

# Destination Marketing as a Team Effort

- the Practices and Experiences of three Tourism Entrepreneurs  
in Northern Sweden

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## **Abstract**

This thesis set out to see how small and medium sized tourism entrepreneurs are using collaborative destination marketing as a complement to their use of marketing as a single destination. To accomplish this, a case study approach was used with interviews carried out with respondents from three tourism companies in the Swedish region of Norrbotten. The results show that the tourism SMEs are working within long-term partnership networks crossing municipal and regional borders. Perhaps as a consequence to this, the companies do not consider themselves to have any competitors, only partners. Another finding was that the reasons for entering a collaboration varies and depend on the situation for the single company. Finally the results show that while previous work have considered tourism SMEs as rather poor marketers, these companies are strong in certain aspect while weak in others.

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# Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Destination marketing.....	1
1.2 Problem discussion.....	1
1.3 Purpose and research questions.....	5
<b>2. Theory.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 How do tourist entrepreneurs market themselves as a single destination?.....	6
2.1.1 The four realms of the tourism and hospitality experience.....	6
2.1.2 Levels of marketing activity model.....	7
2.1.3 Destination demarketing.....	8
2.2 How do tourist entrepreneurs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	10
2.2.1 Four characteristics of destination alliances.....	10
2.2.2 Destination marketing collaboration process.....	10
2.2.3 Brand images of tourism destinations.....	12
2.2.4 Tools for communicating an image.....	13
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Literature search.....	14
3.2 Research strategy.....	14
3.3 Case selection and presentation.....	14
3.3.1 Gammelstad Churchtown, Luleå.....	14
3.3.2 Rödbergsfortet, Boden.....	14
3.3.3 Icehotel, Kiruna.....	15
3.4 Data collection.....	15
3.5 Data analysis.....	16
3.6 Methodology problems.....	16
<b>4. Empirical data.....</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Gammelstad Churchtown, Luleå.....	18
4.1.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?.....	18
4.1.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	20
4.2 Rödbergsfortet, Boden.....	21
4.2.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?.....	21
4.2.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	23
4.3 Icehotel, Kiruna.....	25
4.3.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?.....	25
4.3.2 How do tourism SMEs in market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	26
4.4 Relations between cases.....	27
<b>5. Analysis.....</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?.....	28
5.1.1 The four realms of tourism and hospitality experience.....	28
5.1.2 Levels of marketing activity.....	28
5.1.3 Tools to create an image.....	29
5.1.4 Destination demarketing.....	30
5.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	30
5.2.1 Four characteristics of destination alliances.....	30

5.2.2 Destination collaboration process.....	31
5.2.3 Brand images of tourism destinations.....	31
5.2.4 Tools for communicating an image.....	31
<b>6. Discussion and conclusions.....</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1 Answering the research questions.....	33
6.1.1: How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?.....	33
6.1.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?.....	34
6.2 Reconnecting to the purpose: conclusions and contributions.....	34
6.3 Suggestions for future research.....	35
<b>References.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Interview guide</b>	
<b>Appendix 2: Interview guide, Swedish version</b>	

# **1. Introduction**

*This section will introduce destination marketing as a topic to reader as well as motivating the research problem by referring to previous work. The research questions as well as purpose are found in the end of the section.*

## **1.1 Destination marketing**

The tourism industry has seen a steady growth since 1997, with an average growth of incoming international tourists of four percent every year, in spite of negative external events such as the outbreak of SARS as well as the increase of global terrorism in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks in 2001 (World Tourist Organization, 2008). If the means of travel to and from the destinations is included, tourism expenditure was over \$1 trillion in 2007 (ibid). The growing demand for leisure and travel has according to Williams (2006) made tourism marketing more important, the author however also state that many past marketing efforts have often been failing, due to marketers not understanding the homogeneous nature of many of the destinations and the heterogeneous nature of the consumers. Wang (2008) means that failing destination marketing is partly due to tourism stakeholders not cooperating, something that has led to the use of DMOs, or Destination Management Organizations. This phenomenon has been a popular topic for scholars recently, with not rarely different and contradicting results. Perhaps is this caused by the development of constantly developing methods used by the DMOs or cultural differences between the studied cases. In either way, the dynamic development of the topic makes it interesting.

The word “destination” might need some definition, since scholars have used the word with different levels of geographical limitation. Some previous work concentrates on national destination marketing, for example Riege (1998) who described the national strategies of Germany, New Zealand and Australia. Similar to this view, however more regional, is the one of Iversen (2007), who consider a destination as an umbrella of individual sub-brands. Backteman and Östman (2009) as well as Gidlund and Israelsson (2009) choose to limit themselves to municipalities; while other scholars (Brooker & Burgess, 2008; Niininen, 2007; Thode, 1998; Williams, 2006) make no clear distinction between a destination in terms of geography and the number of independent business units involved in one destination. This thesis will limit itself to the practice and experiences of tourism entrepreneurs who are single business units or legal entities; or when the term is not fully applicable, in the term of Iversen (2007): a sub-brand in the municipal destination umbrella. There is however support for a non-distinction of the word “destination” as well, this non-distinction will be used here; for that reason the results and theoretic contributions of previous work with a broader definition will be used to form a purpose, research questions and a theoretical foundation.

## **1.2 Problem discussion**

According to Hankinson (2004a) destination marketers in general rarely start from scratch when starting to develop the marketing for the venue; since the potential consumer may have developed an image of the destination during the course of the years. These can be both

positive, i.e. a rich and colorful history, or negative, i.e. a long period of industrial decline (ibid). Hankinson further focus on the process in which marketers develop messages for the destination and which features of the destination that is considered important. He found that the most commonly used factors are the activities and facilities offered as well as the history, heritage and culture of the destination. Factors of less importance were for example the people characteristics, the international reputation and the accessibility of the destination (ibid).

Kotler, Asplund, Rein and Haider (1999, pp. 33-47) have divided the main targets of a destinations' marketing efforts into three groups; the first target group, *visitors*, is divided into visitors of the destination that are there to conduct businesses and regular touristic visitors; the second target group, *residents*, is all the residents in the municipality, both employed and unemployed; the third target group, *businesses*, includes all companies and industries who conduct business at or in the vicinity of the destination. The two groups of the visitor segment, business and leisure tourists have both liknesses and dissimilarities, as shown by Kashyap (2000). Value for money is highly important as a choice criterion for both groups according to the author, but business travellers are less concerned with the quality of the rooms and the activities offered than the leisure travellers (ibid). Buhalis (2000) state that leisure tourists are more concerned about the image of the venue than business tourists.

Riege (1998) names three basic approaches for tourism marketers to employ. He states that they are not mutually exclusive and may be used simultaneously. The first approach is the consumer-oriented approach. This strategy is split into two, where the approach may be either differentiated or undifferentiated. While the differentiators target specific segments by adapting their offering, the undifferentiated offering is based on common traits of all segments. Riege found that while single-segmenting and targeting is rare, many destinations limit themselves to a small number of target group instead of a undifferentiated strategy. This decision was most commonly based on the lack of financial capability to target more segments. The next approach is oriented towards the competitors, in the sense of either being a cost-leader or having a superior product. Riege found little support for destinations striving towards cost-leadership, the respondents were however using what they identified as their competitive advantage as the foundation of their marketing strategy. Furthermore, the respondents were often employing the third approach, which is trade-oriented. Companies using this approach are cooperating both vertically and horizontally with travel agencies, restaurants, hotels and other destinations (ibid).

The trade-oriented approach in tourism, with collaboration between single destinations and their competitors in particular, has been a topic for various scholars. Bejou and Palmer (1995) mean that tourists choose the area for their vacations not based on the offerings of a single destination in the area, but rather the complete attributes that all destinations in the area provide. According to them, the marketing efforts of a small single destination may be futile if not somehow related to the surrounding destinations and where it fits in the total offering of the area. The authors put forth three main reasons for forming marketing alliances. The first one is the economies of scale in pooling the resources of many small destinations together, the

second one is that destinations who market themselves individually let other destinations in the area benefit without aiding, the last one is the positive effect from recognizing the codependences every destination have with the other destinations as well as other stakeholders in the area, such as city hall; thus being able to work more efficient. Hankinson (2004b) supports this view, further adding that an area needs to be marketed as an integration of the destinations, not as several fragments. However, Blain, Levy and Ritchie (2005) argue that it is more difficult for a single destination to assure quality because of the variance of products and services a given visitor experiences within a tourism area. On the other hand, Brooker and Burgess (2008) argue that forming partnerships with other destinations and creating a joint strategy is a key competent in order to rejuvenate declining tourism areas. Buhalis (2000), while in general positive to collaborations, state that rational entrepreneurs enter collaborations in order to benefit the most themselves. This leads to opportunistic behavior as well leading to conflicts, since stakeholders have different goals (ibid).

Collaborative destination marketing is often carried out by a DMO, short for Destination Management Organization (Blain et al. 2005). Scholars have come to different results on how the DMOs are or should be organized. Warnaby and Davies (1997) state that the public sector is commonly responsible for the destination marketing. However, Matson (1994) emphasize the importance of the public sector integrating their marketing with that of the private sectors. Backetman and Östman (2009) found that the marketing efforts were conducted not by the public sector, but rather by private entities. Warnaby, Benninson, Davies, and Hughes (2002) state that places has to be marketed through partnerships, both formal and informal, between both private and public organizations involved in the place product delivery, due to its product complexity.

A recent study by Wang (2008) outlined how a mid-western United States county used extensive collaboration in order to give tourists the most complete experience as possible. The author found that destinations which might seem as competitors were tightly tied together in ongoing projects as a complement to their own marketing efforts, but also that many of the firms chose not to participate in the collaboration. A further finding by Wang was that there are often conflicts within the collaboration, often stemming from the issues of balancing cooperation with competition and the greater good with what is best for the own company (ibid). Bejou and Palmer (1995) found differences in marketing collaborations between United Kingdom and United States destinations and state that the basic cultural traits of the environment in which the entrepreneur is active in influence the manner in which destinations collaborate. Hankinson (2009) found that in destination marketing collaborations, as many as 200 stakeholders were active to a certain degree. The author further found that there were rarely any formal partnerships, contributors rather worked within a loosely tied, short-term informal network; complicating the process of creating a consequent brand message to the target audience. Hankinson further argues that destination alliances need to be formal and long-term (ibid).

Blain et al. (2005) examined the DMOs use of logos. The authors found that the majority of the surveyed organizations had a logo, which was used for a variety of reasons; the most cited were to reflect the image of the destination, to be recognized and to differentiate themselves from other destinations (ibid). The members of the collaboration had little influence over the design of the logo, a task which was most commonly the responsibility of the DMO management. Kotler et al. (1999, pp.170-171) mean that a slogan is a way to communicate an image, and also add that the message communicated by the logo must be consistent with that of the slogan. The authors further state that creating events can be a good way of fortifying an image in the eyes of the target audience (ibid). It is important to note, however, that managers do not necessarily need to focus on the positive features of the destinations. Medway and Warnaby (2008) state that demarketing, i.e. discouraging certain segments to visit, is not an uncommon practice. The use of this form of anti-marketing is mostly used in order to not get negative word-of-mouth from visitors that may find the destination unfitting as well as controlling excessive demand for a limited supply (ibid). Buhalis (2000) name premium pricing as a common strategy to demarket a destination for certain segments. Another perspective, where focus is on the experience offered rather than the image, is according to Williams (2006) rapidly growing in popularity among scholars and managers. The author means that tourism marketers need to find a balance between the four different realms of experiences; entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist. This can be done by for example incorporating both educational and entertaining elements into the activities offered, in order to be a complete tourism product (ibid).

While stakeholders in a DMO can be the inhabitants and local interest groups (Buhalis, 2000) as well as city hall with all its functions and local businesses who have a secondary effect on the experiences of tourists, such as gas stations (Blain et al, 2005); but also local hospitality entrepreneurs (ibid). These entrepreneurs are most commonly small to medium sized (Buhalis, 2000). Small to medium sized entrepreneurs, or SMEs, are often family owned (Brooker and Burgess, 2008) and have several dissimilarities with larger firms (Jones et al., 2008). These are a general focus on short-term goals, lack of either the manpower or skill to be the most efficient; but also positive differences such as a closer relation to customers and an ability to be more flexible (ibid). Jones et al. further state that carrying out marketing efficiently is a key component for the success of SMEs and the lack thereof is a common reason for why these companies fail (ibid). To separate SMEs in the tourism industry from other industries, Jones et al. use the term *tourism SME*, which will be the term used here. Gummesson and von Friedrichs Grängsjö (2006) found an example of a successful collaboration between tourism SMEs in Sweden, where the joint marketing was carried out between competitors with a high level of trust. The respondents stated that while they are competitors once the tourists arrive, they all benefit of attracting the tourists to come to the destination through marketing.

Marketing themselves is however not always a priority for tourism SME managers. By researching 15 small resorts, Jones et al. (2008), found that the level of sophistication in the marketing of the venues differ greatly and is heavily influenced by the personality of the manager. The use of different marketing activities ranged from not undertaking them at all to

having advanced and well thought-out means to market themselves. Most common was to not use marketing at all or to a very limited degree, with managers believing that smaller resorts have no use for marketing. The managers in general were of the meaning that marketing is only for companies with a large budget and is complex by nature, therefore not suitable for them. When marketing activities were undertaken, the efforts were flawed because of the lack of competence and training to carry out the activities in an effective manner (ibid).

Previous work (Brooker & Burgess, 2008; Gummesson & von Friedrichs Grängsjö, 2006; Hankinson, 2009; Wang, 2008) state that marketing alliances in the form of DMOs are a common practice which is beneficial for the tourism entrepreneurs, but that it also leads to problems with quality assurance (Blain et al., 2005) the opportunistic behaviour of the partners (Buhalis, 2000) and causing conflicts (Wang 2008). The collaborations are made up primarily by SMEs, companies that often lack marketing and management knowledge (Jones et al. 2008). This thesis will explore the motives behind the choices tourism SME marketers make concerning choosing to work independently, in collaborations and alliances or a combination of the two alternatives, as well as help gaining insight of how the marketing is carried out and which level of sophistication is involved in the context of these choices. Since the DMOs are made up by individual companies, often tourism SMEs, it is of interest to describe the practices of the DMOs from the views of the members rather than the managers of DMOs; the latter is the approach used by my colleagues Gidlund and Israelsson (2009), whom have been a part of the development of this thesis. Using both approaches will therefore help to paint a broader picture of the DMOs. To reflect the current movement on focusing on the experience offered (Williams, 2006) this thesis will be limited to tourism SMEs selling experiences in one or more of the four realms. For this reason, tourism SMEs who offer a products and services which do not belong in the four realms are not included in the topic of this thesis.

### ***1.3 Purpose and research questions***

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how tourism SMEs use collaborative marketing as a complement to their own marketing. In order to reach the purpose, two research questions have been formed.

**RQ 1:** How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?

**RQ 2:** How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?

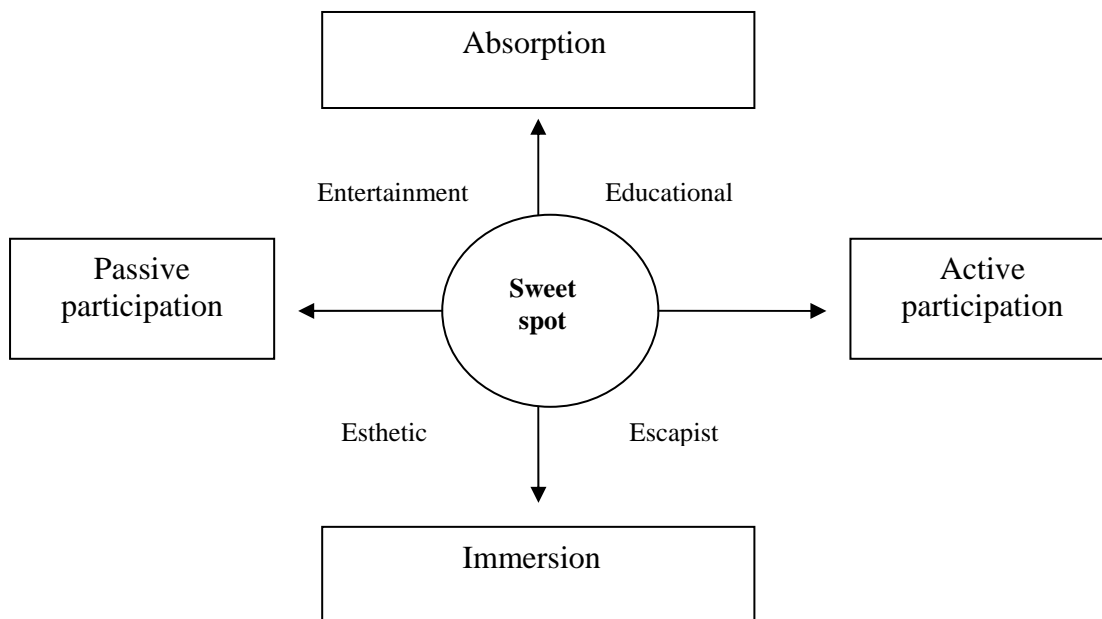
## 2. Theory

*In this section, previous work on destination marketing has been selected to serve as a theoretic frame of reference which will be used to form interview questions. The section is ordered according to the research questions. It is important to note that parts of this section has been co-written by my colleagues Martin Gidlund and Anton Israelsson, who are writing their thesis on municipal destination marketing.*

### 2.1 How do tourist entrepreneurs market themselves as a single destination?

#### 2.1.1 The four realms of the tourism and hospitality experience

Pine and Gilmore (referred to in Williams, 2006), suggest two intersectioning spectrum in order to describe experiences. On the first axis, passive to active participation, the involvement of the consumer is measured. A passive experience mentioned is going to a cinema, while an example for active participation is eating at a restaurant. On the other axis, Williams take an example of a carnival to describe the difference between absorption and immersion, where watching the carnival would be to absorb it and immersion would be to be in the middle of the carnival and experiencing it first-hand.



**Figure 2.1** : Four realms of tourism. Adapted from Williams (2006).

By combining the two spectrum, four realms are created. The first one, entertainment, is a realm that features things such as musicals or concerts. The word that describes the realm best is “sensing”. In the educational realm, the tourist is participating more actively but is still absorbing the impressions. “Learning” is the essential part of the educational realm. Examples of this are ski instructions and guided tours. The escapist realm combines active participation with immersion and feature activities such as bungee-jumping and participating in sports, such as water skiing or golfing, where focus is on “doing”. The last realm is the esthetic. Here,

the tourist take part of for example the scenery, but does not actively interfere with the environment. “Being there” summarizes this realm. In the centre of the four realms is the so called Sweet spot where tourists have a more complete experience. To reach this, the resorts or venues can combine realms by for example making their forms of entertainment more interactive or broaden their scope by adding activities that complement each other to cover all four realms (ibid).

### **2.1.2 Levels of marketing activity model**

Jones, Kupiec-Teahan, Moriarty and Rowley (2008) have adapted a model from Carson (1990). The model describes how tourism SMEs plan their marketing and distinguish four categories. The first type is the *non-marketing*, these managers have only a general view of the market, do not know who their customers are, employ no after sales services, do not collect any market information and cannot describe their competitive advantage. Neither do they keep any track of their own customers.

*Inexpert marketing* managers see the benefits of marketing, but lack the competence to be effective. These resorts do not target any specific segments and describe their market in terms of size, location and competitors. They consider their close competitors, but do not look beyond their own geographic area. Inexpert marketers know about the key events that have influenced their industry, in contrast to the non-marketers who are unaware of these. Another characteristic of inexpert resorts is that they use promotion, but their lack of competence often makes these efforts ineffective. Their pricing strategies depend on their own costs and the prices of the competitors and while they see after sales service as necessary, they do not take advantage of the possibilities that a good after sales service can mean in building customer relationships.

The third category of managers uses *implicit marketing*. They have more knowledge about marketing concepts, often using the 4-p approach. The resorts have segmented the market and carry out some targeting strategies in order to reach them. Hotels and venues in this group can describe their competitive advantage and have developed strategies on how to take advantage of them, although they are not sure how to counter the advantages of their competitors. They employ different sources of market information and regularly contact customers to for example inform about new offers.

The last group of managers uses *sophisticated marketing*. These hotels and venues have a high degree of integration in their marketing efforts. They have carefully segmented and targeted their market and have sophisticated CRM-systems as well as customer loyalty schemes to help them with this task. They are good at not only understanding the significant marketing events, like the implicit marketers, they can also anticipate and even influence these events. Their promotion is proactive and effective and pricing strategies are used as a way to create an image. Just as the implicit group, after sales service is viewed as important.

**Table 2.1: Levels of Marketing Activity Model**

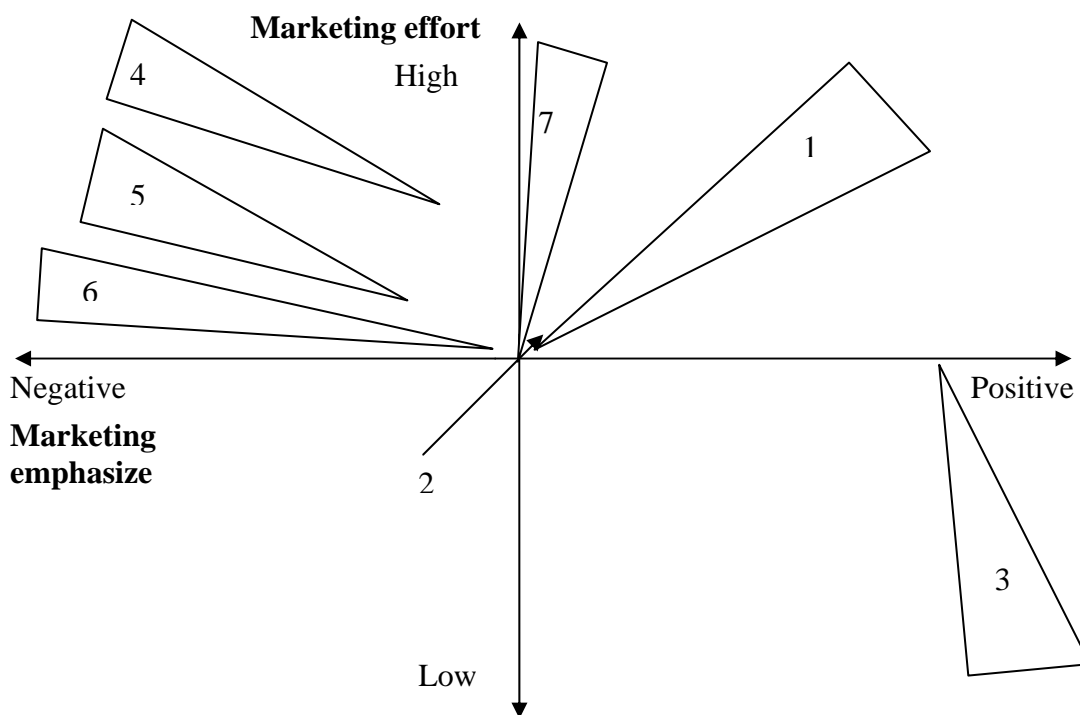
	<b>Non-marketing</b>	<b>Inexpert marketing</b>	<b>Implicit marketing</b>	<b>Sophisticated marketing</b>
<b>Market knowledge</b>	General, no plans.	Defines market in size, location, competitors. No targeting.	Defines market in size, location, segments. Conducts some targeting.	Full understanding of its market and peripheral markets, with well developed market segments and targeting.
<b>Competitors</b>	Considers immediate competitors only.	Some knowledge of close competitors	A more in-depth knowledge of close competitors, related to understanding of competitive advantage	Full awareness of close and peripheral competitors which informs development of competitive position
<b>Customers</b>	Little knowledge of who customers are	Knows its customers. Has contact details but does not use these, or segment customers	Aware of size and segments in customer base, and differentiates between key and other customers, possibly with aid of CRM database	Customer relationships managed through Sophisticated CRM system. Loyalty schemes often used.
<b>Market information</b>	Collects none	Limited and informal approach to collection	Numerous complementary sources applied informally to create and maintain a competitive advantage	Relevant sources harvested regularly and consistently and information recorded for formal decision making and planning
<b>Significant event</b>	Believes none have occurred	Aware of key events	Full understanding of market events and their impact	Is able to anticipate or influence market events.
<b>Competitive advantage</b>	Poor awareness and articulation	Can describe competitive advantage	Understand the value of their competitive advantage and has plans for developments to capitalize on it.	Can clearly define competitive position and how its offering defeats those of competitors.
<b>Promotion</b>	Few tools used	Uses several promotional methods, but they are not always the most suitable	Uses several proactive promotional methods	Is integrated, proactive and effective.
<b>Price</b>	Based on cost plus pricing	Based on what the market will bear and competitor prices	Based on what the market will bear, competitors changes, and customers' value perceptions	Used to complement the marketing mix, adding perceptions of value or prestige.
<b>After Sale Service</b>	Deemed unnecessary	Recognized as necessary, but limited use of opportunities	Viewed as an opportunity for proactive engagement with customers.	Viewed as an opportunity to interact with the customers, gather information and build relationships

From Jones et al. (2008).

### **2.1.3 Destination demarketing**

Medway and Warnaby (2008) take an alternative view on the traditional destination marketing literature, where the focus has been on promoting the positive features of the destination. The authors mean that promoting the negative sides of the destination can

sometimes be the most appropriate strategy. One example for when it is suitable is when the demand far exceeds the supply. A manager can then strive towards discouraging the less attractive segments to visit and instead focus on the best segments, who then will not feel annoyed over the limited supply and bottlenecks. Other reasons for discouraging certain segments is to not receive bad word-of-mouth from segments for which the destination product is not intended for. Medway and Warnaby put forth a model to characterize seven categories, seen in figure 2.2. While developed for DMOs in particular, the model could be argued as suitable in order to describe the demarketing efforts of tourism SMEs as well, perhaps with the exceptions of crisis place demarketing and informational place demarketing.



**Figure 2.2** Typology of marketing and demarketing activities. From Medway and Warnaby (2008).

1. **Traditional positive place marketing:** This strategy is what can be perceived as the normal form of marketing. Managers want to stress the positive features of the destination with high levels of marketing efforts.
2. **Selective passive place demarketing:** When doing the traditional positive place marketing, managers need to realize that features that are considered good to some segments may be seen as bad to other segments. Thus, this is a form of demarketing, albeit unintentional.
3. **General passive place demarketing:** This strategy is done in order to make the demand lower by not doing any marketing effort rather than stressing the negative features of the place.
4. **Crisis place demarketing:** When a disaster, war or epidemic outbreak occurs in an acute manner; marketing efforts need to be high and emphasize these circumstances in order to discourage visitors for a unlimited amount of time.

5. **Perverse place marketing:** While the negative features of the destination is promoted, this strategy is not considered demarketing since these features are celebrated in an ironic way. It is the flawed things that are the strengths of the destination.
6. **Information place demarketing:** This form of demarketing is somewhat similar to the crisis place demarketing, but with less marketing effort. It is primarily carried out by impartial entities. An example is governments discouraging people to visit certain countries because of instability.
7. **Dark place marketing:** This form of place marketing is often characterized by places with tragic histories; such as Ground Zero and WWII battlefields. While the destinations can be seen as depressive, the managers believe that the tragic history is their main advantage and therefore considered to be on the positive side of the scale.

## **2.2 How do tourist entrepreneurs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?**

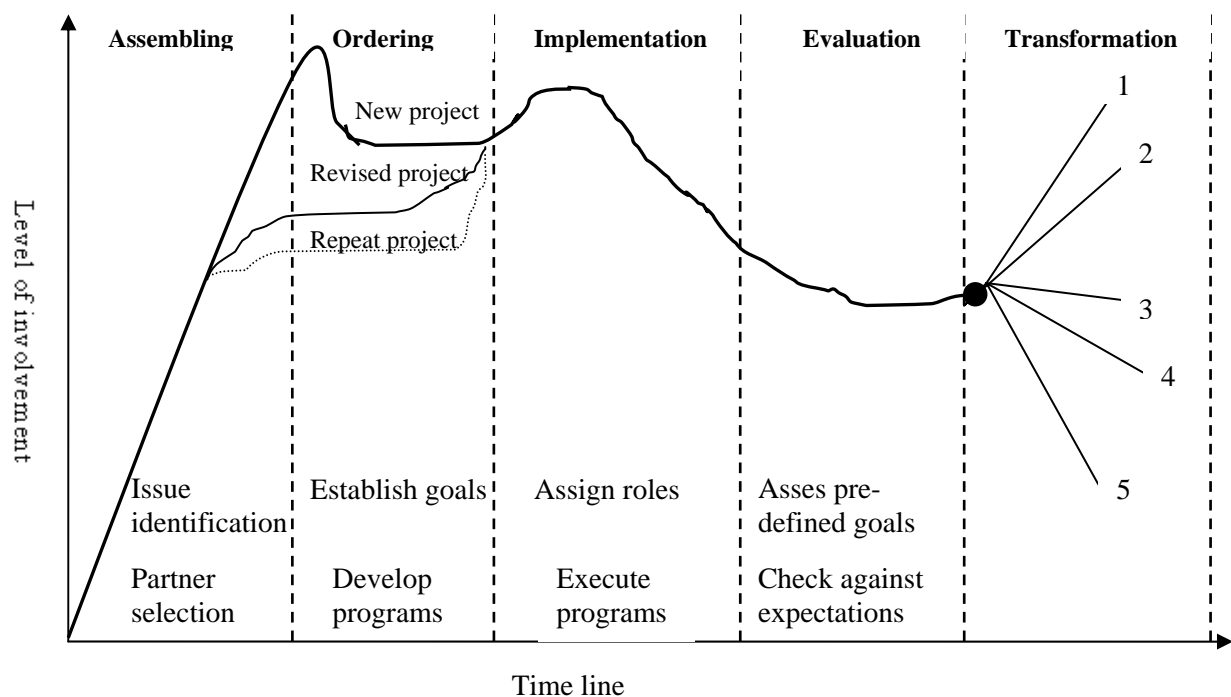
### **2.2.1 Four characteristics of destination alliances**

Bejou and Palmer (1995) state that there are four main characteristics of a destination marketing alliance. These characteristics can be described as either immature or mature for every alliance. The first is *coverage*, i.e. the scope of the alliance both geographically as well as industry wise. The most basic form is according to the authors the single sector alliances, where for example a number of hotels in the same geographic area produce a common promotional brochure. Mature alliances seek out to be as influential on their environment as possible by involving more sectors. The second characteristic is the *form* of the alliance. The immature alliance is an informal, non-equity agreement where financial independence is maintained. On the other side of the spectrum is the joint venture, where destination marketers have invested in and committed to a new tourism product, creating synergy effects by combining the best features of all individual businesses. Another way to have financial co-dependency is to make SMEs buy shares or lend money to the DMO. *Mode* describes in which form the destinations commits to the alliance, for example by deploying only junior staff with no decision power in the alliance, when the partners are using their senior staff. Dealing with cultural differences also falls under this category. The last characteristic is *motive*, i.e. the reason for entering or creating a marketing alliance. Common motives are to achieve economies in promotional spending and market research or the possibility to jointly develop new facilities. Another reason can be during a crisis, for example triggered by job losses in an important industry, where the local government decide to attract tourists in order to make up for the jobs lost. According to Bejou and Palmer, alliances are most likely to be formed when tourism marketers recognize opportunities in a highly competitive environment (ibid).

### **2.2.2 Destination marketing collaboration process**

Wang (2008) identify five general stages in which the marketing collaboration process between destinations can be described and develop a model for how the partnership evolves during the course of a project. The first stage is the *assembling* stage where managers from

different tourism companies come together in meetings. In these meetings, the managers brainstorm ideas for projects as well as choosing suitable partners. An important partner selection criterion is the amount of time and effort the potential partner is willing to put into the project, the most important is however the level of influence the partner has on the community. The ideas for programs generally come from smaller businesses and were based on past experiences from other partnerships. In this phase, destination managers often look on how similar collaborations have been working. Following the assembling is the *ordering* stage. Here, the partners look at ideas brought up in the brainstorming meetings and evaluate the opportunities and feasibility of the ideas. It is here that the collaboration is formalized. In the next stage, the *implementation*, the plans are put into effective use. Much effort is directed to ensuring that all partners work towards the best for the project as a whole, rather than the single manager's own firm. It is important that all partners are aware of the specific roles that they play in the collaboration. The fourth stage is *evaluation*, where the business owners look at the project in hindsight. The evaluation process is much more likely to be formalized in a larger company. Small destinations business owners were found to prefer having informal discussions around the project. The last stage is the transformation, where the collaboration can lead to five basic outcomes. The dynamic process is shown in figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3:** Stages of collaboration and level of involvement in collaborative destination marketing. From Wang (2008).

The five outcomes in the transformation stage are:

1. Evolve into stronger partnerships
2. Spawn other projects
3. Continue the same
4. Continue in different form
5. Finish completely

The most common outcome was to form partnerships, with only a small number of the projects leading to no further collaboration. The most cited reasons for the discontinuation of a partnership were changes in management and organizational structure, as well as different goals.

Another finding by Wang (2008) was that conflicts were common in the DMOs. The conflicts concerned the strategies to employ in order to solve conflicts, the level of cooperation versus the level of competition and individual benefits versus common benefits. The tourism SMEs considered managing conflicts taking up a significant share of the time and efforts invested in the collaborations.

### 2.2.3 Brand images of tourism destinations

Hankinson (2004a) researched the brand image development for destinations and found eleven clusters of images, each cluster having its own set of possible attributes, for a manager to use. The cluster and the attributes are shown in table 2.2. Furthermore, Hankinson found that the brand image of a destination is likely to be built around the activities and facilities as well as the cultural and historical heritage of a destination.

**Table 2.2: Image clusters for destinations**

Cluster	Typical attributes	Frequency %
Activities & facilities	Good shopping, things to do, accommodation	16
History, heritage, culture	Culture vs. industrial, historical vs. modern	15
Ambience/environment	Attractive, vibrant, sleepy, cosmopolitan	13
Main economic activity	Financial, commercial centre	10
External profile	Well-known, high profile, hitting the news	9
Accessibility	Easy access, close to airport/motorway	8
Business tourism	Large conference facilities, large venues	7
People characteristics	Youth oriented, for older people, mixed	6
International reputation	Known internationally, popular with foreigners	5
Economic development	Recent expansion, high investment, growth	4
Industrial environment	Industrial, industrial associations	4
Other		2

From Hankinson (2004a)

Hankinson state that the brand image of a destination can be described as organic and not starting from a zero base. If this image is positive, for example having an interesting history, this image needs care to be maintained and developed. If the image is negative, for example having a long period of economic recession, marketing communication alone cannot be effective. The product of destination must change, a change which may require investments in tourism infrastructure; such as hotels, restaurants and leisure activities. A further conclusion from the author is that the organic nature of the destination brand image leads to repositioning having to be done through public relations, whereas advertising is not effective.

## 2.2.4 Tools for communicating an image

Kotler et al. (1999, p. 169-172), using the term “place” rather than “destination”, has identified three tools place marketers can make use of when communicating a place’s image. These three tools are: *slogan, themes and positions; visual symbols; and events and deeds.*

A slogan is a short phrase that embodies a place’s overall image. The slogans are useful to marketers to generate enthusiasm, momentum, and fresh ideas when integrated in a strategic marketing plan. The authors further states that a good slogan provides a platform from which the place’s image can be further developed. Another approach is to spell out a theme to specific marketing programs that is addressed to a defined target group. An effective theme is versatile and flexible yet grounded in reality. Image positioning is a tool that is used to position a place in regional, national or international terms as the place for a certain activity or as a viable alternative location to another place that may have a more well-known or stronger position. One problem for place marketers when developing an image position is to find an image that emphasizes unique attributes and benefits that make their place stand out among other places.

Visual symbols have been used prominently when marketing places. The visual symbols, such a logo or a famous land mark, are used systematic in brochures, videos, pins, official stationary to mention a few. The authors further states that the visual symbol must reinforce the image of the place. If the visual symbol is inconsistent from the slogan, theme, or position it will undermine the credibility of the place. Inconsistency between slogans and visual symbols often occurs due to a non-existing or inconclusive place marketing strategy. The authors have identified four commonly used visual image strategies. The first strategy is the *diverse visual*, where the audience is given a wide range of visual images about the place. The second strategy is the *consistent visual*, which is the opposite of the diverse visual. In consistent visual the marketers uses the same visual symbols in order to emphasize a clear and positive image. However, when different target groups are approached with the same visual symbol problems may occur since not all groups are attracted by the same visual. The third strategy for visual images is the *humorous visual*, where the place is being visualized in a witty way. The fourth strategy is the *denying visual*, where the place overwhelms their target audience with positive images about the place and denying the negative images. One of the risks with this is that the place does not live up to the expectations given by the images.

Events and deeds can also be used to communicate a place’s image. A successful event or deed, such as a festival, can brand a place and its image permanently. The events can either be quiet, influencing the audience subtly over time or they can be of a more bold and loud sort.

These tools were developed for places, which in this thesis is translated to destinations, and not tourism SMEs in particular; which is why it is more suitable to sort this theoretic contribution under this the second research question. An argument could be made that the usage of some of these tools in the tourism SMEs is of interest as well, which is why respondents will be asked about how they create an image for their specific venue.

### **3. Methodology**

*This section will entail how the research was carried out and discussing benefits and problems of the research approach and strategies employed. The cases will also be presented briefly.*

#### **3.1 Literature search**

To find theoretic justification for the research purpose and motivating the research questions, scientific literature had to be found, studied and evaluated for relevance. The literature mainly consists of articles from journals found via the e-journal databases of Luleå University of Technology and the search engine service Google Scholar. The books used were found in the library of Luleå University of Technology. Due to similarity of topics, the literature search was conducted together with Martin Gidlund and Anton Israelsson. For anyone interested in finding literature on the topic, search terms with the most number of useful articles were *tourism marketing*, *destination marketing* and *place marketing* on the database Emerald.

#### **3.2 Research strategy**

To be able to answer the research questions concerning the marketing efforts as both a single destination and as a bundle, thereby fulfilling the purpose of this thesis, the research strategy must be one that helps gaining a deeper understanding of how the marketing efforts are carried out. Denscombe (2006, p.43) state that conducting a case study is the most suitable when the goal is to describe processes, relationships and events, which seems to suit the research questions; as it will help giving a deeper understanding of how the tourism SMEs plan their marketing.

#### **3.3 Case selection and presentation**

The cases chosen are all situated in the Northern Swedish region Norrbotten, the region in which Luleå University of Technology is situated. The main reason for only choosing cases in the proximity of the University is the time and financial constraints involved when writing thesis, making it infeasible to study companies in other regions. In order to not get the same answers from all respondents about the nature of their collaborative marketing, knowing from the literature that collaborative marketing is often done within municipalities, cases were chosen from different municipalities. The cases are either tourism SMEs or when publically owned: a sub-brand in the municipal destination umbrella. A requirement for the cases was that they would have to offer activities in one or more of the four realms of experiences in order to live up to the delimitation of the thesis, something that was controlled for by visiting the website of respective destination. The final factor playing in was the fact that these destinations were quick to answer inquiries about whether or not they wanted to be interviewed, which considering the time frame was important.

### **3.3.1 Gammelstad Churchtown, Luleå**

Gammelstad Churchtown is the best example of the churchtowns which are common in northern Sweden. Visitors with a long way to travel used the cottages, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the town for overnight stay. The Churchtown is a part of the UNESCO World Heritage list.

### **3.3.2 Rödbergsfortet, Boden**

Rödbergsfortet is the largest fortress in the fortification system of Boden, a system which was build in the early 20th century as a defense line against invaders. After being top secret for many years, the fortress and is welcoming visitors since the beginning of this decade. The company who runs the operation is Fästningsguiden AB.

### **3.3.3 Icehotel, Kiruna**

The Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi, Kiruna is a construction made out of ice and snow. Every winter a new hotel is both built and destroyed, a practice which has been consistent over the 20 years of the company's existense.

## **3.4 Data collection**

When deciding on whether to collect quantitative or qualitative data, the latter was found to be the most suitable choice, since this allows the respondents to describe the processes of their own marketing and the one carried out in the collaborations in a deeper way than a quantitative approach would have allowed. The data was collected through the use of interviews with each of the three relevant respondents, a practice that is appropriate when conducting case studies (Denscombe, 2006, p.132). The interviews were carried out with one respondent at each destination. Anna Lundgren at Gammelstad Churchtown is one of two employees at the Churchtown Visitor Centre. While Lundgren's colleague is in charge of internal matters such as the bookkeeping, Lundgren handles the external profile of the Churchtown. At Rödbergsfortet, the respondent was Sally Sundbom, who is the sole owner-manager of Fästningsguiden AB. Maria Sirviö represented the Icehotel. She works at the marketing department and with the website; she is also the person who answers questions about the company for theses and school projects.

Two of the interviews, those with Lundgren and Sundbom, were conducted face to face in their offices in the 8th and 11th of May 2009 respectively. The interview with Sirviö was conducted over telephone in the 12th of May 2009, due to conflicting schedules making it impossible to meet in person. The interviews were one hour long. In order to ensure that no information was lost, the interviews were being recorded while the answers were written down on paper. When collocating the answers, listening to the recording simultaneously ensured that all data was correctly retained. The respondents did all approve of being recorded. Approximately a week after the interviews, the respondents were contacted over telephone to safeguard against misunderstandings and to be asked short follow-up questions to make unclear answers more clear.

The interview questions were based on the theoretic framework found in section 2. In order to avoid bias by knowingly or unknowingly leading the respondents towards certain answers, the questions were designed to be as open-ended and non-leading as possible, while at the same time not being too vague. The interviews were semi-structured in order to let respondents elaborate their answers as much as possible and not being limited by a completely structured approach. In Appendix 1, the interview guide can be found. This interview guide has been peer reviewed in a seminar, which was done in order to ensure that the interview guide did not feature elements not discussed in the theory-chapter and vice versa.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

In order to be able to meet the purpose of the thesis and to answer the research questions, the empirical data is analyzed by using the theoretic frame of reference in chapter two. The interview questions reflect the theory provided by previous work which allows the answers from the respondents to be compared and put into the context of the terms and taxonomies put forth by these authors. This will be done in chapter five. The analysis of the empirical data will be the foundation of chapter six, where the differences between the theory and the results from this thesis will be discussed.

### **3.6 Methodology problems**

A possible error to make when conducting case studies is to choose unsuitable cases, which could make the results irrelevant in a larger perspective. Since cases were chosen partly because of the convenience of the short distance as well as the quick response, the case selection could perhaps be considered as an issue as well as the notion that a selected case is for example too small and insignificant. The first objection is hard to defend against, since choosing cases from different regions would have controlled for regional deviations. The second possible objection can arguably be countered by entering the search term “sevärdheter”, here translated to “things to see”, in front of either Luleå, Boden and Kiruna in the Google search engine. All chosen cases appear in one of the first five hits, suggesting that the cases are seen as important destinations in the respective municipalities. An issue related to the choice of cases lies within the delimitation in this thesis, namely selecting cases with an experience offering. It is possible that the results would differ if tourism SMEs outside the delimitation would be taken into account, which is why a comparison with Königsson and Stark (2009), who partly study tourism SMEs in the same region but without this delimitation, is done in the final chapter of this thesis.

Another important validity issue is whether or not the respondent is relevant enough to ensure that the information provided portrays events with a satisfying level of accuracy. The respondents have different titles, making the comparison between the respondents hard; all are however working with the marketing efforts of the destination on a daily basis. Two of the respondents, Lundgren and Sundbom, are the only ones on the respective destination working with marketing; the third one, Sirviö, has been delegated the responsibility to answer questions about the marketing efforts of the destination and is thus deemed to provide accurate information.

While this thesis is written in English, along with all theoretic contributions that were used in order to form questions, the interviews will be conducted in Swedish. This introduces the problem of nuances in questions and answers being lost in translation, or perhaps added, as the questions in the interview guide will have to be translated into Swedish and the answers into English. The problem has no complete solution, since carrying out the interview in English introduces new problems; for example varying levels of English proficiency of the respondents and interviewer leading to misunderstandings, and feelings of insecurity concerning the language could limit the respondent. In an attempt to solve the problem at least partially, a Swedish translation of the interview guide is featured in Appendix 2. Readers who are proficient in both Swedish and English can thereby judge if the Swedish version is corresponding to the original English version in a satisfying manner.

The respondents did not know which question would be asked before the interview, other than being told that it would concern their marketing as both as a single destination and as a member of a collaboration. The reason for this is that looking at the interview guide might confuse the respondents, as they are more an aid for the interviewer than for the respondent. Another reason for not allowing the respondents to know the questions is that the answers will be more candid and sincere if the respondent did not have time to prepare answers, thus arguably corresponding better to the truth. A drawback is however that the unprepared respondents might forget information or not knowing things he or she would have remembered or known if given time to prepare. The respondents were however either the managers or in some way responsible for the marketing of the firm, working with marketing matters on a daily basis; thus ensuring a high level of accuracy in the answers, although being unprepared.

The use of a telephone interview was not planned from the start, and it could be argued that it is easier to misunderstand someone over telephone; leading to results not corresponding to the truth of the matters. The interview with Maria Sirviö was like the other interviews recorded and took place in a setting where both could hear each other well. As previously stated, controls were made in order to ensure that the information had been correctly interpreted.

## **4. Empirical data**

*In this section, the answers from the interviews are presented. The chosen cases are presented separately, with the research questions aiding readers to get a better overview of the text. While the text is overall corresponding to the structure of the theory chapter, headers is not used here; this in order to keep a certain level of freedom in the presentation.*

### **4.1 Gammelstad Churchtown, Luleå**

#### **4.1.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?**

Gammelstad Churchtown offer guided tours of the area all year around. These tours can be general as well as focused on specific aspects, such as handcrafts, depending on the wishes of the booker. Another type of tour is the so-called lantern walk, where visitors get to experience the nightly darkness of a village without street lights. In the area, local entrepreneurs offer lodging, restaurants and craft shops. When asked about which factors are important when choosing activities to offer, Lundgren stated that they want to spread knowledge about the site and its history in a fun way. They also take notice to suggestions made by visitors when coming up with activities to offer. Lundgren adds that customers do not like dry facts and that the offering must reflect this.

Anna Lundgren describes the market of the Churchtown in terms of visitors which she divides into four main groups: elderly, culturally interested, business representation and schools. These visitors are primarily from Luleå and surrounding cities, but the site also attracts foreign visitors. Lately, focus has been on attracting 27-35 year-olds, since this is seen as an attractive segment. No real efforts or change in promotion has been done to reach this segment. Overall, Gammelstad Churchtown are striving towards a broad appeal across the demographics. As of this moment, little information is collected about the customers, although surveys will be carried out this summer. Lundgren adds that the last customer satisfaction survey was collected ten years ago. After larger groups have visited, the tour leader is asked about opinions about the visit. At the moment, this is done informally, but in the close future, surveys will be attached to the invoices. Lundgren means that it is important to know what to improve for the next time. When asked about the competitors, Lundgren means that there she does not view any other tourism entrepreneur as a competitor. In her view, having other things to do and see in the surrounding area for incoming tourists is only beneficial to the Churchtown, as she sees the other entrepreneurs as a complement to the offering rather than competition.

When asked about recent events that have had an influence on the Churchtown, Lundgren answered that becoming a UNESCO world heritage site is the most significant. Another important event is the forming of Gammelstadgruppen, or Gammelstad Group; a group of stakeholders who are discussing future plans and marketing efforts.

According to Lundgren, the competitive advantage of Gammelstad Churchtown is the status as a world heritage as well as its unique history and culture. This uniqueness is communicated

in different vehicles. The website is according to Lundgren of high importance. The homepage has both a summer and winter version, where both have an illustrated summary of all activities offered in a snow-bowl style picture. Ads are featured in the local newspapers, roadmaps, tourism websites, local buses and free magazines given to incoming tourists. Due to the limited marketing budget, Lundgren states that the main focus is on the vicinity of Luleå. No advertisement is done abroad, the marketing to international segments is rather being carried out by others. Gammelstad Churchtown welcome guide book authors and travel agency representatives, as the authors have an interest in writing as much as possible about the region and the travel agencies have an interest in offering good packages for their customers.

The prices have been on the same level for a long period of time and are calculated on their own costs. The guided tours, being the primary product, is according to Lundgren set close to break-even levels. She adds that the Churchtown does not have any real profit responsibilities. However, 13 percent of the operation must be financed by own means rather than capital from city hall. There are no pricing strategies or discounts to specific segments.

According to Lundgren, the Churchtown regularly contact travel agencies and tour arrangers after their visit. She believes that this is important to get feedback on the quality of the tours. This after-sales service is done by simply asking if the customers were satisfied, but in the near future questionnaires will be sent out together with the invoice.

Gammelstad Churchtown has a logo in the shape of a G which is featured in all forms of advertisement. On the webpage, many of the activities offered in the Churchtown are featured in a snow bulb resembling picture, which is different depending on the seasons. For example, in the summer snow bulb there are pictures of people celebrating midsummer and dancing traditional Swedish dances; while in the winter there are people sitting in a horse sled. All three logos are shown below.



There is no external slogan, rather an internal in the form of a mission statement. This is “a world class world heritage for everyone”. While Gammelstad Churchtown are not the arrangers, they still benefit from the medieval days held just outside the village. People can come here to experience the lives of the inhabitants of historic days. The Churchtown is also a venue for traditional Swedish midsummer celebration.

Lundgren does not consider the offering of the Churchtown to be for everyone and that it is most suitable for adults, as it is an historical site with guided tours. However, she means that there are no measures taken to discourage families to come and everyone is welcome. Despite not being targeted, the Churchtown are visited by many school classes. The tours are often outsourced to the teachers by providing them with informational material.

#### **4.1.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations**

Gammelstad Churchtown is cooperating with other firms and organisations on many different levels and with varying degrees of involvement. The closest collaborations are with the entrepreneurs and other stakeholders active in the Gammelstad Group. These consist of for example inn-keepers and handicraft store owners, with 15 active members. The group have an ongoing collaboration rather than a project based type and the main focus is to develop the operation of the Churchtown. Another close and ongoing collaboration is with Visit Luleå, which is the DMO of the municipality of Luleå. Here, most tourism entrepreneurs in the area are working together to market Luleå as a destination with joint marketing efforts. Other relationships are with travel agencies in the region of Norrbotten as well as abroad and guide book authors. Within the Gammelstad Group and Visit Luleå, Anna Lundgren attends regular and frequent meetings. Joint marketing strategies are developed during these meetings. To be a part of Visit Luleå, the Churchtown pays a yearly fee of SEK 5000. Visit Luleå is in turn part of the regional DMO Swedish Lapland, an umbrella made up of other municipal DMOs as well as a number of travel agents and Gammelstad Churchtown is featured on the website of Swedish Lapland. Swedish Lapland is in turn a part of the Visit Sweden network. Other collaborations, such as the ones with travel agencies, are more seasonal and they are not working under any common name.

Lundgren means that the process of finding new partners to collaborate with is an ongoing one. There is no formal approach to finding and identifying possible attractive partners for collaborations, this is rather done intuitively. According to her, new partners are needed in order to keep the offering fresh and to constantly develop. She states that in her opinion tourism collaborations are absolutely necessary, that Gammelstad Churchtown will always need the help of others and that “more sells more”.

In the two main collaborations, Gammelstad Group and Visit Luleå, there are sometimes conflicts according to Lundgren. The main reasons for these conflicts are different views on how to promote the destination and which segments are more attractive, since some entrepreneurs rather have young people visiting while others prefer older visitors. Lundgren means that this is a natural part of collaborations. Within the collaborations, the target is to come as close to a consensus as possible; when this is not possible, the minority has to accept to do what the majority feels is the right way to market Gammelstad or Luleå.

While Gammelstad Churchtown has an historical/cultural image, Visit Luleå is marketing Luleå as a shopping city. The marketing efforts are primarily target towards inhabitants of the smaller towns in the region of Norrbotten. Luleå is by margin the largest city in Norrbotten and have compared to the other cities a relatively large supply of stores and activities. The image portrayed can be summarized into the theme “Puls i Luleå” which translates to “Pulse in Luleå” in English. The theme has its own website, [www.pulsilulea.se](http://www.pulsilulea.se), but it is not seen as a real slogan. Lundgren sees no problem in not fitting into this image, since it attracts people to come to Luleå and perhaps consider going to Gammelstad. Visit Luleå has a text logo, shown below.



Members in Visit Luleå are organizing the annual street festival Luleåkalaset, where the city centre is turned into a concert venue with several outdoor bars and restaurants. The Churchtown is not participating in the event.

## **4.2 Rödbergsfortet, Boden**

### **4.2.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?**

The prime product of Rödbergsfortet are the guided tours that are available for private visitor seven weeks during the summer. The tours are accompanied by sound coulisses to give a more alive experience. During off-season, the fortress is open on demand from groups wishing to have conferences or hold events. Conference visitors can sleep in the authentic environments of the soldiers who were stationed there during the active years of the fortress. It is also bookable for weddings and parties, where the food is cooked by a local caterer. The menus have different themes, there are for example the spartanic “privates’ dinner” and the more luxurious “fortress chief’s dinner”. The military theme is also featured in the conferences, as participants can choose, and have done so, to wear authentic uniforms through-out the whole conference. Sundbom means that the meeting arrangers who contact her are bored with the traditional conference venues and want to try something new. She adds however that there is only little focus on attracting the conference segment. The activities for groups can be tailored to a certain degree, but according to Sundbom, the lack of financial capability is the main reason for not having more activities. She would like to have monitors showing actors carrying out typical tasks, adding to the aliveness created by the sound coulisses, but there is no money for that at the moment.

Sundbom describes the market in terms of the visitors. According to her, the most common visitors are families where a member has had a connection to the army in Boden in general or to the fortress in particular. Another common group of visitors are people who have moved away from Boden and want to experience the fortress, which was a highly secretive up to only a decade ago. Foreign visitors are rare and Sundbom means that they do not seem to be interested in military history. When asked about the competitors of Rödbergsfortet, Sundbom answers that there are no competitors. No marketing information collection is undertaken, and customers are not surveyed or in any way contacted after their visit. Sundbom identifies this

as a problem, but does not believe she has time to carry out a customer satisfaction survey or collect more data about the visitors.

According to Sundbom, the most important recent event that has had an influence over the company is the cut-backs on national military spending, with subsequent consequences for the city of Boden. Sundbom means that when there were more active military bases in the area, the fortress could rely on the bases' visitor days, when friends and families of the conscripts would come to Boden and experience the military aspects of the town; and since the cut-backs, the fortress has seen less visitors. Another event that played less of an importance than previously thought was the opening of the Army Museum in Boden three years ago. Sundbom states that while she thought more visitors would come since the opening, this has not been the case. She adds that there is no way for the company to take countermeasures against the consequences of these events.

When asked what set Rödbergsfortet apart from other offerings, Sundbom answers that it is the unique cultural and military history of the fortress as well as the knowledgeable tour guides who ensures a high level of provided quality. Rödbergsfortet is according to Sundbom one of the ten largest military constructions in world history.

The main promotional tools used to market Rödbergsfortet as a single sight is print material left in the tourism centres and the local camping site as well as advertisement in promotional magazines distributed in the same places. The fortress relies heavily on word-of-mouth and reputation, as many people have done their military service in Boden and therefore having a connection to the military history of the city. On a smaller note, the fortresses in Boden are briefly mentioned every Christmas Eve in the popular reoccurring TV-show "Karl-Bertil Jonssons Jul" and Sundbom have plans on creating souvenirs based on this mentioning. Sundbom also mentions that the fortress is of interest for movie shoots since a film recording has taken place there during March of this year. She hopes that this will help creating awareness about the fortress as well as increasing the interest for the military history of Boden.

The prices are based only on the own costs. Sundbom means that the fixed costs of the fortress are high, especially the rent. Larger groups are often trying to get a discount, but according to Sundbom, this is not possible. This is due to the fixed costs as well as the fees to the guide that have to be covered. The prices are therefore the same for all visitors, and there are no senior or student discounts. Sundbom adds that the prices are kept as low as possible.

While Rödbergsfortet does not have a slogan, it has a logo that is featured in all print material. The logo is a representation of the main cannon tower and the name of the company, seen below. The events which are organized are on demand from bookers and usually up to the bookers themselves to manage, such as the previously mentioned weddings.



Sally Sundbom means that the fortress is more suitable for adults and that children may find the guided tours boring. According to her, children can take part of the fortress by entering one of the kids adventures organized by an outdoors club, where the participants are solving mysteries inside the fortress. The offering is also somewhat unfitting to people with disabilities as the fortress was not constructed to facilitate wheel chairs, thus making it impossible for this group to take part of anything more than the first part of the tour. Sundbom states that when people with disabilities are in the tour group, the guides will adjust in order to provide as much information as possible in the first part. This withstanding, no group of people is disencouraged to come to Rödbergsfortet. Sundbom means that everyone is just as welcome, but that she prefers guests who choose to order one of the theme menus as well.

#### **4.2.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?**

Rödbergsfortet has been an active member of various forms of partnerships, both shorter marketing collaborations as well as being a long-term DMO member. The company is also part of a network of military history organizations, which donates money to be used for promotion. An example of a marketing alliance is the one the fortress had a few years back, where they collaborated with the wild west theme park Western Farm, the local camping site and the adventure bath house. Visitors as well as tourists could buy a card that gave pre-paid entrance to all included activities. This collaboration fell through when Western Farm changed ownership. The remaining members then chose to include a Go-Kart track, but shortly after both the camping and the adventure bath changed ownership as well, and the Go-Kart track fell under bankruptcy. Sundbom means that it was a good idea to have the cards and that she is interested to start a similar collaboration. However, at the moment she is not searching for any new partners to collaborate with.

The local DMO, of which Rödbergsfortet is a member, is called Boden Turism. The group consists of what Sundbom approximates to 50 entrepreneurs in different industries. Companies involved are other tourism entrepreneurs such as hotels and camping sites, local merchants and bus companies. Other partners are the local tourism bureau and restaurants. The members of Boden Turism have regular meetings and before the summer season, joint promotional strategies are developed. As the sole owner-manager of the firm, Sundbom is attending these meetings. Boden Turism offer seminars and courses in business related subjects. Sundbom states that she has taken part in several of these, for example she took a short course in international marketing. Members also welcome other members in open

houses and trips are organized to other cities where entrepreneurs exchange experiences and know-how and build networks. This is something Sundbom appreciates. She adds that while she considers the collaboration important, a large majority of her time is put into the operation of the fortress rather than attending meeting and activities offered by Boden Turism.

To be a part of Boden Turism, Sundbom pays SEK 7500 yearly. Members are also expected to pay SEK 15 000 to put into joint promotion. This money is put to use in keeping up the website [www.upplevboden.se](http://www.upplevboden.se), printing material and paying for radio ads. Print ads are also used, with a focus on northern Norway; a region from where Boden historically has been successful in attracting tourists.

According to Sundbom, there are no conflicts within the DMO. Everyone is working in the same direction, which is to promote Boden. The only conflicts are with businesses who choose not to participate in the collaboration. Sundbom means that there are several local companies who see no need to help market Boden to tourists, among these are the bigger warehouses and gas stations; but also smaller firms. Sundbom recalls one instance when she was canvassing smaller stores, asking them to join Boden Turism or to put money into the joint promotion. One manager said that she had no interest in doing so, as she believed that she sees a lot of foreign shoppers without being a part of any collaboration. Sundbom considers such practice as very short-sighted and chauvinistic. According to her, participating in Boden Turism is beneficial since it helps her to reach a considerably larger market than she would be able to do alone with her budget, but also since she can learn from others.

The image of Boden portrayed by the DMO is a small town with a rich nature and the possibilities for hunting and fishing it brings, but main focus is on the city's supply of stores and activities. Sundbom means that Boden benefits from being a small town, since everything offered is within close proximity, something that suits the visiting tourists; who are mainly families staying in the camping site within walking distance from the city centre, and she believes that the image of Boden is a positive one in the minds of potential visitors. Sundbom does not consider it a problem to stand outside of this shopping and activity image, being a culture/history destination, since her opinion is that the most important thing is to get tourists to come to Boden in the first place and that this image suits the city better.

Boden Turism has a textlogo which is featured in print material and websites-The slogan is "Upplev Boden", or "Experience Boden"; although the website [www.upplevboden.se](http://www.upplevboden.se) has the tagline "Hundra procent skoj!", here directly translated into "One hundred percent fun!". Boden Turism is one of the organizers behind the annual street festival Boden Alive, Sundbom does however not participate in any way before, during and after the event.



## **4.3 Icehotel, Kiruna**

### **4.3.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?**

The main offering of the Icehotel is the hotel itself where people can stay in the rooms designed by ice artists. The hotel also welcomes visitors who are not staying to see the hotel or take a drink in the bar, also made out of ice. The hotel facilitates weddings, since the hotel features a chapel. There are several activities for visitors to participate in, for example a trip to a Sami village where people meet the native inhabitants of Lapland and can ride reindeer sleds. Other activities feature snowmobile safaris, dog sledding and car riding on the iced lakes. The Icehotel melts away in spring, making it highly seasonable. To counter this, the company behind the Icehotel offer activities in the summer as well. These activities take place in Björkliden, which is situated in the municipality of Kiruna, although far away from the site of the hotel. These activities are wild river paddling, hiking and fishing. For group bookings, such as corporate events, activities can be tailored after the bookers' wishes. New activities which are added must reflect a demand from customers as well as fitting the environmental profile of the hotel.

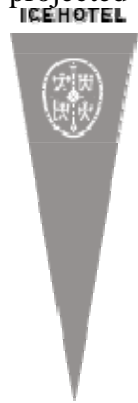
Maria Sirviö describes the market of the Icehotel by saying that it is "very big, but also very small", since the Icehotel is relatively famous in many different part of the world, making the potential market large; but that going to Kiruna and the hotel is a big step for many people. On a smaller note, the hotel sells the concept of the icebar to event arrangers. The Icehotel collects information about the customers in an informal way by personal contact and Sirviö states that they have no CRM-software or similar to support the customer data collection. After guests have visited, the Icehotel does not contact them. Sirviö attributes this practice to a as scarcity of resources rather than lack of interest. When asked about the competitors of the Icehotel, Sirviö answers that there is another hotel with the same concept in Canada, which attracts customers from North and South America. Other competitors considered by Sirviö are companies from Norway and Finland who like the Icehotel sell nature experiences in the north of Fennoscandia. The company keeps track of the competitors by following them in newspapers and online, for example by reading travel blogs where the competitors are mentioned.

Sirviö names three recent events that had an influence over the Icehotel. The first is the start of the Virgin Spacetourism program, where people are sent out in space from the Esrange base in Kiruna from the year 2012. The second is the London-Kiruna direct flights, started in 2007, which makes it easier for British as well as other international visitors to come to the hotel. The third event named by Sirviö is the start of the hotel's environmental program, which gives the hotel a green profile.

The competitive advantage of the Icehotel is according to Sirviö the experience of the hotel with its uniqueness in material and surrounding as well as the culinary and cultural experiences offered in and around the hotel. The main promotional tool employed to communicate to the international market this is by welcoming journalists from all parts of the

world in order to get publicity. The Icehotel is also passively promoting themselves through travel agents. Advertisement is done, but only to the local market. Sirviö means that a large amount of the promotional efforts is done online. She considers the website as very important, but the Icehotel also works with search engine optimization and in various social media, such as Facebook. The prices of the Icehotel is based on the own costs, these costs mainly come from building the hotel every year. The only adaptation to the price is done in the periods when the hotel sees fewer visitors, something Sirviö considers normal hotel practice.

The Icehotels have two logos, one text logo and one where the text is accompanied by an icicle in silver with a Sami schamanic drum inside, portrayed below. Sirviö states the reason for using two logos is that the icicle is “tricky” and does not look very good in all print materials. All promotional material feature one of the logos. There is also a slogan, “A life enriching moment”, which is rather new and not being used in the promotion at the moment. The Icehotel is one of the venues for the annual Arctic film festival, where movies are projected on the ice walls.



Sirviö considers the Icehotel’s offering as suitable for everyone with the exception for small children. There is no market segment that she believes is more attractive than any other and that everyone is welcome.

#### **4.3.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?**

The Icehotel are collaborating with the local DMO called Kiruna Lappland, to which the Icehotel pays a yearly fee. The DMO is like the ones in Luleå and Boden made up out of local entrepreneurs from different industries, but here the group is somewhat more diverse; there are pizza restaurants as well as banks and the mining corporation LKAB. The company also have a collaboration with the railway company SJ and the airline SAS, where discounted nights at the hotel is a part of these companies’ customer loyalty programmes. Representing the Icehotel in the meetings is the sales manager. Sirviö means that the level of formality is low in the Kiruna Lappland collaboration since everyone knows each other very well. The group exchange information to learn from each other and develop marketing plans, such as continuous joint advertising. The DMO do not work in project based form, it has rather the form of a long-term relationship, and has according to Sirviö been free from conflicts. New members are always welcome, but the Icehotel are not actively searching for new partners.

Sirviö means that while the Icehotel could perhaps attract many visitors without the collaboration, she does not see any reason not to collaborate with other companies. “It is beneficial to everyone involved”, she means and adds that the Icehotel is depending on the success of its suppliers and therefore it is important that these companies are doing well; something a collaboration can help to ensure. According to Sirviö, the Kiruna Lappland group has been free from conflicts. Kiruna Lappland is a part of the Swedish Lapland network, which means that just as the Gammelstad Churchtown and Rödbergsfortet, the Icehotel is represented in the regional DMO.

While there is no slogan to help creating an image, Kiruna Lappland has a logo, portraying a red midnight sun over two mountains; which is visible below. The DMO and the members are annually organizing the street festival Kirunafestivalen as well as the film festival Arctic Light previously mentioned. Apart from the film festival, the Icehotel has no real involvement in arranging events, they do however support Kirunafestivalen financially.



The image Kiruna Lappland is trying to develop is a destination with untouched nature and activities involving the scenery. Sirviö means however that she is not sure that people have a positive view of Kiruna, that it is viewed as dark, cold and remote and that Kiruna in general is bad at promoting the positive features of the town. She hopes that the investments in space tourism and research taking place in Kiruna can help to create a better image for the town.

**4.4 Relations between cases**

Figure 4.1 shows how the tourism SMEs in this thesis are related through DMOs working in different levels. The individual companies are also directly connected with higher levels, although with lower levels of involvement than in the municipal DMO.

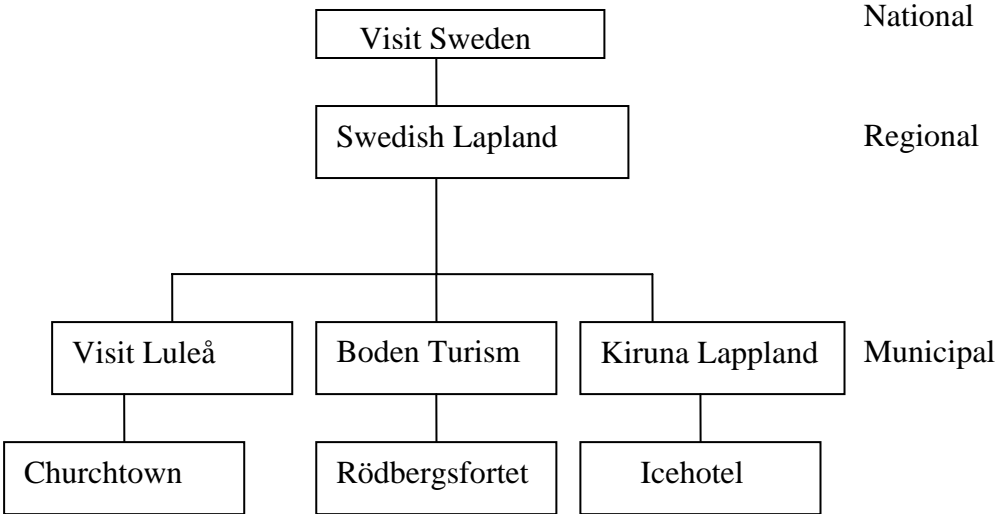


Figure 4.1 Family tree of tourism SMEs.

## **5. Analysis**

*In this section, the data collected from the interviews will be compared with the theoretical frame of reference. To make it easier for the reader, the text is sorted in the same order as in the theory chapter.*

### **5.1 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?**

#### **5.1.1 The four realms of tourism and hospitality experience**

The three cases shared a number of characteristics in the marketing as a single destination. In regards to the Four realms-framework put forth by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and used Williamson (2006), the venues all seem to be offering activities from at least two categories, where the main offering is in one category and other activities used as complements are in other categories.

Gammelstad Churchtown has a main offering in the education realm, with guided tours of the area. Tour bookers can choose to customize the tours by choosing specific aspects of the Churchtown to be emphasized. By offering activities with more immersive elements, such as the lantern walk after sunset, a more complete offering is available. There are different activities offered in the winter from the summer.

Rödbergsfortet in Boden is also offering a product which is mainly educational. The guided tours are accompanied by sound coulisses which add some immersion. As guests can choose to stay the night in the authentic beds used by the soldiers stationed there, another way to reach immersion is achieved. Another step towards an escapist offer is that conference guests can choose to take part of what can be described as a role play-type of meeting with real uniforms.

The main offering of the Icehotel is the hotel itself with all the art, which places the company in the esthetic realm. The other activities, such as snow mobile safari and sledding belong to the escapist realm. There is a great variation between the activities offered in the winter from the ones offered in the summer.

#### **5.1.2 Levels of marketing activity**

Jones et al. (2008) name four categories in where tourism SMEs can be sorted, depending on the sophistication of the marketing activities carried out; non-marketing, inexpert marketing, implicit marketing and sophisticated marketing. The authors found that this type of companies is in general non-marketers or inexpert marketers, due to the lack of interest or training in the field of marketing.

The levels of sophistication in the marketing activities carried out in Gammelstad Churchtown are varying. The view on its market, the low level of segmentation, the simple pricing strategy

and the view on its competitors suggest that the Churchtown is indeed a non-marketer or an inexperienced marketer. There are however activities with higher degrees of sophistication. These are the view on its competitive advantage, the after sales service and the view on significant events. The latter activities could be sorted under implicit or even sophisticated marketing. Gammelstad employ only advertising as a promotional tool, and only to the local market, signaling a non-marketer. This practice is however not due to lack of interest in promotion, but rather a small marketing budget. Furthermore, the Churchtown can be argued to step away from the non-marketers when it comes to promotion; since it gets publication through the guide book-writers and gets promoted by travel agents.

Rödbergsfortet share many similarities with the Churchtown when it comes to the levels of sophistication. No segmenting is carried out, prices are based on own costs, no competitors are considered and no information is collected concerning customers. There is no after sales service, something that is acknowledged as a problem and is due to the lack of time. Advertisement is the only form of promotion carried out, if the website is excluded from the term, and only to the local inhabitants and visitor magazines for tourists who have already arrived. Sundbom was aware of key events in both the macro and micro environment but did not feel as there were any ways for her to influence these events. Put together, in the taxonomy of Jones et al. (2008) Rödbergsfortet shares the characteristics of non- and inexperienced marketers.

While the Icehotel is the most sophisticated out of the three SMEs, there are similarities with the Churchtown and Rödbergsfortet. The bad similarities are a lack of segmenting and targeting, no customer data collection and not using pricing strategies. Like Rödbergsfortet, no after sales service exists, which is attributed to not having the resources to do so. The Icehotel has a clear view on its competitive advantage as well as the significant events that had influenced the hotel; where one of the events, the environmental profile, was created inhouse. The Icehotel sets itself apart from the Churchtown and Rödbergsfortet, as it is the only one who acknowledges its competitors; both direct and indirect. Important competitors are being monitored online. Similar to Gammelstad Churchtown, the Icehotel focus on advertising to the local market, while getting publicity in international publications as well as being promoted by travel agents. All things considered, the Icehotel seems to be either inexperienced or implicit marketers in the terminology used by Jones et al. (2008).

### **5.1.3 Tools for communicating an image**

Kotler et al. (1999) mean that a slogan is a useful way to help communicating an image and that a good slogan builds a platform from which to further develop the destination. Gammelstad Churchtown have what can be described as an internal slogan in the form of a mission statement, which is not communicated to the public. Rödbergsfortet does not have slogan, while the Icehotel has newly developed a slogan which has not yet been put to use.

The use of visual symbols have according to Kotler et al. (1999) been a common practice when marketing destinations, for example having a logo. Furthermore, the authors mean the logo must reinforce the image of the place or else the destination will lose credibility. Gammelstad Churchtown can be said to use two logos, the G which is featured in promotional material and the snow bulb picture of all activities offered which is used on the website. This is consistent with the diverse visual image strategy. None of the logos can be said to contradict either each other or the image of the place. Rödbergsfortet are using a picture of a cannon tower as a logo, which can be said to be consistent visual. It is also arguably reinforcing the image of the fortress. The Icehotel have a main logo of a silver icicle with a Sami drum in the middle, which is switched for a simple text logo when the promotion format does not support the use of the icicle logo. Despite of this, the Icehotel can be argued to have a consistent visual strategy, with a logo which reinforces the image of the destination.

Kotler et al. (1999) also states that arranging events or deeds is a way to build an image, these can either be subtle or loud. Gammelstad Churchtown has a traditional midsummer celebration as well as medieval days being arranged in or just next to perimeters of the town. These can be said to add to the cultural and historical image of the Churchtown, while being somewhat subtle. Rödbergsfortet do not organize any own events, as this is left to bookers to do. The Icehotel is one of the venues of the Arctic Film Festival, which can be said to be consistent with its image. The event can arguably be branded as subtle.

#### **5.1.4 Destination demarketing**

The use of demarketing is according to Medway and Warnaby (2008) done in order to control a demand that is much higher than the supply, and thereby focus on the most attractive segments; as well as to not receive a bad reputation from segments for which the destination was not intended for. Neither the Churchtown, Rödbergsfortet or the Icehotel consider any segment to be more attractive than any other and does not in any way try to discourage certain segments to come.

### ***5.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?***

#### **5.2.1 Four characteristics of destination alliances**

Bejou and Palmer (1995) argued that there are four characteristics which can be used in order to describe the level of maturity in destination marketing alliances; these are coverage, form, mode and motive. All three SMEs are members of municipal DMOs featuring companies and institutions from different industries, with the largest coverage taking place in Kiruna and the smallest in Boden. Gammelstad Churchtown is a member of their own DMO as well as the municipal Visit Luleå. These DMOs are in turn part of the regional Swedish Lapland, which increases the geographical area of the collaborations. The coverage of all three DMOs can therefore be said to be mature.

All three SMEs pay a yearly membership fee to the DMO, implying that in this aspect, the collaborations are immature. Senior staff is used in the dealing with the municipal DMOs, a practice which characterizes a mature alliance. The motives stated for participating in a DMO by Bejou and Palmer were amongst other things the exchange of intelligence, saving on advertisement costs realizing potential in a competitive market. The respondents had different reasons for why they considered it important, ranging from a view that the own offer benefits from having other good offers in the area (Gammelstad), achieving economies of scale in promotional costs to reach a larger audience and learning from others (Rödbergsfortet) and an interest in the success of the suppliers (Icehotel).

The cooperations which the Icehotel has with SJ and SAS may be interesting, but not in this thesis and will thus not be analysed any further.

### **5.2.2 Destination collaboration process**

Wang (2008) means that a project between tourism SMEs can lead to five outcomes, one of those being the formation of closer partnerships. The empirical data shows that has already taken place in Luleå, Boden and Kiruna with the formation of the DMOs. None of the interviewed companies are working in a project based form, but rather in long-term relationships. This means that it is not possible to place the SMEs in the level of involvement vs time graph suggested by Wang.

Wang (2008) found that the conflicts within destination alliances are common and likely to be based on either the way to handle conflicts, the benefits of the individual companies versus the common good and/or the level of competition compared to the level of cooperation. The author found that the latter was the most common reason for conflicts. Only Gammelstad Churchvillage can recall conflicts within the DMO, which concerned different opinions on how the city should be promoted and who should be targeted. This is consistent with conflicts concerning the individual benefit versus the common good.

### **5.2.3 Brand images of tourism destinations**

Hankinson (2004a) means that the image building of a destination is likely to be built around activities and facilities. This holds true for Luleå and Boden, cities being promoted as good places for shopping. Kiruna is instead focusing on the natural scenery and the activities offered within it, which can be said to overlap between ambience/environment and activities/facilities. Hankinson further means that a negative image can only be changed through investments in tourism infrastructure. The only respondent who believed that the image of the city was a negative one was Maria Sirviö at the Icehotel. At the moment, investments are being made into the space tourism offered by Virgin and the local airport now welcomes flights from London; this indicates that investments are being used to change the image.

#### **5.2.4 Tools to create an image**

Visit Luleå does not have a slogan, but is instead using “Pulse in Luleå” which seems to be more consistent with what Kotler et al. (1999) considers as a theme. The authors mean that themes must be both versatile and grounded in reality in order to be effective. It could be argued that “Pulse in Luleå” is grounded in reality, since the supply of stores and activities is the biggest in the region. It can also be said to be rather versatile, since all that has to do with shopping and activities may be sorted as “pulse”. Visit Luleå has a text logo featured in promotional material which does not contradict the theme, but does little to reinforce the image of Luleå. The visual strategy employed is with what Kotler et al. defines as consistent visual. Companies and organisations within Visit Luleå help organizing the event Luleåkalaset, an event which could be described as loud and bold rather than subtle.

Boden Turism have the slogan “Experience Boden”, which is versatile and seems to be consistent with the image that Boden wants to portray. On the website there is also the phrase “One hundred percent fun!”. Subjectively, this tagline is not grounded in reality, since one hundred percent fun can be hard to live up to for any destination. Like Visit Luleå, Boden Turism uses a textlogo in the promotion which is not inconsistent with the slogan, but does not reinforce the image of Boden. Also here is the visual strategy best described as consistent visual. The annually reoccurring event Boden Alive, is like Luleåkalaset a street festival; thus best described as a loud event, suitable to the activity image of the city.

Kiruna Lappland sets itself apart from the other two DMOs by having a graphic logo accompanied by text. The logo portrays the red midnight sun over two mountains, which arguably reinforces the image of ambience and environment. Kiruna is also the venue for a bold and loud-type street festival, which while perhaps attracting outside visitors may not be considered to reinforce the image.

## **6. Discussion and conclusions**

*This section will start with the answers to the two research questions in contrast to previous work. Following is a reconnection to the purpose and a short comparison will be done with the conclusions drawn by Gidlund and Israelsson. Lastly, suggestions for future research are offered.*

### **6.1 Answering the research questions**

#### **6.1.1: How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a single destination?**

This study shows that while tourism SMEs have a main product, they are trying to offer versatility to their visitors. To achieve versatility, activities are added to the product mix as well as trying to make the main activity a richer experience. The offerings are rather adaptable as larger groups, such as tour buses or conferences, are able to customize their visit to a certain degree. Reasons for adding a specific activity to the portfolio seems to be focused on predictions of what customer wants rather than trying to attract customers by creating demand. It also seems to be a way to counter seasonality up to the point where a destination can be a completely different offer depending on when it is visited.

Results from this thesis show that tourism SMEs, rather than as previously thought being poor marketers overall, are weak in some aspect while strong in others; these are in general the same marketing activities across the board. The companies are not segmenting their markets and are very general in their approach; and although they seem to have a relatively clear view of who the typical customer is, information about the visitors is not collected. The results also show that tourism SMEs do not use any pricing strategies, and base prices solely on the own costs. Few, if any, competitors are considered. The stronger sides are a good articulation of the competitive advantage as well as an ability to not only spot important events in both micro and macro environments, but also to create these events themselves. Authors who have written previous work on this topic came to the conclusion that it is the personality of the manager in combination with insufficient training that leads to poor marketing. The results put forth here show that low sophistication is recognized as a problem and is often due to nothing other than a perceived lack of resources

When it comes to the use of promotion, one finding of this study is that advertisement is only done locally; either to the inhabitants of the region or to tourists when they are already in the town. International promotion is carried out by third parties, such as publications and travel agents.

This study finds that tourism SMEs do not take care of the advantages a good slogan gives, put forth by previous research. They do however use logos in a way that corresponds well to the overall offer. Events are not as common as using a logo; but when events are arranged these seem to support the image of the venue.

While previous work has suggested that the use of demarketing may be suitable for tourism entrepreneurs, this does not seem to be practiced. This could perhaps be best described as a consequence of the broad approach the companies have. No segmenting and targeting is done, and everyone is just as welcome. The offering is also considered to be suitable for everyone except for small children. Since the main purpose of demarketing is to discourage some segments to come so that the more attractive segments are more satisfied and not to receive bad word-of-mouth from a segment for which the offering is not suitable, there is no need for the tourism SMEs to use demarketing strategies.

### **6.1.2 How do tourism SMEs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?**

This study shows that the SMEs participate in DMOs with a high level of variation when it comes to involving companies from different industries. While the DMOs are working within the borders of a municipality, greater geographical variation is achieved by having regional and even national DMOs. The SMEs maintain a high degree of financial independence by paying an annual membership fee, rather than buying shares or lending money to the DMO; a practice found in previous research.

Contrary to previous research, this thesis finds that the DMOs are in general free from conflicts. Furthermore, when conflicts did arise they were the result of single SMEs having different goals than the majority; rather than an issue between the level of cooperation compared to the level of competition, which has previously been put forth. The results arguably show support for previous work stating that when tourism SMEs are collaborating, the most common outcome is to form closer relationships.

Results show that DMOs are working with a defined image of the city. This supports previous work. Also corresponding to what scholars have found, employing an image based around activities and facilities was the most common practice.

While tourism SMEs use graphic logos accompanied by text, results show that DMOs are in general using less intricate text logos which do not help to reinforce the image; something that scholars mean is one of the main purposes of a logo. Slogans are like in the SMEs not a common practice. Events are a common practice according to the results. Interestingly enough, all DMOs help arrange street festivals in their respective town. Overall, the events support and reinforce the image of the town.

## **6.2 Reconnecting to the purpose: conclusions and contributions**

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how tourism SMEs use collaborative marketing as a complement to their own marketing efforts. The results show that SMEs are indeed marketing themselves independently as well as a package deal with other offers. A conclusion drawn from the results, perhaps bold and in need of more study, is that the reason for entering collaborations is a reflection of the company. SMEs with scarce resources appreciate the possibility to save on promotional costs as well as learning from similar companies and SMEs

who do not fit into the overall image of the town can use the collaboration to complete its own offer as well as complete the others offers. A considerably less bold statement is that a consequence of the family tree type of collaborations being employed is that tourism SMEs do not consider themselves to have any competitors, only partners. At least, this holds true for the tourism SMEs who offer experiences; as Köngissson and Stark (2009) found that a hotel in their case study did in fact consider other hotels in the city as competitors and not partners to have collaborations with. These two conclusions are the main theoretic contributions from this thesis. Minor contributions are the inconsistencies found with previous work presented in 6.1, for example the finding that tourism marketers are using unsophisticated targeting and pricing strategies, but are good at using their competitive advantage. Practical suggestions for SMEs and DMOs are harder to name, since this thesis subscribes to the view of Bejou and Palmer (1995); stating that there is no best way to work in collaborations and that it is highly dependable on the ruling business culture in which the companies act.

This thesis is a form of collaboration with Gidlund and Israelsson (2009). While this thesis describes the DMOs through the eyes of the tourism SMEs, a large portion of my colleagues work focus on the DMOs as viewed by the administrators and leaders of the organizations. The authors found, consistent with what is considered as a main contribution here, that municipalities do not consider closely situated municipalities as competition, but rather as partners.

When it comes to the possibilities to generalize the results, the outlooks are argueably good within the borders of the delimitation; at least when it comes to describing the practices of SMEs and DMOs in Sweden. The family tree-structure of the DMO network suggests that the overall practice is similar in all municipal DMOs. The Swedish municipalities are likely to be similar to the ones in this thesis in terms of size of population, making the cases fairly representable.

### **6.3 Suggestions for future research**

This thesis shows that the relationships between tourism destinations is completely cooperational without any perceived competition. Previous research meant that the organisation of DMOs depend on the cultural paradigm where the organisation is active. Perhaps is the highly cooperative practice of the Swedish tourism SMEs and DMOs a trait not found in other countries, why a study concerning differences in DMO organisations across cultural borders could be of interest in the field of tourism management. Another possible extension on the same topic is to determine if the view that there is no specific right way of organizing the DMOs is true by controlling performances of different DMO organisation models.

Further studies in marketing could be built around the finding that tourism SMEs share the same strengths and weaknesses when it comes to marketing activities. An extension could be to see if this holds true for SMEs in other industries as well.

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### ***Personal communication***

Anna Lundgren, Gammelstad Churchtown. Responsible for external profile. Luleå, 8th May, 2009, 13.00-14.00

Sally Sundbom, Rödbergsfortet. Sole owner-manager of Fästningsguiden. Boden, 11th May, 2009, 12.00-13.00

Maria Sirviö, Icehotel. Responsible for communication and website. Boden/Stockholm, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009, 10.15-11.15

## **Appendix 1: Interview guide**

### ***RQ1: How do tourism entrepreneurs market themselves as a single destination?***

#### **The four realms of the tourism and hospitality experience**

- Describe the activities offered.
- Are the visitors active or passive?
- Are the visitors being exposed to the activity or being a part of it?
- Which factors are important when you choose which activities to offer?

#### **Levels of Marketing Activity Model**

- How would you describe your market?
- Who are your competitors and what do you know about them?
- Who are your customers and what do you know about them?
- Are you collecting information about your competitors and customers, and if so, how?
- Describe recent events that have had an impact on your business.
- How have you dealt with these recent events?
- What do you offer that none of your competitors can offer?
- How do you promote yourself?
- How do you set your prices?
- Do you contact guests after they have visited you, and if so, why?

#### **Tools to create an image**

- Do you have a slogan, logo? More than one?
- In which way do you use your slogan(s), logo(s)?
- Do you organize any events?

#### **Destination demarketing**

- Is your offering suitable for everyone? Why/why not?
- Are there groups which you rather see visiting than other groups?
- If so, are you discouraging these groups to visit?
- If so, how is this done?

### ***RQ2: How do tourism entrepreneurs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?***

#### **Four characteristics of destination alliances**

- Do you collaborate with any other firm or organization? Why/why not?
- If so, what kind of firms and organizations?
- Where are these partners situated?
- How would you describe the level of formality in this collaboration?

- Who is your representative when dealing with the partners in the collaboration?
- Which are your reasons for collaborating with other firms and organizations?

### **Destination marketing collaboration process**

- How would you describe the process of finding partners and developing projects?
- How much time and effort is spent on the projects?
- What happens after a project is finalized?
- Are there any conflicts?

### **Brand images of tourism destinations**

- How do you think the potential tourists view the area? Positive/negative opinion?
- Within in your collaboration, are you trying to influence the image of the area?
- Which is the image you try to communicate? Historical/cultural, activities/facilities etc

### **Tools to create an image**

- Does your collaboration have a slogan or logo? More than one?
- In which way do you use your slogan(s), logo(s)?
- Do you organize any events within this collaboration?

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide, Swedish version**

### ***RQ1: How do tourism entrepreneurs market themselves as a single destination?***

#### **The four realms of the tourism and hospitality experience**

- Beskriv de aktiviteter ni erbjuder.
- Deltar besökarna aktivt eller passivt i aktiviteten?
- Tar besökarna del av aktiviteten eller är de en del av den?
- Vilka faktorer är viktiga när ni väljer vilka aktiviteter att erbjuda?

#### **Levels of Marketing Activity Model**

- Hur skulle du beskriva er marknad?
- Vilka är era konkurrenter och vad vet du om dem?
- Vilka är era kunder och vad vet du om dem?
- Samlar ni in information om era konkurrenter och kunder, och i så fall hur?
- Beskriv några aktuella händelser som har haft påverkan för ert företag.
- Hur har ni hanterat dessa händelser?
- Vad erbjuder ni som ingen av era konkurrenter kan erbjuda?
- Vad för slags reklam använder ni?
- Hur sätter ni era priser?
- Kontaktar ni besökare efter att de har varit hos er, och i så fall varför?

#### **Tools to create an image**

- Har ni en slogan, logo? Mer än en?
- Hur använder ni er slogan/logo?
- Organiserar ni några event?

#### **Destination demarketing**

- Passar ert erbjudande för alla? Varför/varför inte?
- Finns det grupper som ni hellre ser kommer än andra?
- I så fall, försöker ni på något sätt att få dessa grupper att inte komma?
- I så fall, hur uppnår ni detta?

### ***RQ2: How do tourism entrepreneurs market themselves as a bundle of destinations?***

#### **Four characteristics of destination alliances**

- Samarbetar ni med någon annat företag eller organisation?
- I så fall, vilken sorts företag eller organisationer?
- Var, geografiskt, finns dessa samarbetspartners?

- Hur skulle du beskriva nivån på formaliteten?
- Vem är företagets representant när ni träffar samarbetspartners?
- Vilka är era anledningar för att samarbeta med andra företag eller organisationer?

### **Destination marketing collaboration process**

- Hur skulle du beskriva processen att hitta samarbetspartners och arbetet med att ta fram nya projekt?
- Hur mycket tid och arbete lägger ni på ett samarbetsprojekt?
- Vad händer efter ett projekt är klart?
- Blir det någonsin konflikter?

### **Brand images of tourism destinations**

- Hur tror du att människor upplever området? Positivt/negativt?
- Försöker ni inom ramen för ett samarbete att påverka bilden av området?
- Vilken bild försöker ni förmedla? Historisk/kultur, aktiviteter/faciliteter etc

### **Tools to create an image**

- Har ni en slogan, logo? Mer än en?
- Hur använder ni er slogan/logo?
- Organiserar ni några event?