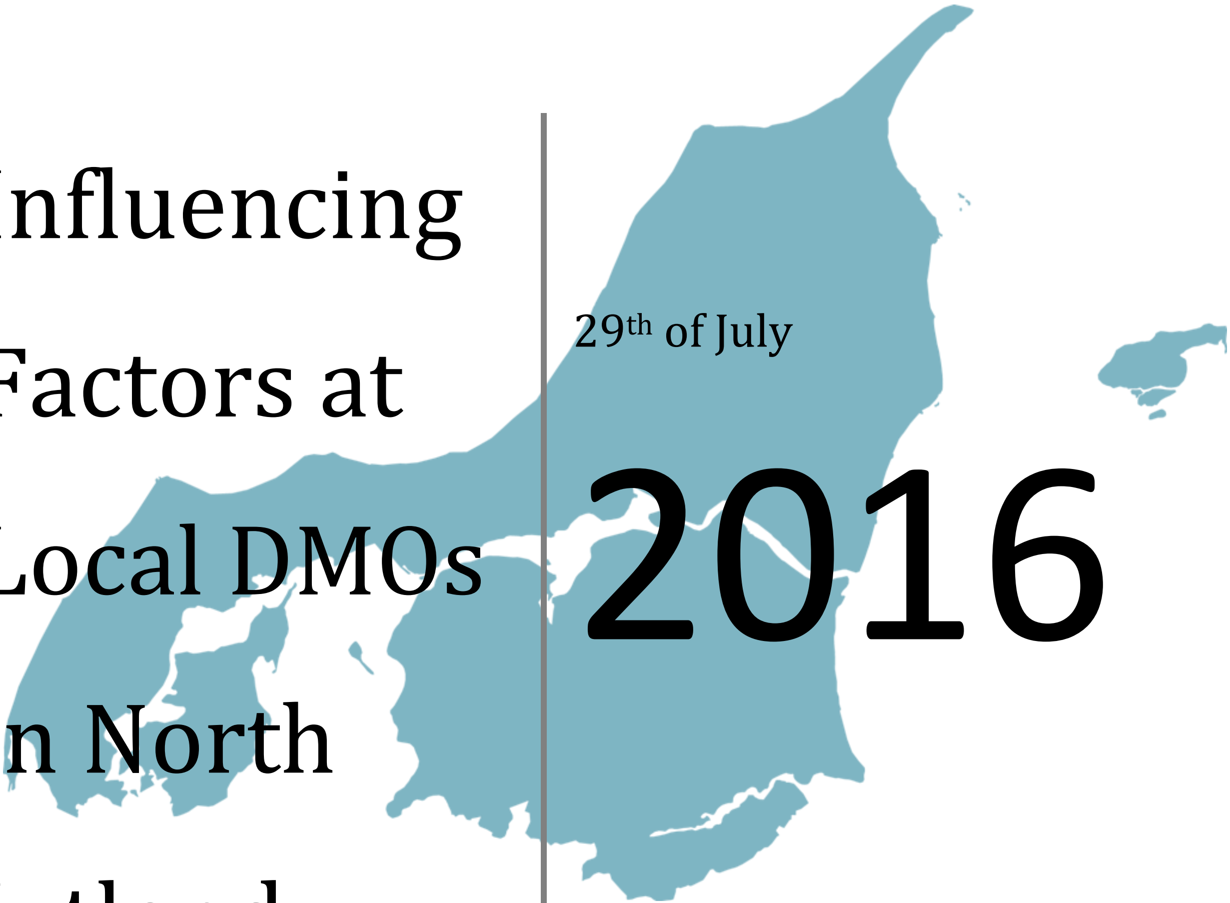

Influencing Factors at Local DMOs in North Jutland

29th of July

2016

Written by Anne Laumark

Aalborg University

A Master's Thesis written for Tourism

Title Leaf

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Master's thesis title: Influencing Factors at Local DMOs in North Jutland

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Written by Anne Laumark
A Master’s Thesis written on the 10th semester in the Master’s of Tourism, Aalborg University
Due on the 29th of July 2016

Abstract

The Danish tourism industry today is going through a current restructuring in order to adapt to a new reality, where all sorts of influencing factors impact the actors within the industry. This includes both private and municipally intertwined organizations.

This thesis focuses on the local DMOs located in North Jutland, which are for the most part governmentally owned and quite small and therefore potentially operate under different conditions than both private and larger organizations. By carefully combing through relevant literature concerning DMOs both in Denmark and internationally, the purpose of the thesis was to see if and which factors of influence applied in the context of local tourism advancement organizations in North Jutland.

Fourteen different factors, which potentially held influence over DMOs in North Jutland, were found. The factors specifically revolved around the structure of the organizations, the use of strategy, the level of cooperation, applying effect measuring, economic resources, skills of laborers, large events, trends and changing tourist behavior, legislation and policymaking, competition level, the rise of new technologies, destination importance, the use of branding and marketing and support (or lack of) from the local community. These factors could then be divided into three main categories: organizational, internal and external factors.

Individual, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with interviewees, who each represented a local DMO located in North Jutland. Explicitly, the interviewees are employed at the tourism organizations located in Jammerbugten, Hirtshals, Thy, Løkken, Hjørring, Vesthimmerland, Læsø, Mariagerfjord, Rebild and the tourism union within Frederikshavn municipality.

The interviews were then transcribed and later arranged by using the grounded theory approach. The interviewees’ responses uncovered parts of the phenomenon through the method of abstraction, which is an approved method within the philosophy of science known as critical realism, which was applied throughout the thesis.

After comparing and discussing the results within the theoretical context, the conclusion was that all the influencing factors found within the literature also applied for DMOs in North Jutland, although the level of influence varied between the destinations. This ultimately concludes that the DMOs are influenced by a whole range of factors, which affect their activities and decision making.

However, this thesis seems to only scratch the surface in terms of influencing factors for DMOs, and it is therefore in no way meant to conclude that only the fourteen mentioned factors affect DMOs. Even so, the DMOs themselves could benefit in this insight about their own organizations in order to better adapt to changes in the future.

Preface

This thesis concerns itself with the smaller Danish tourism organizations in North Jutland, which operate on a local level. They are potentially facing other conditions than their larger counterparts, which are based on a regional or national level. In an effort for them to try and stay relevant within the ever-changing tourism industry, the thesis will look further into certain factors, which influence these organizations and can potentially increase advancements and change – whether in a negative or positive way – in tourism on a local level.
I chose this subject because I wanted to write about a field that actually contributed with some relevant research to the Danish tourism industry, where I wish to be employed in the future.

I want to extend a special thanks to my internship place, the regional Danish tourism organization, VisitNordjylland. Without their help, inspiration to write the thesis and access to a unique pool of knowledge would never have been possible.
All interviewees are equally thanked due to their willingness in participating.

Introduction to the Master's Thesis

Tourism is a complicated concept, which is in no way new to the world (Hannam & Knox, 2010). The 'tourism product' is sold and bought in all places of the world, yet it is an intangible service which you cannot hold in your hands and even in today's research, the definition of what a tourist is, is still fuzzy (Hannam & Knox, 2010). Even so, tourism is an essential source of income for some parts of the world, where this industry offers wealth and employment for destinations (Tribe, 2010; Pike, 2004); some developing countries even have tourism as their main source of income (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, 2015). And undoubtedly, tourism can have a massive effect for a destination – whether positive or negative (Hannam & Knox, 2010).

The tourism industry has experienced continued expansion over the last 60 years and is today one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, 2015; Liberto, 2013). Emerging trends such as niche tourism, dark tourism, authentic tourism, package holidays, wellness tourism and youth tourism are just examples of new available types of tourism which has developed due to a change in tourist behavior, wants and needs (Hannam & Knox, 2010). This has of course also broadened the amount of academic literature on numerous topics within tourism (Hjalager, 2010), and the continuous changes within the industry create a ripple effect, which touches destinations in all parts of the world – along with a whole range of other factors (Bowen & Clarke, 2009).

But what comprises the 'tourism product'? When thinking about a certain tourism location many different types of venues and stakeholders can be found (Pike, 2004; Tribe, 2010). Attractions, activity providers, restaurants and hotels all are part of the 'end product' for a potential tourist (Ruzic & Bilos, 2010). These providers are often independent private companies (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009), who struggle to navigate and make a profit in this ever changing industry (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Pearce, 1992). But perhaps even more intriguing are the multifaceted public organizations, which operate under very different conditions and are an equally large part of the industry (Pike, 2004).

According to the latest numbers, each year tourists in Denmark spend 91.9 billion kroner, employing around 111,500 people each year (VisitDenmark, 2015). According to Hjalager (1999) *"[…] in the case of Denmark, tourism has contributed significantly to the growth in the number of* *enterprises and jobs in regions normally characterized in the literature as being less favoured."* (Hjalager, 1999, p. 179), so especially Danish regions, which are outside the urban areas, benefit from tourism.

In 2011 VisitDenmark were put in charge with the marketing of Denmark in foreign countries, thereby changing the roles of other regional and local tourism organizations (Lyck, 2011; Hall, et al., 2009; Henriksen & Halkier, 2009). Although many regional and local tourism organizations adapted the name 'Visit' (and are today for example named 'VisitCopenhagen', 'VisitNordjylland', 'VisitEsbjerg' and the like (VisitDenmark, 2015)), the numerous organizations are constructed in many different ways such as traditional DMOs, national collaboration companies, interest organizations, associations and municipal tourism organizations (Horsens, 2016). What many of them have in common is the purpose of attracting potential tourists to their specific location through various communicational and collaborative means (Horsens, 2016; VisitDenmark, 2015). And therefore communication and branding tasks of one particular area are sometimes maintained by more than one organization, such as VisitNordjylland, who brand all of North Jutland, although 'The Top of Denmark' brand a part of North Jutland, while TuristhusNord brand a part of their area (Horsens, 2016; Eldh, 2016).

Especially in the Nordic countries, *"The role of the state is an important element of tourism management, planning and development"* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 52), since these governments have great influence over the surrounding society (Hall, et al., 2009; Hjalager, 2005). And in a tourism context, shifting Danish governments have over the years implemented new ideas, changes and initiatives in the effort for Denmark to get a bigger piece of the economic pie, which tourism can offer (Lyck, 2002; Hjalager, 1999; Eriksen & Ahmt, 1999). But with barriers such as seasonality (at least in some parts of Denmark) (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Palang, et al., 2007; Danmarks Statistik, 2014-2015; Hall, et al., 2009; Hall, 2013), a high price level combined with a low service level (Stark, 2015; Hjalager, 1999; Lyck, 2011; Hall, 2013; Dansk Industri, 2015) and an unclear strategy (Lyck, 2002; Hall, et al., 2009; Hall, 2013), the results have stagnated, thus giving Denmark less success than many of their neighboring countries (Lindberg, 2015; Stark, 2015; Dansk Erhverv, 2015; Rasmussen, 2015; Danske Regioner, 2008; Jakobsen, 2015; Erhvervs- og Vækstministeriet, 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2006; Dansk Industri, 2015; Ritzau, 2015), who otherwise share the same difficulties (Hall, et al., 2009).

Currently, Danish tourism industry seems to have failed to keep up with global growth within the tourism sector, and overnight stays and their share in the number of tourists has been in decline (Lyck, 2011; Jakobsen, 2015; Hall, 2013). The need for changes in legislation and regulation is great (Lyck, 2011; Dansk Erhverv, 2015) and adjustments and alterations in the Danish tourism industry are underway (Erhvervs- og Vækstministeriet, 2016). Hjalager (2005) even mentions that *"[…] a political re-conceptualisation has caught on"* (Hjalager, 2005, p. 58), where Danish politicians have initiated various changes that support the tourism industry. The many modifications have naturally also affected the Danish tourism organizations (Lyck, 2002; Hjalager, 2005; Lyck, 2011), where new associations, new destinations and new collaborations have sprouted all over Denmark (VisitDenmark, 2015).

In the midst of all this, small tourism advancement organizations are trying their best to stay relevant and attract tourists on a local level by improving the overall tourist product in various ways (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009). Therefore, local Danish tourism advancement organizations are constantly facing a need for adaption to changes in the industry (Eriksen & Ahmt, 1999; Henriksen & Halkier, 2009), whether such shifting factors for example are new legislation (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007), new tourism demands (Bowen & Clarke, 2009; VisitDenmark, 2015), a reduction in economic resources (Pike, 2004) or something else entirely.

However, we can assume that these organizations have a future in one way or another; if we example take a look at 'Dansk Turismefremme' (Danish Tourism Advancement, ed.), which is a national union consisting of local tourism organizations and tourism agencies, who seek to advance tourism on a local level (Dansk Turismefremme, 2015), we can see that the local tourism organizations are influenced by a alteration in their conditions and are still seeking to develop. Several destinations In North Jutland are located on their list (Dansk Turismefremme, 2015) and in North Jutland you can find a tourist destination/'Visit' organization in almost every city of scale (VisitNordjylland, n.d.).

But which external and internal factors influence local tourism organizations? By simply thinking about organizations in general, economy seems to be an obvious factor. But are increasing or decreasing economic resources necessarily the most important factor? The global changes around the world also hold potential opportunities or threats to even small local organizations in Denmark and governmental legislation might also hold power over the tourism industry (Trafikudvalget, 2008). Yet other factors, which might influence them, occur – this is what the problem formulation reflects.

Literature Review and Knowledge Gap

Though research on tourism organizations and DMOs have increased, the literature is still limited (Pike, 2004; Pearce, 1992; Borzyszkowski, 2014), and the material which already exists tends to focus on larger, national or regional DMOs and not on the smaller, local ones, where Morgan, et al. (2012) and Wheeler, et al. (2011) are examples. The available research within a Danish context is even scarcer and does not necessarily take into account the countless constellations of tourism advancement organizations, especially not in a local framework, although Eriksen & Ahmt (1999), Blichfeldt & Halkier (2014) and Vestergaard, et al. (2011) have touched upon regional Danish tourism, especially in North Jutland.
Within this substantial knowledge gap, I deemed it more relevant to take a closer look on smaller tourism organizations and add on to the already gathered information about tourism organizations in North Jutland, which not necessarily have the same abundance in resources as their national and larger counterparts. In defining what factors potentially influence local tourism advancement organizations it will not only add to the research on DMOs and the Danish tourism industry in general, but also to influencing factors within smaller public corporations. And with Pike (2004) pointing out that the efforts of research are typically wasted on the actual 'practical industry': *"Even though many studies in the tourism literature have practical implications for practitioners, the vast majority of practitioners will never actually read the academic papers relevant to their business operations."* (Pike, 2004, p. 6), I wanted to create a thesis which bordered on academic results and practical ones. Therefore, scholars, politicians and the local tourism organizations themselves could gain a valuable insight into tourism development and view it with more critical eyes.

Problem Formulation – The Soul of the Thesis

Considering the current restructuring of Danish tourism and the available literature concerning influencing factors, which factors apply to local tourism advancement organizations in North Jutland?

With this problem formulation in mind, the thesis will not explore the various types of local tourism advancement organizations per se or their individual efforts in order to increase tourism on a local scale, but rather seek out which fundamental factors hold the potential to influence these organizations in a North Jutland context.
This thesis focuses mainly on the influencing factors within local tourism organizations in North Jutland, thereby excluding other tourism organizations in Denmark, especially the larger ones, who are most likely not facing the same difficulties as their smaller counterparts.
Furthermore, concepts such as 'tourist', 'tourism' and 'branding' will not be discussed elaborately, since these terms have already been exhaustingly explored on the first semesters of the Master's in Tourism and should therefore be well-known to the reader, who is considered to be an acknowledgeable person within academic tourism research.

The Master's Thesis Design – A Hierarchical Overview

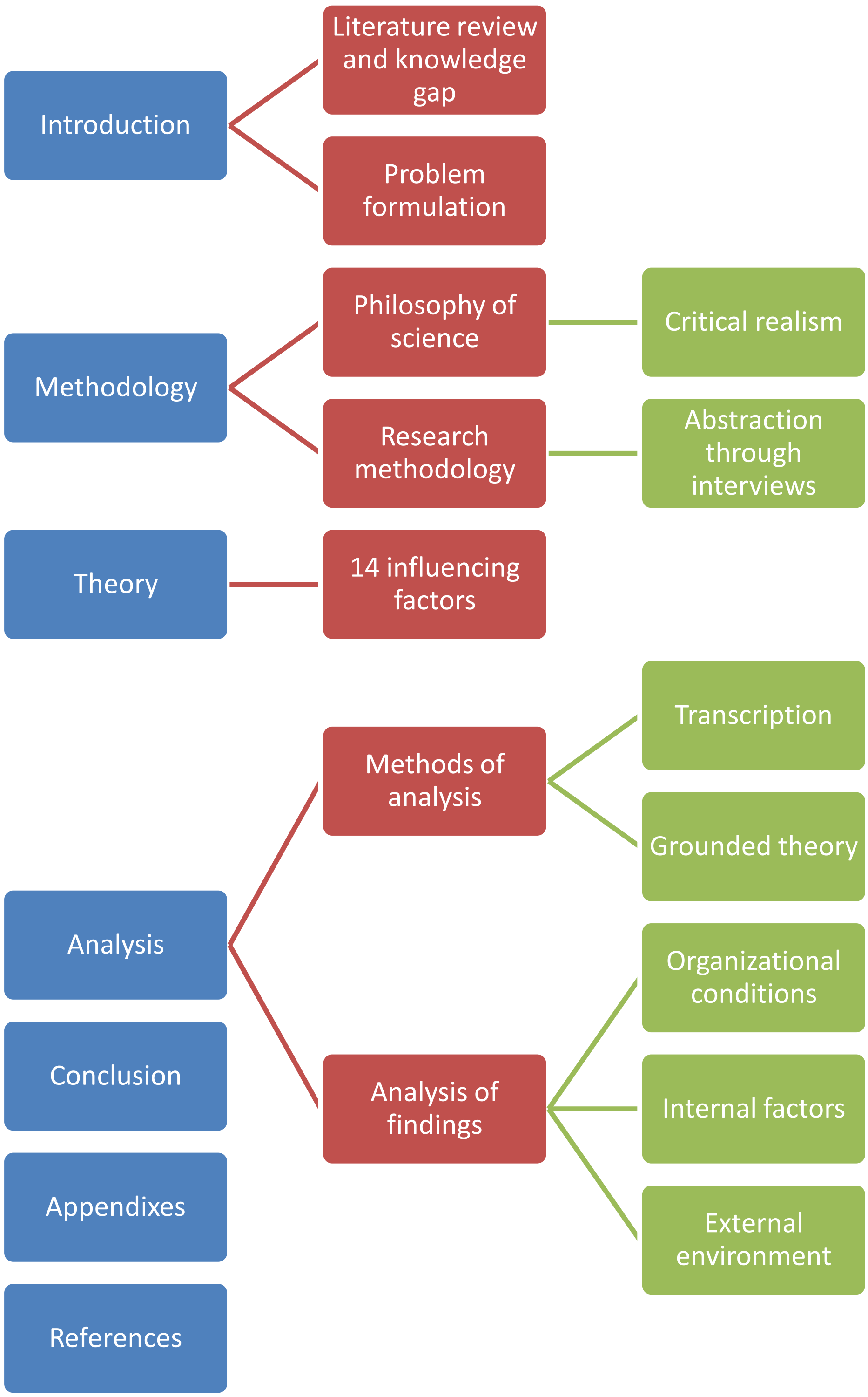

Figure 1: The Design of the Master's Thesis

Some Guidance for the Reader

Every individual part of this Master's thesis begins with a small meta-text, which will shortly explain how the following part is structured, what is contains and any other type of information, which might be of relevance to the reader. The various sections are divided into subsections in order to give the reader a more manageable overview of the thesis.

The methodology part is separated into two sections; one covering the philosophy of science which has been applied to this Master's thesis, the other concerning the research methodology.

The theory section is divided into fourteen smaller parts, where the first sets the scene and explains the concept of 'DMOs' and 'Destinations' and how these terms link to Danish tourism organizations, which then ends in the definition of key concepts. The first thirteen parts discuss various influencing factors found within the literature. The last section gives an overview of the mentioned fourteen factors.

The analysis is separated into two main sections, the first one explaining the methods of the analysis, while the second presents the actual findings of the analysis and analyzes on them.

Lastly, the conclusion, which answers the problem formulation and concludes the thesis, is presented.

In all parts containing literature and the works of various authors, sources have been used in accordance with topic and not their origin. Sources are consistently presented after the relevant sentence or quote in the Harvard, Anglia 2008 style with the last name of authors first and then followed by date of publication. More information of a source can be found in the 'References' part. Verbatim quotes from an author are shown in quotation marks ("), in italics and with a page number, while quotes from interviewees are shown in the same manner, yet leaving out the page number and instead adding a time stamp for their uttering. Any quotes that contain brackets and 'ed.' means that the quote refers to something unmentioned and has been suggested by myself; in other words the quote has been edited. Square brackets with three full stops ([…]) represent an altered quote, where the quote has had some part of it removed either before, after or in between the actual quote. The cause of using an altered quote has been done either for grammatical purposes or to clarify the meaning of the quote in its particular context by removing excess remarks. Any quotes which stem from Danish authors and the quotes from the interviewees have been translated into English by me.

The references made in the final parts of this master's thesis do not differentiate between types of sources such as books, articles, web pages, interviews etc., but are all mentioned by the last name of their author/interviewee in an alphabetical order.

Methodological Considerations

The section is divided into two large parts, covering the philosophy of science in the first section and the research methodology in the latter.

The part concerning the philosophy of science is divided into three subparts with the first presenting the concept of critical realism, which is necessary in order to explain why it has been selected for this master's thesis. Since critical realism is derived from and is a compromise between positivism and interpretivism, it has been deemed important to thoroughly explain the differences between these three philosophies of science.

Addressing various critiques towards critical realism and the consequences of using this philosophy of science is presented in the second part.

Explaining the choice of critical realism and how it may affect the later analysis is done in the latter part, also revealing the undersigned's own presumptions, which (not surprisingly) are those of a critical realist.

The second part concerning research methodology presents the research method, which has been applied in this thesis: through individual interviews.

Methods used in relation to the analysis, are to be found in the analysis section.

It is important to stress that the lines between quantitative and qualitative research have been increasingly blurred. However, this discussion is a chapter on its own and is not elaborated further within this thesis; therefore the two concepts are distinctively separated from each other in the following sections.

Applying Critical Realism as the Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science is a subject which has been addressed by a variety of different authors with discussions dating back to ancient Greece (Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 1998). In the context of constructing new research – also within the field of tourism – philosophy of science is a relevant factor, since the current existing paradigms (if one acknowledges this term, which can be defined as *"[…] a dominant mindset that normalizes research activity."* (Vaivio & Sirén, 2010, p. 138)) consist not only on how proper research should be conducted, but also how the world is viewed and how a researcher is situated between the world and the topic of research (Guba, 1990). As

Bhaskar states: *"Philosophy matters because it is causally efficacious"* (Bhaskar, 2010, p. 16), meaning that philosophical convictions affect any type of research, thereby emphasizing the importance of addressing this topic.

The subsequent section concerns the paradigm and/or concept of critical realism as presented by Roy Bhaskar. Although numerous authors, including Bhaskar himself, have added on to his initial ideas, thus distinguishing between different varieties of realism such as transcendental realism and critical naturalism (Nunez, 2014; Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 2009; Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Archer, et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 1975) and creating phases of critical realism (basic critical realism, dialectical critical realism and metaReality) (Scott, 2015; Nunez, 2014; Jacobsen, et al., 2012), these concepts will not be elaborated further in this thesis. Instead, the umbrella term of 'critical realism' as a paradigm or a philosophy of science with its ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches will be applied. The same is applicable for the use of the terms 'positivism', which covers both empiricism and logical positivism, and 'interpretivism', which envelops hermeneutics, social constructionism and constructivism (Jacobsen, et al., 2012). Admittedly, there are considerable differences between all of these terms, yet these differences are considered minor, and since they are only used in order to explain critical realism fully, their inconsequential distinctions are not presented here.

Critical realism – Introducing the Best of Two Worlds

Over the more recent years, critical realism has gained more and more acceptance in science, both in the natural sciences and the social sciences (Sayer, 2004; López & Potter, 2005; Yeung, 1997; Jensen, 2002; Collier, 1994). It was initially introduced by Roy Bhaskar (1944-2014) in 1975 with his book 'A Realist Theory of Science' (Sayer, 1999; Scott, 2015; Magill, 1994; Bhaskar, 2010; Collier, 1994; Archer, et al., 1998), where – at the time – positivism was the most acknowledged paradigm within the natural sciences, whereas interpretivism was mostly recognized within the social sciences (Sayer, 1999; López & Potter, 2005; Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 1998). The two opposing directions previously stood unchallenged (Sayer, 1999; López & Potter, 2005; Jensen, 2002; Jacobsen, et al., 2012) and merging the two directions never seemed like a possibility, until critical realism was introduced (Bhaskar, 2009; Collier, 1994), since *"Critical realism provides an* *alternative to several philosophical and methodological positions which have been found wanting."* (Sayer, 1999, p. 3). And although critical realism is mainly present within the social sciences (Sayer, 1999), *"[...] critical realism recognizes the difficulties in crafting social science research to produce 'accurate' representations of an objective empirical reality."* (Modell, 2009, p. 212), meaning that it is hard to merge social research with a somewhat objective view of reality.

Critical realism has some fundamental issues with both positivism and interpretivism in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Nairn, 2012; Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Bhaskar, 1998). Yet it is firstly important to point out that the three terms, which together constitutes a paradigm (Guba, 1990), cannot simply be separated but are sides of the same coin of a paradigm, thus being ultimately linked together (Yeung, 1997). But if we begin by looking at ontology, *"the nature of the 'knowable'"* (Guba, 1990, p. 18) , the 'realism' part in critical realism might lead one to believe that it is connected to an objective perception of the world 'as it is', thereby justifying that things are simply a construction of our knowledge as interpretivism suggests (Sayer, 1999). But this is not at all the case; more accurately the 'critical' refers to the possibility of errors within all kinds of knowledge (López & Potter, 2005). Instead, critical realism takes an approach similar to that of positivism arguing that the world exists whether we perceive it or not (this is also called the intransitive dimension), yet still acknowledging that our relationship to the world is socially mediated (referred to as the transitive dimension) (Sayer, 1999; López & Potter, 2005; Yeung, 1997; Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 2009; Kontos & Poland, 2009; Jensen, 2002; Bhaskar, 1998; Bhaskar, 1975). Where positivism strives to find a 'cause and effect' solution, where everything has one way of acting, interpretivism takes the opposite stand and argues that nothing acts in predetermining ways, since everything is socially and individually constructed (Jacobsen, et al., 2012). But *"Realists are largely in agreement that we cannot reduce the realm of things which exist, to those things that we have knowledge of."* (López & Potter, 2005, p. 75), thereby disagreeing with interpretivism's perception of the world. Instead critical realists choose a middle way between the two. As Sayer puts it: *"[…] the goal of rough regularities, let alone laws, to describe social systems, was a pipe dream."* (Sayer, 1999, p. 5), which thereby suggests that finding undeniable truths in social science is unobtainable, yet *"[…] abandoning hopes of finding regularities in no way meant abandoning explanation."* (Sayer, 1999, p. 5). This contests interpretivism, which denies all kinds of regularities within the social sciences. Critical realism's counter suggestion to positivism and interpretivism, which can satisfy and explain that regularities occur in some cases but not in others, is the idea of a hierarchy of reality (Bhaskar, 2010; Lawson, et al., 2013). Critical realists distinguish between the empirical (what can be researched and perceived), the actual (events that occur) and the real domain (the true underlying mechanism which might/might not occur) (Nairn, 2012; Sayer, 1999; Magill, 1994; Bhaskar, 2010; Lawson, et al., 2013; Kontos & Poland, 2009; Kemp, 2005; Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Collier, 1994; Archer, et al., 1998) and their distinction can be seen in Figure 2. These domains are also mentioned by Bhaskar as *"ontological stratification"* (Bhaskar, 2010, p. 23).

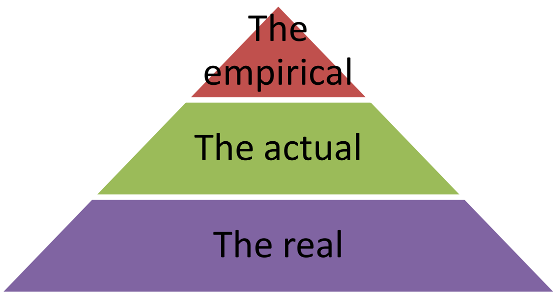

Figure 2: The domains of reality based on Bhaskar (2010) and Lawson, et al. (2013)

Yet the ontological stratification also translates into knowledge production and a system or hierarchy of layers in the intransitive world (Lawson, et al., 2013; Sayer, 1999; Bhaskar, 2009; Archer, et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 1998). Each layer is dependent on the lower ones in order to exist: social phenomena cannot be examined, if you do not have self thinking beings. The lower layers are less complex than the upper layers (López & Potter, 2005), thus interpretivism is not as relevant to use, yet on the higher layers – where social phenomena lies – interpretivism is always an element (Sayer, 1999), but it can be difficult to access 'the real' (Nairn, 2012). But, as mentioned before, critical realists stress that while interpretation is a necessity in the social sciences, this does not exclude *"causal explanation"* (Sayer, 1999, p. 6). Figure 3 shows a potential layer structure of the intransitive world, but many different hierarchies can be produced, depending on the object of knowledge (Nairn, 2012).

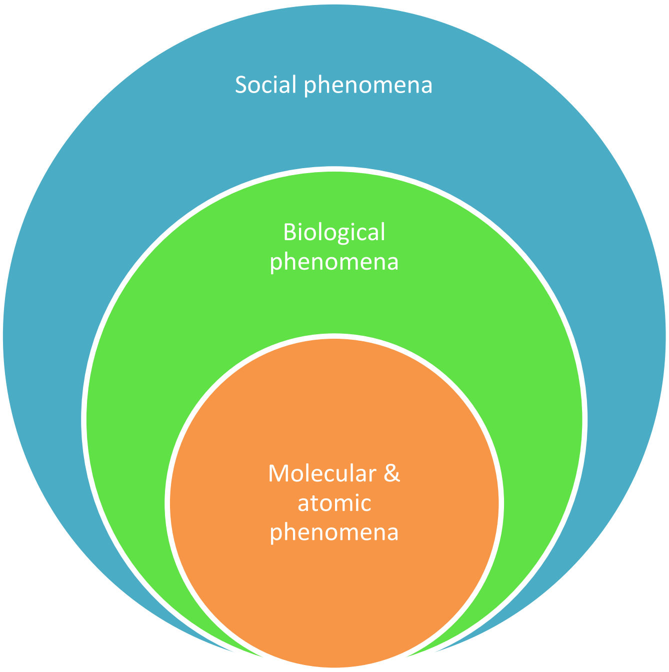

Figure 3: An example of potential layers of the intransitive world (a hierarchical structure of knowledge) based on Sayer (1999), Bhaskar (2009) and Lawson, et al. (2013)

Taking a closer look at epistemology or *"the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)"* (Guba, 1990, p. 18) and the issues that critical realists have with the two mentioned concepts of positivism and interpretivism, we might begin with positivism's beliefs of the ability of obtaining an undeniable and untainted truth of the world. This should of course – in the mind of a positivist – be pursued (Guba, 1990; Jacobsen, et al., 2012). Contrary to positivistic beliefs, *"Critical realism understands all knowledge claims as fallible."* (López & Potter, 2005, p. 97), and recognizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction with the world, thus rejecting complete neutrality (Guba, 1990; Yeung, 1997; Bhaskar, 1998). Instead critical realists adopt what Guba calls *"modified objectivity"* (Guba, 1990, p. 21), claiming that objectivity should be a goal when conducting research, although it *"[…] cannot be achieved in any absolute sense"* (Guba, 1990, p. 21). At the same time critical realists also believe that knowledge changes over time precisely because it is obtained in a social context (López & Potter, 2005), but instead of replacing old theories with new ones, they rather add and complement earlier work (Sayer, 1999). In relation to interpretivism's claims that any research is always affected by the researcher and the other way around (Jacobsen, et al., 2012), critical realists might agree, yet it does not mean that any research is merely a construction of the researched (Sayer, 1999). As Bricmont puts it: *"[…] one has to be a realist about something: about everyday objects, or the past, dinosaurs, stars, viruses, whatever."* (Bricmont, 2005, p. 107), so there are some topics – however insignificant or small – that we humans have to agree on in order to function (Bricmont, 2005). Most people can agree on that a chair is a chair; although we might disagree what *kind* of chair it is, it is still a chair. Some types of knowledge must be obtainable.

Lastly, we might have a look at the methodology. In positivism – where objectivism is desired – a quantitative approach is usually preferred by using 'hard data': statistics, questionnaires, observations and the like, where the truth is found by analyzing from many sets of data in order to generalize about the topic (Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Punch, 2009). Interpretivism takes an opposite stand by primarily valuing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation in order to find 'individual truths' (Jacobsen, et al., 2012). Critical realism rejects both of these approaches; instead of being an 'either/or' question it relates solely to the context of the research. *"[…] It (critical realism, ed.) demands that scientific methods be appropriate to their objects."* (López & Potter, 2005, p. 13) and by doing so *"[…] the methods of social science need not have the narrowness of the positivist straitjacket; they need only to be appropriate to their object."* (López & Potter, 2005, p. 14). Both types of methods – the quantitative and the qualitative – have their strengths and weaknesses and within critical realism *"[…] the point of experimental activity is to identify the relatively enduring structures of nature and their characteristic ways of acting."* (Bhaskar, 2010, p. 22), meaning that the point is to discover the underlying structures behind the phenomenon. Yeung attempts to clarify when one method should be used instead of the other: *"[…] qualitative methods such as interactive interviews and ethnography are necessary to abstract the causal mechanisms of which quantitative/statistical methods are oblivious. […] Quantitative methods, on the other hand, are particularly useful to establish empirical regularities between objects"* (Yeung, 1997, p. 57). So it all depends of the context of the research, since *"[…] critical realism does not automatically privilege any theory or research method over any other"* (Modell, 2009, p. 213).

To get a better overview and understanding of how critical realism differentiates from positivism and interpretivism, Table 1 has been constructed on the basis of various, relevant literature:

	Positivism	**Interpretivism**	**Critical realism**
Ontology	The world exists independently from our knowledge of it and is driven by natural laws (cause and effect). The truth of it can be obtained.	The world only exists through our perception of it, so an objective truth can never be found, since it is merely individual representations (social constructions) of it.	The world exists independently from our knowledge of it (the intransitive dimension), but we may have theories/perceptions of the world (the transitive dimension). We cannot find undeniable truths, but only get close to finding underlying mechanisms of 'the real'.
Epistemology	Complete objectiveness can be obtained and researchers should strive to achieve it without affecting the research.	The researched is always affected by the researcher and vice versa.	The researched is always affected by the researcher and vice versa, but that does not mean that the researched is the researcher's construction. Knowledge will develop and change over time, rather supplementing earlier work than replacing it.
Methodology	Primarily quantitative approach such as observations and statistics.	Primarily qualitative approach such as in-depth interviews and focus groups.	Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used, depending on the context of the research.

Table 1: Comparing positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. The table is based on the method by Guba (1990), while the content is freely constructed from the works of Bhaskar (2010), Sayer (1999), Stuart (2012), López & Potter (2005), Guba (1990) and Yeung (1997)

Being Critical Towards Critical Realism

Like any other philosophy of science, critical realism has received criticism (followed by explanatory defenses) both from an ontological, epistemological and methodological point of view (Sayer, 1997), and I will here address a select few. According to Guba, (who views critical realism as equal to postpositivism), *"Postpositivism is best characterized as a modified version of positivism."* (Guba, 1990, p. 20), and he criticizes its need to predict and control future events (like positivism) and use of falsification (Guba, 1990), but these accusations should more fittingly be aimed towards critical *rationalism*, which stems from Karl Popper's ideas (Popper, 1973), not Roy Bhaskar's, since critical realists are *"[…] deeply critical of positivism and falsification."* (Földi, 2006, p. 37). Magill also argues that regularities and predictions can also be found within the social sciences, not only within the natural sciences, while simultaneously questioning the need for philosophical viewpoints within social research altogether (Magill, 1994): *"General ontological schemas […] have no practical application. […] Neither social scientists or socialists have anything to gain from such philosophies."* (Magill, 1994, p. 133). Addressing the first accusation, this is more quibbling than anything else, since Sayer (for example) prefers 'associations' over 'regularities': *"Realists seek substantial connections among phenomena rather than formal associations or regularities. In explaining associations, they seek to distinguish what must be the case from what merely can be the case."* (Sayer, 1999, p. 27), but this again is a matter of context. 'Formal regularities' might occur in some cases, but on a more general level 'associations' is more applicable. On the second account of questioning the ontological affect on research, he then attempts to separate the ontology of critical realism from the methodology. Admittedly, the researcher's view of the world might not affect the product of the research per se, yet changing the methodological approach would surely affect the outcome (Kemp, 2005). Others have also attempted to criticize the methodological considerations of critical realism, thus again trying to separate the philosophy from the methodology, as Yeung states: *"Previous debates in human geography tend to focus on critical realism as a method, neglecting its essentially philosophical nature."* (Yeung, 1997, p. 52). Yet he too also comments on the area: *"[…] method in critical realism is underdeveloped and misunderstood, resulting in a methodological handicapped philosophy"* (Yeung, 1997, p. 56), since critical realism gives no guidelines towards the use of various methods, but simply lets the researcher decide on the appropriate approach (Yeung, 1997; López & Potter, 2005). This then opens up for the use of for instance statistical and 'hard data' within the social sciences, but *"Many sociologists are highly suspicious of such attempts to translate natural science approaches into the social sciences"* (Veal, 1992, p. 22) – Bhaskar himself asks the question *"to what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?"* (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 1) – and researchers should be critical towards their use of methods within all types of sciences (Modell, 2009).

By choosing critical realism as the philosophy of science for this master's thesis, this of course has some consequences and flaws. I have already dealt with a selected amount of criticism from other authors, but their critiques do of course not just 'glance off' on critical realism. When comparing critical realism to positivism and interpretivism, we cannot hope to find any undeniable truths about either the world in general or the individuals in questions, making our research tainted and somewhere in between the two. And as previously mentioned we are left to our own considerations and judgments as researchers when choosing a methodological approach, thus making our decisions more prone to mistakes and inappropriate use. These aspects of course have to be taken into consideration in relation to the thesis' analysis and conclusions.

Why Critical Realism is the Appropriate Philosophy of Science for this Master's Thesis

When deciding on an appropriate paradigm within a research field, it has often – for this researcher at least – been a decision between choosing in accordance with one's individual beliefs versus choosing the relevant paradigm for one's field of study (Vaivio & Sirén, 2010; Bryman, 1984; Lærd Dissertation, 2012). Therefore, it has previously been so that positivism has been adopted by the natural sciences and interpretivism has been adopted by the social sciences (Sayer, 1999; López & Potter, 2005; Bhaskar, 2010), as mentioned earlier. Being a student within the studies of a social science such as tourism, interpretivism has long been preferred as the appropriate philosophy of science, but throughout my studies the ideas of interpretivism has never quite gone well with my personal, ontological beliefs, when viewing the world outside the 'box' of the social sciences. Epistemologically, interpretivism has made the most sense and in previous writings the methodological approaches have so far been primarily qualitative, thus leading back towards interpretivism. But not anymore. Not only do the ontological and epistemological viewpoints of critical realism apply to my own, but methodologically it makes much more sense to apply the method best suitable for the topic rather than not questioning one's approach. In relation to the relevant topic of DMOs and how various factors influence them, interviews have the opportunity to reach a deeper understanding, when digging into the minds of the representatives.

Research Methodology and the Investigational Design

Since we have already established that by using critical realism there is (more or less) no 'proper' methodology to use because this is a matter of context, there are however guidelines of methods, which are more suitable to critical realism. Yeung emphasizes the use of method triangulation, abstraction and grounded theory in critical realism, stating that *"[…] these are not the only methods that are compatible with critical realist philosophy. But they may probably be the most practically adequate methods in the practice of critical realism."* (Yeung, 1997, p. 57). While Bhaskar himself is much more concerned with the ontological and epistemological aspects of the philosophy, he mainly leaves it up to the researcher (or other authors' recommendations and argumentation) to find a suitable methodology (Bhaskar, 1975), although there is mentioning of abstraction as a suitable approach in later works (Bhaskar, 1998; Archer, et al., 1998). Abstraction is also supported by authors such as López & Potter (2005) and Sayer (1999) as an appropriate technique, and therefore abstraction has been applied to this thesis and is addressed in the following sections.

Abstraction through In-depth Interviews

According to Yeung *"The purpose of abstraction is to isolate causal mechanisms (the 'real') in relation to a concrete phenomenon"* (Yeung, 1997, p. 58), meaning that abstraction means to find the essence of a phenomenon. Lawson elaborates: *"The aim is to obtain knowledge of real structures or mechanisms which give rise to or govern the flux of real phenomena of social and economic life."* (Lawson, 1989, p. 69), so again we want to find the 'real' or the core of a certain phenomena. As previously mentioned, abstraction is a concept which is in line with critical realist thinking, since critical realism itself also wants to uncover 'the real' in terms of the already mentioned 'real domain' (Nairn, 2012; Sayer, 1999; Magill, 1994; Bhaskar, 2010; Lawson, et al., 2013; Kontos & Poland, 2009; Kemp, 2005; Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Collier, 1994; Archer, et al., 1998).

Abstraction within this thesis is done through in-depth interviews in order to obtain knowledge about the influencing factors in relation to DMOs in North Jutland. And as Kvale and Brinkmann asks: *"If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them?"* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014, p. 17), and so that is what I did.

Interviews are what one might deem as qualitative research (Jensen, 2002; Jacobsen, et al., 2012; Veal, 1992), where *"Relatively small numbers of individuals are interviewed at length, possibly on more than one occasion"* (Veal, 1992, p. 51) and the main purpose is *"[…] to collect a great deal of 'rich' information about relatively few people rather than more limited information about a large number of people."* (Veal, 1992, p. 93), which stands in contrast to quantitative research (Veal, 1992). By using qualitative methods, *"[…] the qualitative researcher embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification"* (Bryman, 1984, p. 84), meaning that instead of verifying already existing data, we wish to find new knowledge of a particular topic, although you might argue that both paths are followed within this thesis.

There are many different types of interviews as for example the structured, unstructured and semi-structured interview and the group interview (also referred to as focus group interviews) (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). The aim of the qualitative research interview is to create knowledge based on the interviewees' comments and it differs from normal conversations by being structured and having a purpose (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014).

Although the aim of using interviews is in line with the purpose of the thesis, it is of course relevant to explain the choice of using the semi-structured in-depth individual interview over other types of qualitative research. According to Veal: *"Many areas of interest to the leisure or tourism researcher are not susceptible for controlled experiment"* (Veal, 1992, p. 23), and since the focus of this thesis is not the social environments of tourism advancement organizations, participant observation seemed irrelevant. Focus group interviews were initially also considered, yet this research method has the disadvantage that participants can affect others' way of thinking, thereby affecting results (Veal, 1992). Naturally, the in-depth interview also has its disadvantages, *"[…] mainly that the researcher is never sure just how honest or accurate people are in responding to questions. In some instances people may deliberately or unwittingly distort or 'bend' the truth"* (Veal, 1992, p. 24), but this eventuality is possible in all types of research, therefore only advising readers to be critical towards the end results. However, the topic of this thesis is relatively non-tabooed, so the interviewees should have no reason to distort their comments.

The benefits of using a semi-structured interview opposed to the structured and unstructured interview is logically that you are not completely locked in your interview questions, but have the ability to explore new interesting topics while conducting the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). But on the same time you do not have to make up questions along the way, which would make the interview more like a normal conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014).

Constructing the Interview Guide

When creating the interview guide, the seven steps of an interview investigation by Kvale & Brinkmann (2014) was applied, since it identifies the process of interview creation in details, makes you more prepared as a researcher and thereby creates new knowledge of a higher quality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). It is however important to add that using their model of seven steps does not imply following the steps linearly, but is a process of constant change, working through each step until the eventual research is concluded.

The seven steps of interview investigation are as follows (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014):

1. Thematizing: establish the purpose of the investigation and what should be investigated.
2. Design: plan the investigation design, while considering all seven steps of the interview investigation. Consider how you will reach the knowledge and also moral implications.
3. Interview: perform interviews based on the interview design and consider the context of the interview situation.
4. Transcription: prepare the interview material for analysis, which is normally done by a transcription of interviews.
5. Analysis: determine the appropriate analysis method(s).
6. Verification: determine the validity, reliability and generalizability of the results.
7. Reporting: communicate the results of the investigation.

Since the last four steps are addressed in the analysis, only the first three steps will be discussed here.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather in-depth information about which – if any – factors influenced the local tourism advancement organizations and if so, how they influenced them. When creating the interview guide, the initial starting point was the already available literature, which mentions a whole range of potential factors. Questions were then based upon these factors, although open questions were firstly asked as to avoid that the interviewees simply said what they assumed I wanted to hear.

I deemed it irrelevant to differentiate between the sex and age of respondents, although taking their occupation and the structuring of their organization into consideration. Furthermore, I decided only to focus on the said words of the respondents, therefore excluding other types of communication such as body language. The actual interview questions were then constructed, first through an initial brainstorm and afterwards carefully evaluating each question in relation to the problem formulation. The eventual interview guide can be viewed in Appendix A.

A Small Introduction to the Interviewees

The interviewees were selected based on their occupation within a Danish local tourism organization (or DMO) in North Jutland, which will be defined later in the theory section. The interviewees are the following:

- Martin Storgaard, destination developer at Vækst Jammerbugt, which is the municipality's occupational, tourism and rural district's office
- Henriette Andrea Søttrup, bureau manager at Hirtshals tourism office, which is a tourism union located in Hirtshals
- Ole Riis, local director of tourism in Thy, an industrial union combined with actors from the tourism industry and representatives from the municipality
- Amalie Andersen, office and branding assistant at Løkken tourism office, a tourism union
- Anne-Sofie Ydesen, local director of tourism in Hjørring, a part of the local municipality
- Maria Groes Eldh, press responsible at Turisthus Nord, the tourism union for Frederikshavn, Skagen and Sæby

- Helene Christensen, marketing coordinator at VisitVesthimmerland, an independent tourism union
- Karsten Christensen, president of Læsø Markedsføring, a limited liability company, which runs VisitLæsø
- Trine Søndergaard, local director of tourism at VisitMariagerfjord, a part of the local municipality
- Bodil Christensen, team coordinator at RebildPorten, which is a communication center and tourist office owned by the local municipality

Conducting the Actual Interviews

The local DMOs located in North Jutland were all contacted, however only one representative from each organization was required and not everyone had the time to participate in a lengthy interview. The ones that managed to find the time were scheduled for an appointment.
Before beginning the interview, each interviewee was informed that the interview was being recorded and that confidentiality in the thesis was an option. The interviews were then conducted in Danish and lasted approximately one hour.

Theoretical Foundation

This section is divided into numerous small parts, which all describe potential influential factors in the light of DMOs. The theory is comprised of many different authors discussing the various concepts in general, both on a global level and in Denmark, preferably North Jutland. In the relevant literature concerning DMOs the following topics have been mentioned as potential influential factors, not differentiating between positive or negative influence.

The purpose of this part it to show which factors and theories are already present within the literature. The analysis will later conclude if the literature is consistent with the research found within this Master's thesis and if they apply in a local, North Jutland context. Of course, many of these themes are interlinked; for example is a clear strategy typically a result of great cooperation between organizations, while stakeholders also have an effect on available economic resources, yet the distinction between them is here made to get a better overview of each of them separately. Each factor can of course be elaborated upon exhaustingly, so only a few select articles have been used to summarize each factor.

The last section is an overview of the mentioned factors, which amounts to the theoretical framework of the later analysis.

Within the first section concerning DMOs' structures there has also been included a section, where key concepts are defined.

The Role and Structure of DMOs, Destinations and local Danish tourism advancement organizations

DMOs and their role in tourism today is an area of research which has gotten increasingly attention (Pike, 2004), and in the literature DMOs have many definitions; even some which can be applied in a local context. The acronym originally stood for 'Destination Marketing Organization', but is today also referred to as 'Destination Management Organization' (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Borzyszkowski, 2014; Pike, 2004) and DMOs have therefore changed into being much more than simply marketing organizations faced with larger responsibilities (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Munar, 2012; Morgan, et al., 2012; Slocum & Everett, 2014), although *"[…] only few DMOs seem to adjust their strategies and organizational structures to accommodate this new role."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 119), meaning that not all of the so-called DMOs have adapted to these increasing responsibilities.

Although DMOs have existed for over a century, most of them have only recently been established in the last decade (Pike, 2004). Since *"Travelers are now spoilt for choice of destinations, which must compete for attention in a market place cluttered with the messages of substitute products as well as rival regions."* (Pike, 2004, p. 1), the need for destination branding is more acute than ever (Campelo, et al., 2014; Marzano & Scott, 2009), where destinations have to compete against each other given their similar 'tourism product' (Hjalager, 2002; Hall, et al., 2009). Ooi also agrees with that the function of branding is *"[…] to make the destination stand out in the global tourism market, so as to compete with other destinations."* (Ooi, 2004, pp. 111-112), meaning that destinations are forced to stand out from their competitors in a global scale.

Furthermore, *"The customer is becoming more and more demanding and experienced; hence, it will be more and more difficult to "persuade and win" him/her."* (Borzyszkowski, 2014, p. 69), meaning that potential tourists now have more complex needs, which must be fulfilled in order to win them over. And as a result DMOs now compete with other destinations for the tourists (Munar, 2011; Hall, et al., 2009; Ooi, 2004), but also regularly find themselves copying branding ideas from others: *"[…] destinations are seeking to promote themselves in an extremely congested and competitive marketplace in which there is often a high degree of substitutability and also much copycat marketing, and in which campaigns, brands and images perceived as successful in one destination can be adopted by other destinations."* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 41). And the competition between destinations is hard (Munar, 2011; Ooi, 2004; Bornhorst, et al., 2010), especially because *"[…] a DMO usually has no direct control over the products they represent nor the packaged offerings of intermediaries such as airlines, tour wholesalers and travel agencies. From the supply perspective the often eclectic collection of destination features must somehow be presented to the market in a way that not only cuts through the clutter of crowded markets to offer benefits desired by travelers, but also satisfies the interests of the host community, local businesses and travel intermediaries."* (Pike, 2004, p. 4). This means that a DMO cannot decide on what the destination can offer per se, but can simply try to manage their destination in the best way possible and still attempt to satisfy all their stakeholders. And as often as not, the brand of a destination in the minds of the tourists are not even caused by the efforts of the DMOs: *"[…] much of the information a potential or actual visitor to the destination has with respect to understanding the brand will be derived from other sources, especially the media (especially film, television, newspapers, magazines and internet) and the comments of friends and relations (word-of-mouth)."* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 35), where Hall, et al. here mentions a few of the other potential sources, which can affect the overall image of a destination. And according to Ooi *"Many people rely heavily on their own perceptions when they decide where to go for a holiday. These perceptions are based on these people's experiences and what they have learned from different sources, such as news stories, travel programs, movies, geography lessons, stories from friends and relatives, etc."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 110), so again the tourist's image of a destination is not necessarily based on the branding efforts of a DMO.

The definitions of a DMO are plentiful and many types of DMOs with different purposes, challenges and tasks can be found (Pike, 2004; Borzyszkowski, 2014; Pearce, 1992). According to Atorough & Martin *"[…] a destination marketing organisation (DMO) is a form of alliance that involves the coming together of stakeholders within an area or region, for the purpose of promoting and marketing the destinations image and attractions to potential visitors."* (Atorough & Martin, 2012, p. 36), and Pike follows up with: *"Ultimately, the role of a DMO must be to enhance the long term competitiveness of the destination."* (Pike, 2004, p. 39). Ooi also states that *"[…] many destinations are aiming to shape how the world imagines and perceives them."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 108), so either the DMOs have many different definitions such as an alliance of stakeholders or a destination who market themselves to potential visitors or the definition itself is unclear. Undoubtedly, the concept of a DMO is linked to a destination, which Pike also concludes: *"Most tourism activities take place at destinations, and so the destination forms a pillar in any modeling of the tourism "system""* (Pike, 2004, p. 1). Ruzic & Bilos elaborate further on the importance of a destination, which not only restricts itself to a single facility, but is an entire package: *"This is because travel experience is not created only by a hotel anymore, that is, by a facility in which the tourist uses the accommodation service, but also by the total offer of a destination: parks, museums, trips, exhibitions, shops, restaurants, pastry shops, coffee shops, culture, entertainment, sports, etc."* (Ruzic & Bilos, 2010, p. 184). But Munar also states that

"Destinations are more complex and diverse than specific tourism products." (Munar, 2011, p. 293), meaning that the concept of a destination is understandably more complex than a simple hotel offer, which is a view supported by Viken, et al. (2016), Pike (2005) and Buhalis (1999). But when then defines a destination? According to Pike *"Destinations are places that attract visitors for a temporary stay, and range from continents to countries to states and provinces to cities to villages to purpose built resort areas. […] (It is, ed.) a place at which visitors temporarily base themselves to participate in tourism related activities or non-activities."* (Pike, 2004, pp. 11-12). Bornhorst, et al. (2010) define a tourism destination in a quite similar way and also emphasize on the tourism experience: *"[…] (a tourism destination is, ed.) a geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction, which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visitation experiences."* (Bornhorst, et al., 2010, p. 572).

A DMO on the other hand can be separated into transnational, national, regional or local DMOs (Pike, 2004; World Tourism Organization, 2007) and are the public sector's face in the tourism industry (Pike, 2004; Hall, et al., 2009; Pearce, 1992). They are therefore often non-profitable (Borzyszkowski, 2014; Zavattaro & Adams, 2016) unlike the private sector (Pearce, 1992). Transnational DMOs, National Tourism Authorities (NTAs) or National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) are in charge of marketing tourism on a national level (Pike, 2004; World Tourism Organization, 2007; Munar, 2012; Borzyszkowski, 2014; Pearce, 1992). Regional, provincial or state DMOs (RTOs) brand a geographic region for tourism purposes (World Tourism Organization, 2007; Pike, 2004; Munar, 2012; Borzyszkowski, 2014), and then there are local DMOs (LTAs), who manage marketing of tourism to a small area or city (World Tourism Organization, 2007; Pike, 2004; Munar, 2012; Borzyszkowski, 2014). Munar defines three main functions of a DMO: *" (1) the coordination of marketing strategies, including the destination brand, and the management of information and knowledge about the tourism destination; (2) the establishment of networks and initiatives to improve the destination offer; and (3) the coordination of tourism planning and development."* (Munar, 2012, pp. 102-103), so if we boil it down, DMOs coordinate and manage marketing strategies, establish networks and coordinate tourism development. But does this necessarily apply in a Danish context? Pike's definition of a destination marketing organization (DMO) is *"Any organisation, at any level, which is responsible for the marketing of an identifiable* *destination. This therefore excludes separate government departments that are responsible for planning and policy."* (Pike, 2004, p. 14), where he excludes governmentally appointed policymakers of destinations. Yet in Denmark marketing of destinations on a local level is often done by a DMO or a local government (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014), therefore making it harder to separate the two. Furthermore, you can find examples of many different kinds of DMOs in Denmark, and these DMOs function somewhat independently from each other (Ooi, 2004). As previously mentioned these various tourism advancement organizations are constructed in countless ways, which can affect their financial resources and their stakeholders (Tribe, 2010). Figure 4 shows examples of various kinds of tourism organizations in Denmark, yet it is important to stress that not all tourism organizations can be categorized neatly under such a division.

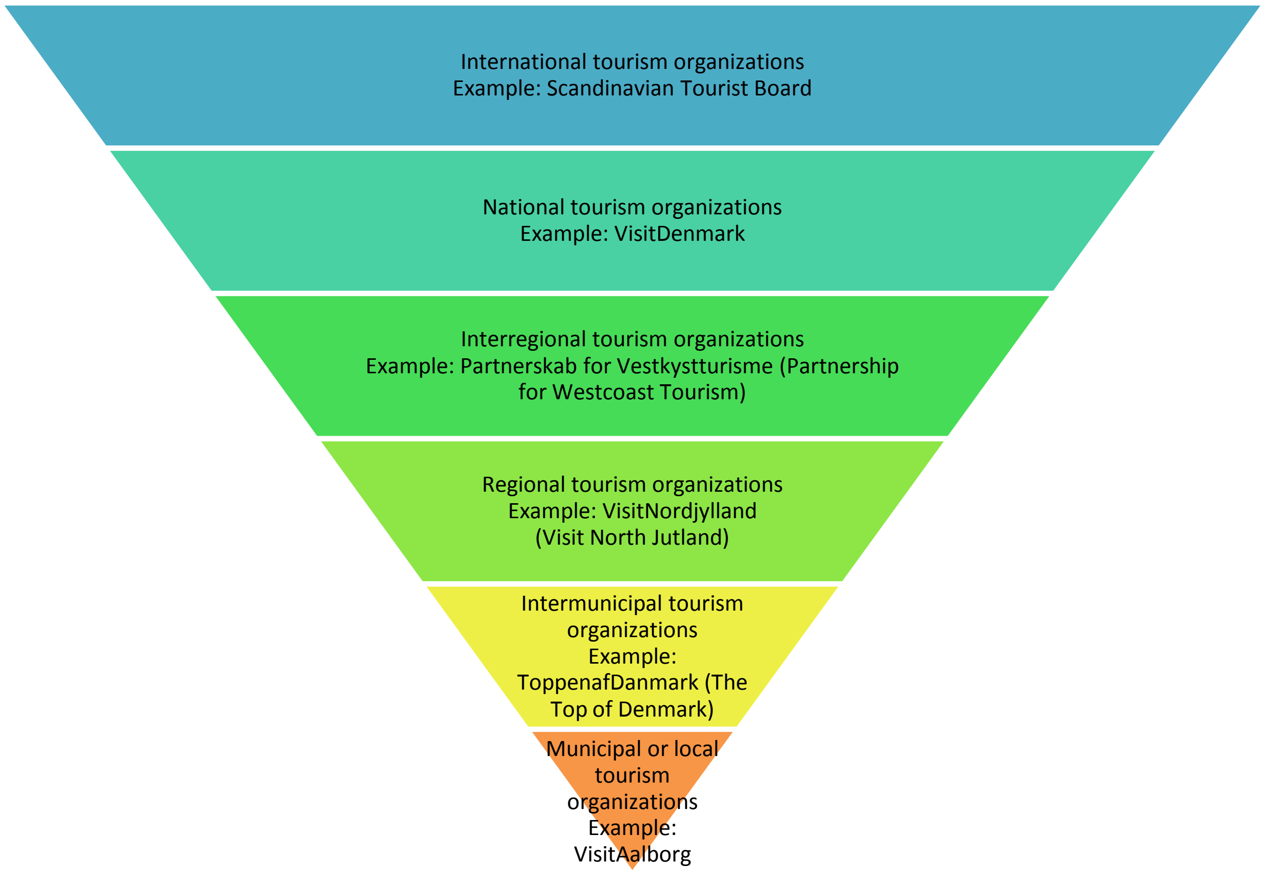

Figure 4: Different kinds of tourism organizations in Denmark with examples. The figure is based on Lyck (2002), Hall, et al. (2009) and Horsens (2016).

Defining Key Concepts: Destinations and DMOs

Since we have already discussed various definitions of terms such as 'DMO' and 'Destination' some key concepts have to have one clear definition within this master's thesis. These definitions are based on other authors' explanations.

Based on Atorough & Martin (2012) and Pike (2004) and their definitions, the definition of a DMO within this thesis is as such: *A DMO is any organization with the purpose of marketing and/or managing a tourism destination.*

Therefore the abbreviation 'DMO' is used throughout the rest of the thesis, but should still be viewed equal to the term 'tourism advancement organizations', which is used in the problem formulation.

Naturally, we must also define 'Destination'. This definition is based upon Pike (2004) and Bornhorst, et al. (2010): *A Tourism Destination is a place, where visitors stay temporarily and engage in tourism related activities.*

Lastly, the term 'local' can also be discussed, but within this context it simply refers to a small area or a city, as defined by Pike (2004) and others.

The Use of Strategy in the Overall Industry

In the case of the tourism industry, Tribe (2010) states that the need for a strategy is crucial for tourism organizations and mentions that *"Without strategy, tourism entities are susceptible to strategic drift, particularly in today's turbulent environments and fragmentation which might be likened to the headless chicken syndrome."* (Tribe, 2010, p. 13). He defines strategy as *"[…] the planning of a desirable future and the design and testing of suitable ways of bringing it about."* (Tribe, 2010, p. 7), while 'strategic drift' refers to an organization (with the mention of both public tourism organizations and private companies) which is out of touch with its environment (Tribe, 2010). Pike and Munar go as far as saying that the role of a DMO actually involves the development of strategies for a specific destination (Pike, 2004; Munar, 2012), hence underlining the importance of a tourism strategy. Lyck also emphasizes on the need for change and strategy on a national, regional and local scale in the Danish tourism industry specifically, if it is to improve: *"[…] industrial competitiveness requires organisational, strategic and management changes if the* *industry is to develop sustainable competitive advantages (SeA) at an appropriate level and to contribute economic growth and welfare in Denmark. […] The changed context for the industry requires not only national, but also regional, local and micro level changes if the economic performance of the industry is to improve.*" (Lyck, 2002, p. 318). Both Hall (2013) and Hall, et al. (2009) support this view.

Level of Cooperation between Stakeholders and the Importance of Similar Interests

A destination is comprised of many different stakeholders, which a DMO all have to cater to and find balance between (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Pike, 2004; Munar, 2012; Munar, 2011; Ooi, 2004; Morosan, 2015). Such stakeholders can for instance be the visitor, the destination community, investors, sponsors, employees, interest groups and government (Hall, et al., 2009). Therefore, *"[…] the numerous stakeholders involved in determining the role and development of an area as a tourist destination unequivocally result in different interests and objectives, which ultimately must converge to support the marketed image of the destination."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 117), meaning that stakeholders often have dissimilar interests when it comes to marketing a destination, but have to reach a joined direction. So, although having a unified and clear branding image for a specific destination is preferable (Alimoradi, 2011), it is rarely the case, and *"The diversity of interests and stakeholders makes the making of a destination brand a multifaceted and polemic task."* (Munar, 2012, p. 103), where stakeholders have their own agenda and goals for their specific entity (Ooi, 2004; Alimoradi, 2011; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Morgan, et al., 2012). These numerous and perhaps opposing interests can often lead to an extensive amount of politics within a DMO (Pike, 2004; Hall, et al., 2009; Ooi, 2004; Morgan, et al., 2012; Buhalis, 1999). Pike stresses that politics is an important part of DMO decision-making: *"Politics in decision-making is a significant aspect of DMO decision-making, and may even be unavoidable."* (Pike, 2004, p. 61), which makes sense due to the DMOs' ties to the public sector with all that this entails. In any case, *"All DMOs share a common range of political and resource-based challenges not faced by private sector tourism businesses"* (Pike, 2004, p. 2) and *"The politics of DMO decision making can, and does, inhibit implementation of marketing theory."* (Pike, 2004, p. 4), where DMOs have a whole range of stakeholders to please, which can eventually lead to politics and hinder marketing. Munar also states that *"Scholars agree that the role of these organizations is often a difficult one, as they are not only supposed to respond to the interests of the tourism industry, but also to political authorities, the host community and other local stakeholders, which may have a stronger focus on the negative impacts of tourism development."* (Munar, 2012, p. 103), pointing out that some stakeholders – often in a local context – focus on the negative aspects of tourism. Also Hall, et al. follow up with this quote: *"[…] political pressures from different stakeholders within a destination might mean that some attributes of a destination are used or not used because stakeholders wish to have their own aspirations presented in a brand (and its associated campaigns), rather than marketers selecting attributes."* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 41), again concluding that some stakeholders might have their own agenda, which is not necessarily beneficial for the destination as a whole. Ooi agrees: *"The different tourism stakeholders want the destination brand not only to include their products but also to present their products in the best possible light. These stakeholders may not support, or may even lobby against, the brand because it does not yield any benefits for them."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 111), so the stakeholders can actually be a hindrance for the overall destination brand.

According to Pike *"The political environment in tourism at national and local levels includes governments and ministers, bureaucratic cultures, competing entrepreneurs, the media, the host community, and special interest groups."* (Pike, 2004, p. 61), and all of these interest groups add to the pressure of the DMO. This can force DMOs to make decisions which are not necessarily beneficial for the tourist (Hall, et al., 2009; Munar, 2012), who is – to a large extent – the core factor of the DMO: *"[…] the tourist remains the single most important focal point that we seek to understand and satisfy within the complex phenomenon we call tourism"* (Bornhorst, et al., 2010, p. 572). Lyck also adds *"[…] it is customer behaviour and needs that define the industry"* (Lyck, 2002, p. 316), meaning that is the tourists who shape the tourism industry.

Since DMOs have so many different stakeholders, it is also naturally important to maintain a strong level of cooperation in order to avoid conflicts of interest (Munar, 2012; Alimoradi, 2011): *"Other studies have also indicated how partnerships and collaborations between organizations in tourism can result in conflict of interests when designing marketing strategies"* (Munar, 2012, p.

112). Another benefit for cooperation between stakeholders could also be the sharing of knowledge about the industry (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Munar, 2012; Hjalager, 2005; Alimoradi, 2011), the ability to divide labor areas between other DMOs (Lyck, 2011) and mobilizing resources effectively (Alimoradi, 2011). Alimoradi even states that *"A web of network relationships forms the foundation for the effective and efficient flow of information, experience, knowledge and ideas."* (Alimoradi, 2011, p. 532), meaning that a strong level of cooperation can lead to a number of positive outcomes. Yet even so *"[…] DMOs still act mostly by themselves; consequently, they forgo important opportunities to create capacity to change through the pooling of resources and continuous knowledge exchange across organizational boundaries."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 117), where DMOs overlook the benefits of cooperation and pooling of resources.
It seems self-explanatory that DMOs must communicate and consult with stakeholders (Hall, et al., 2009), but even so Lyck states that in the Danish tourism industry *"It must be concluded that the tourism area still have difficulties in creating a common platform with clear division of labor."* (Lyck, 2011, p. 10), meaning that there is still room for improvements in terms of cooperation within the Danish tourism industry.

The Ability to Measure Marketing Effects and Asserting the DMOs reason for Existence

In order to satisfy stakeholders such as politicians, private companies and others, measuring the effects of the DMOs' efforts is crucial (Morgan, et al., 2012; Gretzel, et al., 2006). After all, *"The need for DMOs to justify their existence and to prove a return on investment is more critical today than ever before."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 121), where DMOs need to show that their efforts are not for naught. Yet today, *"The most challenging and least reported aspect of destination marketing is that of measuring performance."* (Pike, 2004, p. 177), since *"Isolating and quantifying a DMO's contribution to destination competitiveness is currently an impossible task."* (Pike, 2004, p. 190), hence underlying the difficulties of measuring this effect. According to Pike *"One of the problems with destination marketing is that it has been difficult to actually quantify the contribution of DMO efforts to the overall success of the destination."* (Pike, 2004, p. 36), meaning that the efforts of the DMO are not necessarily the reason for a destination's success with tourists.

And today DMOs are measured in relatively traditional ways, which Gretzel, et al. point out: *"[…] bureau performance is still being assessed using measures that account for traditional DMO activities."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 121), such as measuring overnight stays (Gretzel, et al., 2006), job creation and gross value added (Madsen & Zhang, 2010), even though one-day visitors are also an important part of a destination's earnings (Podhorodecka, 2014). Buhalis even suggests that more effort should be put into *"[...] monitoring tourist satisfaction levels and using these as part of the criteria for success, rather than increasing numbers of tourists"* (Buhalis, 1999, p. 98).
In the case of Denmark, Peter Kvistgaard also states in Hall, et al. (2009) that *"So far, there exists relatively little hard and/or soft 'evidence' of the positive or negative consequences of using public money for tourism development projects in Denmark."* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 71), and since Danish DMOs are mainly publically funded, their efforts have been hard to measure.
Madsen & Zhang have also attempted to list potential ways of measuring tourism efforts' effect, yet remain uncritical towards concluding the optimal way of calculating the tourism effect (Madsen & Zhang, 2010).

Economic Resources and Specialized Skills and Knowledge for Employees

Another aspect, which holds the potential to influence DMOs, is the existence of both financial support and the skills and knowledge of laborers (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Ooi, 2004). Especially in the case of smaller DMOs, the resources are often limited, which can therefore be a hindrance for potential growth (Pike, 2004; Hall, et al., 2009). Lyck, who has written specific research about the Danish DMOs, even goes as far as stating: *"Internally, it is clear that the level of resources (economic) and competencies (skills), the so-called strategic capability of the industry, is too low to develop global competitiveness."* (Lyck, 2002, pp. 312-313), meaning that there is already a low level of resources – both economic and skilled – in the case of Danish DMOs, which is a clear obstruction in a global context.
In Nordic countries, the economic resources of DMOs are often funded from more than one stakeholder such as the EU, the government and private sector partners (Hall, et al., 2009) and *"Many DMOs, at national, state and local levels, would simply not be able to function in their current form without the resources of government."* (Pike, 2004, p. 37). Therefore *"Coordination is*

needed in order to avoid duplication of resources" (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 54) such as a government funding separate DMOs who cover the same area. In an effort to grow in spite of a low resource level *"Many rural areas have, therefore, searched for ways to improve their position vis-á-vis other localities by mobilizing local resources and employing policy tools that are believed to foster indigenous social and economic development."* (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014, pp. 1587-1588), where the pooling of resources and determining overall policies through the sharing of knowledge for more than one destination is increasingly applied. The development of DMOs pooling their resources is also mentioned by Gretzel, et al. (2006) and Henriksen & Halkier (2009), where DMOs attempt to have a greater impact on potential tourists and explore new markets (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009; Gretzel, et al., 2006). Henriksen & Halkier mention an example from North Jutland – 'The Top of Denmark – where a Northern region of North Jutland shares knowledge and resources whilst trying to attract tourists to their region (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009). Yet *"[…] scale, aims and instruments have changed when moving from local promotion towards regional, product-development policies within tourism."* (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009, p. 1446), and such close collaboration can have both benefits and drawbacks, when changing the conditions of tourism marketing from local to regional. Henriksen & Halkier mention that *"[…] changing the geographical scale through collaboration with neighbouring localities in order to achieve greater impact in the market place can clearly be complicated when these localities have traditionally been construed as competitors."* (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009, p. 1446). Again can 'The Top of Denmark' be mentioned as an example, since it previously included the island of Læsø, which decided to part with the collaboration (Læsø forlader Toppen af Danmark, 2011). And such an attempt is also more risky and *"[…] much more demanding in terms of knowledge about the international markets and the capabilities of local firms to change."* (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009, p. 1446), where such a development demands more resources such as knowledge and a preparedness towards change. Yet they do emphasize that some destinations, which choose to cluster, can benefit from such cooperation (Henriksen & Halkier, 2009).

In terms of human resources, there are disagreements among authors whether or not the tourism industry – which is often viewed as an industry with a high turnover of staff and a low educational level (Liberto, 2013; Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005) – actually benefits from investments in higher education and/or increased skill level. According to Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring *"Information is lifeblood of tourism"* (Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005, p. 64), which can translate into a need for increased information about the tourists and the skill to meet their new demands, which is also supported by Liberto: *"[…] demand for tourist products can no longer be satisfied by unskilled or McDonaldized work forces, even at the lower level employees, requiring instead higher educational levels of the workforce and customized training."* (Liberto, 2013, p. 752). Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring specifically mention ICT, marketing and management competencies (Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005) and Liberto also agrees, saying that *"[…] countries with high human capital levels seem to gain significantly more from the expansion of the tourism sector than less educated ones."* (Liberto, 2013, p. 752), yet she also mentions that *"[…] investments in education do not constitute a crucial factor to enhance growth (in tourism, ed.)"* (Liberto, 2013, p. 777).

New Events such as Crises or Upturns

Other factors, which can influence not just DMOs, but the entire tourism industry, are events on either a local or global scale. Major events such as global economic crisis, terrorist attacks and natural disasters can decrease the number of tourists to a specific destination or force governments to make cutbacks and slow down growth within the DMOs (Pike, 2004; Hall, et al., 2009). Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring state that: *"[…] tourists are highly sensitive to conflict scenarios and violence, health risks and increasing environmental accidents."* (Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005, p. 8), which is also supported by Bowen & Clarke with examples such as *"From headline events such as the Gulf War, fuel crises or the tsunami disaster through to the impact of inflation, credit crunch or government adjustment of visa requirements"* (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 32). It is also mentioned that while *"[…] it is the richer North (and West) of the world that has the most active tourists"* (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 14), wealthier inhabitants from other countries can be seen as a rising potential for destinations (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). And as Papatheodorou mentions, it is both the good times and the bad times, which have an effect on the tourism industry: *"During periods of recovery and demand booming, new investment and expansionary strategies may be required to take advantage of the new business opportunities. On the other hand, periods of recession and demand stagnation may necessitate rational restructuring and* *radical downscaling to survive in a fiercely competitive environment."* (Papatheodorou, 2006, p. 8), where actors in tourism often adapt to the various changes of their environment, whether they are good and bad, thereby holding either a potential or threat to DMOs.

Within a Danish context, the financial crisis, which started in 2008 (The Editorial Office, Den Store Danske, n.d.), undoubtedly had an effect for the Danish tourism industry in terms of a significant drop in overnight stays (VisitDenmark, 2014; Nørr, 2010; Vedsted, 2009). Some destinations have yet to overcome the crisis (Jørgensen & Nørgaard, 2016), while others, such as the attraction Bakken in Copenhagen, actually benefitted from it, since the crisis resulted in Danes having their holiday at home instead of abroad (Hoffmann, 2009). The ongoing refugee crisis and fear of terror is supposedly also having a positive effect on the Danish tourism industry, since tourists – both internationals and Danes – are choosing to spend their holiday at safer destinations such as Denmark (Obelitz, 2016; Krogh & Romme, 2016).

Shifting Trends and Development in Tourist Behavior

Other factors which can boost change are transformations in tourist needs and behavior (Lyck, 2002; Lyck, 2011; Hjalager, 2005; Borzyszkowski, 2014). Mapping tourist behavior and trying to predict the next big trend within tourism has gotten increasingly attention from researchers in an effort to predict future earning possibilities (Bowen & Clarke, 2009; World Tourism Organization, 2006). Multiple models of tourist information search, decision making models and cultural differences theories exist (Bowen & Clarke, 2009) and today, actors in tourism have to adapt to such changes. This makes the tourism industry a very dynamic one: *"The possibility of Internet booking and consequent individual travelling, the trend towards late and flexible travel decisions, and the availability of low-cost carriers and intensified search for price advantages makes tourism one of the most volatile and dynamic economic sectors."* (Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005, p. 8), where they here mention a few examples. Furthermore, the travel pattern of the average tourist has also changed, where people today travel more, but for shorter stays (Ritzau, 2015; Turisterhvervets Samarbejdsforum, 2008).

Trying to foresee future trends is a difficult task, but most authors agree that mass tourism and getaways have previously been dominant (Hannam & Knox, 2010; Gyr, 2010; Strietska-Ilina &

Tessaring, 2005). Bowen & Clarke mention various global trends in the future such as travelling with pets, religious tourism, authentic experiences, nudist tourism and space tourism (Bowen & Clarke, 2009), while VisitDenmark have tried to identify future trends within a Danish context, mentioning uniqueness, tourist involvement, impeccable service, authenticity with locals, creative marketing, easy access to information and implementing daily habits while on vacation as some of the things, which tourists will seek out in the future (VisitDenmark, 2015). Such potential trends are naturally important to be aware of for all players in the tourism industry, including DMOs, who can then shape their 'products' and meet upcoming demands (Gretzel, et al., 2006).
In spite of upcoming trends and available information about the tourists of tomorrow DMOs often have limited insight into what their tourists want: *"DMOs also have to manage higher and increasingly diverse consumer expectations, but they often have limited knowledge of travelers' needs and wants."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 119).

Legislation and Policymaking as Changers of Market Conditions

Yet another factor which holds the potential to influence DMOs is the laws and regulations affecting tourism (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hjalager, 2005; Hall, et al., 2009; Marzano & Scott, 2009). Legislations concerning tourism can either create negative or positive modifications in the environment, where tourism actors and DMOs operate: *"Governments may enact legislation on tourism issues but more generally they regulate the wider economic and cultural environments that tourism operates in."* (Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 19). According to Pike *"Governments generally interact with tourism in the following ways: stimulating economic growth, provision of infrastructure, fiscal revenue, border controls, spatial redistribution, protection of resources, regulatory safeguards, managing of exogenous events, stimulating social benefits, and minimising market failure."* (Pike, 2004, p. 37), in other words they are involved in a number of areas, which holds potential opportunities and/or threats to the tourism industry and its actors. The reason for their intervention into the tourism industry is often based on job creation and income generation or to protect the environment: *"Tourism has moved to the centre of the regimes of planning within national, local and supra-national governments as policymakers have recognised both the potential for income generation and, on the less positive side, environmental damage."* (Hannam &

Knox, 2010, p. 19). When it comes to the DMOs, which are often fully or partially governmentally funded (Hall, et al., 2009; Pike, 2004; Morgan, et al., 2012; Zavattaro & Adams, 2016), *"Government recognition of the economic value of tourism activities to communities has to a large extent been responsible for the proliferation of DMOs world wide."* (Pike, 2004, p. 25). DMOs – and the industry in general – are therefore naturally influenced by governmental legislation, which might affect their funding and their 'tourism product' (Pike, 2004). Many case examples of specific tourism related regulations can be found on a global scale, such as increased fines on Mallorca for public drinking to regulate drunken tourist behavior (Heeger, 2016) or regulations concerning transplant tourism in Israel to prevent illegal organ donations (Padilla, et al., 2013) and many more. And in a Danish context the Planning Act has previously made it difficult to build projects near the Danish coastlines and beaches; it is now being discussing if this law should be liberalized (VisitDenmark, 2015; Baumgarten, 2016; Dansk Erhverv, 2015). And the Danish Dog Act from 2010, which made it possible to put down unwanted and potentially dangerous dog breeds, had a negative effect on German tourists, who deselected Denmark as a holiday destination out of fear for their dogs' lives (Lauridsen, 2013; Jensen, 2013; Larsen, 2010).

Increased or Decreased Competition Level

Increasing competition from neighboring markets is also a factor which has the potential to influence DMOs (Turismenetværket, 2010). DMOs must keep up with new events and trends and need to reinvent themselves (Gretzel, et al., 2006; Munar, 2012), since *"[…] DMOs increasingly compete with other destinations for market share."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 120), meaning that they need to stay relevant in this competitive industry, where they are contending with other destinations for tourists. And *"Rural areas are facing prospects of marginalization and peripherality in an age of globalization where the attention of governments and media focuses increasingly on the (lack of) competitiveness of urban and metropolitan regions in Europe."* (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014, p. 1587), meaning that especially rural areas are forgotten, when it comes to global competition. *"Despite the increasing competition in overall world tourism, Europe is still the number one destination."* (Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005, p. 7), however *"[…] tourism organisations will find it more difficult to compete in an increasingly globalised, concentrated and* *fiercely competitive environment."* (Papatheodorou, 2006, p. 149). Papatheodorou elaborates, stating that few actors within the tourism industry have realized the extent of their competition: *"[…] most tourism players fail to understand the magnitude and the global nature of the competitive environment of tourism, or to appreciate that they compete against all the alternative leisure options for consumers' time and money"* (Papatheodorou, 2006, p. 145). Today, there is talk about a 'copycat industry', where the 'tourism product' is often imitated by multiple businesses (Hjalager, 2002; Ioannides & Petersen, 2003), who therefore view each other as competitors rather than as colleagues (Hjalager, 2002; Buhalis, 1999). Furthermore, *"Often destinations are artificially divided by geographical and political barriers, which fail to take into consideration consumer preferences or tourism industry functions."* (Buhalis, 1999, p. 97), meaning that tourists often have no regard for the political division of a destination, but simply act based on their own preferences instead of how actors in the tourism industry perceive them. And some even argue that businesses and DMOs in Denmark have failed to see that they are not necessarily only competing with neighboring destinations, but have to compete against global destinations, who offer the same thing for tourists – and maybe even at a cheaper price (Turismenetværket, 2010; Ritzau, 2015).

Emerging Technologies and the Escalating Use of the Internet by Tourists

According to Gretzel, et al. *"[…] the greatest agent for change in destination marketing is technology"* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 117), and the available technology constantly changes, giving new opportunities, but also new challenges of marketing. Today, the use of the Internet is a naturally integrated tool for many tourists (Stevens, 2012; Munar, 2012; Borzyszkowski, 2014; Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Morosan, 2015), and *"The Internet is becoming a more and more universal communication channel to transmit information to potential recipients."* (Borzyszkowski, 2014, p. 63), meaning that the Internet is becoming increasingly integrated when communicating to tourists. The tourists now set aside traditional services of the tourism industry such as travel agents, flyers and printed material and use the Internet for research, sharing experiences and booking their next holiday (Stevens, 2012; Pike, 2004; Munar, 2011; Munar, 2012; Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Morosan, 2015). Therefore such technologies are also very relevant for destinations and DMOs today (Munar, 2011; Munar, 2012; Borzyszkowski, 2014; Morgan, et al., 2012), since they can offer DMOs with a whole new way of communicating and marketing themselves (Borzyszkowski, 2014; Munar, 2012; Buhalis, 1999), although adaptations to such technologies might prove difficult (Morgan, et al., 2012; Gretzel, et al., 2006; Borzyszkowski, 2014). Therefore changes mostly come from the environment and not from internal research (Munar, 2012). In an effort of adapting to technological changes, *"Most DMOs have developed Web sites with varying levels of interactivity/sophistication but have yet to successfully tackle the challenge of developing cooperation in a way that is meaningful for electronic commerce."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 117) and typically *"[…] the DMO websites have arguably become the central element in the overall advertising scheme of many destinations"* (Morosan, 2015, p. 52), where great emphasis and work is laid into the web sites. And in Denmark as well many DMOs have created websites with varying levels of success (VisitDenmark, 2015). According to Gretzel, et al. *"[…] the challenge of technology lies in constantly learning the latest things and searching for the newest technologies that "supposedly" make the job of destination marketing easier."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 118), so DMOs not only have to be aware of new available technologies but also have to adapt to relevant ones. Pike also states that *"Tourism distribution has been undergoing a transformation through the development of the internet, albeit still as a work in progress."* (Pike, 2004, p. 151), since for example vacations can now be researched and sold online without the need of a representative from the tourism industry. Furthermore, the tourists are losing faith in official tourism agents, relying more on bloggers and reviews from previous users (Stevens, 2012; Munar, 2011; Bowen & Clarke, 2009). Today, there is an increasing level of interaction and user-created content available, which challenges traditional tourism services (Munar, 2012; Munar, 2011). But *"In spite of the increasing access to information technologies (IT), such as the WWW, DMOs often struggle to keep up with the rapid advances in IT and their implications for marketing."* (Pike, 2004, p. 151), linking back to the aspect of new technologies, where DMOs have a hard time keeping up. Yet Gretzel, et al. also state that *"[…] many DMOs have yet to realize that emerging Internet technologies are not a simple substitute for existing technology."* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 118), meaning that traditional media such as television commercials and printed material are still of use – a view which is also supported by Borzyszkowski (2014) and Morosan (2015). Furthermore, *"This means that there are* *different attitudes to the problem of the application of information technologies by DMOs. It can be assumed that those entities whose expenditures related to information technologies are higher will achieve a definitely better position on the tourist market."* (Borzyszkowski, 2014, p. 68), where he actually concludes that DMOs who adapt to new technologies have an advantage over those who prefer traditional media.

Given the complexity of destination marketing, *"[…] it is possible to talk about an integral tourist product of a destination that should be promoted and regularly advertised, and the Internet is, owing to its features, especially its globality, multimediality and interactivity, very suitable for these tasks"* (Ruzic & Bilos, 2010, p. 184), which points out the usefulness of the Internet in the case of destination marketing. This goes well in line with the previously mentioned fact that almost every Danish DMO has developed a web page (VisitDenmark, 2015). In Lyck's detailed recommendations to Danish DMOs, she states that *"There should be a revision of web pages."* (Lyck, 2011, p. 25), therefore given reason to believe that the quality of the Danish DMOs' web pages might be lacking. Borzyszkowski also claims that *"An increasing "saturation with information" is the problem which is becoming more and more evident in the use of the Internet by NTOs."* (Borzyszkowski, 2014, p. 63), meaning that national DMOs often struggle with the aspect of 'too much information' when communicating through the Internet.

Destination Importance and Overall Product Development

A destination is comprised of many different things, which can make it seem attractive to potential tourists: great restaurants, beautiful nature, spectacular attractions or sights, interesting events and access to transportation are just some potential aspects which can be deemed attractive in the eyes of a tourist: *"[...] transport, accommodation and other services are functionally linked. They exhibit demand complementarities, since they all support the production of a tourism experience."* (Papatheodorou, 2006, pp. 3-4). According to Ooi *"With the different products and sights, the brand brings together an array of attractions to package the destination into a seductive entity."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 110), meaning that a destination is a comprised package created by multiple attractions and availabilities. Tourists *"[…] "consume" destinations as a comprehensive experience, without often realising that each element of the product are produced and managed* *by individual players."* (Buhalis, 1999, p. 99), where tourists are often oblivious to the fact that their experience is based on individual elements.

Although DMOs rarely have any influence over the actors within their destination and their contribution to the destination per se (Pike, 2004; Buhalis, 1999; Blumberg, 2005), they can contribute by attracting businesses and the like to boost their destination's attractiveness (Pike, 2004). For example, *"[…] events […] are becoming a solution to the problems of product differentiation and seasonality in an increasingly competitive market."* (Liu, 2015, p. 28) and *"In Europe, many cities are now actively developing event-based strategy as a means to develop comparative advantage and to create local distinctiveness."* (Liu, 2015, p. 28). This view is supported by Kim, et al., though they also mention negative outcomes such as *"[...] these events can also result in significant economic costs (i.e., taxes and real estate) and negative socio-psychological impacts (i.e., disorder, security issues, traffic congestion"* (Kim, et al., 2015, p. 21). As a Danish example, the North Jutland golf event 'Made in Denmark' can be mentioned; an event which attracted a large number of tourists to the region (Troelsen, 2016).

Vestergaard, et al. also mention infrastructure as an important aspect of the lives of Danes, which has the potential to attract tourists if improved – another aspect, which can be changed by government action (Vestergaard, et al., 2011).

The Influence of Branding and Marketing

As mentioned previously, DMOs actually have little to say when it comes to the actual product, which is offered to the tourists (Pike, 2004; Buhalis, 1999; Blumberg, 2005). However, they have the opportunity to market their destination in a favorable way (Pike, 2004). Both Munar and Pike have defined marketing as one the main functions of a DMO (Munar, 2012; Pike, 2004), yet how they choose to do it is an entirely different matter. The choice to brand the destination is frequently used (Ren & Blichfeldt, 2011), since *"A distinctive brand, it is argued, based on a destination's "unique" identity, can be a key source of competitive advantage for destinations"* (Wheeler, et al., 2011, p. 14), meaning that branding potentially holds an advantage for tourism destinations.

According to Blichfeldt & Halkier *"[…] a strong place brand is one that key target groups are aware of and hold strong, unique and favourable associations to."* (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014, p. 1589), where *"[…] the brand draws people's attention to certain positive attractions and sights."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 111). According to Dahlen, et al. *"[…] 'place branding' refers to the promotion of a nation's economy, countries, cities and regions to try to create and maintain a strong brand positioning strategy."* (Dahlen, et al., 2010, p. 75), where a brand is chosen in order to reach a certain target market (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Marzano & Scott, 2009). According to Ooi *"Branding inadvertently frames and packages the destination into a relatively well-defined and coherent product, which focuses on attractions and activities that are considered significant and relevant to the brand values."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 111), so it's all about branding the destination's product, which we have already established consists of many different things such as attractions and accommodation options (Ooi, 2004; Papatheodorou, 2006; Buhalis, 1999). As an example, Denmark has been branded in various ways such as the birthplace of H.C. Andersen (Olsen, 2012) and as a destination with a history of Vikings (Kofoed, 2015; Ritzau, 2014).This can then attract tourists, potential residents, businesses and the like (Liu, 2015) and *"[…] brand image is considered crucial to the marketing success of a tourism destination."* (Marzano & Scott, 2009, p. 248), where branding and marketing goes hand in hand. And *"With travelers spoilt by choice of available destinations, never before has it been more important for a destination to develop an effective brand."* (Pike, 2005, p. 258).

According to Campelo, et al. *"[…] a destination branding strategy should begin by understanding what constitutes sense of place as experienced by local residents."* (Campelo, et al., 2014, p. 154) and they mention both environment, nature, social and cultural capital as potential representations of a destination brand (Campelo, et al., 2014). Yet *"Developing a destination typology is a difficult task, as different visitors use destinations for different purposes."* (Buhalis, 1999, p. 101), meaning that tourists can have different incentives for choosing a travel destination; some may come for business, others for the nature, and others for the attractions. However, Buhalis identifies six main types of destinations: urban, seaside, alpine (including nature and sports), rural, authentic third world and unique-exotic-exclusive (Buhalis, 1999).

Support from the Local Community

Since "*The majority of tourists are domestic"* (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 1) and with the local community being a large part of the destination's essence (Hanafiah, et al., 2013), *"[…] the need to balance the demands of residents and the experiences of visitors create challenges beyond those of traditional consumer and business marketing."* (Morgan, et al., 2012, p. 74), meaning that balance has to be found between tourists and locals. According to Campelo, et al. *"Human engagement within a place connects materiality to meaning, in an open and ongoing process, that brings together social, cultural, and natural dimensions of place."* (Campelo, et al., 2014, p. 155), implying that the local community plays an important role in relation to the destination and therefore the DMOs. The support of the local community is especially significant in regards to the place brand (Wheeler, et al., 2011), since *"[…] the brand will only be more credible and more visible to tourists when different tourism agencies and local residents accept, support and communicate the brand story."* (Ooi, 2004, p. 109). However, *"Frequently, residents and the local community are left aside in the branding process, and this leads to very little connection to and understanding of the sense of the place and the ties, relationships, and networks that determine the communal organisation of society. As a result, this lower level of identification with the brand does not promote authenticity, recognition, acceptance, and commitment by the local community."* (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 918), where the locals are not included in the branding process, thereby leaving the brand lacking in different ways. Aitken & Campelo elaborate further: *"Brand meanings are constantly co-created and re-presented by the community, reflecting, as it does, the everyday experience of its constituents"* (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 927). According to Hanafiah, et al. *"Tourism development is a double-edged sword for local communities and attitude directly affects the current and future tourism industry development."* (Hanafiah, et al., 2013, p. 792), where tourism on one hand generates wealth and job creation, but on the other can hold potential damage to the environment and culture of the destination, much to the dismay of the local community (Hanafiah, et al., 2013; Haija, 2011). They even go as far as saying that *"Local residents are the main stakeholders of tourism developments."* (Hanafiah, et al., 2013, p. 793).

In some parts of the world, the large number of tourists put restraints on local resources (Haija, 2011) such as water supply (Andersen, 2010; Larsen, 2012) or deterioration of local environment

(Hannam & Knox, 2010; Rasmussen & Obelitz, 2016), often leading to conflicts between the community and government, thus slowing development (Haija, 2011; Hanafiah, et al., 2013). In Denmark there are also examples of the local community being annoyed by the tourists: in Skagen, locals are occasionally fed up with the many tourists (Olesen, 2002), and in Løkken they changed their strategy to avoid young, drunk tourists (Flakstad, 2012; Bøje, 2016; Nielsen, 2012).

An Overview of the Theoretical Framework

By going through the relevant literature concerning DMOs and potential influencing factors, fourteen different factors have been identified, which can be viewed in Figure 5. The factors can seemingly be divided into three main areas: organizational, internal and external. 'Organizational' factors are things, which influence the DMOs, but are also part of their organizational structure. 'Internal' refers to factors, which can be altered by the DMOs themselves, which often relates to their activities. The 'external' refers to factors, which the DMOs have no power over and stem from outside their organization, often referring to changes in their environment. Of course one could always argue against such a division, but in this context it is done to give a better overview over the fourteen factors. The analysis will later revolve around these main areas and the identified factors.

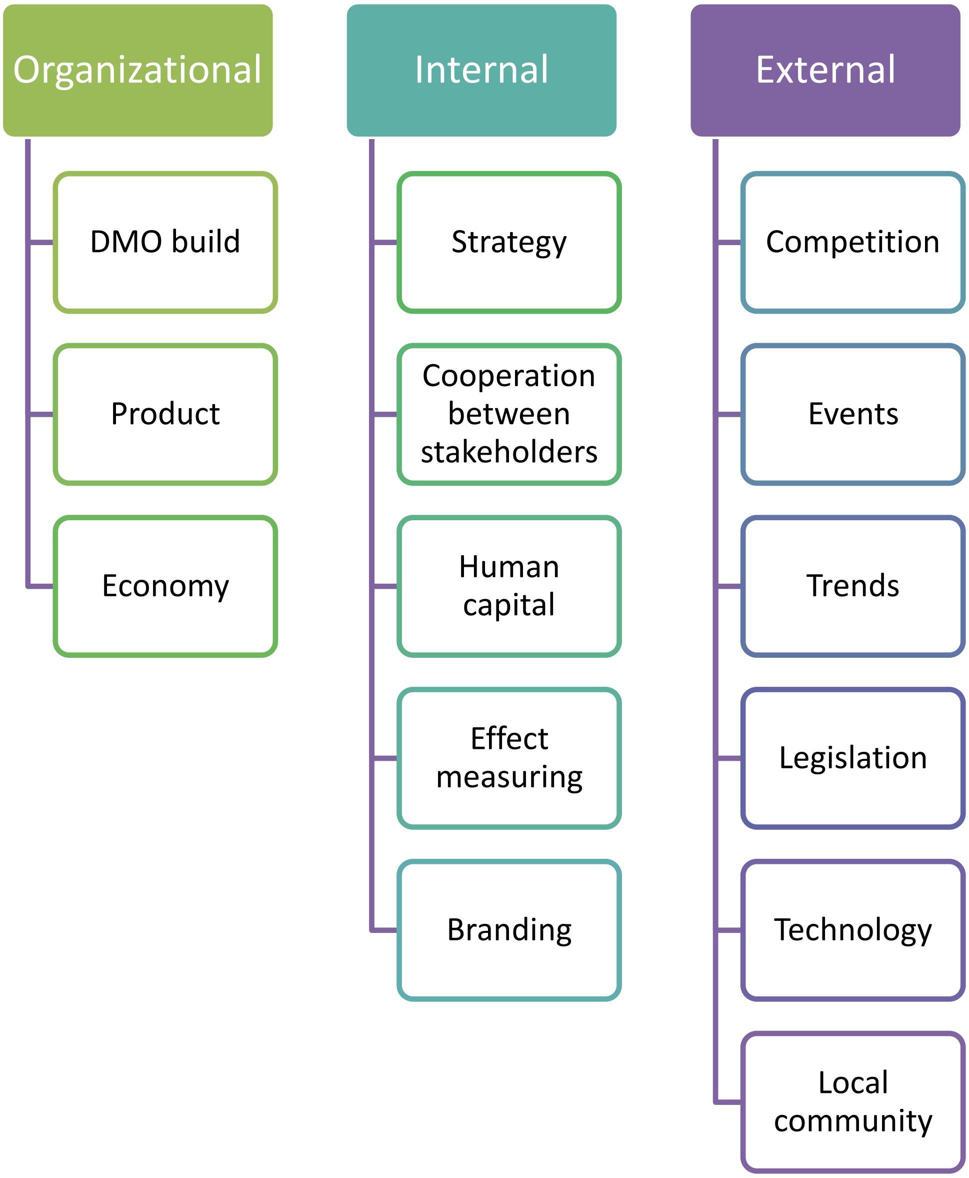

Figure 5: Potential influencing factors for DMOs – a self made model

Analysis

The analysis is constructed of two separate parts. The first contains the methods of analysis, briefly explaining how data will be processed before analyzing.

The second concerns itself with the analysis of findings, which presents the results of the collected data from the interviews and discusses them in accordance with the already presented theory, thereby abstracting the essence of the interviews within the analysis.

Methods of Analysis

Before analyzing the data is first to be processed via the use of transcription and grounded theory, which will only briefly be explained in the following sections.

Since transcribing is a very common way of processing data within the social sciences (Jenks, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014), the method has been applied here. The method of grounded theory has already been mentioned as an appropriate method within critical realism (and research in general) (Yeung, 1997; Bazely, 2004), and it is therefore also used.

Transcribing the Interviews

Transcription is a well known data processing method and *"[…] in most research for the human and social sciences, transcripts are created from video and/or audio recordings of events that have taken place in the past. The 'written or printed version' of data recordings includes text and/or visual material (e.g., pictures and drawings)."* (Jenks, 2011, p. 2). There are various ways of transcribing, where Jenks mention five different types of transcriptions, which can be viewed in Figure 6.

Narrative	• Narrative account of event
Orthographic	• Only words
Interactional	• Pauses and overlapping speech
Paralinguistic	• Intonation, voice amplitude etc.
Multimodal	• Written notes and video stills of gestures

Figure 6: Adaptation of the five types of transcription detail (Jenks, 2011, p. 43)

Since the purpose of the interviews is to analyze the statements made by the interviewees and not to consider the underlying social or emotional structures, it is natural to take an orthographic approach. Simultaneously, a narrative approach would be too superficial to analyze upon. The interviews were therefore transcribed by finding quotations, which were deemed suitable for argumentation in the analysis. The quotations were transcribed, translated into English and marked with a time stamp, so the quotation could be found on the recordings. Both the audio files and the Danish transcriptions of the quotes can be found on the attached CD.

Using Grounded Theory to Categorize Data

Since fourteen influencing factors within the literature had already been found and with the same factors intertwined in the interview guide, it seemed only relevant to use grounded theory as an appropriate approach in regards to the interviewees’ quotations, keeping in mind the fourteen original themes, but also to be aware of the eventuality of new ones. According to Bazely *”Coding or categorising of data is undertaken to facilitate understanding and retrieval of information in almost any approach to analysis. Whether they are called variables, themes, concepts, categories or values, responses are “coded”.”* (Bazely, 2004, p. 145), and grounded theory is a systematic approach to generate and/or test theories about a theme (Yeung, 1997). The aim is typically to generate theory by determining the essence of the data through *“concept labeling and categorizing”* (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 7), which goes well in hand with the notion of abstraction. In practice this meant carefully selecting transcribed quotations and categorizing them under a certain theme and topic, which then constituted the later analysis.

Analysis of findings

As Figure 5 has already illustrated, three different main categories containing fourteen influencing factors in the context of DMOs have been identified in the available literature. In order to answer the problem formulation and determine if these factors also apply in the context of Danish DMOs in North Jutland, this part will address each factor within its category by weighing the findings from the interviews up against the mentioned theory. Each statement is supported by a few relevant quotes (no more than three) from the interviews, although more quotations could be found.

After the presentation and discussion of each factor within its main category, a short summary will conclude the section to highlight certain points.

I find it important to stress that the trustworthiness of the results can be questioned, since we cannot distinguish between what the interviewees *say* and what is actually being *done* at their destinations. This also relates to the critical realist way of thinking, where we can only explore the empirical domain, but never fully conclude that we have final truths about the real domain. The results presented in the analysis therefore only illuminate a small part of the influencing factors, which therefore calls for more research within this area.

How DMOs are Influenced by their Organizational Conditions

As mentioned in the theoretical section the definitions of a DMO are plentiful, thereby giving way to confusing concepts of what a DMOs is per se and how it usually functions. Since we have already defined the term 'DMO' and what is meant by 'local', the interviewees naturally represent such a DMO and an area or destination in this context. Yet the separation of a DMO as either transnational, national, regional or local made by Munar (2012) and Pike (2004) does not necessarily apply within a Danish context, since there seems to be a category missing between 'regional' and 'local', if one looks at the organizations the destinations represent.

As my own definition reflects, the local can in this context both refer to a small area and/or city. In the context of North Jutland such a destination is often separated by a municipality border, as these quotes reflect:

"We cover what corresponds with the municipality's border." – Trine Søndergaard (05:48)

"Turisthus Nord covers pretty much all of Frederikshavn municipality." – Maria Groes Eldh (07:19)

"Thisted municipality, that is what it covers." – Ole Riis (06:42)

Martin Storgaard and Anne-Sofie Ydesen utter similar quotations. Such statements are supported by Buhalis (1999), who argues that destinations are often divided without caring for the tourists' preferences, although Helene Christensen and Martin Storgaard seem to have understood this fact and agree with his perspective:

"The tourist doesn't look on the municipality borders; they go where they want to go." – Helene Christensen (08:42)

"If we put the customers and the guests in focus here they are completely indifferent towards municipality borders." – Martin Storgaard (23:37)

Bodil Christensen and Helene Christensen also emphasize that these borders do not necessarily limit their work efforts across these borders:

"Our employer is Rebild municipality, so as such we have the municipality border to work inside of. […] We have previously been told that since our salary is paid by Rebild municipality, then we had to work within Rebild municipality. Thank God it is not like that." – Bodil Christensen (10:13)

"It is the entire municipality (their area which they cover, ed.). […] Very funny, because we are not actually funded by the municipality […] so that is a bit paradoxical. […] It stems from the old times, where you were funded by the municipality and then you are kind of stuck in it. But I also think that you have begun moving […] towards a different direction." – Helene Christensen (04:24)

So here, Helene Christensen actually expresses that even though they are not funded by the municipality, they have kept the old structures of labor division. Furthermore, the DMOs seem to have realized that they need to cooperate and potentially send their tourists to another destination, if they cannot offer the product they seek:

"It has shifted a lot from being quite isolated and saying that you were not supposed to refer guests to outside of the destination. They now know that they have to." – Trine Søndergaard (34:37)

"It is stupid with the municipal borders we have had, it is absolutely ridiculous. […] I have never had the thought that my guests were to be kept home by myself." – Ole Riis (25:00)

This view is also supported by Martin Storgaard.

According to Munar (2012), a DMO's main functions are coordination of marketing efforts, establishing networks and improvement of destination and tourism development. But based on the interviewees statement, it seems that some of the Danish, local DMOs have not developed as far just yet – or are merely still maintaining local facilities, which can be deemed more as a type of private company than a public one, as Pearce (1992) and others otherwise believe.
In this quote Henriette Andrea Søttrup lists a lot of daily activities, which not necessarily relate to marketing or management efforts such as Gretzel, et al. (2006) suggests, although cooperation and tourism development is mentioned:

"Our purpose is to run a tourist agency, have holiday home rental and […] we have a camping site in Hirtshals too. Furthermore we have to cooperate with the municipality to develop the tourism trade." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (00:58)

Also Ole Riis mentions that his role is both to participate in daily, physical activities along with being present when more strategic decisions have to be made:

"We have to enhance the actors' conditions in Thisted municipality and then we have to service the guests who come here plus being co-players in relation to tourism political assignments which are there, both on a local, regional and national level." – Ole Riis (02:04)

Martin Storgaard and Helene Christensen emphasize on their relation to the industry:

"It (the purpose, ed.) is to support the industry and enhance tourism as a trade." – Martin Storgaard (08:13)

"Our purpose is to develop and make tourism actors in Vesthimmerland visible and then of course to provide service to the tourists." – Helene Christensen (01:22)

On both Læsø and in Løkken, Vesthimmerland, Hjørring and Rebild marketing seems to be the primary purpose of their organization, although 'service to guests' is also mentioned:

"The purpose is to […] create marketing for Læsø and related, relevant assignments." – Karsten Christensen (03:09)

"It goes on multiple legs, I would say. It is of course fundamentally to service all the guests who come to our area, but also extremely much about marketing our area and boost tourism and develop tourism all year round." – Maria Groes Eldh (02:31)

"It (the purpose, ed.) is to market all of Rebild municipality tourism wise, it is to brand the municipality, it is to […] make sure that the numbers of jobs which are here, are maintained. […] But primarily it is service, information." – Bodil Christensen (00:56)

Only Trine Søndergaard mentions growth and development at the destination and not marketing per se:

"It (the purpose, ed.) is to create growth and development in tourism. […] We make sure the guests come here. We then service them when they are here on the channels which they are demanding […] and we need to develop our destination both physically in accessibility and the core product

and we need to cooperate, both alone and in collaboration with others, develop new products and new concepts." – Trine Søndergaard (01:01)

Martin Storgaard also mentions that he believes that there is increased focus on development for the industry, rather than simply servicing guests:

"It is definitely a tendency […] that we focus more on spending our efforts on the industry, help, support the tourism industry rather than servicing the guests, who come here." – Martin Storgaard (19:41)

One of the things which are mentioned by almost all of the interviewees is a change in the DMOs' roles, signifying that development in the DMOs efforts is underway. Just like Gretzel, et al. (2006), Munar (2012) and others suggest, the interviewees have all experienced an increase in work assignments and are now faced with a much larger responsibility, since the potential of tourism has been more widely recognized:

"Until now there hasn't been much of a gamble on tourism. […] My idea is that they haven't done so much for the development of tourism in Vesthimmerland until now. […] The settings are there, and there is a lot to develop further on." – Helene Christensen (03:33)

Also Amalie Andersen mentions that the locals have recognized the need for their organization:

"The view on us has definitely changed. […] Where we might […] have seemed like someone, who just needed to be there […] we now have cooperation and we have a function for the destination." – Amalie Andersen (03:54)

This also sets new demands for how the organization performs:

"It (our role, ed.) has developed a lot. […] Our role as tourist organization, as communicators, as hosts has also changed. […] Our businesses around us have also changed extremely and that has meant that […] we need to be differently prepared." – Bodil Christensen (05:00)

But some of the interviewees' responses vary, when it comes to their developing roles and defining them as either a marketing or management organization as Pike (2004) and other suggest. Trine Søndergaard leads us to believe that they are headed in the latter direction:

"It has gone from being service oriented to being much more about destination development." – Trine Søndergaard (02:00)

No doubt their roles have been expanded, but one might argue that they have not yet developed fully into the 'management' stage and are still on a mere marketing level, as discussed earlier:

"I think we might more and more have become a marketing platform […] where we previously have been more to the holiday home rental. […] It sort of changes, so that you are a marketing platform in cooperation with your local trade and municipality." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (03:51)

This might well be in line with Gretzel, et al. (2006), who claim that many DMOs have not yet adapted to their new roles.
Karsten Christensen mentions that they previously did sporadic marketing efforts, but are now more focused and that this slow development might have been caused by the political forces on their island:

"It has been said politically […] 'we don't want Læsø to look like other tourist destinations, we want that Læsø should offer the authentic'. But that has also, in my opinion, become a hindrance for the modern development." – Karsten Christensen (12:49)

In accordance with Pike (2004), Hjalager (2002) and Hall, et al. (2009) there seems to be a large portion of the destinations, namely Hirtshals, Løkken, Jammerbugten, Thy, Mariagerfjord and Rebild, who offer the same product of nature and authenticity to their target groups, which these select quotes show:

”We try to hit those virtues […] that we think that our guests come for: the nature, the wide beaches, the large forests and the harbor, the authentic. […] We don’t have activities targeted to the tourist. We live here on a daily basis and then we make room for the tourists in season. They get it real, as you might say; it is not shaped to be directed towards tourists in a short period.” – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (09:48)

”If you look at what Løkken has to offer […] with the west coast and the beach then… that’s it, really. […] The primary thing is actually the nature.” – Amalie Andersen (07:53)

This fact has also been recognized by Ole Riis:

“Nature as a theme – they all do that.” – Ole Riis (49:35)

He does however mention that they separate from each other through their communications. Many of the destinations also have the same target groups of tourists, which they try to attract to their specific destination. The majority of the destinations target Danes, Germans and Norwegians, who fall into two categories: the slightly older generation – also mentioned as empty nesters – or children families, which these quotes illustrate:

“The main target group […] is distinctively Danish families and then we target Norwegian families. […] Outside the peak season we target […] empty nesters.” – Karsten Christensen (19:49)

"We mostly have children families, but of course we also focus on couples, just like you do in the rest of North Jutland. But since the primary form of accommodation here is holiday houses, then it is also children families which are mostly here." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (07:56)

"In general we work with two large target groups within tourism. It is 'fun, play and learning', which are these children families, and then there is 'the good life', which are mature couples." – Maria Groes Eldh (07:54)

However, Maria also mentions that she believes that this division it too one-sided and that they also try to focus on niche tourism.

Just as Blumberg (2005) and others state, it seems that the DMOs in North Jutland have very little control over their specific destinations and the businesses within, which Ruzic & Bilos (2010), Papatheodorou (2006) and other authors ultimately state makes up a destination. This is also supported by the interviewees:

"It is a palette; it is a mix of some things." – Martin Storgaard (15:14)

In general, the individual businesses work independently from the DMOs:

"We have no more influence than you have in other places. And that is little, because they do what they want. […] People in the tourism trade are typically […] their own soldiers of fortune." – Karsten Christensen (54:31)

"We have a really good contact with them, but they are the ones who decide in their own business of course. […] (Our role, ed.) is primarily to make sure they are visible, especially online." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (25:50)

The role of the DMOs located in North Jutland is often to market the businesses:

"We can be a part of their marketing or they can be a part of us, but their operation we have no influence on." – Ole Riis (47:30)

Their relation to the industry is often one described as 'cooperative', as Maria Groes Eldh mentions, or 'coordinating' as stated by Trine Søndergaard or 'advisory':

"We can advise, we can give feedback on […] what we are told by the tourists could be good and what could be better, but besides that… […] They run it a lot by themselves." – Amalie Andersen (39:28)

As Pike (2004) also suggests, destination development in terms of attracting businesses and the like is also a potential role of a DMO, yet this is only mentioned by Trine Søndergaard:

"When we develop, we actually think equally settlement into it." – Trine Søndergaard (02:54)

Yet, as it has been pointed out by Vestergaard, et al. (2011), infrastructure – in the terms of creating and maintaining road systems and the like – is mentioned by some of the interviewees. But mostly their idea of product development refers to packaging and marketing:

"When talking about tourism development we try to create some products, which of course appeal to this target group. […] What we can is to offer some authenticity and in that way make our customers loyal to our area." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (08:50)

"We try to change; we try to redevelop our concepts." – Amalie Andersen (10:36)

Even though the organizations are all located in North Jutland, their organizational composition varies a lot, as can be seen in the methodology section under 'A Small Introduction to the Interviewees'. But what in many ways shapes the organizational build of the organizations and what in turn influences them as DMOs is the funding and their financial core. The majority of the

DMOs in North Jutland are funded by their municipality in one way or the other. As stated by Blichfeldt & Halkier (2014) and Hall, et al. (2009) some of them also mention that they collect private funds such as in Hirtshals, Thy, Løkken, Læsø and Hjørring, while they have become completely independent in Vesthimmerland. And just as Pike (2004) states the economic support is crucial to the existence of the DMOs as the quotes below demonstrate:

”We couldn’t exist neither without our membership fee or the things we do for the industry, where they are joined into our publications. It is alfa and omega to our existence that we have that.” – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (25:13)

“It (the financial support, ed.) has a huge significance. […] We are of course dependent on the support from the industry. We are also dependent on the contribution from the municipality.” – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (21:45)

“We are conclusively dependent of our municipal (financial, ed.) support.” – Trine Søndergaard (24:45)

Karsten Christensen, Maria Groes Eldh, Helene Christensen and Amalie Andersen all have similar statements. But as Tribe (2010) suggests the financial structuring of the DMOs affect their stakeholder relations. Among the interviewees examples can be found of a municipal organization, which was later made solely independent (in Vesthimmerland’s case) and the exact opposite (which was the case with Mariagerfjord). Helene Christensen mentions that they have less financial funds than their neighboring destinations, but are at the same time not bound by restrictions or demands from the municipality:

“Yes, it has (their role changed, ed.). It changed, when we became independent from the municipality. […] If you look at the fact that we are independent compared to municipal ‘Visits’, then they of course get more funding. […] But I can imagine they are more bound by some rules or

[…] a certain direction which the municipality wants them to go. […] It is an advantage (to be independent, ed.)" – Helene Christensen (02:01)

In Thy, the DMO is also somewhat separated from the municipality, which Ole Riis thinks is an advantage:

"Organizationally we function really well. The thing with us not being – if you compare with others – part of the municipality, and that gives a completely different way, an entirely different communication than you might have, if it was a solely municipally organization." – Ole Riis (33:21)

This view is also supported by Pike (2004) and Munar (2012) who agree that DMOs, which are typically publically funded, have other conditions than businesses in the private sector. In the case of Mariagerfjord, Trine Søndergaard also mentions that compared to other destinations – as Helene Christensen has so rightly guessed – the support from the actors is merely symbolic with the purpose of creating a common bond rather than actually being crucial to marketing efforts. They were previously an independent organization, which was then turned into a part of the municipality, since it "made more sense".
But there is undoubtedly a broad opinion among the interviewees that the tourism industry is down prioritized and could use more funding:

"I firmly believe that both regionally and municipally could prioritize the (tourism, ed.) trade higher, absolutely." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (25:51)

"Compared with other destinations' budgets, then ours falls short." – Karsten Christensen (53:53)

According to Pike (2004) and Hall, et al. (2009) a lack in financial resources can hinder growth, and the interviewees mention that more funding would of course be beneficial:

"I don't dare to guess how many funds […] the tourism industry has […], but you can always use more money to develop." – Helene Christensen (25:11)

"I think that everybody would like more resources; we would too." – Martin Storgaard (01:11:21)

But some of the interviewees also agree that balance and a purpose for the extra funding has to be in order:

"We would always like to have more money from the municipalities. […] Our funds haven't been cut this time […] but it is of course a shame that it is always questioned. […] Of course we would like more money to market ourselves with, but there has to be a balance in it." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (22:19)

"I don't ask the politicians for more money, because I feel that we need to show a growth and show a positive development, before we are entitled to go and ask for more money." – Trine Søndergaard (25:35)

"I know that many would like to have more (money, ed.), but I work on what we have. […] It is not just to demand more, it is also about using what you have in the right way," – Ole Riis (44:11)

However, the limited resources have lead to a more frequent pooling of financial resources just as it is mentioned by Blichfeldt & Halkier (2014), Gretzel, et al. (2006) and Henriksen & Halkier (2009). This can for example be seen in the case of 'The Top of Denmark', which is a network within the regional collaboration, which includes Hjørring, Løkken, Hirtshals and Turisthus Nord:

"The thought back then was to pool, pool the money, pool the strengths, pool the resources and in that way become bigger and stronger, and at that time in the early 90's 'The Top of Denmark' were some of the first in the tourism industry to pool and join collaborations across areas." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (15:15)

"Instead of being a small player on the big, global market, it can be strategic to be more people around the table, who pool some money." – Maria Groes Eldh (15:25)

But the previously mentioned example of Læsø leaving the collaboration, as presented by Henriksen & Halkier (2009), proves that such a pooling can backfire:

"We withdrew (from 'The Top of Denmark', ed.) because we thought it was too expensive and you got too little out of it." – Karsten Christensen (39:18)

The pooling of resources and the benefits in doing so is often mentioned in a marketing context, especially when trying to reach national markets, where many have joined forces with the regional organization VisitNordjylland:

"As far as I know, yes, we pool among others with VisitNordjylland for marketing, when we need to reach over the borders." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (18:34)

And such cooperation also seems to improve efficiency when efforts are centralized. In fact, centralizing seems to be a development, which happens all over North Jutland:

"This new organization and the structure are coming from the municipality, which want to redistribute the resources and spend the resources better. […] They believe they can lift the task in a different way and that you can become sharper by centralizing more." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (10:53)

Both Amalie Andersen, Helene Christensen and Maria Groes Eldh have similar quotes.

Summary

Based on the responses made by the interviewees and when comparing these to the literature, it seems as if the traditional categorization of DMOs is missing a category between regional and local

DMOs. Many of the interviewees can be defined as local, but also cover an area which is larger than a city; therefore my own definition of a local DMO seems more fitting.
The destinations often cover what corresponds with the municipal area without any regard to the tourists' preferences, although it seems as if the lines between them are beginning to blur and that increased cooperation has taken hold.
The DMOs express that although they have experienced an increase in responsibility, adaptation to this responsibility seems not to have occurred with many of them focusing on everyday activities and not management issues. Instead many mention marketing as their main purpose along with servicing guests, inclining one to think that they may be somewhat less developed in terms of their activities. Furthermore, many of them offer the same product to the same target group along with having no influence over the businesses they represent, except 'cooperative' relations. Alternatively they mention packaging and marketing as their core competencies. Their organizational structure as DMOs therefore seems to influence how they perform activities.
Another aspect, which often influences their organization along with their responsibilities, is the financial background, where the municipal support is often crucial to their existence. However, some DMOs, who are not tied to the municipality, mention that this holds benefits for their activities as an organization.
The interviewees also express that they feel that the tourism industry is often down prioritized and could use more funding, yet many of them still remain realistic about the need for financial resources. Instead many of them have begun to pool such resources, especially for marketing purposes, while a general centralization wave seems to have caught on in North Jutland. This again holds influence over their activities.

How DMOs are Affected by Internal Factors

The importance of strategy has already been exemplified by Tribe (2010), where he warns that tourism organizations might find themselves vulnerable towards strategic drift without a strategy. In the case of the DMOs in North Jutland many do seem to have a strategy in some way or another. In Hirtshals, where they are a part of 'The Top of Denmark', the network has a common strategy, which they follow:

"The tourist unions down the west coast and up over Skagen and farther down to the east have made this collaboration 'The Top of Denmark', and it has existed in, well over 20 years, and it continues. And it is with these colleagues that we have a marketing strategy." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (14:33)

But others have a much more fuzzy kind of strategy:

"Our strategy is primarily to market through online media. […] The printed media is drifting away and more and more have handheld units, both at home and on vacation, so the information is more accessible." – Helene Christensen (10:41)

Either way their strategy is rarely coordinated with the national, regional or local strategies with other DMOs:

"We don't coordinate […] between ourselves (and the other 'Visits', ed.)." – Trine Søndergaard (13:26)

"It could of course be a good idea to do it (coordinate strategies with other organizations, ed.). It could for instance be […] coordination in relations to events, the season… but we haven't done it yet." – Helene Christensen (14:17)

Helene Christensen here agrees with Lyck (2002), who suggests coordination. Løkken might be the exception in this regard:

"We coordinate and […] we coordinate more than once […] we contact each other and hear how we should change this and that […] Then we also have meetings […] where we meet and […] revise strategies ." – Amalie Andersen (23:21)

On Læsø they express that they make an effort to be acquainted with the regional strategy for tourism, but also emphasizes that the structure of tourism in North Jutland is vague. Karsten Christensen believes that there are too many organizations, who all want the same thing:

"I try to keep up with the regional (strategy, ed.). […] The structure in Danish tourism, North Jutland tourism, is immensely muddy, and that might be why the results are lacking on Læsø, but are also lacking in North Jutland. […] We have too many collaborations, which sucks the money out for this and that, and then the money disappear from the marketing account." – Karsten Christensen (33:03)

This view is supported by Bodil Christensen and Ole Riis, who also believe that there is an overweight in organizations trying to market the same things, while they themselves are confused on which organization to rely on:

"I think where we are lacking, not just in Rebild but in North Jutland in general, is on the marketing effort. Too many want to do something and the money is just there once. […] We know where we are headed. We know which target group we have. […] But just who we do when and on which platforms, we are working on it just now, because we are fumbling a bit." – Bodil Christensen (19:20)

"There are many different collaborations this way and that, also more than you can manage." – Ole Riis (22:26)

Hall, et al. (2009) also mention the importance of coordination *"in order to avoid duplication of resources"* (Hall, et al., 2009, p. 54), and that could very well be the case in North Jutland, where multiple interviewees mention the many organizations and collaborations, who all want to do the same things:

"We are suddenly, I sense in the North Jutland region, many who fight over the same assignments and the same customers […] So we have become a lot (of organizations, ed.) who carry out the same things or want to carry out the same things. […] I think that both gives some mess […] in relation to the user friendliness on our platforms, our website and so on, and I also think it gives some political (conflicts, ed.)."– Henriette Andrea Søttrup (17:06)

"I think it has been a messy year, where there have been many questions of doubt and so on, such as who is running which campaign. […] Many different things have happened, which makes the last year a year of uncertainty and not a very clear division of labor. […] You are having doubts about how things should be lifted and there is uncertainty about which jobs are lifted where and so on and that is of course frustrating." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (14:11)

This leads us towards the topic of cooperation between the organizations, which seems to be very pronounced in North Jutland:

"I have a positive approach to cooperation. […] We need cooperation." – Karsten Christensen (35:53)

"My conviction is that you get nowhere if you simply say 'we will only alone in Rebild'. […] The ones who want to play ball with us, we want to play ball with them." – Bodil Christensen (21:31)

"We cooperate with VisitNordjylland and similar 'Visits in the area." – Helene Christensen (12:41)

The interviewees often mention that they cooperate with neighboring organizations and 'The Top of Denmark':

"There is also some cooperation (with other tourism organizations, ed.). […] There is a close collaboration between VisitJammerbugten and […] Løkken, even though the municipality border separates them. […] We have contact internally, because there are a lot of things, which concern

each other. […] Furthermore […] it is a given that when you are a part of 'The Top of Denmark', you have contact with the other organizations." – Amalie Andersen (05:44)

"A lot of the things we do go through 'The Top of Denmark' cooperation. […] It is within this cooperation that the treads have been gathered." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (13:04)

The same level of cooperation can be seen in relation to other important stakeholders, which the DMOs have to cooperate with, in accordance with Gretzel, et al. (2006), Dredge & Jenkins (2007) and other authors. An example is the tourist unions, which are mentioned by the Amalie Andersen:

"There are two partners. The largest partner, which has the most weight, is the tourist union […] which makes the decisions and thereafter it is the trade union." – Amalie Andersen *(27:06)*

Also the local businesses play an important role for the DMOs:

"The businesses, they are everything. This thing with tourism is because the businesses should gain something from it." – Martin Storgaard (58:47)

"It is the trade, who sort of sets the tone. […] It is the businesses and the municipal politics. […] It is those two things in the union, who have the largest influence." – Ole Riis (34:14)

Anne-Sofie Ydesen, Amalie Andersen and Henriette Andrea Søttrup have similar statements.
The municipality and the local politicians also have a say in the DMOs' activities:

"On the bottom line it is our mayor, our politicians, who decide what it is we are working with. They are really the ones who can pull the economic rug and fire us all and then there would be no development." – Bodil Christensen (29:36)

"It is evident that we also listen to our municipality, because it is them who make a partnership agreement to run a tourist agency, so we also have to listen to what assignments they expect a local tourist agency can carry." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (13:33)

Anne Sofie Ydesen also mentions that it is the municipality who decides what needs to change. The tourists are of course also mentioned as important influencers:

"It is the tourist (who is the biggest influencer, ed.). If the tourist wasn't there, then we wouldn't be here either, so that is the primary one." – Helene Christensen (18:49)

But with the exception of Vesthimmerland, the tourists are in no way stated as the most important stakeholder in the eyes of the DMOs in North Jutland:

"It is not the guests who come and decide what we should do. It is partly that." – Bodil Christensen (15:56)

This goes well in line with Hall, et al. (2009) and Munar (2012), who state that decisions are often made without the tourist being the most important influencer, although Bornhorst, et al. (2010) and Lyck (2002) believe the tourists to be the most significant stakeholders. Many interviewees are also torn when asked to mention the most important stakeholder, but prefer to say it is balance between all of them, as the literature also supports:

"I would say that all stakeholders have equal influence. […] We need support all the way round, both from the tourism actors, and the local community and… It is one big collaboration." – Helene Christensen (19:08)

This is also supported by Maria Groes Eldh, although Trine Søndergaard actually believes that they themselves have the biggest say when it comes to making decisions:

"It is us who have the mandate to make decisions in the end along with the city council. […] There is not a single actor, who has larger influence. […] As long as we can decode the inhabitants', the actor's interests and then the politicians […] then far along the way, we have solely the largest (influence, ed.). And we should have." – Trine Søndergaard (18:27)

As it is shown in the literature, the benefits of stakeholder cooperation are multiple, where knowledge sharing, labor division and pooling of resources are mentioned. The latter has already been presented as something, which the DMOs in North Jutland practice and many of them also explain that they often meet within the regional collaboration network of VisitNordjylland to exchange knowledge and present future work efforts ideas:

"We do (share knowledge with other organization, ed.) to a certain extent. […] It is not because we withhold information, it is more resource based." – Helene Christensen (13:09)

"I think we share knowledge where it makes sense." – Bodil Christensen (22:27)

"On all possible fronts we sit and talk about the everyday which is ours and meets our colleges. […] I don't feel misinformed or underinformed or what you might say about how tourism evolves, because then it is my own damn fault." – Ole Riis (19:48)

Some of the DMOs also gather their own knowledge, independently from the other organizations:

"We collect our own knowledge." – Amalie Andersen (22:57)

Yet the lack of labor division – which is for example mentioned by Lyck (2011) as an area where the Danish tourism industry still struggles – seems also to apply in the case of North Jutland, where labor division is a rare thing, especially across municipality borders, where the cooperation level is quite low:

"We are very much involved in the regional collaborations right now, but I would like to say that we are too little involved in the cross-regional cooperation downwards. […] It hasn't come that far." – Trine Søndergaard (12:00)

"Within 2-3 years, something will happen. […] It might be that you will see more cooperation over the municipality borders." – Helene Christensen (05:16)

And in spite of an otherwise pronounced acknowledgement that cooperation is vital, the DMOs – as Ooi (2004) and Gretzel, et al. (2006) suggest – still act on their own to some extent:

"When it is 'The Top of Denmark', then it goes under that umbrella arrangement, where you try to distribute it all under that name. […] Regionally, I will be honest to admit we haven't been so much there, we of course have a lot which is covered under VisitNordjylland, but what I am sitting with is so technical that it all comes in automatically […] both with VisitToppen and VisitNordjylland and VisitDenmark." – Amalie Andersen (19:49)

This might be due to the numerous differences in opinions, as Gretzel, et al. (2006) and others mention, which is a view supported by Karsten Christensen:

"There are a lot of interests, both professionals and a lot of unprofessional interests." – Karsten Christensen (41:41)

And consequently, as stated by Ooi (2004), Morgan, et al. (2012) and others, politics is mentioned by the interviewees as an extensive part of the DMOs everyday life. Yet even so, it is very few of the interviewees who have actually experienced conflicts per se:

"I can't quite see what sort of political conflicts there would be. Then it should be more when we enter these regional collaborations, where there might be a conflict of interests." – Trine Søndergaard (15:12)

This view is also supported by Munar (2012), who states that conflicts might arise when organizations cooperate and design marketing strategies. A view which is shared by Karsten Christensen:

"Tourism is one big minefield filled with conflicts." – Karsten Christensen (41:31)

When it comes to the human resources of the individual DMOs, the lack of skilled personnel is definitely a factor, which influences the work outcome:

"We have become more limited in regards to our (human, ed.) resources. We don't have […] so many resources to communicate and spend time on the tourists who come in and actually want information and guidance. […] It has become limited, but that also depends […] on economic resources. […] It is very important that you have an employee who has the right competencies, who meet the tourists." – Amalie Andersen (06:31)

"The most important resource we have, that's the employees."– Helene Christensen (27:15)

And according to Lyck (2002) the lack of the right skills and competencies hinders global competitiveness. It does also seem that some of the DMOs and the corresponding municipalities have opened their eyes when it comes to improving the skill level of their employees:

"There is constantly something happening on different levels. […] I know that there from the municipality's side wants to focus on competencies in relation to the tourism industry in general." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (23:36)

Trine Søndergaard and Martin Storgaard even mention that skills from other industries will find their way into the tourism industry:

"The classic tourism advancement employees will, I think, be supplemented with other competencies. […] As long as it (tourism, ed.) gets great focus […] then we will see a different demand for competencies to comply." – Trine Søndergaard (07:22)

"Today it is probably a different kind of employee which is in this tourist support function than there was 10 years ago, because it is different competencies, which are needed. It is some consultancy, some project, some marketing, some economic competencies." – Martin Storgaard (01:13:51)

The majority of the interviewees believe that the skill level of employees needs to be heightened in order to meet the increasing demands from tourists in terms of the service they provide:

"Within the next year we will be differently trained or skilled or get other competencies on the tourism part." – Bodil Christensen (08:07)

Especially IT competencies seem to be sought after:

"Right now they (the employees, ed.) are all sent on different courses and educations. […] There are a lot of new demands all the time, new competencies, which are sought after. […] Our employees have to develop their competencies so they can perform the service, which they have done until now, dynamically on an online platform." – Trine Søndergaard (26:24)

"What we in particular are aware of, are things like IT competencies and language competencies, which need to be upgraded." – Maria Groes Eldh (35:49)

Furthermore, many of the interviewees express their convictions concerning the low educational level in tourism, which is an aspect that has to change:

"It is a factor in the tourism industry that the educational level on all levels is alarmingly low. […] We are on, in some areas, an unprofessional level, because the educational level in tourism is significantly low." – Karsten Christensen (19:21)

Helene Christensen also mentions her own struggles when attempting to get into the tourism industry:

"It was difficult to get into the industry as a graduate, because there has always been this culture in the tourism industry that 'we have worked here the last 50 years, and it has worked out alright', but […] the different organizations realize more and more that this a serious industry, so the competencies has to be there." – Helene Christensen (28:22)

The view of a need for a higher educational level is also supported by Liberto (2013).

In accordance with numerous authors claiming that effect measuring is important for DMOs in order to justify their existence, many of the DMOs in North Jutland do measure the effect of their work efforts in one way or another.

"We don't have large marketing budgets. […] We need to carefully consider what we gain for very few money. […] Therefore there is a big focus on what we gain per krone, and we need to focus on this. That is also some of the competencies, which will be more important, that you can make these analyses." – Trine Søndergaard (10:27)

Trine Søndergaard also mentions that presenting numbers to the tourism businesses can make them cooperate and listen more:

"Those factual numbers, they can move (the tourism actors, ed.) a lot." – Trine Søndergaard (35:52)

However, the way and extent of such measurements vary a lot. Effect measuring of printed material is very limited with the exception that the DMOs keep track of how many copies are taken and/or sold:

"We don't have any measurements on it (the effect of printed materials, ed.) besides what we can being taken and then what they ask more about." – Amalie Andersen (29:46)

"In 'The Top of Denmark' we have statistics on […] distribution of the on/offline. With printed material we of course have numbers on where our publications are distributed and we also have numbers for web site visits and Facebook and Instagram and […] touch screens and all that, and we also do that locally. […] And then of course we listen what people say and what it is they ask for. […] There are several of our products and publications, which are so known and have existed for so long that there is a great demand for it." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (23:17)

The Internet, on the other hand, has provided the DMOs with a whole new instrument of effect measuring and evaluating tourist behavior online:

"I gradually spend quite a lot of money on Google Analytics and have a person to analyze things for me." – Karsten Christensen (42:36)

"If we do a marketing campaign and we work with the digital, it is easy to measure because you can say 'well, how many have seen it?' […] So in that way it has become easier today versus marketing earlier." – Martin Storgaard (01:09:08)

This view is also supported by Ole Riis. But measuring the effect is in general quite hard:

"Until now we haven't made any investigations (on the effect, ed.), but we are of course going to run it online to see where the visitors get inspiration from. […] We really don't know what has worked until now." – Helene Christensen (20:04)

This is also supported by Pike (2004), and just as Gretzel, et al. (2006) mention, the DMOs are still all measured in rather traditional ways, in this case by overnight stays, which are not necessarily accurate:

"Politically we are concretely measured on the number of overnight stays. It is a bit boring, but it is very easy. And you can relate to it, if there is growth or not. And that has given cause to some dilemmas in relation to day visitors, which is a great potential to many areas." – Trine Søndergaard (19:51)

"The common scale in Denmark, and what is easiest, is to measure overnight stays. And that it what you use and that is what you compare." – Martin Storgaard (01:05:45)

"It is tremendously important to see what the status is with the overnight stays. […] But with that being said, it is a huge huge dark figure." – Maria Groes Eldh (29:29)

As Podhorodecka (2014) claims, one-day visitors can also be of great importance to destinations, and as Trine Søndergaard points out, measuring overnight stays excludes one-day visitors:

"It is okay (to measure in overnight stays, ed.), but […] the one-day tourists […] they fall through, but […] if there are 1000 extra guests, is that caused by this kind of marketing or that kind? […] It is difficult to tell." – Helene Christensen (22:16)

And in Thy they have relatively small accommodation options, meaning that the statistics do not apply to them:

"We have Denmark's Statistics, but that doesn't say a lot, it does not apply to our area. […] There is actually no model (to measure effect with, ed.). […] So it is limited what you seriously can say about effects." – Ole Riis (38:00)

On Læsø they have the advantage of the ferry, which is almost the only possible way of transportation to the island, which is why they are always certain how many come and visit the island:

"We measure effect by seeing how many board the ferry and it doesn't lie and it's very very clear. So we know exactly how our season has turned out, when we have the numbers from the ferry." – Karsten Christensen (50:53)

As Buhalis (1999) suggests focus should be laid into measuring how satisfied the tourists are, but Karsten Christensen takes it even further, stating that they actually need to ask the tourists that *didn't* come:

"Of course we have a satisfaction investigation going on the ferry, we look on that […] but we don't have an investigation, which goes 'why have you deselected going to Læsø?' for example. And those are really the tourists you need to ask." – Karsten Christensen (49:30)

Pike (2004) and Peter Kvistgaard in Hall, et al. (2009) state that there is small evidence of the effect of public tourism organizations' activities, while Hall, et al. (2009) and Ooi (2004) mention that when it specifically comes to the destination brand, it is often not caused by the DMOs' work. The interviewees vary a lot in their responses, where most of them naturally disagree:

"Of course there is (a connection between their efforts and the number of tourists, ed.)." – Helene Christensen (23:36)

"I strongly believe that we contribute to the returning of the tourists. If we are the best in bringing new tourists here, I got to say I don't know that specifically, but I […] think and believe that we are. I am 100% convinced that our publications and work make people come back to this area." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (24:34)

Some of the interviewees maintain that their efforts have an effect, although at the same time admitting that it is impossible to know for sure:

"No, (there is not a direct coherence between their efforts and the number of tourists, ed.). I would like to say there was […] and there is, but not alone. […] Our efforts are many things." – Trine Søndergaard (21:20)

"It is also tempting to say that there is a lot who come and spend the night in Løkken, but that it is exactly because we have marketed so well with this product, that's kind of hard." – Amalie Andersen (34:17)

And on Læsø they do believe that their efforts give results, although it not necessarily corresponds with the use of more money:

"Unfortunately we haven't seen tourism increase with the expenditure of more money. […] And that is scary." – Karsten Christensen (51:30)

As previously mentioned, many of the DMOs mention marketing as their main purpose, which is also a view supported by Munar (2012) and Pike (2004).
According to Helene Christensen, marketing is used to make their destination noticeable:

"It is through marketing (we make ourselves noticeable, ed.). My perception of the destination Vesthimmerland is that it is sort of hidden, […] and they (the tourists, ed.) don't really know it exists." – Helene Christensen (35:44)

Anne-Sofie Ydesen views marketing as one of the services they provide for their local businesses:

"The marketing we do […] is sought after […] and I think that is a sign that what we do is also sought after." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (21:12)

Even so, some of the organizations do not even have a marketing strategy:

"We probably haven't, no (a marketing strategy, ed.)." – Bodil Christensen (18:40)

Trine Søndergaard doesn't believe they have a clear marketing strategy either and in the case of Hjørring, where they are a part of 'The Top of Denmark', they simply use their strategy without having one of their own:

"No (we don't have a marketing strategy ourselves, ed.). We don't have one currently and we haven't had one while I've been here. […] We have had this cooperation with 'The Top of Denmark', where we have had a clear marketing strategy, which we have kept. But on a municipally level there hasn't been a marketing strategy in the latest years." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (11:54)

This can also be explained in the case of larger attractions, which have their own strategies:

"We support and help with the marketing of our tourism products in the area. The larger organizations of course have a strong marketing strategy and platform themselves, but for the slightly smaller ones we are an important partner to tell widely what offers for tourists are in Hirtshals and its surroundings." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (02:22)

As is stated by Alimoradi (2011) and Blichfeldt & Halkier (2014) a clear brand image is an advantage for DMOs, yet this is supposedly a rare incidence due to a diversity of stakeholders' interests, as Munar (2012) suggests. Branding is however frequently used.
In the case of Løkken – which is already mentioned in the theory – the destination previously had an image of being a 'party destination' for young people, but this was ultimately forcedly changed by the city council:

"There was a city council, who […] influenced the destination and tourism and said that the camping sites had to be closed and young people were forbidden access. […] To this day we are still

very marked by it. […] On that basis you might discuss, because there are different attitudes towards what the young people did to Løkken. Some said they ruined the atmosphere, destroyed other peoples' vacation. Others say that they brought life and joy. […] So they would like to be branded a bit more like an active holiday city while having a cozy atmosphere." – Amalie Andersen (44:00)

This is something which decreased the number of tourists at the time and did not take the local population into account, as is otherwise recommended by Campelo, et al. (2014).
In the case of Mariagerfjord, Trine Søndergaard mentions that it is hard to gather all the locals, businesses and the community together around a common identity, because people have different opinions and interests towards the destination and what is best for it in terms of both branding and marketing, claiming that:

"Many actors are still short sighted." – Trine Søndergaard (16:28)

They have even encountered resistance from such actors. In accordance with Ooi (2004), who states that stakeholders might fight against a certain brand, she also mentions that they are challenged by locals, who do poor marketing:

"Where we are challenged in general, is on bad pop up marketing. Fireballs and entrepreneurs and initiators, who think 'I'll just make this webpage, I'll just communicate this, I'll do something', where it is extremely poor products which are never maintained." – Trine Søndergaard (31:50)

As Buhalis (1999) suggests, finding a common destination DNA is hard, since visitors can use the destination for various reasons. Yet, as Mariagerfjord is an example of, they have divided their area into different 'experience areas', which appeal to different target groups:

"We work with what we call 'experience areas', where we have the coast as one experience area, which speaks to […] children families, but also the comfortable life outside the peak season. […] Around the fjord it is a different target group." – Trine Søndergaard (04:32)

The same applies in Thy:

"It is very much based on motives. In one moment a German is an angler and heads out on The Yellow Reef with the guys, in the next moment he is maybe a family father, who goes in a summerhouse and in the third moment he can be a fiery, young dater. And that means it is harder and harder to say 'who are they, these guests?" – Ole Riis (07:16)

As mentioned previously, many of the destinations actually offer the same product. If one uses Buhalis' (1999) types of destinations, many of them are either seaside or nature destinations with the exception of Rebild:

"The idea is to be Denmark's leading outdoor sports destination." – Bodil Christensen (01:26)

In Hirtshals, where they are also a part of 'The Top of Denmark', Henriette Andrea Søttrup mentions that she think the brand might be a bit confusing in relation to regional and national initiatives:

"Just now a lot of new organization has happened and […] it seems it was with the purpose to be simpler and plainer, and I don't think that has succeeded, because what we want in 'The Top of Denmark' is to hold on to the brand 'The Top of Denmark'. It is well known, also in Germany. So we want to continue with that platform and so we have. And that might give a slightly confusing image in relation to the regional and national lines, which are being made." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (16:11)

In Mariagerfjord, they also chose to stop marketing a certain city, since the product was too poor:

"There has actually been a time, where we haven't done much to market Øster Hurup, because we need to lift the quality. […] When I came, there was a lot of what I call false marketing, where you think 'we can only get disappointed guests out of this' and that is no good. We need to be honest in our marketing." – Trine Søndergaard (38:32)

In fact, many of the interviewees mention that quality is an aspect, which needs to improve:

"In general there is a need for a heightening of the quality; that is different from ensuring it." – Ole Riis (36:10)

"Where we really have something to work at, that is with quality. Quality, service, hospitality." – Martin Storgaard (40:16)

Maria Groes Eldh also mentions a need for a better quality, especially in terms of service, which is also supported by other interviewees. And the majority of the destinations call for more marketing and branding instead of staying idle, which some of them have been:

"Our challenge is that people in the tourism trade on Læsø, who have been involved for many years have gotten used to 'well, they will be back". […] But they don't anymore." – Karsten Christensen (56:53)

Summary

Judging from the interviewees statements, is seems as if many of them have somewhat fuzzy strategies, which are not coordinated with others. Instead the DMOs 'cooperate' a lot, especially with neighboring DMOs. However, there is a broad opinion that today too many organizations exists, which goes well with the previously mentioned centralization, which occurs in North Jutland. When cooperating with other DMOs knowledge sharing is quite common, yet when it comes to labor division – especially across municipality borders – the DMOs seem to act on their own. This can be explained by the many opposing interests and politics within decision making, which naturally also has an impact on their organizations.

The interviewees name multiple stakeholders, who influence them: the union, the businesses, the politicians and the tourists, although tourists are seemingly not the most important ones. In fact they express that they balance between all stakeholders, where not a single one stands above the others.

When discussing their employees' skill levels, they all believe that laborers are important in relation to the work outcome and express that they increasingly need new competencies in the industry to meet new tourist demands (for example IT skills). They agree that the educational level in tourism is quite low and needs to be changed.

Effect measuring also seems to be an aspect that in particular helps the DMOs in justifying their reason for existence, although they struggle when it comes to how it should be done. Measuring the effect on printed material is limited, while the Internet has made effect measuring online much easier. However, the destinations are still measured in overnight stays, although it seems inaccurate, for example in relation to one-day visitors. Even so, the interviewees believe that their efforts have an effect, even though it can be hard to prove.

Marketing and branding is also used by all the DMOs, although some do not have a marketing strategy on their own, but look towards the strategies of larger organizations. Yet such strategies or branding identities are rarely coordinated with other organizations. Many of the destinations can be defined as either seaside or nature destinations, although a common identity is hard to establish due to the stakeholders' differences in opinions. Resistance has even occurred, which can be a hindrance for the DMOs. But they seem to have realized that tourists use the area for various reasons and have adapted thereafter. The interviewees agree that there is a need for more marketing and branding initiatives, although quality is also an aspect, which needs attention.

How the Surrounding External Environment Impacts DMOs

In terms of competition this is of course a factor, which has great influence over the DMOs and it is also mentioned by Gretzel, et al. (2006) that destinations do compete with each other. Yet the statements from the interviewees vary a lot, where some destinations still focus on an internal competition between other nearby destinations:

"Every tourist destination […] in Denmark (is our competitor, ed.). And they are the ones we need to cooperate with." – Karsten Christensen (55:36)

"I think that the level of competition has been heightened. […] We can feel that in the North Jutland region we have become more bidders over […] the same guests, the same jobs, the same target groups. […] It is like there is constantly lacking a bit of fantasy to find new assignments or new roads to take to prevent us from looking into the same jobs, I think." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (36:45)

This also seems to correspond with their previous quotes, where they express that they think that too many DMOs have arisen. It also goes well in line with Papatheodorou's (2006) argument that not many organizations have realized the extent of the competition level.
Others have identified and adapted to a global competition level as suggested by Ooi (2004) and Papatheodorou (2006):

"Globalization means above else bigger supply, bigger competition, bigger market. […] And I think we need to think more globally." – Martin Storgaard (01:16:20)

"Blokhus and Løkken lie close to one another and there you'll see it as a competition, but my professional attitude is that they're not. […] We have to compete against charter companies, who offer much cheaper travels abroad. […] Ultimately you might say that you share with each other in some ways in relation to tourists (in Denmark, ed.)" – Amalie Andersen (25:49)

This view is also supported by Maria Groes Eldh.
Others again don't recognize a competition at all – or at least stress the pointlessness of looking outwards – since they as a destination have to create something unique:

"We have no competitors. […] Who are we competing against? In principle, we are competing against everyone. […] It doesn't help to look outwards and see what the others are doing, because you have to stand out. […] I view it as a great cooperation between the destinations, […] because the tourists move so much. […] You might easily say that it's the other […] 'Visit's […] and yeah we do fight for the same tourists, but it is of no use, since the tourist basically decides themselves where they go, because there are so many other factors, which come into play. […] It is cheap to go to Southern Europe and […] Thailand and such, so they might be competitors, […] but instead of calling it a competitor, it is simply a challenge and a factors, which comes into play." – Helene Christensen (31:26)

This is also supported by Trine Søndergaard:

"I don't view it as a competition. […] I think we should be better in seizing all opportunities and potential there is in inner travel patterns and family patterns and online channels to sell experiences. […] I don't view others as competitors; I think we should focus more on developing the quality in our experience." – Trine Søndergaard (31:50)

If one takes the statements by Hjalager (2002) and Buhalis (1999) this is a positive development, where the DMOs realize that they are colleagues and not competitors.

As mentioned in the literature, various kinds of events have the potential to influence DMOs on a local level. According to Munar (2012) and Gretzel, et al. (2006) it is important for DMOs to stay in touch with such events, where Pike (2004) and Hall, et al. (2009) for instance mention global economic crisis, terrorist attacks etc. Papatheodorou (2006) also states that both the good and the bad times make tourists increase or decrease their travel activities. And within the context of DMOs in North Jutland, the majority of the interviewees name the global financial crisis from 2008 – as it is pointed out by numerous Danish authors – which led to a decline in the number of tourists:

"We felt it (the financial crisis, ed.) until 2013. […] It has had severe consequences for Løkken, since it was at the same time they rejected young people to return […] which meant a huge decline in regards to turnover […] so it has had a big significance." – Amalie Andersen (47:50)

"I would say that it had influence all over, when the crisis (financial crisis, ed.) broke out in '08. Tourism wise, it influenced everyone." – Helene Christensen (37:08)

"The financial crisis has affected Læsø more than anyone else. And Læsø is still recovering from the financial crisis." – Karsten Christensen (58:58)

Trine Søndergaard even states that the crisis has been the biggest initiator for change for them:

"The main reason (for change, ed.) is probably when it crashed economically in 2011. […] I think we have all felt a financial crisis." – Trine Søndergaard (08:29)

In accordance with Bowen & Clarke's (2009) and Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring's (2005) statement of tourists being affected by conflicts and chaos, some of the DMOs also mention the ongoing terrorist attacks and the refugee situation in some parts of Europe, which has already been mentioned in the theory section. The DMOs view this as a potential for growth in tourist numbers:

"I could imagine that in these days of terrorism, the Danes, instead of going to Turkey which has been extremely popular, […] that many choose to have their holiday at home. The same applies for foreign guests." – Maria Groes Eldh (41:55)

"We have a hypothesis that with the global development there is now with crisis abroad, both economically and […] war in the Middle East, it is very unstable, which might make people feel unsafe, and then they might rather have a Danish vacation. […] We can feel in regard to overnight stays […] that there must be something there." – Amalie Andersen (46:59)

"Within a world context, Scandinavian and thereby Denmark are viewed as a relatively safe, secure, great place to be in the world we have, which is a bit dangerous and in some places quite horrible. I think this year – and maybe slightly forward – we will experience […] an increased interest for vacationing with us, because there has been terrorism in Paris and Belgium and other places." – Martin Storgaard (47:53)

Karsten Christensen also mentions a shift in the German tourists' travel patterns, where potentially dangerous destinations are deselected:

"They (the Germans, ed.) take radical changes in regards to the choices they have made earlier. Greece is dropped on a large scale. Destinations, where there has been terrorism, are dropped on a large scale, also the European travel market. It must mean a considerable increasing interest from the Germans for the cozy Danes." – Karsten Christensen (01:01:14)

In terms of influence, trends and changed tourist behavior is also a big aspect according to Lyck (2002), Hjalager (2005) and others, since DMOs are forced to change accordingly to meet demands in order to survive.
Travel patterns, where tourists now travel for a shorter period, are especially mentioned by the interviewees:

"When I was young in tourism […] the Germans came for three weeks and lived in a hotel, came in the restaurant and ate three meals every day. They don't do that anymore. […] They too have become modern, meaning that they might stay in a holiday destination for one week. […] The travel pattern has changed. […] People go on holiday for a shorter amount of time. " – Karsten Christensen (37:42)

"Where you previously had these long vacations […] then it typically becomes these shorter, extended weekends, but then also all year round." – Maria Groes Eldh (42:45)

"There is such a tendency for us having more vacation, but it is shorter and multiple ones." – Martin Storgaard (16:25)

This is also supported by Turisterhvervets Samarbejdsforum (2008).
Yet Henriette Andrea Søttrup also mentions that although the tourists come for a shorter period of time, they now actually prefer more luxury:

"Where we a few years back noticed that you took slightly shorter vacations, maybe you went down a class in holiday homes, slightly smaller holiday home and so on, we now feel again that you scale up. Maybe the holiday is still shortened by a week, but on the other hand you now want a good and slightly bigger house. So yeah, we feel it depending on the economic situation." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (32:15)

Another aspect, which is mentioned by many of the interviewees, is the increasing use of their web pages and online media in general, although they all still agree that there is a target group, which still prefers the printed material:

"We can see that the visitation numbers on our webpage are rising and rising and also the foreign pages are coming along, but […] our German target group continue to prefer the printed media. So we accommodate this by maintaining the printed publications a season or two still, I have no time limit on it, but I certainly think that it is too early to put it on the shelve." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (33:14)

"It (the printed material, ed.) doesn't die out, but it will be reduced." – Ole Riis (56:23)

"I don't think that you will phase those publications out entirely. But the main weight of the marketing, it is digital." – Maria Groes Eldh (19:47)

Amalie Andersen and Anne-Sofie Ydesen have similar quotes.

As Borzyszkowski (2014) states the tourists have become more experienced and thereby more demanding, as Karsten Christensen also points out:

"Tourists are becoming immensely more demanding. […] Tourism has become so international. […] The guests' horizon is expanded." – Karsten Christensen (57:33)

And according to Lyck (2002) the tourists' behavior is what shapes the industry.
Just as Bowen & Clarke (2009) and VisitDenmark (2015) suggest, authenticity is one of the things, which the interviewees believe that the tourists seek:

"It is a new kind of tourists, who have emerged. […] They want uniqueness, they want an experience, […] they want to experience authenticity. […] When you look at investigations which have been made, and you listen and ask them, they want more quality. […] Attention towards what the tourist wants and not so much on what the turnover is, what the costs are." – Amalie Andersen (15:17)

And the DMOs do try to gather information about the tourists' shifting habits and wants, which is crucial according to Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring (2005) and Bowen & Clarke (2009), but this is primarily done by simply listening to the tourists' and the businesses' suggestions:

"I think we try to listen to the reactions we get both from tourists, but also the reactions we receive from our industry. We are just about to have a strategy day in the tourist union, where we sort of formulate the core assignments and products we want to work with in the future to precisely adapt to the need, which the tourists and the local industry have." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (12:36)

"We try to relate to how the tourist would experience an area and then work from there. […] And it is of course difficult, because […] what a tourist's wishes in 2016, are probably not the same in 2020." – Helene Christensen (08:54)

This goes well in line with Gretzel, et al. (2006), who mention that DMOs often have limited knowledge of their target groups' demands.

Legislation is also an aspect, which has the potential to influence DMOs, as is stated by multiple authors. And the interviewees do name some concrete examples, both positive and negative, where legislation has affected them. One example is The Dog Act, which is also mentioned in the theory section:

"We did have a lot of stir concerning that Dog Act, which came a few years back, which the German reacted strongly towards. […] We were definitely affected by that, we had a lot of questions and […] nervous reactions. People who had ordered a holiday home and were bringing their dog and who called wanting our word for that their dog would not be put down by the border." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (35:07)

Helene Christiansen and Maria Groes Eldh also mention The Dog Act as a law, which affected them. Another example is the law on traffic equality, which has great importance for Læsø, since the ferry prices might get cheaper in the future:

"The law on traffic equality. […] If it doesn't influence the development of tourism, there are history books which need to be rewritten." – Karsten Christensen (59:42)

However, as both of these examples show, such incidents are often side effects from laws, which regulate another area than tourism, which is also supported by Hannam & Knox (2010). However, examples of the opposite also exist, where the government has made direct laws targeted at the tourism industry and thereby stimulating the growth of tourism, as Pike (2004) suggests. In these specific examples the government has chosen to legislate in order to create jobs and growth within the industry, which is also supported by Hannam & Knox (2010). The government's recently presented Growth Package is targeted directly towards the tourism industry (and other industries), which for example gives more flexible accommodation opportunities. The importance of the package is mentioned by Anne-Sofie Ydesen, Martin Storgaard, Maria Groes Eldh, Ole Riis and Trine Søndergaard.

Some interviewees also mention The Blue Flag arrangement, which is maintained by an independent, non-governmental organization, where members have to follow certain standards in order to have their beaches marked as 'Blue Flag Beaches'. The organization recently tightened their regulations, so that dogs and cars on the beaches were no longer allowed, causing many destinations to drop out of the arrangement and create their own flag, 'The Bathing Flag':

"Blue Flag also had some initiatives […] concerning dogs and swimming and so forth, but we luckily had a municipality, which quickly […] jumped on a new arrangement about the bathing flag, so we were not included by it." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (36:05)

This was also the case in Vesthimmerland.

As mentioned previously, there seems to be a trend where the tourists increasingly use online media such as the Internet to both search for information and book their next holiday, which is also supported by Borzyszkowski (2014) and many of the interviewees:

"The way of searching for information, the way of making choices, it happens very digitally today." – Martin Storgaard (20:36)

Undoubtedly, the ever-changing technology makes this possible and Gretzel, et al. (2006) even calls it *"[…] the greatest agent for change"* (Gretzel, et al., 2006, p. 117). When it comes to the increasing development within technology, the interviewees agree with the numerous authors saying that the digital advancement will only take up more space within their organizations in the future, and so they have been influenced and are beginning to change:

“The tourist today is of course becoming more and more digital and moves around on Instagram and Facebook. And that means that our marketing moves more and more in that direction.” – Maria Groes Eldh (18:57)

“I think that the digital development is so prevailing and storms ahead. […] We work a lot on digital development and we have to work even more on it. […] In five years […] we are digital on all fronts, we are visible on all social media. […] We boost even more; we blow on the development which is to come.” – Bodil Christensen (11:04)

“No doubt we need to focus much more on this entire online part. […] There will be much more of this in the future.” – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (35:14)

Some of the clear benefits, besides the previously mentioned ability of better effect measuring, are for example the Internet and the communication and marketing tools it can provide, as Borzyszkowski (2014), Munar (2012) and others suggest.
Many, such as Helene Christensen and Trine Søndergaard, for example mention social media as one of their largest communication channels due to its potential and effectiveness. The same can be said of their web sites:

”Our reach is wider with the web page. […] We are also present on the social media, and it is actually just Facebook. My attitude towards it is that I’d wish we might expand on the social media, and that we might think differently in relation to how we reach the target group and what it is we post.” – Amalie Andersen (59:14)

Since the web sites offer great marketing aspects, mostly all of the DMOs have one, as stated by Gretzel, et al. (2006) and Lyck (2011) with the exception of the organizations underneath the brand ‘The Top of Denmark’, which have a shared web site. These sites are then marketed in other collaborations:

"It is about getting the destination marketed on the local web page, which then later is distributed onwards in the system to The Top of Denmark and VisitNordjylland and so on." – Amalie Andersen (00:30)

Lyck (2011) recommends a revision of Danish DMOs' web pages, and this is also mentioned by Karsten Christensen, where he is actually contemplating using a different web solution than their current one, which all the 'Visit's in Denmark share:

"The organization should then develop and I see that the first thing we will take a hold of is our electronic portals. […] It could be within the 'Visit' system or it can be outside of the 'Visit' system. Sometimes I'm leaning towards being outside it." – Karsten Christensen (26:07)

Others mention that they already revise and update their web page frequently along with using other digital tools:

"We prioritize our web site a lot and try to optimize it constantly so it both reflects the reality we are in today, so it doesn't just stands and rests with old data […] But of course also search engine optimization and all these things which influences externally, like Google and that kind of things, there we also have to keep up. […] And of course the other digital platforms, Facebook, Instagram and so forth, whatever moves, right, we make up our minds if it is something we need to spend resources on or if it is not something which will pay off for us and that we need to wait with." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (39:00)

And in the case of marketing the DMO's web page is actually the main online communication for some businesses:

"It is mostly for other partners, where we might be the main platform for their presentation online." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (03:27)

Another benefit derived from the emerging technologies is the possibility of online booking, which is also mentioned by Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring (2005). Both Læsø and Mariagerfjord view online trade as a great potential, where they can market and sell the authentic products from the area. Another aspect, where the technology comes to play, is the increasing discarding of printed material which slowly gives way to more digital working methods as suggested by Stevens (2012) and others. The interviewees do not mention that their credibility has been challenged, as Munar (2012) predicts, but acknowledge instead that the online media requires a larger focus:

"We are finally aiming at electronic and very little in printing." – Karsten Christensen (31:40)

"We have no printed material with us anymore. […] So it is only digitally we work." – Martin Storgaard (55:14)

"Within the later years, the Internet is already taking over. We can see that the flow of information flows differently." – Ole Riis (10:55)

But – as previously stated – many of the interviewees argue that the printed material is still required by many tourists:

"Maybe we will move more away from paper (printed material, ed.), who knows? We just know that right now that is certainly not true, for there is a demand all the time. […] Where everybody is singing that the Internet is a blessing, you can still see that print is also something which is sought after, while the Internet is still getting stronger." – Ole Riis (12:25)

"The printed material […] is still sought after. Online we have commenced some initiatives […] so that we will be sharper online." – Anne-Sofie Ydesen (20:15)

"It (the technology, ed.) helps make it easier to communicate, but then again […] we have a generation […] who actually just wants the human contact, so we can't really feel that it has taken over." – Amalie Andersen (57:55)

These views are also supported by Gretzel, et al. (2006).
The increasing technology level also affects the physical tourist offices, where many of the interviewees believe that they might become expendable in the future:

"We still have a generation, who actually need the human contact, need to meet a human being and get this information. So until that generation isn't there no more… […] Then we will properly be expendable. But in five years I think […] we will be there, that we will still be available on some level. How and how much is difficult to say." – Amalie Andersen (11:21)

Helene Christensen also mentions the use of info screens, which many of the destinations have, in order to save resources:

"Society is becoming more and more paperless, and the information is more and more accessible. […] Multiple 'Visit's also have these info screens instead of small local tourist offices. It is of course sad that you have to close down, but it is a way to […] save some resources and […] use the money for something else such as the development of tourism." – Helene Christensen (11:44)

Yet some interviewees also believe that there are some things, which will never be replaced by new technology:

"We have some things, which cannot be solved digitally, such as navigation outside. […] People want to hold a real map in their hands." – Trine Søndergaard (45:08)

All of these quotations seem to fit with Munar's (2012) statement that adjustments to technology stem from the changing environment and not from the DMOs' own initiatives. And it does also seem that many of the DMOs are not ready for this rapid change, as Borzyszkowski (2014) and others claim:

"It (the technology, ed.) develops so fast, but that also becomes our dilemma, because we suddenly have an infrastructure, which can't keep up." – Trine Søndergaard (44:52)

"The digital development will mean everything. And this year we have taken a big turn, where we truly go digital. We are however not properly prepared for it, but we do it." – Karsten Christensen (01:01:59)

Nevertheless this seems to be an ongoing process, as Pike (2004) says.

According to Hanafiah, et al. (2013) the local community plays a large part of the destination's DNA, where DMOs are supposedly forced to balance between the tourists' demands and the locals', if one is to believe Morgan, et al. (2012). And the interviewees' responses does seem to be in agreement with Aitken & Campelo (2011), who state that the local residents are often not included in a potential branding process. However, in Rebild and Skagen they actually did ask their local community if they would welcome additional tourists. Even so, some of the destinations have experienced conflicts with their community in one way or another:

"Oh yes, plenty (of resistance from the community, ed.). And divergence in opinions […] concerning which direction tourism is headed. […] I always think there are conflicts." – Trine Søndergaard (15:34)

It seems as though the local community often welcomes the financial benefits of the tourists, but is on the other hand annoyed by their presence:

"I know from experience that there are people in many local communities, where tourism is a great significance, who rather saw […] that a giro cheque was sent from the tourists, because they want

the money, but they are not ready to offer the service, which needs to be there." – Karsten Christensen (43:19)

But most of them have only experienced support from their community:

"Resistance, I don't think at all… On the contrary, we get a lot of support and are very active with different organizations. […] There could probably be worked on something with more synergy in sight and some more cooperation, but I wouldn't say there is resistance." – Henriette Andrea Søttrup (20:42)

"Actually, we have only experienced support and pats on the shoulder (from the community, ed.) that they think it is good something is happening and that we are visible." – Helene Christensen (18:12)

Karsten Christensen, Anne-Sofie Ydesen, Amalie Andersen, Ole Riis and Bodil Christensen have also only encountered support, although Bodil does mention that there are differences in opinions.

Summary

When considering the interviewees' responses it seems as if there is a rising competition level, which naturally affects them. How their competitors are defined is however an entirely different matter, where the respondents are divided: some mention their closest competitors as neighboring destinations, others have a global view, where others again choose to focus on their own activities, thereby excluding the aspect of competition altogether. The general view is however that the DMOs should view each other as colleagues, not competitors.
Major events seem also to have an effect, where the financial crisis and the terror situation are examples; the latter being a potential for increasing tourist numbers for the destinations in North Jutland.

Travel patterns and tourist behavior seem also to have changed with tourists now travelling for shorter stays, they increasingly use the Internet for information search and booking (although some still prefer printed materials) and in general demand authenticity, making the tourists more demanding, since they are now so experienced. The DMOs then try to adapt, but when acquiring information about the next trend or tourist wants, it seems as if this is mainly done simply by listening to suggestions from tourists and businesses.

Legislation has also had an impact on numerous DMOs, where the Dog Act and the law on traffic equality are examples, yet these are regulations which were not aimed at the tourism industry per se. The Growth Package and the Blue Flag are however examples of legislation aimed at tourism directly.

The interviewees agree that the increasing technology and digitalization will only increasingly affect them in the future, where the Internet can be viewed as a communicative, marketing and sales tool by the DMOs. The interviewees themselves mention social media and their web pages as important and most of the DMOs have both. Even so, it does seem that especially the web pages could be improved. Furthermore, many of them believe that the increasing online technology is still not the solution to all problems, even though fewer tourist offices and more info screens has been a development. They are adapting to new technologies, although it seems that some DMOs are not ready for this change, but this is an ongoing process.

In terms of the local community, the majority of the DMOs have only encountered support, even though examples of resistance and conflicts can be found, which naturally strained their relationship. It seems as though the community mainly see the benefits of the tourists, although they are also the cause of some annoyance. Some of the destinations also included their community, when the prospect of more tourists was a possibility.

Conclusion

The Danish tourism industry is currently facing a restructuring, which seems to affect all actors within. The local DMOs located in North Jutland are no exception.
By evaluating and comparing relevant literature concerning issues, which potentially have an effect on DMOs, with the responses from interviewees employed at DMOs in North Jutland, this thesis can seemingly conclude that there is a whole variety of influencing factors. No less than fourteen different factors were found within the literature and throughout the analysis it is assumed that the same fourteen factors – or at least the three main categories of organizational, internal and external factors – do influence local DMOs in North Jutland as well.
Although the traditional classification of DMOs seems inadequate, they are bound by their organizational structure, which for example restricts their 'work areas', target groups and 'tourism product'. They can be defined as marketers of destinations with a typical responsibility towards the corresponding municipalities, which leaves them somewhat powerless in relation to the businesses within their destination. Furthermore, their financial background, which again often leads back towards the municipalities, is often crucial to their activities, thus limiting their ability to perform activities as they please – even though this might be more beneficial for the tourists. Accordingly, pooling of resources and centralization are seen as upcoming trends at DMOs in North Jutland.
Internal factors appear to also influence the DMOs. Here the use (or lack) of strategy seem to affect their activities from a general perspective, since such strategies are often not coordinated with others. This is also the case with other things such as labor division across municipality borders. This hereby contests the interviewees' statements of a great level of cooperation between the DMOs internally, which is usually viewed as very important, especially in terms of knowledge sharing. Ultimately, cooperation level between stakeholders, which can both be the union, the businesses, the politicians and the tourists, is mentioned as essential to the DMOs activities and decision making. Even so, the DMOs seemingly act on their own and mention potential reasons for this such as an abundance of organizations, plenty of opposing interests and politics. Human capital is named as a vital resource in relation to the work outcome, where there in the future is a need for new competencies to meet new tourist demands. The same is the case

with effect measuring, which has gotten increasingly attention from the DMOs in order to justify their reason for existence, although relatively outdated effect measuring methods are used today. The use of marketing and branding in particular also influences the DMOs, which is mentioned as one of their primary tasks, although finding a collective identity for stakeholders to relate to proves difficult for them.

Externally, there is a whole range of influencing factors, which the DMOs need to adapt to. A considerable rise in the competition level cannot be ignored, although there are disagreements on who their competitors are. Major events also have the potential to influence them, where the financial crisis and the terror situation are mentioned examples, where the first have decreased the number of tourists, while the latter potentially will give a rise in tourists. The shifting travel behavior of tourists is also a factor which holds influence, where tourists for example now travel for shorter stays, use the Internet more and seek authenticity. Legislation and policymaking impacts the DMOs with numerous examples such as the Dog Act, the law on traffic equality, the Growth Package and the Blue Flag. In relation to changing tourist behavior, new technologies affects and will increasingly affect the DMOs in the future, where adaptation is crucial, although with restraint, since some issues are yet to be solved by technological devices. Finally, the local community and their support is essential to successful DMO activities. The DMOs in question have mainly only encountered support, but conflicts do occur, which potentially hinders growth and change.

In conclusion, the DMOs in North Jutland are influenced by many factors, although the level of influence varies from organization to organization. More factors might occur – therefore more research is needed within this area – but this thesis defines fourteen factors and three main categories, which influence local DMOs in North Jutland.

Appendixes

Appendix A: The Interview Guide

Introduktion

1. Kan du fortælle dit navn og stilling hos din nuværende arbejdsplads?
2. Forklar venligst, hvordan jeres organisation er struktureret? (Er I en fagforening, markedsføringsorganisation etc.?)
    a. Hvornår blev jeres organisation oprettet?
    b. Hvad er det jeres formål er?
    c. Hvad er det egentlig for et produkt/service I leverer?
    d. Har jeres rolle ændret sig over tid?
3. Hvorfor er turisme relevant for den destination, du repræsenterer?
4. Hvilket område dækker jeres destination over?
5. Kan du forklare, hvem jeres hoved-målgruppe af turister er? Hvorfor netop den?
6. Hvordan ser jeres organisation ud om 5 år?
7. Hvad gør, at I laver ændringer i forhold til destinationen?

Samarbejde

8. Har I en klar markedsføringsstrategi for at tiltrække turister til jeres destination?
9. Hvordan passer denne strategi ind i den nationale, regionale og kommunale strategi for turismen i Danmark?
10. Hvordan forholder I jer til andre regionale og lokale Visit-organisationer (samarbejder I)?
    a. Deler I viden med disse organisationer?
    b. Koordinerer I strategien med dem?
    c. Hvordan fordeler I arbejdsbyrden?
    d. Opstår der nogensinde politiske konflikter?
11. Har I nogensinde oplevet modstand fra lokalsamfundet/det lokale erhverv/lokalpolitikere i forhold til turisme-initiativer?

12. Hvilken interessent yder størst indflydelse på jeres beslutningstagen (turisten, politikerne, samarbejdspartnere, lokalsamfundet etc.)?

Ressourcer

13. Hvordan bedømmer I kvalitet i forhold til det materiale, der udarbejdes til turisterne?
14. Hvordan effektmåles I på jeres indsats? Hvad synes du om denne måde at måle på? Hvad ville dit forslag være, hvis denne måde at måle på skulle ændres?
15. Mener du, at der er en direkte sammenhæng mellem jeres indsats og antallet af turister?
16. Hvor stor en betydning har den finansielle støtte for jeres arbejde i forhold til den daglige drift?
17. Synes du, at turismebranchen – og jer – har tilstrækkeligt økonomisk råderum, og hvordan er din holdning til denne prioritering af midler?
18. Hvad gør I for at styrke medarbejdernes personlige kompetencer og hvor stor en betydning har individuelle færdigheder for jeres slutprodukt?
19. Har I nogen indflydelse over de organisationer, attraktioner, restauranter osv., som er med til at skabe 'destinationen'? Hvis ja, på hvilken måde?
20. Hvilke ændringer skulle der til, for at jeres destination blev bedre? Er der et behov for ændringer?
21. Hvordan adskiller jeres destination sig fra konkurrenternes?
22. Hvordan forsøger I at påvirke turisternes billede af jeres destination?

Omgivelser

23. Har I bemærket, at globale eller lokale kriser, opsving eller events har påvirket turismen lokalt?
24. Har turistens krav/prioriteter/adfærd ændret sig?
25. Anskaffer I jer jævnligt information omkring ændringer hos jeres 'kerne-turist'? Og hvordan (spørges turisterne direkte)?
26. Hvilke politiske tiltag og love, som er blevet implementeret over tid, har haft betydning for jer – og hvordan?

27. Føler I, at I skal konkurrere med andre destinationer? I så fald, hvilke? Og om hvilke slags turister? Og er konkurrencen øget eller faldet?
28. Er det dit indtryk, at Danmark klarer sig godt eller skidt i den globale turismekonkurrence?
29. Teknologien ændrer sig hele tiden – har dette nogen indflydelse på jer og i så fald hvilken?
30. Hvad er jeres største kommunikationskanaler til jeres turister (tv, hjemmeside, print osv.), og hvorfor har I valgt at lægge jeres fokus netop her? Har fordelingen tidligere været anderledes?
31. Hvor aktivt bruger I jeres hjemmeside? Og hvordan er jeres syn på internetbrug og dets udvikling – fordele og ulemper? Har I tilpasset jer?

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