

Norrbotten is the northernmost and largest county in Sweden and covers 98,244,8km<sup>2</sup>, almost one quarter of Sweden’s total size. Despite this, only about 2, 5% of Sweden’s population inhabits the county, which had a total population of 249,436 in 2013. The largest cities are Luleå and Piteå with about 75,000 and 41,000 inhabitants respectively. Other major cities in the area include Boden, Kiruna and Gällivare (SCB 2014a).

The region holds 14 municipalities. In alphabetical order, they are: Arjeplog, Arvidsjaur, Boden, Gällivare, Haparanda, Jokkmokk, Kalix, Kiruna, Luleå, Pajala, Piteå, Älvsbyn, Övertorneå and Övertorneå (Kommunförbundet Norrbotten).

The municipalities that we will focus on as destinations in this thesis are: Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Kiruna. These destinations have seen an increase in Japanese bed nights, and unlike the other municipalities, they have an outspoken focus on the Japanese market. We will also focus on the region’s overarching DMO, which is located in Luleå municipality, but works for the benefit of all destinations.

Norrbotten is rich in natural resources and has historically been home to several resource extractive industries. The main examples are forestry, hydroelectric power and the mining for valuable minerals and metals, the most important being iron (Erlandsson 2014). The county is trying to move towards other activities and has named tourism as one of its new main industries (Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten).

Rural, peripheral regions such as Norrbotten face many difficulties when trying to move away from traditional industries and establish a tourism industry (Kassam, 2001; Schmallegger & Carsson 2010). The majority of companies in the region are SMEs with limited resources, as such they struggle to overcome one of the major difficulties peripheral tourism companies' face, which is the lack of global attention and awareness. In order to alleviate this problem the county and EU projects aimed at promoting peripheral and rural areas have been aiding the region with finances and support. One effect of this has been the rise of the many DMOs (Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten), and lately the area has enjoyed increasing growth in tourism (SCB 2014b).

## Regional Tourism Promotion

The discussion on economic growth has historically centered on raw materials and locational advantages – “hard factors” of development such as the resources extracted in Norrbotten. In the 1970s and 1980s, “soft factors” such as entrepreneurship, cooperation, learning and trust – that are essential for tourism - were increasingly acknowledged as beneficial for the economy (Aronsson 2007).

The perception of a region as attractive – exciting, dynamic, and welcoming – was also seen as a soft factor of development. When the Swedish state retired from parts of its earlier regional-political responsibility, the regional representatives were expected to find their own ways for development. Tourism promotion emerged as one possible pathway (Aronsson 2007; Syssner 2013). In 2001 the government proposition *”En politik för tillväxt och livskraft i hela landet”* saw the manifestation of these new politics of regional development, where each region is to care for its own development (Regeringen 2001).

Even though destination development does not rely on formal legislation (Jonsson 2013), tourism fitted well together with the proposition's idea that development would be generated from within the region and with local resources. Tourism is also an industry with many small businesses, which also went well with the new demands for entrepreneurship and business-oriented thinking (Syssner 2013).

## Destination Management Organizations

Discussing Sweden's county tourism organizations and municipal tourism information bureaus from a historical perspective, Bohlin & Elbe (2007) describe how they have moved from private heading, to public activity, and that currently mixed forms of public/private ownership are commonplace. The authors also mention how the Swedish state's historical organization of public tourism organizations has been characterized by instability and sudden change, which has been crippling for some regional and municipal organizations. The current trend is for each region to handle its own tourism promotion activities through organizations of various legal forms called DMOs, which are involved in destinations development and support local businesses.

# Methodology

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*In this chapter we consider the theoretical aspects of business research that influenced this thesis. We will also describe our approach and the methods we used to conduct our research, and consider questions of reliability and validity. Finally, source criticism is undertaken.*

## Epistemology

Epistemological issues relate to what should and should not be called knowledge within a discipline. The view we have had is interpretivism, which is presented by Bryman & Bell (2011) as contrasting the classic, objective view of natural sciences of positivism (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Interpretivism is critical in scientific approaches to research in the social world, and can be said to demand of the researcher to understand the subjective meaning of social actions (Bryman & Bell 2011). As we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of DMOs who operate in business conditions of human interaction and various level of hierarchy, interpretivism is a discipline that represents our views. When conducting the research, it was largely built on our interpretations, which brings with it so called hermeneutical issues (Bryman & Bell 2011).

## Ontology

The nature of social entities and questions related to this are issues of social ontology, and cannot be separated from business research. Constructionism maintains that business entities are built up from the actors' perceptions and actions, and is common in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell 2011) (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). When performing our research we maintained the constructionist view that the DMOs are made up from the actions and values of the people representing them, rather than being independent social entities as in objectivism (Bryman & Bell 2011). Emphasis was thus put on the active involvement of the people in what Bryman & Bell (2011) call the reality construction. Therefore we conducted interviews with the DMOs, rather than just examining data.

## Choice of Method

The research was mainly undertaken with a qualitative method, as it was based on personal interviews. Much like Bryman & Bell (2011), we agree that there are more subtle differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies than that the former stresses measurements and the latter do not, but we can still draw a clear line separating the two with regards to their stance on data collection and analysis.

The two methods are often mixed in business research, although this could result in a debate on whether or not this is possible in relation to epistemological and ontological commitments (ibid). In this thesis we did incorporate quantitative data in the form of bed night statistics. However, these statistics are to be seen rather as a background that sparked interest in the actual research questions that concern DMO operations and their effect on destination development.

Qualitative research is presented by Bryman & Bell (2011) and Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) as inductive – generating theory. In the research we looked at questions of *how* rather

than *if*, in relation to the DMOs work. This means that our data collection helped us answer our questions, rather than testing previously collected data on our case actors. Bryman & Bell (2011) discusses how the relationship between the inductive strategy and qualitative research is not entirely clear as not all qualitative research generates theory. In addition, we used previously generated theory as a background. Using previous theories is rather in line with quantitative approaches using deductive strategies, however, both Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) and Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that perhaps inductive and deductive strategies should be seen as tendencies rather than absolute rules, and that their strict forms are rare or unsuitable in qualitative research. In this thesis we move from deductive stages such as when the research proceeds from theory to empirical analysis, to inductive phases as we incorporate previous research into our analysis. Abduction is commonly offered as a research method when combining the two strategies (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) as in this thesis, using deduction to evaluate hypotheses and induction when qualifying them with empirical data (Staat 1993, Schwandt 2001).

## Choice of Research Area

We became interested in this area of research both from having heard first-hand accounts from Japanese friends expressing their interest in northern Sweden, and having read news articles about the increasing Japanese tourism to the area in the year prior to the start of the thesis course. At the start of the course, we contemplated which actors and what perspective would be most suitable to answer our questions of how this development came to be and how it is facilitated.

Examining the news articles on the topic, we found that our future interviewee from the DMO Kiruna Lappland and representatives of The Embassy of Sweden in Japan was featured in these articles. We started off by talking to a journalist who wrote a recent article on the topic. We then reached out to The Embassy to see if we could take the Japanese perspective on the development. The Embassy appreciated our interest in the topic, but did not have time to provide any extensive assistance as they were planning for the launch of a new Swedish tourism promotional venture called The Swedish Tourism and Culture Center. We proceeded to contact the DMOs in Norrbotten instead, who were very accommodating and welcoming to our research.

We realized that taking the Norrbotten perspective on the tourism development would be beneficial for our study as we would be able to visit the DMOs, and see the region by ourselves. We were at first interested in a broad range of topics relating to the area, including peripheral area development and networking theories. However, as we were working under a limited timeframe and were in contact with several DMOs, we decided to concentrate on the role of DMOs in destination development. This was initially suggested by our tutor, and provided a suitable focus for the study.

## Research Approach

We started the research by identifying a number of keywords that were relevant for the study. As interpretative researchers we did a narrative review of the literature, implementing a wider scope than that of the systematic review (Bryman & Bell 2011). We tried to gain an initial

impression of our topic and as such used our keywords to find a range of articles, theses and books that seemed interesting and relevant for our research. After reading these we looked up further studies from the references. Based on these and the original literature we adapted our keywords and started the process of compiling the most appealing theories. In order to understand how the DMOs work we needed theories that concerned the work and role of DMOs. Since these theories state that DMOs work for destination development we added theories on this area. Furthermore, in order to understand if DMOs work has been successful we included theories on DMO and destination success. Finally, we looked into theories for attracting Japanese tourism in particular, as this would help to answer if the DMOs' work has been successful on this particular market of interest.

After reviewing a substantial amount of literature and choosing relevant theories, we formed interview questions to use for semi-structured personal interviews, which would provide our primary source of data collection. In addition to this we utilized secondary sources of data in the shape of statistics of bed nights that proved the increase in Japanese tourism, and an extensive review of reports and previous case studies conducted in, or near, the region.

## Case Studies

There is a tendency to associate qualitative research with case studies since the method works well for gathering qualitative data (Bryman & Bell 2011). We conducted a case study as it would allow for deeper understanding of the research question (ibid). Since our question concerning DMO work is of the *how*-orientation, Yin (2003) suggests that a case study is an appropriate method. Yin discusses how case studies should be applied to unique or extreme case, which could be considered to be the case for this thesis as the case actors are relatively new and operating in a vast, peripheral area.

Syssner (2013) maintains that that the buildup regions look very different depending on the shape and work of the regional organizations within it. DMOs can include multiple interests and even conflicting ones. This motivated us to incorporate a number of DMOs in our research for a more comprehensive view. Furthermore, we were inspired by the research on a regional DMO conducted by Eriksson & Svensson (2013). For future research, the authors suggested studying several DMOs, and assess the success factors of DMO cooperation. Although we did not take on that particular research question, this case study includes both the regional representative and several municipal counterparts.

## Interviewee Selection

We utilized the method of purposive sampling to select our interviewees. We used this method as we did not seek to sample participants on a random basis. Instead we wanted a sample that was highly relevant to our research question (Bryman & Bell 2011). The first DMO we contacted was Kiruna Lappland, which operates in the place where the chartered flights arrived. They provided us with yearly statistics of Japanese bed nights in Norrbotten, and we then proceeded by contacting the DMOs that had seen substantial growth in bed nights. The DMOs that responded and were interested in our research also proved to be the ones that had an outspoken interest in the Japanese market. We realized that those DMOs were all members



of the overarching regional DMO, Swedish Lapland Tourism, and thus contacted this organization as well, which was willing to participate in our research.

Because the sampling method is not random it did not allow us to generalize about the entire population of DMOs (Bryman & Bell 2011). However, the selection will be beneficial for the research as all participating DMOs will be relevant. When selecting the interviewee from each DMO, we made sure to include participants with extensive knowledge of each area of DMO work that we considered as essential for the purpose of the research. Next is a presentation of the chosen DMOs and the interviewees:

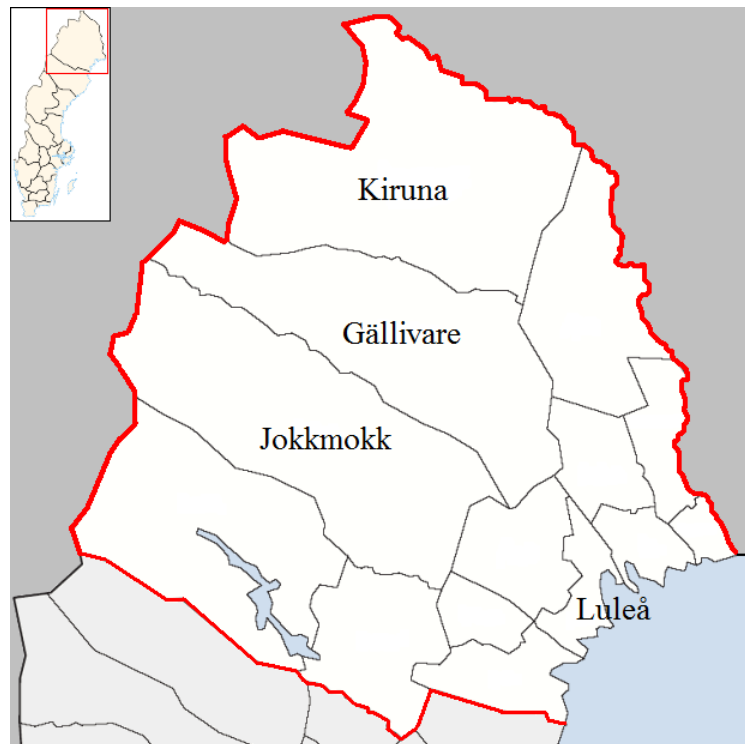


Fig 1. The location of the chosen DMOs in Norrbotten (SCB, no copyright)

**Swedish Lapland Tourism**, henceforth known as SLT, is an economic association and collaboration platform located in Luleå that represents the tourism industry in Norrbotten. Several smaller organizations are members of SLT including the below mentioned DMOs. SLT's mission is to increase the number of visitors to the region by marketing the destinations and experiences within them. "Swedish Lapland" is a brand that is owned by SLT (Swedish Lapland Tourism a).

SLT was chosen due to them being the overarching DMO of the region. We interviewed Erica Mattson, destination development strategist. The interview would allow for insight into both how SLT works for the entire region together with its members, and what kind of work that has been undertaken for destination development in particular. Erica has also been the CEO, Chief Executive Officer, of Kiruna Lapland, which was beneficial as we could gain an understanding of how this specific DMO has worked in the past.

**Destination Jokkmokk AB**, henceforth known as DJ, is a company that is owned jointly by Jokkmokk municipality and just over 50 tourism-entrepreneurs organized in the economic association Destination Jokkmokk. DJ aspires to work closely together with actors throughout

the entire region in the development, packaging, and ensuring the quality of travel experiences in the destination (Destination Jokkmokk).

DJ was chosen as its municipality has seen the largest increase of Japanese bed nights in the region (SCB 2014a). The DMO was established in 2012, shortly after the case study on Jokkmokk’s tourism that had concluded a need for a coordinating actor for the destination. Our interview was with Thomas Brandlöv, CEO. Thomas has been with the DMO since its establishment and could thus give us a comprehensive view of the DMOs activities and its role in the region, as well as in Jokkmokk.

**Visit Gällivare Lapland**, henceforth known as VGL, is an economic association owned by about 50 companies. VGL works with marketing and selling Gällivare as a tourism destination, and is actively promoting the destination in the foreign markets of Japan, northern Norway, and the German-speaking countries. The association also runs the tourism bureau in Gällivare (Visit Gällivare Lapland).

VGL was chosen as the DMO has an outspoken focus on the Japanese market. Our interview was with Saeko Nyberg who is responsible for the Japanese market. She has been working closely with both Japanese tourism actors and Japanese tourists, and could provide extensive information about Japanese tourism issues.

**Kiruna Lapland**, henceforth known as KL, is an economic association functioning as an umbrella organization for most tourism companies, and other actors in Kiruna. The association works with creating awareness of Kiruna by participating in exhibitions and managing media relations. They also work with different European Union-projects together with their members (Kiruna Lapland).

KL was chosen as a case actor since it is the biggest visitor destination for Japanese tourism. Our interview was with Mattias Mannberg who, in addition to working as marketing director for KL, also holds the position of regional coordinator for the Japanese market. Mattias has also worked with promoting Scandinavian tourism in Japan and could provide insights on both marketing and cooperation with Japanese tourism actors.

To summarize, our interviewees and their respective positions were:

<b>Name</b>	<b>DMO</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
Erica Mattsson	SLT	Destination Development Strategist	2014-05-07
Thomas Brandlöv	DJ	Chief Executive Officer	2014-05-07
Saeko Nyberg	VGL	Tourist Center Employee	2014-05-06
Mattias Mannberg	KL	Market Director	2014-05-06

## Data Collection

To gain better understanding about how the chosen actors work, both on their own and together with each other to promote the Japanese tourism to the destination, we chose to conduct semi-structured interviews. We considered that structured interviews might cause us to miss factors that were deemed of key importance by the interviewees that we could have overlooked, as discussed by Bryman & Bell (2011). However, the authors suggest that one needs some kind of structure in order to be able to ensure comparability. We, like Bryman & Bell (ibid) considered the flexibility of the semi-structured interview as the main thing that makes it so attractive. We brought an interview guide with questions that were relevant to our previously studied theories, but were also able to do follow up questions, or allow the interviewee to take the discussion into a new direction.

Targeting international business research in particular, Yeung (1995) argues that personal interviews are far superior to other common methods, such as telephone interviews or surveys. However, due to a delay in our study trip, one participant had to be interviewed by telephone. While this is not optimal, the interview was undertaken in the same fashion as the others in terms of semi-structure and extensive time frame. This interview could also be recorded, one recent advantage in telephone interviews as discussed by Sreejesh et. al. (2014).

At the beginning of the interviews we tried to establish a good contact and comfortable atmosphere by explaining our purpose, ask whether we could record the conversation, and tried to convey our genuine interest in the topics. The prerequisites that Kvale (2007) mentions for properly setting the interview stage were considered naturally; we listened attentively, and showed interest, understanding and respect for the answers. As the interviews were only semi-structured, and we had sufficient time with our interviewees, we enjoyed the opportunity of not rushing the interviews by firing off questions. Rather, as Kvale (2007) suggests as a method, we permitted for a bit of silence after the responses. This allowed the interviewees to reflect upon their answers, and gave them a chance to make additions.

The interviews were conducted with both recording and notes. Bryman & Bell (2011) discusses how this could potentially discern interview objects if they feel uncomfortable with their literal word being preserved. We perceive this as not being as much of a hindrance as it could be in other research, since our interview objects works in tourism promotion and are thus used to comment on their activities. Contrasting this disadvantage, the authors lists a number of advantages such as; being able to examine what people said more thoroughly, and repeatedly, and as such both complement the natural limitation of our memories as well as prevented us from misinterpreting what was said due to personal values and ideas.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and the parts used in the thesis were translated to English to the best of our abilities. In order to make sure to keep what the interviewees stated as close to their original meaning as possible, we first transcribed the recording of each interview in their entirety. This allowed us, as discussed by Kvale (2007), to first and foremost secure the many details that were relevant for our analysis, but also learn a fair deal about our own interviewing style.

## Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data that we have collected we used the method of pattern matching as described by Yin (2009). We found the method suitable for examining whether or not the DMOs' work was successful as stated by our theoretical model. When drawing conclusions from our theoretical framework we saw a pattern of activities that DMOs should work with to be successful. These activities were turned into a model of DMO success that contained three categories, which all had a number of factors within them. This model formed our interview guide. The answers from the interviews were compared with the categories and factors to see if they were coherent.

## Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are both mainly geared towards quantitative research (Bryman & Bell 2011). Reliability and most aspects of validity are mainly concerned with measures and variables and thus not usable for a qualitative research approach. Some authors have proposed other criteria to be used for qualitative research.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) supports this different view – that qualitative research should be evaluated to different criteria than reliability and validity. The criteria contain four aspects:

- Credibility: How believable are the findings?
- Transferability: Do the findings apply to other contexts?
- Dependability: Are the findings likely to apply at other times?
- Confirmability: Has the researcher allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree?

Since the nature of our research that consists of semi-structured interviews is difficult to replicate and confirm by other researchers we have considered Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria when conducting the research and during the formulation of our interview questions. Of special importance was that our interview questions would give us answers that were credible and confirmable. As the interviewees are all working for the DMOs, we had to consider and question how believable the answers were. Also, we made sure to ask non-leading questions that did not incorporate our own theoretical findings, which would allow for our own bias to enter the interview and give us the answers that we "wanted to hear".

## Criticism of Sources

We found that there is a great deal of literature that concerns DMOs and destination development. As such, the selection of literature was made from our research questions, purpose and proposed interview questions.

To secure trustworthiness of the literature, it was to a high degree sourced from the university library's own course literature, as well as from its databases. We also made sure to go back and review the original source mentioned in the literature, in order to avoid misinterpretation on our own part. We also wanted to avoid distortions hailing from multiple citations and thus coloration by several authors' views, a danger discussed by Bryman & Bell (2011). When selecting theories we aimed to use the most recent literature to ensure that our research would

be up to date. However, some older writings were mentioned as essential by recent authors, or where in other ways considered valuable to our research.

The Swedish public body Tillväxtanalys (2012), responsible for political growth analysis and evaluations, recommend Bohlin & Elbe's book *Destinationsutveckling – Ett Svenskt Perspektiv* (2007) for the best internationally published Swedish destination development theories. As such we made sure to include contributions from authors in this compiled volume when doing our literary review.

Williams (2013) bibliography of Japanese tourism discusses how the subject of rural tourism was actively pursued by both western and Japanese researchers in the 1990s. We have made sure to include several of the researchers Williams mentions in this field, however as far as Japanese researchers are concerned, only Yamamoto & Gill (1999) are mentioned as prominent in this field. As such the theories on Japanese tourism in particular takes on a mostly western perspective. We find this acceptable as we take on an overall western perspective in this thesis.

Concerning interviews, we felt it important to promote respondent validation by sending our interpretations of the transcribed interview to the subjects who requested it in order to give them a chance to validate our interpretation. Bryman & Bell (2011) makes a distinction between respondent validation by individuals and organizations, where respondent validation from organizations runs the risk of censorship. However, we considered the risk of censorship was at an acceptable in order to make sure our interpretations were correct.

# Theoretical Framework

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*In this chapter we will put forth the theories concerning the shape of DMOs and their operations. We will also present theories on destination development, what constitutes as success in this field in regards to DMOs, and how destinations can develop in order to attract Japanese tourism.*

## Shape of Destination Management Organizations

The empirical knowledge of what regions and regional organizations are must, according to Syssner (2013), be complemented with theoretical perspectives that can help explain, understand and problematize the efforts of organizations in tourism.

Regarding tourism organizations in general, Pearce (1992 p. 200) stated that:

*'There is no single best type of [tourist] organization nor interorganizational network, rather each country must evolve a system which best reflects local, regional and national conditions'*

Tourism organizations are in a position of influence, not control. DMOs actions goes further than so as it not only inform about the destination, and create interesting but realistic expectations about it, but also plan the tourism industry's next steps. The DMO is to make sure cooperation takes place between actors, and coordinate the involved actors' interests. The DMOs are still rather in a position of influence as it does not produce the destination's products (Bohlin & Elbe 2007). DMOs are as such dependent on its members to be able to work for the development of a destination. This in turn also means that the members have a need of being involved since they are part of the destination (Shockley-Zalabak 2002).

Svensk (1998) claims that the work methods and direction of DMOs varies depending on hierarchy, place conditions and the phase of development that the organization is currently in. There are no two destinations that share the exact same conditions; as such no two DMOs share the exact same work method.

## Role of Destination Management Organizations

Generalizing, Svensk (1998) in the late 1990s suggested that regional and local cooperation of tourism businesses, cooperation that is now commonly led by DMOs, should engage in place image-enhancing tasks such as exhibits and promotion campaigns just like national organizations, but that their coordination tasks differ.

The DMOs main task of responsibility is argued by Elbe et. al. (2009) to be the marketing of their destinations. DMOs often receive a central role in the marketing of a destination since they are created with the aim of promoting tourism and attracting visitors to the region they represent. The work to market regions is often undertaken parallel with other measures, for example courses in eco-tourism or international business development (Syssner 2013).

Drawing further on marketing, Pike (2004) also suggest that the role of DMOs is to enhance the destination image. This should increase the local industry profitability, lessen seasonal

dependency, secure long-term investments and strengthen the competitiveness of the destination.

While marketing is an important DMO responsibility, some researchers suggest it is only a part of the DMOs more comprehensive role of managing destinations and the actors within it. The most important task, according to World Tourism Organization (2007), is monitoring the development and implementation of a mutually agreed upon strategy for tourism promotion. For the strategy to be successful public, private and the community sector needs to work together.

Contributing to satisfying and memorable experiences for visitors, and securing the supply of effective destination governance and development, are DMO roles as discussed by Bornhorst et. al. (2010).

Gartrell (1994) discusses DMOs as responsible for coordinating the various elements of the tourism sector, helping to ensure development of attractions and programs, providing visitor services and drawing attention to the significance of tourism. DMOs should also serve as key liaisons to external organizations such as travel agencies.

## Motives for Destination Management Organizations

Both the destination and tourism product incorporates a vast amount of interests and complicated relationships. According to Elbe (2003), this contributes to the tourism product being one of the most difficult products to handle, as well as mutual dependency between tourism actors. To handle this, destinations can bring actors together to cooperate instead of competing against each other (Pearce 1992).

Another motive for bringing actors together in a DMO is to overcome problems related to the often small size of companies active in the tourism industry. Pearce (1992) tells how the small scale of many businesses creates a need to join forces with others in order to reach targets they could not achieve on their own and to gain economies of scale. By bringing together the region's resources these companies can create a stronger, more unified stance and utilize more effective marketing campaigns.

Destination marketing however, is becoming more complex as tourists regard their stays as both educational and recreational. Buhalis (2000) argues that the upgrading of human resources and cooperation between competing and complementary destinations will enable regions to adapt to new demand requirements that this change brings with it.

Bodén et. al. (2006) who has studied the knowledge-driven tourism development in another county in northern Sweden, argue that the organization of DMOs who work together at tourism destinations rests upon the perceived need of such an organization by the individual DMOs. The common need must be large enough that the DMOs can create an overarching organization, while at the same time keeping their autonomous position as independent organizations. A comprehensive tourism strategy enabled by the establishment of a regional DMO strengthens the businesses by increased competitiveness and destination attractiveness.

## Challenges for Destination Management Organizations

Destination governance and marketing are functions that, according to the World Tourism Organization (2007), stretch beyond the DMOs and a comprehensive view on destination management and marketing shows that these are efforts that require collaborations between different levels of hierarchy, organizations, as well as between the public and private sector. Even so, the DMOs maintain a significant leadership role. This can be problematic since DMOs need to be localized enough to let its stakeholders identify with their goals and purposes, but at the same time large enough to have a common budget that allows it to be effective on the market.

Another challenge for many DMOs is the problems they face with financing their work. World Tourism Organization (2007) mentions the challenge of constructing a business plan with public funding, and contributions from the private sector that is sufficient enough for the DMO to focus on delivering its services without constantly having to search for money. Elbe et. al. (2009) describes how since DMOs often have limited budgets, they can incorporate a strategy of mobilizing their joint resources in order to launch coordinated marketing efforts for the region. Furthermore, as DMOs can include private companies, public bodies and non-profit organizations, conflicts can arise if these diverse members feel that contributions are uneven (ibid).

Frisk (2003) and Selin & Meyers (1998) similarly argue that the various actors involved with the DMO can have different views, aspirations and degree of interest in the destination's development. This has proven to be one of the largest obstacles for long-term development and stable cooperation. Cooper et. al. (2008) also discusses the difficulty in organizing destinations due to the large number of interests involved. It is thus, as Shockley-Zalabak argues, of utmost importance for a DMO to understand the expectations of its members, (2002).

Gunn (1994) identified the lack of coordination and cohesion within the private sector as problematic. To prevent these problems, Selin & Meyers (1998) argue that communication between a DMO and its members is crucial. The DMO have an important role in evening out the lack of conformity between public bodies and private sector by coordinating and stimulating cooperation (Halldin & Hultman 2005).

Bodén et. al. (2006) discuss how, for DMOs, the most important task in the short term is creation of an effective organization, and in the long term to create and maintain legitimacy among its members. Halldin & Hultman (2005) observed that trust contributed to more effective collaborations amongst actors. For a DMO to maintain credibility it needs to cohere with the cooperation guidelines of its members. Trust and legitimacy is then created amongst its members. To strengthen its legitimacy, a DMO can create target goals and visions for sustainable destination development wherein the interested parties can take part of the process and evaluate the work, thus promoting participation and increased value of membership. By achieving targets and visions legitimacy can increase. It can however also diminish if targets are not achieved. It is therefore important for the DMO to clearly display its goals and visions



and do follow-ups of its progress in order to maintain positive relations with its members and interested parties (Bodén et. al. 2006).

## Cooperation in Destination Management Organizations

Buhalis (2000) claims that cooperation rather than rivalry between local actors is essential for successful, competitive destinations. This can be achieved through partnerships between public and private actors. Elbe et. al. (2009) also suggests for a cooperation to work all the involved actors needs to have mutual goals and some form of coordination.

The type of cooperation that might be most frequent and meaningful in the DMOs is the one in marketing. Palmer & Bejou (1995) describe three reasons why destinations need collaborative destination marketing:

- Possibility for economies of scale through pooling of resources
- Participation prevents some from leeching on the others' campaigns
- Stakeholders can achieve their objectives more easy through collaborations. These collaborations are easier to turn into long-term strategies with input from the public sector

## Destination Development

One of the most well-known tourism development models is Butler's tourist area life cycle model (1980). Based on the product life cycle model it shows how destinations go through the different stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and rejuvenation/decline. A destination's position in the model is determined by the length of time tourism has existed at the destination.

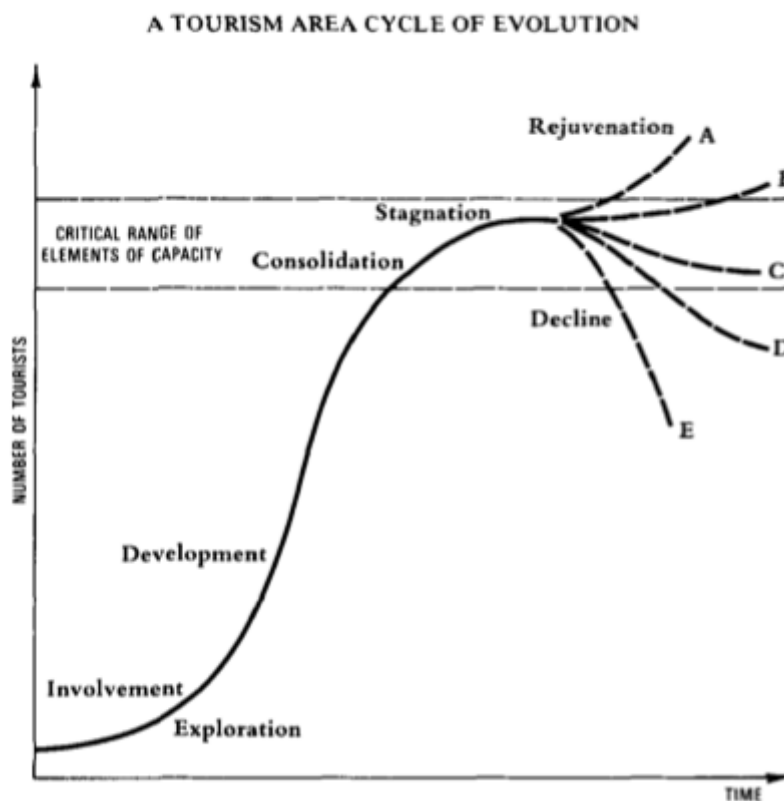


Fig 2. Tourism Area Life Cycle (Butler 1980)

When a destination reaches the mature stages of the tourism area life cycle it must often take action to ensure it enters the rejuvenation stage and not the decline stage. As such the destination must re-engineer itself. An example of this can be found in a study by Franch, Martini, Buffa & Parisi (2008). The study looked at alpine resorts facing the risk of decline due to a changing market and motivations amongst tourists. In order to cope with the lowered interest in traditional activities that were offered by the destination, new attractions based on eco-tourism were identified as appropriate for rejuvenating the destination.

The model has, however, been criticized on several points. Shaw & Williams (2004) point out some of the major flaws with the model. Not all destinations go through all stages of the model. Another point that has been criticized is that the two critical stages are too loosely defined and thus hard to apply to real life cases. An alternative model for destination development was developed by Gibson (2006). In this model the six stages have been brought down to three: Starting, Maturing and Ageing. The relations within destinations and the communication with the market get increasingly complex and developed as a destination goes

through the stages. When a destination reaches the ageing stage, its relations and communications with the market has been set, but it runs the risk of returning to a previous stage.

## Destination Success

When looking at the success of DMOs and destinations it is tempting to equate them. After all, if a destination is enjoying success, is the DMO not also successful? Bornhorst et. al. (2010) argues that this is not necessarily always the case as successful destinations and successful DMOs are not the same thing. It is, for instance, possible for destinations to enjoy success while the associated DMO is of little or no use. The opposite situation is also plausible – a successful DMO but a destination that enjoys little success (ibid). How then are these two related?

There is no single recognized determinant for destination success. Studies by Archer & Fletcher (1996) have used “hard” data such as visitor numbers, while researchers Ritchie & Crouch (2003) advocate the use of guest satisfaction, a “soft” measurement, in order to determine success.

Although much research regarding what constitutes success for a destination or DMO have been conducted during the last twenty years, there has been little research made into how they relate to each other (Bornhorst et. al. 2010). For a long time, however, researchers have suggested a link between them. In a study by Dwyer & Kim (2003) destination success is linked to four determinants: *Resources*, *Demand*, *Situational conditions* and *Destination management*. Similarly, Ritchie & Crouch (2003) identifies five categories for destination competitiveness, a more indirect approach towards destination success: *Destination policy*, *Planning & development*, *Core resources & attractors*, *Supporting factors & resources*, and *Destination management*. In both studies, destination management is claimed to be one of the determinants. We can therefore see a clear link in the literature between the success of destinations and the work of DMOs.

Bornhorst et. al (2010) tried to find out how stakeholders in DMOs perceive successful destinations and how they perceive successful DMOs, and if these definitions differ. Five observed key themes were deemed relevant for tourist destinations to be successful. The key themes and their most important variables were:

- *Economic success* - visitor numbers
- *Marketing effectiveness* - strong image, and high levels of tourist awareness
- *Product and service offerings* - a wide variety of items
- *Visitor experience* - repeat customers and overall value of the experience
- *Internal stakeholder relations* - resident support of tourism

For DMO success four key themes were identified:

- *Internal stakeholder relations* - the ability to interact effectively with stakeholders

- *Operational activities* - management activities, and especially marketing activities
- *Resources* – funding, and the human resources
- *Performance measures* - the ability to demonstrate direct results from their efforts (visitors numbers was the most frequently mentioned variable)

The study found that there were several commonalities between destination and DMO success. Three common key variables for success were:

- *Community support/relations*
- *Marketing*
- *Destination performance*

These variables were all highly visible and as such Bornhorst et. al. (2010) argues that they are often used for determining success for both destinations and DMOs. Besides these common variables there were some variables unique for destinations and DMOs respectively. For destinations, these were *accessibility, product and service offerings, quality of visitor experience and community support*.

For DMOs, these were *supplier relations, effective management, strategic planning, being objective driven, as well as funding and personnel*.

These differences suggest that it is possible for a destination or DMO to be viewed as successful without necessarily holding the same view for the other. It is therefore of importance to differentiate between the two (ibid).

Adding to this research, Volgger & Pechlaner (2014) tested if perceived DMO success correlates to perceived destination success. They grouped the variables related to DMO success into four determinant categories:

- Networking capability (*Networking*)
- Provision of transparent evidence of performance (*Transparency*)
- Resource endowment (*Resources*)
- Professionalism in operational work (*Professionalism*)

The study supported the model by Bornhorst et. al. (2010) and showed a positive correlation between DMO success and destination success. Furthermore, the study supported three out of the four categories as determinants for success. *Transparency, Resources* and *Professionalism* were all showed to have a strong positive influence on the success of a DMO. The fourth variable, *Networking*, was not found to have any direct influence on DMO success. However, it did show a significant indirect effect through *Power* - how much influence the DMO has, and *Acceptance* – to what extent stakeholders accept the DMOs role as a leading actor, variables. The *Acceptance* variable played an especially strong role in mediating the effects of networking capability. The two variables together forms what the researchers call *Authority*, a new sub-category to *Networking* that was deemed crucial for perceived DMO success.

## Japanese Tourism Destination Development

Murphy & Williams (1999) looked into potential destination development by attracting Japanese tourists to rural areas. The authors also examined the characteristics that differentiate rural travelers from their non-rural counterparts. This was done by conducting interviews with Japanese tourists who had previously visited a rural area as a tourist, or planned to do so in the near future.

It was concluded that the potential rural tourists were generally more nature-focused and adventuresome. They also placed higher value on, and interest in, rural experiences and characteristics. This result is supported by Mok & Lam's (2000) as well as Yamamoto & Gill's (1999) research, which suggests that Japanese tourists favor destinations with products based on landscapes and culture. Several strategies to attract Japanese tourists to rural regions were devised from the data collected by Murphy & Williams (1999):

- *Maintaining rural "attractiveness"* - since Japanese rural travelers desired to experience natural landscapes and rural phenomenon, it was deemed important for the regions to maintain these attributes.
- *Incorporating cultural components* - while landscape and nature viewing were the main motivators for rural tourists it was not considered enough to create a satisfying, complete experience. It was therefore important to incorporate other elements of rural culture such as participation in cultural activities.
- *Creating soft adventure experiences* - rural regions trying to attract Japanese tourists were advised to make sure that their offered experiences were not too overwhelming or intimidating for Japanese tourists experiencing rural regions for the first time.
- *Facilitating host-guest interchange* - individual events that helped tourists connect with the area's unique features and people was deemed as necessary. For instance, visits to farms or indigenous villages. This should provide opportunities to purchase local specialties, and the chance to interact with locals through an interpreter.

In addition to the above presented strategies the study included additional recommendations. These were:

- Establishing a regional rural tourism organization
- Assessing product-market matches
- Enhancing and marketing products through package tours
- Creating product awareness
- Involving Japanese tour operators
- Being proactive

Watkins & Gnoth (2010) suggest a connection with nature as an important factor for attracting Japanese tourists. The researchers did a study on what values Japanese tourists placed

highly and desired from destinations in New Zealand. They found that there were two distinct groups of tourists. The more traditional tourists sought escape, relaxation and a "oneness with nature". Destinations catering to this group must make sure that they provide a "Japanized experience" through a firm understanding of Japanese culture and Japanese businesses, and by having Japanese speaking staff available. The other, modern, group sought to challenge themselves, to meet their needs tourism operators and destinations need to provide safe and comfortable accommodations and transportation options as well as a range of differing activities for tourists to take part of. In contrast to the previous group however, an authentic experience was desired. As such, activities and services should not be adapted for the Japanese tourists. Destinations hoping to attract Japanese tourists must make sure that they do not only cater to one of these two groups with contrasting desires.

Nash et. al. (2010) conducted a study trying to find out if there was a potential market for Japanese tourism in Northern Scotland by using a link to Thomas Blake Glover, a historical Scottish figure whom had a connection to Japan. The result of their study did not support any significant potential for a destination based around an interest in Thomas Blake Glover, they did manage to collect some suggestions for growth markets in Japanese tourism that is of interest for Norrbotten's situation as the region has the potential to provide these products. These were:

- Seasonal products and themed travel, not just a collection of sightseeing spots
- Products that offer a chance to interact with local people
- Smaller tour groups, limited to a maximum of 26 participants
- Tours of the countryside
- Senior segment tours of natural and world heritage sites

The research also addressed the point that any attempts at marketing rural areas must include proactive attempts to target the major Japanese tour operators since they control a significant portion of the market.

## Theory Conclusions

Reviewing the theories and models on DMOs and destinations, and drawing upon the success factors for the two, we have identified three main categories of work for DMOs. In addition to this, we have identified specific priorities for the Japanese tourism to rural areas and incorporated them into the following categories:

- *Marketing* – A great deal of authors stress the DMOs leadership role in image enhancing and marketing activities. The DMOs need to bring actors together and coordinate joint marketing efforts. On the Japanese market one must stress the destination attributes that Japanese tourists value; nature, cultural and historical attractions, a sense of relaxation and escape, as well as the opportunity to buy exclusive local goods and souvenirs.
- *Cooperation* – DMOs also need to have a leadership role in destination governance. This includes cooperating with both the public and private sector in order to bring these possibly conflicting interests together. There also needs to be cooperation between destinations, and coordination of overarching regional activities. On the Japanese market, cooperation also needs to entail direct contacts and links with the Japanese actors. Of special interest will be coordination between destinations for the purpose of running themed package tours, which are in high demand.
- *Development* – DMOs need to ensure the development of the destination and individual attractions as without efficient governance they run the risk of entering a stage of decline. The destination also needs to develop by upgrading its human resources and improving accessibility. Development aimed at the Japanese market should include events that allow for interaction with local people and culture, and access to world heritage and historical scenery. The availability of staff that understands Japanese culture and preferably even speaks the language, shopping opportunities, and high quality accommodations are also important.

If these categories and their components, especially the ones aimed at the Japanese market, are implemented by DMOs in their work, it should contribute to success on the Japanese market. As such, it is these three categories we will look at, with a number of factors as sub-headings that will be used throughout the rest of the thesis. These categories and their factors should be applicable for all DMOs in rural destinations aiming to attract Japanese tourists. When simplified to a model, it will look as follows:

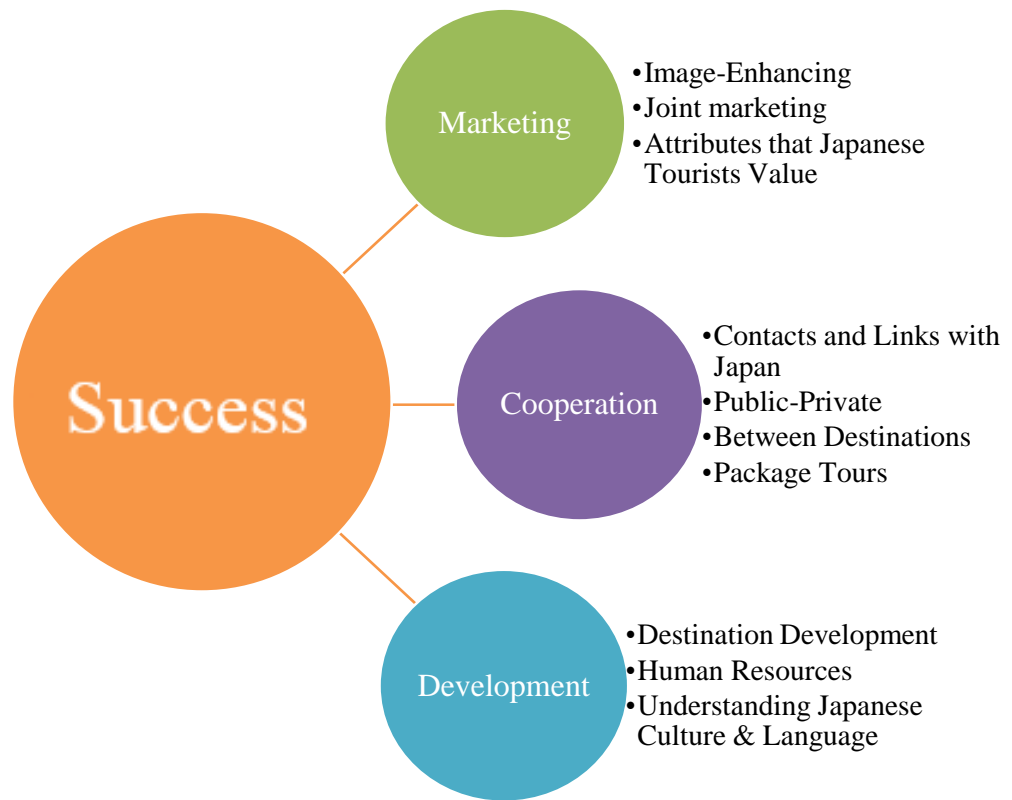


Fig. 3: Activities for DMO Success (Authors' own).



## Empirical Findings

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*The following chapter will present the increased visitor numbers that we have referred to earlier both in real numbers and in constructed diagrams that clearly show their relevance. Furthermore, we will have a look at reports and previous case studies that concern DMOs and destination development in the region, and present their main conclusions.*

### Visitor Statistics

In order to get a picture of the development of tourism to Norrbotten, we decided to examine the bed nights statistics for Sweden as a whole and Norrbotten specifically. Japan, China, India and the US are the largest non-European tourism markets (Tillväxtverket 2013), and were thus included in the sample. Germany was partly chosen as it is the largest non-Nordic market for Sweden and Norrbotten, the main reason however, was that the DMOs have had a focus on the German market, just like the Japanese one (Swedish Lapland Tourism b). It was therefore of interest to see if the development of these two markets in Norrbotten follow the same pattern.

#### **Bed nights in Sweden sorted after year and country of origin:**

(Source: SCB 2014b)

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Germany</b>	2,631,930	2,564,252	2,598,505	2,649,661	2,553,629	2,599,236
<b>USA</b>	395,216	357,957	409,781	422,759	452,136	455,903
<b>Japan</b>	101,058	93,493	95,764	92,891	104,519	90,510
<b>China</b>	100,886	98,009	111,126	146,432	163,377	190,286
<b>India</b>	52,534	50,482	57,789	76,993	107,801	126,840

#### **Bed nights in Norrbotten sorted after year and country of origin:**

(Source: SCB 2014b)

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Germany</b>	74,159	75,767	73,144	100,162	104,412	110,098
<b>USA</b>	5,678	6,934	4,954	5,428	11,708	6,419
<b>Japan</b>	2,624	4,459	4,267	4,738	6,745	8,195
<b>China</b>	1,592	2,020	3,048	4,087	4,365	4,961
<b>India</b>	171	398	200	456	525	610

The German and Japanese markets follow the same pattern in both areas. Even though these two markets are stagnant or even decreasing in the country as a whole, they are on a clear rise in Norrbotten. In order to make this trend clearer, a line chart was made. Using the bed nights for 2009 as a baseline, the percent change in bed nights for the various markets are shown below:

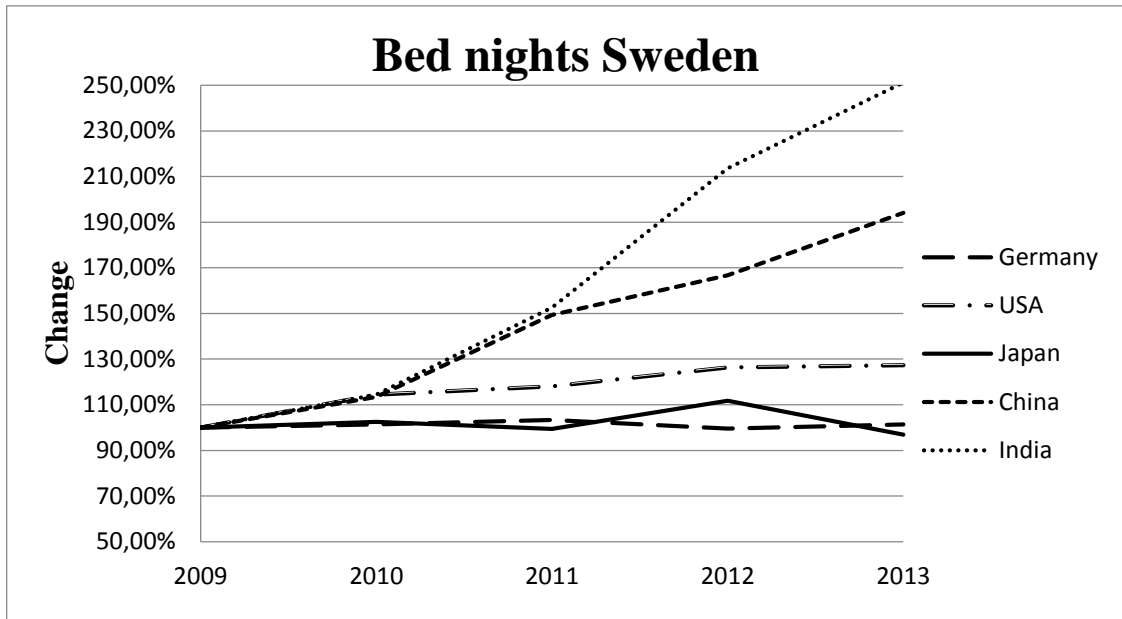


Fig 4. Percentage change of bed nights in Sweden.

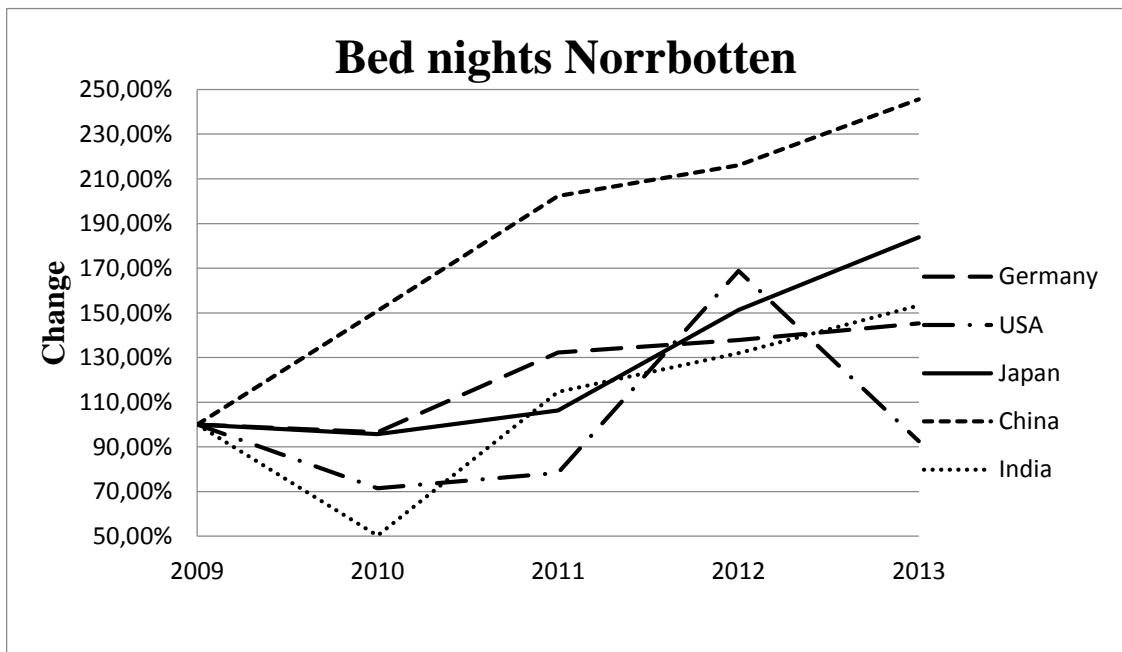


Fig 5. Percentage change of bed nights in Norrbotten.

While we are not able, or wish to proclaim any certain correlation, this could potentially indicate that the DMOs' work has had an effect on visitor numbers for specific markets, and as such motivated us to further examine this phenomenon.

Looking closer at the bed nights of the individual destinations that are the subject of this research, we found some distinctive key points (SCB 2014a, compiled by M. Mannberg):

<b>Destination</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Kiruna	3 273	3 678	5 224	5 876
Gällivare	133	144	192	179
Jokkmokk	111	199	334	508
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 517</b>	<b>4 021</b>	<b>5 750</b>	<b>6 563</b>

These three destinations have experienced a growth of Japanese bed nights by approximately 86% during the period 2010-2013. Kiruna is the main destination in the region, and Jokkmokk has experienced tremendous growth during this period.

## Previous Reports

### Nature & Culture Tourism

Norrbottn County Administration published a report in 2008 about what needed to be done on a regional level for the nature and cultural tourism in the region. We have compiled the conclusions that were relevant to DMOs and destination development and categorized them according to the main headings of our theoretical model (Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten 2008):

#### Marketing:

- Coordination of marketing and information through the DMOs.
- Continuous work to inform visitors both about the destination and practicalities while the visitors were at the destination. Increased efforts on marketing and information towards foreign markets were stressed.

#### Cooperation:

- Making tourism visible as an industry. Strategic planning across municipal borders and the need for a destination coordinator were topics of discussion.
- The local and regional actors experienced difficulties in developing tourism in the areas national and local/regional interests differ, as they perceived national rules and restrictive laws promoted preservation over usage.
- Lack of coordination across the destinations. Some even thought that Norrbotten should be one destination.
- SLT and the then nine DMOs of the county was considered to be important actors as they generated new possibilities for cooperation in the region, so that the region would be able to compete with other similar tourism destinations instead of competing with each other.

#### Development:

- Troublesome for many entrepreneurs to create larger events and activities.
- Lack of competence, capacity and capital. Many small companies did not have the resources to develop and grow.
- Lack of really good ideas and projects, few internationally attractive products and a weak sales organization.

- Better road signs. This would be a task for The Swedish Transport Administration to solve in cooperation with SLT.
- Education for the entrepreneurs in marketing, hosting, languages, food culture, quality insurance and improved knowledge about potential guests. DMOs were predicted to play a role in this education.
- Increased long-term perspective in business development and communications.
- Increased emphasis on themed tourism was proposed.

Coordination was brought up throughout the research. Entrepreneurs expressed a need for the DMOs to coordinate marketing, as well as business and destination development.

### Tourism Trend Analysis

A trend analysis by Razormind AB, a consultancy, regarding the tourism industry's part in community development was ordered by Expandum, a company working for development of Gällivare County, in 2011 (Arvidsson & Hurve 2011).

For Norrbotten, the two major attractions were deemed to be nature tourism and mining tourism and these were shown to complement each other nicely due to the difference in season of demand between them.

The report also found that in order for Norrbotten to reach the goal of doubling tourism, the area needed investments in both of these two large tourism fields. Norrbotten needed to invest in accessibility and product offerings if the area wanted to maintain its shares of the tourism market. In addition to this, investments in communications with direct flights were singled out as extra important, along with increased bed capacity, especially in Kiruna and Gällivare.

### Previous Case Studies

#### Jokkmokk

A case study on tourism's role in rural innovation was undertaken in Jokkmokk by Brouder (2012) about one year before DJ was founded. In this study, Brouder performed qualitative interviews with various stakeholders in the destination and found the importance of the tourist office as a recurring theme. However, it was rather the role of the tourist office as a forum for the entrepreneurs that were stressed, rather than projects that "comes and goes". The start-stop approach of projects and their non-fixed funding were factors that contributed to an expressed need for a new organization who could take the lead.

Both public and private participants mentioned destination development as challenging since they had conflicting interests. Other challenges were the perceived need for major entrepreneurial players who could bring more muscle to the industry, as there were only smaller companies at the destination. Many of the individual entrepreneurs did not have the time, money, or in one case even the will to grow, but they all did want to cooperate.

Potential for building local capacity through joint tourism efforts was highlighted, and many interviewees noted the role of tourism in community planning as increasingly noticeable. However, development would have to incorporate a great deal of cooperation and

coordination with the Sámi people, who are indigenous of the nearby Lapland, a world heritage area, as they use it for traditional reindeer husbandry.

Growth and innovation was argued to exist despite the lack of a destination leader. Brouder predicted the new tourism office, which now exists as DJ, to become a conditioner of paths, but not necessarily a determinant of developmental outcome.

### Destination South Lapland

Eriksson & Svensson (2013) did a case study of Destination South Lapland, a DMO located in the north of Sweden, with the purpose of finding out the importance members ascribed the DMO, as well as how it could strengthen and help tourism in the area.

Marketing was seen as the most important part of the DMOs. It was deemed important since individual actors did not have the necessary resources for marketing efforts. For the individual companies this was the main reason to join the DMO as it allowed them to take advantage of its marketing efforts.

Increasing cooperation was also seen as important both as a motivation for starting the DMO and as part of its role, and was one of the reasons for joining the organization. One of the interviewees said that the thought behind the DMO was that the sum of all involved would create added value for the members. Cooperation would be important in order to avoid duplication of work between the DMO and the local tourism companies. The view that cooperation was important was likewise shared amongst the other actors involved, such as the municipalities. It was also deemed to be one of its greatest challenges, that is, to coordinate all interests and create a common goal that everyone can work towards.

Good communications with members and legitimacy for the DMOs work was seen as necessary. In order to increase legitimacy, “hard” data such as an increase in bookings was desired from the member companies.

### Gällivare Tourism

A case study of Gällivare was undertaken by Karlsson & Kull (2012) who looked at tourism as a complementing industry in rural areas with an already dominating industry.

The authors found through their study that the destination was in the development phase of Butler’s tourism area life-cycle model. It was categorized as this phase since the destination had been experiencing positive development and a demand that was larger than the supply and tourists demanding more experiences, activities and longer opening hours at stores and restaurants. The respondents saw a future for potential development, especially in Dundret, a ski resort, and Lapland. Gällivare was perceived to have an advantage due to its closeness to unique nature. One area that was stressed was the need of development in infrastructure both to, and within the destination. Cooperation, both with actors within the destination, and at other destinations, was also deemed important for destination development.

### Visit Gällivare Lapland

Focusing specifically on VGL, Anestedt & Westberg (2012) did a study on how “coopetition” – a compound of “cooperation” and “competition” – was perceived by both the DMO and its

members.

Marketing was revealed to be perceived as a large part of what VGL works with as it directly translated to more visitors for the destination. However, the respondents stressed that marketing the destination was not solely the responsibility of VGL, but for all actors at the destination. Some interviewed members of the DMO saw that marketing of Gällivare was key for the destination to grow.

Cooperation was also seen as a large part of what the DMO should do. VGL tried to increase cooperation within the network and had, amongst other activities, daily phone contact with companies regarding booking questions as well as a monthly newsletter and an internal network for information and news. Despite these efforts, lack of commitment from members was viewed by respondents as a major problem as the members were inexperienced at working with this kind of organization, and the level of commitment it required.

The potential for destination development was seen as positive. The quietness and closeness to nature was mentioned as advantages. The future move of the city core and the development of the area as an international destination were of interest. However, cooperation between actors would be a key requirement.

## Empirical Findings: Our Interviews

*As a separate part of the empirical findings, the following chapter will entail a summary of the most relevant results from the semi-structured interviews that we conducted. These results are divided under the sub-headings of our theoretical model.*

To summarize again, our interviewees and their respective positions were:

<b>Name</b>	<b>DMO</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
Erica Mattsson	SLT	Destination Development Strategist	2014-05-07
Thomas Brandlöv	DJ	Chief Executive Officer	2014-05-07
Saeko Nyberg	VGL	Tourist Center Employee	2014-05-06
Mattias Mannberg	KL	Market Director	2014-05-06

## Marketing

### Image-Enhancing Efforts

Saeko consider it is important to promote Norrbotten as a whole to maintain competitiveness in a global market. She explains that she never promotes just her own destination when on promotion trips in Japan since the Japanese do not usually know what Gällivare is, and as such she needs to talk about the whole of Swedish Lapland or even Sweden. If the DMO only markets its own destination's attractions it runs the risk of losing the interest of potential customers to bigger, more developed destinations.

Mattias from KL also mentions encounters with Japanese actors who barely know what northern Sweden is and as such requires promoting the destination in broader terms. He states that since from a Japanese perspective the destinations are basically the same area, it is more effective to work together when promoting. He feels that it is more efficient to unite with one strong brand instead of trying to promote lots of smaller, individual brands. A recent example of this was an exhibition in Germany where the DMOs showcased themselves as Swedish Lapland rather than as individual destinations.

The region is relatively weak compared to its neighboring competitors in Norway and Finland, both in terms of marketing and financial resources, says Mattias. With this in mind, Erica at SLT explains that the DMOs must prioritize markets and efforts in order to allow reasonably large budgets for each. This is something Thomas claims DJ has worked with as well. He explains that since the DMO started marketing has become more focused. They target certain markets instead of marketing all over the world; they also take this a step further

by identifying and targeting certain segments of the markets. In Sweden, DJ markets themselves directly towards the end customers both at exhibits and through social media and their website. In comparison, on the Japanese market their focus is working with incoming companies and tour operators. When working on that market they highlight the range of attractions, transfer solutions and product quality.

VGL has participated in exhibitions and workshops in Japan for a long time. This is very effective, says Saeko, as they can meet a lot of different people. She explains how she uses Twitter, Facebook, a blog and their website to promote the destination. The latter two are also available in Japanese.

Mattias says that KL is increasingly participating at exhibitions and workshops in order to increase awareness of the destination in Japan and provide information. To do this they have developed roll-ups and brochures in Japanese. Participating at workshops provides the opportunity to meet and show Japanese actors what Kiruna has to offer, and gain insight into the mindset of the Japanese actors.

Both Saeko and Mattias stress the importance of media, and Mattias says that KL works hard to attract media's attention. KL does not have the resources necessary to advertise and launch large scale advertising campaigns, what they can do is invite journalist and increase awareness and interest that way. This is done either by going through the Embassy of Sweden in Japan or by contacting the media actors directly, he explains. Likewise, Saeko considers TV very influential for instilling interest in the destination on the Japanese market. Saeko says that the Japanese crews sometimes contact her through the VGL's Japanese website. They often frequent the destination because of interest in Lapponia and the Inland Line, a railroad that runs from Kristinehamn, a town in southern Sweden, to Gällivare.

SLT's Erica explains how getting the region's products out for sale on the international market and increasing the awareness of the destinations and their individual attractions are the basic marketing strategy for SLT. Mattias similarly describe KLs marketing as being aimed towards the industry to get their products out on the market and working with awareness.

In order to strengthen the image of Swedish Lapland as a brand that will benefit the region, SLT allows companies in other sectors to use it. For example, Care of Gerd, a cosmetics company from Jokkmokk, and LKAB, a Swedish mining company, have used the brand in their marketing efforts. Erica explains that this helps build credibility and awareness.

### Joint Marketing Efforts

The reason for destinations in Norrbotten to focus on the Japanese market has been the presence of large actors with an interest in the market. Previously, KL has worked closely together with a few actors in Kiruna towards Japan, as there was not a lot of interest from other destinations, Mattias explains. Saeko says that when she started working in Gällivare in the 1990s there were thousands of Japanese tourists visiting the destination. Thomas explains that even before the establishment of DJ, the Japanese market was targeted in Jokkmokk. It was chosen through an evaluation of potential markets, and by looking at what markets other destinations in the region targeted.



Mattias remembers how the DMOs were asked by SLT to name their targeted markets. When the results were compiled, Japan stood out as a one of the markets where more than one destination were active, as such it gain recognition at a regional level. KL has tried to influence this recognition, according to Mattias. When establishing DJ, Thomas explains, it was realized that in order to gain the financial strength needed to work on a market such as the Japanese; cooperation with an organization such as SLT was necessary.

Thomas further adds that SLT is of great importance for the tourism industry of the region as it provides the economic muscles required to market the region. Likewise, Mattias says that KL tries to utilize the opportunities SLT provides to reach out and be seen on the Japanese market. One benefit he sees from this is that SLT is an influential organization that can support KL with financial resources, as well as human resources in communication or other areas of expertise. Mattias feels that this increased regional cooperation under the Swedish Lapland brand could have contributed to the increased Japanese tourism to the region. In addition to this, according to Mattias, a marketing plan for Japan has been jointly developed with VGL and DJ. He also believes it has been beneficial to work together by developing a joint travel-plan for doing promotion in Japan. Each DMO can be responsible for its own destination while at the same time promoting the region as a whole.

Erica explains SLT's financial model when marketing towards Japan or other international destinations. SLT lays down the basis of the marketing budget, and companies interested in acting on the market in question can contribute financially at different levels depending on their commitment and resources. SLT then constructs a joint budget and executes previously decided activities and projects. Besides coordinating markets geographically, SLT is also about to start coordinating thematic markets, the first two being hunting and fishing. In fishing, for instance, they utilize a skilled colleague in the destination Arvidsjaur/Arjeplog for coordination.

Erica mentions Unique Selling Points and strong attractions of the region as things SLT promotes when marketing towards tour operators. She also says that they make sure to highlight some new interesting attractions with the potential to "create a buzz", such as Treehotel, which does not have the time or resources to market itself sufficiently.

### Attributes that Japanese Tourists Value

Although Saeko has tried to bring Japanese tourists to the mining attractions; there has been little interested in this type of attractions. World heritage areas, however, are extremely interesting to Japanese tourists, she says. As such, when she markets the region she gladly stresses the opportunity to visit both Lapponia and Gammelstad Church Town, a world heritage area in Luleå municipality.

The opportunity to buy local specialties is another thing that VGL markets towards Japan. Saeko always inform about local goods, and the travel agencies usually ask questions about what kind of goods they can recommend to their customers. There are several shops in Gällivare where tourists can buy traditional handicrafts and Saeko says that the Japanese tourists appreciate them and buys a lot of their products. According to Mattias, Japanese tourists have a lot of purchase power, especially the ones who travel with more exclusive

packaged tours. As such, they surely appreciate the opportunity to purchase high-quality goods. He mentions that while it is not something Kiruna actively markets towards Japan, there are several actors selling local specialties and it is something he would like to promote more extensively. He adds, however, that this type of product may suit other destinations better.

The Santa Winter Games, developed jointly with a local entrepreneur, and other Santa attractions is heavily promoted by VGL, and Saeko explains how Gällivare's Santa culture is considered more genuine than the commercialized Santa Claus Village located in Rovaniemi in northern Finland, and is marketed as such by both VGL and the Japanese travel agencies. Saeko says that they cannot compete with the lower price of Finland, so the genuine products that they provide is a way to stand out.

Mattias believes that without the northern lights attractions Kiruna would attract very few Japanese tourists but could still attract European ones. He believes that on many markets the Icehotel is more popular than the northern lights, but for the Japanese market in particular the opposite is true.

The Japanese tourists who arrive in Jokkmokk could be considered part of a more exclusive segment that wants to get away from the mass tourism destinations such as Rovaniemi in Finland. Thomas says that the highlighted core values of Jokkmokk are nature, culture, and food. In 2014, the town has been named "food capital of Sweden".

## Cooperation

### Contacts and Links with Japan

Erica explains that when she was working for KL it was the members companies interested in the Japanese market that maintained contacts and links with Japanese actors, sometimes on a daily basis. She thinks that KL also communicated a lot with Japan in the period prior to the chartered flights, but that it was the long-term work from the DMO that was most important on their end.

Mattias says that KL cooperates a lot with actors in Japan, who in turn are connected to the incoming companies. He feels that it is very important that they cooperate with actors in Japan, and establish communication with the various actors.

At VGL it is mostly Saeko who maintains contacts with the Japanese market. While living in Japan, she worked at a travel agency and still maintains a network of contacts from there. She has also accumulated a lot of contacts through familiarization trips for Japanese actors coming to Sweden, henceforth called FAM-trips, and participation in workshops with VGL in Japan. VGL sends out newsletters to their about 300 registered correspondents in Japan, which include travel agencies and airlines.

Thomas says that DJ has its own communication with actors in Japan which they keep in a customer register. They send newsletters regularly and try to keep a business relationship with the Japanese actors.

## Public-Private

SLT puts a lot of effort into lobbying for the tourism industry to be acknowledged as one of the county's main industries, Erica says. SLT spends a lot of time working with business development processes, representing the tourism industry, and attracting capital in networks that includes public actors such as the County Administration and public transport bodies. She thinks that it is useful to have a regional organization like SLT that can pick up on local demands at individual destinations, and show common needs for the tourism industry. The regional organization can then speak with a stronger voice for the industry in the entire region, which she feels is appreciated by the local destinations. Sometimes she adds, they get requests from their members to write consultation responses on their behalf.

A change that Erica says SLT actively lobbies for is the opening of Lapponia for commercial usage. SLT interacts with the Environmental Protection Agency, responsible for proposing and implementing environmental policies on a national level, and the County Administration. When working towards this the DMOs sometimes send consultation responses individually to show a unified position, and sometimes SLT represents all members.

As of now, Lapponia is not open for commercial use, and thus VGL's tours run just outside the area, Saeko says. VGL has not worked very actively in regards to this and Saeko thinks that they could perhaps do more. Currently they try to make the best of the situation and inform tourists about the rules, and the need to preserve the area in a way that is appreciated by the tourists.

Thomas says that he would like to see the possibility for the tourism industry to utilize Lapponia in a sustainable way. He believes that one should be able to perform professional guided tours since they work under stricter demands with regards to journey routes, disposal of garbage, sustainability, and similar concerns compared to the general public who are free to roam the area. He adds that although DJ is not currently very actively working with these questions, they try to be part of discussing them when opportunities arise. He says that DJ is working together with Lapponiatjuottijudus, a non-profit organization which administers the Lapponia area, and plan to enter partnerships with similar organizations in order to work towards common goals in similar issues.

Another issue where DJ works together with public actors is in the development of accommodations, which he says is lacking in Jokkmokk. They try to be active in municipal planning process and make sure the interests of the tourism industry are taken into consideration. Thomas agrees that it can be difficult to combine public and private interests in the tourism industry. He does not mind mixed public and private partnerships but stresses the importance of making sure that qualified, informed decisions that are beneficial for the industry are made. He says that the DMO has solved conflicting situations by using their expertise to inform public parties on what they see as beneficial for the destinations development.

Mattias discusses how KL has been trying to support Swedish tourism in Japan during the time an official organ with this function has been missing. He believes that a national tourism promoting venture is needed. As such, KL has supported the development of The Swedish

Tourism and Culture Center in Japan by giving advice, and will attend their launch event together with DJ and VGL.

An important public actor that will attend the event is Swedish State Railways. Saeko hopes that they will acknowledge the market potential and further work with the DMOs to improve access to the region. Erica tells that SLT is part of a special work group for night trains that incorporates a range of public and private actors to improve this type of traveling.

A project where VGL works with public actors is on improving signboards at the attraction called Dundret, a ski resort and mountain area. The project incorporates private and public actors such as the Swedish Road Administration and the municipality. Working with public actors comes with some demands on the organization. Since VGL is partly financed by the municipality the DMO is required to promote smaller local events, such as fishing competitions, by adding them to their website and brochure, Saeko explains. This is a lot of work, as the DMO only has four employees.

### Between Destinations

Erica explains that SLT is not looking to establish a strong, regional head organization centralized to Luleå, but feels that it is important that the individual DMOs are present at their destinations. The region's DMOs have a great capacity for cooperation and coordination, says Erica. Ten years ago a great effort focused around the brand Swedish Lapland was made to gather the tourism industry. Since then, confidence and trust has been built up between the different DMOs that jointly own the organization SLT, and has led to 2014 seeing the premiere of common budgeting and marketing coordination. The DMOs are financed to a great extent by European Union structural funds, and in the upcoming period they will apply for these funds together. A strategy that hopefully will allow for the region to receive a larger total sum than if they applied separately, Erica explains.

With regards to looking after the individual members interests, Erica means that since the member companies owns the various destination, and the destinations in turn own SLT, all involved parties' interests are taken into account. SLT does not want to undermine the authority of the local DMOs, and as such rarely meets directly with local member companies. However, when working in market groups consisting of these companies they communicate directly with the individual member company since they are already in the same grouping.

Mattias feels that the DMOs have an ongoing dialogue. They see each other at marketing meetings through SLT where they all meet and they also communicate through telephone and mail when needs arise. Thomas says that DJ tries to maintain good relations with the other destinations. Recently, they organized a tourism information conference in Jokkmokk to show what the destination has to offer. He feels it is important for the other destinations' tourism offices to have knowledge about Jokkmokk and the products offered there in order to be able to direct potential tourists to the destination.

When working together on the Japanese market, Saeko says that VGL arranges FAM-trips for Japanese tour operators together with the other DMOs who are active on the Japanese market. Mattias adds that previously KL has arranged their own FAM-trips whereas lately they have

tried to broaden it to include several destinations. This has been done in a process where KL has received more support on a regional level through SLT.

Thomas discusses the benefits of working together in organizing FAM-trips. Since the tour operators get offers from all over the world, DMOs have to pay all their expenses in order to bring them to their destination. By working together the DMOs can split the cost of bringing these tour operators to the region, whereas if DJ was to bring these tour operators to Jokkmokk it would be very costly as they would have to pay all expenses.

An issue when organizing FAM-trips is that the members of the destinations want the tour operators to spend an equal amount of time in their respective destinations, which according to Saeko is impossible due to the long distance between the destinations. The members at the destination interested in marketing towards the Japanese market pay half the cost for the tour operators expenses, and the DMO pays the other half. This has resulted in some complaints from individual members when the tour operators have spent more time in another destination than their own.

### Package Tours

Erica maintains that it is impossible to make sure every destination will be a part of tours in the region since the final decision of which attractions will be included is up to the incoming companies. What SLT can do is provide an overview of suitable attractions for the counterparts to choose from. Mattias agrees by saying that the tours are packaged by the agents and incoming companies together with their members.

SLT's Erica explains that their guests do not care about municipal borders or perhaps even country borders, but that their interest is in experiencing Lapland. According to Mattias, Japanese tourists want to see the highlights of the different destinations and will probably not stay in just Kiruna for eight days before returning to Japan. As such it is important to present to the Japanese market what differentiates the destinations and show that one can see several destinations during the same trip. Thomas mentions how 99 percent of the Japanese visitors to Jokkmokk has been to Kiruna as well. Working together with the other DMOs to show their respective highlights to tour operators provides them with the opportunity to combine all destinations, and thus create a stronger, regional product for the market, Mattias concludes.

Saeko tells how Sweden is trendy in Japan right now, and seen as a safe and friendly destination where they can relax. The opportunity to go on a package tour combining Norrbotten with shopping in Stockholm is seen attractive. Although northern lights can be seen in many locations, Sweden is seen as more luxurious than Alaska or Canada. The success of northern Norway and Finland as tourism destinations is also beneficial for Norrbotten, Mattias explains. When tourists arrive at those destinations, Kiruna for instance is only two hours away, and he sees that many packaged tours cross the national borders. Thomas agrees and believes that the work undertaken by Finnish actors since the 1990s to increase access to their destinations has been beneficial for Norrbotten as well.

Thomas says that their region is too small for internal competition. When meeting tour operators, the first thing he asks is what attractions they are interested in. If they are solely

interested products he deems are better provided by other destinations within the region he explicitly points to that destination, but also explains what Jokkmokk has to offer. Mattias likewise says that if a sought after attraction is available in another destination he feels like it is only natural to provide information about the attraction and contact details, something he believes is true for all destinations.

Mattias explains that it can be a challenge working together since the destinations, and in particular their members can have different interest. He brings up how members of the same or other destinations in the region can see each other as competitors and that the DMO have tried to explain to them how cooperation between destinations will be beneficial. Saeko has had similar experiences. Sometimes members are skeptic as to why she brings up for example Kiruna's Icehotel when out promoting Gällivare in Japan, but as previously mentioned she feels like the destinations can't stand alone in a market as far away as the Japanese one.

## Development

### Destination Development

Erica believes that the DMOs have achieved well-functioning coordination, and that the challenge now is to help the members' growth. In SLT's regional strategy for destination development, Erica mentions a range of factors that their members need to work with to raise the overall level of the region. These include:

- Strengthening companies to become economically, socially and environmentally sustainable
- Satisfactory accommodations for the global traveler, such as high-standard facilities located close to nature
- Clearly defined areas for tourism
- Developed infrastructure in both accessibility and transfer, as well as in communications
- Raising food standards

SLT also needs to work with the development of new products and processes. Erica explains that it is the companies that provide the products, but that the DMOs' job is to inspire this, and to provide input and information about international demand.

For Kiruna's development, Erica believes that it was mainly the northern lights at Aurora Sky Station, and the Icehotel, which drove the development of tourism to the region, with the latter in particular being promoted by Sweden's international tourism promoting bodies. She also describes how attractions related to northern lights have been extensively developed. Mattias discusses how KL has developed together with Icehotel during the last 20 years and contributes a lot of the awareness of the destination in Japan to this member that has had connections to Japan since early on. He contributes a lot of the attention the destination has gotten on the Japanese market to the existence of the large, strong attractions such as Icehotel and Aurora Sky Station and that it is important for the DMO to handle inquiries from media in order to increase the demand for the destination. In addition to this work, KL has tried to increase the information available in Japanese in Kiruna, for example by introducing

messages in Japanese at the train station.

Northern lights as a product has been very popular for a long time and, according to Thomas, it is losing a bit of its attraction and is decreasing in popularity. As such, he feels that it is beneficial for Jokkmokk to showcase other products that might start new trends. He says that Jokkmokk has only been active on the Japanese market for a short time and looking at it from a product lifecycle perspective, the destination is on a sure rise and he assesses that the Japanese market for Jokkmokk will grow.

Initially DJ focused on establishing their brand internationally but also within the region. The next step for the DMO will be to work internally with destination development by securing the quality of their products, making companies internationally competitive, and transfer solutions both to the destination and within it. Thomas also mentions that there is a need for more bed capacity in the destination but this is something the DMO can't work directly for since the development of accommodations ultimately is up to the member companies.

There is no guarantee to see the northern lights, and as such Saeko tries to promote other activities so that the Japanese tourists will have some memorable experience to tell their friends about when they go back to Japan. One result of this is that VGL has established an attraction where Japanese tourists can visit real Swedish homes to cook a meal, have some coffee, or just look around and chat. The tourists appreciate the opportunity to interact with the locals in a calm environment where they can try to converse in English. Saeko says that it is important to also consider the development of indoor activities to especially cater to the older or less active tourists.

Access is highlighted by Saeko as a problem affecting visit numbers. In the 1990s Gällivare had about 2000 Japanese visitors a year. At that time, SAS and Skyways, a now defunct Swedish airline, had a partnership that made it cheaper for international tourists to transfer to Gällivare from Stockholm. According to Saeko, improving access by train and flights are areas that the DMO works with.

When Erica worked for KL, the DMO was involved in establishing a direct flight from Copenhagen to Kiruna. Nowadays, she explains that SLT supports the regions airports, sometimes with financial resources and marketing, and sometimes with expertise. Mattias mentions how the flights from Copenhagen to Kiruna not only benefited the Danish and German tourist but also provided Japanese tourists with improved access to Kiruna.

Thomas says that DJ has worked innovatively with increasing access to their destination by organizing a transfer solution from the Luleå airport directly to Jokkmokk. It used to be cumbersome to travel from the airport due to several transfers. DJ has constructed a financing model where several members participate in a risk-fund in order to cover up any potential losses for the bus company if they run with few or no customers, making it possible to have airport shuttle buses running to the destination. When it comes to developing access by flights DJ leaves the matter into SLT's hands as the regional representative. Thomas says, however, that the DMO in many ways participates in the regional work to improve accessibility.

Direct flights between Tokyo and Kiruna are definitely a factor affecting the number of

Japanese tourists to Norrbotten, according to both Saeko and Thomas. Saeko says that these flights are probably the product of the work carried out by travel agencies and incoming companies in Japan. Erica considers the long running, continuous work on the Japanese market to be the reason that the direct flights came to be. She goes on by saying that she believes the direct flights to be proof that the KL had worked correctly for a very long time. The Japanese tour operators believed so much in the destination, and enjoyed a lot of sales, that they were willing to take the risk and book these flights. She adds, however, that they were not selling only Kiruna, but the entire Cap of the North, an arctic area that consists of counties in Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Mattias agrees that it is partly the long running marketing efforts on the Japanese market and the demand for Kiruna as a destination that exists in Japan that has resulted in the chartered flights. He believes that Kiruna was chosen as the city had the infrastructure necessary to handle these tourists. However, he says that even before the chartered flights were established, the number of Japanese tourists was increasing.

### Humans Resources

Erica says that the tourism industry has a greater need than some other industries of staff with varied cultural backgrounds. Since Norrbotten is becoming an increasingly international destination the DMOs have a need for staff with language skills and cultural understanding. She also stresses the need of SLT for people with specific expertise in various areas. Since SLT does not have their own destination but works for the region as a whole, when the individual destinations contact them with a request or concern, they need to be able to provide support in that specific field.

Despite the industries specific needs, Erica tells that when she worked at KL they had the same hiring-policies as any other industry; looking at what was demanded in the role and function of the position and hiring accordingly. For example when she was recruiting a Japanese market coordinator she was looking for a person used to working on an international market, as they were an international destination. She also wanted someone who understood the business model, and had knowledge about the destination. When she heard that Mattias, who she believes possess these qualities, had resigned from his job in Japan, she contacted him directly about the position.

When asked about how they have upgraded the human resources in KL, Mattias mentions a recent project where actors who were previously not internationally active were taught how to receive international guest and open up for an international market. This was done in order to allow members to function well together with large scale international travel agencies. He also mentions that there are more of these kinds of projects planned for the future and that they have continued this type of work at their destination.

At VGL, Saeko has held a number of activities for the member companies with the purpose of increasing their knowledge about the Japanese market. This includes how to act, and the tourist's expectations. The DMO also has provided some opportunities for the members to educate themselves about culture and the language, and to ask questions about Japanese behaviors and mannerisms.



The interest for education for members in Jokkmokk was very low when DJ started. The members were tired of lectures and rather wanted to see actual increase in visitor numbers, Thomas says. Now that the visitor numbers have increased he sees that the interest among the members is on a rise.

### Understanding Japanese Culture & Language

Saeko tells how it is quite difficult to work with Japanese tour operators. This is due to the operators being highly cautious and planning far ahead in time. Issues sometimes arise for the hotels when tour operators book a large number of rooms months in advance in order to provide accommodation in case they manage to sell enough trips, only to cancel the reservations later on, leaving the hotel owners with empty rooms and not enough time to re-book them. They are also very meticulous about details concerning attractions. This is due to strict rules where providing inaccurate information to the customer in the travel brochures is ground for reimbursements. For example, there has been complaints from Japanese tourists about issues such as not being able to enter a church that was advertised in their brochure, or unexpectedly had to help cooking meals during guided tours. These activities and their contents were not clearly described in advance and as such misunderstandings arose. Therefore, the Japanese travel agencies appreciate being able to ask about details in Japanese, according to Saeko.

An example of where Japanese tourists differ, according to Saeko, is that even couples want twin rooms rather than double rooms. She also brings up how the balance in the food menu might be more important to the Japanese compared to European markets. Serving the same type of food two days in a row could result in complaints, and as such they check the menus carefully. She also mentions time between meals as important, which may not exceed four hours. Minor issues like this can be confusing or frustrating for the local members.

Saeko thinks that one has to work extremely hard and thoroughly to retain Japanese tour operators' business. She perceives a need to be expeditious in communication, and for the destination to convey interest in the success of the partnership. Otherwise, the tour operators will take their business elsewhere. Mattias agrees that it is quite demanding to be active on the Japanese market, as such, KL collaborates with members who themselves are willing to work towards the Japanese market. The DMO has helped these members with translation and market communication. It is also these members that he primarily highlights when promoting the destination in Japan but he adapts to the situation depending on what the other party shows interest in.

Saeko mentions that not only doing bookings for, but also helping with little things concerning Japanese tourists is seen as a comfort by the local attractions. An example is the attraction where tourists visit Santa. As the local Santa, and average Japanese tourist, is not very proficient at English, Saeko says that both parties appreciate her help translating.

Mattias mentions the value of staff that understands Japanese language and culture, such as Saeko, for cooperation with actors in Japan. Thomas agrees that this is important but feels that the most important thing is to understand the business model. Mattias explains that his expertise from his previous work in Japan, such as his contacts, has been implemented when

constructing the joint marketing plan for the destinations with an interest in Japan.

Erica explains that while there was no staff at KL who had specific knowledge of Japanese knowledge and culture, the members who took on a lot of Japanese guests had their own staff with these skills. Now, she highlights the importance of having Mattias there as a knowledgeable regional coordinator for the Japanese market. Mattias adds that there is not enough staff at KL to allow for the type of service in connection to the Japanese market that Saeko provides in Gällivare other than being of assistance with tourist information.

# Analysis

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*In this chapter we will link our empirical findings to the theoretical framework in order to analyze and discuss consistencies and deviations. The headings will follow the same format as the Empirical Findings: Our Interviews chapter, in line with our theoretical model.*

## Marketing

### Image-Enhancing Efforts

The main task of the DMO is, according to Elbe et. al. (2009), to market its destination. In the case studies by Eriksson & Svensson and Anestedt & Westberg, marketing was indeed seen as a large part of the DMOs work. This since the individual actors did not have the resources to market on their own. Unsurprisingly, marketing is an activity that all interviewed DMOs have put extensive effort in, even marketing the region together in a unified manner.

In Japan the DMOs present themselves under the Swedish Lapland brand. Utilizing the Swedish Lapland brand goes into Pike's (2004) discussion of the role of the DMO to enhance the image of the destination. The lack of awareness of the local brands owned by the destinations in Norrbotten severely weakens their ability to compete on the global market. By uniting, they can increase the destination competitiveness and overcome this disadvantage.

Increased marketing toward foreign markets was stressed in the Nature & Culture Tourism report. All three local destinations engage in promotional activities abroad to market their destinations, a role of the DMO as suggested by Svensk (1998). These efforts are increasingly supported on the regional level by SLT providing more effective marketing campaigns through a stronger more unified stance, which helps the DMOs to overcome issues of small scale that Pearce (1992) discusses. As Thomas and Mattias mentioned, it is seen as essential to collaborate with SLT in order to establish a presence on the Japanese market.

The DMOs in Norrbotten are working under strict budgets and are relatively weak in terms of financial and marketing resources, according to Saeko and Mattias. As mentioned by the World Tourism Organization (2007) lack of finances is a common problem for DMOs. The DMOs therefore need to construct business plans that allows them perform their functions while under constricted budgets. In order to do this, the DMOs in the region prioritize markets and efforts to allow for reasonable budgets for each. This strategy is clearly exemplified by DJ. From the outset DJ focused their marketing efforts to target certain markets and even segments within them. Another example of how the DMOs have worked with this in mind when marketing towards Japan is their attempt to utilize media attention. They both pick-up on offers from media and actively pursue opportunities to appear in Japanese media. Since this is a cost-free way of increasing awareness it is an important mean for image-enhancing.

We can see that SLT engages in the marketing of a place as defined by Heldt Cassel (2007). By allowing companies who represent the image SLT wants to convey of the region, such as in natural cosmetics and respected industries, to use their brand Swedish Lapland, they work with conveying a positive image of the destination.

## Joint Marketing Efforts

The DMOs work towards the Japanese market since they have historically had member companies with an interest in this market. This shows that the DMOs understand the expectations of their members, and maintain the type of communication discussed by Shockley-Zalabak (2002). The DMOs and their members work for the same goal which is crucial for cooperation to work (Elbe et. al. 2009).

At the regional level, individual DMOs considered the activities of the other destinations when deciding targeted markets. The same is true for SLT, who surveyed what markets were interesting for the DMOs in the region and decided on their targets accordingly. This makes sure that when planning their next steps in image-enhancing, cooperation takes place between the DMOs on a regional level, argued necessary by Bohlin & Elbe (2007). Coordination was something that was pointed out as lacking in the Nature & Culture Tourism report, and seems to have improved based on the cooperative marketing efforts led by SLT.

When marketing the region internationally, SLT promotes the classic attractions but makes sure to include some new attractions. This is beneficial for all participants as the new, upcoming actors can achieve economies of scale through pooling of resources with SLT's financing model, making their marketing efforts more effective. The new interesting attractions are often small and do not have time nor resources to market themselves, as Erica exemplified with Treehotel. At the same time, the large, established actors' campaign efforts are not leached upon as these up-and-coming actors contribute to the marketing efforts as explained by Palmer & Bejou (1995).

## Attributes that Japanese Tourists Value

Yamamoto & Gill (1999), Murphey & Williams (1999), Watkins & Gnoth (2010), Mok & Lam (2000), & Nash et.al. (2010) all mentioned nature and rural attractiveness as important factors for drawing Japanese tourism. Promoting nature attractions is something all DMOs engage in, emphasizing northern lights or rural sceneries. The case study on VGL also found that the quietness and closeness to nature was one of the destinations advantages. The importance of this is further illustrated by the lack of interest in the mining attractions, which is the other major source of tourism assessed as important by Arvidsson & Hurve, and Mattias saying that there would be few Japanese tourists visiting the destination if it was not for the northern lights.

World heritage areas were also considered valued by the Japanese tourists (Nash et.al. 2010) and the DMOs cater to this demand by promoting not only their own world heritage areas, but also the world heritage areas of the entire region in their marketing, as exemplified by VGL.

However, researchers Murphy & Williams maintain that nature alone is not enough to create a satisfying experience and as such incorporation of cultural components is necessary. DJ and VGL complements KVs heavy focus on the northern lights by offering genuine Sámi and Santa experiences. Watkins & Gnoth (2010) argues that this kind of experience is appreciated by the modern Japanese tourist who demands products that have not been adapted for the Japanese market. It is therefore possible for VGL and DJ to compete with destinations like Finland, which caters to the traditional Japanese tourist, by targeting a different segment of

the market.

These events also facilitate host-guest exchange, something Nash et.al. (2010) deem important, allowing the Japanese tourists to communicate with locals, sometimes with the direct involvement of DMO personnel as is the case with VGL. Host-guest exchange is something especially VGL works with and can be exemplified by their “home-visit” product, directly contributing to satisfying visitor experiences as DMOs should according to Bornhorst (2010).

The ability to buy local specialties is highlighted by Murphy & Williams (1999) and this is, although to a lesser extent by KL, marketed by all destinations. It could be argued that KL’s strong focus on nature experiences has led them to somewhat neglect developing the cultural side of the tourist experience. The lack of these attractions means that, by itself, KL could probably not provide a complete, satisfying experience. The presence of, and cooperation with, other complementary destinations as promoted by Buhalis (2000), serves to negate this problem, which Thomas clearly exemplifies by explaining that almost all tourists that visit Jokkmokk have also visited Kiruna.

## Cooperation

### Contacts and Links with Japan

Both Murphy & Williams (1999) and Nash et.al (2010) stress the importance of involving Japanese tour operators when trying to attract Japanese tourist to a destination. These contacts and links seem to be maintained strongly by all the DMOs both through events in Norrbotten and Japan and also by regular communication by phone or mail. As such it seems as the DMOs serve as key liaisons with the actors, which Gartrell (1994) suggest is their role.

### Public & Private

The individual DMOs are engaging in public-private cooperation, mostly on the municipal level, thus contributing in evening out the lack of conformities between public bodies and the private sector as discussed by Halldin & Hultman (2005), World Tourism Organization (2007) and Buhalis (2000). The arguably most essential work however, to lobby for the tourism industry as deemed necessary by the Nature & Culture Tourism report, is handled by SLT on a regional level. This seems reasonable as they have the ability to speak for the entire region, and can coordinate lobbying efforts.

A clear example of where the DMOs and public actors have different views, which becomes a large obstacle for long-term development as discussed by Frisk (2003), Elbe et. al. (2009) and Selin & Meyers (1998), is the usage of the heavily protected Lapponia area, a question where a consensus has yet to be reached. This has been an issue for a long time and was brought up in the Nature & Culture Tourism report. While there is a clear interest in allowing commercial activities in Lapponia from the individual DMOs, they are not currently pushing the issue. DJ, however, does express plans to increase efforts through cooperation with, for instance, Sámi organizations, as deemed necessary in Brouder’s case study for the destination’s development. The relative inactivity probably stems from the lack of personnel since, as Erica explains,

working with this kind of issue takes a lot of time and personnel resources. As the individual DMOs are occupied with marketing and developing their own members, it is logical that they leave this type of large-scale issue to the regional representative. This is a good example of a situation where SLT can pick up on local demand and act as a leader in a common need for destination development.

The region as a destination for Japanese tourism might possibly have been in a disadvantageous position due to the lack of a Swedish tourism promotional organ in Japan. The DMOs are all actively participating in the launch of The Swedish Tourism and Culture Center, a venture that will help enhance the region's image in Japan, with KL in particular being active in supporting the launch. At the same time, they are using this opportunity to meet with Japanese actors by yet another promotional visit to the country.

### Between Destinations

There seems to be consensus among the member DMOs as they trust in each other and in SLT. Trust is important for SLT and the individual DMOs as it enables effective collaboration between members and is created when the DMOs cohere to the cooperation guidelines of its members (Halldin & Hultman 2005), such as when SLT goes does not bypass the local DMOs when contacting a member company. Establishing trust for the DMO leads to legitimacy for its work, which, together with good communications, was seen as necessary in the case studies of Destination South Lapland and Gällivare Tourism.

According to Erica, SLT does not desire to build a strong, centralized organization but rather wants to work towards cooperation and coordination between actors, as Bohlin & Elbe (2007) argues a DMO should, and deemed necessary by the Nature & Culture Tourism report. This type of work could have contributed to the increased trust as the DMOs feel a sense of cooperation rather than rivalry towards each other, something Buhalis (2000) claims is essential. Keeping their autonomous positions and at the same time utilizing a comprehensive tourism strategy from a regional DMO should benefit local businesses and DMOs (Bodén et.al 2006).

Increased trust and cooperation have seemingly been beneficial, enabling the organization of joint efforts between actors at different hierarchical levels. These efforts are, for instance, FAM-trips, promotional visits, and a joint marketing plan. With FAM-trips, there have been issues of perceived uneven contributions that caused conflict, a possibility discussed by Elbe et. al. (2009). However despite these issues, it seems that this type of cooperation, which is argued necessary by The World Tourism Organization (2007), has developed in the right direction.

The cooperation between the actors has made it possible for the DMOs to jointly, though SLT, apply for funding during the next period. SLT is the organization that takes the lead in securing funding, a need discussed in Brouder's case. Funding is one of the factors one should look at when determining DMO success (Bornhorst et.al. 2010) but is at the same one of the major problems for DMOs according to the World Tourism Organization (2007). Limited budgets have been shown to be a problem for the interviewed DMOs, restricting their target

markets and activities. Increased cooperation between the actors and the motivation for it mostly seems to be focused around solving this problem through common efforts.

### Package Tours

The development and assembly of package tours as a possible strategy for attracting Japanese tourists to a destination (Murphy & Williams 1999; Nash et.al. 2010) is ultimately out of the DMOs control, they do however work with presenting options to incoming companies and travel agencies so that they in turn develop tours to the region. Since DMOs have established cooperation and promote their destination and attractions in a unified manner, they have arguably contributed to tours increasingly taking place in their region rather than in the more developed destinations of Norway and Finland. This would be a natural consequence of tours that start in one of Norrbotten's destinations, such as in the case of the chartered flights that start in Kiruna. The DMOs are decreasingly working alone or competing against each other in attracting the interest of incoming operator, thus improving since the Nature & Culture Tourism report was published.

However, while they view the adjacent regions as competition, they also attribute a lot of their success to the existence of the more developed destinations since a lot of the tourist at these destinations also travels across the national borders and visits Norrbotten. Increased cooperation across the country borders with competing destinations could possibly be beneficial for the future, as suggested by Buhalis (2000).

The importance of themed tours in particular for attracting Japanese tourism (Nash et. al 2010) and (Murphy & Williams 1999), was considered important for the industry in the Nature & Culture Tourism report. Erica mentions themed tourism as one of the areas where SLT works, which could prove to be beneficial for the region, but the results remains to be seen.

## Development

### Destination Development

The advent of northern lights attractions and the Icehotel in Kiruna was the starting point for destination development in Norrbotten. While these attractions have been the basis for tourism, especially Japanese, to the area, there is a need for constant development in order to make sure that the attractions do not fall into the stagnations stage In Butler's tourist area life cycle model. This can be work with developing new attractions or upgrading of things such as infrastructure and even systems within organizations. It is like Haugland et.al. (2011) describes it, a very broad range of activities that can be seen as destination development.

Arguably, some of the attractions may already be in, or risk soon entering, the stagnation stage of Butler's model (1980). For instance, Erica describes how the northern lights attractions have been developed to a great extent already, and Thomas believes they are in a decline. To replace these, new attractions need to be developed as argued by Butler (1980) and Gibson (2006). Since much of the region is arguably still in the earlier stages of the model and has the possibility for future growth, as found in the Gällivare Tourism case study and claimed by

Thomas, the promotion of and support in developing new attractions undertaken by the DMOs is necessary for the successful development of the region.

The DMOs have contributed to destination governance and development (Bornhorst et.al. 2010) partly by working closely together with large attractions, like KL's collaboration with Icehotel, and partly by promoting new attractions as in the case of VGL's Santa attractions. The latter is also an example of where the DMO has helped entrepreneurs overcome the troubles perceived with creating larger events or activities, as brought up in the Nature & Culture Tourism report, and helped the development of attractions as advocated by Gartrell (1994).

The idea that DMOs are rather in a position of influence than control of destination development (Bohlin & Elbe 2007) is shared by SLT. It is the DMOs job to inspire members and provide input but new products and processes need to be developed by the member companies. In his case study, Brouder found that while individual entrepreneurs lacked resources, they did have a strong will to cooperate, and there existed a potential for building local capacity at the destination through joint efforts led by a coordinator. SLTs efforts of supporting upcoming attractions could be seen as a continuation of such efforts but on a regional level.

The DMOs have worked with providing visitor services and have also been participating in efforts to develop their destinations and attractions (Gartrell 1994). Examples are the "Home-visit" and Santa Winter Games products offered by VGL, and KL's job with ensuring information about the destination and its attractions are available in Japanese. The case of the Santa Winter Games is also an example where the DMO has helped an entrepreneur to increase the scale of activities, a challenge for destinations development as described by the Nature & Culture Tourism report.

Much of the previous work with development has focused on the region's brand and cooperation between destinations. This work seems to have had some effect as the destinations are now gathered under a coordinator with a fair level of international renown. The next step is for the DMOs to turn inwards as exemplified by SLTs strategies for strengthening and raising the overall level of the member companies, and DJs efforts to make their members internationally competitive and secure product quality.

One area where development is needed is in bed capacity. This was singled out in the report by Arvidsson & Hurve and by Thomas as important if the destinations are to grow. This is one issue where, since the DMOs can't affect it directly, indirect work to encourage development of accommodations, and awareness of this issue need to be increased.

Another pressing matter for further development is in improving communications to and within the region. There has been some success in this work as the DMOs have partaken in the development of flights to the region, shuttle-buses to the destinations, and are working on train-access. Flights in particular have been of interest for this study and were brought up by Arvidsson & Hurve as especially important for regional development. It is difficult to say to what extent the DMOs have influenced the development of chartered flights since work was largely done on the Japanese side. However, the long-term and the increasingly coordinated



promotional work of the DMOs in Japan cannot be ignored. There is however much work remaining. Especially train connections are in need of improvement according to all the interviewees, and our own first-hand experience when visiting the region. SLTs active work for improving night trains, however, is promising.

### Humans Resources

The tourism industry is argued by Kvarnström & Syssner (2013) to be in constant transformation, and as such the DMOs must be able to handle the new demand that this change brings with it. The DMOs seem to be working with in a number of ways; SLT is hiring staff with specific expertise in a range of fields that are demanded by the destinations, thus adapting to changes by upgrading human resources (Buhalis 2000).

At all three local destinations there has been some amount of efforts with upgrading human resources in relation to working towards the Japanese market, or at least an increased interest such as at DJ. Educating members in for instance eco-tourism and international business methods is work that, according to Syssner (2013), is often undertaken by DMOs parallel with marketing efforts and this was also brought up in the Nature & Culture Tourism report as one area where work needed to be done. For instance, at VGL they have provided opportunities for the members to educate themselves about Japanese tourists and how one should work towards that market. Mattias being hired as the marketing director for KL, is also evidence of a clear commitment from the DMOs to upgrade human resources to be more effective on the Japanese market. This type of efforts is part of one of the key themes for DMO and destination success as according to Bornhorst (2010) and can have contributed to the DMO success.

### Understanding Japanese Culture & Language

Seeing as Norrbotten is becoming increasingly international as a destination, there is a need in the tourism industry for staff with language skills and cultural knowledge. Working toward the Japanese market comes with its own challenges and requires dedication and effort from the companies as explained by Saeko and Mattias. As such the DMOs work with members who themselves express an interest in working towards the market. This aligns with the need for mutual involvement of DMOs and their members when working for destination development as discussed by Shockley-Zalabak (2002).

The presence of staff at the DMOs with knowledge about Japanese language and culture as deemed necessary by Murphy & Williams (1999) and Watkins & Gnoth (2010) is something that is perceived as beneficial for the all involved parties according to Saeko, Erica, and Mattias. Staff with these skills are employed by both KL and VGL, which seems to have contributed substantially to the interaction and collaboration with Japanese actors both in Norrbotten and while promoting the destinations in Japan, and in the case of VGL, to visitor satisfaction at the destination.

## Discussion

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*In this chapter we will take a critical look at our own theoretical proposition and the results from our interviews, incorporating our own thoughts into the discussion to a higher degree.*

### Findings

Our perhaps most important finding was how the DMOs used the brand identity of Swedish Lapland together in their marketing. As they operate from a very peripheral region this should be almost a prerequisite to stand out on a market as far off as the Japanese one. This type of marketing could not be possible without a substantial amount of trust that facilitates cooperation, however, which has led us to re-evaluate the different categories for success, or at least seen a pattern in their order of implementation that is as follows:

Cooperation → Marketing → Development

While the three categories all remain important, we have found that the DMOs need to work with them in this particular order. To engage in joint marketing efforts, for example, certainly requires a high level of trust and strong commitment to cooperate with each other. When the highly outward-oriented marketing efforts are coordinated and in effect, the next step is to further improve the destinations, turning the focus inwards yet again. Cooperation could thus be argued to be the most important category, as it is a prerequisite in the model for further work that will result in DMO success. However, this finding is probably only applicable in similar situations where several DMOs work together for destination development and would probably not be the case for the work of DMOs operating individually.

One factor that we found interesting was that all DMOs had their own contacts with Japan. It seems like it would be more efficient to have a shared contacts register to avoid duplication of work and allow for broader, more streamlined communication channels between the region and Japan. This may be a possible direction for the DMOs as they have indeed a regional coordinator, which brings us to our next factor of interest for the Japanese market: human resources. The development of new attractions is deemed important for the development of a destination. For the Japanese market however, there is an overwhelming interest in, and importance of, the northern lights attractions. Seeing as these are already highly developed, the issue of improving and adapting both the attractions and the services surrounding them for the Japanese market is of higher relevance. The way this has to be done is by developing human resources with expertise related to working with Japan. As such, the Destination Development point of the model seems to be of less importance than Human Resources and Understanding Japanese Culture & Language in this particular case.

### Criticism & Speculations

One could question the objectivity of the interviewees and thus the results we have obtained. Since we only talked to the DMOs, there is of course the risk of biased answers and an excessively positive view of the work they have done for destination development. However, as a way to minimize this risk, the questions asked were focused around what type of work they had undertaken and what the organizations considered the main challenges for attracting

Japanese tourists. This since asking them directly about the specific points related to attracting Japanese tourists could result in leading questions and unsatisfactory answers. We also made a point of not revealing what work within the different categories we deemed important as revealing this could have influenced the interviewees into naming just the factors we, rather than they, deemed important.

For a comprehensive view we would have needed to examine other actors as well such as the member companies, public actors, and certainly the Japanese actors. Nevertheless we have been able to determine how the DMOs have worked but as we lack a comprehensive view and do not use any measurable factors for DMO success, it is difficult to say to what degree they have been successful. Other factors which have influenced the success of the destination have been found in the empirical data, such as the success of the nearby destinations in Finland and Norway and their effect on Norrbotten's destinations needs to be examined. Efforts on the Japanese side could also have had an effect on the success of the destinations, especially since they were the ones who started the chartered flights. We do however maintain that the success of the destinations on the Japanese market can to some degree be attributed to the work of the DMOs. Some attractions, like Icehotel, which maintains its own links to Japan, would still have seen interest from the Japanese market but without the DMOs efforts in organizing FAM-trips to Norrbotten and their efforts of promoting the destinations in Japan, it is hard to believe that we would have seen the interest on the Japanese market that resulted in such increased visitor numbers to the region.

## Conclusion

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*In this final chapter we will reflect upon if we have fulfilled the purpose of this thesis and try to answer our research questions with the results that we have gathered. We will also give some suggestions for future research in this field.*

The purpose of this paper was to gain a better understanding if the DMOs in Norrbotten have affected the increasing Japanese tourism to the region and how. In order to do this, we needed to understand the DMOs work in general to promote their destinations on the international market.

Through the research in this thesis, an increased understanding about the DMOs work with destination development in Norrbotten and their work in the Japanese market has been achieved. The results of this thesis and the model provided should be applicable for future international business studies in similar destinations where these types of organizations operate.

The main question of this thesis was:

- How do the DMOs work with Japanese tourism and has their work been successful?

In order to answer this question, we first needed to look at the following supporting research question:

- How do the DMOs work for destination development?

To start answering the supporting research question, it seems as if the DMOs to a large extent works with activities one could easily fit into the three categories for DMO success of our model.

Marketing in particular is an area where the DMOs have worked extensively in the last few years. SLT has taken on a leadership role in marketing by providing a brand that all the destinations can jointly work under, thus increasing their competitiveness on the global market. The destinations work together in coordinating joint marketing efforts and promotional activities.

Promoting cooperation is something the DMOs have worked with for a long time. There seems to be a large degree of cooperation between the local DMOs as well as with SLT that has taken on a clear leadership role. All DMOs cooperates with public actors to some degree and SLT, in its leadership role, represents the region when working with issues that affect several destinations.

The DMOs are working with development in several ways. They have in some cases been directly involved in the developing and supporting new attractions. They have also worked with upgrading of human resources, both in the DMOs by recruitment and at the destinations by educating members. The DMOs have also worked for use of the world heritage Laponia by the tourism industry; however, this work has mostly been through SLT but has yet to yield any concrete results.

To answer the main research question, we have seen that the DMOs are working to some extent in all factors of our model that we have deemed necessary for DMO success on the Japanese market.

For the Japanese market they have highlighted attributes in their marketing such as nature, world heritages, local culture and specialties. These are attributes that, according to the theories we used, are deemed attractive on that market.

The local DMOs have cooperated in organizing regional activities such as FAM-trips, which has become more effective compared to when they worked individually. The DMOs also maintain their own contacts with Japanese actors. In the coordination of packaged tours, the DMOs cannot directly affect the tour contents, but they do cooperate with each other to promote tours taking place in their region as a whole.

For the Japanese market, the DMOs have worked with facilitating interaction with the local population, providing information in Japanese, and educating member companies about Japanese tourism. In addition to this, to increase human resources aimed at the Japanese market a regional coordinator has been assigned.

To answer the question of whether the DMOs work has been successful, by looking at the factors deemed important in our model and the results that we have analyzed, we can conclude that the DMOs have been successful. This since the DMOs to some extent work with all the factors of our model and, without the DMOs work with promoting the region through FAM-trips and promotional events in Japan, the interest from Japanese actors to establish trips to the region would be lower. However, we cannot say to what extent the DMOs have been successful as we have only examined the DMOs and we do not use any hard factors of measurement. Partly due to this we would like to present some suggestions for further studies.

## Further Research

Since this thesis only looked at the work done by the DMOs in Norrbotten, further research from the perspective of the Japanese actors as well as other interested parties in Norrbotten needs to be done in order to gain a comprehensive picture of how the development of the destinations for the Japanese market has taken place.

Examining destination success from other criteria than the ones we have, taking on a more quantitative approach, seeing if it yields any different results, and be able to assess the level of success to a more precise degree could be of interest .

Further research at other destinations working towards the Japanese market would be an interesting choice for a future study; especially the destinations in neighboring countries would be of interest since we have seen tendencies of spill-over effects that, while outside the scope of our research, could influence the success of a destination.

Other markets than the Japanese one could also be researched to provide different conclusions on how DMOs work with attracting tourists. It could also be interesting to see whether the work done for to attract Japanese tourist is equally effective for other markets, and what differences there really are in promoting the destinations for various markets.

# Appendix

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## Swedish Lapland Tourism Interview Questions

### *Marketing*

How do you work with the other DMOs to market the region?

How does your marketing towards the Japanese market look? What do you highlight? Does it differ from other markets?

### *Cooperation*

Private and public often have conflicting interest in destination development. Has there been any challenges working with both?

Do you see any difficulties with organizing so many DMOs? How do you combine your overarching goals with the ones of the individual destinations?

How do you cooperate with the smaller DMOs in questions regarding Japanese tourism?

Do you cooperate, or communicate, directly with any Japanese actors?

### *Development*

How has your organization worked to develop Norrbotten as a whole? Have you also focused on the individual attractions?

How have you worked with destination development for the Japanese market?

Would you say that Japanese tourists differ in their needs and expectations of Norrbotten compared to other tourists? How does the destination cater to these needs?

What do you think has been important factors for the increased Japanese tourism to Norrbotten?

## Other DMOs Interview Questions

### *Marketing*

How does your marketing differ from the joint marketing of SLT? In what way do you cooperate with the other DMOs in marketing?

How do you market yourselves towards the Japanese market? What do you highlight? Does it differ from marketing towards other destinations?

### *Cooperation*

Private and public often have conflicting interest in destination development. Has there been any challenges working with both?

Has there been any difficulties working together with so many other destinations in SLT? How does SLT cater to your destination's needs?

How do you cooperate with the other DMOs in questions regarding Japanese tourism?

Do you cooperate, or communicate, directly with any Japanese actors?

### *Development*

How has your organization worked to develop the destination as a whole? Have you also focused on the individual attractions?

How have you worked with destination development for the Japanese market?

Would you say that Japanese tourists differ in their needs and expectations of Norrbotten compared to other tourists? How does the destination cater to these needs?

What do you think has been important factors for the increased Japanese tourism to Norrbotten?

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