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WHALE WATCHING TOURISM AT LITTLE BELT, DENMARK

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Abstract

This research paper examines the whale watching industry in Little Belt, Denmark, with a focus on stakeholders' collaboration. Even though the academic literature in connection to stakeholders' collaboration is vast, it could be argued that stakeholder collaboration as an element of tourism development, in particular in whale watching industry in Denmark, has not been given much attention. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to understand how collaborative processes take place and what are the benefits and challenges of these processes for the whale watching industry. This project may help in filling the gap by focusing on stakeholder collaboration as a component of whale watching tourism development using the case study of whale watching in Little Belt, Denmark. This thesis adopts qualitative research methods and a deduction approach. The theoretical framework applied include theories about stakeholder and collaboration, literature about marketing collaboration and partnerships at a destination. The data for this thesis was collected through a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with six stakeholders that represent three key sectors within the whale watching industry: environmental group the Nature Park Little Belt, DMOs and boat operators. Respectively, two boat operators, two representative of the Nature Park Middelfart and two representatives of the DMOs one from Fredericia and one from Middelfart. Data collected was a number of 5 tape-recorded, semi-structured interviews and one scripted interview, that focused on the respondents' description of their activities, their collaborative practices, their insights, opinions, and relationships to whale watching industry in the region. Semi-structured research questions were included in the data collection tool to determine the factors that are affecting and effecting the collaboration of different stakeholders in a destination. The data collected during the research were analyzed through thematic analysis and as a result, a thematic model has been created. In order to reflect the opinion of the respondents, direct quotations were made from the interviews with the various stakeholders. In this paper, the argument put forward is that collaboration is a necessary tool for the future success of whale watching industry in Little Belt, Denmark. Accordingly, this study will set the context by looking at industry current situation, its opportunities, advantages, challenges and eventually propose recommendations to acknowledge for the actors specifically involved in whale watching tourism industry.

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry is considered one of the most influential industry in today's world and it represents almost 5% of the global GDP, responsible for 30% of the international exports of commercial services (WTTC, 2017). Marine tourism is considered a sub-sector of the tourism industry which is closely related to coastal tourism as it includes both shore-based activities and ocean-based activities (Hall, 2001). Orams (1999:9) defined marine tourism as *“those leisure activities which focus on the maritime environment, the consumption and use of which requires that the consumer travels away from his place of residence”*. However, Miller (1993) argued that it has a controversial nature and has emerged as a relevant topic in the field of ocean and coastal management. Additionally, the most relevant element of a maritime tourism attraction is its accessibility, therefore, infrastructure development can play a major impact on this form of tourism (Sulistiyona et al., 2017). Moreover, marine tourism development is considered to be driven by primary actors such as governments and secondary players such as tourism operators and consumers (Diakomihalis, 2007). However, due to its complex and fragmented character, the demographics and interests of different groups and individuals might vary. As a result, many times the local value is not captured (Strategy for Scotland, 2010). Further, it has been argued that in order to develop an attractive tourism product-offer, it is important that all actors in the sectors cooperate. However, this aspect is regarded as almost impossible without policy support (ECORYS, 2013).

The present paper will analyze the whale watching tourism in Little Belt, Denmark. Accordingly, whale and dolphin watching is viewed as the most important section of marine-based tourism (Higham & Luck, 2008). Consequently, the image consumption of marine wildlife is perceived as a harmless activity with important benefits such as conservation and educational (Curtin, 2013). However, many researchers have shown worries about the impact of whale watching on the marine fauna, thus pointing to its sustainability aspect (Cunningham et al, 2011).

Whale-watching tourism began as a land-based tourism activity in the late 1940s. However, starting with the 1980s, this industry has known effective growth, due to its changing status from an alternative use of whales to an important form of marine tourism (Elejaneitia et al, 2012). According to Hoyt (2007:3), whale-watching is defined as *“tours by boat or air from land with some commercial aspect, to see or listen to any of the 84 species of whales, dolphin, or porpoise”*. Moreover, O’Conner et al. (2009) reported that in the last years, almost 13 million whale-watcher generated a total expenditure of 2.1. billion dollars and favored

employment for 13.200 people in the world. However, as Highham et al. (2016) noticed, marine tourism as well as whale watching, depends on well preserved marine ecosystems. Nevertheless, Higham & Lusseau (2014) argued that in order to understand and manage the environmental impacts of whale watching tourism, we should look at the sociocultural and political context of a destination. Additionally, the current data imply that the number of whale watchers is also associated with the size of the tourism industry of a particular country. By the 21st century, the whale watching industry has expanded to nearly 119 countries with global revenue of US\$ 2.1 billion (Cunningham et al. 2011). However, the rapid growth of the industry, the poor management and lack of regulation have affected cetaceans in many regions of the world (Hoyt & Parsons, 2014; Orams, 2001). Additionally, around 1970s many cetacean species were already enlisted as endangered in the USA (Marrero & Thornton, 2011; Reeves et al., 1999). In spite of this, only in 1982, the International Whaling Commission banned commercial whaling. However, not all the nations approved the moratorium, with Norway and Japan continuing to allow whaling in various forms, Norway supports whaling for meat and Japan for research purposes (Hoyt & Parsons, 2014). Furthermore, whale watching is correlated with scientific research and also with quality operations, as the majority of cetacean research apply biological and ecological approaches and focus on whales' protection (Rose et al., 2011, Higgs, 1996; O'Connor et al., 2009). In this respect, IWC (International Whaling Commission) was created to guarantee low-impact and viable whale watching activities (Higgins, 1996). However, in the region under study Little Belt, Denmark, there is no specific regulation concerning whale watching tourism. Thus, this aspect needs careful consideration for future studies. Although, this paper will not treat the sustainability issues, and regulation of the whale watching industry in the region of Little Belt, these aspects seem to preoccupy many actors involved in the industry.

1.1. Research question

The research question that will guide the present project is:

“How collaboration of different stakeholders in a tourism destination can help the development of the whale watching tourism industry. Case study: Little Belt, Denmark”.

The present paper intends to offer an explanation and analysis of the collaborative relationships between different actors at a destination, as it follows the following objectives:

- (1) Presents the theoretical framework that governs partnerships, and stakeholder collaboration.
- (2) Analysis of the important facts and issues related to partnerships and collaboration.
- (3) Presents and discusses the various aspects of the collaborative processes and how they can affect the development of the whale watching industry in the region.

A specific whale watching destination was chosen for the project due to the fact that it's the only place in Denmark where the whale watching tourism has developed in recent years. Consequently, this study uses the case study of whale watching tourism in Little Belt, Denmark to examine the effectiveness of collaborations and partnerships as strategies for the growth of whale watching tourism in the region. Furthermore, to accomplish the objectives of the study, the author employed two instruments (face-to-face semi-structured interviews and participant observation) to triangulate the collected data and therefore to attain a higher level of data reliability.

2. Introduction to the destination

Midelfart, Fredericia, and Kolding constitute the Destination Little Belt which is marketed as a single and unique beautiful destination. The Destination Little Belt partnership started in 2014 with the support of the European Union, as a close alliance for tourism and also for experience development. Additionally, it has involved more than 100 enterprises as partners in the respective development concept (Kielgast, 2014). This partnership aimed to create growth in the tourism and experience industry based on the area's special strengths and unique features, such as its natural and cultural assets, the world's largest population of harbour porpoises and its geographical location, and especially the need and desire to collaborate of many tourism enterprises. At present, the destination project Little Belt is considered, '*one of few of its kind in Denmark*' (Kielgast, 2014:12). Consequently, the town of Middelfart constitutes the starting point for whale watching activities and is located at the most confined point of the Little Belt. Hence, the harbour porpoises can be easily detected close to the shore.¹ This town is associated historically with the harbour porpoises, due to the fact that whaling has been practiced for centuries, starting with the 16th century to World War II (Andersen & Hansen, 2008). However, in the late half of the 19th century, a decline of catch activities has been recorded

¹ <https://www.visitlillebaelt.com/ln-int/middelfart-fredericia/whale-watching>

which was connected to the decline of porpoise oil price, and the unfavorable financial conditions (Lockyer & Kinze, 2003). Nowadays the harbour porpoise is protected and represents the symbol of the Middelfart cultural identity, which attracts many visitors through whale-watching tours.

Furthermore, at Little Belt recently has been created Denmark's Lillebaelt Naturepark, that is a protected marine area stretching from Trelde Naes to Hejsminde. The park is the home for a number of 3,000 harbour porpoises (fig. 1,2).² It has been estimated that in all Europe there was a total population of 42,000 porpoises, that inhabited the waters from the Kattegat through the Danish straits and to the Western Baltic. The harbour porpoises (*Phocoena Phocoena*) is considered one of the smallest marine mammals in the world (Sveegard et al, 2012). Moreover, Gaskin (1984) observed that the harbour porpoise has a northern circumpolar distribution and is the only cetacean breeding in Danish waters. Additionally, the only studies about harbour porpoise in Danish waters are connected to their morphology and genetics and satellite telemetry (Andersen et al, 2001; Teilmann et al, 2008). However, the European surveys conducted with regards to their density, in 1994 and in 2005 (SCANS I and in 2005, SCANS II.), have shown a huge decline of the population in the respective region (Hammand et al, 2002, SCANS II, 2008) and have triggered alarming concerns about the management of harbour porpoises, in both Germany and Denmark as well as concerns of several international conservation groups such as IUC & ASCOBANS and ICES. Nevertheless, although the decline between 1994-2005 has caused serious concerns at national and international levels, the recent studies have shown that the decline of harbour porpoises has ceased starting with 2005, and until now their number has increased significantly (Sveegard et al, 2012). It has been argued that the causes that might influence the abundance of porpoise and their decline are connected to the pressure from threats such as noise pollution, habitat degradation, food depletion and bycatch (Sveegard et al, 2012:8). Moreover, in Denmark, the harbour porpoise is protected nationally. The first action plan with regards to porpoise was established in 1988 by the Ministry of Environment and Energy in Denmark and the second act from 2005 is a revision of the same plan. These two plans stated that more research was needed and stated that they supported the international commitments to protect harbour porpoise and also reduce incidental by-catch (Teilmann et al, 2008; Mjoministeriet, 2005).

² <http://digital.ecomagazine.com>

This paper concerns the collaborative activities that take place in the region of Little Belt, in connection to whale-watching tourism. It is important to acknowledge some of the collaborations that took place in the region, even though they were not directly connected to whale watching sea-based tourism, but indirectly to whale-watching land-based tourism. Thus, in April 2017, a collaborative project between Aarhus University in Denmark, Lillebaelt Nature Park, the Middelfart Municipality, and Seiche Ltd. has started, with the goal to install a long-term listening station to monitor the sounds of harbour porpoises and boat traffic in the region. As a result, in the Old Harbour of Middelfart, it has been created a land-based whale watching platform in the form of a boathouse equipped with a listening station and a binocular.³ Moreover, according to Haywood (1988), whale watching should also be seen in the wider context of the tourism industry. Thus, it should be acknowledged as a resource industry able to attract visitors with a unique and viable product and at the same time an industry capable of maintaining a destination's comfort and support. Hence, it is considered that a long-time partnership will be beneficial for the community as well for the industry. However, Haywood (1988) argued that tourism strategic planning could be worthless unless it is approved and also enforced at the functional level. Thus, there is a need for partnerships which is the extensive participation of all actors involved with the tourism product (Haywood, 1988). Furthermore, it has been argued that since 1986, when the whaling moratorium was introduced, and whaling has become less popular, whale watching has evolved into an important and complex tourism industry (Parsons, 2012). However, this growth of the industry was accompanied many times by the conflicts among different stakeholders regarding various issues such as the protection guidelines and the best management procedures etc. (Parsons, 2012). It could be argued that as whale watching in Little Belt Denmark becomes increasingly important to the community an understanding of stakeholder collaboration and perceptions will be an important part of the management and marketing processes for whale watching industry in the respective region. Consequently, in contrast to the long history of consumptive use of marine wildlife in Little Belt, the history of whale-watching is relatively new to the region, as whaling was resumed in the region after the World War 2nd (Andersen & Hansen, 2005). However, whale-watching as a commercial venue begun 18 years ago, around 2001 in the region of Little Belt being initiated by Mr. Henrik the Aventura boat operator. Consequently, according to Parsons (2012), there are several aspects of whale watching tourism that should be considered in order to see how

³ <http://bios.au.dk/en/about-bioscience/organisation/marine-mammal-research/projects/porpoise-livestreaming/>

the whale watching industry has developed in a region such as the whale population, the available infrastructure and the impact of this industry on the economies, culture and the community of a region. In relation to the whale population, Little Belt has the highest harbour porpoises' population in Denmark and it also has an important historical heritage related to the sea (Sveegard et al, 2012). Additionally, it could be argued, that there is a good infrastructure available for whale watching tourism in Little Belt. However, the lack of studies in relation to the whale watching industry in Denmark might present difficulties for the present research. Nevertheless, the present study aims to represent the architecture of a collaborative model and the interactions of stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt, Denmark. Through this project, the researcher will try to attract more attention to whale watching opportunities in Denmark. Accordingly, a number of researchers have argued that it is desirable for a destination or organization to negotiate organization collaboration (Cooper, & Baggio, 2008a; Sigala & Marinidis, 2010). As opposed to this, Fyall & Wang (2012) noticed that collaboration is not sufficient to ensure the success of achievement of all the objectives in a destination. Hence, it needs an extended collaboration with other destinations.

3. Structure of the project

The present thesis addresses the proposed objectives through eight parts. The first chapter presents the introduction and discusses the concept of marine tourism and whale watching. The second chapter provides an introduction to the destination and informs on the key concept of whale watching industry in Little Belt and its current perspectives. Part three depicts the structure of the project, part four offers a framework of the literature and theories that will support the analysis through a number of subchapters. Chapter five constitutes of several subchapters and covers data collection and the methods applied in the research process. The six chapter provides an analysis of the results and data through various theoretical lenses, as well as, a discussion of the research findings. Finally, the project closes with a conclusion to the analysis and some remarks of the directions for future research.

4. Literature review

The main aim of this section is to present and examine theories aiming to build a theoretical structure for the thesis. Moreover, it will present the role of collaboration in the development of the tourism industry with a focus on whale watching tourism. The theoretical framework

will be later used in the analysis part as an instrument to analyze the gathered data. Accordingly, it will discuss the implications of different alliances and actors within the tourism industry.

Moreover, this chapter explains the requirement for collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders and highlights the distinctiveness of cooperative behavior in tourism destinations, and the concept of stakeholder and partnership, with the help of selected literature. Moreover, this chapter strives to meet the following objectives:

- To identify and discuss the connections, if there are any, among stakeholder collaboration and development of a tourism industry.
- To examine the obstacles that stakeholders might face while working collaboratively and to uncover the potential factors, that could help remove them.
- To identify those aspects that facilitate collaboration in the tourism industry, in particular, collaboration in the whale-watching industry in Denmark.

4.1. Collaboration in a tourism destination

The concept of collaboration is described in the academic literature as a combined situation of cooperation among various stakeholders in a tourist destination who usually unite their efforts and resources and work together to solve different problems in tourism development (Bramwell, Lane, 2000b; Plummer et al., 2006). Consequently, Brown & Keast (2003) noticed that collaboration in contrast to cooperation, doesn't always depend on the goodwill of the independent actors but *"has some of the force of an objective, a mandate, leading to a more enduring system of relationships between the various different components of a larger system"* (Brown, Keast, 2003:116). Moreover, cooperation and collaboration are considered interdependent, whereas cooperation entails working together to achieve the shared objective, while collaboration suggests the linking together of partners in order to achieve the same aims. Both involve the element of a relationship of various partners that have the same goals (Borodako, 2011; Dredge, 2006; Lemmetyinen, Go, 2009; Palmer, Bejou, 1995; Selin, 1993; Borodako et al. 2016). It has been argued that by working together for a common goal and by understanding the advantages of this collaboration, the potential long-term costs and conflicts can be avoided (Gramwell & Lane, 2000). In support of this, (Fyall & Wang, 2012:11) noticed that, if an organization wants to reach their goals, they should reconstruct their strategies in such a way to reach a *"collaborative advantage rather than a competitive advantage"* However, Hall (1999) argued that collaboration in tourism is considered a developing process

which takes place is a non-linear way. Nevertheless, many researchers have identified a number of factors that can help to a good collaboration such as formal structures, stakeholders' personalities and their role and motivations (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Healey, 1997; Laing, Lee, Moore, Weiler, & Wegner, 2009, Fathimath, 2015).

Moreover, several studies describe collaboration as a necessary element for tourism development at a destination (Wang, 2008). According to Wang (2008), every destination has an inter-related nature, where its various elements that build up the destination must be brought together in order to ensure the tourism viability. Hence, collaboration is seen as a necessary instrument for the development of the tourism industry as well as a destination. Nevertheless, more than often it is triggered by marketing or tourism management challenges. Consequently, DMOs is regarded as capable to bring all the elements together and facilitate various collaborative practices among stakeholders (Wang, 2008). As opposed to this, Fyall & Wang (2012) argued that the collaboration of various components of a destination can also be done without the DMO as an intermediary. This research will try to see if this aspect is true for collaborative practices among various stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt.

4.1.1. Cooperation in a tourism destination

It has been argued that nowadays due to globalization and an increase in the competitiveness of the tourism market, tourism businesses should become more flexible in order to survive (Gursoy et al., 2015). Cooperation is defined as a strategy and a ‘‘voluntary way of joining actions in which those involved take an active part, share rules, norms, and structures to act by’’ (Gursoy et al., 2015:6). However, cooperation does not replace competition, but both elements are needed for the success of tourism development (Borodako et al, 2016). In a similar vein, Czernek (2013) suggested that successful cooperation requires a joint effort, through the potential of partnerships. However, Girsoy et al (2015) argued that cooperation is not always successful, due to the fact that strategic alliances do not always reach their potential advantages. In support of this, Reid et al. (2009) noticed that a number of factors might impede a successful outcome the most important being an inadequate manner of the cooperation process which can lead to short-term relationships. Nevertheless, several factors can contribute to the prediction of successful cooperation such as previous cooperation experience and a detailed analysis of the potential business partners (Girsoy et al., 2015).

4.1.2. The DMO and its role in the collaboration

A number of researchers have pointed to the fact that DMOs are non-profit organizations created by public firms and are usually financed by public channels, responsible for the marketing and management of a tourist destination (Elbe, Hallen, & Axelsson, 2009; Elbe & Emmoth, 2014). Thus, the DMOs primary role is promoting the destination and connecting in a better manner the demand and supply aspects of tourism with the aim of increasing the use of the destination resources (Pike, 2008a). In support of this, Pike et al. (2014) suggested that destinations can be understood differently from the demand and supply sides. However, this action needs ‘new ways of working together, building partnerships across disparate, competing and even conflicting stakeholder groups with the DMO, an obvious coordinator’ (Morgan et al., 2011:17). Furthermore, it has been argued, that a DMO is not always in total control of the decisions, as very few DMOs have the necessary resources or legitimacy to manage the destination (Leiper, 2008, Pike et al., 2014). Nevertheless, a DMO may acknowledge that it is their responsibility to perform this task, especially when problems occur in the respective region (Pike et al., 2014). As opposed to this, Page and Hall (2003) argued that from a management perspective, due to their lack of power to make significant changes in a destination, the DMO will perform within certain boundaries. Additionally, their influence on the management of the natural resources is limited, as they do not have ‘control over stakeholders’ product development, and the continuous search for funding’ (Pike et al. 2014:205).

4.1.3. The barriers to collaboration and the DMO

According to Huxham (1996) collaboration is a challenging process, and more than half of the collaborative practices are not successful (Fyall & Garrod, 2005). Moreover, Azizpour & Fathizadeh (2016) argued that every tourism destination has stakeholders with different goals, whereas the DMO plays the role of facilitator in collaboration and cooperation between various stakeholders. However, little research has been done on this topic. In order to fill this gap, this project tends to analyze the collaboration between tourism-related public and private institutions in the region of Little Belt, Middelfart. The researcher has understood that both DMOs of the Destination Little Belt have also a coordinator role in the whale watching industry. The challenges will be to find out which are the factors that impede collaboration or

enhance it. According to Azizpour & Fathizadeh (2016:48), the main factors that could affect non-collaboration between stakeholders are the following ‘*lack of systematic approach, weak legal structure, poor planning, lack of integrated tourism management, and the weakness of the policymaking system*’. However, according to Lemaire and Viassone (2015), the structure of a destination is built on several elements such as non-cooperative vs. cooperative behavior, hierarchy vs. network etc. Hence, the non-cooperative behavior of different stakeholders could lead to poor management of a destination (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016). This research will look at elements that could impede collaboration such as poor planning, lack of trust and value or lack of legal structure etc. (Viassone, 2015).

4.2. Tourism partnerships as a model of tourism evolution

According to Lepetu et al (2008), in the research literature partnerships are most of the time based on stakeholders’ theories as well as inter-organizational cooperation. Moreover, partnerships are characterized by their positive outcomes, thus they can be favored by different stakeholders (Pirnar, 2016). However, many times partnerships are created out of necessity such as lack of resources or diminished staffing or funding (Lepetu et al, 2008). Nevertheless, Pirnar (2016) suggested that partnerships could be strategic alliances built on voluntary or written arrangements among various actors where every partner is able to maintain their identity and independence. For the present research, the author will look at Gray’s (1989) model of the evolution of tourism partnerships. The question is if this model can be applied at this specific destination Little Belt and for whale watching tourism. If this is possible, the researcher will see how the whale-watching tourism partnership progress through the respective stages of evolution.

Consequently, the present academic research describes and examines the process of collaboration from various perspectives. For example, Selin and Chavez (1995) developed a model of the evolution of tourism partnerships based on Gray’s (1989) original work. Accordingly, this model develops through five stages: antecedents, problem-setting, direction setting, structuring, and outcomes, see Figure 1 (Selin & Chavez, 1995:848; Plummer et al, 2006). Moreover, Bedwell et al. (2012) remarked that the concept of collaboration in tourism is often interchangeably used with the terms of coordination, cooperation, and teamwork, which often take place between individuals, groups, or organizations at the micro and macro level. However, Albrecht (2013) suggested that often partnerships between stakeholders in

tourism are practiced as networks. In support of this, Gursoy et al. (2015) argued that more than often, partnerships are built among various stakeholders from different business areas who have a shared goal. Furthermore, these partnerships will increase their business' opportunities and will offer many advantages such as legitimacy, solving the conflict or staying competitive etc. (Gursoy et al., 2015).

4.3. Business cooperation and partnership: co-creation at the destination level

According to Rivas et al (2016:23), a partnership is defined as: “an agreement to do something together that will benefit all involved, bringing results that could not be achieved by a single partner operating alone, and reducing duplication of efforts”. Additionally, it is usually commenced by both public administration and governments with the aim of promoting common thinking (OECD, 2006). However, Rivas et al. (2016) suggested that not only governments are initiators of partnerships, but partnerships can also be initiated as bottom-up (locally driven), top-down (policy-driven) or incentive driven. The factors that could influence the creation of partnerships are the following: the involvement of all the important actors and formal commitment for a common strategy and similar goals (Wilson et al. 2009). However, there are few cases of partnerships in tourism which have weakened a tourism activity or destination (Caffyn, 2000). Nevertheless, it has been argued that in order to avoid failures and when thinking of a tourism collaboration the main actors must acknowledge, ‘*the life cycle of a tourist destination*’ (Caffyn, 2000:229). Moreover, it has been argued that partnerships especially private-public partnerships, should be understood as a type of commercial innovation (Wearing et al, 2005), where all the actors understand the importance of partnerships and the possibility ‘*of doing more with less*’ (Wilson et al. 2009:270).

4.4. Marketing Partnerships and their role in the development of a tourism industry

The research literature defines stakeholders as “*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose*” (Freeman, 1984:25). Particularly, tour operators are acknowledged as vital stakeholders because of their experience and market knowledge (Snyman, 2014). Furthermore, Forstner (2004) suggested that several non-economic stakeholders are involved in tourism development, such as marketing and social

enterprises, community associations, non-governmental organization etc. It has been argued, that stakeholder collaboration is important to tourism development, especially in relation to the marketing of a tourism industry (Moscardo, 2008). This is due to the fact that, sometimes local communities encounter many issues such as lack of knowledge of tourists demand and of the tourism market etc. (Moscardo, 2008). Hence, they need external marketing assistance due to their limited resources and remoteness (Notzke, 2004; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Consequently, through collaboration with many other stakeholders will replace their lack of financial resources and necessary skills (Moscardo, 2008).

4.5. Public-private partnerships: challenges

In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to non-commercial collaborative activities among different tourism stakeholders (Wilson, 2009). However, just a few academic papers have treated commercial tourism collaborations, especially public-private partnerships. Moreover, researchers have argued that special attention must be paid to public-private partnerships (PPP) in tourism, due to their antagonistic character and due to the fact that the collaboration among private and public institution could be a difficult process and could lead to conflicts (Sinh et al., 2017). However, it has been argued that careful management would help adjust this aspect (Wilson, 2009). Additionally, Hall (2000) noticed that this type of partnership is a form of commercial innovation and promotes effectiveness and efficiency of accomplishing more with fewer resources. Nevertheless, Rubies (2001) argued that most of the time disagreements between both sectors derive from the fact the private sector is not always pleased with the efforts of the public sector and vice versa. Regarding the present research paper, the private-public partnership (PPP) between both DMOs at Fredericia and Middelfart as well as boat operators will be analyzed. We will see which working principles are applied and which are their differences. McBoyle & Martin (2006) argued that there is a common opinion about PPPs among the broad public, that both parts engage in collaboration in order to have access to financial support. However, the existing research literature lack studies about PPP in tourism (McBoyle & Martin, 2006). Nevertheless, some researchers such as Augustyn & Knowles (2000) proposed a number of success factors for PPP, which can also be valid for partnerships. Accordingly, for a PPP to succeed it is necessary that various interests be respected, costs and capacities shared, and all stakeholders are involved equally.

4.6. Stakeholders' theory

The present academic literature covers a number of theories that describe the processes and conditions that can help collaboration of stakeholders: game theory, rational choice theory, institutional analysis, resource dependency theory, transaction cost economics and social exchange theory (Beritelli, 2011). According to Freeman (1984:25), a stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives”. In this research, stakeholders are considered those persons or groups involved in activities connected to the whale watching tourism industry (Waligo et al., 2013). It has been argued that stakeholders’ theory can play a significant role in identifying the obstacles that could limit adequate communication and collaboration between different actors (Timur, 2010). However, it is often difficult to identify this aspect as the various ways in which different stakeholders are connected make their performance almost “*unpredictable and unmanageable*” (Baggio, 2011b:51). Another approach to stakeholder theory is that improved stakeholder dialogue can be facilitated through discussion and training courses for operators and staff. Consequently, this approach can be relevant to industry operations and can generate regular contact among operators and government agencies (Dimmock et al, 2014).

4.6.1. Stakeholder theory in whale watching

The present research will analyze the whale watching tourism in Little Belt. According to Pomeroy & Douvere (2008) whale watching tourism industry has a public nature thus it has become interesting to a variety of stakeholders such as tourists, whale watching operators, environmental groups and locals. Moreover, according to Mitchel et al (1997), the selection of stakeholders can be narrowed down to several key factors: their influence, their legitimacy and those stakeholders actively involved in the industry. However, this definition can raise issues as it doesn’t include those stakeholders by association such as tourists (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008). Nevertheless, the legitimacy element discussed in this theory known as power is capable to affect the industry (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008). Additionally, Egger et al. (2016) noticed that it is important to understand the architecture of the whale watching tourism system. Thus, by understanding the core and outer layers of this industry, whale watching can be developed in a better way. Accordingly, the core layer is built around the whale watching experiences and the layers built around the core, include various stakeholders involved in the industry (e.g. boat tour operators, tourism offices, DMOs, and municipalities). Thus, for a better understanding of the industry, it is significant to examine the industry knowledge and the information exchange

between various stakeholders, their major differences, as well as their perspective, and the different issues among them (Dimmock et al, 2014).

4.6.2. Stakeholder collaboration for tourism development

According to Waligo et al (2013), tourism stakeholders are diverse and often show conflicting interests. Additionally, Getz & Timur (2005) noticed that the relationship between tourism development and stakeholders is interdependent, where not only tourism activities impact the stakeholders, but stakeholders also, have an impact on tourism. Hence it is important to include all the needs and interests of stakeholders in order to develop the tourism destination and provide invaluable experiences to the visitors. Moreover, Selin & Chavez (1995) proposed a tourism partnership model, which is based on the idea that all the involved actors must reach an agreement. Consequently, the agreement must cover such aspects as initial issues, goals and assigned tasks and roles that can benefit all stakeholders. Furthermore, it has been argued that the success of collaboration could be determined by the number of participant actors and other elements such as trust (de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). In support of this, Robert & Simpson (1999:328) argued that “*trust and sincerity are intangible elements of collaboration which are fundamental to the success of collaborative processes*”. Therefore, the present research will discuss these aspects and understand which is their role in whale watching tourism at Little Belt? It has been acknowledged that at Little Belt there are four main whale-watching operators, with a remark that one operator has recently bought the ship from the previous operator who has worked for 10 years in the respective destination, and another operator has just started the business. Furthermore, the researcher will examine how DMOs work together and analyze the role that DMOs play in the whale-watching collaboration of operators and other stakeholders. Further, there are many other stakeholders involved in some whale watching projects such as Nature Park Little Belt.

4.6.3. Cooperative behaviour of stakeholders

According to Lee & Cavusgil, (2006), there are two main approaches to cooperative behavior of stakeholders in a tourism industry which are formal (contract-based) and informal relation-based one. Moreover, several researchers acknowledged that formal cooperation is connected

to cooperative behavior between institutions and governing actors, while informal cooperation is specific for cooperation in communities and regions (Aas et al., 2005; Carpenter & Westphal, 2001; Denicolai et al., 2009). To understand each of them in this research the author will briefly analyze them. Formal collaboration is considered a formal agreement which involves economic dependencies and mutual gain, with. In contrast, informal cooperation places mutual respect and trust at the center of cooperation. It also emphasizes personal commitment, and interrelationships (Chen et al., 1998; Innes, 1996; Rodriguez et al., 2007). Nevertheless, both approaches, state that cooperation requires good communication for a good outcome (Carpenter et al., 2004; Doz, 1996; Luo, 2002; Rodriguez & Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, this subchapter will examine the possibility of applying the rational choice theory in this research, which considers that the attitude of various actors can maximize benefits. However, it is possible that more than one theory can be applied in the chosen destination, such as transaction cost economics which assumes that individuals, as well as organizations, can minimize their costs through various economic exchanges (Beritelli, 2011).

4.7. Conclusion to the literature review

It could be argued that in contrast to the increasing development of whale-watching worldwide and the whale-watching potential for Denmark, the current literature on the topic is scarce especially in Denmark. Additionally, most of the present accessible knowledge is found in the “grey” literature (e.g. local news and government documents). This project aims to embrace a wide range of the voices of the stakeholders in order to assess the development of whale watching in the region. Furthermore, this study aims to bridge a gap in the literature by investigating the collaborative approaches carved by various stakeholders’ ideas on how to attain a long-term success of whale-watching activity in the region Little Belt.

According to Gursoy et al (2015), tourism, leisure, and travel are considered extremely fragmented and diverse industries. Thus, it is necessary to build partnerships among different stakeholders, due to their capability to offer small and medium-sized businesses opportunities to perform in a competitive market (Gursoy et al, 2015). Moreover, Borodako et al. (2015) noticed that the motivation for starting a business relation in the form of collaboration or cooperation can be internal (e.g. internal motivation) or external (e.g. external environments).

With regards to the development of the whale watching industry, IFAW (1997) recommended that the actors involved in the industry should prioritize on those decisions that are built on

evidence and knowledge. Consequently, it should include both locals and visitors, and at the same time should boost public-private cooperation and networking among various stakeholders. This project will look into stakeholder theory to understand the conditions and mechanisms of collaboration in the whale watching industry at Little Belt. Consequently, it has been argued that understanding stakeholders' perceptions and tourism industry concerns can assist management and marketing activities of the respective industry (Fathimath, 2015).

Another aspect of collaboration that will be considered in this project is formal and informal collaboration among important stakeholders in the whale-watching industry at Little Belt, Denmark. This view is in accordance with the idea that viable planning and development of the tourism industry needs to involve the cooperative behavior of various tourism actors (Beritelli, 2011). Consequently, previous research in this field pointed to the fact that both formal and informal cooperation, can be influenced by many factors such as the context and the actors involved (Beritelli, 2011). Therefore, this study will try to unveil how collaborative processes occur among stakeholders in a whale watching tourism destination, and what difference can it make to the development of whale-watching tourism at Little Belt, Denmark. This research uses a case study in order to understand the collaborative processes, as well as to provide empirical evidence of collaboration of stakeholders connected to the whale watching industry. Moreover, the author aims to examine collaboration to the level of the individual, such as whale-watching operators and also at an organizational level, such as DMOs. More specifically the organizational collaboration with a focus on a network of important stakeholders with respect to their relational preferences, formal and informal connections, and their cooperative behavior (Zivodern, 2015). Additionally, this research will try to cover and to investigate the importance of interpersonal versus professional connections and identifies the role of communication in the initiation and realization of collaborative processes. Furthermore, it is interesting to discuss the achievements of collaborative advantages and see if *'the achievement of collaborative advantages is sometimes more relevant than the achievement of competitive advantages'* (Zivodern, 2015:70).

Another aspect that is interesting for this research is the collaborative marketing. In this respect, the researcher will look at different stakeholders of the whale watching industry at Little Belt. Accordingly, tour operators, development agencies, local authorities, tourism governments, and local entrepreneurs are included in collaborative marketing. Moreover, boat tour operators are considered significant stakeholders in collaborative marketing, due to the intermediary role that they play, their tourism knowledge experience, and their resources (Ngo et al., 2018).

5. Methodology

This research aims to answer the following research question:

“How collaboration of different stakeholders in a tourism destination can help the development of the whale watching tourism industry. Case study: Little Belt, Denmark”

The plan of this thesis is to analyze stakeholders' collaboration in the whale-watching industry in Little Belt, Denmark, through the use of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and participant observation. The present research will attempt to address several important thematics and analytic questions: (1) how collaboration can help develop a tourism industry and a destination, (2) what kind of collaboration takes place within the whale-watching tourism industry and how can this collaboration affect whale-watching.

This chapter aims to discuss the methodological approaches that have guided the data collection. The researcher acknowledged that critical reflection and triangulation of data can be enabled by the adoption of a diversity of methods. Additionally, it will depict those problems, meditation, and approaches that accompanied the whole research journey.

5.1. Research design

This sub-chapter offers a recap of the process of master thesis writing. The research paper starts with an introduction, where the author provides an overview of the research topic. Before proceeding with the writing process, the researcher gathered information about the topic through thoroughly desk research and through literature review consisting of academic articles and books. Consequently, the research question and the sub-questions were provided. The main goal of the research is to understand how collaboration practices of different stakeholders take place at a destination within whale watching tourism activity. And which are the consequences for this industry in the region of Little Belt? A specific destination was selected due to the fact that it is the only destination in Denmark that provides whale watching tours. An interview guide has served as a guideline for most of the interviews, although the questions were tailored according to the role of the actors in the specific industry. In order to answer the research question, qualitative data has been gathered through observation and semi-structured interviews. The participant observation approach has been used in order to immerse into the whale watching activities and to understand how they are conducted by two main whale-

watching boat operators in Little Belt. The data collection approach was considered suitable for this research since the expertise of the main actors involved in the industry was necessary to provide deeper insights into the whale watching industry in the region of Little Belt.

Additionally, through the conceptual lenses of the diverse research theories (e.g. stakeholder theory), the analysis of the data has been accomplished. Finally, conclusions were established in the final section together with some suggestions for forthcoming research.

5.2. Philosophy of science

According to Crotty (1998), the researcher needs to clarify why he made the choice in order to make the research trustworthy. Moreover, at every stage of the research, it is necessary to make assumptions about the character of encountered realities and human knowledge, which will facilitate the understanding of the research questions, the methods, and findings (Crotty, 1998). However, Johnson & Clark (2006) argued that sometimes the research philosophy adopted in the study can be altered by some practical considerations. Nevertheless, the main effect is likely to be the researcher's particular view about the knowledge as well as the actions by which it is developed (Saunders et al, 2012). Furthermore, Johnson & Clark (2006) argued that the most important issue of the research is how a researcher reflects upon his philosophical choices and how he defends them. The present research literature discusses two philosophical approaches, one is pragmatism and the other is an ontology (Niglas, 2010). The ontology approach refers to the nature of reality and how the researcher perceives the way the world function and his engagement with specific views (Saunders et al, 2012). And the second aspect is subjectivism, which portrays those social phenomena as realities created by the affected actors and also by their actions. However, Guba (1990) discusses another approach, constructivism- paradigm approach. This project intends to take into account the use of a constructivist paradigm approach in its methods. Constructivism, according to Guba (1990), accepts a multitude of realities that are present in the minds of the insiders, and try to achieve one or more reconciled constructions that are accepted by everyone involved. Hollinshead (2006) argued that due to its nature, the constructivist paradigm is considered important in analyzing various problems where stakeholders' opinions co-exist. A vital element of this study is that the researcher will consider all the viewpoints of the stakeholders involved in whale-watching collaborative development and marketing in answering the present research question. Consequently, the adopted approach may help the dialogue among various viewpoints to accomplish an understanding of expectations. In the present study, the research was done among

representatives of the tourism industry in Little Belt, whale-watching tour operators and the DMPs of Little Belt destination.

5.3. Research approaches

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2008), an important step in the research is the choice that a researcher makes about suitable approaches for the study. Moreover, Saunders et al. (2012) claimed that deductive and inductive approaches are based on the reasonings the researcher adopts in her project. On the one hand, deductive reasoning happens when the conclusion is derived from a number of premises, and the conclusion is regarded as true only when all the hypothesis are true. On the other hand, inductive reasoning indicates that the conclusion which is judged should be backed up by the observations made (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2012) argued that if the research uses a deductive approach, the theory is developed from different academic readings. In contrast, if the researcher starts the research by collecting data to analyze a phenomenon, he uses an inductive approach. However, it is considered that all these approaches do not have rigid divisions, thus they could overlap or be combined in a single study. Nevertheless, the combination of different approaches could offer an advantage to the research, even though sometimes one of the two approaches could become dominant (Saunders et al., 2012). Additionally, Buchanan et al. (1988:59), suggested that *‘needs, interests and preferences (..) are typically overlooked but are central to the progress of fieldwork’*. However, Hakim (2000) argued that preferences need much care as they could lead to the ambiguity of the research question.

This research adopted a deductive approach, thus it helped the researcher link the study into the present field of knowledge in the respective subject area and has provided a primary rational framework for this research. Accordingly, the author identified the primary components, variables, and themes of the study and also the predictive connections among them (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, a descriptive structure will be based more on what the researcher anticipate to occur, even though it is possible to establish an analytical framework constructed on a combination of theory evolved from the used literature as well as from the own assumptions (Saunders et al., 2012).

5.4. Case study and Data Collection

It has been argued that setting up a research study in a scientific and unbiased manner is as significant as developing a good research question (Yin, 2009). This sub-chapter will discuss the data collection process and explain how it was carried out in order to avoid bias. Data collection took place in Middelfart and Fredericia, from September 2018 to December 2018. A number of 6 interviews were conducted in English, and five of them were transcribed verbatim in English and one was scripted. By coding the data in different categories, the researcher identified, retrieved, and indexed the data for analysis and evaluation. Content analysis has been utilized in analyzing the data. Gribich (2012) argued that content analysis can be applied to get authentic outcomes. The case study in this project (see table 1) was conducted in the region of Little Belt, and it concerns the whale-watching tourism activity, in particular, the whale watching companies that activate in the region and their collaboration with different stakeholders. The researcher deemed that the case study approach was suitable for this project since case studies are favored when a phenomenon is under-researched, and little is known about it (Elbe & Emmeth, 2014). Accordingly, Lichtman (2006) noticed that the case study approach doesn't generalize but enables the researcher to gather detailed and rich data by employing different entities from one individual to a whole school. Furthermore, this phenomenon must be studied in its real-life context mostly due to the blurred boundaries between the context and the event (Denscombe, 2007; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, the goal of this study is to understand and analyze how stakeholders interact, and which problems they encounter in relation to whale watching industry, and how this can affect the industry. Accordingly, the researcher followed the Haywood (1988) approach, whereas, in order to catch a larger variety of local and regional viewpoints on the whale-watching tourism situation, several stakeholders academic and non-academic were included in the research. Moreover, significant stakeholders who served as key informants were the local tourist offices, and one representative of the Nature Park, Little Belt. However, a key informant sometimes might play the role of a gatekeeper, that will limit access to the information (Elbe & Emmeth, 2014). Nevertheless, the researcher felt that the key informants were willing to help and has shown interest in the research, even though there were moments where some questions seemed too sensitive and were not entirely answered. Furthermore, the participant for this study was selected through a judgemental approach due to their position in the industry as well as through a snowball sampling (Patton, 1990). Additionally, the research was conducted in several stages. The first comprised the identification of problems or challenges that face the industry.

In this respect, the researcher has visited the Little Belt region and discussed with several people, one being interviewed in the third research stage. The second aimed at collecting primary and secondary information. In addition, suitable theoretical instruments were chosen based on the literature review. In this stage, the researcher participated on whale-watching boat tours and had a personal discussion and semi-structured interviews with whale-watching boat owners. The third stage consisted of a semi-structured interview and participant observation, targeted at the same stakeholders and the DMOs representatives. The researcher has strived to identify the main positive impact on the development of whale watching tourism activity and understand if it is occurring as a consequence of collaboration among various stakeholders. Furthermore, to complement the particular observation, several semi-structured interviews were conducted, where a semi-structured interview guide was used. However, questions were not asked in a particular order, but rather they were guided by the interview situation. Moreover, the interviews were encouraged to discuss emergent ideas and themes (Gummesson, 2000). The interviews which lasted one hour each with the DMOs representatives and around two hours with two whale-watching boat owners were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The researcher believes that the respondents were honest in their answers, as they have seen the researcher as merely contributing to the research tourism field and maybe to the community and thus, they were willing to help. Moreover, the interview and participant observation were enhanced by secondary data such as articles in the media and scientific papers connected to the present research. Moreover, the researcher participated in a seminar organized by the Municipality of Fredericia and the Nature Park LittleBelt, respectively Foredrag om stenrev med DTU Aqua, organized on November 13th, 2018 at Fredericia Theatre. However, the seminar was mostly connected to the marine life in the Nature Park, in particular in how to balance a natural environment, and not with the marine tourism. Nevertheless, the researcher had the possibility to observe the use of rhetoric communication in authentic situations as well as it gave a feel of the atmosphere and also learn about some of the issues of the Nature Park Little Belt which is also connected to whale watching tourism.

Case study	Location	Characteristics
Aventura boat tour operator (fig. 3)	Middelfart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was established 18 years ago ○ Is owned by Mr. Henrik Traugott-Olsen.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Currently in partnership with different stakeholders: The Legoland, The Nature Park Little Belt etc. ○ Is a member of the Union in Middelfart. ○ Offers different boat tours: fishing trips, ash-spreading, weddings, children trips and whale-watching boat tours.
Mira boat tour operator (fig.4)	Middelfart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was established 10 years ago. Currently has a new owner who bought the boat in September 2018. Line Jepsen and her family are the new owners. ○ Is owned by Ms. Line Jepsen and her family. ○ Currently is establishing different collaborations mostly informal. ○ Offers different boat tours: fishing trips, ash-spreading, weddings, children trips and whale-watching boat tours.

Table 1: Summary of the case studies.

5.5. Data justification

It is considered that qualitative interviews should be scripted or recorded. However, Long (2007) has argued that usually, the recording of an interview determines the researcher to focus mainly on the questions and thus makes the interview more formal. The present research alongside the recorded interviews has also adopted the scripted interview approach. Consequently, by using writing notes the participants will feel more relaxed while talking about their activities, motivations, challenges, and problems that they encounter in their daily activities (Long, 2007). Furthermore, the researcher has taken into account the fact that some of the respondents were approached while they were engaged in their work. Moreover, the

formal recording would have been challenging to accomplish due to the sound issue (e.g. boat engine sounds & listening station). Thus, scripting of the interviews has been applied due to the possibility for the interviewees to offer insights and reliable information in a more relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, ethical issues were considered while interviewing. Consequently, all the respondents were previously informed about the project and then asked if they would like to be part of the research and to be scripted or recorded. In a similar vein, Bloor (2006) argued that a researcher should take into account the element of 'no harm', whereas a conflict between the right to be familiar with the information and the right to their own privacy could be avoided. However, the author hasn't encountered any objections from the respondents. Moreover, they were happy to provide any information that was needed for the present research. Furthermore, Stake (2010) noticed that the confidentiality aspect of the interview is needed in order to retain a balance. However, the respondents chosen for this research have given their consent for their name to be fully acknowledged.

5.6. Qualitative research design

This project will employ a qualitative research design. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), qualitative research can be associated with interpretive philosophy, where the researcher strives to understand the socially constructed and subjective meanings of the events under analysis. Additionally, this type of research also known as naturalistic because the research needs a natural setting in order to have access to meanings, and to establish trust (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, as noticed by Marshall (1996) in a qualitative study the researcher is an integral part of the whole research process, and the outcomes provide trustworthiness and possess an indirect quality. Furthermore, the results are characterized by transferability (Marshall, 1996). Additionally, Brown (2005:485) noticed that one of the greatest assets for qualitative research '*is its potential for forming hypothesis*'.

5.7. Sampling for a qualitative research

This study has embraced a qualitative sampling approach. According to Marshall (1996), qualitative sampling is defined as the deduction of a model sample from the population, so that the end results could be generalized back to the community. Moreover, Kristensen & Ravn (2015) argued that in order to obtain valuable and viable data, the researcher must acknowledge the importance of the recruitment process of respondents, to the research process. Accordingly,

this study has employed a variety of factors in selecting respondents. Therefore, the participants in the interviews were necessarily involved in the whale watching industry and could thus be considered stakeholders of the industry. The respondent groups were three key stakeholder groups: DMOs the Nature Park Little Belt, and whale watcher operators Aventura and Mira 3. Interviewees were contacted initially by email, followed by, in some cases, a phone conversation before the full interview. Moreover, boat tour operators were selected as the second group in the study due to their close involvement in the whale watching industry. Hence, they necessarily have a special stake in the success of whale watching tourism (Alshenqeeti, 2014). As such, the researcher expected that the priorities of tour operators might have been different than other groups in the industry. Furthermore, according to Marshall (1996), in selecting participants for an interview the researcher usually uses several approaches: the probability sampling, the convenient sampling, the judgemental sampling, and the theoretical sampling. Consequently, the most used approach in the research is considered the probability sample is also known as random sampling where all the members of a society have equal chances of selection for research purposes. However, it has been argued that large samples do not always produce better results (Marshall, 1996).

The second approach which has been employed in this study is the judgemental sampling approach, also called purposeful sampling where the researcher chooses the most relevant sample to answer the research questions (Sekaran, 1992). Additionally, another sampling employed by this study was the snowball sampling where respondents can recommend useful potential candidates for study (Marshall, 1996). It could be argued that by using snowball sampling, it was approximately easy to discover suitable respondents. However, it has been argued that by adopting this approach it should be taken into account that the participants might not represent the target community. Hence, attention must be applied to building a statistical assumption from this type of sample (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). Nevertheless, for this study the respondents were in the decision-making position, thus their views are considered significant and unbiased for this research. However, these three categories can overlap, and the balance is usually set by the research question and how the researcher chooses to analyze the acquired data. Thus, the researcher should always keep in mind that the qualitative approach is naturalistic, and the sampling needs to recognize the diverse influences such as situational, temporal and spatial influences (Marshall, 1996). Additionally, some researchers argue that in practice qualitative sampling needs a pragmatic and flexible approach (Sekaran, 1992). This study first adopted the judgment sample, as the researcher could stratify the subjects according

to their known public position beliefs and attitudes. Firstly, key participants were labeled through judgemental sampling (Sekaran, 1992), where the significant participants were selected within a limited period according to their importance to whale watching industry and tourism in the region. Then, through a snowballing method, several additional participants were proposed by the key participants and then recruited for the present research. Consequently, during the data interpretation, the researcher followed Marshall (1996) advice to support subjects who are supporting the emerging explanation, thus confirming and disconfirming samples.

5.8. Interviewing Methodology

It has been argued that interviewing has long been proven as an effective instrument of data gathering for both qualitative and quantitative studies (Brown, 2005). This sub-chapter discusses the interviewing methodology and cognitive approach of this study. According to Rubin & Rubin (2005), social scientists often use qualitative research to understand human behavior, as well as human beliefs within the context they happen. Consequently, Brown (2005:485) noticed that one of the greatest assets for qualitative research “is its potential for forming hypothesis”. Furthermore, as observed by Dornyei, (2007:132) qualitative data are many times collected by researchers through questionnaires and interviews. In a similar vein, Blaxter et al (2006:172) suggested that interviews are rich tools for acquiring information which is not always “accessible using techniques such as questionnaires and observations”. However, Cohen et al (2007:29) argued that interviews are more powerful than questionnaires in extracting narrative data from the interviewees. Nevertheless, interviewing is regarded as a “rich method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting” (Cohen et al, 2007:29). For the purposes of this paper, an interview may be defined as a strategic process that aims to gather information on the opinion, knowledge, and experience of the person being interviewed on a specific subject or problem, through a discussion (Cohen et al, 2007). Additionally, Kvale (1996:174) noticed that an interview is “*a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the interviewee*”. In support of this, Schostak (2006:54) wrote that an interview represents an extended conversation among two people that intends to uncover “in-depth information” about a specific subject or topic. Moreover, the choice of a proper method usually relies upon the goal of the study (Marshall, 1996). Aiming to employ interviews in this study, through this paper the researcher will critically discuss the limitations and values of interviewing as a research method. For this research, semi-structured, face to face

interviews was conducted to gather data from the interviewees. The aims of the interviews were to comprehend the participants' understanding of stakeholder collaboration and the partnerships they form, as well as their views on the development of the whale-watching industry through collaboration.

According to Blaxter et al. (2006), various researchers perceive interviewing as a natural mean of interaction and can be conducted in different situations. However, Dornyei (2007) argued that the presence of the interviewer ensures mutual understanding, thus appropriate answers are facilitated, and data are more accurate. Moreover, social science research discusses the use of four types of interviewing which are the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the groups' interview and the semi-structured interview (Berg, 2007). This paper has adopted the semi-structured interview which, according to Rubin & Rubin (2005:88) is a more flexible version of the structured interview and it '*allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses*'. Additionally, the researcher has used a checklist in order to cover the research area (Berg, 2007). In support of this, Kvale (2007) observed that the interview platform is usually arranged with a script, which usually is an interview guide. For the semi-structured type of interview utilized in this research, the guide included an outline of themes and topics to be covered by the researcher, with proposed questions. However, the researcher didn't always follow the guidelines, and sometimes the answers opened up new directions for the interview. In line with this, Kvale (2007) argued, that it depends entirely on the type of research and the researcher, whether these questions are necessary on the respondents or if the researcher chooses to follow to the respective guideline or go in new directions. Furthermore, it has been argued that the interviews are different due to their purposes and openness (Kvale, 2007). In this paper, the interviewer adopted an open approach and asked direct questions from the start. This could be explained by the fact that before the interview the respondents were contacted by phone and e-mails and the purpose of the research was explained (Kvale, 2007). However, Cohen et al (2007), suggested that the interviews could be seen as invasive into interviewees' privacy, with regards to the type of questions and time allocated. Thus, the researcher should always maintain ethical consideration (Cohen, 2007). Therefore, participants have given their consent for the interview, the recording of the interview and whether the researcher can disclose their name or data obtained in the interview. In the present research, all the ethical considerations were taken into account. Furthermore, the researcher considered all the interviewing aspects while conducting the interviews.

5.9. Semi-structured interviews

For this research, semi-structured, face to face interviews have been employed to gather data from the interviewees. The aims of the interviews were to comprehend the participants' understanding of stakeholder collaboration and the partnerships they form, as well as their views on the development of the whale-watching industry through collaboration. Moreover, an interview guide was used, with both open-ended and closed questions. These interviews have a dynamic and thematic dimension and give us a specific amount of room to adjust our questions (Bernard, 2011). Thus, they offer the opportunity to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Alshenqeeti, 2014). While conducting semi-structured interviews the researcher has considered several key aspects: value (honesty, accuracy, objectivity); meaning and wording. Moreover, by doing interviews, the researcher has had the opportunity to uncover information that is not always accessible through questionnaires and observation, information that is only known by those involved in the process (Blaxter et al., 2001). As opposed to this, Alshenqeeti (2014), underlines that interviews do not pose only advantages (e.g. fewer incomplete and flexible answers), but also disadvantages, (e.g. time-consuming, small-scale, and risks of inconsistencies and bias). Moreover, the researcher has been prepared and answer to herself questions connected to the topic of interest, the necessary resources for investigation, its relevance for the scientific research, time constraints, access difficulties and geographical distance (Alvesson, 2011). Furthermore, during the interview, the researcher has realized a good contact with the respondents through active listening. In support of this, Kvale (2007) argued that a successful interview also depends on good contact built on active listening.

5.10. Participant observation

Another method of collecting data is participant observation, where the researcher becomes a participant in what is being observed (Kawalich, 2005), this method could enhance the value of the interviews, so that, it will increase the quality of data and the quality of interpretation of the data. Accordingly, for this research participant observation was adopted alongside semi-structured interviews to gather primary data and facilitate a better comprehension of the behavior of the whale watching operators and tourists, and to experience the whale watching tours (Podoshen, 2013). As opposed to Kawalich (2005), Knox (2011), pointed to the fact that some difficulties might arise by adopting this method, which is in terms of defining at what

point the researcher is a real participant or simply an observer. However, Knox (2011) also suggested that the answer to this dilemma is that the researcher can be both a participant and an observer. In line with this idea, the researcher participated in two tours with different operators on October 15th and October 16th that took place at Little Belt, Denmark where the researcher has observed the tourists at the same time being a visitor herself. Prior to starting tours, the researcher did alert the whale watching operators to the research study. Hence, ethical considerations were considered so that the data would not conclude in any unfavorable result and the goal of the research wouldn't be eroded (Oliver & Earls, 2008). Moreover, the observations were registered promptly after the completion of the tour. This is in accordance with Kwek & Lee (2013) observation that all these findings should be treated with attention because truth and reality are equally created by both the researcher and the respondents. However, if data collected from participant observation is used together with other data, it ensures more confidence in the participant observations. Furthermore, it could be argued that the language barrier could have limited the understanding of the tourists as most of them talked Danish. However, the tour boat operators have translated the information in English and some of the tourists were foreigners speaking English.

5.11. Data Analysis. Thematic analysis

This subchapter will unpack the analysis process. The research literature sometimes sees the analysis process as a material process, which could at times be unclear and messy (Pyke et al., 2003). Additionally, the analysis could be seen as 'thinking by writing' which as a result will uncover various contradictions in our ideas (Pike et al., 2004:6). However, through the analysis, a researcher doesn't necessarily find an answer but instead makes clarifications. Additionally, Benjamin (1999) highlighted the significance of how the researchers order their concepts and the relationship of this ordering to their analysis. Moreover, Alshenqeeti (2014) suggested that in order to reduce the amount of data collected, the analysis should be reflexive and done through coding following certain stages. The analysis is defined as a "*process of thinking by writing, that tend to reveal the laws, the contradictions in our ideas (...) forcing us to look, and to analyze in different ways, to rethink*" (Pyke et al., 2003:5). Moreover, Neuman (2007), argued that one aspect of the qualitative interview is that they generate a huge amount of data. Consequently, as Dorneyi (2007) observed, that an an-hour interview might need two hours of transcribing. Nevertheless, the researcher can use coding in his analysis in order to reduce the quantity of the collected data, which could be done in two stages. In the first stage important

data could be generated, and in the second one, the data are classified and ordered into units (Dorneyi, 2007). Additionally, Creswell (2009) noted that the researcher needs to understand that he should adopt a reflexive attitude while doing the analysis. All in all, the research literature does not provide us with a fixing method of analyzing data. However, the researcher needs to acknowledge the necessity for reliability and validity of their research (Creswell, 2009).

For this research, it was expected that the outcome of the present analysis to generate important data which were ordered then classified (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Moreover, qualitative analysis can be done in either an inductive or a deductive way and can be conducted through several phases: preparation, organization, and reporting of results. However, the researcher has always kept in mind that through analysis she could make interpretations, and not necessarily find answers (Pyke et al., 2003). Additionally, this process implied critical thought and reflexion. Consequently, qualitative data analysis has been a scientific journey, aiming to “*develop plausible explanations through the data, to examine which ones are worth following up*” (Pyke et al., 2003:7). Furthermore, in analyzing qualitative data, the researcher adopted the thematic analysis approach. According to Braun et al. (2001), this method is a flexible one and is suitable for qualitative analysis due to its capacity to identify, analyze and report themes within a big block of data. Moreover, during the stage of selecting themes, the field data has been broken into topic-theme, with the goal to be lately: “*recontextualized and rebuild into an interpretation*” (Pyke et al., 2003:8).

5.12. Validity and Reliability

According to Decrop (1999), more than often tourism qualitative research is blamed for missing the principles of good science. This is due to several factors, such as the positivism paradigm which is prevailing in many tourism fields, and the researchers’ failure to explain the validity of their methods. In support of this, Zohrabi (2013), suggested that the research process needs to meet several requirements such as the validity of the research, how truthful it is, and the reliability of the collected data. In order to achieve this goal, the researcher adopted the triangulation approach which allowed her to set control bias and also to adopt an accurate proposition to the research (Zohrabi, 2013). However, Smith (2017) argued that it could be difficult to ascertain validity to research due to several elements such as unexpected answers, people’s attitudes, and their behavior. In a similar vein, Decrop (1999), argued that these factors

could lead to misunderstanding or confusion. Therefore, it is recommended the assessment of the trustworthiness of a qualitative approach and the triangulation of data.

Another approach of the present study is the reliability of research, which applies to the consistency of the research. Thus, the results are expected to be similar when the research is being repeated (Smith, 2013). Moreover, research intends to make use of various sources which allow the triangulation of data. According to Bowen (2009), triangulation enables the researcher to offer credibility for the findings, by allowing to examine where the various data concentrate. Furthermore, if the research is based on the expertise and experience of the stakeholders in the whale watching industry, it could be possible to be replicated in another study, thus the results could be similar. However, Kvale (2007) argued, that it is hard or almost impossible to control reliability in humanistic research, due to the volatile and changing social conditions. Consequently, in this research, through triangulation, it was possible to compare data from semi-structured interviews and participant observation and thus avoid bias.

5.13. Research ethics

This chapter will discuss the project's potential ethical issues. In the framework of research, ethics is defined as the guidelines of behavior that lead the researcher's conduct in connection to those who are the subject of research or are affected by it (Saunders et al, 2012). Moreover, the acceptability or appropriateness of a researcher's behavior could be influenced by the social norms of conduct. Consequently, a social norm is considered a type of behavior which a person may adopt in certain circumstances. However, the norms of conduct will allow for different ethical positions (Saunders et al, 2012). Furthermore, Berry (2004) argued that a researcher's behavior could be open to conflicting and competing for ethical situations. Consequently, two main conflicting philosophical views were established deontological and teleological. The deontological view is constructed on pursuing certain rules of conduct, and the teleological view argued the researcher's behavior should not be triggered by its consequences but should be justified (Saunders et al, 2012). The present study followed the deontological view approach in the research process. Accordingly, a code of ethics has been consulted such as which are the ethical standards for a researcher while conducting an interview, for instance, the researcher always asked for permission to record the interview and asked the respondents whether they agreed for their names to be anonymous or genuine.

5.14. Challenges for international students

This sub-chapter is aimed to determine the difficulties and opportunities that the researcher has encountered during the academic research, and how these factors affected the research process.

According to Huang & Brown (2009), international students face a number of challenges and problems while studying abroad. In a similar vein, Wenhui & Zhe (2013) have identified five main issues: sociocultural issues, psychological and personal issues, living issues, academic issues, and language barriers. It could be argued that one of the challenges for this research has been the language barrier. Therefore, even though the researcher has obtained valuable data by conducting interviews in English, there have been situations when knowing the Danish language would have been much more valuable for this study. For instance, the involvement of locals in this study and a better understanding of the seminar where the researcher participated, would have been facilitated by knowing the language. Moreover, the whale watching operators might have found easier to answer the questions in their native language. However, the researcher has felt welcomed and all the respondents have been extremely warm and open. Furthermore, the participants were willing to help with information about the industry and they facilitated the interaction with other stakeholders. Additionally, it could be argued that whale watching is a growing industry and the harbour porpoise is a symbol for Little Belt, especially for Middelfart which has a rich history connected to these cute and small whales. Thus, everybody involved in this research has shown concern in connection to their wellbeing, and at the same time, they have shown pride for being the only place in Denmark where the harbour porpoises breed thus making the existence of whale watching industry viable. Moreover, the challenges of the research were also connected to lack of acquaintance and some financial challenges. However, all these barriers have been overcome and the author tried to carve a trustworthy picture of whale watching tourism in the region of Little Belt.

5.15. Limitations

According to Polonsky & Waller (2011), the research could be influenced by various limitations. Consequently, this research has been confronted with certain challenges and limitations. It has been argued that the main limitations for a study could be the reliability of the research thus finding the most suitable respondents is desirable (Wiersma, 2009). However, this aspect has been overcome as the researcher has reached the most appropriate people with the help of other respondents, through a snowball sampling process. Additionally, another challenge has been to arrange interviews according to the respondent's availability, thus it was

necessary for the researcher to visit several times Little Belt. Moreover, one of the main boat-operator couldn't be reached due to the fact that he sold his boat to another stakeholder and left the city, and the researcher took some time to reach the new boat operator. Another limitation was that the whale-watching season was over in September when the research started, thus the researcher had to wait until October when the whale watching tour was organized during the autumn break. For this reason, data gathering continued until late November. Moreover, the present research observes that the qualitative methods and tools used in this research are not entirely enough to provide a complete dimension of results. In particular, a participatory research perspective should be embraced to investigate the communication process and knowledge co-production between various stakeholders (e.g. if it is possible to participate at the Union meetings in Middelfart, even though it is reserved only for the members). Further investigation it is required therefore to be set up. Furthermore, the lack of empirical and theoretical research in this field suggests that further research should involve more attention and resources to explore the significance of collaboration among tourism enterprises at a destination. Future studies may help to a better interpretation of the collaboration mechanisms in the tourism industry and the role of various actors and their motivations in these relationships. Additionally, it is recommended that further study should be carried out to see the various aspects of whale watching industry for instance how the tourists perceive this tourist activity and what factors influence their choice to participate in whale watching tours.

6. Analysis

This chapter encompasses data from research concerned with collaborative practices applied to a tourism activity at a destination. According to ECSU (2000), many of the main contemporary innovations are considered the consequence of creative collaboration. Thus, ideas could generate more ideas, and theoretically more minds focused on solving a certain problem will create a better solution. It has been argued that stakeholder collaboration processes can help a series of stakeholders to cultivate a better understanding of the challenges and issues involved in attaining various goals (ECSU, 2000). Moreover, this chapter will examine the whale watching industry in Little Belt and how stakeholder collaboration and partnerships are shaping the industry. Consequently, the present chapter will examine some key issues such as the effectiveness of the collaboration and tourism partnerships, the

stakeholder engagement in the collaborative practices and the collaborative marketing of whale watching tourism in the region.

6.1. Whale watching at Little Belt, Denmark

According to Orams (2002, 2013) whale watching and many other forms of marine wildlife activities might generate regional and local economic development. The region under study Little Belt is considered the only destination in Denmark which offers whale watching tours, mainly due to the massive presence of harbour porpoises:

‘We are the only place in Denmark where we have whale watching this whale-watching it makes sense. But of course, we share it a little bit with Fredericia’ (Jonas).

Whale watching tourism in Little Belt has been initiated by Mr. Henrik, the operator of Aventura in 2001. Accordingly, it began as a Blue Flag activity organized by the Middelfart Municipality:

‘I came in connection with Blue Flags (..) they asked me if I could go for whale observing with guests with the grants from the pool Blue Flag’ (Henrik).

‘It was Henrik who was originally the initiator to do the whale watching trips and then as a tourism organization we had to promote what is happening here in our destination’ (Jonas).

Moreover, this tourism activity is considered a *‘very family friendly activity’* (Jonas) and it’s also a part of Middelfart history. During the years the industry has shown signs of growth. Between 2000-2018, many local businessmen in the maritime sector of Little Belt region began to set-up their own boat tours offering marine tourism experiences with whale-watching boat tours among them. However, the whale watching industry in the region is considered a relatively small industry, and it employs approximately four official operators that provide whale watching tours:

‘It’s going to be 4 ships that will be offering whale watching trips for four different kinds of ships’ (Verena).

However, the exact capacity of the industry is not well known due to the lack of regulation. Moreover, whale watching industry has been common mostly for Middelfart, then Fredericia. Nevertheless, around two years ago in 2016 the DMO in Fredericia has shown interest in this activity and since then boat operators are offering whale watching tours from Fredericia as well:

‘I don’t know how many people do whale-watching because I haven’t recorded down the number (..) it’s been quite new to Fredericia (..) I think that Fredericia was not interested in it that much (..) it’s only 2 years ago that we started whale watching trips from this side of the Little Belt (..) The same there is only one ship that is going from our town’’ (Verena).

In a similar vein, Diakomihalis (2007) argued that an important challenge of the marine tourism sector is data and knowledge gaps. Consequently, maritime tourism is not defined as an economic sector in statistics, and the available data concerns revenues, and participation at the global level. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely assess the real size of maritime tourism sector (Diakomihalis, 2007). Nevertheless, several studies about particular sectors and regions can offer an idea about the importance of the maritime tourism sector (Morena & Amelung, 2009). At present there is no regulation of whale watching tourism at Little Belt, thus it could be argued that there is a knowledge gap about data concerning the industry. However, for this research, this challenge has been partially overcome by the fact that respondents were playing a major role in the tourism industry of Little Belt. Hence the obtained data are considered reliable for this research. Additionally, whale watching is considered a unique selling point for the destination Little Belt, and a brand in itself, thus it has attracted many stakeholders in various collaborative practices:

‘Whale watching as a unique selling-point we want to collaborate with operators of whale watching because it’s such a big thing. It’s a brand in itself (..) as the only place in Denmark’’ (Jonas).

However, the respondents argued that at present the destination Little Belt and whale watching tourism, in particular, faces a big challenge, which is the need to attract more visitors to the destination:

‘We don’t have enough tourists in our destination in that time of the year (..) it will return in the summer months’’ (Jonas).

According to Mr. Neils, the representative of Nature Park Little Belt, an ineffective marketing communication of a destination could lead to poor visitation. However, this issue could be solved through better promotion practices such as storytelling and using various tools and social media channels to spread the message about whale watching tourism and the destination Little Belt in general:

‘I think it’s a unique activity and it’s something that we have had quite a few years in Denmark in Little Belt (..) We have to promote it better. I think it’s a unique thing you can (..) we use

whales as an icon (..) The best way is people talking about it on social media (..) But we have to do a more a better storytelling about the whole Nature Park (..) it's not only for whale watching, but you can also do a lot of other things in the whole area'' (Niels).

In support of this Debski (2013), argued that it is important to consider that touristic assets may gain in significance once visitors acknowledge their existence, which falls into the realm of marketing communication.

6.2. Stakeholder collaboration and the use of resources

A stakeholder is considered any group, person or organization which negatively or positively is affected or affects a specific outcome or issue (ECSU, 2000). This paper uses stakeholders to refer to whale watching operators, the DMO's and the Nature Park Little Belt representatives, that are involved in the collaborative processes at a destination. Accordingly, the participant stakeholders in this research include those who due to power, responsibility and authorities are central to the development of the whale watching industry. This subchapter will discuss the concept of stakeholder collaboration and how they use the resources in the tourism industry, in this case, whale watching. According to Hakansson & Snehota (1995) resources are defined as various material (e.g. financial, human) or immaterial elements which can be used by various stakeholders. Resource dependence theory implies that "a focal organization always is dependent on other organizations in its environment which are in control of coveted resources" (Elbe & Emmoth, 2014:211). However, organizations are considered social constructs, therefore shouldn't be regarded as subjects (Hakansson & Snehata, 1995). In the present research, respondents indicated high-propensity to collaborate with other tourism destination stakeholders due to many factors such as marketing gains. Accordingly, whale watching at Little Belt brings mutual benefits for all those involved such as better promotion on different markets by uniting efforts and capabilities:

'For us its great selling point for our destination. We are able to provide these whale watching tours to our guests and for them, I would say they have unique chance to get some promotion. They could not pay for themselves because we are able to find a lot of money when we do it together. We try to when we try to promote the destination as a whole, we are able to fund a lot of money ''(Jonas).

Consequently, collaboration and cooperation are dynamic strategies suitable for managing unstable domains at various levels (Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009), hence, the interrelationships

between stakeholders such as information, sales, supplies, and access of other organizations (Ford et al, 2003), allows medium and small-size tourism businesses the possibility to diminish their size detriments (Bieger, 2004). In a similar vein, Martin (2001) argued that business partnership alliances and cooperation are important ways of collaboration and may ensure the survival of the tourism actors. Thus, small operators who don't have capabilities to promote themselves will benefit from these collaborative processes. Accordingly, whale watching operators in Little Belt, do not have enough resources for their own promotion campaigns, thus through a membership, they can benefit from the promotion of the whole destination nationally as well as internationally:

‘The operators they don't have the capabilities of promoting themselves in the same way as we are able to both regarding on how to do it Facebook, printed, media online websites and everything. And then because of the time (..) We want to promote the area and they don't have the capabilities to do so I would say (..) It's Henrik Aventura and Mira 3. They are paying us for the membership to get promotion in our material to get promotion in the tourist guide and all the other things that we do online press work etc. (..) this is some sort of membership agreement ‘ (Jonas).

In support of this, Bramwell and Sherman (1999) suggested that the consensus-based collaboration can offer a range of benefits such as lower costs, validation of collective actions and the improved coordination of various policies or activities. Consequently, Ashley et al (2005), pointed out that through partnerships communities can make constructive use of their resources, by importing the tourism know-how and the capital that they don't have. Accordingly, the collaboration of various stakeholders and organizations such as Destination Little Belt and Nature Park can help spread the message about many activities that take place at a destination, including whale watching. Therefore, more tourists will be attracted at a destination to experience nature and at the same time to enjoy attractions and tourist activities such as whale watching:

‘Fredericia and Middelfart and Kolding have come together and done this Nature Park (..) they are trying is to get people to use the Nature Park more and protect it at the same time. So, there is also definitely a tourism perspective in that’’ (Verena).

In a similar vein, Ashley et al (2005) have noticed that collaboration of various stakeholders can help developing unique tourism products built on local resources and skills, thus improving tourism services and products for the visitors. Consequently, stakeholder collaboration in the

tourism industry, for instance between Nature Park Little Belt and whale watching boat operators, might also involve sustainable issues of the whale watching industry (e.g. providing eco-friendly engines for the boat operators):

‘‘We also have the plan to change the engine for an electric engine. So, without sound without smoke and anything like that’’ (Line)

According to Montemayora et al (2009), the whale watching industry in the world has shown that it has the potential for the development of the tourism sector. This is mostly due to the increasing preference of tourists for environmentally friendly leisure activities. Additionally, in some regions, this form of tourism has proved that it has a higher growth rate than the tourism sector in general. Further, the potential for this industry can be connected to the total number of tourists that visit a country (Montemayora et al., 2009). However, in the region under study Little Belt, it has been acknowledged that besides attracting tourists the future of the industry depends on the presence of whales. Moreover, the respondents argued that there is no need for more operators in the industry, but there is a more need for cooperation between the existing ones. This aspect has been acknowledged by the DMO representative of Middelfart:

‘‘I would say that if we suddenly had 10 or 15 more boats going whale watching, I would say it’s too many. Because the whales have to get their peace also’’ (Jonas).

In support of this, Moor & Rodger (2010) argued that like fisheries, maritime fauna has the features of common pool resource. Thus, a resource that advantages a group of people, but which at the same time offers decreased benefits to everyone if every individual follows their own interests. Consequently, whale watching in the region of Little Belt should take into account this aspect for future development of the industry:

‘‘It’s a little, a little tough product to develop (..) Because they are not coming more whales’’ (Jonas).

Moreover, according to Higham et al (2016) whale watching needs to be seen as a model of non-lethal exploitation of whales performed by a number of interconnected stakeholders, thus a paradigm shift in the governance is needed for this activity. Consequently, the respondents acknowledged the importance of this aspect of the whale watching industry, and have discussed the measures taken in this respect such as the creation of some ground rules for whale watching operators:

‘Hopefully, the tourists will continue to come here and hopefully, more and more people will come here but the whale watching (..) we made some ground rules on how to do it. We are trying to not overdo it’ (Jonas).

This subchapter has analyzed the stakeholder theory and the use of resources at a destination. Consequently, stakeholders in this research are considered organizations and individuals related directly or indirectly to the whale watching industry (Waligo et al., 2013). Furthermore, by using stakeholder theory it was intended to identify obstacles that could affect the collaboration among stakeholders (Timur, 2010). However, as Baggio (2011), it is not always easy to detect them, due to the unpredictable performance of stakeholders. Nevertheless, it could be argued that through the effective use of resources in the whale watching industry, stakeholders might be encouraged to collaborate more productively.

6.3. Stakeholder collaboration and competition

According to Pomeroy & Douvere (2008), whale watching tourism has a public character thus it attracts various stakeholders. Hence, this could lead to competition among these actors. Consequently, the respondents of this research acknowledged that the collaboration of various stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt, does not exclude competition among them:

‘I don’t think that the market is big enough at the moment. In my opinion, there are too many boats for the product (..) There are too many operators who want to go on whale watching because they are competing internally (..) They take money from each other so to speak at the moment’ (Jonas).

Nevertheless, Gursey et al (2015) suggested that cooperation does not exclude competition among stakeholders, thus both elements are required for the success of tourism development. In support of this, (Fyall & Wang, 2012:11) argued that an organization can reach their goals only when they will try to achieve a ‘collaborative advantage rather than a competitive advantage’. As opposed to this, Mr. Jonas the DMO representative of Middelfart has argued that internal competition is not desirable for the success of the whale watching activity at the respective destination, due to the fact that the industry is relatively small and there are not enough tourists:

‘For us, it means that eventually they will start competing internally and then a lot of other trips will be concealed. Because we don’t have enough participants who want to go whale

watching. They spread out on the boats. And the boats they have a minimum count of participants they want to fill before they go sailing'' (Jonas).

In a similar vein Cisner-Montemayer et al (2010), argued that competition among whale watching operators is more than often translated into a kind of rivalry, and it is connected to various factors such as lookouts for whales, recruiting of clients etc. Furthermore, internal competition could negatively impact whale watching operators, for example, it might result in bilateral financial loss. Nevertheless, Cistner-Montemayor et al (2010) suggested that more than often through informal alliances, whale watching is at the root of many more or less of enduring collaboration and coalitions mostly among operators, for example through the transfer of customers, or shared information among operators about the localization of whales etc. Accordingly, Mr. Henrik, the Aventura boat operator has suggested that at Little Belt whale watching operators are still helping each other, and collaborate in informal ways:

‘I am sending people for other boats when I am filled up (..) We are helping each other. So, if my ship breaks down, I lend Mira (..) if I filled up, I will send them to the other ship’’ (Henrik).

This subchapter discussed the idea that collaboration does not exclude competition among stakeholders in a whale watching destination. However, the respondents acknowledged that internal competition among operators of whale watching industry at Little Belt is not desirable for the future success of the industry. Accordingly, it is important to analyze the whale watching industry from different angles. Thus, by understanding the architecture of the whale watching tourism system, its core, and various layers, and by comprehending the industry knowledge and information exchange among various actors, whale watching industry can be developed in a better way (Egger et al., 2016; Dimmock et al., 2014).

6.4. Cooperative behaviour of stakeholders

It has been argued that a distinctive firm's achievement depends on the behavior of other actors that are indirectly or directly connected to it (Freeman, 1984). This aspect is more obvious in a tourism destination, where the success of the region and the customers' contentment is connected to various types of organizations and businesses which are situated inside or outside of a destination. Consequently, the effectiveness of a tourism industry is related to the linkages among these different actors (March & Wilkinson, 2009). In support of this, the DMOs representatives at Little Belt noticed that collaboration that takes place among both DMOs

Fredericia and Middelfart and the boat operators is mostly informal, and it is based on the concept of working together for effective shared results for all the stakeholders involved:

‘‘There is a lot of informal collaboration (..) it is really about more to find a way to work together (..) we are quite good in figuring out how we are working together and making it happen’’ (Verena).

Moreover, it has been argued that due to this type of collaboration power and differences are minimized and control of the collaborative processes is equally shared among actors (Ng & Wong, 2006). Consequently, both the DMOs Fredericia and Middelfart have a very close informal collaboration which proves to be effective and beneficial for all the parts involved:

‘‘We communicate directly. We pick up the phone and call them. We have a very close collaboration. We are very informal about that (..) if we have something, we just call them maybe they even show up in the office unexpectedly’’ (Jonas).

However, according to Waligo et al (2013), tourism stakeholders can be diverse thus conflicting interests are often emerging among them. Nevertheless, it has been argued that these conflicts can be addressed within a collaboration scheme, where the organizations that have the role of facilitator of collaboration practices understand the root of conflicts and therefore take necessary actions (ECSU, 2000). In a similar vein, the research has acknowledged the existence of various conflicts among whale watching operators, which are generated by multiple issues such as time of the tours and the involved costs for the operators. Accordingly, Aventura boat operator offers three hours tours and the other operators offer two hours tours: *‘‘But I can’t reduce it because it has sails which stop the cost to keep it running (..) If you don’t see the difference when you are sitting in Switzerland and find out which whale watching you are going for (..) And my prices also are covering (..) the diploma from the Tilma when they steer the ship’’* (Henrik).

Additionally, other issues such as the differences in the price of products and services can lead to conflicts between stakeholders. Consequently, the DMO representative of Middelfart Mr. Johnas suggested that this aspect needs attention to avoid further fractures in the collaborative and cooperative processes:

‘‘They are selling different prices and again that is one thing that they do not agree on. What the price will be and that is something they have to figure out between themselves’’ (Jonas).

However, the success of collaboration processes depends on several factors such as the existence of negotiation space, or the actors' willingness to participate, and the need to achieve

common goals (ECSU, 2000). In support of this, Mr. Jonas the representative of the DMO Middelfart has pointed to the quality level of products and services offered to the tourists by every operator. Hence, a shared goal in the form of qualitative products and services could reduce the tension between them and lead to a more viable collaboration:

‘Especially Henrik he is very keen on telling the stories about the whale watching and whale hunting and all this. Some of the operators don’t really, they are just like, ah doesn’t matter let’s go sailing’ (Jonas).

In a similar vein, the Mira 3 boat operator Ms. Line observed that collaboration and cooperation in the whale watching industry at Little Belt involve the willingness of actors to work together:

‘We are going to talk with Henrik because I think we are doing the trips like 8-9 times each week (..)we are just going to talk with him and say if you want this and that we might be filling in the blanks. Ok, we will go on these other days. It shouldn’t be a problem’ (Line).

Nevertheless, it has been argued that collaboration is more likely to succeed when the issue of non-collaboration could lead to increasing conflict, or resources deterioration (ECSU, 2000).

Moreover, according to Rivas et al (2016) shared goals could be achieved if the stakeholders understand that by working together chances to attract more visitors to their destination, could increase significantly. Consequently, stakeholder collaboration and partnerships can provide important economic and social returns such as better tourism services and better governance. In a similar vein, the Nature Park representative Ms. Annette has argued that shared goals in collaborations can offer whale watching operators and other stakeholders’ common benefits: *‘The boat operators can use Nature Park Little Belt as that we can help each other to get more tourists to come here’* (Annette).

In support of this, Getz & Timur (2005) observed that it is essential to involve all the needs and interests of various actors in order to develop a tourism industry or destination and to provide unique experiences to the visitors. However, it has been suggested that collaboration is many times a question of at what extent of collaboration is appropriate or possible and in what context (ECSU, 2000). Hence, as Ms. Line the Mira 3 owner argued for the need for collaboration between the operators and other actors such as tourist guides:

‘I have three guides I can call. They work as guides and help me with these ropes and make people comfortable around here so just attend their needs’ (Line).

Consequently, it has been argued that stakeholder collaboration may in the right situations offer a strong approach to answering the problems where single efforts cannot always resolve (ECSU, 2000). Moreover, Franch et al (2008), noticed that the element of trust should be considered for the development of tourism activity, which represents the willingness and awareness of the actor to be part of the collaborative structure (Franch et al, 2008). Consequently, many respondents in this research have argued that most of the collaborative practices that take place in the whale watching industry at Little Belt are mainly informal. Where trust is regarded as an essential aspect of many collaborative agreements (e. g. Legoland, operators and the Destination Little Belt):

‘It was just informal. We had some meetings and set down and made agreements and we had no paper (..) they trust me they trust the guarantee for whales a 100% (..) Legoland was asking if I could do it with my ship. Yes. Of course, in connection with Visit Little Belt’ (Henrik).

In a similar vein, Jamal & Gets (2000) argued that building trust is the essential element in achieving collaboration among stakeholders. Consequently, the DMO representative of Fredericia Ms. Verena has argued that the collaboration with Aventura operator is informal and has been suggested that it is also based on an element of trust:

‘That’s really like that quite informal at least for our part of the town (..) But it was just me approaching him and say hey, can you come’ (Verena).

Additionally, as Mr. Niels the Nature Park representative observed, trust can also be seen as a gentlemen's agreement:

‘We only have a gentlemen agreement’ (Niels).

However, Robert & Simpson (2000) have argued that for a long-term and successful collaboration, stakeholders need to build trust and sincerity with the community as well as among themselves. Accordingly, Mr. Henrik, the Aventura boat operator acknowledged this element in his collaborations with stakeholders:

‘A wine farm from Kolding is also a member here (..) and we are working together (..) So they trust me they trust the guarantee for whales a 100%.’ (Henrik)

In a similar vein, Grigorescu (2008), suggested that trust can be an important ingredient to the viability and profitable establishment of collaboration among partners. However, as Wayeers et al. (2014:3) noticed, there is a downside of this approach, *‘if convergence and harmony between collaborating stakeholders go too far, it may lead to ‘tunnel vision’ and other rigidities*

of structure and strategies, which can reduce the ability to innovate''. Moreover, Ms. Verena the DMO representative of Fredericia has acknowledged that the element of trust is not enough for a viable collaboration, but it needs other ingredients, such as the expertise of the stakeholders in the tourism industry in particular, whale watching industry:

‘‘We base it of course on trust but also on experience. Because we know he has the good collaboration with Middelfart and I always have the doubts, so I am quite confident that when I am putting the whale watching trips for next summer then he will be there, you know unless he falls down and breaks a leg’’ (Verena).

However, Grigorescu (2008), suggested that a lack of trust between partners can result in uncertainty in the collaborative arrangement. In support, Ng & Wong (2006) has argued that a lack of trust can prevent cohesion and cooperation which is necessary for a viable agreement. Nevertheless, the lack of trust might derive from the stakeholders' behavior and how they work with other stakeholders. Consequently, the DMO representative of Middelfart has acknowledged that lack of commitment of whale watching operators, such as not respecting agreements, might trigger a lack of trust and eventually affect future collaborations:

‘‘Not all operators are good at keeping our agreements’’ (Jonas).

This subchapter has discussed the cooperative behavior of stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt. More specifically, the research has uncovered that most of the cooperation and the collaboration practices that occur among stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt are informal. This is in line with the idea that informal cooperation is more specific for regions and small communities (Aas et al., 2005; Denicolai et al., 2009), and it needs mutual trust, respect and personal commitment from all stakeholders in order to become viable (Rodriguez et al.; Carpenter et al., 2004). Nevertheless, as the following subchapter will disclose, good informal cooperation also requires effective communication in order to give fruitful results (Carpenter et al., 2004; Doz, 1996; Luo, 2002; Rodriguez & Wilson, 2002).

6.5. Communication as an effective tool in stakeholders' collaboration

According to Wayeers et al (2014), an effective partnership and collaboration require a culture of good communication and collaboration. Consequently, the interviews with various stakeholders at Little Belt, have indicated that effective collaboration among various stakeholders in the whale watching industry at Little Belt, could be facilitated by the communication tool. Accordingly, it could be argued that the whale watching industry at Little Belt many times is missing opportunities due to ineffective communication among various stakeholders. Additionally, according to the Aventura boat operator Mr. Henrik, direct communication of stakeholders in whale watching in informal as well as formal settings, could play an important role in successful collaborative processes. Consequently, it could represent an effective engine for solving issues or challenges that operators encounter:

‘‘I think we have all the ships here also fishing ships and so on and we all are sitting in the tourism system of Little Belt. And we also have guests here. And as long as they are running us individually then we have to work together and taking activities. A dinner for Christmas together for example. We have done it before and it is good because we can talk small talk and find out solutions and move’’ (Henrik).

Accordingly, by creating a positive collaboration culture and increasing the capacity of the stakeholders to perform within it, will boost their prospects of success (Wayeers et al, 2014). Consequently, the communication tool, especially direct communication, is regarded as important in positive collaborative processes with other partners, such as Destination Legoland:

‘‘And the same with Legoland and so on. Direct (..) both. Before, in the beginning, was talking and we were together in at least two meetings a year when we would talk and ask. (..) now they sit more in the office and talk to other offices’’ (Henrik).

In support of this Richins (2009) noticed that the collaboration process needs direct communication between participating actors and acknowledging their interconnection, with the scope of creating a collective perception, and common decision making and shared goals etc. However, the DMO representative of Fredericia Ms. Verena has argued that it is more effective for a tourism activity such as whale watching, if the DMO intermediate collaboration processes among various stakeholders, for instance among operators and Destination Legoland. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the operators themselves are capable of establishing direct communication channels:

‘I don’t think I think I would be fine if they did that on their own as well. Because I am interested in that all our partners here who offer some tourism product they can get as far out as possible (..) But obviously I would mind if you choose not to be marketed by me, but someone else. But if he chooses both or more things that’s fine (..) I don’t care where they come from as long as they come’ (Verena).

As opposed to this, Debski (2013) observed that even though local authorities are the actors who have the biggest rights in connection to the decision-making at a destination, they are not the best actors to impact the behavior of residents and stakeholders. Nevertheless, adequate management of a destination or a tourism industry requires elements of collaboration between stakeholders (e.g. local government, organizations, operators etc.) for the drive of tourist demand (Debski, 2013). Additionally, it has been argued that lack of communication can produce misunderstandings among stakeholders in the tourism industry and lead to missing opportunities for all the participating stakeholders, particularly in the whale watching industry. This aspect of the collaboration among the whale watching operators and the DMO Fredericia has been acknowledged by the representative of the DMO Fredericia, Ms. Verena:

‘I couldn’t understand why no one ever had approached any of the boat owners and ask maybe you can offer trips from Fredericia (..) So obviously even though he is not partner with us, we, of course, have to use the possibilities that are there (..) So I just approached him and asked can you maybe do a whale watching trip from Fredericia? and it was really easy (..) he told me what is necessary for him to get into the harbour and I made a little sign down at the harbour (..) it’s just about using the opportunities that are there and then utilizing them’ (Verena).

However, it has been argued that lack of communication can extend to higher levels such as to the collaboration among the DMOs. Nevertheless, this issue could be overcome as long as the stakeholders involved take the responsibility and acknowledge that ineffective communication could lead to missing opportunities for all the parties involved:

‘And that’s a collaboration between the two municipalities. But when I started it seemed like all communication was basically Middelfart. So, no one here in Fredericia had taken the responsibility to make sure that all the communication also includes Fredericia (..) all the communication is (..) you just have to grab the opportunities that are there’ (Verena).

In a similar vein, Kennedy & Augustyn (2014) suggested that the accomplishment of various collaboration processes could also depend on how the voices of stakeholders are coordinated.

Hence, it is important to understand their role in the collaborative processes. Consequently, identifying their salience can aid efficient stakeholder inclusion, and their coordination in various collaborative processes and projects (Jamal & Getz, 2000).

This subchapter discussed the role of communication in stakeholder collaboration in the whale watching industry. Moreover, the respondents argued that effective communication could lead to a better understanding of how shared objectives could be achieved and to seizing opportunities (Borodako, 2011), and how long-term costs and conflicts be avoided (Gramwell & Lane, 2000). Nevertheless, it could be argued that collaboration in whale watching tourism at Little Belt is a developing process that occurs in a non-linear way (Hall, 1999).

6.6. Tourism partnerships as a model of tourism evolution

According to Merinero & Rodriguez (2016), governments are the only bodies that can create proper conditions for public-private collaboration in the form of strategic frames. With regards to Little Belt, Destination Little Belt and Nature Park Little Belt are considered top-down architectures:

‘ ‘Some politicians in Middelfart, Fredericia, and Kolding (..) it’s a top-down process actually. They talked about how we promote our area. So, they heard about this Nature Park (..) we worked for many years (..) have to do a lot of talking to the landowners (..) It’s a formal one and we have written down in our plans for the whole area’ ’ (Niels).

In support of this, Hall (2000) argued that the most important stakeholder that promotes collaboration in tourism is the public sector. In a similar vein, Rivas et al (2016) argued that tourism partnerships are usually initiated by municipal policymakers with a focus on marketing and promotion following the goals of private sectors. Consequently, the result of these collaborations would be sharing of resources and working together, which affects all the activities at a destination including whale watching activity:

‘ ‘Someone above us they decided now you have to work together. And we did our common website (..) from there we kind of developed how we were going to work together’ ’ (Verena).

In a similar vein, Amaral et al (2016) argued that partnerships can promote synergies for the development of the tourism industry and the destination. Consequently, the understanding of these benefits can contribute to better marketing and designing of tourism services and products

(Amaral et al, 2016). However, the top-down approach is valid especially for small companies which might not have enough financial, or human resources to keep their position in the marketplace, and only through collaboration they can achieve different advantages such as the growth of their businesses and reduced costs (Girsoy et al 2015). Accordingly, the partnership with Legoland is considered of great significance for the region of Little Belt, and for the whale watching industry:

‘We have a partnership with Legoland because we are located fairly close to Legoland. It’s called Legoland Belund Resort and we try to communicate that we are located close to Legoland. Because Legoland itself attracts a lot of tourists to stay here that’s good for us’ (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Kotler, Heider & Rein (1993) suggested, that the agreements between different partners can result in combined efforts in terms of promotional activities, brand advertising, and promotional campaigns. It is considered that there is a commitment for actors to cooperate in partnership arrangements based on the idea that the destination and the tourism organizations are capable of obtaining competitive advantages by importing experience, knowledge capital and various resources (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). Consequently, whale watching is part of the contract, thus the DMOs has the role of intermediaries between boat operators and Legoland:

‘Whale watching? They operate everything with us (..) if Legoland or some other organization wants to go whale watching they come to us and we can arrange the bookings with captains (..) But their contract means that we as a destination Middelfart can be part of Legoland Resort’ (Jonas).

However, the respondents of this research have argued that the lack of direct communication among partners (e.g. boat operators and Legoland) could have an influence on the quality of tourist products and how the whale-watching product is perceived. Further, it could become a challenge for future collaborations among whale watching stakeholders:

‘From the beginning, we were very close. I was together with the person from Legoland. Not now, now it’s they are talking with the person on the tourist bureau They are talking to me (..) in this way I don’t want (..) they don’t have the view what can we perform’ (Henrik).

However, Palmer & Bejou (1995), suggested that an ineffective exchange of resources and goals could lead to issues in collaborative processes. Consequently, stakeholders that subcontract a service could face the possibility of weakening the quality of their services, which

eventually might negatively affect their reputation (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Nevertheless, Mr. Henrik, the Aventura boat operator suggested that through direct communication many misunderstandings and issues among partners could be avoided. Hence, direct communication among partners is seen as more effective for a collaborative process and can facilitate an understanding of the industry' capacity and how the whale watching tourism is performed. Thus, the Aventura boat operator argued that a collaboration that reaches directly the actors is more desirable in this respect:

‘I am going to Kolding that's a group with firm. They had business meeting coffee and cake and they said come over and go out for three hours and let us talk about whales and maybe we can find something’’ (Henrik).

Furthermore, the Nature Park representative Mr. Niels has argued that, by uniting efforts and sharing similar goals and attracting more visitors, the whole destination can benefit, and whale watching activity in particular:

‘Enjoy the nature and go on whale watching and also spend some money in our area (..) this tourism aspect is also important for the Nature Park. The politicians in our area think that is important to make some money also’’ (Niels).

Additionally, Pirnar (2016), argued that partnerships are defined by their positive effects, hence they can be favored by various actors. In support of this, Ms. Line the Mira 3 boat operator has noticed that partnerships with external actors can provide benefits for the whole destination, not only for the whale watching industry, because it will help spread the message about the attractions of the destinations and its unique products:

‘And they had made some agreements with other tourist offices in Holland and Germany (..) The Scandinavian countries Norway, Sweden would be new partners in this and they offer some bonus if they buy the whale watching trips (..) I think they might get a few more customers (Line).

However, it is considered that partnerships are created out of necessity (Lepetu et al, 2008). Nevertheless, Pirnar (2016) suggested that partnerships represent strategic alliances built on voluntary arrangements among different stakeholders, where every participant can preserve their identity and independence. Consequently, Mr. Niels the Nature Park representative has suggested that collaboration of all stakeholder at a destination can enhance the development of tourism activities, due to the multiple elements that hold the destination together, whale watching being one of them:

‘I think that Nature Park is the destination in itself (..) all the activities connected to Little Belt (..) The whales it's a very important part of it. But there is also a lot of surfing, diving. So, it's a lot to do. But I think it's a destination (..) it helps because it's unique. So, we can get more visitors to this area because we have this unique thing, that they don't have other places’’ (Niels)

6.7. Local partnerships: a perspective for whale watching industry

In the research-literature partnerships are considered a more business-oriented interpretation of a group of two or more actors who aim to carry on a business with a perspective on benefits (Ashley et al, 2005). This type of partnership is increasingly embraced by many tourism companies or combined endeavours with local communities. (Ashley, et al., 2005). It has been acknowledged that at Little Belt community has been involved mostly in building the land-based whale watching platform in Middelfart:

‘Some citizens voluntarily (..) helping us so it's a very good cooperation. They think it's fun to do this boathouse and to clean it up and well they are very good very. And also, this is very important to Nature Park to have some citizens who are helping so its project like that’’ (Niels).

In support of the community involvement approach, Morisson (2013), noticed that community resident support is essential to the sustainable development of a tourism industry such as whale watching within a destination. Additionally, voluntary participation is considered an essential element in this type of partnership:

‘That is a very good example of what we want to do. If the boathouse and if we (..) it's important for us to do it at every spot that we do to find some locals. Looking after it and come with their ideas. It's important to us that we have local participation in our projects’’ (Niels).

In a similar vein, Zapata (2014) has argued that partnerships can be tools for community development, tourism planning, product development, and marketing (Zapata, 2014). Accordingly, the Nature Park projects in Little Belt, which also started recently a collaboration with Aventura whale watching operator, has been based on voluntary participation of different stakeholders:

‘Nature Park which means that they are working on the voluntary participation of all stakeholders’’ (Verena).

However, it has been argued that these partnerships involve shared risks and not only benefits for all the participant parties (Ashley et al., 2005). Additionally, it's not always easy to involve all the stakeholders of the community in a tourism project, due to several factors such as their willingness to participate:

“ We first (..) we talk about it and then we know how we are doing this. There might be some landowners and if we want to make a path for visitors then we have to ask him if he says no then it's no ” (Verena).

Furthermore, Harill (2004) argued for the need of consulting the community residents, for building a better tourism industry. In support of this, ECSU (2000) argued that it is important to understand how stakeholders view the challenges, opportunities, and issues that have brought them together in a collaborative process. For instance, a collaboration might preserve the culture of a community or better their livelihood. Moreover, it can result in shared benefits for all parties involved:

“I think that boats here are like an institution. All the people living here they are usually watching over the boats and if something is unusual, they will call the captains and they well is it supposed to be like that? (..) I think we have got that little black shed over there belong to our boat. And a couple of these people above here have their bicycles in exchange to watch the place” (Line).

This subchapter has discussed the idea of local partnership in whale watching industry at Little Belt. This aspect of the industry has been acknowledged during the interviews with various stakeholders at Little Belt Destination. It has been suggested that the community could play a significant role in various projects, for instance in helping building platforms for land-based watching tourism etc. As well as the various informal cooperation processes among whale watching operators and the locals. However, it could be argued that at present local partnerships do not play a major role in whale watching sea-based tourism. Nevertheless, community involvement is regarded as important for the development of the tourism industry and destination.

6.8. Cooperation and partnership: co-creation at the destination level

According to Ashley et al (2005), local partnerships can contribute to the access of financial investments or new sites, due to the fact that the government can easily grant concessions when the local benefit factor is involved. Additionally, the Nature Park representative Mr. Niels argued that through partnerships, it is desired to generate extensive awareness and promotion of whale watching tourism and of the destination as leisure and natural paradise and thus boost the region's tourist receipts and arrivals:

‘Boats like Henrik, he is sailing, and they are also ambassadors for the Nature Park Little Belt. I brought a flag for Henrik he can put up on top of his boat and he can also promote Nature Park Little Belt. So, he is a very important partner, co-operator and we are trying to go a step further and do more systematic a kind of manifest where we can see that we do something for our partners and they do something for us in the Nature Park (..) whale watching will be a very important partner’ (Niels).

In support of this Zapata (2014), noticed that partnerships can be perceived as tools for community development, tourism planning, product development, and marketing. Moreover, Rogerson (2016) suggested that the existence of multiple partnerships can help the bridging together of various stakeholders in formal or informal partnership in order to improve the productivity of a tourism destination, its attractiveness, and its market effectiveness. Additionally, Mr. Niels the Nature Park representative has argued that by involving all stakeholders in collaborative practices, the whole destination will benefit not only a tourism activity such as whale watching:

‘This I think will be a new collaboration because we focus on nature and whales are a very important piece of this. Because it's on the top of the ecosystem (..) it's a new collaboration with the whale watching ship and other Nature Park. We can say something more (..) we can work together with some scientists who know a lot about the whale ecosystem in Little Belt. So, we can do more nature scientifically. But then we have some hotels and camping sites with us so that we can attract people and then they can stay here for the night’ (Niels).

However, stakeholders can be engaged in collaborative processes in different ways and at various levels. Thus, it is important that they are provided flexibility to facilitate their participation which could further develop into collaboration (ECSU, 2000). Accordingly,

formal collaboration is considered more desirable when the partners intend to set a long-term relationship and also apply for different funding:

‘It’s not formally yet, but I think we are going to do that I think next year. To do this partnership, an agreement a manifest. So, it’s going to be more formal’ (Niels).

Consequently, it has been argued that if a successful model of collaboration has been successful, it could be applied to other collaboration processes:

‘We have something called Fishing Friends Little Belt (..) with other people who do fishing trips in Little Belt. And this is more formally. We have some, a manifest but its only about fishing and not whale watching. And therefore, I think it’s a model. You can copy. It’s a very fine model its only six partners (..) A shop who sells fishing equipment, and Henrik and some boat renters. So, it’s a little partnership, but it’s a first formally that we have (Niels).

However, participation could be expensive and can involve different costs for the actors, for instance, political costs, thus stakeholders will get involved only when they think it is worth doing it (ECSU, 2000). Accordingly, a partnership that involves financial implications would be seen less desirable by some stakeholders even though financial costs are necessary for the development and promotion of an entity such as the Nature Park or whale watching industry:

‘Well always this money. I could say that you have to pay if you want to be a partner (..) Then they can say we don’t want to pay it is too expensive and. Because we also have some costs, we do this, and we do that (..) Some merchandise involves promotion, we are spending money on this. And we don’t have much money from the Fredericia and Kolding and Middelfart’ (Niels).

Consequently, the representative of Nature Park Mr. Niels argued that for effective partnerships they need to be genuine where all stakeholders participate equally. Therefore, they will be able to access funding at national and international levels which would benefit everyone involved:

‘We have to do funding and also, we have to get some money from the partners (..)because the funding you have to say that you collaborate. So, it’s very important to do it, and actually not only to say it but you have to do it (..) To do this collaboration’ (Niels).

In a similar vein, Grigorescu (2008) argued that the public-private partnerships in various projects such as public investments could be an effective way to resolve socio-economic issues and also to access European Union funds. Accordingly, stakeholders in whale watching industry at Little Belt have acknowledged the importance of the partnerships and the benefits of being a partner:

‘It is formal because they need partners to get the support from the European Union funding’
(Henrik).

However, it has been argued that an important aspect of the collaboration processes is the equal involvement of stakeholders, and how they keep their agreements:

‘Not all operators are good at keeping our agreements’ (Jonas).

Additionally, if partnerships are successful, they can bring benefits to all the actors involved in the process, and also to the whole whale watching industry and destination:

‘Henrik will his benefit is of course that he will get some money and he work and be sustainable. And we get more visitors and then they also spend money in our area. And then I hope a benefit it’s also some knowledge new knowledge for people that they know about these values nature values that we got in the sea, and then I hope that will preserve it better (..) So we have to give them some advantage and some unique experiences, then they will get some love to nature’ (Niels)

6.9. Collaborative marketing and its benefits for a tourism activity

The goal of this subchapter is to draw attention to various collaborative approaches in destination marketing and whale watching industry in particular. According to March & Wilkinson (2009), due to the increasingly fragmented tourism system, stakeholders tend to apply collaborative standards to their business practices, in particular in the marketing and planning fields. Moreover, Govers (2011) argued that places usually collaborate easily on different kind of issues, but when they are confronted with the possibility of a place as a destination, they often do not cooperate, as they find themselves as contestants. However, as Mr. Johnas the DMO representative of Middelfart has noticed that when actors understand the advantages of collaboration and share resources, common goals could be reached more successfully. Consequently, renowned partners can help the Little Belt Destination and whale watching industry, in particular, to be promoted at larger scales:

‘But it’s good to be represented together with Legoland. Because it’s such a big brand and we have to work closely together’ (Jonas).

However, Naipaul et al (2009) have argued that collaborative approaches in tourism marketing, represent a consolidation of a certain destination and the touristic attractions to be advertised

as a single unique product. Nevertheless, small firms can benefit from collaborative marketing practices due to the lack of sufficient resources to promote themselves. Accordingly, the Aventura boat operator Mr, Henrik has argued that the booking system in collaboration with the DMO Middelfart has facilitated the operations of the whale watching activity:

“From the beginning. It was hard work to book individuals because it was made by hands. Later on, 10 years ago we made this booking system” (Henrik).

This is in line with the idea, that when local communities or entrepreneurs encounter problems such as lack of knowledge about the tourists demand and markets and limited resources, external marketing assistance will replace the lack of their skills and resources (Moscardo, 2008). Additionally, Lepetu et al. (2008) have noticed that the creation of partnership is a strategy that can help develop and promote various tourism activities. In support of this, Mr. Henrik, the Aventura boat operator, has argued that through collaborations with various stakeholders in the whale watching industry, more advertising channels have been utilized, and thus it was possible to reach a wider audience:

“We are advertising in the tourism magazine and here you can go on the website (..) And we have meetings frequently with personnel from Visit Little Belt Middelfart and Fredericia and we adjust the system (..) And we have another organization Du Glimmer Det Aldring (..) A lot of channels. My channel to reach the guests is jungle drum guest (..) destination Legoland” (Henrik).

However, Wang (2008) has suggested that successful collaborative marketing practices in the tourism industry need mutual sharing of ideas and experiences, as well as creating a pool of human and financial resources aimed at solving various issues. In this respect, the DMO representative of Fredericia Ms. Verena has observed that the collaboration marketing of all the stakeholder of a destination can enhance the development of the destination and tourism activities, such as whale watching activity:

“The collaboration between us and our accommodation providers for instance that means that all products that we market we can tell the accommodation providers and they can tell their customers. So, this thing is kind of circle that has to get going so everybody knows of offers that are present in the destination (..) collaboration is the key to everything really” (Verena).

In a similar vein, Wang & Xiang (2007) have argued that marketing collaboration can provide several benefits to those involved such as decrease of transaction costs, risk sharing and lowering the competition power. Moreover, it could provide tourist information, and lowering

advertising costs by publishing brochures collaboratively and can increase the destination competitiveness through the development of the destination image (Wang 2008). In support of this, Ms. Verena the representative of the DMO Fredericia has noticed that when two destinations collaborate to promote a single product, shared goals can be reached, and resources can be used more effectively:

‘‘It’s between the two of us we have a marketing collaboration, but we are still two different organizational structures (..) But we kind of putting our resources together in terms of marketing and then we are making strategies for two we are going to attract people to the whole destination. Because from a tourism perspective and tourist perspective it makes perfect sense. Also, because we have the Little Belt in common and we have whale watching in common (..) they might not have enough money to maybe attract the German market and we have enough money to attract the Norwegian market. We can put our resources together and then maybe attract them both’’ (Verena).

However, collaborative approach in the marketing of a destination and of a tourism activity can be difficult due to several factors such as power balance, different goals (Wang et al, 2013), lack of trust and competition (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Consequently, Ms. Verena the DMO representative of Fredericia has argued that more opportunities arise for a tourism industry when it extends on other markets, and when it collaborates with all the stakeholders in the region. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of product in order to market it more effectively:

‘‘As a tourist organization are trying to grab the opportunity (..) How can we use it because it’s difficult to market something that you don’t know what it is? You know you can’t say come to the Nature Park Little belt and then people are coming here and can’t see any signs and they don’t know what is it that I can do (..) how can we work together how can we market their things and on which grounds’’ (Verena).

In a similar vein, Dredge (2006) argued that collaborative practices play an important role in supporting and preventing public-private partnership creation. Consequently, the DMO representative of Fredericia Ms. Verena observed that a product at a destination such as a whale watching activity could benefit from these partnerships by being included into a large collaboration and being promoted at larger scales:

‘‘We are members of the Legoland Billund Resort which is not a DMO but it’s the union (..) so, whale watching is part of that. We are trying you know taking that product and bring it

into the collaboration in Legoland. And then you know they get a little discount if they have the happy pass (..) we do have a lot of collaboration I think with external partners. But Legoland is the biggest (Verena).

This subchapter has discussed the collaborative marketing practices that take place between stakeholders in the whale watching operators at Little Belt. It has been acknowledged that these collaborations have been beneficial for the industry due to the fact that whale watching operators do not always have enough resources to reach a larger audience by themselves. Thus, more opportunities and more marketing channels could be used through marketing collaboration. However, it has been argued that this is not always possible due to several factors such as the misunderstanding of the principles of fruitful collaboration such as mutual efforts, financial as well as human resources.

6.10. Marketing strategy an effective tool?

This subchapter will discuss why tourism planning should be considered important for a destination, in particular, what role it would play for whale watching industry at Little Belt. According to Morrison (2013), the DMOs together with its stakeholders should design the key goals for achieving a tourism plan and articulate the desired effects. However, at Little Belt, all the operators and the DMOs representatives acknowledged the lack of a strategy for whale watching tourism. Nevertheless, the respondents suggested that a strategy would be necessary when the number of tourists and partners involved in whale-watching tourism, will increase:

‘We don’t have a strategy yet. But maybe it will be a very good idea to have in a long term. If we have had a lot of tourists and a lot of partners’ (Verena).

In support of this, Morrison (2013) argued that the adoption of a marketing strategy needs the involvement of many actors and is necessary when there is a large number of tourists at a destination. Nevertheless, Ms. Verena, the representative of the DMO Fredericia, argued that a tourism activity such as whale watching could be included in a larger strategy of a DMO, for instance when the DMO takes an informal collaboration approach with the private actors:

‘We want to do a campaign where we kind of trying to get some of the Dutch people to come here on holidays. Then we might ask him can you maybe do a trip there, so we maybe put it into the campaign and then market it. But it’s not like you know sitting down and thinking ok whale watching its really just the way that we can get like millions to visit us (..) we just take

the single the one boat owner and tell what do you want to do? and maybe ask what is your experience? How often should I do it?’’ (Verena).

However, Kotler (2000), argued that the DMO vision statements should be rational with the destination marketing aims. Accordingly, Ms. Verena the representative of DMO Fredericia has noticed that due to the fact that participant actors in whale watching industry are private actors, it would be difficult for a DMO to make a strategy for whale watching industry:

‘There is none and I don’t think that’s going to be one. Unless because you know, they are all private companies (..) we have no collaboration we just ask him how often, do you want to do this?’’ (Verena).

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that a marketing strategy for a tourism activity could be effective for a destination, due to the fact that the carrying capacity of an industry would be known and effectively managed in the future:

‘We are not kind of utilizing it like a huge big think and how can we attract more boats or everything we don’t do that. Not yet. You know if we do it, we obviously have to look at what is the carrying capacity of this you know. How many boats should be enough?’’ (Verena).

Moreover, Ms. Verena the DMO representative of Fredericia suggested that the lack of a strategy means not having specific goals for the future of whale watching industry at Little Belt:

‘For me whale watching is one of the main tourist attractions that we can offer at least foreigner visitors (..) we don’t have a strategy, so we don’t have a goal that we have to achieve’’ (Verena).

Nevertheless, it has been argued that because whale watching is not used as a main attraction in the destination, could mean fewer tourists for the respective industry:

"You know when we have this goal. At the moment I feel from our town Fredericia that one weekly trip it’s enough because we can’t sell out all the spaces in summer and it is really dependent on the weather. Also, sometimes people book or they don’t book. So, I think my goal will be to make it a little bit known and use it. We don’t use it as one of our main attractions. That’s for sure some together with bridge walking’’ (Verena).

However, Mr. Jonas the representative of DMO Middelfart argued that even if there is no strategy in place for whale watching, the DMO is striving to achieve some goals at the respective destination. For instance, the DMO aims to attract more tourists at the destination

through various tools, media tools, networking or alliances. Consequently, the whale watching industry is promoted together with all the attractions at a destination:

“Every year we want to have more tourists. So just it’s the main goal (..) every year we try to communicate and promote the area in different media online (..) We don’t have a strategy especially for whale watching (..) if we attracted a lot of tourists to destination hopefully some more people will go whale watching (..) we have a lot of different operators and events and so we can’t focus only on whale watching (..) we need to help all of our operators” (Jonas).

This subchapter has argued for the importance of a tourism planning for a tourism industry at a destination, the difference this could make on the whale watching industry, and if it could be done in collaboration with whale watching operators. The respondents indicated that even though they don’t have a long-term strategy their goal is to attract more tourists to whale watching tours. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that a marketing strategy would help the DMO know the exact carrying capacity of the industry and better manage it in the future.

6.11. The DMOs. and their role in the collaborative practices

At present, there is an increasing debate of how DMOs should take into account the locals’ perspective on tourism at a destination. Consequently, it is considered that tourism within a certain destination could influence negatively or positively the locals both indirectly and directly. However, only recently has been acknowledged a shift the DMOs’ focus from external markets to internal markets (Morisson, 2013). Furthermore, a number of academic papers have discussed collaboration among DMOs and stakeholders and on how DMOs handle stakeholders’ relations (Buhalis, 2000; Cox & Wray, 2011; Elbe et al., 2009). In a similar vein, the DMO representative of Fredericia, Ms. Verena, has indicated a propensity of the DMOs to facilitate different collaboration processes of various local stakeholders in the tourism industry:

“If a new person (..) a tourism person wants to offer a tourism product, we will obviously help that person” (Verena).

In support of this, several researchers noticed that the main strategies of a DMO, are to boost, to coordinate, encourage and facilitate collaborate with various stakeholders (Elbe & Emmoth, 2014; Pechlander et al, 2012, Azizpour & Fathizadeth, 2016). Consequently, Ms. Line, the Mira 3 boat operator, suggested that the DMO play a significant role in coordinating activities

for whale watching tourism at Little Belt destination. For instance, new whale watching operators receive assistance and guidance from the DMO:

‘The collaboration is a little bit new to us (..) But this morning we had a meeting with the tourist office and they are sort of coordinating things’ (Line).

In a similar vein, Zivodern et al. (2015) observed that tourism organizations have an important role in coordinating stakeholders in order to attain a productive long-term brand. Additionally, local residents and visitors’ opinions and participation are regarded as important for the respective purpose (Zivodern et al., 2015). However, Morgan et al. (2011) noticed that everything begins at home. Thus, it is important to consider developing a coalition between various actors, society, governments, and businesses. Nevertheless, Mr. Jonas the representative of DMO Middelfart has noticed that the DMO has a primary role of intermediary between small enterprises and external destinations, and is also a facilitator of various collaborative processes among these stakeholders:

‘We collaborate clearly with Nature Park as we do with Visit Fredericia, as we do with the Destination Little Belt. We try to work closely (..) it’s mainly us who has direct contact with operators. So, if the Nature Park or Destination Little Belt they want us to arrange a whale watching trip on a certain day then we surely can do that (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Sheehan (2007) suggested, that DMOs are significant to the marketing of tourism in a region. Consequently, the DMO plays multiple roles, including acting as an interface among private sector enterprises, and public area tourism initiatives, as well as product development and visitor services (Sheehan, 2007). Accordingly, the DMOs will include the most representative products in their collaboration practices. In line with this idea, Ms. Verena the representative of DMO Fredericia has observed, that whale watching, is a unique selling point for the destination and a brand in itself, thus it is included in its collaborative practices:

‘It is up to us who we want to include really (..) And then we are sitting down so what is the best to offer because in that collaboration is all about having Legoland and as the key thing to come here, but having all of us to get them to stay here longer (..) we are kind of looking at our destination and then taking all the things that are most interesting for children travelling and families and then bringing them into that collaboration (..) it’s only us who have the contact with them’ (Verena).

In support of this, Pike et al (2014) suggested that the focus of DMO actions is implementing and constructing marketing communication plans that can match the resources of a destination with the opportunities of the market. According to Spotts (1997), destination resources can be seen as anything that can attract visitors to the destination. Consequently, whale watching is included in market communication and thus can attract a wider range of tourists. However, the DMO representative of Fredericia Ms. Verena argued that the DMO needs to know well the tourist products and services that they will market. Moreover, the offered products at a destination should be qualitative otherwise, the DMO can lose their future credibility in relation to their partners and tourists. Furthermore, a whale watching tour that it doesn't meet the standards and expectations could damage the whale watching brand:

“We at this point are sitting together with the boat owners and already now before everything happens to talk about how what kind of product is it that we want to offer (..) I think as a tourism organization and if we market it we have some kind of responsibility to know what he offers (..) it would be better for our marketing, because that way we can know you know to make sure that is a quality product that we offer” (Verena).

In support of this, Viassone (2015) argued that lack of value and trust, and other factors such as lack of legal structure and poor planning could impede the collaboration of stakeholders in the tourism industry at a destination. Furthermore, Sigala & Marinidis (2010) argued that the destination management is considered a collaborative process which requires the destination marketing organizations to match the various interests of different actors and at the same time involving them in various decision making. Accordingly, the DMO representative of Middelfart Mr. Jonas suggested that the whale watching operators make use of the online booking system, and consequently, they are also involved in decision making regarding the schedule, hours of departures etc:

“We are having this online booking portal in which whale watching tourists will be able to book online. So yes, maybe we are the coordinators, but we try to of course we try to involve the operators themselves when we agree when we want to depart, when they want to do the trips and so on” (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Pike et al. (2014:209) argued that the DMO needs to identify current resources at a destination that depict possible *“sources of comparative advantage in the various markets of interest to stakeholders”*.

However, several researchers suggested that a DMO needs to be seen as legitimate by all the stakeholders in order to be able to represent their interests at a destination (Dacin, Oliver & Roy, 2007; Hybels, 1995). Consequently, it has been acknowledged that the DMOs Fredericia and Middelfart are coordinating different activities involving whale watching stakeholders at Little Belt:

‘‘We can only provide the location where we can sit down and agree on how we are going to do things and serve a cup of coffee and food’’ (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Elbe & Emmeth (2014), argued that the DMO represents the tourism industry, and at the same time has its own goals. However, although the DMO is perceived as legitimate by actors in the whale watching industry at Little Belt, the respondents have suggested that the DMO cannot solve issues between actors, but only facilitate their dialogue, for instance by providing a specific location for their meeting:

‘‘They don’t really cooperate (..)We are trying to get them to meet each other and let’s agree on how we are going to do this because it will benefit all of us if we can agree on how to (..) we are not the ones who can tell them it has to cost like’’ (Jonas).

Nevertheless, Elbe & Emmeth (2014) noticed that the DMO needs to be seen morally and pragmatically legitimate, so as to be able to organize stakeholder’s assets. Moreover, the respondents suggested that the DMO has the responsibility to assist the various whale watching development processes at a destination so that to ensure its sustainability and future success. However, this aspect is only at a theoretical stage for whale watching industry at Little Belt. Nevertheless, the DMO representative of Fredericia has acknowledged its importance and the necessity to act in this direction:

‘‘The tourism organization we have the responsibility in terms of looking at the development and maybe see well now we have 4 we might have to sit down with someone who knows about whales and see if there is maximum capacity maybe’’ (Verena).

Furthermore, according to Mr. Johnas, the DMO representative of Middelfart, the whale watching stakeholders at Little Belt must try to collaborate among themselves and find solutions to various issues such as price, time and how to better represent the whale watching brand. Thus, they can stay competitive in the market:

‘‘I will say that they are trying to collaborate (..) For their own good and for the good of the whale watching product’’ (Jonas).

Moreover, the development of whale watching activity at Little Belt, more than often depends on the stakeholders themselves:

“Right now, it’s good as it is and if it needs some sort of development, I would say that it’s up to the operators themselves to” (Jonas).

In support of this Byrd (2007) suggested that through working together the collaboration might result in combining stakeholders’ capabilities and wealth of knowledge. Moreover, Huxham (1996) argued that tourism collaboration is a comparable form of governance which requires the successful collaboration of various actors of the industry. The goal of this subchapter was to analyze the role of the DMOs Fredericia and Middelfart in the collaborative processes of various stakeholders in the whale watching industry. The respondents have acknowledged that the primary role of the DMO in whale watching industry at Little Belt is that of facilitator and coordinator. However, it has been argued that various issues of the whale watching industry can be solved only by the operators themselves. Consequently, the development of the whale watching industry depends on them and how they conduct their operations and how they cooperate among themselves. This is in accordance with the idea that the non-cooperative behavior of different stakeholders could lead to poor management of a tourism activity (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016).

6.12. Private and Public Partnerships

The present subchapter will look at private-public partnerships (PPP) and their effectiveness for the development of the destination Little Belt and whale watching industry in particular. Moreover, this section aims to understand how the private and public partners interact in marketing the region’s attractions, among them the whale watching activity, and how it helps it grow on the markets.

According to Sai et al (2015), the tourism sector needs to boost its promotion and marketing practices in order to become more efficient. In this respect, the most effective tool is considered the cooperation between central actors in the industry realized through private and public partnerships. Consequently, private-public partnerships usually involve a contract between two institutions, a private party and a public institution, in which various risks such as the financial, operational and technical risks in the design, are undertaken by the private party. With regards to Little Belt, the Aventura boat operator Mr. Henrik has acknowledged the importance of the

collaboration that whale watching operators, as well as various stakeholders in Middelfart, have with the Union in Middelfart which is a private party:

“ We have lots of members here boats, museum lots of members with different activities diving and you can hire boats as well different boats and go out (..) they are sitting here, and we have the board for members (..) We have the Municipality Middelfart Community Municipality pay 1 million per hour (..)as members we are paying over here (..) so the booking office book the tickets 10% sending in (..) we are not sitting so formal” (Henrik).

In a similar vein, McBoyle & Martin (2006) argued that many times public and private partners engage in collaborative practices in order to gain financial support. Moreover, Miočić et al. (2016), has argued that in the last decade, the destination marketing companies have moved closer to public administration thus changing their role into actors that manage the public and private partnerships. Furthermore, Public-private partnerships are aimed to emphasize the role of two constituent parts in the development of a society, economic development and enhancement of competitiveness (Miočić et al., 2016). Consequently, Grigorescu (2008), has argued for the need for effective communication between both parties public and private. In a similar vein, Mr. Neils the Nature Park representative has argued that when two parties are working effectively and communicating, all the stakeholders will benefit and eventually will unite their efforts and merge into a single entity. Accordingly, the whale watching product is a good selling point for the destination, and its quality could be enhanced through its association with Nature Park Little Belt:

“You can say that Destination and Nature Park we are very close together. We are like brothers now. So, we are working very tight together. And I think perhaps in some years we will be melting together. I think Nature Park is a stronger trademark than a destination. Nature and whales the whale tourism it sells better” (Niels).

This is in accordance with the idea that public-private partnerships is a type of commercial innovation, and it advocates innovation and efficiency of reaching goals with fewer resources (Hall, 2000). In a similar vein, Vaidyanathan & Scott (2012), have suggested that public-private partnerships are attainable through building sharing values where all actors make a compromise aimed at social and economic benefits. Thus, DMOs must correlate with the private sector and local authorities in order to create public-private structures (Serra et al., 2016). Consequently, the DMO representative of Middelfart has noticed that an efficient collaboration between public and private actors could lead to shared benefits.

“ It started because we are located close to each other and the bridge walking (..) It’s also our unique selling point for both Middelfart and Fredericia (..) So, it’s something that we are both proud of (..) it makes sense that we work together because we are located so close to each other and we can benefit from each other” (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Vijayanand (2013) noticed that professionalism, productivity, and competitiveness could increase through various efficient alliances. Accordingly, the DMO representative of Fredericia has acknowledged that the public-private partnerships at Little Belt can be effective to a destination and also to a tourism activity such as whale watching. For example, both partners public and private although they are different in architecture, they still can benefit from this partnership (e.g. balancing costs):

‘ In the Middelfart they have they are funded by the local government, but they are run by the board. So, they are financed by memberships from the tourism providers. So, they get the money mainly from partnerships and local governments (..) We are the department in the local government (..) We can market all our public partners or our partners at no cost and on the other side, they have to pay money to be marketed. Then we kind of tried to balance out our system so that we can also take a little amount of money from our partners whoever wants to be communicated to the tourists (..) But we are you know just different” (Verena)

In support of this, Augustyn & Knowles (2000) have argued that in order for a public-private partnership to be successful, the actors’ interests should be respected, and all the stakeholders should be equally involved in the decision making. However, Ashley et al. (2005) suggested that during the years, PPP in the tourism industry has encountered legal issues and delays. Consequently, a PPP is seen mainly as a partnership between an organization and government, where the private partners are expected to offer linkages (Ashley et al, 2005). Nevertheless, Wilson (2009), has argued that through careful management the major differences between public and private actors could be avoided. Accordingly, Mr. Jonas the representative of DMO Middelfart has noticed the existence of some issues connected to PPP, mostly derived from the differences in the structure of the two DMOs. Accordingly, the DMO in Fredericia is public thus has a political element, and the DMO in Middelfart is private. Hence, in the future these differences could lead to issues related to the way of doing things:

‘ One barrier is of course that Fredericia, for example, is a political organization and we are private, and we have some differences that we try to overcome. We work together (..) The

political way of doing things in Fredericia we don't have to rely on political influence because we are a private organization so that is one barrier of course'' (Jonas).

Nevertheless, Ms. Verena, the representative of DMO Fredericia has argued that the political aspect of the public organization is not regarded as a barrier to collaboration. Accordingly, the public party does not depend on funds from their members, but from the local government which is more stable. Thus, they will have a financial advantage, for instance, the whale watching boat operators are not required to contribute financially in order to have whale watching tours from Fredericia:

'' We are still two different parties and we are dependent on the membership money you know you could argue that since Henrik is also on our side, we can split the money. We could but we don't, and I don't think that we want to. We just accept that they got them first so that's fine. And we just leaving it at that because we are quite lucky here because we are the local government, we are not dependent on the funds that we get from members. I think our funding is more secure than that on the other side of the bridge. So that way you know we can be the bigger person you know just to keep the money'' (Verena).

In a similar vein, Rubies (2001) has suggested that most of the time disagreements between private and public partners are related to the fact the private sector is not always satisfied with the performance and efforts of the public sector and vice versa. Moreover, Ms. Verena, representative of the DMO in Fredericia has suggested that there are many other benefits of the PPPs, such as being challenged to look broader to the issues of the tourism sector in general and whale watching in particular:

'' I think it's the reach that you can have and also for us who work it just gives so much more because we are not many people who work with it and if you are working all by yourself(..)But when you always have someone who challenges you and have some different opinions and some different insights you can have you know you look a little bit broader'' (Verena).

Furthermore, a wider tourism audience could be reached by uniting public and private partners' capabilities. Therefore, the destination's attractions would reach further, for example, whale watching as one unique tourist product would be promoted in a more efficient way:

''I think it just gives opportunity in terms of how far we reach in terms of tourism. tourists, we can reach a lot more tourists because we are putting our money together and also it gives us a lot of working in our daily life. It's just nice to have colleagues on the other side I can call. I

am not the only one that has to do the website I can call my colleagues and say hey what do you think (laugh). So that's really great'' (Verena).

In support of this, NG and Wong (2006), noticed that the adoption of PPP could bring a series of benefits for the tourism industry such as cost-effectiveness, better performances, and competitiveness, and better consumers' satisfaction. In a similar vein, the respondents have argued that by using the resources together for a common goal, more people would be attracted to a destination to experience whale watching tours and other attraction of the specific destination:

‘‘We are reaching more tourists and we are able to use our resources together on the same goal. You know we want to attract the same people (..) if they come to Fredericia on the first time and hopefully, they go to Middelfart to experience whale watching, and other things here. And the other way around’’ (Jonas).

However, Guzman & Sierra (2012) has suggested that one goal for the tourism industry at a destination would be to identify the major challenges that could affect the viability of PPP, and the understand the differences in perception of the two parties. In a similar vein, the DMO representative of Middelfart Mr. Jonas has argued that public-private partnership at Little Belt doesn't lack issues and uncertainties due to the political element that could affect its future development:

‘‘Some things are happening in the future and we are awaiting what will happen (..) it's political (..) Visit Denmark is a political organization. And all the different offices as we are one visit office, for example, it's up to the community to decide how we will do things and it's going to be a private union or we it's going to be a government (..) A lot of this is a political decision’’ (Jonas).

In a similar vein, Guzman & Sierra (2012) has acknowledged the existence of several challenges that might hinder the fruitful implementation of PPPs, such as the legal and policy aspects, lack of capital, risk management, the participants' behaviors and lack of expertise of some of the stakeholders. Consequently, the representative of the DMO Middelfart has argued that due to the collaboration of all the stakeholders and through public and private partnerships in the tourism industry at Little Belt, the whole destination has benefited and also the whale watching industry in particular. Thus, its present status, as a more developed industry is mostly due to the collaborative processes of various stakeholders:

‘‘We have a wide range of things to do and things to promote to the tourists. We have a wide range of reasons to go here (..) that we will not have if we did not collaborate’’ (Jonas).

This subchapter has discussed the private-public partnership at Little Belt, and which are the implications that derive for the destination in general and for the whale watching industry in particular. It has been acknowledged that even though the PPP is considered antagonistic in character (Sinh et al., 2017), this aspect doesn't represent a barrier in the effective collaboration among both parties. On the contrary, it has been argued that both partners can benefit from their differences, for instance by effectively managing their resources and uniting their financial efforts to reach more markets and more partners so that larger audience will know about whale watching activity and other attractions at the destination etc.

7. Conclusions

The findings of this study have shown the current state of whale watching industry in Little Belt, and the main aspects of the collaborative approaches among various stakeholders. As well as the challenges, issues, and benefits of stakeholder collaboration and their impact on the development of the whale watching industry. It can be argued that without the inclusion of all the stakeholders connected to the tourism industry, the whale watching wouldn't have reached its present potential. Moreover, harbour porpoises are seen as ambassadors, the symbol of Little Belt, and represent an attraction in itself. However, the whale watching operators do not have sufficient resources to promote themselves through internal and external channels and reach a broader audience. Thus, the multiple collaborative practices associated with whale watching and various tourism activities that they perform have helped them grow on the internal and external market. However, these collaborations are not without issues. Accordingly, the boat operators are cooperating and at the same time, they are competing among each other. Moreover, issues connected to communication, quality of the services and price are not missing. Therefore, the respondents have argued that more attention should be paid to these issues in order to remain competitive in the market. Furthermore, this research has uncovered the existence of a communication gap between diverse stakeholders regarding the collaborative practices related to whale watching industry. Consequently, this paper suggests that the communication and co-production approach can play an important role to drive the stakeholders' engagement in whale watching collaboration. Additionally, it could be argued that through various informal networks, whale watching tourism could be the source of some durable collaborations and cooperation among DMOs and many other tourism-related

stakeholders, but also among different boat operators, for example through transferring clients and also sharing of information about the localization of harbour porpoises. However, this research has acknowledged the fact, that whale watching tourism is facing many challenges in the region of Little Belt. It could be argued that one challenge is the data knowledge gap. Accordingly, the author had difficulties in obtaining data about the industry due to the lack of information about whale watching tourism in Denmark. Consequently, due to the fact that whale watching is not licensed or regulated, it was difficult to obtain enough information on the number of operators and the real capacity of this industry. Nevertheless, the researcher has been informed of the existence of four official whale watching operators, with Aventura boat operator being the main actor in the whale watching industry.

Additionally, the findings suggested that the whale watching industry in Little Belt has grown relatively rapidly over the last years in the region of Little Belt. However, the respondents have argued for the lack of management the of whale watching tourism, hence the need for this aspect to be addressed in the near future. Accordingly, the management issues are common for many other whale watching industries (Parsons, 2012). Consequently, the findings suggested that there are too many vessels at Little Belt offering whale watching tours although it is not easy to confirm how many boats are involved in this activity, due to the fact that many locals have their own boats, and many are offering whale watching tours. For instance, the author has discussed with several locals who confirmed that whale watching tours are common in the region, and one restaurant was providing vessels for whale watching tours. Hence, the difficulty in determining the number of boats involved in the industry could indicate a management problem (Parsons, 2012). However, in order to determine the exact carrying capacity of this industry future studies are needed. Moreover, by knowing the carrying capacity of the industry would help the industry to develop in a sustainable way (Higham et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the present study has investigated stakeholder involvement in collaborative marketing approaches for tourism development. Particularly, collaborative marketing perspectives that engage different significant stakeholders of the industry (boat operators, the Nature Park, DMOs, the government) were discussed. Accordingly, the findings of this research have shown that a collaborative marketing process where various goals are balanced could be a strategic tool to achieve growth in the destination and in whale watching industry in particular. Therefore, this project argues for the importance of communication approach in which various stakeholders work together to cultivate a collaborative marketing perspective. Additionally, it has been argued that many challenges and issues could arise from a lack of fair

communication of different stakeholders and sometimes lack of commitment to collaborative engagements of some operators in the whale watching industry. Furthermore, based on various actors' insights, this project aims to add some value to the research on stakeholder collaboration and tourism development, by investigating if there are linkages between stakeholder collaboration and the development of a tourism industry. Consequently, by recognizing that collaboration could be important for a tourism activity and by explaining how it is correlated with tourism growth, this study has emphasized that collaboration and development of a tourism industry could be interdependent and also interconnected.

8. Suggestions for future research

This study has uncovered some aspects of whale watching industry in the region of Little Belt in relation to collaborative practices among various stakeholders in the tourism industry and the respective outcome for the industry. However, it is acknowledged the need for further studies in order to uncover the variety of aspects of the whale watching industry at this destination. Consequently, for future studies, it is recommended to look into sustainability issues of the whale watching industry and analyze what role plays the collaboration of different stakeholders in this respect. Accordingly, Miočić et al (2016) have noticed that in order to provide sustainable development of a tourism industry it is required that both social and economic aspects and all the elements of the destination be optimized and at the same time to consider ecological constraints.

Another element to consider in future studies is the development of land-based whale watching tourism and which are the issues and collaborative processes that are taking place at the moment in connection to it. The research has acknowledged that currently, land-based whale watching is in its incipient form in Little Belt. However, it has shown that could be successfully performed in the respective region. Moreover, even though at present there is a small platform in Middelfart from which land-based whale watching is carried out, there are still many visitors who are attracted to it. Additionally, this platform is equipped with a unique installation for hearing the underwater sounds of Little Belt, respectively the clicking sounds of harbour porpoises, and with a binocular which offers the possibility to see harbour porpoises. Consequently, the interviews with the Nature Park representatives, have surfaced the fact that at present the Nature Park is working on a project to develop many whale watching platforms along the coast of Little Belt, which would include Fredericia, Middelfart and Kolding municipalities.

Furthermore, another aspect that should be considered in future studies is how whale watching tourism brings value to a destination and through what elements (e.g. an educational aspect of the whale watching industry). Accordingly, Luck (2003) has noticed that education and perception are significant elements of fulfilling tourism experience, particularly those which involve wildlife and take place in natural surroundings. Hence, it is important to analyze in the future how the collaboration of different actors can enhance this educational component, which according to Mayers & Richins (2008) it is an important feature of a tour and could boost visitor satisfaction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Semi-structured Interview guides

1. Questions' guide for DMO in Middelfart. Mr. Jonas Grønlund Eriksen

Which is the state of the industry in the region?

Do you think if whale watching brings value to the destination?

How do you reach your target audience?

Can we talk about development at this stage, development of the industry or is it a still young industry?

Connected also to whale watching which are the challenges of the industry?

Can we talk about development at this stage, development of the industry or is it a still young industry?

How do you overcome the challenges, issues?

How do you collaborate with the DMOs and other stakeholders and boat operators?

Do you also have a role of coordinator?

Which are the benefits of whale watching and the collaboration?

Which would be the problems for the collaboration with other stakeholders?

How do you collaborate with the DMO in Fredericia?

Do you have a strategy in place when collaborating with boat operators?

What can you tell me about the partnership with Legoland?

What kind of collaboration do you have with your partners and other stakeholders in connection also with whale watching?

Do you collaborate with other DMOs and DSB?

Can we talk about communication between you and operators and between the DMOs? Like when you have issues problems do you communicate them?

Is the community involved in the collaboration?

What can you tell me about the regulation and whale watching?

How do you collaborate with Nature Park?

What are the barriers for collaboration?

How do the visitors reach to you?

What would be the difference between the last year and this year? What will you do differently let's say?

How did you start the collaboration with the DMO in Fredericia? How can you describe this collaboration as a PPP collaboration?

Which would be the factors that can affect the collaboration?

Can we talk about a need for more collaboration?

Do you think that whale watching industry will be here without collaboration?

How do you see whale watching in five, ten years-time?

Is whale watching bringing value like education, employment what do you think?

What can be done for more effective collaboration?

What would be the consequences for non-collaboration?

Where do you want to be in the near future?

2. Questions' guide for DMO in Fredericia. Ms. Verena Maria Obertopp Knudsen

What is the current state of play of whale watching in Little Belt?

Does whale watching bring value to the destination?

Do you know which would be the problems, challenges and opportunities of whale watching tourism here?

Do you know if there is regulation in place for whale watching?

Can collaboration of different stakeholders in the region help develop the industry and also develop the destination in general?

What collaboration do you have with the DMO in Mddelfart, is it a marketing collaboration, can you describe it?

What are the differences of both DMOs?

Can we talk about Private and Public partnerships?

Do you collaborate with whale watching operators?

How do you communicate with the partners, do you have a good communication?

What kind of collaboration do you have with your partners, formal or informal?

What do you know about Destination Little Belt project?

What are the challenges, barriers and opportunities when you collaborate with other stakeholders, boat operators and DMOs?

Do you also collaborate with internal and external partners, like DSB?

What do you know about the collaboration between Nature Park and the boat owners?

What do you know about the Nature Day?

Do you know about partnerships in connection to whale watching, what partnerships are formed?

How do these alliances contribute to the field of marketing and management of tourism?

Do you have any strategy in connection to whale watching?

What goals do you have in terms of whale watching?

Is DMO playing the role of a coordinator for whale watching operators?

How do you see whale watching in 10 years-time?

Which are your recommendations for a better collaboration in connection to whale watching?

3. **Questions' guide for boat operators. Mr. Henrik Traugott-Olsen, Aventura boat owner**

How did you start whale watching in this area?

What is whale watching, what aspects does it have (for example educational why)?

Which is the target market for whale watching?

Do you think that whale watching brings value to the destination and how?

With whom do you collaborate when you do whale watching?

What collaborations do you have? With what actors do you collaborate?

What kind of collaboration is this, formal or informal and why?

How can you describe formal and informal collaboration here?

How do you decide to collaborate with other stakeholders, for example Legoland? How do you work with Legoland?

What can you tell me about Nature Day, do you collaborate with Nature Park in connection to this?

What collaboration do you have with Nature Park?

How do you collaborate with other boat owners?

How do you collaborate with the Destination Little Belt, with the DMOs in Middelfart and Fredericia?

When you are marketing and advertising do you also work with the DMO?

Do you collaborate with DSB?

What are the benefits and opportunities for the collaborations?

What barriers and problems do you encounter while collaborating?

What would be the challenges of the collaborations and for the industry?

What partners do you have can you describe these partnerships?

How do you see whale watching in 10 years-time here?

What strategy do you have while doing whale watching?

What can you tell me about the regulation here?

Is the community involved in the whale watching activity? Do you collaborate with them as well?

What can be done to bring more tourists?

4. **Questions' guide boat operators. Skipper Line Jepsen, owner of Mira 3**

What do you know about whale watching here?

How did you decide to start as a whale watching operator?

What do you think, which are the challenges and opportunities for whale watching and for you as a whale watching operator?

How do you collaborate with the DMO?

How do you collaborate with other boat operators?

How do intend to promote the whale watching activity?

Do you know if the tourist office makes the promotion and how do they do it?

Do you also promote on your own?

Do you intend to collaborate with Nature Park?

With who else do you collaborate?

Do you know if there are regulations connected to whale watching?

Do you have a strategy in connection with how will you do whale watching and other activities?

Do you think if whale watching brings value to the destination?

Do you know if the community is involved?

5. **Questions guide for Nature Park representatives. Mr. Niels Ole Præstbro**

What is your opinion about whale watching in the region?

What role has played collaboration in the development of whale watching tourism?

What kind of collaboration do you have and with whom?

Is it formal or informal collaboration?

Which are the challenges for this collaboration?

What kind of collaboration do you have with Aventura?

Is the community involved in the collaboration?

Do you know if people in Denmark are aware of whales here?

What other collaborations do you have?

What other partnerships do you intend for the future? Who would you like to involve in collaboration?

How do you collaborate with whale watching operators on Nature Day in Middelfart?

Do you have a strategy in place when you collaborate for example with whale watching operators?

What kind of collaboration & partnership do you have with them?

Can whale watching help in the development of the destination?

Is collaboration of different stakeholders help the development of the industry?

Are any barriers for the collaboration?

What are the benefits for collaboration in connection with whale watching?

What kind of agreements do you have with Mr. Henrik on Aventura?

What do you think, how whale watching will look in ten or five years-time?

6. Questions guide for Nature Park representative. Ms. Annette Weiss

How can you describe whale watching in the region?

Can we talk about land-based whale watching here?

Can you tell me more about the Listening Station project?

Do you have any collaboration with boat owners, for example with Aventura on Nature Day?

What do you know about the collaboration behind this project Little Belt Underwater Listening Station?

What kind of boats have boat operators and how do they impact?

Do you know about regulation?

How do you see whale watching in the future?

What do you know about the collaboration between Nature Park and the boat owners?

Do you know if community is aware and involved?

Do you know if there are problems in relation to whale watching in the region?

How do you see whale watching in the future here?

What can be done to improve whale watching here?

Appendix 2: Henrik Traugott-Olsen Interview

Aventura whale watching boat operator. Conducted on 13th of November 2018

<http://www.galeasen-aventura.dk/>

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: H (Henrik Traugott-Olsen)

M. (the researcher introduces herself) My name is Marina and I study at Aalborg University. Right now, I am writing my master thesis about whale watching in Little Belt. And I want to see if through collaboration whale watching will attain growth and will have a future in the region and maybe it will be an example for other destinations. First of all, I would like to know about the whale watching here in Little Belt, in Middelfart. How did you start it?

H. (Mr. Henrik introduces himself) My name is Henrik T and I own my ship Aventura for several years since 2001. I took it with my oldest son, so we own it together but, and I am sailing the ship and I used the ship from before, I sailed it from 1984 besides my job. And when we took over, we have been sailing every year until now. And from 2001 we begun with whale watching and in the first 5 years we had 90% guarantee for observation of the harbour porpoises and later on I am giving a 100% for whale observer on 3 hours trip from Middelfart. It has never failed, from 3 animals to 90-100 on a trip. And all the trips begin with a presentation in Danish and when we have guests from other countries in English. So, we make two groups on the ship and we inform about the ship and safety on the ship, and then a short information about how whales look like and when come on the surface, and how to be a good whale watcher. And when the first animals are spotted, I tell about whale hunting whale behaviour in Danish waters, the whale hunting in Midelfart 300 years ago for lamp oil and oilskin, whale behaviour. And also, about whale hunters' guild here where and when they hunted South of Middelfart.

M. It has an education aspect?

H. Yes

M. They also learn about whales

H. and I also tell about enemies of whales and how we protect them. That's what we say on three hours trip.

M. How did you start the project, or the idea just came to you?

H. Yes, it just crossed my mind. In 1964 when I moved to Lille Solyst Gamborg Fjord, Little Belt at the coast, next to my neighbour Egon Neumann. He told me and showed me footage from the last organized whale hunting period 1940-1945. Daily I was fishing eels with fish traps until 1968 and meet the whales every day. I serviced in the Navy from 1964 and from 1968 working with dredging sand and stones from the seabed. From 1984 helping on Aventura still observing whales. So, I've been out in waters for so many years and I have seen whales so. When we took over Aventura in 2001, I came in connection with Blue Flags. Blue Flag activity it is organized by Middelfart Municipality. And when they put up a blue flag on the beach, they have demands every year to keep the flag on the beach for water tests dissemination minimum five blue flag activities. Then they asked me if I could go for whale observing with guests with the grants from the pool Bla Flag.

M. How many years ago did happen this?

H. 2001

M. Almost 18 years ago.

H. Yes exactly. So, it began slowly with two trips in July 2001 with 3 hours and I think we had 30 guests on every trip.

M. In the beginning?

H. Yes, so 60 guests on the water.

M. And in the first year how much time?

H. Only two weeks, and now it went on and this year 2018 we had 714 guests directly booking on scheduled whale watching in July, August and September as listed in scheduled Oversight for nationalities 2018. And from here (showing diagrams) you can get which nationality it's from whole Europe.

M. And which are prevailing countries? Most of them from what countries do they come?

H. Mostly Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy.

M. Western Europe mostly?

H. And few from Sweden, Norway and from Russia and China. So, we spread around.

M. On Chinese market?

H. But that was for people who booked directly individual. For groups there was in 2018, 3399 guests on the tours the whole year booked as a whole groups. So totally we have 4113 guests for whale watching.

M. So not all of them book directly some of them come here and decide directly?

H. That was 740 guests that is individual. And now come a lot of groups now. In the first 5-6 years whale watching didn't gave deficits. But I continued because I saw individual booked guests showing up next year booking as group for example celebration birthdays in their family, firm as personal care, associations looking for experiences in the nature, school classes for teaching etc. For most groups they have there on purpose for the day and asked if we could combine for example birthday celebration and whale watching by using listening equipment. And they were only 580 guests on the ship this year for other activities. For ash spreading for example. It was transporting or fishing trips. So, people are mainly booking for whale watching now.

M. so it is a trend in whale watching as a marine tourism activity?

H. Yes, the brand got very strong now.

M. Do you think that whale watching brings value to the destination?

H. Absolutely yes. It shows 714 guests individual. More than half is from abroad. So that is good value.

M. How do you reach to them? Do you have your own site? I mean how do you promote whale watching?

H. A lot of channels.

M. Do you have many channels?

H. Yes. My channel to reach the guests is jungle drum guest. A guest that has been here years ago and comes again. Some guests bring their neighbour or family. It's like this coming up and going out.

M. You provide unique experiences that is why they keep coming back.

H. That is true. And, that is for individuals.

M. By the way what jungle drums guest means?

H. Poka ponk (making sounds like a drum). When one is talking to another.

M. Ah ok! Like word of mouth let's say?

H. Yes exactly.

M. And do you collaborate with different actors?

H. First we collaborate with Visit Little Belt. It is collaboration Fredericia, Middelfart and Kolding. Mostly Fredericia and Middelfart. And that was in the beginning. And then it developed to destination Legoland. They ask if we could go in their system with happy pass.

M. ok.

H. And we are the only destination with ships as a happy pass destination Legoland.

M. How do you collaborate with them. Do you have formal or informal collaboration?

H. It was just informal. We had some meetings and set down and made agreements and we had no paper.

M. So it was mostly informal based on mutual trust?

H. Yes trust. So, they trust me they trust the guarantee for whales a 100%.

M. I see. And how did you decide to collaborate with them? BY yourself?

H. Legoland was asking if I could do it with my ship.

M. so they came up with the idea?

H. Yes. Of course, in connection with Visit Little Belt. Because I have from the beginning. It was hard work to book individuals because it was made by hands. Later on, 10 years ago we made this booking system book a ticket so the guest can book and if we can not go out they can get their money back.

M. so you are booking through Little Belt booking system of the tourism office the destination page?

H. Yes Visit Little Belt is booking tickets.

M. and how do you collaborate with them? Is it again informal or formal collaboration? Do you have contracts with them so that they can promote your activity?

H. Yes, they can. And we just had some meetings now and prepared for the next season. And when we will sail. We have another ship that will also be going out. And it came late in the system and we cooperate because we try to place our ships, so we can cover the whole week all days. So, I am going out Mondays now and Tuesdays and Mira goes Wednesday and maybe Sundays I don't know yet.

M. So You can also go out twice per day or once per day or it depends?

H. Normally when we go on Visit Little Belt you can book ..we only open the first trip from 10-13. If it is full it opens for 13-16 and if it is full it opens for 13-19. Because that is our experience. If we open all three trips, we can get 5 persons on each and it won't work.

M. I see.

H. So we can fill the ships now.

M. that is great you are going out to sea and you are sure that.

H. Yes, we have tried the system before and it won't work. And have something for the guests also. When they are sitting five it is not fun on the ship.

M. It is better when many.

H. Yes, they can talk.

M. That is true.

H. And we are advertising in the tourism magazine and here you can go on the web site and find all this. And we are going out. That's the main stream. And we have meetings frequently with personnel from Visit Little Belt Middelfart and Fredericia and we adjust the system.

M. So all participate and decide how to do it?

H. Yes.

M. So that everybody gains something from this?

H. Yes and the same with other kind of trips and man sailing trips for sales and people can take, and it is not rented against the whales but of course. And we have another organization Du Glemmer Det Aldring. Never forget it another organization.

M. Do you collaborate with them?

H. And they are getting tickets on the ship too

M. and this is done, again through the DMO? With whom do they interact to do this?

H. They are calling me ask tickets from me and then we book it so that's another kind of organization.

M. But again is it informal or formal collaboration?

H. It is formal. This is the only one formal.

M. Ok.

H. Depends on how much I can get and how they tell me which picture and so on.

M. I see.

H. It is more formal.

M. Is The only one with contract?

H. Yes. I also have partnerships with Little Friends

M. Is this an organization here in Little Belt?

H. Yes, it is here Little Friends at Little Belt.

M. what kind of organization is this

H. and also the Nature Park Little Belt.

M. In connection to this one I have seen that you have Nature Day. There is a Nature Day, Nature Park

H. Yes Nature Park

M and you organize a day nature Day and somebody comes here and talk about whales?

H. I could. We have got schools and we call them high schools. It is volunteer education for grown up people... telling about the whales.

M. Ok.

H. So we have another channel to reach the guests. I have worked earlier with them much more than today. My connection to South Danish University, Arhus and Copenhagen University. We cooperate with Fjord and Belt. They have one communication centre at the Ministry of education. And it is another part of Fjord and Belt Research Department Industry of Research. And the personnel has been on the ship to see how it goes on. So, they bring people to the ship when they meet guests on the centre. And I am doing the other way.

M. You started to work with them as well?

H. Yes earlier. And we had studied whales I had one PHD on my ship.

M. I read in the paper about this. So, they were studying whales' behaviour and at the same time you were having ships with tourists, right?

H. Yes and they got on the deck and told tourists about whales.

M. Ok.

H. And at the same time they were observing the whales.

M. That's amazing.

H. So here we have tourists looking over the shoulders of the scientists.

M. Watching over the shoulder and see what they were doing?

H. Yes.

M. Maybe there will be research about whales and you will continue with them

H. Yes.

M. And now do you have any connections with them?

H. I don't. They had troubles to run the system out there. So, they stopped I can see that they had done all the efforts to get to run it again. So there has been no possibility to come here. But for the new season I will talk with them again. With the new director. She is going another way and I will say hello.

M. Good luck will be advantageous.

H. And the Research Centre it is more for sea dogs, seals

M. Ahh for seals.

H. For seals than for harbour porpoises

M. Ok.

H. So, but we can do to look up for whales.

M. Yes because researchers on the boat may make the tour more interesting let's say in a way.

H. yes. So, I meet people at the harbour going to see ships and suddenly they stand as guests.

M. They decide on the same day that they want to take the trip?

H. No next week maybe.

M. another trip for whale watching?

H. I could have it.

M. Ok good luck!

H. But I am sending people for other boats when I am filled up.

M Ok so you also collaborate with other boat owners.

H. Yes, every time

M. and you also collaborate with Middelfart Museum?

H. Yes because the guests the ticket is also for the museum. So guests that have been on the water can go up and see how the whales was hunted and what was going on.

M. And it was during the summer noticed on the site that the ticket included also this visit to the museum. The ticket for whale watching.

H. Yes.

M. Thank you (pause. Mr Henrik brought a book). So it is about Middelfart Museum here (pointing to an image)?

H. Yes

M. You also collaborate with them

H. Yes

M. And again what kind of collaboration?

H. also before we were working together how do you call it..

M. Whale watching or whale hunting?

H. The history of whale hunting. And once a year I have meetings for the reception and conference and all hotels in Middelfart and Kolding. And I am telling how whale watching is going on

M. Ok!

H. Because they sale it and their guests on the conference they want to do something more.

M. and as you said you also collaborate with Nature Park?

H. Yes.

M. what kind of collaboration is this? How can you describe it?

H. That is quite new. It is formal because they need partners to get the support from the EU.

M. Funding?

H. Funding yes.

M. Ok!

H. and here in February I was out with the mayor from the community and brought out the stone and marked it. And it was also the Nature Park. That was the beginning. So that is all until now. But the though is we will make some organized trips out in the Park to fjord. Just like they do in other nature parks. But is in the beginning

M. So you are now in the process of.

H. Yes developing.

M. Developing how to do it?

H. How to do it. But I think, when you are going out whale watching we talk that is about Nature Park.

M. In this case they will have like representatives on the boat? Let's say.

H. I don't know.

M. You still don't know?

H. I will just tell about fjord Belt and inform about it.

M. Which would be the benefits for you for example for whale watching, like opportunities will it affect the development of whale watching the collaboration.. if everybody gets together and work together?

H. One thing... Now the next ship has more guests because it has two hours.

M. Do you mean the other boat?

H. So I think Firstly I say it is whales it doesn't work like this Because we call it Danish messy situation

M. Tourism?

H. I say it will be bad for the area. Because we have to, its unique what we have here. So close among the whales here so they are running around and will disturb whales, I think so.

M. Aha! So mass tourism could be damaging

H. I think so. Also, I think the quality. If we don't have.

M. Standards?

H. Standards, yes for what we are telling and what we are not telling. And how we are doing it. I was on holidays in Azores last year. And I was out on a whale watching trip

M. where is this?

H. Azores South Atlantic

M. Ahh Azores ok!

H. Yes.

M. Whale watching is a big industry there

H. Yes

M. huge whales.

H. And that's a problem that some ships are fast running and they are coming too close to the whales. They have some standards of how they are approaching the whales. We have nothing out here. We can do if we want. So I think of whales we have to find out. You know fast running propela is scaring the whales. Slow turning propela is my ship and Mira.

M your ship and the other one Mira they are designed in a way for this activity

H. Yes, they have slow running engines and if we make electronic motors on the ships. And they do it in Iceland

M. It would be great.

H. so they have less emission and less noise in the water.

M That's why they don't disturb, the wildlife

H Another thing, we have been filmed on ARD + in Germany and the film was sent for whole Europe 150000 in whole Europe.

M. ARD is a channel?

H. Yes. it's a channel.

M. Television channel ok!

H. Yes.

M So they can reach more people in this way.

H. Yes whole Europe that is 16 million people.

M. Are you also working with them right now? Aha you already worked.

H. We had, and I know one was from Swizeland they saw the video.

M due to the channel they found out.

H Yes, it's a tool spread out.

M. It's a beneficial one.

H. And I hope that I know that some people tell me later that they found out.. and now we are working on Facebook.

M. On Facebook?

H. Yes

M. social media is a powerful tool

H I am not used to it.

M But also through Instagram, Twitter and other social channels you can reach to people (twitter Instagram social media channels)

H. Instagram Yes. Take it easy!

M. Good luck! I don't know which one could be more efficient, Facebook or Instagram but yes, it's a new way of reaching and efficient.

H. Yes, I know.

M. If it is done in a good way of course yes. So, you say that there are benefits of collaboration

H Yes absolutely

M. Can you say again which are some of them, like.

H. Benefits you think about opportunities?

M. Yes opportunities for yourself. Benefits mean what do you gain from it or what whale watching industry will gain from collaboration?

H. Positive?

M. Yes for example does it develop the industry in a way? Do you understand what I mean?

H. I am not.

M, For example when people collaborate in different ways maybe this industry will grow so.

H. Ok!

M. will it will be growing what do you think?

H. It is growing slowly from 2001 and till now. I could do more individual booking, but I don't want it.

M why don't you want?

H Because it gives not so much money.

M No?

H. No! It's not so good because there is a limit how high you can rise the ticket price in Denmark.

M ok I see

H. I am the highest and obvious they have tried on the other ships on a lower price.

M Aha

H. But, I can't reduce it because it has sails which stop the cost to keep it running. I take good economy when I am sailing with groups.

M. Of course you can't go like empty out to sea.

H. No, no So I keep Tuesdays and Fridays free for groups Normally a family is booking on Fridays because they can take free and go home for weekend sailing.

M. I see.

H. I've seen it

M I understand (talking about accessing internet) Right now, I cannot open any channels.

H. that's fine. (Showing documents) Some are for the meeting tourist bureau.

M. Ok so.

H. You can see in 2009.

M. Is it the number of guests?

H. No that's money

M. Ah ok.

H. and it's how many cruises we had made

M. Ok

H. So you see July is very high.

M. So July its peak month as I see here.

H. Yes.

M Also October less What about September? Or again it depends on how many.

H Yes it goes down there, and we can see October.

M Is it because there are not so many guests?

H. And you can see when you are looking at July.

M Yes

H. And August not so many sailings, but good earning and July don't earn so much from sailing

M. Ok I see.

H. It is obvious and because when I am booking

M Yes

H I have booked that's gemersmit. I put all my sailings in the box and divide it So that's gemesmit.

M. I don't know Is it profit?

H. It is in the middle when we take out

M. I don't know I am sorry.

H. Average for my sailing its up here. No that's for all the sails. My group is up here

M So you are the red one,

H Yes So that I get

M. And again here the red one what do this mean?

H. Oh that's something else that's.

M. Ok So these tours are specific for you.

H. For the same visit Middelfart.

M. ok here?

H. I don't earn on the tickets

M. Why is that?

H. Because I can't rise, the price for each ticket.

M why shouldn't you do this?

H. I could fight but then they will all go to the other ships.

M. I see. But the other ship has 2-hour trip and you have 3 hours trip. One hour is a big difference.

H. Yes.

M. It is also the time

H. If you don't see the difference when you are sitting in Switzerland and find out which whale watching you are going for.

M. I see.

H. And my prices also are covering the. and they have diploma from the Tilma, when they steer the ship. Yes, so I think if I rise the price it will go. I am not sure I could fight I am not sure.

M. I see.

H. You can see that's another company getting ships from here and good earning, but my own earning is better. So, if I rise just out here.

M. Aha I see.

H. And take more groups.

M. The groups come also through your booking site or Middelfart or depends on different channels?

H. They are three groups in the year so it's nothing.

M. Ok I see.

H. It won't.

M. Its fine.

H. And so of course I have to book 10% They are booking a group or tourist'

M. why?

H. So the tourism bureau to run the booking system

M. Aha.

H. So it cost here and here.

M. So 10% from you to them in a way?

H. Yes.

M so this is because they promote for you?

H. Running the system

M. Aha ok

H. Because I am a member in the Union of tourist bureau. We pay yearly tax to be member So they run tourist magazine etc.

M Can you tell me more about the union. I am not informed about it would be interesting to know about the union here

H. The Union.

M. Yes how it works for example.

H. I am better. We have lots of members here boats, museum lots of members with different activities diving and.

H. You can hire boats as well different boats and go out.

M. Yes.

H. They are sitting here, and we have the board for members. They go out and hire tourists' chief boss and they have some persons employed running the office. We have the Municipality Middelfart Community Municipality pay 1 million per hour.

M. Euros or krona?

H. Danish krona per an hour. And as members we are paying over here.

M. Yes ok.

H. so the booking office book the tickets 10% sending in.

M. Yes Ok

H. So if there is a guy who is making jumping and stepping in the trees, he is here paying his membership in here and then also he is using booking system and paying 10%.

M. Ok so you also are paying here and here.

H. So that is business money.

M. aha Is it official or again, official contract?

H. yes. No. we are not sitting so formal. But again, it is. When you say whale watching

M. Yes.

H. Then they book for me and we have part of the tourist bureau here We have parted. The library is sitting up here we do not have front desk customer over here.

M. Library being a tourist office the DMO you mean?

H. Now yes But, we parted it so now the front person is the people from the library. They are taking books for people and sitting and selling tickets. It's something from internet and people can walk in here What kind of what we do in Middelfart as tourists.

M. I've been once.

H. Here and here and they could go in and take the money and bring the money from tourists and booking system and it goes in here.

M. Yes, yes (talking about Mr. Henrik Nephew who could be heard in the background). Now I understand how it works.

H. And the community pay's the person in the library So they have two heads the tourist person and working for the library.

M. I see. I understand now, and this is for Middelfart. The Union of Middelfart

H. Yes

M. Do you have anything to do with Fredericia and Visit Little Belt?

H. Fredericia and they are sitting in a house and office They are sitting this kind of person there

M. Is a small organization?

H. Yes and some of hotels in Fredericia are members here.

M. Ok.

H. Because they get better performance and contacts with tourists. But they are looking they would like to have in Fredericia.

M. Maybe they want to do the same as in Middelfart? Or they don't want?

H. Not at the moment

M. So again you.

H. A wine farm from Kolding is also a member here.

M. Ok

H. and we are working together.

M. Interesting, I understand.

H. that's another way to do it. But they can do this, and they have trust so its fine. Ask me with Aventura they book me and that's is. They are booking me and it goes in this.

M. What does this mean?

H. That's my booking.

M. So it's more advantageous for you?

H. So they are going directly. They say Henrik are you able to sail for us? When he makes cruise, he is coming. There is a Disney ship cruise coming and they heard about the whales. Can I put the ship to Fredericia and guests can go on ship on whale watching?

M. Your ship?

H. My ship.

M. And do you agree with this?

H. I say I will do it next time I've tried not this year but a year before to go into the harbour and stay together with the cruise ship and sail come on look at the whales. I was coming out but then. and luckily, they wanted to come out and see the whales. So, I filled the ship once. Next time, it doesn't work. Because you try not to. Legoland they ask destinations.

M. So you have to cover all these destinations?

H. No when the cruise is in harbour the guest is thinking I want to. I don't want to go whale watching I've sailed enough.

M. I see.

H. I go to Legoland. So, it's still whale watching.

M. Yes of course.

H. And its.

M. Fredericia and Middelfart DMOs they also collaborate right, or you don't know much about this. How they do it, like tourism offices from Middelfart with the one from Fredericia how they do this.

H. We had this new collaboration it's not visit Fredericia It closed down. It's not Visit Middelfart Its just Visit Little Belt.

M. So they work together, you work together.

H. And they use our booking tickets Fredericia.

M. so you make a stop there and pick up tourists?

H. Yes.

M. I see Which would be the problems when you collaborate What problems do you have? For example, with Legoland?

H. Yes it stopped.

M. What do you mean or if you don't want to do it?

H. I can stop from now.

M. But when you collaborate with them what things would be that you like, or you don't like when you collaborate with them.

H. I think from the beginning we were very closed. I was together with the person from Legoland. Not now, now its they are talking with the person on the tourist bureau They are talking to me and they can think in this way I don't want I think its

M- So you would like to collaborate directly with them?

H. Yes and the same when I am booking a group, I don't want siting there, talking too much, what they want.

M. I see.

H. and we are sitting there, and they don't have the view what can we perform so I want when a group is coming up. We can better say oh you say so we can do both fishing and go for sails. Not at the same time. And whale-watching and sailing is difficult because with the whales we have to turn around.

M. And stop?

H. Stop the sip and so it is not the best combination.

M. But, have you tried to talk directly with them? Or again what kind of collaboration you have with them. Do you have contract they work with?

H. No I don't have time for it so. Because for example on Tuesday I am going to Kolding that's a group with firm They had business meeting coffee and cake and they said come over and go out for three hours and let us talk about whales and maybe we can find something.

M. Good luck!

H. But it's too difficult.

M. Do you mean the distance?

H. but the history its ok so is still whale watching in a way.

M. I see by the way is the community involved in whale watching? I was on the second day on October 16th with Mira because I had to see how they do it And I was talking with Ms. Lina and she told me.

H. the new owner?

M. Yes, and she was telling me that sometimes community is involved like let's say keeping an eye on the ships. How is the community involved for example are you helping each other?

H. We are helping each other. So, if my ship breaks down, I lend Mira.

M. I see.

H. That is the first thing I talk to Lina if something is wrong, we have to get people out.

M. Yes of course

H. Forget about the ship and, get experience yes, and then we can find.

M. How do you collaborate with other boat owners and tour operators with Mira for example

H. Oh I send a group for her when they are few, I say I cannot work like this. Or if I filled up, I will sent them to the other ship.

M. So again you are helping each other which is great.

H. I forgot one MCC

M. Is it another organization with whom you collaborate?

H. Yes that is another firm this one and they mostly go for sailing ships.

M. Do they also do whale watching.

H. No that's a birthday maybe in Copenhagen or somewhere else. They just ask me could we go out for a meeting on the ship, but not specially for whale watching. This is a new organization for our system. And now they put we can see that when we are doing with the tourist system it dies. Because when you are sitting in an organization you are hired in the municipality you are not working as when you are working in the front.

M. You are not involved like 100%, what do you mean?

H. Maybe but not always.

M. Because of their position board of directors?

H. Yes but that is.

H. And we need some special knowledge when you are working with ships and tourists.

M. Another thing which would be the challenges for whale watching and for collaboration?

H. What can be done?

M. Yes, what can be done in a better way. What it seems impossible to be done, but in the end, you can accomplish and reach your goals.

H. I think we have all the ships here also fishing ships and so on and we all are sitting in the tourism system of Little Belt. And we also have guests here. And as long as they are running us individually then we have to work together and taking activities. A dinner for Christmas together for example. We have done it before and its good

because we can talk small talk and find out solutions and move. We have to take this again I can do it with Lina for example the owner of Mir

M. I met Ms. Lina and I talked with her she seemed a great person.

H. And the same with Legoland and so on.

M. But right now they go like this here and here (looking at the picture of the Middelfart Union drawn by Mr. Henry). They talk with Visit Little Belt and Little Belt talk with you. There is no direct channel between you and them. What would you prefer direct or indirect?

H. Direct both

M. Can you do both?

H. Before in the beginning was talking and we were together in at least two meetings a year when we would talk and ask.

M. Now is it different it has changed?

H. Yes.

M. S they talk directly with Visit Little Belt.

H. They sit more in the office and talk to other offices.

M. It's good to get in touch with those who perform those activities. And, here in Middelfart in little Belt who are the most important whale watchers Aventura & Mira?

H. And sailing ships, I work with a ship in Nyborg we work together. When I cannot lift up the whole group, he is coming up here and I am going to Nyborg, yes.

M. It's a big collaboration, I see you are many members

H. Yes

M. Do you encounter problems?

H. We have a lot of work demands on the ship. So, we have Legoland, MCC and other ships. And sometimes I work directly.

M. A big network.

H. Yes, it is.

M I saw in the train in Copenhagen on the DSB tv they promoted Visit little Belt (telling about the surprise to see Little Belt promoted in the DSB train).

H. Which of the ships?

M. I don't remember well. I was surprised so, I was wondering if it is a new collaboration between you and DSB

H. I forgot we have on top Visit Denmark.

M. So maybe.

H. And some of the websites.

M. I understand.

H. It goes around here and some of it are sending up here.

M. More people are reached in this way.

H. and one more thing about I could easily drop out of Legoland.

M. But isn't it more profitable for you?

H. Because I give 50 kr. every time a child comes with happy pass. Rest of the ticket I give 10% to the tourist office. And for Line she gets 90 kr. for child because.

M. So It's not that much.

H. No.

M. You don't get so many benefits from this?

H. 30 kr. for a child and so on happy pass minus (drawing on a paper and calculating) you see 100 kr. ticket 10% 10 kr. Do you see half price Mira 200 for a child minus happy pass 50-50 that for child on Mira.

M- That's not much.

H. Nothing so.

M. By the way did I ask about partners? Which are you partners in this activity?

H. N

M. Like business relationships you said before it's a kind of collaboration with Legoland Nature Park

H. Ye

M. And also the community.

H. They invested in this to run.

M. Just to make it clear, with other boat owners you only have informal collaboration no contracts.

H. I am not sure you mean contact.

M. You only have a few formal collaborations.

H. Yes.

M. Mostly is based on trust and respect?

H. Yes, we are hanging in the trees yes.

M. And something else. Do you think that in 10 years-time whale-watching will be more developed?

H. Yes. I see more ships and I hope we get a rule system so that they don't use fast boats for whale watching.

M. You don't have regulation in place now?

H. No I hope we will have regulation at that time. Maybe it's coming I could talk more together to find out.

M. I hope so regulations are necessary.

H. Yes regulations.

M. Now you only have to have a licence in order to do this activity.

H. Yes but it has nothing to do with whales just generally

M. Ok! This mean that anybody can own a boat.

H. Yes everybody can show up and there is a small boat (Mr Henrik's wife came, and the researcher greeted her and then asks Mr. Henrik if he has more time)

H. But this was one boat copied my system.

M. Who?

H. He can take up 12 persons, so there is no danger there.

M. Ok! You mean the boat in Fredericia?

H. It's Skabet (he shows the site on his computer).

M. In Middelfart is Mira and in Fredericia.

H. I am sailing out to Fredericia (shows the site).

M. It could also be like going as an individual everybody can own a boat and goes by himself and enjoys the trip. I understand.

H. yes. He goes out from Skabet. See this one you have seen that before (showing on site).

M. Do you have also on your website this possibility to see it in English.

H. Yes.

M. And here the community know about whales and.

H. Everybody (the researcher and MR. Henrik look on the site how whale watching is promoted).

H. You see here Fredericia for example about whale hunters.

M. Is this a new activity?

H. It's been for a long time.

M. I've seen also the Light House it has a binocular and a platform where you can also watch whales?

H. No we tried but it stopped because of people. They don't want to stay in the Light House and look down in their gardens. And they are big houses and they stopped it.

M. I see.

H. I was working up and had a loo

M. But here in Middelfart there is a platform with binocular where you can also listen to teh sounds of whales.

H. We have one.

M. there is a small one.

H. But not anymore.

M. No? I've tried once last month I think near the shipping yard.

H. Yes.

M. Can you detect whales because whale watching could be like land based or sea based

H. We could make we've talked about it in the area. Maybe it could Actually I've been out with a group once walked out and I was hired for the tour guide. It's very high up here and you can see the whales

M. Is it the only point where you can see.

H. I saw whales, but it is difficult because you are high up and far away.

M. And they are very small.

H. So maybe it could be a place.

M. It could be a project for the future?

H. It could be

M. Do you make a strategy for the year that comes.

H. Yes, I sail the ship.

M. Nothing written goals to be achieved?

H. I will go out and make whale watching. I have another ship I have to finish

M. So if you have the other ship you will do more?

H. No just for fun.

M. As a hobby?

H. We are planning to make some trips again in the same manner.

M. That's interesting.

H. And it's nice to stay with the ship here take time.

M. We talked about collaboration, barriers, the barriers would be the problems when you are doing the activity and the benefits.

H. And another problem if whale watching stops.

M. Is it a possibility?

H. It depends on fish here.

M. Ok.

H. The small fish.

M. Which would be the problems what affect the fish in this area.

H. If there is no oxygen in the water.

M. Because of pollution?

H. Yes but because of the stream it goes if there is no fish there is no whales.

M. Sometimes ago I read an article about a big fire in the region.

H. Yes but it did not bother it was palm oil on the surface.... (the respondents show the researcher the map of the Little Belt and then talk about it).

M. (The researcher thanks for the interview).

Appendix 3: Verena Maria Obertopp Knudsen Interview

Turismekoordinator Visit Lillebælt/Fredericia, Fredericia Kommune. Conducted on 14th of November 2018

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: V (Verena Maria Obertopp Knudsen)

M. (introduces herself and the topic of the master thesis) I have some questions regarding whale watching and collaboration in Little Belt. I will start by asking about whale watching in Little belt which is the current state of play of whale watching in Little Belt?

V. Well from my knowledge is that we have four ships next year. It's going to be 4 ships that will be offering whale watching trips for four different kind of ships. I don't know how many people dowhale -watching because I haven't recorded down the number we can find them for you. But I think the colleagues in Middelfart know numbers as well. And, it's been quite new to Fredericia Because even though we have Little belt in common we haven't traditionally tourism wasn't. I think that Fredericia was not interested in it that much.

M. Yes.

V. So it's only 2 years ago that we started whale watching trips from this side of the Little Belt.

M. From this side ok!

V. The same there is only one ship that is going from our town because and that's Henrik.

M. Aventura.

V. Exactly and he is coming once a week in the summer time and doing whale watching. Yes.

M. I understand. Do you think whale watching brings value to the destination?

V. Yes definitely, it's a very special product and also because when you go on holidays somewhere you always think of big whales.

M. Yes of course.

V. And it is huge tourism attraction. But sometimes people get disappointed because of the small whales. I think it even makes it more special that is here. Because people after thing of our waters related to whales. And also, the whale kind of looks like dolphins, little dolphins. And people love dolphins. But I think it's a great value definitely. It's a good nature attraction

M. I understand, and which are the present problems in this activity if you have any idea, what do you know about this?

V. I am not sure if it's about the problems but.

M. Challenges, opportunities.

V. I think that for once we sometimes get comments on the pricing level. People think its quite expensive, and. But I think my question is that its most the locals that finds it expensive. Because when you are on a holiday mood you are willing to pay a little more for an experience. You might not do that if you live here. And from my knowledge well I don't know if there is a problem. But I'm quite aware of the number of ships that we are having in our waters right now and weather they think of doing what is best for the whales. Because I know from my professional knowledge that there are other places in the world where people have established rules in terms of whale watching. And they have to turn off the engine when they get close to the whales and from my knowledge. We don't have any of those rules here and it might be a concern in the future that they will affect the whales. Yes

M. So in this case regulation should be put in place

V. Yes. Maybe you should start talking about it Maybe not to start with regulation but to start with sitting together with the ship owners and then talk about what do we want, how are we doing this and also, I think it's an opportunity for marketing opportunity if we do it correctly and we keep to our own ethical rules.

M. Yes!

V. Because we can say honestly that we are doing in a right way and we are not harming the whales in any way. So, I think it would be valuable for our situation if we do that.

M. And what about the community. Is it involved in this, are they aware of the necessity the need for regulation I understood that anybody who owns a boat could go out and watch whales so..

V. Yes. I don't think anyone thinks about it for. I'm not sure if the boat owners think of it because often it seems to me that people they only think of their own, if they think hey! I want to own a boat and sell whale watching trips, I don't think how many boats are there and everything. So, I think I don't think they think of the whales when they start doing.

M. So in this case definitely it needs to be.

V. I think that someone must just sit them down at the table and see ok now let's talk about this

M. Yes!

V. And we also have to think, I think we have too the tourism organization we have the responsibility in terms of looking at the development and maybe see well now we have 4 we might have to sit down with someone who knows about whales and see if there is maximum capacity maybe

M. Yes.

V. that we have to look to Because if there is than, something we have to have some regulation right, so.

M. Yes of course, for the future we have to think always for the future generations.

V. Yes exactly very important.

M. Now speaking about collaboration which is the main focus of my research, I want to find out if collaboration of different stakeholders in the region can help develop the industry and also develop the destination in general. What do you think about this?

V. Do you mean the whale watching or develop the tourism industry in general.

M. Develop first of all whale watching and also it can also influence the development of the region.

V. Of the region in total yes, here it can. I think just the collaboration between us and our accommodation providers for instance that means that all products that we market we can tell the accommodation providers and they can tell their customers. So, this thing is kind of circle that has to get going so everybody knows of offers that are present in the destination. So, I think collaboration is the key to everything really.

M. Can we talk here about marketing collaboration for example between the DMO Fredericia and the DMO Middelfart. What kind of collaboration takes place?

V. It's between the two of us we have a marketing collaboration, but we are still two different organizational structures. We are still on each side of the Little Belt and we are organized totally differently. But we kind of putting our resources together in terms of marketing and then we are making strategies for two we are going to attract people to the whole destination. Because from a tourism perspective and tourist perspective it makes perfectly sense. Also, because we have the Little Belt in common and we have whale watching in common and we have bridge walking in common which is one of our flagships in terms of tourism. So, it just makes perfectly sense to talk, instead of we are going to spend 200000 kr. in Fredericia and Middelfart is going to spend 200000 kr. and then they might not have enough money to maybe attract the German market and we have enough money to attract the Norwegian market. We can put our resources together and then maybe attract them both (laugh).

M. Are there some differences between the DMO here and in Middelfart let's say.

V. Yes there is organizational. In the Middelfart they have they are funded by the local government, but they are run by the board. So they are financed by memberships from the tourism providers. So, they get the money mainly from partnerships and local governments. And we are the local government. We are the department in the local government.

M. You are the public.

V. Yes, we are the public but we also because we work together with Middelfart we kind of you know

We can market all our public partners or our partners at no cost and on the other side they have to pay money to be marketed. Then we kind of tried to balance out our system so that we can also take a little amount of money from our partners whoever wants to be communicated to the tourists, yes.

M. I understand.

V. So they also pay with us.

M. I see.

V. But we are you know just different (laugh).

M. And in connection to whale watching?

V. Well that's really the contact we only have one of our ships actually 2. We have tourist ships that goes from Fredericia but they are both a member in Middelfart.

M. Ok!

V. The other one is one in SKabet. It's like a small boat that started this year and because they approached Middelfart and Middelfart has a booking system that we are buying into. Because they developed it. So, we are buying into it. So, if our partners if they want to use the booking system then they have to be a member in Middelfart

M. Ok!

V. But also Henrik from Aventura. He is also a member there but obviously it doesn't make sense when I started here, I looked at what we are offering. I couldn't understand why no one ever had approached any of the boat owners and ask maybe you can offer trips from Fredericia. No one had ever done that. So obviously even though he is not partner with us, we of course have to use the possibilities that are there.

M. Sure!

V. So I just approached him and asked can you maybe do a whale watching trip from Fredericia?and it was really easy. You just you know he told me what is necessary for him to get into the harbour and I made a little sign down at the harbour, this is for tour boat. So, it's really easy didn't take anything, yes (laugh)

M. So we can talk here about communication?

V. Yes really its just about using the opportunities that are there and then utilizing them. And I think that was really another example that bridge walking for instance. Have you heard of the attraction before?

M. Yes, I have seen it while doing whale watching tour.

V. God exactly. And that's a collaboration between the two municipalities. But when I started it seemed like all communication was basically Middelfart. So, no one here in Fredericia had taken the responsibility to make sure that all the communication also include Fredericia. You had to go to Middelfart to go up the bridge but that was not the plan originally. Originally was that you could go up on both sides but that never happened. So somehow people forgot oh it's a collaboration between someone just forgot! (laugh). So, I've kind of started you know I contacted bridge walking said when you do your Instagram posts can you not just write Middelfart but also write our name?

M. I see!

V. It was really easy. So yes, all the communication is really, you just have to grab the opportunities that are there, yes

M. So we can also talk about direct and indirect communication in this case direct communication is the best option?

V. Yes. Definitely yes, I think so yes.

M. I see, by the way, I understood that Visit Little Belt was a project created several years ago?

V. Yes it started I wouldn't call it a project, but it started 2 years ago in the beginning of 2017. So, this is our second year that we are.

M. So recent.

V. It's quite new, yes, exactly when we really, the two I don't know where we started from, but its just you know makes perfect sense that someone above us they decided now you have to work together. And we did our common website, so we get a common website and from there we kind of developed how we were going to work together.

M. I understand. And going back to collaboration what kind of collaboration takes place formal or informal, which is relevant for example? Formal contract based or informal based on trust, mutual respect?

V. There is some amount of formal collaboration. There is I am not quite aware of how what it says but there is some written documents somewhere (laugh) about the collaboration

M. I see

V. That's above my level, definitely. But besides that, there is a lot of informal collaboration. I think a lot of it is dependent on the tour Well they have a tourist manager in Middelfart. We don't have a tourism manager we only have a team leader. And it is really about more to find a way to work together. And beneath that level I think that me and my colleagues like Johnas and those that I work together closely we are quite good in figuring out how we are working together and making it happen! Even though my bosses might not like I don't know. (laugh)

M. In connection to whale watching or with everything we talk about?

V. You mean the formal and informal collaboration?

M. Yes, yes.

V. That's really like that quite informal at least for our part of the town because I mean Henrik has a formal some kind of formal collaboration with Middelfart. But it was just me approaching him and say hey, can you come, and You know he is writing in his calendar that he is going to come every Monday in July to August, so that is just how it happens, yes.

M. I see

V. Yes, So, it is just Because you know we base it of course on trust but also on experience. Because we know he has the good collaboration with Middelfart and I always have the doubts, so I am quite confident that when I am putting the whale watching trips for next summer then he will be there, you know unless he fell down and break a leg.

M. Yes.

V. I don't know but you know

M. No!

V. Exactly that doesn't happen, yes.

M. Maybe I've asked you about the challenges of this collaboration that you have?

V. With Henrik?

M. Yes what do you think?

V. I kind don't see any challenges now

M. What about barriers of collaboration?

V. Well any barriers.

M. Or for example have you had any issues or problems even with the DMO from Middelfart and how do you solve eventually if you had any?

V. Well we haven't. The only thing that I can see is because we are still two different parties and we are dependent on the membership money you know you could argue that since Henrik is also on our side, we can split the money. We could but we don't, and I don't think that we want to. We just accept that they got them first so that's fine. And we just leaving it at that because we are quite lucky here, because we are the local government, we are not dependent on the funds that we get from members. I think our funding is more secure than that on the other side of the bridge. So that way you know we can be the bigger person you know just keep the money (laugh)

M. I see

V. I don't think that's a barrier or challenge. It really doesn't come down to Henrik, I mean obviously it doesn't make sense that I approach Henrik and say you have to pay the same amount now because it's the same website he is marketed on. We only can so we can't get twice the money, but we don't have twice the experiences as well because we are working together. So yes.

M. And the challenges while working with the DMO in Middelfart, and also the same time opportunities of working together. As you said its marketing collaboration, so which would be the biggest opportunities for such kind of collaboration?

V. I think it's the reach that you can have and also for us who work it just gives so much more because we are not many people who work with it and if you are working all by yourself. You know you only see this much. But when you always have someone who challenges you and have some different opinions and some different insights you can have you know you look a little bit broader.

M. Yes

V. So I think it just gives opportunity in terms of how far we reach in terms of tourism. tourists we can reach a lot more tourists because we are putting our money together and also it gives us a lot of working in our daily life. It's just nice to have colleagues on the other side I can call. I am not the only one that has to do the website I can call my colleagues and say hey what do you think (laugh). So that's really great, yes, I like that.

M. And you also collaborate with external destinations and also internal like Visit Denmark, DSB? Because I've noticed Visit Little Belt promoted in the trains in Copenhagen and I noticed several weeks ago, a quite new collaboration maybe?

V. Yes, I think what in magazines?

M. No on tv in the train.

V. In the trains in Copenhagen?

M. Yes DSB actually.

V. I am not sure. Maybe my colleague who has said something. Do you remember what was all about?

M. Just promoting Little Belt and all the activities that take place here.

V. All right, because I know that we sometimes buy ads in the paper.

M. Ah ok.

V. So maybe that's kind of like an extra.

M. I understand.

V. The one that is with marketing budget I have to ask her, that's interesting. But what was the question?

M. How do you collaborate with other external destinations and internal DMOs?

V. We are also in Fredericia and Middelfart we are members of the Legoland Billund Resort which is not a DMO but it's the union. That is put together by different municipalities and some attractions where we try to attract children families. So, we work very close together with them, but actually one of my main projects that I am working on. Where we are making sure that Fredericia you know is visible in that collaboration, so you know I am making sure that and that is also collaboration with our partners in here. Also whale watching is part of that. We are trying you know taking that product and bring it into the collaboration in Legoland. And then you know they get a little discount if they have the happy pass. They get you know a discount when they come here. I think we do have a lot of collaboration I think with external partners. But Legoland is the biggest one I think, yes.

M. And you said they also promote whale watching, they also have this activity included in their ticket activity?

V. Yes.

M. But this kind of collaboration is not direct, they don't reach the boat owners directly, but they reach them through you right?

V. Yes they do exactly.

M. So

V. It is up to us who we want to include really. So, the target group is children at the age from 2 to 12, and families with children at the age from 2 to 12. And then we are sitting down so what is the best to offer because in that collaboration is all about having Legoland and as the key thing to come here, but, having all of us to get them to stay here longer. Because they can spend a little longer time. So, we are kind of looking at our destination and

then taking all the things that are most interesting for children travelling and families and then bringing them into that collaboration. Yes, and its only us who have the contact with them, exactly yes.

M. I see, what is your opinion, if they for example contact directly the boat owners, which would be better through you or directly through them?

V. I don't think I think I would be fine if they did that on their own as well. Because I am interested in that all our partners here who offer some tourism product they can get as far out as possible. It doesn't matter whether it's through me or through another collaboration. So, if he can get business by going somewhere else that's fine. I think that's only good I mean he could even you know become a member of Visit Kolding, because he thinks that he can reach father and that's fine for me. I think that's a good idea

M. Ok.

V. But obviously I would mind if you choose not to be marketed by me, but someone else. But if he chooses both or more things that's fine.

M, Ok, ok.

V. Because its really just about .I don't care where they come from as long as they come (laugh). You know.

M. I see, so there are many benefits working together, collaborating and making partnerships?

V. Yes, definitely and I think it is really just about seeing the opportunities I think that's really important.

M. Can you tell me more about the collaboration with Natural Park, I understood that is a recent one?

V. Yes quite recent.

M. In connection to whale watching.

V. Yes well that's quite recent. Quite blurry for us, because it Fredericia and Middelfart and Kolding have come together and done this Nature Park and it's a way you know of what they are trying is to get people to use the Nature Park more and protect it at the same time. So, there is also definitely tourism perspective in that and its if there is a project manager and there is people from each municipality kind of work with it.

M. Ok.

V. And we as a tourist organization are trying to grab the opportunity and kind of you know. How can we use it because it's difficult to market something that you don't know what it is! You know you can't say come to the Nature Park Little belt and then people are coming here and can't see any signs and they don't know what is it that I can do.

M. So you are responsible for this part of marketing?

V. Well we are not really, it's not about responsibilities because you know it's not written down somewhere that you have to do it. But its again its collaboration. That we are sitting with them and we are trying to figure out how can we use this in terms of tourism. and then sometimes they ask you know because we have our expectations in terms of tourism and they have their expertise in terms of conservation and things like that. So how can we work together how can we market there, things and on which grounds. Like they have lots of tours that they offer each year and last year they went they just started they were not ready for our circle. So, they didn't come into our

catalogue because we were all finished already. Because they just started. but this year they now know if we want to be in the guide in the official guide, we have to be ready in November. Otherwise, you can't get your tours in here. And of course, we also started to understand what is it? What is Nature Park Little Belt? You know, it's still new and we don't really know about it.

M. When was it created?

V. I think it's one year old now. It was officially it got the recognition the official recognition of being Nature Park last year. I think in November or December that's one year old and of course that was a period of time up to when they tried to get the certification.

M. I SEE. And in connection to whale watching? Do you know anything about it?

V. Well I know that obviously it takes place in the Nature Park. So, it's one of those activities that we have to make sure kind of has a place. But and I am quite sure that they must have had some kind of talks with at least Henrik, because he is, he knows a lot about whales and he is very into the nature and what is happening.

M. Yes'

V. I don't know about other quite well because I don't know them. But obviously it's quite important Last night at the meeting about the nature Park there was at least one comment that I noticed. That one of the fishermen he was telling that, there is not many fish in the waters of little Belt and he was kind of suggesting that maybe it's because of the whales. Because they eat all the fish. And I was thinking oh really. I mean because you know he was kind of saying should we protect the whales And I was like seeing this picture about we are going to slaughter the whales you know

M. Ah no!

V. In terms of tourism that would be horrible.

M. Going back in the past

V. Exactly so I don't know

M. Definitely is not whales that.

V. Definitely not. I'm hoping not. You know even if then we have to find solutions. It doesn't involves killing the whales because

M. Of course even the idea is.

V. Yes, it's crazy!

M. Yes it shouldn't even be suggested

V. But he wasn't like saying it, he was just you know making a point or something. I don't know but from my knowledge I asked yesterday Henrik because I dint really know what the problem is about the little Belt. Because I know that they are working with this project which is called Little Belt in Balance. Obviously, there is a kind of imbalance.

M. Ok!

V. But I didn't know what it was, and they didn't tell it at the meeting. So, I was just a little bit confused like half way through the meeting they always talked about this one kind of fish. That's why at some point I raised my hand and asked why this particular fish is so important? And then I figured out oh because of the fishing that they haven't had you know enough fish to sell them

M. Ok!

V. Of course of the tourism as well because people if they can't catch any fish they don't come here for fishing. But that's a different story, I think. And Henrik told me that there is not he doesn't experience that they have had been less whales. So, there must still be enough food for the whales so.

M. Aha nature know better.

V. Exactly yes.

M. There is a balance.

V. That's also my idea.

M. I also understood yesterday only about the fish and I was curious to know, if they were talking about whale watching or whales in general. at a moment they showed something but that's it

V. Yes exactly. There was the only moment that was from the fisherman. That wasn't nothing about and that's kind of why I didn't like the greatest perspective. I kind of like why are we talking about this fish why is it important? And apparently there is some kind of sometimes there is not enough oxygen in the Little Belt, but it didn't seem like I asked Henrik afterwards and he didn't see it that was kind of a big problem.

M. Aha.

V. So I can't really see still can't see the bigger picture because I mean ok yes might won't have much fish lets so something about that. But you know if we have more fish, we also have more birds maybe, birds are also good both for biodiversity and also for the tourism and everything. So, but if the whales are still there and we still can go swimming. You know I can't see the huge problem except for the people who want to fish. I am not a fisherman, so I don't care (laugh).

M. But they don't do drilling in the region it's a Nature Park and its protected area?

V. Its protected not protected in that sense. Its protected before even though it wasn't a nature park has always been protected within the Natura 2000 and a part of it, Natura 2002 but Nature Park its really just a volunteer certification.

M. I see

V. It's not like, a National Park it's a Nature Park which means that they are working on voluntary participation of all stakeholders. So, everything that we do voluntarily. We first you know we talk about it and then we how we are doing this. There might be some land owners and if we want to make a path for visitors then we have to ask him if he says no then it's no you know but.

M. I see.

V. We can try to work with.

M I see but again there is no regulation in place so.

V. No.

M. This should be something to think about for the future.

V. Yes definitely.

M. Do you know anything about the Nature Day because I understood that they collaborate with boat owners while doing whale watching on that day?

V. Yes, I think they do. But I think they also have Nature Day in Middelfart. We have Forest Day we call it the Forest Day so.

M. Ok.

V. It's really, I think a local like Middelfart local government who organize it. It's really about showing the nature what the area has to offer in terms of nature experiences. And I know that some of the whale watching trips have been offered for free or at a small price on the particular day.

M. I see. Speaking about partnerships which do you think which are the main issues aspects connected to the partnerships in relation to whale watching let's say?

V. Can you specify what you mean aspects?

M. Maybe we have already talked about the DMO that you collaborate and also directly with boat owners so. What do you think how do these alliances contribute to the field of management and marketing?

V. The alliances with Henrik?

M. How do these alliances contribute to the field of marketing and management of tourism?

V. Well I think at this point they only contribute to marketing because of the product that we can market. My wish would be that will contribute to the field of management in terms of the tourism development maybe because they all have some insights you know of the surroundings. I think that's important that we work mostly in the boundaries of nature and everything. So, someone like Henrik he could give us some insights for example when we talk about that we have to do some regulations.

M. Yes, yes

V. In terms of protecting the whales if we have if we obviously I am not saying that we have to have it just saying that we must be aware you know.

M. Sure

V. It might be necessary at some point. So, I think management it doesn't really contribute to that its more marketing.

M. Its more marketing aha and some other things I wanted to ask you if you have any strategy in place connected to whale watching

V. Not, not really

M. Not yet do you consider it?

V. There is none and I don't think that's going to be one. Unless because you know they are all private companies and they kind of. that's the funny thing in Denmark. I mean we have no collaboration we just ask him how often do you want to do this this? And then maybe we want to have like some point of the year we have some kind of campaign. Just saying in April, the Dutch have 2 weeks of holidays in May. It's a period when no one else is on vacation. And we want to do a campaign where we kind of trying to get some of the Dutch people to come here on holidays. Then we might ask him can you maybe do a trip there, so we maybe put it into the campaign and then market it. But it's not like you know sitting down and thinking ok whale watching its really just the way that we can get like millions to visit us. We are not sitting down and thinking how we can do that. Because it's really, we just take the single the one boat owner and telling you know, what do you want to do, and maybe ask what is your experience. How often should I do it and maybe how long should I do it and maybe how long should the trip be, and we have some kind of experience and put some time together. But we are not kind utilizing it like a huge big think and how can we attract more boats or everything we don't do that. Not yet. You know if we do it, we obviously have to look at what is the carrying capacity of this you know. How many boats should be enough?

M. Yes, yes.

V. Definitely yes.

M. What about goals?

V. In terms of whale watching?

M. Yes.

V. Well for me whale watching is one of the main tourist attractions that we can offer at least foreigner visitors. We also domestic visitors. But it seems to be more the abroad visitor to like it. So, for we don't have a strategy, so we don't have a goal that we have to achieve. You know when we have this goal. At the moment I feel from our town Fredericia that one weekly trip its' enough because we can't sell out all the spaces in summer and its really dependent on the weather. Also, sometimes people book, or they don't book. So, I think my goal will be to make it a little bit known and use it. We don't use it as one of our main attractions. That's for sure some together with bridge walking.

M. Do you see Little Belt and whale watching as an example for Denmark. In general, so other destinations take an example from you? And whale watching where else can be done for example?>

V. Yes, I don't know. I think there is a few trips down of the Southern part of Funen. Because you know there is Little Belt then we have the island of Funen and then the Southern part which is a kind of

M. Great Belt?

V. No Great Belt. It's still Little Belt I don't know if that part of Little Belt is called in another way. Its same water I think there they could do it there at the Southern part of Funen. Because otherwise they just could take the boat and go into the Little Belt easily, I guess (laugh).

M. Yes.

V. But I don't know whether whales are else otherwise I think the strength for us is that we also have the coast line on both sides. If you did that on the eastern part of Funen where you have the Big Belt then you would you know it's too far to see the land so you won't see the other part of the coast.

M. It will be just open sea.

V. It will be exactly.

M. And that interesting, yes, it is. I've been on whale watching trips twice and first with Aventura and the second day with Mira. I just wanted to see how they are doing it. In what way they are doing and of course the nature when you see it on both sides and open sea its charming

V. So what was your experience of the two boats?

M. The first day with Aventura it was a sunny day and of course we saw more whales because of this. And the second day was a bit gloomy let's say but I also experienced whales but not that many.

V. All right.

M. Of course the difference between them it's that of the time one is 3 hours the other 2. And the ships are different of course Aventura it's an old big ship and a pirate ship, looks like a pirate ship.

V. Yes and also for the children is funny with Henrik because they also allow them to steer the ship.

M. Yes, they were many kids on that day.

V. Ok all right.

M. Do you have more time its already 10 o'clock?

V. I have 10 more minutes more.

M. Ok. I want to ask you again going back to the DMO I understood from Mira boat owner that the DMO has a coordinator role. For example, she the lady and the DMO in Middelfart showed her like what to do. I just wanted to know more about this role of the DMO?

V. I think that what they did in Middelfart we weren't involved in that.

M. Ah you are not involved so.

V. Yes exactly. But that would be typical because you know obviously if a new person wants to offer a tourism person wants to offer a tourism product, we will obviously help that person. The same way we have just been approved by someone who has a fishing boating flag whatever. He was asking maybe can we do something and use and have our experience we could say yes you know, and we of course offer our relations to the local government here. So, if we would have known if you know what days would be best if he did that and what would it cost how could be marketed it and everything. Yes obviously.

M. I see. And something else how do you see whale watching in 10 years-time let's say?

V. I am hoping that it won't explode. I'm not hoping that it's going to be. I would be afraid that it will cost too much traffic on the water and it will cost too much for the whales. I don't know anything about the whales in terms of you know how much they can cope with. But I would like to have it at a moderate level. Like I don't

want to have 10 more boats doing the same thing. That would be my personal opinion and also because I see the 4 boats that we have now. It's not that all are booked fully every time. But I don't think that there is a lot more that we can do. Obviously, it could attract more tourists to try that. But then I prefer to fill up those boats before offering new trips. Yes.

M. Yes of course. So, more boats won't be like necessary recommended?

V. Yes, I would rather have the same boats offering more trips than you know a lot of new actors.

M. So we can also speak about mass tourism?

V. Yes exactly.

M. It can diminish.

V. Yes exactly and also because then at some point we have to have some regulation and I would rather have you know that we can sit here and talk about how we do, and we have you know in terms of rules. And we can apply them and then you know we can market that instead of you know involve the city council and say we have to have some researchers who tells us what the whales can cope with. And it would be easier to just talk about then do it.

M. Yes sure. Another thing which would be your recommendations in connection to whale watching collaboration for example? If there is a need for more collaboration or the present collaboration should be

V. Yes, I think from my point of view there is a need for that. We at this point are sitting together with the boat owners and already now before everything happens to talk about how what kind of product is it that we want to offer. And I mean I know that there is a new boat this year down Skabet a small boat. I don't know him I don't know what type of interpretation he has on boats and I think as a tourism organization and if we market it we have some kind of responsibility to know what he offers.

M. Sure.

V. But at this point I have suggested but my bosses think that at this point it is not necessary. But I think it would be a good idea to do it now and think also it would be better for our marketing, because that way we can know you know make sure that is a quality product that we offer. Obviously, he can do what he wants at this point. But we could maybe help him out to improve his product if we knew what it was.

M. Sure, its again connected to communication.

V. Exactly.

M. From both parts.

V. Yes exactly. I think that's important I think we should do that. That would be my recommendation in tourism terms. You know look a little bit into the future. From the beginning instead of you know oh yes, it is just you know whatever. Do it what time do you want just we think a little bit more strategically and then looking at what is that we want and how can we do that.

M. I see, I see.

V. Yes.

M. now I have a better picture and still have to work on it.

V. Yes of course.

M. Thank you very much! And when you will be available for more interviews?

V. Of course you just let me know you can write me the questions whatever

M. I will. Thank you.

V. Not a problem!

Appendix 4: Jonas Grønlund Eriksen Interview

Marketing- & kommunikationskoordinator, VisitLillebælt – Middelfart. Conducted on 14th of November 2018.

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: J (Jonas Grønlund Eriksen)

M. (the researcher introduces herself and the topic of the research and then proceed in asking questions) What whale watching means in the region, which is the state of the industry in the region? How do you describe whale watching in the region here?

J. Whale watching as a tourism activity?

M. Yes.

J. Ok It's this very family friendly activity. Also, people can go whale watching both older people, younger people small children with their parents. It's a large it's a part of the history here in Middelfart where we are at the moment. Because we have a lot of history surrounding the hunting of these whales from a long way back. And therefore, the whale watching helps besides watching beautiful nature and seeing the whales it also tells a little bit about the history of the whales and yes to get people to understand how it worked in the old days and

M. To know more about the region?

J. Yes sure.

M. Do you think that it brings value to the destination whale watching as a tourism activity?

J. Surely it brings a lot of value to our destination because it's the only place in Denmark where we have these whale watching trips actually so that is clearly one basic selling point for us. And we try to use it in our communication towards the target areas. We want to attract especially the Netherlands, Germany and Norway.

So surely a big selling point for us.

M. How do you reach these groups for example?

J. We try to use a lot of online communication as social media our website is merchandised in different languages. And we try to use some printed material in the newspaper. We find it interesting and things like that.

M. I read somewhere that Middelfart is considered capital of whale watching in Denmark. What can you say about it, is it true?

J. Well I didn't know that. But of course, as we are the only place in Denmark where we have whale watching this whale watching it makes sense. But of course, we share it a little bit with Fredericia. Because we have some departure from Fredericia also. So, if its Middelfart or Fredericia which is the capital I don't know but maybe we can say Little Belt instead.

M. Yes.

M. Connected also to whale watching which are the challenges of the industry?

J. Challenges, which challenge is to get people to go on these trips. Because we have a lot of boats in this area where the captains of these boats also want to go and do some whale watching trips and at the moment there is not enough people who are going on these trips compared to how many boats we have who also want to go on these whale watching trips.

M. I see.

J. So that is why I actually think we have like four boats at the moment. Who is considering going on these whale watching trips. Previously it was mainly Aventura where you went I guess.

M. yes, yes. I've been once on October 15th and I understood from Mr. Henrik that he was the first operator who started actually the activity here.

J. Yes, he was the one who started it. So previously was only him at Aventura and there it was Mira 3. Who did these trips, but now we have two more boats coming for next year. One boat started this year, so it was kind of starting up and not a lot of people went on these trips but for next year two more boats are coming.

M. I see. Can we talk about development at this stage, development of the industry or is it a still young industry?

J. I don't know if it is a young industry don't know. I don't think that the market is big enough at the moment. In my opinion there are too many boats for the product.

M. I see.

J. There are too many operators who want to go on whale watching because they are competing internally.

M. Ok, ok.

J. So it means for us it means that eventually they will start competing internally and then a lot of other trips will be concealed. Because we don't have enough participants who want to go whale watching. They spread out on the 4 boats. And the boats they have a minimum count of participants they want to fill before they go sailing.

M. Yes, yes.

J. So that is one challenge.

M. Is a kind of mass tourism in the region? Can we talk about it or not necessarily?

J. I don't know if there is a mass tourism but.

M. So one challenge would be to attract more visitors?

J. Yes.

M. In order to fill the boats.

M. For now how do you try to overcome this challenge? What are you doing in this respect?

J. We do a lot of work with online communication towards the main groups of tourists we want to attract, and we do a lot of press work and try to communicate our wonderful destination towards these people. And of course, whale watching is part of that communication. Because it's a unique selling point for us as a destination. I don't know for us it makes sense to communicate.

M. I see and speaking about collaboration of different stakeholders. Let's start with the collaboration between the DMOs and the boat owners, how do you collaborate with them?

J. It's a little different. It depends where you are in the country. One we are private organization we depend on our members, pay members and our members to get promoted in the tourism guide as you've probably have seen in the large guide.

M. I don't think so.

J. Ok. Its downstairs I can show you later. Then we have a lot of printed material in which our partners will be able to be promoted if they pay this fee or their membership. But for example, in Fredericia its teh government who owns the tourist agency. So that's a little different from here. So, we are private organization and they are public.

M. In this case we talk about public and private partnerships?

J. So its Henrik Aventura and Mira 3. They are paying us for the membership to get promotion in our material to get promotion in the tourist guide and all the other things that we do online press work etc. They pay us to do so. So, this is some sort of membership agreement.

M. Do you also have a role of coordinator? I also talked with the owner of the Mira and they told me that they are new on the market and you the one who are showing them how to do this thing.

J. Yes, we are having this online booking portal in which whale watching tourists will be able to book online. So yes, maybe we are the coordinators, but we try to of course we try to involve the operators themselves when we agree when we want to depart, when they want to do the trips and so on. So, Yes, maybe some kind of coordinator you could say.

M. I understand, speaking about the benefits of this collaboration, which benefits will derive from here?

J. From the collaboration with tour operators?

M. Yes for everybody, benefits for them for you.

J. For us its great selling point for our destination. We are able to provide these whale watching tours to our guests and for them, I would say they have unique chance to get some promotion. They could not pay for themselves because we are able to find a lot of money when we do it together. We try to when we try to promote the destination as a whole, we are able to fund a lot of money.

M. I see!

J. Which we can use on different kind of promotion, printed media etc.

M. I see, and about problems. Have you met any problems while collaborating cooperating with them?

J. Not all operators are good at keeping our agreements (laugh)...If you can say so but problems, I don't know what the problems would be besides that as I told you earlier that we have too many boats for the product right now and the boats the operators are competing internally. They take money from each other so to speak at the moment.

M. But don't they collaborate among themselves or you don't know?

J. They don't really cooperate. We try to be the ones who you know. Let's meet up and let's agree and let's do it and some, especially Henrik he is very keen on telling the stories about the whale watching and whale hunting and all this. Some of the operators don't really. they are just like. Ah doesn't matter let's go sailing and see some whales and its.

M. It's about quality for the product?

J. Yes.

M. I see. And you are the one who is actually trying to coordinate the cooperation?

J. We are trying to get them to meet each other and let's agree on how we are going to do this because it will benefit all of us if we can agree on how to.

M. I see. Speaking about collaboration at a broader scale. How do you collaborate with the DMO in Fredericia?

J. We work very closely together. We have this same website where both of us operate and we all. We try to communicate Little Belt as a whole as one destination and it makes sense because we are located so close to each other and we can benefit from our collaboration.

M. It's a marketing collaboration?

J. Yes, it does mainly.

M. Can we talk about the strategy in place. Do you have a strategy for cooperation/collaboration?

J. Strategy?

M. Goals, a plan for the future.

J. Every year we want to have more tourists. So just it's the main goal.

M. Ok!

J. All I can say is every year we try to communicate and promote the area in different media online. We don't really have a strategy at the moment but last year we did a collaboration with for example the online bureau from the Netherland about the network campaigns targeting, that is.

M. I understand. In connection to whale watching do you have a strategy for the whale watching tourism in the region or not only for whale watching?

J. We don't have a strategy especially for whale watching.

M. So it is included in the strategy?

J. Yes if we attracted a lot of tourists to destination hopefully some more people will go whale watching. That is hopefully a natural way of think here. When you arrive here you have to go whale watching or you have to go. We have a lot of different operators and events and so we can't focus only on whale watching. We have to. We need to help all of our operators.

M. What other partnerships do you have, Legoland?

J. We have a partnership with Legoland because we are located fairly close to Legoland. It's called Legoland Belund Resort and we try to communicate that we are located close to Legoland. Because Legoland itself attracts a lot of tourists to stay here that's good for us.

M. In connection to whale watching, how do they collaborate, directly with you or also with boat operators?

J. Whale watching? They operate everything with us.

M. Directly with you and then you talk to boat owners?

J. Yes.

M. I understand.

J. If Legoland or some other organization wants to go whale watching they come to us and we can arrange the bookings with captains.

M. What kind of collaboration is this, is it formal/informal, contract-based or relation based? Do you have a contract I mean a formal agreement with them?

J. With whale watching operators?

M. With whale watching operators and with other collaborators.

J. Yes, we have a contract.

M. With Legoland and DMO in Fredericia do you have as well?

J. I'm not actually sure about that but with Legoland yes, we have some sort of contract. I'm not into all the details about the contract. But their contract means that we as a destination Middelfart can be part of Legoland Resort.

M. Do you also collaborate with Visit Denmark?

J. I'm not sure about that.

M. I'm asking because I saw on TV in the trains Little Belt promoted so I was curious about this aspect how do you reach?

J. Maybe was actually us we did it ourselves because we have had some promotion agreement with the magazines in trains called U. and I wasn't aware that we were showing on the screen but if you say so.

M. Yes, it's true, I've seen it.

J. I'm wandering, how many besides you who are actually watching the screens!

M. I don't know maybe many.

J. Hopefully.

M. I'm also interested in communication. Can we talk about communication between you and operators and between the DMOs? Like when you have issues problems do you communicate them?

J. Yes, we communicate directly. We pick up the phone and call them. We have a very close collaboration. We are very informal about that. So, if we have something, we just call them maybe they even show up in the office unexpectedly and then oh, let me put this aside because I have to.

M. Nice! Is the community involved here? How the community is involved in the whale watching? I was talking with random people and they know about whale watching here and they were proud in a way.

J. Yes, I would say so, because every year we have this day in Middelfart called Marshvel and marshvin mean porpoise. So, it's this day once a year when we celebrate the history and whale catching and everything about the whales because Middelfart is part.

M. Part of the history.

J. It was one of the only places in Denmark where it allowed to hunt the whales. You know way back it was actually the king from back then who said that Middelfart was allowed to hunt them and then they used I'm not sure how they actually did it. They were used for lamp oil.

M. The blubber? I'm not sure after the world war HH whaling stopped?

J. I can't remember then it stopped, but you maybe ask google about this (speaking more on this).

M. Do you know about the regulation aspect?

J. I'm not aware of any regulation, its more in your personal opinion. You know we try to not get too many boats out in the water, because the whales have to get their peace or else will leave.

M. Yes, they will leave.

J. They will find somewhere else to be I guess, so it's more a personal. How do you feel about whale-watching? I would say that if we suddenly had 10 or 15 more boats gong whale watching, I would say it's too many. Because the whales have to get their peace also. They and I don't think they should feel hunted in their natural habitat. But that is only my opinion. I'm not the one who makes these decisions.

M. Do you usually need a licence for your boat?

J. Yes you just need a licence for your boat and then you can go on your own. But of course, if you want to be an operator of the whale watching trips, you have to have some safety expectations and you know. So, the boats don't sink, and you have to have life vests and all these regulations. But that's different, I'm not into that. Maybe you can ask Henrik about that he surely knows.

M. He said there is no regulation in place and he is a bit worried about this aspect.

J. I could imagine.

M. Is Nature Park involved in collaboration?

J. Some sort I would say we collaborate clearly with Nature Park as we do with Visit Fredericia, as we do with the Destination Little Belt. We try to work closely, yes.

M. And the Nature Day, there is a nature day here in Middelfart. I read in newspapers that you organize whale watching trips on Nature Day (talking about the lines).

J. Probably we do because its mainly us who has the direct contact with operators. So, if the Nature Park or Destination Little Belt they want us to arrange a whale watching trip on a certain day then we surely can do that.

M. Connected to stakeholders do you know how do they use their resources?

J. That is a tough question. Now I'm not sure how do they do, sorry.

M. What are the barriers for collaboration in your opinion?

J. One barrier is of course that Fredericia for example is a political organization and we are private, and we have some differences that we try to overcome. We work together, they have to do something in order. The political way of doing things in Frederician d we don't have to rely on political influence, because we are private organization so that is one barrier of course. But I won't say that it has been a big problem. Not at all. We try to overcome this barrier and most of the time we can agree on how we do things. I can't point out one specific thing which has been. But they probably.

M. I wanted to see this tourist activity from different angles, not just benefits but also problems.

J. But I don't really think that we have large barriers so not big problem.

M. For example Legoland they are also promoting whale watching here and also doing what they are doing do you think it is in a good way preserve the quality?

J. I would say so. but again' Legoland has to have. Legoland has many operators they have to promote so the channel is big. And then you have whale watching down here and it's hard to say what they actually get out of it. But its good to be represented together with Legoland. Because it's such a big brand and we have to work closely together.

M. Yes, it's a big brand, it's also the Asian market reached easily through them.

J. Yes exactly. So, it's nice that we can do this collaboration.

M. You said some time ago about these two DMOs, was a political decision or who was the initiator?

H. It was Henrik who was originally the initiator to do the whale watching trips and then as a tourism organization we had to promote what is happening here in our destination. And whale watching as a unique selling point, we want to collaborate with operators of whale watching because it's such a big thing. It's a brand in itself right.

M. Yes, it is.

J. As the only place in Denmark.

M. Why is it the only place it's because of the whales?

J. Yes, it's because of the whales. Because out here in Little belt we have the largest concentration of the whales in all of Denmark, actually in all of the world.

M. The small harbour porpoise?

J. You have the biggest population of whales compared to how big the waters are. So, when you go whale watching you nearly have 100% guarantee of actually spotting the whales.

M. This is guaranteed by all the operators?

J. You can't really guarantee that you will see the whales. But I would say that you mainly see the whales when you go whale watching compared to the weather and time of the year. All these things come to play.

M. And the main season is it during the summer?

J. Its June, July and August.

M. I was wondering why during September none of the operators from Middelfart had those whale watching tours.

J. It's because of the tourists. We don't have enough tourists in our destination in that time of the year. The one trip that you went on the 15th of October it was a special trip because of the Danish Autumn holiday.

M. Do you have it every year? So that you are doing it no matter what happens.

J. I'm not sure if we do, but I can't say at this moment. But of course, we, well it will return in the summer months. Because its where, when our tourists come. We have many camping sites and it's not that nice to go on camping when the weather is cold so.

M. Depends on people?

J. Depends. But mainly people come here in the summer time. That's why we mainly have whale watching trips in these months.

M. And most of them know about whale watching through your channels? How do they find out?

J. Hopefully different channels of communication, websites, Facebook I would say, one of our sites the whale watching site is on our website. It's the one who generate nearly the most traffic. Generally speaking so I would say they find information on, before they come here, they maybe look up what is to see in Middelfart and they see whale watching and they book some tickets. Maybe they see a Facebook post and.

M. I understand. And which is the main market for this destination, is it Netherland, Western Europe or depends again?

J. We have four main targets who we want to attract tourists. Number one the main target is of course Denmark. Number two is Germany because we are so close to Germany and it only takes one hour 15 minutes to go from the German border to here actually. Maybe even lesser time.

M. So that's why.

J. And then Holland, Netherland. Because its nearly close also and we as a population the Danish people look a lot alike the people from Holland. So, we can get along pretty well let's say.

M. I understand.

J. Then its Norway again people fairly close to Denmark.

M. But don't they have already whale watching market?

J. Oh I thought you meant the destination as a whole.

M. Destination as a whole and also whale watching.

J. I would say, if we only talk whale watching I would say mainly Germany and Holland.

M. What about the Eastern market or they are too far from Denmark?

J. Some people go on whale watching but it's not the main target for us to attract so they come here. Maybe they have seen some other places I can say where, but we had some Chinese people coming this year. We have got French people, from Belgium, Italian so I will say all around.

M. Can we talk about people who come here and find about whale watching at the destination who are not aware about?

J. Maybe some do because they in all of our hotels and camping sites and then holiday homes we have the tourist guide. In the rooms of summer of summer home sand camps, we have all these small brochures what is happening in the time that they are staying here so. Of course, whale watching is a big part of that communication towards the tourists. That they have to experience the wanders of Little Belt.

M. I did also go on a whale watching trip with Mira.

J. Did you see some whales?

M. Yes, the weather was a bit bad on that day but still we saw some whales. Not that many than the previous day because on 15th when I went with Aventura, it was a great day sunny. And all these and everybody enjoyed it.

J. When its sunny and waters are fairly relaxed, its perfect conditions for whale watching.

M. Are you already promoting for the next year?

J. We are just starting right now.

M. What would be the difference between the last year and this year? What will you do differently let's say?

J. Doing differently, I would say that the operators has to keep their agreements with us.

M. They don't?

J. Some of them don't. what is different we have more boats coming as I said earlier, and we have to agree with the new boats on how to do whale watching you know. So that the quality of the trip will be fairly like of course, it's not possible to do it exactly alike, but

M. You are trying to make it?

J. We are trying to make some ground rules on how to do whale watching in the Little Belt.

M. I see, I see. Do you have like a political help in this way or not necessarily? As you say you are trying to do it in a way you mean like following regulation or just the goals as you said?

J. I don't. I think we aren't following any regulation. I don't see any besides. No, I don't see any. So political influence I'm not sure.

M. It's just to know more about. Going back again to the DMO from here and Fredericia, you promote the destination as a whole. But when did you start it? This collaboration between you and them and how did it start.

J. How did it start? It started because we are located close to each other and the bridge walking have you been bridge walking?

M. I'm afraid of height.

J. You told me earlier.

M. But I've seen people doing it.

J. It's also our unique selling point for both Middelfart and Fredericia. Because it's the only place in Europe where you can do this bridge walking. So, it's something that we are both proud of. And that we, it makes sense that we work together because we are located so close to each other and we can benefit from each other.

M. How was it initiated, who came up with the idea.

J. I don't know it was before my time.

M. I see, but was it several years ago?

J. No it's not that time ago. Our website you know the one that we collaborate it was in 2016, I guess. So, its was nearly three years ago. I don't know how was initiated and when, but I don't think it's so long time ago. But it is before my time.

M. Is it beneficial this collaboration.

J. Yes, I would say so.

M. In literature it's called private and public partnerships and there are always challenges for the partnerships and also problems and opportunities. Can you say something about it?

J. It's a tough question (laugh). The challenge it's that we don't always speak the same language because we want to. We don't depend on the political way of doing things. So, we just do the things we want to do our way. We ask our partners let's do it this way. And if we can partners agree ok let's do. We don't have to think of the political way of doing things. We don't have to ask our people if they want to go this way or that way or.

M. I understand it's a kind of union here. Mr Henrik was telling me how it works here (talk of the union). Can you say something about it?

J. We rely 100% on our partners. If we didn't have our partners here in the area, we wouldn't exist. That is the way we are doing things here and Fredericia is doing in another way.

M. Some partners that we talked about them?

J. It's the hotels and the camping sites, tour operators and bed and breakfast and also this kind of partners who are paying their membership every year. So, we can do all these things and promote area.

M. And again is it formal or informal or depends on different actors?

J. It depends.

M. Do you agree that trust experience and patience play a role in collaboration?

J. Yes, I would say so. Yes (laugh)

M. (looks through questions) Is it mostly marketing collaboration?

J. The tourist manager works closely together across but it's not, they don't have a like a formal partnership. I wouldn't say so. If they are working together it's because it makes sense and we can benefit so that's mainly why.

M. Do you think that there are some factors that can affect this collaboration?

J. Yes but I cannot speak of it. It's in the shadows at the moment.

M. Of course, things that are in the light sure.

J. Its not to speak of right now sorry (laugh).

M. No problem.

J. Some things are happening in the future and we are awaiting what will happen and that can of course affect how we do things, but I cannot speak of right now.

M. Of course just asking what is possible to.

J. Its political thing you know. Because we are a part of all of us Visit Denmark. And Visit Denmark is own by the Danish government so in the end of the day.

M. They are the one?

J. Yes, its political but and then Visit Denmark is a political organization. And all the different offices as we are one visit office for example, it's up to the community to decide how we will do things and it's going to be a private union or we it's going to be a government.

M. I see. Talking about community what do you mean by this a community of political parties?

J. Political parties not the community.

M. Ok not the community like stakeholders, operators all this thing.

J. It's a political decision from the city hall so to speak.

M. I see So I'm just wandering if we can speak of a need for more collaboration?

J. The need for more collaboration?

M. Yes for the development of whale watching narrowing down to whale watching.

J. It's a little, a little tough product to develop.

M. Why?

J. Because they are not coming more whales and hopefully the tourists will continue to come here and hopefully more and more people will come here but the whale watching what it is, we have some, we made some ground rules on how to do it. We are trying to not overdo it. So, I think right now it's good as it is and if it needs some sort of development, I would say that it's up to operators themselves to.

M. So the decision is in their hands?

J. Yes.

M. I see. What do you think, without collaboration whale watching would be where it is now or?

J. No. because the operators they don't have the capabilities of promoting themselves in the same way as we are able to both regarding on how to do it Facebook, printed, media online websites and everything. And then because of the time. We are here because it's the only one thing to do. We want to promote the area and they don't have the capabilities to do so I would say.

M. I see. So, collaboration has developed this industry?

J. Yes, I would say.

M. I see. How do you see it in five year-time or 10 years-time let's say?

J. Hopefully we have sold out whale watching trips throughout summer on all boats or as we are trying to do next year. We hopefully we will minimise the amount, of concealed trips.

M. There are many concealed trips usually?

J. Not many. But there is a fair amount, of concealed trips every year because this minimum count of participants that the operators which to have before they want to go out because of course it's quite expensive for them also to go out on the whale watching trips. So, they have to reach the price given before they want to sail.

M. I see and between operators they are doing in their own way and they are selling with different prices?

J. Yes, they are selling different prices and again that is one thing that they do not agree on. What the price will be and that is something they have to figure out between themselves, we can only provide the location where we can sit down and agree on how we are going to do things and serve a cup of coffee and food you know. But we are not the ones who can tell them it has to cost like.

M. Do they usually cooperate among themselves or you are not aware of what is happening between them?

J. I will say that they are trying to collaborate.

M. For their own good?

J. For their own good and for the good of the whale watching product.

M. Yes of course and whale watching of course brings value like education, employment do you think?

J. Education yes. The whale watching tells a lot about the history and the biology and about the biology of the whale, also of course there is some education connected to it. But not employment.

M. Not employment? But they don't employ like people during the summer or they don't need it. They can do it by themselves?

J. They don't need it, they can do it by themselves. And then maybe they can have one guy who they know and maybe it's a brother or cousin. I would not say that they create employment no.

M. I understand. The new boat operator on Mira I understood that there is a new one started in September. Do you know why the older one decided to give up?

J. I wouldn't say that he gave up. I would say, I think he is, I can imagine that its quite stressful to be a whale watching operator. Especially in the summer. Because maybe they have two departures a day throughout the summer. So, it's a lot of work and he has done good. He has been with us for many years and maybe needed to try something else. I don't see. I cannot point out that that is why you know.

M. I was just curious because I contacted him earlier then noticed that I couldn't reach him at all so.

J. He is a bit of.

M. I wanted to talk with him to see his view about whale watching.

J. Well he is a nice man, I can't see why because again because he has been with us for a long time.

M. Yes everybody.

J. I think that he needed to try something else, something new.

M. Yes like everybody else. I already have a good view.

J. I can imagine.

M. Did we talk about factors that can affect collaboration?

J. Yes.

M. What can be done for more effective collaboration?

J. I would say that we have to be more open minded towards each other and towards in collaboration with other operators and that is also what we are trying to do when we arrange a meeting with the operators to, you know. Let's sit down and agree on the ground rules on how to do the whale watching trips. We also because when we are having new boats coming to us, who also want to do the whale watching trips we have to pass some sort of agreement on how we will do this, so we can be sure that the quality will be fairly like the previous trips.

M. Do they have to meet some requirements in order to be?

J. I'm not aware that we are having any specific requirements at the moment as it is right now. But I know we are working on something to do something.

M. What would be the consequences on non-collaboration let's say?

J. Non-collaboration with us as a DMO?

M. With DMO and of different actors let's say.

J. We of course as a destination we would miss out a unique selling point. A big selling point for the destination for the area itself. And the operators will miss out on a great opportunity to be promoted.

M. Yes because everybody benefits. There are many benefits from this cooperation.

J. Yes sure.

M. I understand, and we can also talk about inter-organization cooperation as DMO from Fredericia and DMO in Middelfart they are cooperating?

J. Yes benefiting.

M. (..) Which would be the opportunities of this collaboration? You are reaching more tourists?

J. Yes, we are reaching more tourists and we are able to use our resources together on the same goal. You know we want to attract the same people. So, if they, of course we want them to stay in Middelfart. But if they come to Fredericia on first time and hopefully they go to Middelfart to experience whale watching, and other things here. And the other way around if they come to Middelfart on first time and then they go to Fredericia to experience the theatre or whatever we can benefit from it.

M. It's a win-win situation?

J. Yes, I would say so.

M. Can we also talk about improved productivity, like better products through collaboration?

J. Sure I would say so.

M. Also the customers will have like enhanced knowledge they will know more?

J. Yes. We have a wide range of things to do and things to promote to the tourists. We have a wide range of reasons to go here you know. That we will not have if we did not collaborate.

M. What other potential collaboration do you have in mind?

J. New potential collaboration? I don't know (laugh). That's a tough question.

M. Where would you want to be?

J. I don't know because that's about my payed grade to take these decisions.

M. I understand.

J. That is the tourist managers who agree where we want to go and again it's a political decision. A lot of this is a political decision. So, I can't say anything about it.

M. Yes of course.

J. They the politicians point out the guidelines on how they want us to do things.

M. Then you are following of course.

J. Yes! Mainly.

M. That's the rule. I think that I covered almost everything I wanted to cover. But if I will still have questions for the future will you be open for more interviews?

J. Yes send me an email or give me a call or whatever. Let's talk or meet up whatever if you have more.

M. Thank you again.

J. You are welcome.

Appendix 5: Line Jepsen Interview

Whale watching boat operator Mira 3. Conducted on 16th of October 2018

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: L (Line Jepsen)

M. (Introduces herself and the topic of research) I've seen that whale watching is mostly in Middelfart and not in Fredericia?

L. There is one boat I think, just up here

M. Is it because it's a tradition for Middelfart like hunting whales?

L. I think that Fredericia was a lot of open water. Here its very protected and its just this narrow strip of water and it gives can be seen land on both sides. Even if you don't see whales its still something beautiful and interesting to look at. If you go out here it's just water.

M. It's open sea?

L. It's not open sea, but small water and it's a larger trip just to go on in here to the narrow strip. And it's in the stream of the narrow strait that you can see most of the whales.

M. They are breeding here?

L. They are breeding there and because of this strong current there is a lot of fish and obviously I think it's the best place in all of Denmark to catch fish and breed.

M. By the way how did you decide to start whale watching or its not only whale watching it's also different activities?

L. I think actually is was a coincidence. I think it's been that with this boat. The former owner he was a photographer and one night I was just walking around the harbour and this old captain was to sell the boat and I said ok ill buy it (laugh). And this summer my husband was looking at boats and private sailing he was just at these old-wooden boats, because it was so romantic. And he saw this one and said ok we can buy half of it. That was interesting. But then the old captain decided that wasn't half of it but all of it.

M. Ok, ok.

L. And then we went on one of the boats on this and just nice and we just started talking to the captain and decided. We need to hear a bit more about this!

M. About whale watching or in general?

L. About the boat about him selling the boat. And then I could an option. My husband was not too satisfied with his job and my job was not going that well this year. So we just ok lets just meet the guy.

M. Always its like this there are like opportunities and you never know what happens next day.

L. Yes you know. So, we just met the captain at his place and talking about this and we decided wow let's do it!

M. Yes its really nice.

L. I've been sailing with the old captain for a while getting to know the boat but always with him beside me.

M. To get to know the boat?

L. Yes and the water yes. There are some places where you got a lot of sand just coming out.

M. Ok!

L. Most of Little Belt is really deep. But when you enter the show some places its really flat and shallow and you have to steer.

M. Ok!

L-. And you have to know where.

M. Ok because if.

L. Yes. This small part you have to avoid.

M (talking about the water in the region, safety on board and the reason for choosing the research topic). I was searching for something challenging in Denmark and whale watching is challenging. I think because its nothing written about it and its only here done. I actually understood that is done in other parts but not like here.

L. I think that because in terms of the porpoises its much, much higher here. There is so many of them.

M. Yes, yes.

L. So you almost guaranteed to see them when you go one. I haven't even in a single trip where we hadn't seen at least one (laugh). So, you do have them in other places, but we don't see them every time.

M. But here it could be also done all year round the whale watching or when does it depend on the weather?

L. Its more pleasurable when its warm. You could see people getting a little bit cold today.

M. Yes, but it was a nice day. Its open sea you also need to wear a hat.

L. Yes but it does get a bit chilly because you are always with the wind it's a bit chilly.

M. Yes (talking again about the focus of the research) Is whale watching here done only by you and Aventura? like Aventura and Mira?

L. Yes, they are the main boats. There are three more smaller boats that go out mainly on fishing trips and also whale watching but not as much as they can carry around only twelve people each. So, they are smaller boats.

M. And they are like marketed. But on the site of Little Belt there is only for Middelfart its only Aventura and Mira promoted.

L. I'm not sure there is a boat called Sealed.

M. Ok.

L. But sometimes she is sailing from Scabek. I don't know if its from here. And there is a small boat lined there Marianne. She also goes on trips and the Fortuna. she also goes mainly on fishing trips but sometimes whale watching.

M. At tourists' request?

L. Yes, I think a lot of costumers this summer the boat was full every time and even people come oh could we get a chance to book it's a room for four more?

M. Such a pity that I was not here but I could have enjoyed more tours. I am trying to see now how every entrepreneur is doing their business as whale watching. I know they are doing different activities but apart from this they are also doing whale watching let's say with a focus let's say on how they collaborate with other stakeholders and actors.

L- The collaboration is a little bit new to us because the old captain did all these things before.

M. Yes.

L. But this morning we had a meeting with the tourist office and they are sort of coordinating things.

M. Ok.

L. And they had made some agreements with other tourist offices in Holland and Germany, I think. The Scandinavian countries Norway, Sweden would be new partners in this and they offer some bonus if they buy the whale watching trips.

M. Ok I see.

L. I think they might get a few more customers.

M. Through them? They are promoting this?

L. Yes, they are promoting them through the tourist offices in the other countries.

M. Ok.

L. So you get this advertising out in other countries through that.

M. That's nice.

L. And then I think we are going to talk with Henrik because I think we are doing the trips like 8-9 times each week. This year it was Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday and Sunday two trips every day.

M. You were doing same day with them?

L. No he used to do Wednesday and maybe Sundays or Mondays I don't remember. But I think we are just going to talk with him and say if you want this and that we might be filling in the blanks. Ok we will go on these other days. It shouldn't be a problem.

M. Yes.

L. But we hadn't the whale watching trips, the tourist book individual but you also can book the whole boat and lot of people do that as well for anniversary, weddings even when you die you can spread the ashes.

M. Ok, ok.

L. We have got a lot of it as well.

M. Do you do it for the whole year around not just for the season?

L. Yes.

M. Are you promoting?

L. No actually the old captain never promoted anything.

M. Oh no?

L. He had these trips and the booking site at tourism office. That's the only thing and people just come here and are asking if it's available and mail or whatever.

M. Ok.

L. Or just putting in the calendar and that i.

M. Ok but will you also collaborate or talk with the Nature Park here?

L. Yes that's the plan. Because both my husband and I we used to be engaged in environmental things. We both used to the drinking water and protection of ground water.

M. Sustainability?

L. That was my education originally.

M. Very nice green planet in a way.

L. Yes, we also have the plan to change the engine for an electric engine. So, without sound without smoke and anything that.

M. I haven't noticed it's an old engine here?

L. Yes.

M. And what do you use when it's an old one petroleum?

L. Diesel.

M. Diesel ok (talk about the diesel certification and about the researcher background).

L. I think that the tourist office does a lot of the promotion.

M. Yes, I will also talk with them.

M. Some other things for example Mr. Pete he was some kind of you also have a kind of collaboration with him?

L. Yes, I have three guides I can call. They work as guides and help me with these ropes and make people comfortable around here so just attend their needs.

M. Yes and all the stories?

L. Yes Pete actually my favourite is the guy called Michael and he was the younger brother of the old captain.

M. Ok.

L. He is like he is a huge guy, but he is so friendly and so like warm hearted and always. Tells all these incredible stories and just go like oh!

M. The know very well the region also so they can they are very good guides.

L. Yes especially Michael he is excellent. I have never met someone so good with people and good at storytelling. Yes, well he is great.

M. Yes, yes.

L. You have to come back and experience him some time.

M. I will come back. As you said it was not necessarily yes it was a kind of coincidence with whale watching. But first it was how to say, the drive because you come on the tour and liked it?

L. Yes actually we saw the boat we saw that it was an option. I didn't know you could go whale watching and saw this trip and said ok! So, you can go whale watching? Great! I have seen the porpoises from the little sail boat but not like this. So, we didn't know it was an industry.

M. But did you know about whales that there are in Denmark?

L. No I am a geologist. Yes, well we knew there were whales but didn't know there is so many of them here and it is guaranteed to see them. And we just hooped and so this is whale watching you can make a leaving great!

M. Yes its really amazing.

L. Yes it doesn't even feel that you are going to work.

M. And also like a tourist you don't only go to in a boat to see the surroundings, but you also see wildlife and it could be an impulse and a big attraction to come here.

L. Yes people are always happy to come here it's just really good.

M. By the way about regulation. Do you know about regulation here?

L. Regulation?

M. For whale watching is there anything or you just need the license?

L. You just need the license to sail the boat.

M. There are not like rules don't approach it?

L. No there is not. well you can't harm them of course.

M. Of course no! they were tortured too much time they need yes.

L. When you see them, and you are fast you take the gas of the boat and leaving sailing so.

M. Yes. So you don't disturb them.

L. So you don't disturb them much and slow the boat down so people can watch them, and I mean whales. There is no harm done we don't experience the whales reacting to the boats. Sometimes when really fast boats go by

you can see they go really deep and disappear. But when we come, they are still circling up and catching their fish or whatever they are doing.

M. Yes, I have noticed them very friendly.

L. Unfortunately we didn't see any of them feeding today. Sometimes they work together like four and five whales and they fast approach the fish from different sides and they come up like this like this, four whales like this and catch.

M. It's a strategy for them?

L. Yes that looks great they don't come up all the time when they come up to breath you just see them two or three times and that's it.

M. Yes.

L. So its much more interesting when they are busy.

M. They have their strategy and we have our strategy. By the way you will also promote on your website?

L. Yes.

M. I have noticed that it is not in English?

L. No we just I think it should be there maybe today.

M- Ok. I think my husband was translating the last bits yesterday. And my sun was busy setting out everything else (laugh). But that is really new.

M. Yes because ok now it's your boat but before

L. It was not in English?

M. No it was just in Danish.

L. We are going to make a German version as well.

M. yes good there are Germans for example yesterday were some German tourists.

L. Yes. we have four as well today.

M. Yes ok.

L. And in summer are almost Germans every time half the boat.

M. Aha.

L. Every day.

M. It's very good. So, during summer you can sail every day if you have like tourists let's say?

L. Yes.

M. Ok that's good.

L. I think during summer the old captain was sailing everyday like two or three trips. Well I think every week eight of the trips were these tourists' trips where you could first book one single ticket from the tourist office.

M. Ok.

L. But he also had just as many private tours we are given to rent the whole boat.

M. Aha.

L. And now here in winter is more like people just renting to go fishing.

M. Aha. But fishing season is all year round? Or depend on the fish?

L. Yes but we don't do the fishing trips in summer. Because it's a little bit messy. And its not so much fun to go on a tourist trip and just after fishing trips (laugh).

M. ok! Do you have maybe I keep you?

L. No its ok we are on holidays.

M. Ok! That's good I have been on a holiday in June.

L. Ok but this week its holiday over most of Denmark, I think.

M. Ok! I didn't know I'm also working that's why.

L. And the university don't have a holiday now?

M. Now I'm writing my thesis and I don't have time to be there maybe that's why I lost.

L. Track of time!

M. Track of time yes.

L. That's why my sun can be with me because they are on holidays and yes.

M. He is of great help.

L. Yes, he is excellent he did most of the web page (talking about her sun and times about being his age).

M. do you have any strategy in place for now? Like your own strategy or you are working on it?

L. Well the strategy is to well most of the income is in the summertime that's for sure. So, the strategy right now is just to sail and when the customers are aboard and was a wild chance to try this on the holiday season!

M. But you still had.

L. The weather was great today.

M. Yes it was, and people enjoyed I have noticed.

L. Oh that's great and they are just people calling now and then wanting to rent the whole boat. I have been on a couple of fishing trips. People want to fish cod.

M. Cod?

L. Cod its one of this really large fish with. But it's a tradition to eat fish for New Year Eve.

M. Ok.

L. So between Christmas and New Year Eve there is a lot of fish like this.

M. Ok!

L. So I think I am going to sail for the whole week then.

M. Aha!

L. But otherwise waters are coming in (talking about the change in the water during winter and how boats are checked in autumn).

M. I am also trying to understand if you try to co-create here? Co-create like with other actors?

L. Yes, I think we are going to coordinate with Henrik who wants to sail which days.

M- Ok.

L. But I think the invention of whale watching has already been done so we are just writing the whale, I guess.

M. Yes and Mr. Henrik started first whale watching here was the only one.

L. Yes years ago was something was a long time ago.

M. Yes it's amazing that actually as you said harbour porpoises its only here but bigger whales are up in Greenland. I think they are doing tours.

L. Yes sort of co-creation. I think maybe my husband and I would like to make some themed tours, some kind of. But we haven't quite decided on what.

M. You are working now on it?

L. Well just going to see what would be interesting. My husband would like to do some music tours.

M. That would be great.

L. And we also like sometimes to have one of the porpoises' expert as on Aventura.

M. Yes.

L. Its fine that our guides can tell a little bit but some of the experts are really experienced. Telling everything.

M. Yes.

L. So for the people who want to know more about it not just going on the trip that would be.

M. To know more?

L. Yes. Making people aware telling more about the nature and well different things.

M. That's a very good idea and also with music as they do like jazz.

L. I don't know about. I like I have no idea.

M. Do you think if whale watching has potential here? And value will it create value for this area?

L. Area? Yes, when the former captain decided to sell his boat, the tourist office went like ohh nooo you are not going to do that!

M. Ok!

L. We want your boat! You have to stay. So, it was one of his main criteria for choosing the buyers.

M. So it was under the condition that you will continue the tradition?

L. Yes well, he told us you should stay here for at least one year. Then we can do whatever. Because it will be his responsibility (laugh). But actually, there were some people offering more money for the boat to bring it somewhere else, so he said no.

M. Ah ok!

L. So definitely brings people to the place the whale watching and the bridge walking. They are the two main attractions here.

M. For the whole Little Belt?

L. Yes. That's something you cannot do anywhere else.

M. No. I was reading that Middelfart it is called the capital of whale watching. I think it is yes so (talking about eventually other interviews and future research in the region).

L. I think that boats here are like an institution. All the people living here they are usually watching over the boats and if something is unusual, they will call the captains and they well is it supposed to be like that?

M. Aha! So, there is a union here?

L. Yes, I think we have got that little black shed over there belong to our boat. And a couple of these people above here have their bicycles in exchange to watch the place.

M. Ok! (talk about the small shed that belong to the owner and the pictures that are hanging on the wall which show royals and other celebrities).

M. I asked already about the promotion. How do you market promote on the website?

L. Yes website and tourist office.

M. In the old days there were also flyers, but not anymore.

L. Well we do also. We do have these (she shows the old cards for the boat and talk about how to contact the former captain if the researcher needs to talk with him).

M. thank you for now for all the information!

L. You are welcome.

M. And I still have many a lot of questions and if you agree later on. I will come back here.

Appendix 6: Niels Ole Præstbro Interview

Sekretariatskoordinator, Beskrivelse: Naturpark Lillebælt Sekretariatet for Naturpark Lillebælt. Conducted on 11th of December 2018

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: N (Niels Ole Præstbro)

M. (introduces herself and the research topic). I am also interested in your opinion about whale watching. What do you think about this activity?

N. I think it's a unique activity and it's something that we have had quite a few years in Denmark in Little Belt part. Somehow, we are not good to promote it. We have to promote it better. I think it's a unique thing you can do and often it's possible to see the little whales here in little Belt Park. It's an icon, we use whales as an icon. And this fact that you can see the small Little Belt it's very important to us.

M. What do you think the development of this industry actually it has been developed through collaboration? And different actors were involved that is why it's here at this stage?

N. Yes, it's because of the nature that it's here. But in regards boats like Henrik, he is sailing, and they are also ambassadors for the Nature Park Little Belt. I brought a flag for Henrik he can put up on top of his boat and he can also promote Nature Park Little Belt. So, he is a very important partner, co-operator and we are trying to go a step further and do more systematic a kind of manifest where we can see that we do something for our partners and they do something for us in the Nature Park. So, this is coming up. And this whale watching will be a very important partner.

M. And this collaboration is a new one?

N. This I think will be a new collaboration because we focus on nature and whales are very important piece of this. Because it's on the top of ecosystem. So, it represents the diversity of Little Belt. So, it's a new collaboration with the whale watching ship and other Nature Park. We can say something more. We can we can work together with some scientists who know a lot about the whale ecosystem in Little Belt. So, we can do more nature scientifically. But then we have some hotels and camping sites with us, so that we can attract people and then they can stay here for the night.

M. And also enjoy the attractions.

N. Enjoy the nature and go on whale watching and also spend some money in our area.

M. Yes.

N. So this tourism aspect is also important for the Nature Park. The politicians in our area think that is important to make some money also.

M. Yes.

N. So this cooperation has a big future.

M. I think it has.

N. It's not easy to say something about it.

M. It's my personal opinion. How did you actually decide to start this collaboration?

N. Well it was actually some politicians in Middelfart, Fredericia and Kolding. It's very recent I think it's a top down process actually. They talked about how we promote our area. So, they heard about this Nature Park. Danish Nature Park something, it's a concept. It's a Danish concept. And they said that we have to work on it and, you have to fulfil 10 criteria to be a nature park. So, we worked for many years, five years or so to get an area specific so this is the nature park we have to do a lot of talking to the land owners, so it's been a long way, but actually last year it's our birthday today.

M. Really, Happy Birthday!

N. Thank you! Nature park is one year today.

M. Many years ahead!

N. I hope so with a lot of whale tourism!

M. I visited Little Belt Nature Park in Middelfart, that part with reindeers. But I guess it's only a small part of the whole Nature Park.

N. This is a small part of the whole area. We can see on the internet the whole map. It's from Kolding and the all the way up. So, I can find you a map afterwards.

M. Thank you. Is it a kind of formal or informal let's say?

N. It's a formal one and we have written down in our plans for the whole area, so it's written down and it's what's called the mayors in all cities said ok and wrote down. So, it's a formal decision.

M. And with the boat owners do you collaborate like formally contract based or?

N. Well it's not formally yet but I think we are going to do that I think next year. To do this partnership, agreement a manifest. So, it's going to be more formal.

M. OK, ok. So, you think whale watching has a future in region?

N. Yes, it's very important to the Nature Park. No question about that.

M. Aha. And do you think they are doing it in a sustainable way let's say? The boat operators?

N. Well I hope they do I don't actually know much about whales, but I know that they have some problems with noise and I hope that I think that we must do it sustainable. We don't want to frighten the whales. So, it's important that we do it in a proper way. Actually, this we call it environmental tourism it's a what we want the Nature Park. It's very important for us. We have to conserve nature.

M. Yes for future generations and also for us. And something else, which would be the challenges for this collaboration?

N. Well, one challenge could be this if they don't beware and take care of the whales, if they are doing in some small fast speed boats you can frighten the whales. I think that would be a problem, if we do a lot of that. I don't

think the big boats like Henrik would have a problem. But it could if in 10 years it's a very big industry, perhaps whale tourism, then we have to have some restrictions.

M. Yes at present I understood that you need only a license and safety licence

N. Yes and safety license

M. Yes and that all.

N. Yes that's all, there is no rules no restrictions at the moment.

M. I see. Do you think that many, let's say from the community, many people are using the fast boats in the water?

N. Yes but I don't think it's for whale watching. No, it's for other purposes, they are sailing. But it could be a problem if you are like hunting them.

M. Yes, yes!

N. Just to get a look at them. That would be a problem.

M. I been on Aventura and Mira and when they approach the whales, they are very careful so. I've noticed not so many whales, but I saw some of them.

N. Yes. I think they are very gentle and careful.

M. Yes, they are. I understood from Mr. Henrik that this collaboration between you and him is it connected to some European Union projects or not necessarily?

N. Not yet but we do some national funding. Doing a lot of national funding at the moment. I try to get more money to, well to do some things at the coast, coast lines so you can stand and watch over Little Belt. Like the spot we already got in Middelfart.

M. Yes, yes!

N. At Gamle Havn, have you seen it?

M. The boat house with the listening station?

N. Yes you can listen to whales. We are going to do a lot more of that. And for that purpose, we have to do some national funding.

M. That's interesting. You also want to do also land based whale watching?

N. Yes. More binoculars.

M. Can you spot whales with the binocular?

N. Yes you can if you are lucky! (laugh)

M. Ok!

N. You can see them. But its also just, if you do a little platform or just a bench or something, and then you can some information also. Sit there and look after. And then you can tell a story also. So that's our goal to have a lot of these spots all around coast line so you can stay on the coast and look.

M. That would be also the listening station. I suppose it can be placed anywhere.

N. Yes.

M. I've been listening on youtube the sounds.

N. Did you hear some whales?

M. I don't know. I couldn't distinguish between, of course the boats are making a lot of noise I didn't know they make such much noise.

N. Yes you really can hear that.

M. Yes, its noisy.

M. Very noisy. But apart from this, I understood that at night sounds are much clear, I mean the wildlife sounds not the boat and all this so. So, I don't know.

N. I don't know, but in the evening and in the night time, there is much more life, more whales. I don't know why, perhaps it's easier for them to hunt at that time. Also, we are funding we already got some EU funding to some reefs for, two reefs in Little Belt, and also the whales will benefit of this. It's because it's good for a lot of fish.

M. It's great!

N. And then they got more to it.

M. In this way you are protecting here, and people will not fish there.

N. Yes, we are doing some nature restoration projects. In the Nature Park that's also important issue and topic. nature and tourism so we have to have big view. A lot of topics we have to deal with.

M. Yes sure! Connected to the boat house from Middelfart, I understood that the community was involved in a way to build the boat house? I also talked with Ms. Ann and she told me that many sailors or people from there who are working in the shipping yard they helped restore the house.

N. Yes, some citizens voluntarily, so some help helping us so it's a very good cooperation. They think it's fun to do this boat house, and to clean it up and well they are very good very. And also, this is very important to Nature Park to have some citizens who is helping so its project like that.

M. So we can say that the community is getting involved sometimes?

N. Yes. That is a very good example of what we want to do. If the boat house and if we. Actually, it's important to us to do it at every spot that we do to find some locals. Looking after it and come with their ideas. It's important to us that we have locals' participation in our projects.

M. Yes. Generally, are people aware of whale watching. I mean in Denmark, Danish people?

N. I don't think it's very much knowledge about it. I think that we should be better, much better to promote it.

M. And which would be an idea for a better promotion?

N. Well tv commercials. But also, newspaper' articles.

M. Aha.

N. Yes. Well actually I think that the best way is people talking about it on social media, that they have a great experience and they can tell their other, mother or friends.

M. Social media it's a good channel to promote.

N. Yes. But we have to do a more a better story telling about the whole Nature Park. So, it's not only for whale watching, but you can also do a lot of other things in the whole area. Maybe that would be a great idea.

M. Yes! And Kolding it's also included in the promotion of little Belt?

N. Yes. They are with us within us the Nature Park.

M. And people here are aware of whale watching?

N. Not so much as in Middelfart and Fredericia. Middelfart I think that's very high knowledge about the whales. And they also got the citizens weapons, shield. But in Kolding there are a lot of whales entering in the Kolding fjord, but actually no one knows it. So, we have a bit of promotion inside.

M. Inside and then outside?

N. Yes.

M. About collaboration with whale watching operators, who else would you include in this collaboration. Or its just Aventura, or you try to include everybody that are connected to the industry.

N. Well, the hotels I think we have to involve and camping and other places. But also, the guides, the private guides we have some rangers, nature guides. And they can also do a lot of information. And do a lot of these trips. So, we have two or three guides who also should be a part of this.

M. And these guides are specialized?

N. They are specialized in a lot of outdoor thinks. But they also have some boats. Or they can rent the boats, or they can stay on coastline and talk about whales. So, I think they are also important partners.

M. And the Nature Day, what can you tell me about this special day. I understood that you tried once on the special day to talk about whales on board Aventura?

N. Yes, we have our the Nature Park our nature guide Ms. Annet.

M. Yes Ms. Annet.

N. She was with Henrik out on the boat. So, this is a great day when you get actually like people in Kolding, then it's a way to learn about the nature in their backyard. So, I think it's an important day locally. Not so important nationally or internationally?

M. Do you have in Kolding this kind of day? I understood that in Fredericia they have forest day.

N. No, not so much nature day here. Its Middelfart, who is doing a lot of things on that day.

M. Ok!

N. Kolding has some other days when the do something special. But actually, we are doing in the Nature Park Day every year.

M. When is this day?

N. This is in June. Sometime in the summer June before the vacation. S its every year and it's in the different spots every time. So, it's also a very good place to do some whale stories.

M. Do you have any strategy about the collaboration. Let's say connected to whale watching?

N. Connected to whale watching?

M. Narrowing down and then at a broader sense.

N. Well we don't have a strategy yet. But maybe it will be a very good idea to have in a long term. If we have had a lot of tourists and a lot of partners. Then it would be nice to have a strategy. But you can say that our strategy is to do environmental tourism. concerning about nature. You don't have to ruin nature when you are doing tourism. that's our, very big strategy.

M. Yes, yes, sure. I hope you will manage to.

N. Thank you.

M. And I asked you before about the development for the destination, let's say through whale watching can you say something about this?

N. I think that Nature Park it the destination in itself?

M. With everything included like whale watching, all the activities connected to.

N. Yes, all the activities connected to Little Belt. That is, the things that hold it together is Little Belt. The whales it's a very important part of it. But there is also a lot of surfing, diving. So, it's a lot to do. But I think it's a destination.

M. Aha. And through collaboration of stakeholders that are all involved in this collaboration, and if it's helping the industry this kind of collaboration. Do you think that it does or?

N. I think it's helping the whale watching?

M. Yes, the industry many people who are involved and they collaborate.

N. I think that it helps because it's a unique. So, we can get more visitors in this area because we have this unique thing, that they don't have other places in Denmark they don't have it. I don't know if there is something in Germany.

M. Whale watching?

N. Yes.

M. I don't know. The small harbour porpoises here they are unique and it's the only place that they breed at least it's what I understood, and I read about. And many Germans are coming I understood from the DMO.

N. I think there are a lot of places around in the sea and around Germany and Denmark. But this is unique place to see them because it's a very small belt and it's a very deep. So, it's a lot of hunting possibilities for the whales.

M. And something else, do you think there could be any barriers for collaboration?

N. Well always this money. I could say that you have to pay if you want to be a partner.

M. Aha.

N. Then they can say we don't want to pay its too expensive and. Because we also have some costs, we do this, and we do this (shows the printing materials). Some merchandise involve promotion, we are spending money on this. And we don't have much money from the Fredericia and Kolding and Middelfart. So, we have to do funding and also, we have to get some money from the partners.

M. But from all those connected to collaboration it is connected to this kind of funding?

N. Well its connected because the funding you have to say that you collaborate. So its very important to do it, and actually not only to say it but you have to do it.

M. Ok!

N. To do this collaboration.

M. And with Mr. Henrik you have this kind of agreement or for now its not

N. Not very formally.

M. Ok.

N. We only have a gentlemen agreement (laugh).

M. Ok!

N. We don't have anything. Well we have something called Fishing Friends Little Belt. So, we have to ..with other people who do fishing trips in Little Belt. And this is more formally. We have some, a manifest but its only about fishing and not whale watching. And therefore

M. Maybe in the future.

N. I think it's a model. You can copy. It's a very fine model its only six partners.

M. Ok.

N. A shop who sells fishing equipment, and Henrik and some boat renters. So, it's a little partnership, but it's a first formally that we have.

m. So it's a first year when you started. and you are kind of developing it?

N. Yes you can say that. We are in the developing phase. We are only one-year Nature Park so.

We have to build up the formally partnerships, yes.

M. Yes, yes.

M. And also the Destination Little Belt is not that old so.

N. Yes, you can say that Destination and Nature Park we are very close together. We are like brothers now. So, we are working very tight together. And I think perhaps in some years we will be melting together. I think the Nature Park is stronger trademark than a destination. Nature and whales the whale tourism it sells better.

M. Nature itself its very

N. Yes its very hot right now (laugh).

M. Right now yes. It hasn't been like this several years ago actually but not that hot as nowadays.

N. Not.

M. And a final question maybe, what do you think of whale watching in ten years-time or five years-time how would look like?

N. Well I hope it will be an international visit trademarks in the Little Belt. They are coming from England, Holland and Germany to try it. And I hope they will pay a little bit of money, for the trips and then we can use the money to do nature projects in the sea. So that we recycle some money back to nature, back to the sea.

M. So it's a kind will be more developed like an industry let's say?

N. Yes, I hope so. More visitors.

M. I don't know if I Asked you, I said final but I, did I as of the benefits of collaboration of cooperation?

N. No.

M. What benefits will be?

N. Benefits, well Henrik will his benefit is of course that he will get some money and he work and be sustainable. And we get more visitors and then they also spend money in our area. And then I hope a benefit its also some knowledge new knowledge for people that they know about these values nature values that we got in the sea, and then I hope that will preserve it better. We have to know something about it.

M. Yes, yes.

N. if you want to preserve you have to know what it is.

M. aha.

N. So we have to give them some advantage and some unique experiences, then they will get some love to the nature, I think.

M. Yes, yes. You must be made aware sometimes.

N. Yes.

M. Thank you!

N. You welcome.

M. (asks if she can call the respondent for more interviews if there will be the case, and he agrees).

Appendix 7: Annette Weiss Interview

Naturvejleder. Conducted 14th of November 2018.

Interviewer: M (Marina Buruiana)

Respondent: A (Annette Weiss)

(5) Interview November 14th 2018.
Respondent Naturvejleder Annette Weiss (A)
H/p. 21294174
Researcher. Marina Buruiana ^{Annette Weiss @ Middelport, dk}
M. (Introduces herself) (M)
What can you say about whale watching
in the region, about whales in general?
A I don't have much to do with whale watching
I work as a ranger and mostly
take schools and other groups and I
talk about whales here, and the latest
station. And in general when we walk
along the coast so I never go on shore,
I don't sail around. I'm more like Henrik
on Adventure and other ships that do this.
I don't do alone whale watching.
M. Can you talk about land based whale
watching here?
A. This summer in the time when the
porpoises have calves they are over
to see because they go up for the sea
with calves so we made a trip here,
write here on this spot with the
museum. We made a trip here
walking up to the old houses. In old times
the porpoise hunters lived there to the point
from the museum talked about the hunters
the porpoises in old time and the hunters
lives. Then we came back here and
we are along the coast. I talk
about the porpoise and how
many porpoise are here, all the
biology of half tonight

(1)

history, what the porpoise historically
mean for the city. And then I took the
biology part with a lot of focus on the
listening station here.

M. How old is the Listening station
project? Is it a new one?

A. I think it's a year and a half.
This spring they put the camera
But we haven't seen the porpoise in
camera. We hear them mostly at night
when it's dark. We could see that sounds
from the porpoises is more frequently
at night maybe because during day
it's a lot of noise from the ship.
The hydrophone is at the end of the
reef where the porpoise comes to get food
and I think they come to eat at night
and there is not much noise in the water.

M. Is the binocular from here, the boat house
suitable to see whales?

A. Yes it is. For that purpose we have it
here so you could see them when
they go up.

M. Do you have a collaboration with
the boat owners, for example Adventure on
the nature day?

A. Yes. I went on his usual whale
watching tour. About there to talk
about the nature that we have the
why is it good for the people
nature park and what does it
mean for the people.

M. Do you do this one day a year on Nature Day?

A. Yes one ~~day~~ a year. This was the first year we did this.

M. Do you intend to continue?

A. I would like to it but I don't know

M. Do you know about the collaboration behind this project?

A. This project yes. It's very a lot of work contributed. That the where Port Little Belt and then there is the Aarhus University, the ship was also there for the English company, rope and everything reported this & the boat house is from 1871 and then it was the boat house that was built in the garden so they had a group of volunteers who were making boats, recently now and then they found it in someone's garden and put up there we found... a lot of collaboration with the guys from the ship yard

M. When was the boat house renovated?

A. They did that before they didn't know what to do with it. And we came by and said we need

(2)

history, what it is

it because we have a fantastic project where you could listen to the water sounds. They said hey we have an idea you can see it. And I think it was over my because it moves, it's such a nice place to have this... an attraction in itself.

M. For the nature day how do you collaborate with nature?

A. Actually it was my boss calling me asking if I want to go with them sailing on Nature Day, and I said of course I will do that.

M. Do you think that whale watching brings value to the destination? Is it an attraction in itself?

A. I think it's an attraction. And it's a capability to educate people about the underwater world. I want to teach people how wonderful it is so they want to know about it. To me the whole watching is way to tell people look at that.

Because the purpose is such a funny picture, they are cute too. It's perfect because people want to take care of cute things so... that they can see. And the purpose is perfect for that because they have to take a breath once in a while.

A. The whole watching is perfect to get people to be aware of the sea and that we have to take care of it.

A. I see it. I think it will start to grow, will be more visitors. There are a lot of people in Denmark who doesn't know about us having whales. I think they are cute and people will come to see them.

M. Do you know if the community is aware - and involved?

A. They are aware and involved in many ways. One is, in this project with the volunteers from the ship yard, in that way we had a lot of collaboration with the community and people who did it.

M. What do you know about the - Collaboration with Nature park & boat owners?

A. One thing I know that the boat operators can use Nature Park ~~that~~ as, that we can help each other to get more tourists to come here. And some of my colleagues are having meetings.

M. This means that you need more tourists? Do you need to attract more tourists?

A. If you ask me no I don't need more tourists. If you ask Henrik we need more tourists and if you ask the destination Visit Lillebelt we need

more tourists
I don't have a problem with more
tourists. But the goal of my work is to
educate people and to tell them that
we have something to look out in the sea
and to protect

M. Do you know if there are any
problems connected to whale watching here?

A. I don't think there are any problems.
You could say that the more boats
on the sea more noise so is it a
problem if we get more tourists on the
water to make noise. But the area around
here... well... it's a lot of traffic so I
don't think the four boats make a difference
all the time. It's getting noisy here because it's noisy
all the time. It's kind of a highway.

M. Can anything be done about this?

A. This is Denmark, one of the 3 places
where you can see a porpoise, here it's
very narrow. The alternative would be
if we don't want ship traffic and I don't
think it will be a good idea. Porpoises
As we have so many boats passing
here I don't think the four boats
will make any difference. I do think
if we see more of a small boat will
be a problem. Because that is not a small
boat. The purpose is used to (for other
marine life)

4

(1)

Appendix 8. List of figures



Fig. 1. The harbour porpoises (source: [Nature Park Visit Little Belt](#))



Fig. 2. The harbour porpoises (source: [Nature Park Visit Little Belt](#)).



Fig. 3. Aventura whale-watching operator (source own).



Fig.4. Mira 3 whale-watching operator (source: [Visit Little Belt](#)).