
INNOVATION IN NORDIC TOURISM

*A summary report on innovation projects in the Nordic
tourism industry 2008-2011*



Digital trails, improved storytelling and well organised festivals are just some of the things that can give the Nordic tourism industry a boost.

The Nordic region has a lot to offer visitors, such as beautiful nature and vibrant cities. However, statistics on national tourism performance has shown that the Nordic countries lag behind other OECD countries. This indicates a need for more innovation. The Nordic Innovation Centre has therefore invested more than 11 million NOK in seven very special projects.

In this publication you can read and learn more about these projects and what they achieved... Enjoy!





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FOREWORD

In order to compete on the global arena the Nordic tourism industry must explore new, innovative concepts to meet the individual needs of the modern traveller. Especially in the service sectors of the tourism industry, there is an untapped potential and more innovation is needed.

This publication presents the results of the seven projects financed under the Nordic Innovation Centre's programme Innovation in *Nordic Tourism - New Products and Services*. These projects provide valuable insights and recommendations on how the Nordic tourism industry can develop into competitive, sustainable and innovative businesses and thereby increase their market shares globally.

The projects are a fine collection of new thinking in tourism development, and focus on different aspects of the tourism industry, which is emerging as a major engine for economic growth in the Nordic countries. They address questions on how the tourism industry can increase knowledge sharing and co-operation, develop technologies and explore new communications methods and innovation paths. In the article Innovation in Nordic tourism: Pathways for future growth (page 6), you can read more about the programme and the seven projects in general. The remaining articles of this publication, gives a more in-depth presentation of the projects.

I hope you will find the articles useful and interesting.

Ivar H. Kristensen
Managing director
Nordic Innovation Centre

Innovation in Nordic tourism:

Pathways for future growth

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

An innovative tourism sector in constant development represents serious growth opportunities for the Nordic economies.

Using innovative thinking in tourism to promote growth

The Nordic countries have shared interests with regards to development of their tourism, focusing on new service technology, wellness and sustainability. Developing the sector and confronting international competition together therefore makes a lot of sense.

When initiating *Innovation in Nordic tourism – New products and services*, the Nordic Innovation Centre wanted to contribute to a new way of thinking tourism in the region. The programme's objective is to encourage development of innovative service concepts and thereby generate economic growth.

Senior Innovation adviser Jørn Bang Andersen explains that the programme was a reaction to the tourism industry's steadily increased importance for the Nordic economies.

- Tourism is an important sector within the Nordic service economy and is becoming more and more important with regards to employment and economic prosperity in the Nordics. We launched the programme

in order to support this development by reinforcing professionalism, innovative competences and economics of Nordic tourism, he explains.

Key industries that should not be neglected

Actively accelerating innovation in tourism represents a large potential for Nordic economic growth.

- 5% of the European GDP comes from tourism. Almost 2 million enterprises are engaged in tourism-related activities, employing 5,2% of the total labour force. These numbers underline the economic significance of continually developing new, innovative services in the industry, says

Petra Nilsson-Andersen, senior Innovation adviser at Nordic Innovation Centre.

She describes tourism and related activities as key industries for the Nordic countries.

- It is an important message that the broad concept of services that constitute tourism and the experience economy are absolute key industries. Not everyone realises how much growth they actually stand for. They are high potential industries and should therefore not be neglected, says Nilsson-Andersen.

An interesting mix of innovative projects

Innovation in Nordic tourism – New products

« *It is an important message that the broad concept of services that constitute tourism and the experience economy are absolute key industries. Not everyone realises how much growth they actually stand for »*

PETRA NILSSON-ANDERSEN
SENIOR ADVISER, NORDIC INNOVATION CENTRE



and services consists of seven projects.

They address questions on how the tourism industry can increase knowledge sharing and co-operation, develop technologies and explore new communication methods and innovation paths.

The projects with a primarily technological focus are *Youth Spaces and the Alpine Tundra regions – YOUSAT*, looking at how mobile technology and social web can attract young tourists to the region, and *Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific*, which has created a search engine that extracts information on Nordic travel experiences from Asian travel blogs.

- We also have the *SILAB* project, working on the development of an electronic platform, granting the tourism industry access to interesting knowledge from other sectors, says Nilsson.

Other projects are *Nordic event tourism networks*, occupied with knowledge sharing and development of the festival and event industry, *Nordic wellbeing – A health tourism approach to enhance competitiveness of the Nordic region*, aiming to define a unique

Nordic wellbeing concept, and *Storytelling and destination development*, which has looked at how well-constructed narratives can advance tourist destinations.

- Last but not least, *Today's lead user shows tomorrow's mainstream tourist offerings* looks at how lead users can contribute to development of new tourism products, possibly capable of creating mass volume markets in the future, says Jørn Bang Andersen.

Entire service culture needs reassessment

Petra Nilsson says that the programme's diversity has furnished insight into various aspects of Nordic tourism innovation.

- The project portfolio is a good mixture of trying out new concepts and technologies and conducting in-depth analysis to enhance knowledge and show how innovation in tourism can be done, says Petra Nilsson.

According to Jørn Bang Andersen, the cases reveal that the region's tourism industry's main challenge is to reassess the entire service culture.

- The Nordic tourism seems to be focused on developing incremental innovation around

existing products. There is more to be gained if the Nordic tourism industry would work more systematically with the customers. We need to innovate more around the customers, and less around the products, Andersen concludes.

Continued focus on tourism in an international context

The programme's final workshop will be held in Oslo on April 12, 2011. At the conference, the participants will discuss the findings from the seven projects and how they can promote innovation and growth in the Nordic tourism industry.

In 2010, the Nordic Innovation Centre had the secretariat for the Nordic working group on tourism, with representatives from tourism organisations and tourist boards from all the Nordic countries. The joint Nordic effort in developing the tourism industry will continue by developing a project together with the OECD, called *Business model innovation in the experience economy and the tourism industry*, which will be carried out in 2011.

WANTED Younger tourists exploring Nordic nature

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

YOUSAT treats the question of how mobile technology and social web can be used to attract young people to sustainable tourism in the Nordic nature.

Attracting younger audiences represents great potential

The average age of travellers in the Nordic region is rising and young people only constitute a small fraction of those choosing the Nordic wilderness as a destination.

Youth Spaces and the Alpine Tundra Regions, YOUSAT, aims to address this issue by using modern communication technology to present the region's rich opportunities towards younger travellers.

- The fantastic Nordic areas are an enormous resource and the possibilities within nature-based eco-tourism are endless. Attracting younger audiences represents a great potential for the tourism in the region, says Pär Hansson, senior Researcher at the Swedish Institute of Computer Science.

The project's studies on the tourism industry's current communications methods show that there is considerable room for

improvement in the use of new media technologies.

- As far as we have seen, the communications in the tourism industry is still quite conventional and mostly based on traditional media. We have explored how the younger generation's tools and media channels can be used to attract their attention to the Nordic areas to a larger extent, Hansson continues.

Real-time sharing arouses dynamic interest

The project will provide recommendations on how the Nordic tourism industry can design services directed at young people, and make use of the most recent communication technologies in its interaction with younger target groups. User-created content and the possibility of real-time experience sharing are important elements in the recommendations.

- We have to model the content in a way that allows people to share photos and information on interesting trails, places and stories from their travels as they go along. This arouses a more dynamic interest in the travelling experience than telling people about it afterwards, says Hansson.

According to Hansson, a variety of different techniques can be utilised to achieve this instant sharing of experiences, the most important being social publishing platforms, mobile phones, GPS positioning and interactive maps.

Flexible communication of events

YOUSAT's aim has been to develop an open service that could integrate as many different stakeholders as possible, including local tourism industry and local governments in each area.

- We have looked for a broader view, where not only the tourists themselves could generate the content, but where all local tourism entities would also be able to contribute with input in real-time. This would add a new dimension to their marketing and make their information distribution more flexible, says Hansson.



The project YOUSAT has worked on solutions to attract more young people to sustainable tourism in the Nordic nature.



The fantastic Nordic areas are an enormous resource and the possibilities within nature-based eco-tourism are endless. Attracting younger audiences represents a great potential for the tourism in the region »

PÄR HANSSON, SENIOR RESEARCHER,
SWEDISH INSTITUTE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

He mentions tourism events based on sensitive nature activities as an example of an area, where increased communication flexibility would be an advantage.

- It is possible to witness reindeer herding in the Swedish and Norwegian mountains. However, as the herding can only be controlled to a certain degree, it is difficult to communicate when and where it happens. Incorporating this information into the service would allow the tourism to be redirected, so to speak, to experience this extraordinary event, Hansson explains.

- In other words, increased use of social media and new technologies would allow us to accommodate the increasing demand for more specialised and unique experiences, both amongst the younger generation and other tourists, Pär Hansson continues.

Technical tourism a multi-faceted issue

A large variety of different technologies and technical issues, such as mobile services in poor coverage areas, have been looked at during the YOUSAT project. Key concepts and ideas have been tested in a prototype

application, developed by the project group.

- We have worked on prototype development, taking a first stab at implementing the ideas and results from the project. Here we have tested different methods of sharing information on travel experiences in the Nordic region, gaining important input for our recommendations towards the tourism industry, says Pär Hansson.

Furthermore, YOUSAT has explored how a change in the communication approach can represent growth opportunities for the Nordic tourism industry and other players within the Nordic experience economy.

- Together with our industry partner, the Swedish map service company Idevio, we have explored potential new business models for reaching younger target groups and increasing their awareness of sustainable tourism in the Nordics. The results from these efforts will be included in the project's final report, says Hansson.

Will the next tourism transformation come from lead users?

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

Lead users represent an unexplored source of ideas for the tourism industry. Its close contact to customers can be valuable in the industry's innovation processes.

A Nordic-Baltic research effort on lead user innovation

The global tourism industry has gone through enormous changes in recent years, with Internet revolutionising the relationship between tourism companies and customers.

Today's lead user shows tomorrow's mainstream tourist offerings has explored how the relationship can be used as a generator for new innovative ideas that could become the mainstream tourism services of tomorrow.

- The objective of the study was to raise awareness of the value of involving lead users in the innovation processes in tourism. We should be making the most of their ideas and the new solutions they identify, says Project manager Eva Rikmann from Demirano Invest in Estonia.

Five countries participated in the project; Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia, answering the Nordic Council of Ministers' call for increased co-operation between the Nordics and the Baltic region. The project had a total budget of approximately 3 million NOK, half of which came from the Nordic Innovation Centre.

Continued refining of the product range needed

Tourism is an important business sector, particularly in terms of creating local employment and economic activity in rural areas. According to Eva Rikman, there are obvious opportunities in using innovation to strengthen the Nordic and Baltic tourism industries and economies.

- We have to act upon the increased international competition by being more active in positioning ourselves in the market. Many fantastic tourism products have already been created, but we need to continue to develop and refine the product range, says Rikmann.

- And to do so, why not involve the users themselves to ensure an optimal product satisfaction and attractiveness, she asks.

Extent of involvement has to be carefully defined

The lead users are defined as being early, trend-setting adapters of new products and services, willing to actively involve themselves in innovation processes.

- The lead user theory is an open

innovation approach that defines what role, characteristics, and impact the leading innovative users can attain in the innovation. Before beginning the process, the companies need to address what kind of users to involve, how to involve them and to what extent, Rikmann explains.

Identifying and selecting the lead users is a crucial part of a successful user-driven innovation process. In the case of the tourism industry, these can either be individual customers or intermediaries like tour operators.

Close contact to customers opens up for lead user innovation

Few industries are in a better position to enjoy the benefits of their customers' feedback and innovative ideas.

- The tourism companies are in very close, daily contact with their customers and there are many ways of receiving their feedback. The industry therefore has a unique opportunity to bring in new types of innovation in order to strengthen its market position, says Rikmann.



Research on lead user innovation in tourism has been limited up until now, and the project thinks that one of the themes that should be explored in more detail are lead users as drivers for innovation in sustainable tourism.

« *Our project provides specific recommendations on how lead users can be involved in identifying new ideas that could turn into mass volume tourist products in the future* »

EVA RIKMANN, PROJECT MANAGER
DEMIRANO INVEST, ESTONIA



Despite this, the research team was not able to identify examples of tourism companies applying lead user or user-driven innovation in its complete form.

- There is lots of evidence of user input but it is rarely collected in a systematic manner. As a consequence, the innovation does not reach its full potential. To get the optimal advantage, the lead users should be systematically involved from the beginning and throughout the entire innovation process, says Rikmann.

Lead user input unleashes potential

The research has shown that a lot of potential can be let loose by increasing lead

user input.

- Our conclusions should serve as a motivation to tourism companies to think differently about innovation and how they can develop their businesses. Our project provides specific recommendations on how lead users can be involved in identifying new ideas that could turn into mass volume tourist products in the future. Applying these recommendations will therefore improve the tourism industry's innovation capabilities, says Rikmann.

Furthermore, the research group has identified and recommended several ways in which policy makers and branch organisations in the Nordic-Baltic tourism industry

can support the process.

Results should inspire further progression

Rikmann says that research on lead user innovation in tourism has been limited up until now. She hopes that the project motivates further research in the future.

- Some of the themes that could be explored in more detail are lead users as drivers for innovation in sustainable tourism and health tourism and the use of Internet and virtual innovation communities. Also, exploring the competences that enable companies to harness innovative knowledge from lead users would be highly useful, says Rikmann.

Holistic stories drive tourism businesses forward



If storytelling is to be used as a successful tool in destination development, the story needs to be a verbal and visual metaphor for the attraction.

The project *Storytelling and destination development* has produced theoretic and practical advice on how stories can serve as potent marketing tools in tourism.

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

A well-told story, linked to an area or a tourist attraction, can represent great value for those involved in promoting tourism. The use of storytelling in the sector has in many cases contributed to a large increase of interest and visitors, boosting the economy and providing tourists with a more meaningful experience at the same time.

The project *Storytelling and destination development* set out to discover how stories are used in Nordic tourism and how a more structured approach to the narrative development can be used to the industry's advantage.

- We wanted to learn more about storytelling, how it worked, how it was practiced at the different destinations, and then use the knowledge to develop a theoretical model on how this can be organised and implemented, says Lena Mossberg, Professor at the University of Gothenburg.

Shellfish and Vikings attract tourists

The research was based on five cases, one from each of the Nordic countries. They represent different focus areas in tourism, but are all based on storytelling.

- We looked at how long they had been using storytelling, the theme in their narrative and also how many tourism stakeholders were involved. This is an important aspect, as we see the

storytelling approach as a long-term, multi-actor, multi-level process, where all stakeholders and activities have to be in tune with the storyline, says Mossberg.

The project's cases tell stories about issues as different as a Swedish shellfish tour, nature, food and historical attractions in the Limfjord area in Denmark, the medieval age in Numedal in Norway and the Icelandic sagas. Finally, the Finnish case study wanted to add a storytelling dimension to a cave from the stone age, already used as a tourist attraction.

Theoretical model on how to create lucrative narratives

The academic contribution of the project is a theoretical model, describing the issues and processes in storytelling as a strategic destination development tool.

Four closely interrelated elements are at the centre of the model, stakeholder involvement, a definition of the different stages of the storytelling process, its outcome, and its influence on the destination development.

- We also identified three conditions that are vital for a story to be able to create a lucrative narrative environment. It has to be accepted by those involved, it has to be location based and it needs to be subject to conceptualisation and commercialisation, Mossberg

explains.

The project phases defined in the model are the agenda setting phase, development of the storytelling concept and implementation.

- Our cases were at different stages of the process. Finland was in the agenda setting phase and Sweden in the first two years of the implementation phase, whereas the Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic concepts had been operating longer, says Mossberg.

Leadership and motivating communication

According to Mossberg, some of the keywords in the model are strong leadership, high degree of stakeholder involvement, good communication and enthusiasm.

- Communication between the project leaders and other stakeholders, both internal and external, is very important and has to be consistent throughout the project. Lack of communication creates conflict and frustration and hampers progress, says Mossberg.

This is closely related to another important ingredient in developing a storytelling concept, identified in all the case studies.

- All of our case studies showed that enthusiasts are another important factor, contributing to the success of a storytelling project. We have seen numerous examples of

volunteers and other enthusiastic participants, working hard and really pushing the projects forward, says Mossberg.

Holistic stories tie different aspects together

Finding a unique, holistic story is one of the prerequisites for the successful use of storytelling as a tool in destination development.

- In some of the cases, a number of separate stories existed, without being linked together in a fruitful way. Not having a holistic story in place can prevent the projects from reaching their full potential, says Mossberg.

She explains that the story needs to become a verbal and visual metaphor for the attractions, tying individual stories together and providing guidelines for everything from packaging activities, transport, and accommodation and dining.

Successful implementation of the storytelling aspect allows tourism companies to develop and test new products, embedded in a common identity founded in the narrative.

- The objective is to get the stakeholders to work together and develop good products to attract more visitors. That is what it is all about. The storytelling has to be able to drive the businesses forward, Lena Mossberg concludes.



UNIQUE VALUES TO DEFINE NORDIC WELLBEING TOURISM

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

Researchers are working towards conceptualising Nordic wellbeing tourism, aiming for a connotation anchored in nature, cleanliness and health.

Innovative wellbeing concepts create economic advantage

Innovation in Nordic wellbeing tourism has bred some of the strongest tourism companies in the region, prime example being Blue Lagoon in Iceland.

The idea behind *Nordic wellbeing – A health tourism approach to enhance competitiveness of the Nordic region* is to optimise the value of wellbeing tourism to the Nordic economies. Researchers across the region have studied the concept and explored how a particular Nordic content of wellbeing can be developed and used in marketing of the region.

– We have worked with wellbeing tourism for a while and have had many discussions with our Nordic partners on the prospect of developing a particular Nordic wellbeing idea. The concept is meant to spark development of new destinations, products and services, based on the region's unique

resources, says Henna Konu, Researcher at the Centre for Tourism Studies at University of Eastern Finland.

The idea of Nordic wellbeing explored and defined

In the project's initial phase, a wide literature review was conducted to get a better understanding of existing theories and concept development in wellbeing tourism. At the same time, different tourist destinations and attractions in the Nordic countries were selected as case studies for

the project.

– We selected what we call laboratory areas in each of the countries, which all had an interest in tourism development. The selected cases reflected our objectives with the project and served as platforms for our activities. Empirical studies were focused around the laboratory areas, and later on in the process they implemented our research in their development efforts, Henna Konu explains.

Interviews with professionals in the tourism industry were conducted to gather information on product development, co-operation and innovation processes in wellbeing tourism.

– To get a broad view of the possibilities in developing the concept, we conducted a Delphi study among tourism professionals,

« *We need to differentiate Nordic wellbeing from other wellbeing concepts. The focus should be on building on the unique characteristics of each area, but with the Nordic region's qualities in mind* »

HENNA KUNO, RESEARCHER AT THE CENTRE FOR TOURISM STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND



Innovation in Nordic wellbeing tourism has bred some of the strongest tourism companies in the region, prime example being Blue Lagoon in Iceland.

including researchers, marketing organisations and tourism developers. These studies were also conducted in other countries in Europe, in the US and in Japan, providing a wider perspective on the concept, says Henna Konu.

Customer input on the essence of Nordic wellbeing

In addition, customer surveys were conducted in some of the laboratory areas. Customers were asked what they felt the Nordic wellbeing concept should include and how willing they would be to participate in developing processes in these areas.

- The interview studies gave us a good understanding of the current perception of the Nordic wellbeing concept and on what it should embody in the future to create added value for Nordic tourism companies, says Henna Konu.

Eight recommendations for industry and policy makers

To enable Nordic tourism actors to develop products and services under the Nordic wellbeing concept, eight recommendations were put forward in the project's final report,

Innovating and re-branding Nordic wellbeing tourism.

Harvesting the benefits of unique selling points in each area, country or the Nordic region as a whole is essential in the conceptualisation.

- This should serve as a background for the development of new sports and leisure activities, signature products within medicine and cosmetics, and services addressing lifestyle diseases with wellbeing, all of which are included in the eight focal points, says Henna Konu.

Other recommendations include widening the food link in order to gain from the current focus on Nordic foods, spiritualising the wellbeing experience, and supporting Nordic infrastructures. Communications is furthermore highlighted as a key issue in the recommendations, stating that all involved should work towards attracting international media attention to the concept.

- Moreover, the final report includes a list of best practices, where we discuss some of the issues the tourism companies have to address in their development efforts and present useful examples from our laboratory areas, says Henna Konu.

Wellbeing concept a significant profiler for Nordic tourism

According to Konu, the Nordic wellbeing concept would be a strong profiling feature in a competitive tourism market.

- We need to differentiate Nordic wellbeing from other wellbeing concepts. The focus should be on building on the unique characteristics of each area, but with the Nordic region's qualities in mind. If we succeed in creating such a concept, it will become a significant profiler of the Nordic tourism industry in European markets and elsewhere, Konu explains.

She points out that the Nordic wellbeing concept needs to be based on innovative business approaches.

- The concept should not be too narrowly defined. We have to make sure that there is room for innovation and constant development of new products and services, both within the industry itself and by enhancing co-operation between tourism and other industries. This continued development is very important for the Nordic tourism industry, Henna Konu concludes.

Innovative measures to attract Asian tourists

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON



Japanese tourists on the train to Flom in Norway.

User-generated content about Asian visitors' experiences in the Nordic region can now be extracted from social networks with an innovative search engine.

Peer-to-peer recommendations provide authentic insight

Conventional research and marketing is in many ways limited when trying to attract Asian visitors to the Nordic region. The sheer size of markets like China and Japan, as well as different travel- and communication cultures, calls for new methods.

The most technologically complex project within the Nordic Innovation Centre's tourism programme was *Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific*. It has worked towards developing a search engine that identifies and extracts travel blog entries about Nordic destinations from selected social networks.

The platform will function as

a knowledge database, where tourism professionals can study trends in travel blogging about Nordic destinations. This provides them with valuable insight into Asian visitors' experiences and expectations and can be used to market the Nordic region as an attractive tourism destination for the Asian traveller.

Machine learning techniques rank blog entries

The search is done via a web-based interface where the user selects different parameters for the search. The results give easy and immediate access to user-generated content, specifically on the subject of tourism experiences in the Nordic region.

The search engine is based on machine learning techniques developed in statistical physics. The techniques allow the tool to rank results based on a certain sentiment, showing if they are positive or negative, and perform other analysis. Moreover, the tool enables users to extract content for publishing on their

website, giving Asian tourists access to relevant and attractive information about other people's travels in the Nordics.

Apart from the marketing aspect, the information can be used as input into development of both products and improved strategies, directed towards the Asian markets.

Also applicable in other markets and industries

The tool is already available to customers in the Nordic travel industry, wanting to acquire more intelligence about the Japanese and Chinese markets and obtain information on how Asian tourists experience their travels in the Nordics.

The search engine is structured in a way that makes it easily applicable to other markets and industries. *Travel 2.0 promotion in Asia and Pacific* was finalised in 2010 but further improvements and adaptations to other sectors will be made to the system in the future. The development rate will depend on income generated from sales.

« *The tool is already available to customers in the Nordic travel industry, wanting to acquire more intelligence about the Japanese and Chinese markets and obtain information on how Asian tourists experience their travels in the Nordics* »

Knowledge collisions to benefit tourism

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

SILAB is a *Service Innovation Laboratory*, facilitating knowledge sharing between tourism professionals and relevant specialists in other industries.

The project is based on the idea of creating cross-sector collisions, where people with different expertise meet and exchange knowledge.

Expertise from one industry made useful in others

The SILAB project is based on a concept originally developed in Finland. Its objective is to promote new service innovations in Nordic tourism.

- The basic idea is to create what we call cross-sector collisions, where people with different expertise meet and exchange knowledge. Our Finnish pilot project was very successful and we therefore wanted to continue developing the concept and explore its potential in a Nordic context, says Dr. Teemu

Moilanen from HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Science.

Apart from HAAGA-HELIA, the University of Stavanger, Stockholm University and Culminatum Innovation participated in the project.

Collisions on three levels

According to Moilanen, exchanging professional knowledge is still mostly done through traditional conferences, seminars and meetings.

- All industries make their own forums where they exchange information. What we try to do is to encourage Nordic tourism professionals to participate in events organised by other industries, in order to acquire knowledge that will advance service innovation in Nordic tourism, Moilanen says.

The SILAB project operates

with three main levels of cross-sector collisions.

- The initial collision is where a travel professional simply absorbs information and gets an overview of the possibilities within the other industry. On the second level, he or she enters into dialogue about ideas and solutions that could also be applied in the tourism sector. This potentially leads to the third level, which is joint development of new, innovative services, Moilanen continues.

Tremendous advancement in platform functionality

The exchange of knowledge is facilitated by a web-based platform, making use of social media tools to connect people and provide access to information on events, sector specific reports and other material. A Nordic SILAB network has now been established, consisting of the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian versions of the platform.

- It has been a time consuming effort to develop the platform but it carries out important functions that support the collisions. During our project, the platform's functionality has advanced tremendously and the Nordic networking aspect has been very valuable. We will continue working with our partners towards developing the SILAB platform and are also interested in expanding our collaboration into other areas, says Dr. Teemu Moilanen.



Breaking new grounds in the festival and event industry

BY PÁLL TÓMAS FINNSSON

Close collaboration between researchers and organisers in the festival and event industry has been established through the project *Nordic event tourism networks*.

High activity level characterises event research

Theory, applied research, and practical experience with event and festival organisation all come together in Nordic event tourism networks. The aim is to use knowledge, networks, leadership and innovation to develop and expand the sector in the Nordic countries.

- We have increased knowledge on the subject by conducting research and creating meeting places for academics and event organisers. This process has been mutually fruitful and has stimulated both research and development of festivals, says Project leader Reidar J. Mykletun.

A paper on festival identity development and the sense of belonging in the festival industry has been published, another on event risk and safety management, as well as 13 articles in a special issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism. The research has been widely presented in media and at conferences, such as European City Events and the Nordic Research Symposium of Tourism and Hospitality.

Innovative insights have been achieved

Developing a database on event

management parameters was one of the project's aims. This is now underway, mapping ownership, size and economy of all festivals in three Norwegian counties.

- The database can be used for benchmarking purposes and to improve festival organisation. Data will also be collected in other countries, so this is the first step towards a larger, international database, says Mykletun.

A study on use of social media in the event and festival sector has been conducted, revealing the need for a more structured integration of new media into the promotional mix. Also, an innovative GPS tracker has been developed and made available for event managers.

- The GPS tracker, developed by Mid Sweden University, maps the movement of event participants, registers the most visited activities and allows participants to identify 'hot spots' at the event. This is one of the project's more innovative outcomes, says Mykletun.

Mentoring meetings facilitate knowledge sharing

Creating knowledge platforms and meeting places for researchers and event organisers has made up for an important part of

the project. An annual festival manager conference, Rogaland Festival Forum, has been established, attracting around 100 festival managers each time. Similar events have also been organised in Denmark and Sweden.

According to Reidar J. Mykletun, the project has been successful in bringing together different groups of stakeholders to share their knowledge and experience.

- Two social structures have been established, one between the researchers and another between the festival managers. These structures will definitely continue working together, strengthening the Nordic event sector, Mykletun says.

Nordic event tourism networks will be finalised in December 2011.



Through the project, an innovative GPS tracker has been developed and made available for event managers.



Nordic Innovation Centre is an institution under the Nordic Council of Ministers facilitating sustainable growth in the Nordic economies. Our mission is to stimulate innovation, remove barriers and build relations through Nordic co-operation. We encourage innovation in all sectors, build international relationships, and contribute to a borderless Nordic business region.