



ICELANDIC TOURISM
RESEARCH CENTRE



Iceland country report

The Mývatn region as a possible Nordic wellbeing destination

Dr. Edward H. Huijbens

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DECEMBER 2010

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Introduction

Over the past decades, the popularity of the Nordic countries as tourism destinations has increased (Hall, Müeller & Saarinen, 2008; Müeller & Jansson, 2007). The countries have in common many attractions but also some clear specificities that create respective marketing niches. A familiar theme of attractions in the Nordic countries, be they general or specific, is the role of nature and natural phenomena. Building on significant variations of landscape types and climates, numerous possibilities for activities are available for all seasons. As traditional tourism destinations become more crowded, people seek out these alternatives as ways to get away from crowds. This the Nordic countries cater for and offer many unique tourism experiences, but yet, the tourism business needs to pay heed to major international trends and integrate these into their respective niche market product developments. One of these trends is wellness, wellbeing and health tourism products and services in all their aspects and variations.

As noted by Bushell & Sheldon (2009) health, wellness and wellbeing tourism has received little academic attention, and product development is usually seen through the lens of the spa traditions. The scarcity of research is even more prevalent in the Nordic countries. Tuohino and Kangas (2009) delivered some characteristic of health and wellness tourism in Finland in Smith and Puczko' (2009) comprehensive book on *Health and wellness tourism* worldwide. Presently, the trade and travel literature is the major source of information. Part of this report is dedicated to a comprehensive literature review to address this lacunae and this review will be incorporated into the empirical findings presented in the concluding part.

This report is set in the context of a Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe) funded project called: *Nordic Well-being - A health tourism approach to enhance competitiveness of Nordic Tourism enterprises and destinations*. The main aim of the project is to explore the possibilities for health and wellbeing tourism, and to investigate the resources for activities, branding and potential selling-points across the five Nordic countries. The project involves researchers from each of the Nordic

countries set with the task to detail the innovative and entrepreneurial aspects of selected budding health and wellness tourism destinations in each country. These destinations were:

In Finland:

- Eastern Finland, the Vuokatti region
- Jyväskylä region
- Savonlinna and Mikkeli region

In Sweden:

- Åre Business Organization
- Jämtland Härjedalen Tourism

In Denmark:

- Vejle area: VisitVejle

In Norway:

- Valdres Health Cluster (including Beitostølen Resort)
- Bykle Hoveden Vekst (Destination Hovden)

In Iceland:

- Mývatn region
- Mývatn Nature Baths

On the whole, the aim of developing a Nordic Wellbeing product is related to developing a particular Nordic content of wellbeing to be offered by tourism enterprises and destinations across the five Nordic countries. The main objective of the project is the creation of a customer-driven Nordic wellbeing concept around Nordic resources based on unique values in the Nordic countries anchored in nature, outdoor life, cleanliness, images of health and perceived Nordic lived values. The goal is also to find out if the Nordic Wellbeing concept can be a significant profiler of the Nordic tourism business sector in European markets.

Four assumptions have guided the Nordic Wellbeing project:

- First, the five Nordic countries and their destinations hold a variety of resources of importance for the development of wellbeing tourism. These resources are both of material and immaterial kind but revolve around lived values and nature.

- Second, that the creation of a unique wellbeing destination demands multifaceted processes including simultaneous collaborative measures and political emphasis in integrating identified resources into product development. This requires going far beyond launching slogans and financing campaigns.
- Third, that the collaborative practice of inventing a wellness destination have significant side effects in terms of product, process and marketing innovation in local SMEs.
- Fourth, that the contribution to Nordic wellbeing image and brand may serve to strengthen regional health and wellness product development initiatives and thus contribute to future development.

Accordingly, the purpose of the project is to address these assumptions through the analysis of the preconditions, nature and outcomes of specific destination development processes. In the case presented in this report this is the Mývatn region of North East Iceland.

The report proceeds in four parts. The first part details the joint methodology of the Nordic project partners. The ways in which this method was deployed in the Icelandic context is the particular focus of this part, along with detailing the research activities undertaken. The second part deals with health and wellness tourism as it emerges in the tourism literature. The focus moves from a general outline of the terms of health and wellness, to a more specific Nordic focus along with a focus on Iceland and how health and wellness manifests in policy documents as well as general discourse there. The second part ends with a detailed outline of the manifestations of health and wellness in the Mývatn region and its tourism context. This part is partly published in Huijbens (2011). The third part takes a step back into the world of academic literature, this time focusing on the role of nature and landscapes in wellness and how these could play a part in the branding of places, with special emphasis on health and wellness. The latter emphasis on branding is derived from the work of Anne-Mette Hjalager and is based on drafts of the full project report submitted to NICe (see: Hjalager, Konu, Huijbens, Björk, Flagestad, Nordin & Tuohino, 2011). This review, along with the literature on health and wellness more generally, is then deployed in the last and

fourth part. This part deals with the potentials of the Mývatn region in becoming a Nordic wellbeing destination. Lastly some concluding points are summarised.

The country case study methodology and research activity

Under the terms of the Nordic project the research was undertaken through case studies in co-called “laboratory regions” in each of the Nordic countries. As the term suggests the researchers worked closely with local actors in both tourism and regional development. The laboratory areas were the arenas for a systematic collection of empirical information about the health and wellness product and its suppliers and the dynamic interactions of tourism stakeholders in each of the regions.

The laboratory region in Iceland was the settlement around Lake Mývatn in NE Iceland (see figure 1). The focus of the research was on the Mývatn Nature Baths (see: www.jarlbodin.is), a geothermal outdoor spa similar to the by now well known Blue Lagoon in the SW of Iceland, near Keflavík International Airport. Lake Mývatn has long been one of the best known destinations in N. Iceland, although in recent years the nearby town of Húsavík has started to rival it through marketing itself as the whale watching capital of Europe. Lake Mývatn is renowned for its birdlife, agricultural heritage, unique geology and outdoor geothermal bathing experiences. Winter tourism is increasing in popularity, e.g. with the Yule Lad holiday programme and winter sports and activity tours by Mývatn Ltd. Thus the attractions of the lake and its surroundings are in the form of numerous geological features set in an idyllic, sparsely populated countryside.

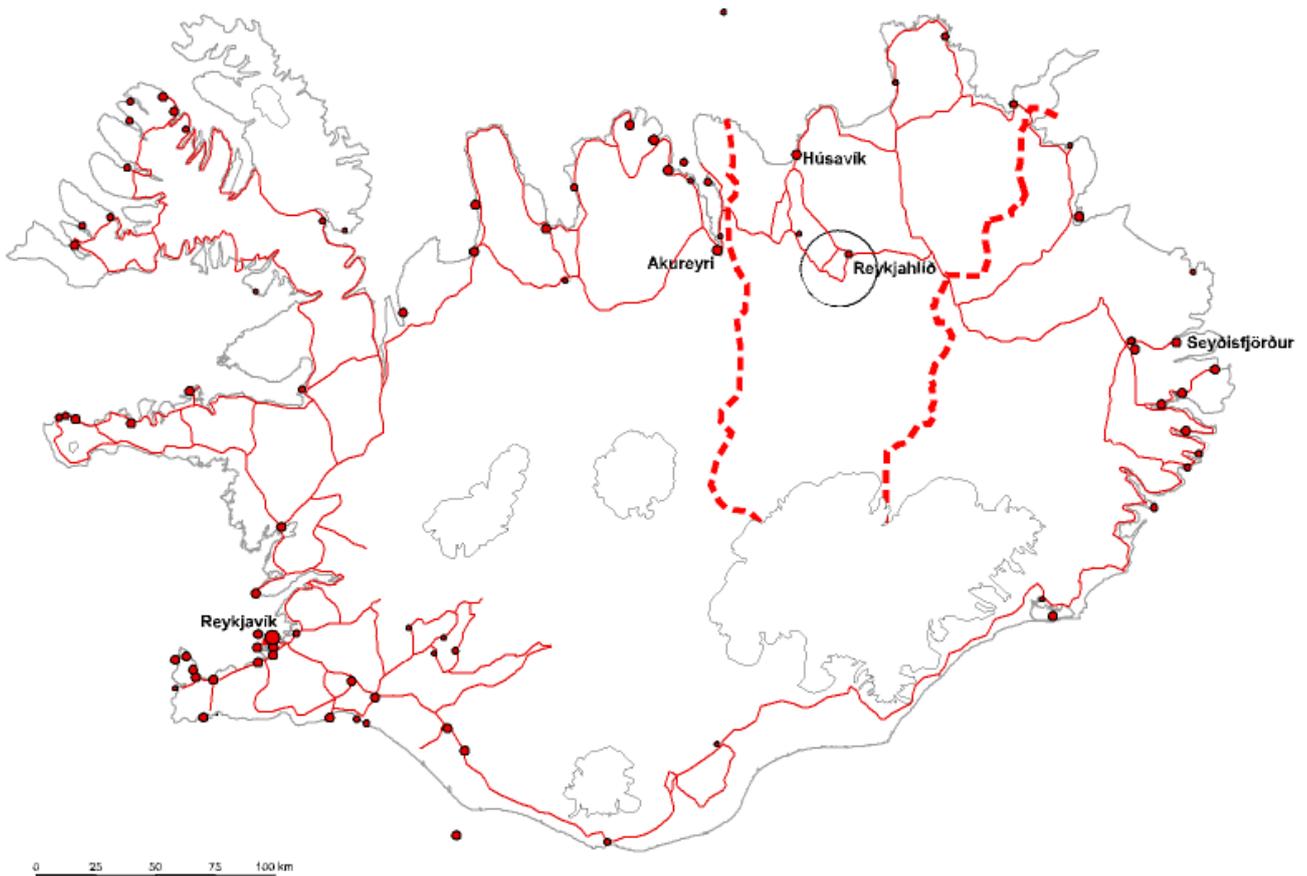


Figure 1: Map of Iceland showing roads, glaciers and major towns and villages. The NE region is delineated, lake Mývatn and vicinity circled and selected towns in North Iceland named along with the capital.

Source: E. Huijbens, 2010.

A three pronged approach

The Mývatn Nature Baths were the subject of the research but during the research period through 2009-2010, a three-pronged research method was deployed.

Interviews

First, building upon extensive desk research entailing a reading of policy documents from official bodies in Iceland, such as the Ministry of Industry (tourism) and the Ministry of Health, about two dozen interviews were undertaken. Those interviewed emerged to some extent from the documents researched, but others through snow-balling from the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured with; key stakeholder, visionaries and entrepreneurs involved in the building up of the Mývatn Nature Baths (Jarðböðin) and the Mývatn Bathing Company Ltd. (Baðfélag Mývatnssveitar hf). The framework for the semi-structured interviews was jointly made by all

participating researchers in the Nordic project and was used by all in their interviews around the Nordic countries. The focus of the questions was on the respondents' background and what they consider to be the unique selling points of their area and of the Nordic countries. In addition they were asked about the tourism services networks and destination management in the area under study. They were queried on how they gathered their knowledge of tourism in general and health and wellbeing in particular and also the vision and understanding the respondents have on health and wellbeing and what drives their innovative activities. These points were then tied to an outline of Nordic lived values and a Maslowian framework of the hierarchy of needs for both individuals and the company under study. It should be stated here at the outset that their prior knowledge of a Nordic wellbeing concept was scarce to none. In the Icelandic case interviewees were all contacted four weeks prior to the proposed time of interview and then interviews were confirmed via e-mail with basic project information attached. Each interview lasted around 1 hour and was recorded and subsequently analysed through identifying themes and setting these up in a typology based on the interview framework with direct quotations added below. In the typology the interviewees' different inflections on the themes queried were recorded and then conclusions drawn.

Delphi study

The second research method deployed was a Delphi survey involving key stakeholders in health and wellbeing tourism from all the Nordic countries. The Delphi method was first developed in 1948, later to be deployed for development by the Rand Corporation in a period from 1950-1963 (Helmer, 1966). The method is named after the Greek oracle at Delphi and entails interactive and systematic forecasting relying on a panel of experts and their opinions. In the words of Gupta & Clarke (1996: 185) the method is "a qualitative, long-range forecasting technique, that elicits, refines, and draws upon the collective opinion and expertise of a panel of experts." The method is thus designed to elicit future visions of those most actively involved in whatever topic is to be researched. The future orientation of the method also makes it a valuable tool for planning and group decision making. In the Nordic project, the aim was solely to elicit future visions and the best practices for Nordic Wellbeing product development. Thus the experts gave their answer to a set of questions in two rounds. After the first round, the group of researchers in the Nordic project summarised the experts' forecasts and the reasons behind their judgments. This summary was

used to build statements for the experts to review in the second round. Thus, experts were encouraged to revise their earlier answers in light of the replies of other experts on the panel. This is in line with the Delphi method, as Gupta & Clarke (1996: 186) state, drawing on Gutierrez (1989):

Delphi's goal is not to elicit a single answer or to arrive at a consensus, but simply to obtain as many high-quality responses and opinions as possible on a given issue(s) from a panel of experts to enhance decision making.

The Delphi survey of the Nordic project was electronic, using the e-Delphi software, administrated by the University of Eastern Finland (for details on e-delphi see e.g. Chou, 2002). In Iceland an invitation to participate in the e-Delphi survey was sent to all members of a recently (November 2009) established nation-wide health tourism association, set up under the auspices of the Icelandic Tourism Board, the tourism industry association (SAF) and the Icelandic parliament (see: www.islandofhealth.is). This association was chosen as it most likely represented a venue where those most actively involved in product development in health and wellness tourism in Iceland could be found. In Iceland the response was good considering the level of commitment required for a Delphi survey, 15 of around 85 members of the association registered for participation. Table 1 shows the total number of respondents in the Delphi survey. It should be noted that although 15 registered from Iceland, these were not all necessarily completing the survey. On the whole the panel of experts to emerge represented three distinct interests, much like in a similar survey executed in Taiwan (see: Lee & King, 2008). These can be seen in table 1, where respondents come from the tourism supply side or industry actors (business and marketers), another from the public sector (developers), and lastly researchers were involved.

Table 1: Respondents of the on-line Delphi survey.

Tourism sector	1st Round	2nd Round
Developers	3	2
Marketers	6	3
Researchers	5	2
Business	5	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>19¹</i>	<i>10</i>

¹ One respondent remains unclassified

The first Delphi round started on Friday 5th of March 2010 with an e-mail including a link to the study being sent to all the Nordic participants. The results from 20 respondents (see table 1) were ready on 26th April and a report with the results was sent to all the Nordic researchers. The findings of the first round were used to distil more detailed statements, mainly focusing on nature as a key asset in health and wellness tourism. The second round was sent to all participants again on the 20th of May. The results from 10 respondents (see table 1) were ready on 14th June and sent round to all the Nordic researchers for the distillation of comments and opinions on the future development of health and wellness tourism in the Nordic countries.

Customer survey

The third research method deployed was a customer survey undertaken in the Mývatn region of NE Iceland (see appendix I). This was a four page survey with 17 questions including basic variables. The focus of the survey was on customer experience of the wellbeing services provided in the region and also their experience of the region as such, i.e. nature and surroundings. The aim of the survey was to get customer feedback on their perception of the destination as a place of health and wellness, what customers appreciate/want to do when they are on holiday in any of the Nordic Wellbeing laboratory areas and their interest and involvement in product development. The survey was done in collaboration with the Mývatn Nature Baths, the only company dedicated all-year-round to providing wellbeing services, and also the office of Visit Mývatn, the local information centre. The survey was done in the summer of 2010 and was distributed to three places in the Mývatn region. These were the local tourist information and wardens centre (www.visitmyvatn.is), the Dimmuborgir souvenir shop and restaurant (www.dimmuborgir.is) and at the Mývatn Nature Baths. In all these three locations the staff were given guidelines as to how to collect the survey and promote it. The first round of visits to distribute the survey was on 22nd June and thereafter a fortnightly visit was paid to each location to collect filled in surveys and provide more if needed, till the 31st of August.

All in all 82 people completed the survey. In terms of response rate 24% of distributed questionnaires were completed. Most of these were completed in the Mývatn Nature Baths (73%) and an almost equal number of males and females replied (table 2).

Table 2: Respondents of the survey.

Data	Description	%
Location		
	Mývatn Nature Baths	73,2
	Dimmuborgir	13,4
	Tourist Information Centre	13,4
Gender		
	Male	52,4
	Female	47,6
Age		
	<20	6,2
	20-40	32,1
	41-60	56,8
	>60	4,9
Country of residence		
	Germany	28
	France	12,2
	Belgium	8,5
	Czech Republic	7,3
	UK	7,3
	Other (18 nationalities)	36,7
Education		
	Elementary school	4,9
	Upper secondary	7,3
	Vocational	13,4
	University	74,4
Income compared to country of residence		
	Below average	12
	Average	29,3
	Above average	52
	High	6,7

As can be seen from table 2 above the respondents to the survey were well educated, mostly from Western Europe, above average income and of above average age. Almost all who responded were in the region for purposes of holiday (90,1%) with their spouse (46,2%) or family (29,5%), staying mostly for one (28,8%), two (31,3%) or three (25%) nights. Most of the respondents had not been in the region before (77,8%), but those who had had come once (12,2%) in summer (88,9% of those that had come).

The survey findings which emerged along with rankings of service offerings and descriptions of activities undertaken by the respondents once there will be detailed below in the discussion of the Mývatn Nature Bath as a tourism and health and wellness destination.

Based on the findings of all three research methods an interactive workshop involving health tourism expertise and customers was organized involving all chosen laboratory areas on the 14th of December. At the conference presentations of findings from each of the Nordic case studies were presented through an online Adobe conference meeting room. Thereafter discussion seminars were held in Iceland and Finland. In the Icelandic case seven of the health and wellbeing stakeholders at the Mývatn region took part, but an invitation was sent to all tourism stakeholders in the region.

During the project period the team of Nordic researchers met three times. First during the 18th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research held in Esbjerg, Denmark 22nd to the 25th October 2009. This first meeting set the research agenda and a plan was developed for the research activities in the coming year. The second meeting was in beginning September 2010 in Budapest at the 2010 conference of the European Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA). The theme of the conference was: “Health, Wellness and Tourism – healthy tourists, healthy business”. Preliminary findings were presented at this conference, garnering feedback and preparing for the above mentioned interactive workshop held in collaboration with the laboratory areas. In relations to the conference and following it the Finnish partner in collaboration with the Finnish Innovation Centre (FinPro) had planned an ambitious four day benchmarking trip through spa and wellness destinations in the Alps, focusing on Austria (see appendix II). This trip was cancelled due to lack of participation, but each partner was assigned the task of recruiting participants from their home country. In Iceland the stakeholders and key persons at the Mývatn Nature Baths were not interested in attending as they had already been to most of the places that was planned to visit – for benchmarking purposes! The third meeting of the research group was at the 19th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research held in Akureyri, Iceland 22nd to the 25th September 2010. As this meeting was very shortly after the

Budapest meeting, nothing much was added, but plans of dissemination and a further refinement of the laboratory workshops was discussed.

Research activity report and publications

Below in table 3 the research activities undertaken in Iceland are outlined with reference to date or period undertaken and where the activity took place.

Table 3: Research activity report.

Date	Location	Activity
17 th March 2009	Tampere, Finland	Presentation and talk at the Finnish wellbeing seminar – hosted by the Finnish Tourist Board
18 th March 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Presentation and talk at the health and wellness seminar – hosted by the Icelandic Tourist Board
29 th April 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	NICe project kick-off meeting
5 th May 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Meeting with MP Magnús Orri Schram, introducing him to the terms of the project
25 th August 2009	Mývatn region	Interviews with stakeholders
17 th September 2009	Mývatn & Húsavík	Interviews with stakeholders
22 nd October 2009	Esbjerg, Denmark	Presentation at the 18 th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research
23 rd October 2009	Esbjerg, Denmark	Project meeting
30 th October 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Presentation at the 10 th Icelandic Social Sciences Conference at the University of Iceland
19 th November 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Interviews with stakeholders
20 th November 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Interviews with stakeholders
24 th November 2009	Mývatn & Húsavík	Interviews with stakeholders
24 th November 2009	Heiðabær	Health tourism workshop by Innovation Iceland (NMI) and the regional development agency (At-thing)
25 th November 2009	Reykjavík, Iceland	Preparatory meeting for the establishment of the Icelandic health tourism cluster
12 th February 2010	Reykjavík, Iceland	Interviews with stakeholders
24 th March 2010	Iceland	First Delphi round sent to recruited participants

26 th April 2010	Iceland	First Delphi report ready
20 th May 2010	Iceland	Second Delphi round sent to recruited participants
14 th June 2010	Iceland	Second Delphi report ready
22 nd June 2010	Mývatn region	First visit distributing survey
31 st August 2010	Mývatn region	Final collection of surveys
1 st September 2010	Budapest, Hungary	Presentation at the European Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA). "Health, Wellness and Tourism – healthy tourists, healthy business". Cancelled benchmarking trip
24 th September 2010	Akureyri, Iceland	Presentation at the 19 th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research
29 th October 2010	Reykjavík, Iceland	Presentation at the 11 th Icelandic Social Sciences Conference at the University of Iceland
14 th December 2010	Video conference	Interactive workshop

During the work undertaken under the terms of this project several publications were made and worked on. These are listed below in chronological order, but these publications build on parts of this report.

- Huijbens, E. under review: Natural wellness – health and wellness as nature-based tourism products. In *Tourism Geographies*.
- Huijbens, E. 2011: Developing wellness in Iceland - Theming wellness destinations the Nordic way. In *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. 11(1):
- Huijbens, E. 2010: Þróun heilsutengdrar ferðabjónustu á Íslandi – hvað finnst ferðafólki sjálfu. In I. Hannibalsson (Ed.) *Rannsóknir í Félagsvísindum XI*. Reykjavík: Félagsvísindadeild Háskóla Íslands, pp. 23-31.
- Huijbens, E. 2009: Vörubrún í heilsutengdri ferðabjónustu – möguleg norræn undirbemu. In I. Hannibalsson (Ed.) *Rannsóknir í Félagsvísindum X*. Reykjavík: Félagsvísindadeild Háskóla Íslands, pp. 113-126.
- Huijbens, E. 2009: Developing wellness in Iceland - Theming wellness destinations the Nordic way. In Nicholaessen, J. (Ed.) *18th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research – Conference Proceedings*. Esbjerg: University of Southern Denmark, CD-ROM.

Wellbeing as niche tourism destination – a literature review

On the most general level, the subject of this report is set out under the terms of health and wellness tourism. Issues of health and wellness are certainly not new, although they are currently emerging in the tourism literature (see: Bushell & Sheldon, 2009; Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Wellness tourism has its roots in the long history of spa resorts, and in that sense is not a new phenomenon. More recently however, as demonstrated by Smith and Puczkó (2009), wellness tourism has been evolving around facilities for medical treatments, as well as pure leisure and relaxation sites. The growing research interest in health and wellness covers many issues, but there seems to be an overwhelming interest in users' profiles and in motivations, behaviours and experience. Generally, the rationale is that there are significant growth prospects due to ageing and changed lifestyles (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009). In parallel, destination studies contribute to the wider perspectives with evidence about local resources, sustainability and economic viability (Pechlaner & Fischer, 2006).

In this section issues pertaining to health and wellness will be sketched out in order to establish the content of the concepts and their interrelation, drawing out wellness in particular. Subsequently these will be brought to bear on tourism more generally and then Nordic tourism specifically. The aim of this part is to set the scene for the destination to be studied here. In the following wellbeing and wellness are treated as synonyms and used interchangeably depending on which literature the text draws on. The reason is that parallels can be drawn between both in the literature, and their distinction in practice seems to lie mainly in their adoption in different marketing and branding strategies, to be addressed in the third section of this report.

Being healthy

To be healthy is a multifaceted state of being. The World Health Organization (2006) defines health in its basic constitution; as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. With this recognition the relations between health and wellness can be unpacked via Travis & Ryan (1988). They set out the relationship between illness, health and wellness as a continuum. The negative end is set in a permanent state of disability. From there the continuum moves through symptoms and signs that can be treated (or

not) up to a neutral point. The positive side of the continuum entails states of awareness, education and finally growth, through which the attainment of optimal wellness is the goal. Wellness is thus not only a state of being healthy; it entails an active moving towards a state that is termed wellness. Herein lies the distinction between health and wellness this paper will build on with focus on the latter.

In order to demonstrate this process of attaining wellness figure 2, drawing on disabilities studies, shows a general model for the dynamic constitution of what Felce & Perry (1995) term; wellbeing. For them, wellbeing is conceived around three conditions: objective conditions, satisfaction with one's state and values and aspirations one might hold to wellbeing.

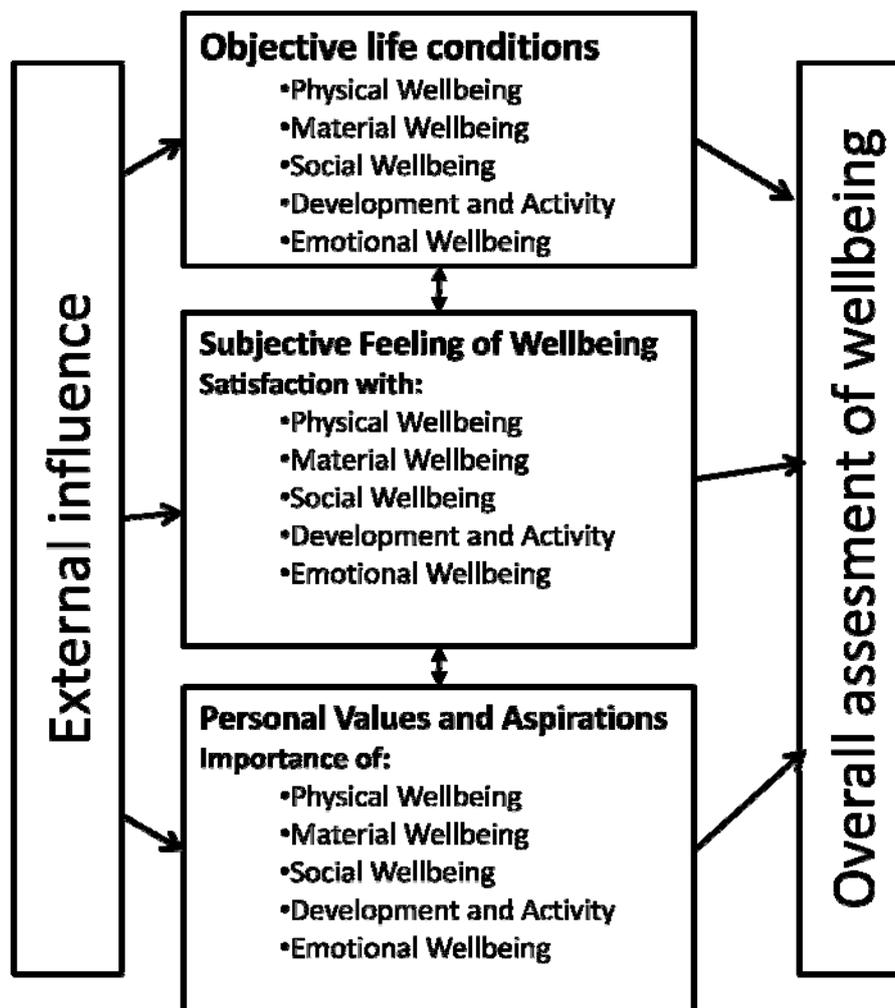


Figure 2: An overall framework for wellbeing.

Source: Felce & Perry, 1995: 62

These three conditions are subject to external influence. Moulded by these, and one's personal condition and preconceptions, an overall assessment of wellbeing emerges. What is key to the above is that the dimensions of wellbeing do not only relate to an objectively measured physical state, but has a social, material, emotional and activity dimension, much like the WHO (2006) definition. As Felce & Perry (1995: 69) argue:

This model accommodates both concerns that objective data should not be interpreted without reference to personal autonomy and preferences and concerns that expressions of satisfaction are themselves relative to the individual's temperament and the circumstances and experiences that have shaped their frame of reference.

Wellness is thus not a purely subjective phenomenon. It is compounded by external influence or more objectively measured quality of life and quantifiable standards of living. As such wellness revolves around social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional aspects of the human being and the attainment of wellbeing on all these fronts. Wellness is thus taken to be the well-being of body, mind and soul (Smith & Puckzó, 2009).

The model Felce & Perry (1995) promote and the dynamic constitution of wellness can be related to the well-known hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (1943). The five needs of every human being according to Maslow are; physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization. His conclusion was that the human condition is in a perpetual state of want, aspiring to the satisfaction of each tier in the five-tiered hierarchy. Hattie, Myers & Sweeney (2004) have turned these five tiers into the "wheel of wellness" (figure 3), outlining in detail which factors influence one's aspirations to wellness. The wheel incorporates the objective framing provided by larger global events and more local frameworks, (such as education, media, industry, family and more) and the subjective everyday feelings and actions towards the attainment of self-actualization, or what they term spirituality.

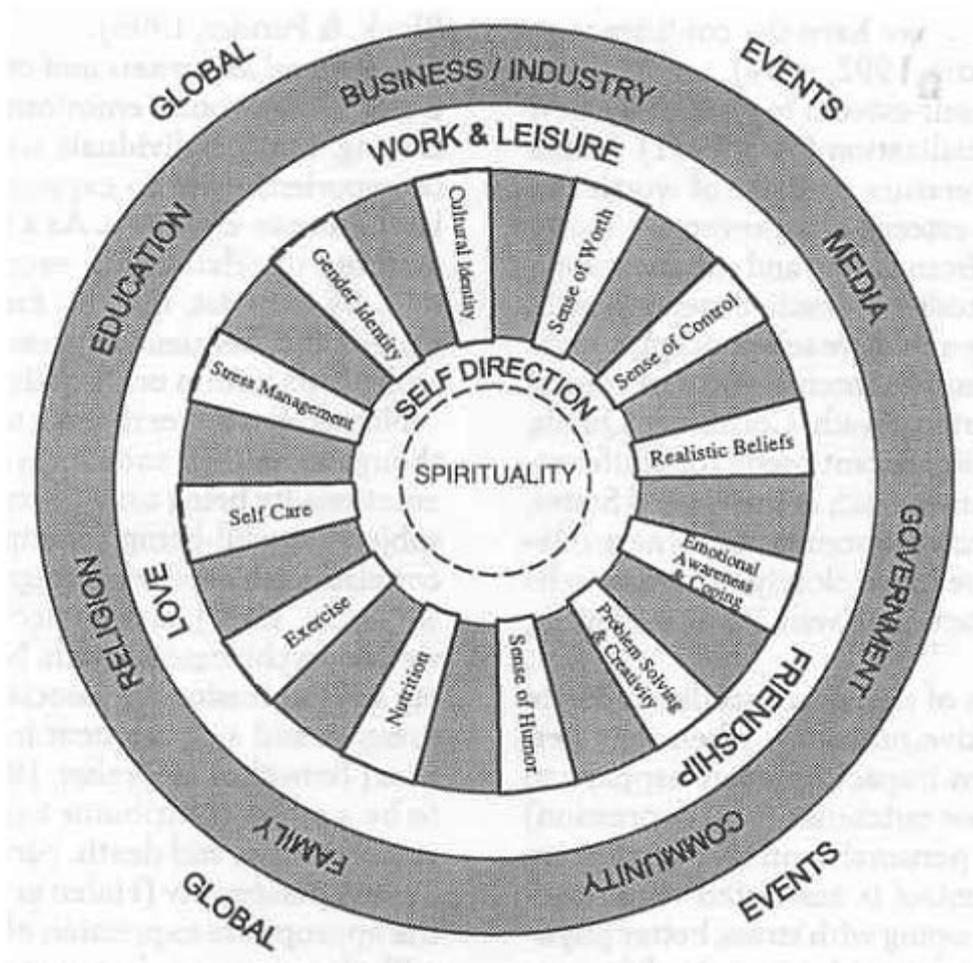


Figure 3: The wheel of wellness.

Source: Hattie *et.al.*, 2004: 355

Manifest in the wheel of wellness is the dynamic process of attaining wellness via mixing subjective notions of one's place in the world with more objective conditions set by the framework of global, more local and lastly everyday events and sentiments. The actions towards the attainment of self-actualization relevant for health and wellness, and manifest in the wheel of wellness are, e.g. nutrition, exercise, self-care, stress management and sense of control.

In sum, the general framing of health and wellness is too broad for the purposes of tourism, but do set the scene for the actions involved in the attainment of wellness.

Health and wellness tourism

Health and wellness tourism on the most general level can be categorised as special interest tourism (see: Douglas, Douglas & Derrett, 2002; Weiler & Hall, 1993). The manifestations of health and wellness tourism are driven by two inversely related factors:

Not only are many people increasingly concerned about their physical, social and psychological wellbeing in their everyday lives, but they are also prepared to travel long distances to experience different forms of health and wellness (Smith & Puczko, 2009: 8)

Several demographic, economic, and lifestyle factors drive this preparedness, e.g. aging population (with a third of OECD populations over 60 in 2020), lifestyle changes, tourism alternatives and particularities of health care systems (García-Altés, 2004). Inversely:

Travel can contribute to all aspects of health if we consider the physical and mental benefits of rest and relaxation, the social aspects of mixing with other tourists and local people, and the intellectual stimulations that can come from learning about new places (Smith & Puczko, 2009: 40, drawing on WHO, 1984)

With these driving forces the future for health and wellness tourism looks bright (Yeoman, 2008). Mobile practices are important for understanding tourism dynamics, but also as already hinted at above in tying together health, wellness and tourism. What this more concretely refers to is how health and wellness tourism destination development can be conceptualised in the tourism production system proposed by Britton (1991). This system refers to the various “commercial and public institutions designed to commodify and provide travel and touristic experiences” (p. 455). In Britton’s view, a dynamic interplay between these actors affected both the materiality and social meaning of places. Linking Britton’s insight to the more recent framing of tourism through mobilities it can be said that the tourism production system refers to diverse mobilities that carve out places to play while simultaneously putting places in play (Sheller & Urry, 2004). Tourism mobilities have to be thought through in relation to other mobilities that constitute places. Mobilities are themselves dependant on immobilities or infrastructures, local practices, material cultures and discourses. Hence, tourism as a form of mobility works through a complex topology of overlapping near and far connections and relations that are “produced through practises and relations of different spatial stretch and duration” (Amin, 2002: 389). These practices and relations are then networks that produce places as “material natures, social relations and discursive conceptions” (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2004: 26). Practising health and wellness thus

results in a variety of health and wellness tourism offerings and destinations, typified in table 4 below:

Table 4: Health and wellness tourism service offerings.

Source: Adapted from Smith & Puczko, 2009: 84-85.

Domain of Health and Wellness	Typical Destination	Typical activities or type
Physical healing	Medical spas	Surgery trips Rehabilitation retreats
Beauty treatments	Cosmetic surgery facilities	Hotel/Day retreats
Relaxation/Rest	Pampering spas	Wellness hotels Thalassotherapy centres
Leisure/Entertainment	Spa resorts with 'fun waters'	Sport/Fitness holidays
Life/Work Balance	Holistic centres	Occupational wellness workshops Life coaching holidays
Psychological	Holistic centres	Workshops
Spiritual	Meditation retreats	Yoga centres Pilgrimages

The first type of service offerings (physical healing) have to do with healing physical ailments, dentistry or therapeutic plastic surgery (Cornell, 2006). These are growing in popularity with often affluent Westerners seeking cheaper services in emerging third world countries. Simple health-care tourism will also fall under this category of tourism (Goodrich & Goodrich, 1987; Henderson, 2004). Bristow, Yang & Lu (2009) have compiled a detailed list of resources on the topic of medical tourism. The second type of service offerings are beauty treatments that are neither therapeutic nor medical. These are also becoming a popular impetus to travel with ever shifting common ideas of female and male bodily beauty. In the stressed out, overworked and time compressed everyday perceived reality of many people in the West, rest and relaxation tours make sense. Offering an escape from your everyday surrounding holds the allure of experiencing something fundamentally different resulting in rest from the former (Cohen & Taylor, 1992). The spa resorts and water-parks, albeit in many cases fundamentally different, offer all kinds of treatment but mainly revolve around leisure and entertainment (see: Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009). Treatments therein are most commonly water-based, but not all have the approval of the medical establishment as therapeutic or directly beneficial for health. With these the list in table 4 moves to more subjective

health and wellness service offerings guiding people to find life and work balance, psychological rest and spiritual fulfilment. Typical activities and destinations involve life coaching, stress management and guidance for everyday living in alternative ways in centres or retreats most often in beautiful natural surroundings. In terms of spiritual health and wellness examples abound with new age travel of all sorts (see: Pernecky & Johnston, 2006 in a theme issue of *Tourism Recreation Research* on wellness tourism) and visits to sacred places of either healing potential or special energy (see: Sylge, 2007; Timothy & Olsen, 2006)

Table 4 and its above short summary represent the most general trends in global health and wellness tourism, demonstrating how these produce places materially as destinations and through social relations and discursive conceptions. Smith & Puczko (2009) have provided a detailed discussion of these trends with numerous case studies and examples worldwide (see also Sylge, 2007). Drawing towards the latter half of table 4 the domain of health and wellness moves more squarely into what is termed wellness or wellbeing in both products and service offerings.

The mobilities and products listed in table 4 specific to wellness tourism are captured by Mueller & Kaufmann (2001) in what can be termed a more trimmed version of the wheel of wellness (figure 4), framing wellness tourism product development. They interpret wellness based on a thorough review of the uses of the term in Anglophonic literature.

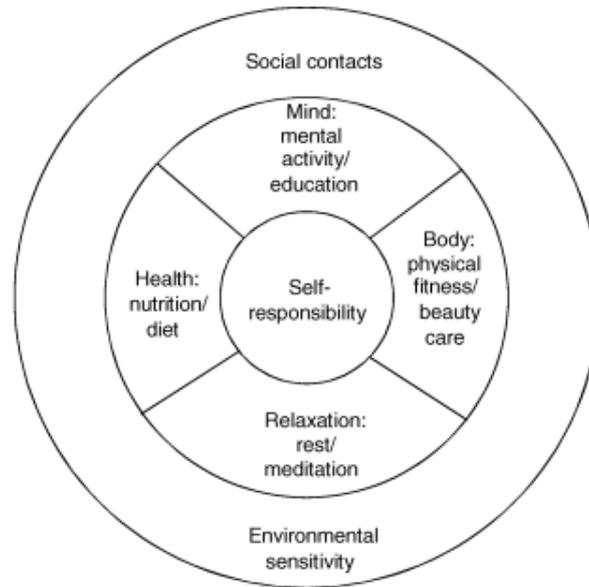


Figure 4: The tourist's wellness wheel.

Source: Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001: 6

In sum Mueller & Kaufmann (2001: 16) state that:

Professional market positioning of wellness services can only succeed if a clear distinction is made between them and cures, and if health-promoting objectives are pursued.

As argued above, health is a state of being, albeit multifaceted, whilst wellness entails an active moving towards a state of being of which being healthy is integral. In this context wellness tourism includes different services and products. Its main objective is to maintain and improve the well-being of body, mind and soul. Services and products thus include elements of pampering, refreshing mind and body, fitness and sports - even some luxury in addition to just nurturing health. Thus moving further into the relationship between tourism and the attainment of wellness, the above described hierarchy of needs, be it set out as a Maslowian pyramid or as a wheel, has been developed as well in business studies. In the current business interpretation what the hierarchy amounts to is that general consumption takes place at the lower level needs, with the fulfilment of emotions and self-actualisation as harder consumptive practices, but integral to consumption at the same time (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Wellness as a consumptive practice is here being interpreted as aspirational, or something that can be obtained through purchase. This aspiration transpires, e.g. in the way in which people attempt to signify a high(er) social status by

catering to wellness, e.g. through buying expensive brands, and demonstrating superior taste through their choice of venue and through the act of purchase (Boyle & Rice, 2003, quoting Bourdieu, 1989). Analyzing tourism in this context:

... offers social science an opportunity to inquire about the mobile reality that configures western societies and the constitution of places, bodies, subjectivities and sensibilities (Obrador Pons, 2003: 48)

When placing wellness in the context of tourism, it inevitable becomes part and parcel of consumptive practices and thus the individual frame of reference is modified under these terms.

What seems to be at stake though is as Smith & Puczkó (2009: 58) argue:

So whilst it seems that optimum wellness is to be achieved at a personal level, through synergies of body-mind-spirit-environment, the tourism sector does not always have the holistic know-how or the desire to deliver its products in this way.

In this report the focus is on *Nordic Well-being* as a more specific segment area. As evident from the general discussion of health and wellness above, in terms of tourism wellness entails the active search for and attainment of a state of being, of which health and being healthy is merely one aspect. How the tourism sector responds to these aspirational consumer demands seems to vary greatly, but on the most general level competences in product delivery seem to be lacking.

Nordic wellness tourism

The five Nordic countries have often been lumped together in terms of competitiveness, due to their shared positive economic and political image. Concomitantly in the past decades, the popularity of the Nordic countries as tourism destinations has increased (Hall, Müller & Saarinen, 2008; Müller & Jansson, 2007). The countries have in common many attractions mainly revolving around nature and natural phenomena. Building on significant variations in nature and landscape types and climates, numerous possibilities for activities are available for all seasons (Hall, Müller & Saarinen, 2009: 17-21). In terms of health and wellness Lindahl (2005), in her autobiographic reflections, notes that the Nordic countries have a contribution to make in terms of global wellbeing (see also in some of the letters in Lindahl, 2010). Indeed the way in which wellness translates into various languages is mostly a matter of cultural preference and local perceptions. In the Nordic context, Lindahl (2005) expresses these through an emphasis on personal spaces e.g.

through design, healthy home-grown food, traditional family values and outdoor walking. The last expression of Nordic wellness chimes with Smith & Puczkó (2009: 6, 112-114) who sum the Nordic emphasis:

In Scandinavia, there is a large emphasis on outdoor recreation such as Nordic walking, cross country-skiing, and lake swimming, even in winter.

What emerges as specifically Nordic in terms of wellness seems to thus revolve around the outdoors, being with nature and dealing with the cold. The cool, crisp air along with vast open spaces form integral parts of these. What also influences perceptions of wellness in the Nordic countries is the role of the Nordic welfare state of which the key components are still distinct as; universal social policy programmes, equality in opportunity and outcomes as explicit goals in social policy with relatively even income distribution, large public sector as proportion of GNP, extensive transfer programmes and services, high/full employment and high taxes (Greve, 2004; Lahelma, Kivelä, Roos, Tuominen, Dahl, Diderichsen, Elstad, Lissau, Lundberg, Rahkonen, Rasmussen, & Yngwe, 2002; Lundberg, Yngwe, Stjärne, Elstad, Ferrarini, Kangas, Norström, Palme & Fritzell, 2008). This general policy framework and emphasis on nature set the tone for the cultural specificity of Nordic wellness as is further outlined in the final report submitted to NICE (see: Hjalager, Konu, Huijbens, Björk, Flagestad, Nordin & Tuohino, 2011).

The values underpinning the Nordic welfare state go to some length at explaining the values underpinning conceptions of Nordic wellbeing and wellness, albeit vague at current. The emphasis on personal space, through notions of design, solitude, vastness of horizon or the dense embrace of the boreal forest all point to the ways in which the individual and her rights are praised in the welfare state model and form objects of aspiration. Equal opportunities through income, the accommodating role of the public sector and transfer programmes are manifest in the open access policy to wilderness areas, sometimes codified in law, allowing for the opportunities of Nordic walking and cross-country skiing. The public sector has a large role in providing for wellbeing and as such plays a crucial role in the concept of wellbeing, i.e. state-provision of wellness. Hjalager (2005: 58-59) in this context even goes so far as to

suggest in [her] article that the interweaving of leisure and holiday frameworks into a coherent welfare legislation has determined much of innovative activity in Danish tourism for the past half century.

On the most general level, the welfare state has directly impinged upon tourism with subsidising holidays for health (seeking cures) and recreation in order to secure equal access by all. But as Hjalager (2005) concludes these general policies are being moved towards specific targeted actions for groups such as the elderly and disabled and thus towards that of medical tourism.

In a global context most people, aware of the Nordic countries to begin with, will recognise the Nordicity of the wellness image sketched above. But when it comes to specific products on offer today that can be formulated as Nordic wellness tourism, they are many and varied. With the aim of a tentative typology in order to roughly sketch the service offering in Nordic countries a short excursion will be made through each, using the official tourist board websites. Going from East to West, in Finland, the Finnish Tourist Board has introduced the idea of GoSauna (see: www.gosauna.fi) trying to create a product out of the well known Finnish sauna tradition. Visiting the site of the Swedish Tourist Board they state “Wellness ‘Swedish style’ is what you want it to be” (www.visitsweden.com). But their main emphasis is on simplicity and cottage living either in the forest or on an island. As Hall *et.al.*, (2009: 176) state: “staying at the cottage is an important part of national folklore; it is also a special part of family life, and thus in tourism it is promoted as a means of experiencing the Nordic way of life”. In Denmark, as has been indicated above with reference to Hjalager (2005), service offerings have been largely dictated by the needs of the welfare state, but that is changing. Looking at the website of the Danish Tourist Board (www.visitdenmark.com) activities and life enjoyment feature as inspiration and the emphasis is on fun and relaxation. Nothing specific emerges there that will set Danish wellness apart from anywhere else, although the focus is clearly on the relaxed way of living, good food and all-round fun. In Norway the website of the tourist board (www.visitnorway.com) has no special focus on wellness or wellbeing, but what comes up if the words are searched via the site are general spa service offerings at selected hotels. Nature looms though large in Norway and they claim to be powered by it, entailing a sense of spirituality or self-actualization through experiencing nature. Clearly wellness in the Norwegian sense is being at one with nature and its health and wellness potential would thus seem to tie with nature-based tourism.

Generally speaking the Nordic service offerings have an international outlook drawing in varied components of wellness from around the globe, based on what is fashionable at each point in time. In this way it is hard to talk about Nordic wellbeing tourism, although some individual entrepreneurs will try for marketing and branding purposes, as Lindahl (2005, 2010) is a case in point. Generally speaking thus Nordic wellness would seem to revolve around the cold, solitude with nature and outdoor activities. Ending this short excursion with the Nordic country furthest to the West, Iceland is the focus of this report and will be dealt with in detail below.

Wellness tourism in Iceland

Iceland is slightly set apart from the rest of the Scandinavian countries when it comes to the amenities associated with the aspiration towards wellness. Following the tentative typology above and as introduction for further analysis, the webpage of the tourist board (www.visiticeland.com) will point the viewer towards the homepage of the recently established association whose primal function is to promote health and wellness tourism in Iceland (www.islandofhealth.is).

The association has not set their strategy yet, so all those wanting in can be included under the umbrella of the association resulting in motley service providers in tourism around the island being listed. The country however does not follow its Nordic counterparts on the mainland in several ways when it comes to framing health and wellness. In Iceland there is a limited tradition for outdoor recreation, such as Nordic walking, the island lacks the forests characteristic of the mainland and even lacks accessible snow to do skiing to the extent it is done on the mainland, contrary to what the name might suggest. In addition, through 20 years of right-wing neo-liberalism the welfare state has taken decisive turns away from the Nordic welfare model (Ólafsson, 2003) and privatisation has gained considerable momentum, even in terms of public access to recreation and outdoor activities. The only establishment that can be counted as a wellness destination, that has any kind of history is that of the Nature Health Association of Iceland, but that is also involved in health and physical healing (see table 4 for definition). They set up a rehabilitation and health clinic/retreat in the town of Hveragerði near Reykjavík in 1955, now catering to 160 *guests* at a time with holistic treatments for a range of ailments and also simply for

your wellbeing (see: www.hnlfi.is). Still this facility is subsidised by the government and is mainly for those seeking treatment and rehabilitation.

In terms of lake swimming and bathing, stated to be prominent as health and wellness in other Nordic countries above, Iceland sets itself again slightly apart. No-one would be too eager to jump into a lake or the sea, even on a warm summer day in Iceland. The bathing spots are in hot-springs that are to be found in abundance all over the country (for a detailed listing see: Aradóttir & Sigurjónsson, 2004 and Snæland & Sigurbjörnsdóttir, 2009). With the abundance of hot water and in addition to the tradition for bathing in natural hot springs, dating from the time of first settlement in 9th Century AD, the water has been put to use for heating utilities for the country as it urbanised, especially after the 1970s. The heating utilities provided a spurt in the building of outdoor swimming pools, which by now are to be found in almost every urban settlement in Iceland. Bathing culture has thus developed to become a modern dual manifestation of wellness, as venue of regular physical exercise (body) and epicurean delights (social/soul) (Jónsson & Huijbens, 2005 and Jónsson, 2009).

In the natural hot springs the temperature, water quality and composition range considerably, but can generally be estimated from the proximity the spot holds with respect to the volcanically active zone that cuts Iceland in half from SW to NE (see figure 5: Younger than 0.8 m. years).

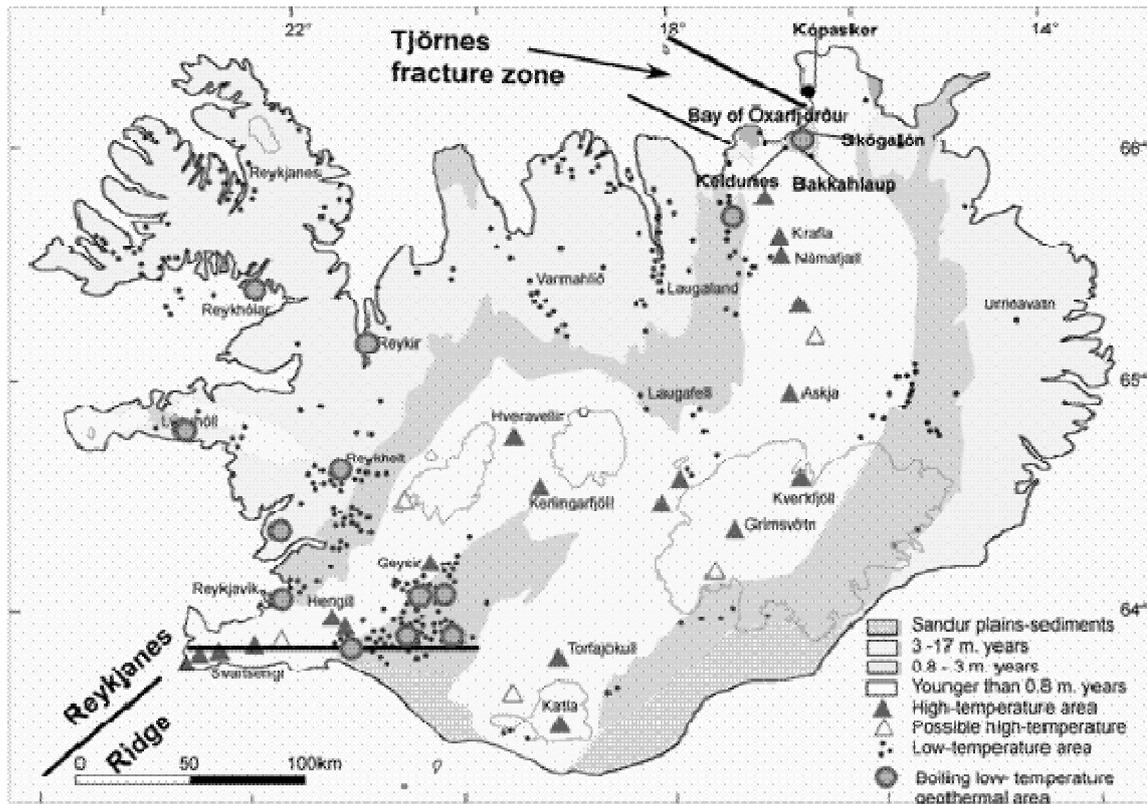


Figure 5: A simplified geological map of Iceland.

Source: Kristmannsdóttir, 2008: 10, based on a map by Björnsson, Axelsson & Flóvenz, 1990

Furthest away from the volcanically active zone, in the fjords and mountains of the West, Westfjords and the East (in figure 5: 3-17 m. years), are low temperature bathing pools to be found. Water in these will be from 15°-40°C and if built up or damned a nice ‘natural’ hot tub emerges. On the other hand once closer to the active zone (in figure 5: 0.8-3 m. years), temperature rises and the water becomes laden with minerals, especially where boiling point is reached (in figure 5: boiling low-temperature geothermal area). The triangles in the above figure point to high temperature geothermal areas. This is where water is far beyond boiling and usually emerges from the ground as steam or through boreholes under great pressure. The best known example thereof is Svartsengi in the SW on the Reykjanes Ridge (see figure 5). There the steam coming through boreholes of the Svartsengi power plant is up to 400°C and is used to propel turbines to generate electricity for the municipalities on the Reykjanes peninsula. Then the steam is put through a thermal exchange unit where it heats up fresh cold water to be used in the municipalities heating utility. After that the steam/water is released onto the surrounding lava, pooling up to create the by-now well known destination *the Blue Lagoon*, getting its characteristic

colour as minerals precipitate from the water. The precipitating minerals, predominantly silica, also create a layer of mud on the bottom of the pool that is now being sold as cosmetics around the world (for details on natural cosmetics see: Hjalager & Konu, 2011).

This presence of geo-thermal natural baths and the swimming pools in towns and villages is one of the unique selling points of Iceland and supplements the country's key attributes; wilderness and nature. But to date these are mainly promoted as a complement to existing service offerings, e.g. a nice relaxing soak after a hiking tour or bird watching excursion, either of which being the main aim of the trip. The visitor experience of the pools is captured in the novel *Smukke Biler efter Krigen*, but what intrigues one of the main characters the most about Iceland is the water. He loves the swimming pools and the geothermal pools, which give him a sense of intense physical well-being, when he seems to be at peace with himself and the world. Whenever he is in a pool, the text states that "Lasse is very fond of Iceland" (Frost, 2004: 17, 168). There is most certainly growing interest in building tourism around wellness through water. One of the most argued for attribute is that this will allow for year-round tourism, but Icelandic tourism, especially outside the capital region suffers from pronounced seasonality. Tourism, it is argued, also creates an added dimension to resource uses, i.e. the multi-uses of hot water, as the Blue Lagoon case demonstrates. Building on the abundance of geothermal water, and general abundance of water in Iceland a design group called Waterfriends has created a vision for Iceland as a wellness destination:

Wellness country Iceland is a concept to promote health related tourism in Iceland. The abundance of water and geothermal energy is a unique resource of Iceland. The network of water arteries in nature offer an inspiration to join efforts in a network supporting interrelated initiatives for future economic regeneration (Natturainfo, 2008).

The economic regeneration aspect sets the scene of most of the official policy documents. In these documents the prevailing sentiment is that the water and geothermal resources used for spa and wellness tourism are to be combined with state-of-the-art medical facilities and services available in Iceland and thus create new opportunities in medical tourism in Iceland, as can be gleaned from numerous official policy documents (Útflutningsráð & Orkustofnun, 1994; Kristmannsdóttir, Björnsson, Hauksdóttir, Tulinius & Hjálmarsson, 2000; Kristmannsdóttir, Arnórsson, Sveinbjörnsdóttir & Ármannsson, 2005; Samgönguráðuneytið, 2000; Kristmannsdóttir, 2008,

Lúðvíksson, 2009: 70-71). In the recently established health and wellness association the focus is clear on the medical part, but once the focus is medical tourism tends to be forgotten. Of the 40 companies currently working on product development in medical tourism, only four have roots in or relations to tourism (Lúðvíksson, 2009: 33). Following this medical emphasis extensive analysis has been done on the chemical properties of the geothermal water. Kristmannsdóttir (2008) has done so in NE of Iceland, and this has partly resulted in new developments such as The Mývatn Nature Baths, but in a manner similar to the Blue Lagoon they offer water for wellness.

Mývatn Nature Baths

The specific focus of the Nordic project in Iceland, or the so called “laboratory area”, is the settlement around lake Mývatn (see figure 1) as mentioned above, and more specifically the build up and development of the Mývatn Nature Baths. Lee & King (2008), already referred to above in relations to the Delphi method, made a survey executed in Taiwan on hot springs and tourism. Their framework for analysis provides the basic platform from which the region and the Mývatn Nature Baths can be approached (see table 5).

Table 5: The focus of analysis in the laboratory area in Iceland.

Source: Adapted from Lee & King, 2008: 344.

Major components	Elements
Tourism destination resources and attractors	Natural resources, cultural assets, special attractions, accommodation, transportation, safety and security.
Tourism destination strategies	Capabilities of destination management organisation, destination planning and development, environmental management, service quality management, human resource development, destination marketing management, pricing.
Tourism destination environments	Socio-cultural changes, economic growth, demand conditions, community participation and attitudes, intra-industry interaction.

The three major components are the base from which the subsequent discussion will unfold.

Tourism destination resources and attractors

The Mývatn Nature Baths (MNB) are founded upon geo-thermal steam that comes from the ground due to volcanic activity nearby. Traditionally locals have made use of the hot water and steam for bathing especially in one particular spot named after the activity: *Hotspring bathing hills* (Jarðbaðshólar). In 1996 a couple of local entrepreneurs decided to revitalise the tradition and put up a fibre-plastic hut over one of the steam crevices in Jarðbaðshólar. Thus they created a natural steam bath, and as the steam is resulting from magma heated surface- and groundwater, it is relatively odour free as opposed to the often distinct H₂S smell of geothermal water. The steam bath became an immediate success with locals and word spread among tourists in the region. With growing demand the idea of developing good service facilities was born. Two years later a limited holding the Mývatn Bathing Company (Baðfélag Mývatnssveitar hf.) was set up around the idea and six years thereafter, in spring 2004, the current facility was up and opened to visitation. This facility is only partly built around the old natural steam bath. The centre-piece of the facility is the blue thermal pool with water from the National Power Company's nearby energy facility. There, much like in Svartsengi which feeds the Blue Lagoon, boreholes provide steam that propels turbines and generate electricity for local industry, but thereafter the steam is put directly to the pool. This surplus water had been pumped out before and was pooling up at the roadside of ring-road number 1 (see figure 1) going through the area and attracting a considerable tourism bathing crowd, furthering demand for facilities to be built.

As the building of the facility had been fully funded with share capital, mainly from various government funds, the owner of the MNB, the Mývatn Bathing Company Ltd., has turned a profit every year from start. In spring 2009 a 300m² extension to the existing facility was opened, housing a restaurant and a retail corner for souvenirs and nature cosmetics from Icelandic producers, mainly MNB products. To date, with the addition, the facility consists of a 5.000m² pool with geothermal water from the nearby power plant. There are two natural steam baths there, built on the old spot where the barracks were. There are hot tubs, with water slightly hotter than what is in the pool. There are facilities to change, showers and washrooms, along with a small kiosk/restaurant and retail outlet (see figure 6). All this represents a considerable change from

what used to be there prior to 2004 as then the only facility was the fibre-plastic barrack and a hose for rinsing.



Figure 6: The Mývatn Nature Baths – view across the outdoor facilities.

Source: E. Huijbens, 2009

In table 6 below the number of visitors to the MNB is juxtaposed with the total number of foreign visitors to the region. Obviously the region also gets domestic tourists but only estimates of bed nights are available for them. Generally what the table indicates is that MNB seems to have immediately secured a third of the international market in the region and stabilised there.

Table 6: Visitors to the Mývatn Nature Baths and foreign visitors to Mývatn region.

Source: Gunnarsson, 2009 (MNB figures), Guðmundsson, 2008 and the Icelandic Tourist Board, 2009 (visitor figures)

Year	Number	Increase %	Foreign visitors to Mývatn region	% Visiting MNB
2004	32.323		162.176	20%
2005	51.449	59%	171.462	30%
2006	62.463	21%	207.762	30%
2007	64.096	3%	214.208	30%
2008	65.421	2%	N/A	N/A

Generally the region suffers from pronounced seasonality with the great majority of visitors coming in the summer months of July and August. There are three hotels in the region and several smaller guesthouses, farm-house accommodation and sleeping-bag accommodation (see table 7).

Table 7: Accommodation available in the Mývatn region.

Source: Gunnarsson, 2010

Accommodation type	Beds / Spaces available
Hotels	235
Guesthouses	326
Sleeping bag accommodation	80
Camping	820
Total	1461

If all of the spaces shown in table 7 would be available on an annual basis the occupancy rate would average at 15% for the year, as in 2009 a total of 79.825 (15% Icelanders, rest international) were registered as bed nights in the region (Skútustaðarhreppur municipality). This might seem strange in comparison with figures presented in table 6, but therein day visitors are also counted and the figure refers to the extended Mývatn region beyond the bounds of the Skútustaðir municipality. Many of these might be coming on cruise ships to the port of Akureyri, but in the summer of 2008, around 60.000 passengers arrived with these and thereof 60% take day trips to the Mývatn region. Compared to the survey undertaken in summer 2010 under the terms of this project, 13,4% of the respondents did not register nights they were staying in the region and are thus presumably day visitors. These were not from cruise ships as they on a tight schedule and would not have had time to respond to the survey.

In terms of transportation the region is on the ring-road that goes around the island and it benefits from tourists with the traditional aim of completing a circle of Iceland. The region is often the first stop of those coming with their own vehicles on the ferry from the mainland, which berths in Seyðisfjörður in the East. Scheduled bus trips come once a day both from the East and from the nearby town of Akureyri, 90km to the West. Akureyri has an airport with domestic and international flights arriving, the former up to eight times a day from Reykjavík, the latter once a week from Copenhagen, during the summer of 2010. The airport is connected to the scheduled bus departures to the Mývatn region. Generally round half of the almost 500.000 people visiting Iceland in a given year will travel on their own in rental cars, the rest will use public transport or partake in prepared tours with a set itinerary.

Safety and security issues are not high on the agenda in Iceland and generally the country is considered very safe for travellers. In terms of the Mývatn Nature Baths, the facility is for bathing and thus has to comply with rules and regulations common to all public swimming pools in Iceland. This means that life-guards need to be trained and rescue equipment in place for staff to use in case of emergency.

The special attraction of the region is its nature. Judging from the customer survey undertaken in the summer of 2010 the key attractor of the region is its nature. This general statement confirms findings from other surveys (Guðmundsson, 2006 and 2008) but warrants closer scrutiny.

When interviewing tourism stakeholders in the region, respondents were asked to identify the tourism resources of the area. As can be seen in table 8 below, these in many ways chime with the opinions of those surveyed in the summer of 2010, but with a clearer focus on specific resources, somewhat unsurprisingly and also an emphasis on some of the service infrastructure:

Table 8: Tourism resources of the Mývatn region, identified by interviewees.

<i>The area's tourism resources</i>	Clean air, environment, footpaths and solitude	Geothermal energy, water and steam – heat therapy, sulphur and clean air
	The Nature and the readily apparent forces of nature – birds and vegetation	Geothermal energy and water, steam and clay, amazing natural phenomena, energy, peace and winter beauty
	Solitude, nature, all basic service infrastructure, baths, massage and physical pampering	Unique Nature, the hot water, aurora. You do not need to be told once you are there.
	The potential of the greater region to be a centre for health – a net of opportunities. The beauty, peace and variety – nothing to distract	Wonders of nature the regions uniqueness in nature.
	The area itself, its energy , peace, clean air, aurora borealis, stars, shimmering clouds and the light	Varied nature, lava, lake and birdlife, footpaths Water Clean air The beauty.
	The countryside nature – the Nature Baths and the Bird Museum	The central role of hot water, few people, the darkness, remote, aurora
	Opportunities for nature bath development – treatment – natural diversity, aurora, stars and clean air	Beautiful surroundings, relaxed in winter, calm weather, walking in frost , birds and power plants as attractions
	Accommodation, hiking, birds, fishing, and harnessing energy – linking history with utilisation	Accommodation and infrastructure, geothermal energy and the lake. A fresh landscape and fresh air
	Grjótagjá is coming back due to the water cooling there (a geothermal pool)	It is seasonal: In the summer, general tourists, spring the birds, winter the peace and quiet.
	The geothermal energy	Raw nature away from all temptations - hiking
	The beauty of nature and hiking.	

This stakeholders' perception can be then compared to what visitors to the region valued in choosing it as a destination. When people were asked to "rate the importance of the following points when choosing this area as a destination" figure 7 emerges showing the average score for each point, but respondents could rank them 1-7.

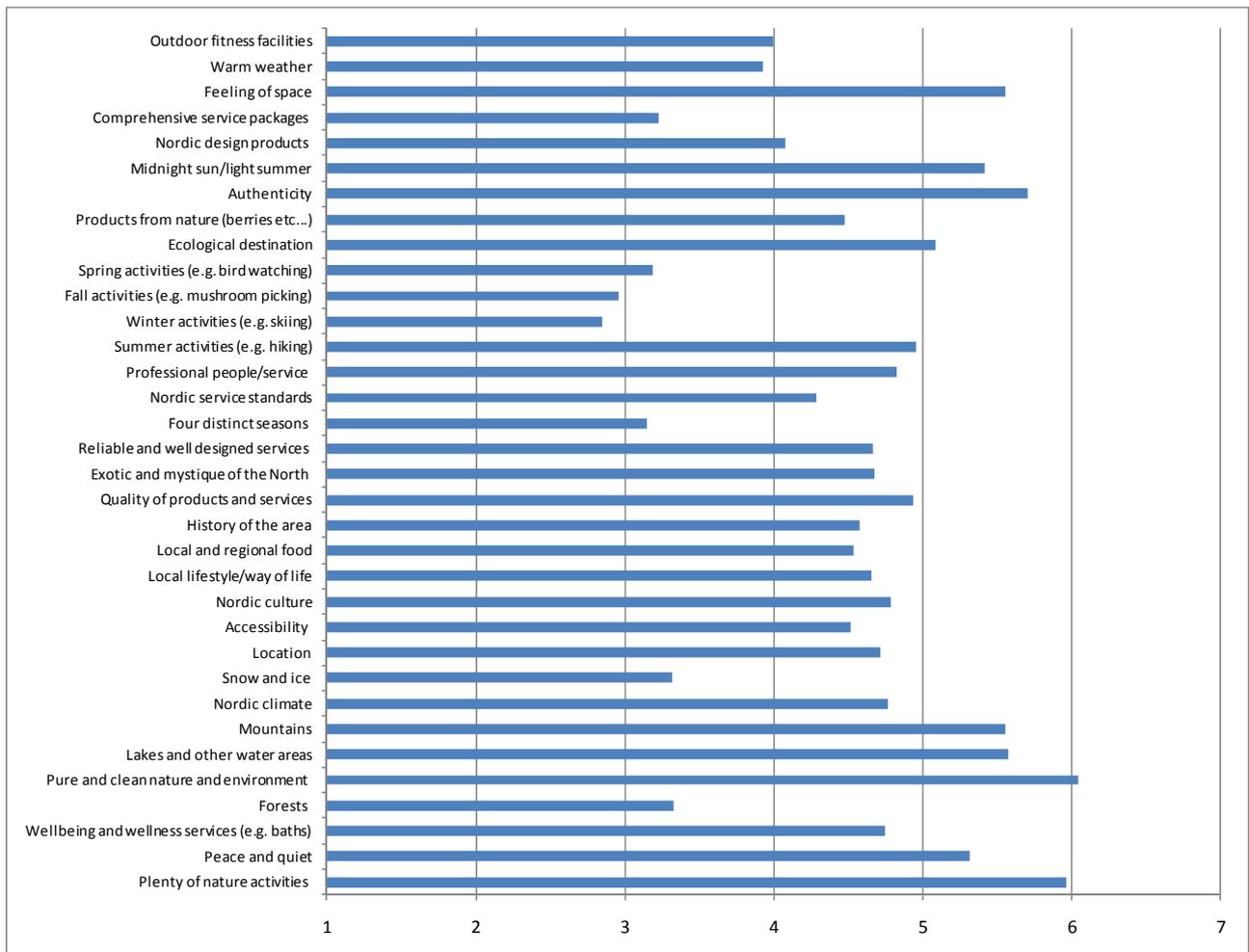


Figure 7: The average score of listed points when choosing the area as a destination, scale 1-7.

What is clear from figure 7 is the prominent role nature plays as the special attraction of the region, with focus emerging on plenty of nature activities, pure and clean nature and environment, feeling of space etc. This can then be reflected in what people actually did in the region. Customers queried in the 2010 survey give an indication of the destination resources and the services offered. When asked "what have you done/you are going to do during your stay in the Mývatn region (activities/services)" figure 8 below emerges.

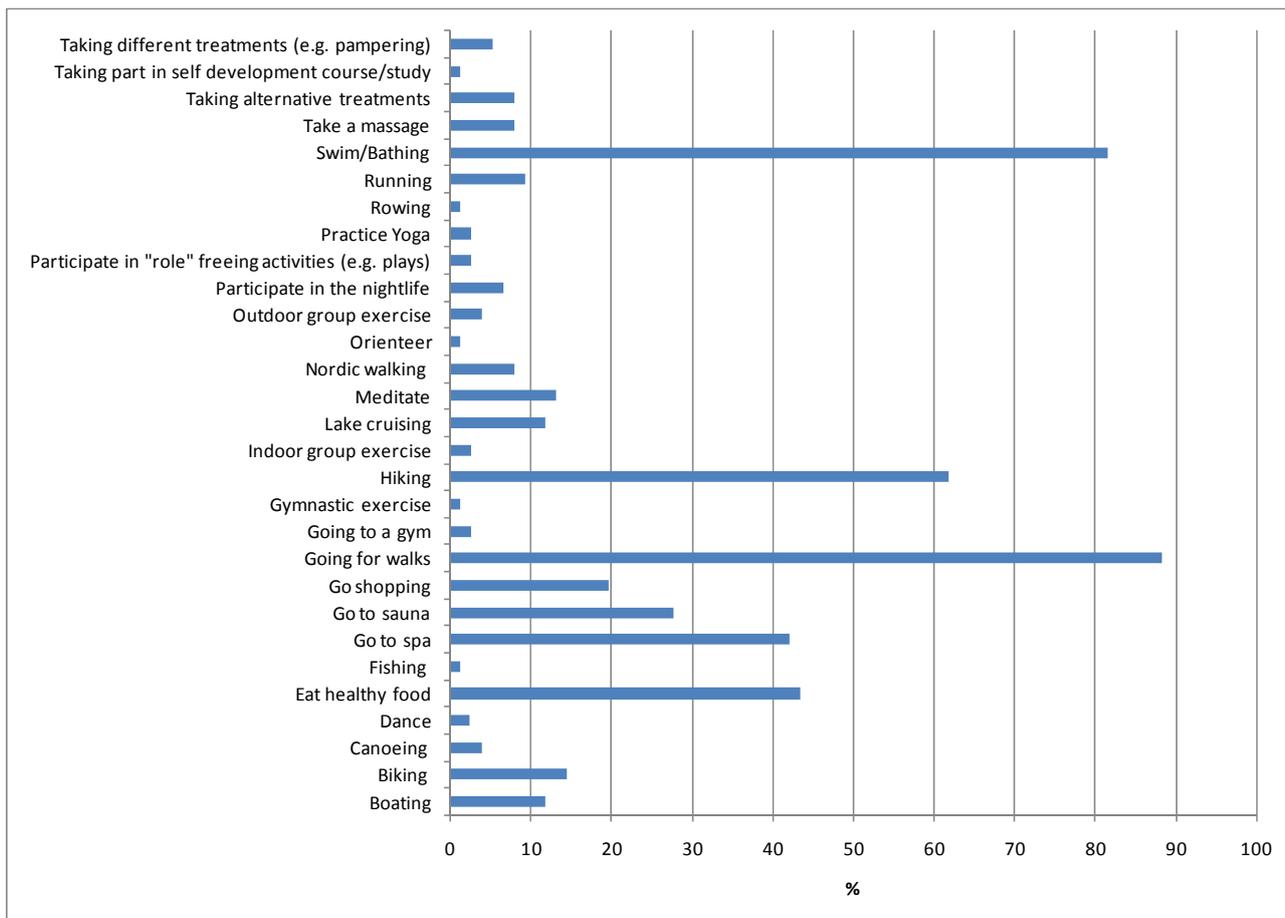


Figure 8: What people did or planned to do in the Mývatn region.

A few (20,7%) mentioned something else they would like to do, which mostly (for 53% of those that mentioned other) entailed watching nature, a few wanted to watch wildlife (12%) and the rest had miscellaneous ambitions. Clearly the area is perceived as a hiking terrain, presumably for wilderness and nature experiences, all of which can be complemented with a nice soak in a pool.

Tourism destination strategies

What needs to be borne in mind here is that the Mývatn region suffers greatly from seasonality, one of the identified key weaknesses in tourism in Iceland (see: Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010 and Jóhannesson, Huijbens & Sharpley, 2010). This results in tourist volume in the Mývatn region being far beyond capacity with attractions and nature already suffering damage in the short summer period. Destination strategies do sadly not reflect this challenge and are almost solely geared towards marketing. Indeed the Mývatn region is a well known destination in Iceland, with almost

two third of foreign visitors to Iceland, identifying the region as the most memorable part of their visit, if they had been to North Iceland (Guðmundsson, 2006). In terms of strategies, the region's marketing dynamics can be said to unfold in a threefold manner.

Firstly, the whole region around lake Mývatn with its myriad of attractions is marketed via the Visit Mývatn office which is a limited shareholder's company (see: www.visitmyvatn.is). Its board is comprised of the General Manager of the Mývatn Nature Baths, a municipal representative and one from Hótel Reyhlið. The Visit Mývatn office is based in Reykjahlíð and also functions as the tourist information for the region (see figure 1). The region is also promoted as one of the crown jewels of the so-called Diamond Circle, including also the Dettifoss waterfall in Vatnajökull National Park and the town of Húsavík for whale watching. This route is promoted by the NE Regional Development Office along with stakeholders in the region (see: www.visitnortheasticeland.is). The Regional Development Office is funded by the Ministry of Industry through the Institute of Regional Development in Iceland, but also receives grants from competitive funds. Their office is in Húsavík (see figure 1). Zooming further out geographically, the Mývatn region is lastly promoted by the North Iceland Marketing Office, which is funded by almost all municipalities in North Iceland in addition to some government funds. This office is based in Akureyri (see figure 1) and markets the region in tandem with the Icelandic Tourist Board (see: www.nordurland.is).

Secondly, the destination itself is mainly promoted by the big industry stakeholders. These are the hotels, especially hotel Reyhlið and Sel hotel at Skútustaðir, both owned and operated by locals. The manager of hotel Reyhlið is one of the main entrepreneurs setting up the Mývatn Nature Baths and sits there as the chairman of the board. What emerges through interviews with stakeholders of the MNB and Mývatn Bathing Company (MBC) is that, contrary to expectations and their own acclaimed wellness qualities of a hot bath, the marketing focus is not on wellness, but is simply about providing a needed service (bathing), the traditional way. There was a need for an all year round recreation in the area and the customers were already there. "It was just a matter of picking them from the main road" (MBC chairman) and the water and tradition for bathing was already there. As this form of bathing is traditional this ensured the good-will and co-

operation of the locals, both through direct investment and use of the facility and ensuring a good reputation as informants in the region made unanimously clear. It needs to be borne in mind that the region is predominantly a farming region with a total population in 2010 of 391 person. One big factory was operated near the village of Reykjahlíð opened in 1967, and in many ways formed the basic sustenance of the village and its *raison de être*. This factory used geothermal steam to dry diatomite earth, mined from the lake bed. This factory was closed in 2004 and it can be fairly stated that the closure prompted interest in tourism, but at that time just over 162.000 visitors were coming to the region (see table 6 above).

Lastly, in terms of strategies there is a formal destination management organisation manifest in the tourism association in the region where tourism stakeholders and business entrepreneurs meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest. This forum has no real say in the development of the destination and has often been subjected to the rule of those running the biggest companies. The municipality plays a limited role in the development of the destination with no clear vision for the future of tourism in the region and mostly involved in fighting the government for building permits, but the region is a designated protected area.

Wellness strategies

In the survey respondents were asked to respond openly to “What makes the region an interesting wellbeing destination?” The respondents were asked to give three key words ranked, with number one being the main reason. Most people (81,7%) wrote something as number 1. Slightly fewer (69,5%) filled in a second keyword and less than half (47,6%) filled in all three. When the keywords written by the respondents are themed table 9 emerges:

Table 9: What makes the region an interesting wellbeing destination - % of those that respond.

Theme	1st word %	2nd word %	3rd word %
Hot springs and nature baths	18	19,3	12,8
Beauty, calmness, quietness	6	17,5	7,7
Nature and landscape in general	30	12,3	12,8
Geology	19,5	7	7,7
Activities	7,5	14	17,9
Birds	1,5	5,3	2,6
Other	18	22,8	38,4

As can be seen hot springs, nature baths, nature and geology are the most prominent ideas in people's minds framing the region as a wellbeing destination, but as people are pushed into the second and third round of thought, activities start to be more prominent. In terms of other keywords, not themed, the most prominent were individual sites, e.g. the lake itself, Dimmuborgir or Hverfjall that were deemed important or infrastructure.

The only publicly available and advertised hot spring or nature bath in the region is the Mývatn Nature Bath (MNB). Most of the respondents to the survey actually answered in the MNB, so perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly they emerge as prominent in peoples' minds, but might also be indicative of popular perceptions of the facility. However, when analysing the marketing strategies of the MNB the relation this facility has to wellness tourism can only be tentatively established. Under the general terms of rest and relaxation, the MNB advertises that one should come there to relax and soak in the hot water in beautiful surroundings, an escape from it all in that sense. Thus, on the most general level, what the MNB seems to provide is a needed ballast for other service offerings in the region. This has led to the expansion of existing ones and increasing interest in developing new service offerings, amongst these is the interest for wellness tourism. Centred on the MBC, using the MNB as a central attraction, formal wellness service offerings are being established and various informal spin-offs and ideas are germinating in the adjacent village and the rural area around the lake. These are detailed in table 10 below.

Table 10: Service offerings developing around the Mývatn Nature Baths (MNB) 2009-2010.

With MBC	Description	No formal relation to MBC	Description
Detox	Two weeks treatments in the off-season at hotel Reynihlíð (see: www.detox.is).	Health care and treatments	The local medical establishment is willing to develop a health-care and treatment centre at MNB
Short breaks at Hotel Reynihlíð	Rest and relaxation breaks with local food and slow living in the hotel (see: www.hotelreynihlid.is).	Yoga centre	Two local entrepreneurs are working towards opening a holistic centre, focusing on Yoga and spirituality.
		Spa hotel development	A local entrepreneur wants to diversify the uses of hot water and develop a spa retreat.
		Magma Essentials	Massage and Rope/Hatha Yoga centre (see: magmaessentials.com)

Generally speaking the focus is on the Nature Baths as “all tourism here by now has as its beginning or end the Mývatn Nature Baths” (a Mývatn tourism entrepreneur). The list in table 10 demonstrates an interest and will amongst locals to establish wellness related service offerings in the area centred on or using similar concepts as the MNB. But to this development there is another facet.

As opposed to the focus on medical tourism to be found in official policy documents the entrepreneurs at Lake Mývatn state that, “in order to increase wellness and wellbeing we do not need to be highly scientific”. Here the chairman of the MBC and hotel manager of Reynihlíð indicates the foundation to his experiments with various short break packages especially focused on the shoulder and winter season. The most prominent of these, and one which has been instrumental in building Mývatn’s reputation as a wellness destination, were the Detox treatments offered in collaboration with a Reykjavík based company. Through involvement with this company the hotel manager gained benchmarks for his service offerings through the spa resorts of Poland

and the Baltic states, but the Detox company collaborates with some of these, offering Icelanders trips abroad. The Detox treatment has been discontinued at hotel Reynihlíð, but a valuable lesson was learned in terms of marketing and promotion. These developments are directly related to the MNB (see table 10) with the key entrepreneur central to both.

More alternative treatments are becoming established in the region (table 10), but again centred on or spinning off from the success of the MNB. Starting within the MNB, offering massage to the customers, Magma Essentials are now operating independently, offering holistic treatments ranging from simple massage, to yoga, yoga dance and emotion freedom technique (EFT). Ideas for a holistic centre, Yoga retreat and a spa hotel have also been floated in the region – all in one way or another drawing on the establishment and success of the MNB.

The MNB has no formal service quality management strategy for the general tourist. To them it is mainly managing the massive influx of people during the summer months. When it comes to the locals on the other hand, they are offered better prices through frequent visit entry tickets and the fact that the facility is open all year round and into the evening. Much as tourism in the region, human resource development suffers from the pronounced seasonality. The staff turn-over rate is quite high, with summer staff mainly comprised of school pupils (aged 16-20) coming once or at best twice. There are no specific plans for environmental management. The proponents of wellbeing tourism in the region all cite nature as the fundamental asset, but at current the municipality and locals strife more for the building of service facilities and infrastructure rather than nature-protection.

What could enhance wellness strategies in the region and the development of service quality procedures for these is the perception of visitors and what they deem of importance for the destination to become a wellbeing destination. Visitors in the 2010 customer survey were asked to “rate the importance of following elements of wellbeing tourism product for your tourist experience”. Figure 9 below shows what they see as important. The figure shows the mean rating on a scale from 1-7.

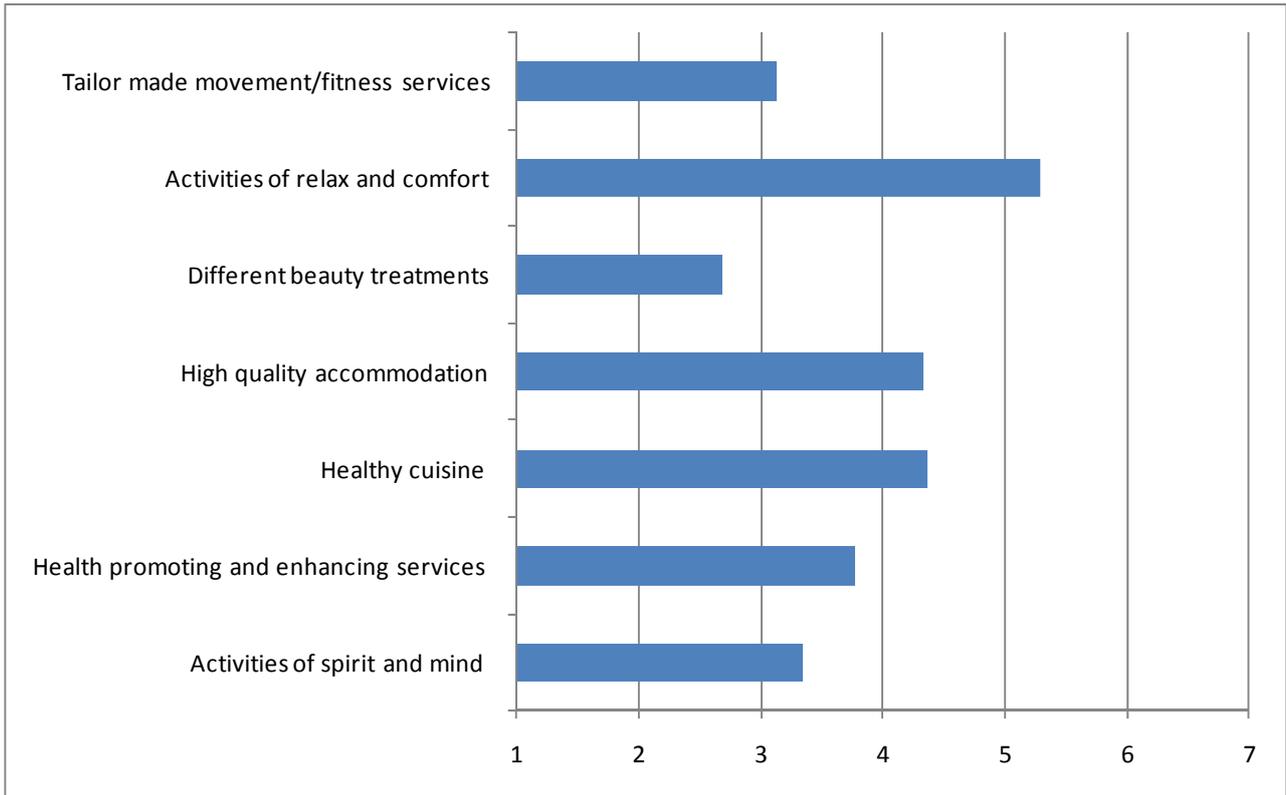


Figure 9: The important elements of wellbeing products for tourist experience, scale 1-7.

What is important to customers already in the areas is rest and relaxation, with food and accommodation seemingly able to cater for people’s perception of health and wellness, but presumably under the terms of rest and relaxation. High quality accommodation and health promoting and enhancing services also play a role in peoples’ minds.

This perception of the visitors already in place can be seen from their purchases and in the customer survey people were asked if they had purchased any products or services to improve their health. Just under 40% of the respondents had done so and mostly (44%) considered their ticket to the Mývatn Nature Baths as representing such a purchase. Other items mentioned were creams, oils and cosmetics (33%) and then food from the area or healthy food (15%). When asked to rate the quality of the purchase 56% said it was good, 29,4% said excellent, and the rest mostly did not know as they said they had not tried it yet.

Tourism destination environments

The dynamics of tourism arrivals to the Mývatn Nature Baths and the Mývatn region has been shown in table 6 above. This growth in numbers is in tandem with the growth of tourist arrivals to Iceland in general, but in 2004; 360.392 people arrived, whilst in 2008, these numbered 502.000. These visitors almost unanimously cite nature as being their main reason to come (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2009), and the Mývatn region is surely a recognised part of Icelandic nature with its plethora of geological attractions, vivid bird-life and rural idyll. During this same period Iceland was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom, resulting in a seriously over-valued currency and a gold-rush like investment climate. This led to supply conditions of heavy competition and with entry barriers being traditionally low to the industry, new offers and ideas for new products abound. On the flip side the demand conditions were characterised by international tourists to Iceland being price wary, but had a wide selection of supply in a competitive environment. Domestic tourists mostly preferred to go abroad and marketing was thus not geared to the home base, at least not during the high-season.

To further intra industry dynamics in the region, with focus on those involved in the building up of wellness tourism around Lake Mývatn table 11 below, details the key emergent themes in the interviews undertaken. In the left hand column there are direct quotes from interviews that capture an ongoing concern of those involved and are explicated in the left column. Below the relevance of these themes to wellness development around Lake Mývatn is outlined.

Table 11: Themes emerging as motivations and driving forces of tourism entrepreneurs and stakeholders around Lake Mývatn.

Quote	Emergent theme
“It is work” (an informant from the medical establishment)	The total population around Lake Mývatn is just under 400, which means that if an idea is to be put into practice it involves devotion and immense amount of sacrifice on behalf of the one that wants to put the idea in motion.
“We have no idea what they are doing now” (a local tourism entrepreneur)	The concern is that although MNB provides a ballast to service offering locals are becoming disengaged from MNB, as it becomes simply a business providing bathing services for those visiting the region. There is lack of communication and spin-off services develop independently.
“Everything that has to do with ‘slow lifestyle’ [<i>verbatim</i>] we can do really well here” (MBC chairman)	They key point of emphasis was on the presence of basic business infrastructure and services in an area isolated and far removed from bigger settlements. The wellness focus is on getting away from the everyday and offering that retreat.
“location plays the ultimate role” (municipal spokesperson)	The isolation is to offer you an escape from your everyday, with limited options of ‘escape’ from the rest and relaxation you are to get and therein lies the attainment of wellness.
“there is no space for these activities” (an informant from the medical establishment)	Here it is pointed out that none of the service infrastructure has been built for the purposes of wellness or to serve people visiting for those purposes.
“People do not come for mediocre, shabby, it wants a nice environment, quietness and <i>luxury</i> , that is just the way it is” (MBC chairman)	The services on offer in terms of wellness are merely focused on providing basic service needs and do not cater to more complex consumption practices or aiming for market segmentation.

Tying together the first two quotes the wellness component of the MNB seems to be disintegrating as it becomes a recreation business meaning that other developments led by other locals will become independent of the MNB. This will result in a less centralised service offering, with a lack of vision and marketing strategy of the region as a wellness destination. Although some individuals might have the vision no single operator is able to pull that off on their own, so there is

desperate need for co-operation and the setting out of a strategic vision. What the following two quotes indicate is a lack of engagement with the terms of wellness tourism and again a lack of vision. For tourism entrepreneurs in the region it is about the location and the fact that in a nature location like the Mývatn region you can have services that really have more to do with pampering than wellness *per se*. The last two quotes show clearly the lack of a strategic vision and substantiated engagement with notions of wellness and what aspirations thereto entail. There is no shortage of ideas, but the combination of those into a coherent package that is geared towards a vision of wellness and viable business practices, perchance in collaboration with the local medical establishment is lacking. The tourism development in the region seems to be lagging behind as visitation increases, but then again the pronounced seasonality the region suffers from needs to be borne in mind, but this should be aimed at correcting this.

What should be mentioned in this context is the other active player apart from tourist entrepreneurs in developing wellness and that is the medical establishment. Their ideas of a treatment centre in relations to the MNB are not coming to fruition. Nonetheless in terms of medical or health-care tourism what seems to be occurring in terms of successful build up are health care and preventive initiatives in collaboration with NGOs. In this respect the health care clinic in the region has been instrumental in planning walking and running events to benefit charities, but also raise awareness and help those participating. The draw to have these in the Mývatn region is going to the place, the role of the location, and the fact that these events end in the MNB.

In this sense it can be said that the community is being involved in the building of the Mývatn region as a wellness destination. The formal activities of the medical establishment in terms of hosting a nationally advertised Walkathon (Göngum Saman), the Mývatn Marathon, along with hosting the Smoker's hotline for Iceland – helping people who want to quit, all indicate community awareness.

Summary

The Mývatn region in NE Iceland is a well known destination in the country, predominantly for its nature and geology. The municipality of Skútustaður covers most of the area under consideration and has just under 400 inhabitants. This population scarcity sets the terms of most tourism development challenges and product development efforts.

In sum, all interviewees cited above agreed that nature was a key component in wellness to be derived from the Mývatn region. The customer survey cited above demonstrates visitor's awareness of the power of nature and from the Delphi study indications to that extent could also be gleaned. This leads on to postulations about how nature-based tourism, the by far most prominent form of tourism in Iceland, can be translated into health and wellness products.

Wellness as nature-based tourism asset

When it comes to tourism and health and wellness we know in general;

The therapeutic effects of being removed from daily routine and stress and changing one's place and pace are intuitively logical. A vacation affords opportunities for rejuvenation and refreshment so that we can return to our lives equipped with the energy to deal with whatever comes our way (Sönmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009: 37-38)

The recharging allowed us by a holiday has been well known at least in Europe, to the extent that governments will support people in being able to holiday, recognising the opportunities afforded by tourism to "social and personal growth" (McCabe, 2009: 668, see also Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). The importance lies in changing one's place and to many that entails getting away from urban areas and to what is perceived as nature or the natural. In health and wellness tourism the natural setting is thus fundamental to the products developed as Smith and Puczko (2009) demonstrate:

[n]ature plays a significant role in health and wellness in many countries, especially those which have a sea coast and can offer products like thalassotherapy (common in Europe). Mountains are another feature which have always attracted health visitors, especially the Alps in Europe. Jungles and national parks (e.g. in Central and South America, Africa) make ideal locations for adventure and ecospas, which is a growing trend. To a lesser (but increasing extent) deserts (e.g. in the Middle East or North Africa) are being used as locations for yoga and meditation holidays ... (p. 252).

With focus on the setting, nature's plenitude and people's sensibilities there is potential to explore the geographies of wellness with a special focus on "the sensorial experience of places and the therapeutic virtues of the landscape are studied" (Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007: 107). Apart from MNB and its abundant geothermal resources, the Mývatn region also offers vast tracks of land void of signs of human habitation, or what has been termed wilderness (Cronon, 1996). With most people coming to Iceland to experience nature (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2009a) nature-based tourism is the primary form of tourism in Iceland. A combination of health and wellness through the geothermal and wilderness experience, is here claimed to allow for the development of a specific nature-based tourism product, hitherto undeveloped. The tentative outlines of this product emerged from the research, when people explicated the role of nature in people's experience of and opinion about health and wellness tourism destination development (see: figure 7 and table 9). Stakeholders, interested parties and the visitors themselves drew my attention to how passive nature-based tourism consumption focusing on viewing wilderness, what I here term

agoraphilia, could be formulated in product development for health and wellness tourism in Iceland.

The point of departure and context for the following discussion is the way in which the natural environment has a role to play in tourism as both the motivation for travel and the setting in which tourism activities takes place. The most common term used in tourism for this is nature-based tourism (NBT) and it is undoubtedly an important component of world-wide tourism (Luo & Deng, 2008). Basically, nature-based tourism is threefold. It includes tourism in natural settings, tourism focusing on elements of the natural environment and tourism developed to conserve or protect natural environments (Hall & Boyd, 2005: 3; see also Buckley, Weaver & Pickering, 2008). The combination of nature and tourism in nature-based tourism allows for nature to be defined in relative, often perceptive terms and in terms of accessibility and infrastructure.

Growing public interest and concern with nature and the environment is the prime driving force of NBT development. The clearest manifestation of NBT is in the growing number and extent of protected areas and national parks worldwide throughout the 20th Century (see: Eagles & McCool, 2000: 21). The value of nature and the environment for tourism is defined through perceived use values and non-use values. The latter has two facets, the existence value and bequest value, i.e. its value in simply being there and the value it might hold to the future. The former is more multifaceted and involves direct, indirect and optional values. The direct values entail uses of nature by those who come, visit and experience, the indirect values lie in more passive uses such as taking pictures and enjoying scenery without making direct uses of the nature being viewed and lastly there is always the value of nature that lies in the option to use it another time.

Obviously outdoor activity entailing physical exercise, such as hiking or mountain climbing, allows nature to become the setting for a brand of health and wellness tourism. These entail direct uses of nature. But health and wellness is about more than simply staying fit (Dunn, 1957, see: Miller, 2005). Health and wellness is about self-development and the reconciliation of body, mind and spirit, keeping these three in perpetual balance as stated above (see: Bushell & Sheldon, 2009 and Smith & Kelly, 2006: 1).

In maintaining this balance, the importance of getting away from the everyday is by many considered integral to the wellbeing of people in the Western world (Cohen & Taylor, 1992). More fundamentally getting to what is perceived as authentic nature – or nature the way God intended it – is part and parcel thereof (Cronon, 1996). Thus exploring “the sensorial experience of places and the therapeutic virtues of the landscape” (Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007: 107) should allow for an understanding of how people could improve health and wellness from indirect uses of nature. In tourism examples abound with experience travel where one is to gain touch with one’s authentic self via authentic nature. New age travel of all sorts (see: Pernecky & Johnston, 2006) and visits to sacred places of either healing potential or special energy abound (see: Sylge, 2007; Timothy & Olsen, 2006). These are places with perceived value for people’s health and wellness and more often than not involve nature and the environment.

Experiencing wilderness landscapes thus emerges as a key component in wellness (see: Kearns & Gesler, 1998). On a more general level the theorising of place and space as components in health and healing can be framed under medical geographies, drawing forth the healing property of places and how to understand it. A more particular manifestation thereof is the idea of therapeutic landscapes (Smyth, 2005).

Therapeutic landscapes

The concept of therapeutic landscapes draws on the re-emergence of humanistic geographies in the 1970s and post 1990s theorising in cultural geography. The most cited pioneer of the term is Gesler (1992, 1993) but he understood therapeutic landscapes to be;

... changing places, settings, situations, locales, and milieus that encompass both the physical and psychological environments associated with treatment or healing; they are reputed to have an ‘enduring reputation for achieving physical, mental, and spiritual healing’ (Williams, 1998: 1193, quoting Gesler, 1993: 171).

Williams (1998) adds to the outline of the concept and argues for “landscapes [to be] understood herein as not only healing places, but those landscapes associated with the maintenance of health and well-being” (p. 1195, see also Smyth, 2005). This is furthered still by Williams (2010) stating;

the therapeutic landscape concept provides a fitting framework into which this challenging research direction can move in order to better elucidate the relationship between spiritual practices/activities, landscapes/places and health, broadly defined p. 1633).

With the social and mental aspects of health and wellness in mind the framework of therapeutic landscapes “today can similarly be seen to reflect the values of our societies” (Smyth, 2005: 491).

This underpins the role of the social in understanding landscapes and the ways in which;

Landscape is, after all, perhaps the only geographical metaphor able to refer to both an object and its description; to recall, at once, a tract of land and its image, its representation (Minca, 2007: 433).

Table 12 below provides a typology of concepts and health applications where landscapes are the focus. The table builds on the work of Gesler and presents concepts used in humanistic geographies and ties these to the practices of health and wellness under the terms of holistic medicine (see table 12 below).

Table 12: Landscapes and holistic medicine.

Source: Adapted from Williams, 1998: 1195

Humanistic geography concept	Health application	Association with holistic medicine
Symbolic landscapes	Medical semiotics	Basic element in therapy
Importance of meaning, value and experience	Medical beliefs	Incorporation of individual and/or cultural belief systems
Sense of place	Physiological rootedness	Belief that environment holds meaning, significance, and felt value
Authenticity of landscapes	Caring environments	Formation of environments through human networks of care Imagery used in accessing healing environments
Landscapes of the mind	Fields of care	
Landscapes as text	Tapping into the sensory experience	Interpretation of health conditions

The typology in table 12 can be read in tandem with table 4 with focus on its latter half. Landscapes are here seen as part and parcel in wellness and health. They are seen in relative and perceptive terms, drawing forth the environmental, social and symbolic dimension of therapeutic landscapes. People’s engagement with them is to guide them in finding life and work balance, psychological rest and spiritual fulfilment. Typical activities involve life coaching, stress management and guidance for everyday living in alternative ways in centres or retreats. These are most often in beautiful natural surroundings and/or places with perceived unique values (Smith &

Puckzó, 2009). When it comes to health and wellness it does not have to revolve only around places with an 'enduring reputation for achieving physical, mental, and spiritual healing'. Willis (2009: 87) states that the notion of therapeutic landscapes is limited by this:

First, that therapeutic landscape research tends to focus on exceptional places while ignoring the ordinary places most of us spend most of our time in. And, second, that there is an overt or covert assumption that there are inherent attributes of places that make them therapeutic.

Following this critique perhaps one does not have to be in a specific place to experience health and wellness. Fleuret & Atkinson (2007: 115) argue that:

... a geographical gaze can explore the central issues of the spaces and places in which wellbeing is produced, and the nature of the different scales, processes and interactions involved.

Indeed an appreciation of the scenic is important (see Benediktsson, 2007; 2008). The visual experience of landscape is thus meaningful even going so far as to state that the mere glancing at it as the tourist body is moved through the landscape involves a sensuous experience (Larsen, 2001) of potential benefit to health and general wellbeing (Parsons, Tassinary, Ulrich, Hebl & Grossman-Alexander, 1998).

So simply by gazing at vast tracks of land can be good for you, but although seemingly passive, this entails an interaction, a certain experiencing with resonance with our ideas of the world and the ways in which a landscape can "recall, at once, a tract of land and its image" (Minca, 2007: 433). "The experience of space and place molds human ideas" and this is why nature and the environment "is of special importance in discussing therapeutic landscapes in the practice of holistic medicine" (Williams, 1998: 1199, drawing on Cosgrove, 1978). People clearly experience scenic landscapes in vastly different terms and thus it is necessary "to consider a person's interaction with that landscape" (Conradson, 2005: 338). Conradson (2005) proposes a three-tiered imbricate focus on wellness to understand this interaction. First a focus on the whole person, then on embodied encounters and lastly the socio-natural relations of each person.

Being well with nature

Conradson's (2005) considerations above touch upon very complex issues open to endless theoretical ruminations. Here I want to contextualise these in terms of tourism and geographic literature, revolving around our creative involvement in the world and how a person can possibly be understood as being one with nature.

What clearly underpins current notions of therapeutic landscapes is a relative understanding of space, seeing the person as part and parcel of the landscapes in which we see ourselves. Elden (2004: 44) summarises:

There is not the material production of objects and the mental production of ideas. Instead, our mental interaction with the world, our ordering, generalizing, abstracting, and so on produces the world that we encounter, as much as the physical objects we create. This does not simply mean that we produce reality, but that we produce how we perceive reality.

Indeed simultaneous production and perception of reality is reflected in the social constitution of therapeutic landscapes and thus a person's socio-natural relations, as has been dealt with somewhat above in terms of driving forces of demand, but there is more here. This is not about place as social construction but about the "place" in which social construction might happen. What myself and Gren have called earthly tourism (see: Gren and Huijbens, 2009 and forthcoming) aims to understand what Latour (2004 and 2005) describes as:

multiple associations of humans and nonhumans waiting for their unity to be proved by work carried out by the collective, which has to be specified through the use of the resources, concepts, and institutions of all peoples who may be called upon to live in common on an earth that might become, through a long work of collecting, the same earth for all (Latour, 2004: 46).

The gazing at wilderness landscapes to become one with nature for the benefit of one's health and wellness can possibly allow for people to become "Earthlings" in the sense Latour (2007: 8) describes:

Who are you really, Earthlings, to believe that you are the ones adding relations by the sheer symbolic order of your mind, by the projective power of your brain, by the sheer intensity of your social schemes, to a world entirely devoid of meaning, of relations, of connections?! Where have you lived until now? Oh I know, you have lived on this strange modernist utterly archaic globe; and suddenly (under crisis) you realize that all along you have been inhabiting the Earth (Latour, 2007: 8)

Becoming one with the Earth is for Latour allowed for under the terms of crisis which for him entail the environmental issues of global warming and climate change. But the above quotations hint at a more fundamental conception of man's being with nature. They can roughly be framed as

post-positivist humanistic thought drawing on phenomenology in the widest sense and have in common seeing space as being constituted through the relations produced by the interaction of entities (Crang and Thrift, 2000; Peet, 1998). It is through these entities constituting relations through interaction, that space is created and thus a focus on how these entities interact heeds the warning of Massey (2005) that any pursuit of an autonomous sphere of nature and the environment that would explain relations, processes and distributions in space is flawed from the very start. There is thus a need to "...confront these volatile exteriorizations [of nature] as places of our own making, configured in relation to the interiorized sites of knowledge, imagination and desire" (Whatmore, 2002: 13, quoting Foucault, 1973 and 1986).

Above the focus was placed on the seemingly passive gazing at landscapes, but in order to realise its healing potential nature's plenitude including us must be allowed for. Whatmore (2002) above proposes we confront nature as configured in relation to ourselves but not to arrive at an end state or defined way of being to e.g. realise health and wellness, but in the words of Leibniz, as summarised by Law (2004: 22), allowing for the disclosure of a world within worlds, or ponds within ponds and gardens within gardens. Thus space becomes disclosive much like Malpas (1999: 170-171) explains:

Places always open up to disclose other places within them (within the place that is a garden or a house, a town or a countryside, there are places for different activities, for different things, for different moods, for different people), while from within any particular place one can always look outwards to find oneself within some much larger expanse (as one can look from the room in which one sits to the house in which one lives.

When experiencing nature through what at first might seem as passive gazing might therefore entail a realisation of nature's plenitude; its infinite multiplicity but yet wholeness. The Icelandic philosopher Páll Skúlason describes this when he experienced at well-known destination in the Icelandic highland interior.

When I came to Askja I entered an independent world, Askja world, one clearly demarcated whole spanning all and filling the mind to the extent one feels like having sensed all that is real in both past, present and future. Beyond the horizon is the unknown eternal, the great, silent void. When you know such a world one has reached the end of the road. Having touched reality itself. The mind opens to perfect beauty and one sees finally what life is about. - Sometimes I play with a rock I received from the lake at Askja. It reminds me of this connection with reality, this touch, this whole that is Askja itself, spanning all that is, was, and can be. Or almost (Skúlason, 2005: 5-7).

In a similar way Woodford (2009: 23) describes her experience of nature, watching the aurora borealis whilst travelling in N. Norway;

Breathtaking and beautiful the vivid tongues of blue-green light traversed the night sky, their numinous presence a manifestation of the mysterious and mystical. In those icebound places I felt the absolute essence of nature laid bare.

This feeling of reconnection and realisation of nature's plenitude has the potential to transform people's lives. As Conradson (2005: 340) notes:

Humans have the capacity to psychically internalise their experiences, in a sense folding particular events into their selves, so that even short-lived relational encounters may resonate and have effects beyond their immediate occurrence.

Steiner & Reisinger (2006) sum the above concerns with reference to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger drawing on his notion of the fourfold; or how the Earth, Sky, Divinity and Mortals fold in the moment of perception revealing wholeness and authenticity to our existence (see also Malpas, 2007). Space and place are thus part and parcel of the constitution of therapeutic landscapes, we are at one with that landscape, thus:

Taking seriously [these] post-positivist assumptions about relational selves, healing must of necessity extend beyond individual psyches and biologies. Embedded individuals cannot heal in isolation but must instead transform in and through relationships to and within a range of places (Willis, 2009: 86-87).

Our embodied encounters with spaces need to be allowed for as they can conducive to wellbeing. Thus aiming at developing tourism products focused around health and wellness might use this as a point of departure. What is proposed here in grasping the restorative effects of extensive views (see: Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989 and Kaplan, 1995) is that the concept *agoraphilia*, be used to describe the specific experiences had when gazing at vast tracks of land seemingly void of human habitation. The term can be traced to Glauben (1955), who described it as the need to conquer a petrified Mother Nature (p. 703). He drew on the tradition of psychoanalysis and to him this conquest entailed the rebirth of the individual. But in the above context the term as proposed here entails more than love or conquest of wide open spaces. Carter (2002: 180) describes agoraphilia as "a desire of *other* other places" which ties with the disclosive properties of relational space as explained above. The desire of *other* other places propels a constant state of transformation and the search for places one can connect to and lend meaning.

Branding places

The concluding points from above draw forth the notion of *agoraphilia*, conceptualising the healing powers of landscape gazing and capturing man's relation with nature when doing what most tourists do best: Watch the vista offered. What is proposed below is that this term can be a component of branding health and wellness destinations that base their attractions and claims to wellness on nature and natural resources. How this might be translated into strategies for destinations will now be fleshed out.

Images and branding

In tourism a destination's image is well known to be fundamental to destination choice (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Jenkins, 1999). That is, the images, perceptions, feelings and beliefs that tourists hold of particular places is a significant influence on the destinations they choose to visit. Moreover, those images may be verified, enhanced or modified (positively or negatively) by the experience of the destination, thus impacting upon future travel decisions (Chon, 1992). In this context and drawing on Hankinson (2004) an image can be defined as that which people perceive whilst a brand is that which is being communicated by someone. Kapferer (2004) outlines a relationship between brands and images in three parts. First, is the sender who conveys brand identity, along with other sources of inspiration, as a signal. These signals are messages transmitted to a receiver, who is the third party, and develops the brand image. An image is always in the eye of the beholder, but branding or brand management aims to encompass both ends, the eye of the beholder and the producer of the image. Between both ends there needs to be congruence. Image thus appears as a promotional asset in brand management and branding is about the management of images amongst other things, just as branding is created through image.

Place branding is a much debated issue in tourism research, and there is often reference to destinations which (from the look of it) have succeeded in constructing memorable, catching and positive *clichés* which capture their most important features (the general nation branding exercise of Iceland has been documented and critiqued by Huijbens, 2010). Distinguishing a region efficiently and positively from competing regions is the aim, and identifying the unique branding

proposition is central to the development of place brands (Kolb, 2006). This is not a simple process. Along with being complex and multifaceted in their own right as places (Huijbens, 2010), all destinations are a composite of tourism products (Morgan and Prichard, 2002). When narrowing the destination focus to e.g. a spa, natural vista or physical exercise, a single place normally consists of accommodation, transportation, catering, treatments and natural endowments under different jurisdiction. It is very important to acknowledge that destination marketers do not have any significant control over the supplies and that:

A tourist destination (e.g. city, region or site) is at present often no longer seen as a set of distinct natural, cultural, artistic or environmental resources, but as an overall appealing product available in a certain area: a complex and integrated portfolio of services offered by a destination that supplies a holiday experience which meets the needs of the tourist. A tourist destination thus produces a compound package of tourist services based on its indigenous supply potential (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008: 336).

The lack of centralized and absolute power constitutes the main difference between a manufactured product, e.g. soft drinks or fashion items, and tourism destinations (Blichfeldt, 2005). In addition, the promotion and marketing which takes place under a joint umbrella, often only accounts for a small fragment of the funds spent by companies individually on marketing. Many firms are linked up to collaborative structures without a distinctive place identity such as chain hotels. The motivation for those firms to support alternative images and destination features might be limited, if this blurs a corporate identity.

In spite of the obvious difficulties, destinations managers are tirelessly looking for workable methods, and the effort is a matter of intense scholarly inquiry. A crucial issue in this process is the scrutinizing of the identity of a place, as first step (Therkelsen & Halkier, 2008). What are the distinctive characteristics of the place, its people and its history (Yeoman, Durie, McMahon-Beattie, & Palmer, 2005)? Pronouncements of the identity can take place through collaborative processes with many stakeholders in the region, with filtering and assessment procedures of various sophistications. The interviews documented above and done with stakeholders in the Mývatn region were aimed gauging these distinctive characteristics. They might be termed an “inside-out” process and may be beneficial in terms of the consolidation of internal collaborative structures, but it does nevertheless receive substantial criticism. Self-perceived positive features and identities are not necessarily appealing to the tourist. Or in other words – what is good for the locals is not necessarily, what tourists are looking for. Anholt (2007) mentions for example the

laboriousness of the Germans which without any doubt benefits the country, but it tends to translate into an image of boredom and coldness *vis-à-vis* the tourists.

Accordingly, crafting the identity requires an “outside-in” component. There must be an identified emotional link between the product and the consumer (Hosany, Ekinici & Uysal, 2006). What the local providers find important to communicate will have to match consumers’ wishes and lifestyles at least to such an extent that it will arouse attention and curiosity, and of course an inclination to purchase. However, consumers are not always aware of their inner motivations. For example, before the Ice hotels, no one was conscious about his or her “need” to sleep in a room with temperature below zero. In practice, the mapping of consumers’ emotional structures and demands takes place through surveys, interviews, focus groups and other social science methods. The customer survey undertaken and report on above was aimed at eliciting peoples’ perception of the Mývatn region’s tourism assets.

Dealing with the paradox of the inside-out and outside-in approaches is delicate in its own respect. However, enhancing a brand might also include benchmarking against competing regions (Lennon, Cockerell & Trew, 2006). Compiling arguments about being superior in some respect can be a supplementary selling argument, although often not well-documented in communication. “Warmer”, “healthier”, more spectacular” are typical arguments, but the places compared with go without saying. A benchmarking trip was organized under the terms of the NICe funded project, but sadly had to be cancelled (see Appendix II).

The pronouncement of existing features of identity is one level of action. Inventing regionally based niche tourism products and ensuring a subsequent positive image is a completely different and usually much more intricate exercise. There is considerable plea for the innovation and expansion of tourism products in the literature as a measure to ensure competitiveness, economic sustainability and consumer attention (Hjalager, Huijbens, Flagestad, Björk & Nordin, 2008). Niche tourism is often mentioned as a strand of development for remote areas, as the needs and interests of the locals and the tourists coincide. For example, Liburd and Derkzen (2009) suggest that contemporary art may positively influence the quality of life of participants, residents and

visitors alike, thus ensuring an emotional and intentional unity of the brand value of all users. Less confidently; Brown, Chalip, Jago & Mules (2002) address the limitation of events as platforms for niche branding by pointing to the fact that it takes a long time and continued policy attention for an destination to become associated positively with an event to such an extent that an equity value is created (Pike, 2010).

The literature is very limited when it comes to the branding of destinations with an emphasis on wellness, wellbeing and health. Smith and Puczkó (2009) investigate the occurrence of spa associations and their slogans. There are various partnerships constructed to enforce joint marketing and development. Smith and Puczkó refer to the professionally organized “Alpine Wellness International (AWI)”. AWI operates in the Alpine region in Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Italy, characterized by the involvement of a range of business partners across spa tourism providers, manufacturer, educational institutions, media and related tourism stakeholders. AWI also works with quality concepts and coordinated marketing, targeted towards well-defined customer groups. Thus, the products are branded as “Alpine Relaxing”, “Alpine Fitness”, “Alpine Health” and “Alpine Character”. Case studies in Smith and Puczkó (2009) demonstrate how destinations increasingly specialize in specific wellness segments, although there is not much evidence of whether this development takes place as supplement or a substitute to other categories of tourism (Sheldon & Park, 2009). The relationship with the lived values that the destinations represent tends to be underreported. As interesting examples, Gerritsma (2009) investigates how tourism activity grew out of the strong Dutch yoga community, and Smyth (2005) talks about therapeutic places, spaces and networks.

This brief literature review demonstrates that there is still much to be achieved in terms of understanding the determinants and developments of successful wellness, wellbeing and health destinations and how their brand values are enhanced and exploited. Small scale, remote locations and high costs are particular challenges in a Nordic context, especially for a region as remote as NE Iceland.

Strategy, substance, structure and symbolic action – an analytic framework

What does it require to invent and to place-brand a wellbeing tourism region? Is it altogether possible to develop a comprehensive reputation based only on a collection of small and larger service providers? Can a region's fairly diverse composite tourism offer become unified into a wellbeing profile?

To help in the analysis of the nature of place branding, and in order to look at the process that brings a region closer to a brand stage Anholt's (2005) model provides a foundation. Anholt introduces three s'es: Strategy, Substance and Symbolic action. According to Anholt the establishment process, the specific nature and the success of place brand is extremely complex. Communication does not make it alone, even in the format of large and expensive campaigns. According to Anholt, brands are to be deserved, not marketed. The mere existence of a wellness product, no matter the quality, will not constitute a brand. This is even more so, as these days nearly all hotels and destination claim to have wellness resources. Anholt's model outlines the preconditions for the emergence of a favourable reputation. Thus, the approach can also be considered as guidelines for regions working on the invention of a wellbeing concept. In order to ensure a comprehensive discussion in terms of tourism it is necessary to add an S: structure. Anholt does address the issue of structure, but he tends to include it in the idea of substance. Below an outline of the four s'es is provided.

Strategy

Strategy is, simply speaking, about knowing where to go and how and when to go there. In a regional setting with numerous individual actors, it is not simple to reconcile all business needs and desires and lead actors into a single direction. Setting understandable and acceptable goals is a first requirement, but also an ongoing process of adjustment. Tactics include the establishment of motivational mechanisms and suitable incentives. Even in the (rare) situation where considerable consensus is reached there will be contesting forces; individuals or organizations who ask what is in it for them. They might question the consensus or break the rules in order to get exclusive attention, or to demonstrate power. The control over the goals set belongs to actors who acquire and maintain influence in the process of planning. It is possible that this can result in

a top-down, policy-led action (Svensson, Nordin & Flagestad, 2005). The process of destination brand creation might, however, alternatively emerge bottom-up. In this case, strategic influence belongs to those who choose to be around and volunteer to set the agenda and work for it. In this perspective the collaborators who invest time and energy in the process are also likely to gain some hold over more comprehensive development (Faulkner & Russell, 2003).

Substance

Substance is the material and immaterial products, services and images that are basic features for a branding effort. In the case of tourism branding, substance is comprised of core tourism facilities such as accommodation, transportation infrastructures, natural endowments and attractions. In terms of wellness and wellbeing hot springs and other geological phenomena range as important substances, together with for example healthy, homegrown and healing food products. However, substance should be seen in a wider perspective to become special and valuable *vis-à-vis* the customers. Substance is also the spirits and mindsets of the population that are so important in determining the qualities of the products and services available in the place. In addition, cohesive policies and investments in the society, for example with the aim of modernizing, facilitating innovativeness and a favourable business climate, constitute a foundation for a reputation. Substance is not a single element, but rather the amalgamated pieces that constitute a successful and well managed locality.

Structure

Structure does not stand alone either. Structures include legal and institutional infrastructures that regulate the behaviour of many competing actors that constitute the tourism product (Vail & Heldt, 2000). Structures are established to limit some non-beneficial categories of self-interest and to ensure a balancing of power, for example through economic redistribution and reallocation. Structures are of importance for the efficiency of any society, and a driving force for development in its own right. Not only governments form and maintain structures. Private organizations, institutions, associations and voluntary bodies are channels for legitimate expression of interests and task performance. In spite of the fact that receivers of branding messages seldom envisage so, structures are crucial, not only for the efficient promotion of the message, but also for the

continuous construction of the substance that is promoted. Sometimes the structures are even the core of the branding messages, as for example the “*Allemansrätten*” in the Nordic countries, entailing the public’s right of access to common lands.

Symbolic actions

Symbolic actions are by Anholt (2005) defined as a particular species of substance or structure that happen to have an intrinsic communicative power, something “suggestive, remarkable, memorable, picturesque, newsworthy, topical, poetic, touching, surprising or dramatic.”(p. 3). Often in place and nation brands, the symbols are enacted in memorable one-liner slogans or in logos. Ensuring a durable image with this form of symbolic action requires not only an ability to find the quintessence of myriads of messages, but also a strong organization to execute it (Pike, 2004). Slogans may be controversial, such as the tourism slogan “Slow down in Slovenia”, which was not at all how Slovenian entrepreneurs would like to see the country. Symbolic action is, however, something far more intrinsic and related to the picture of a country or a region that the media is addressing and circulating, without the full control of actors in the nation or region. Governments may enhance a positive image of a country through deliberate and targeted work with innovations, structures, legislations, reforms, investments or institutions. As an example Sweden is well recognized as a place with a distinct work-life-balance culture. Finland is recognized as a country with advanced environmental policies, and that translates positively into an image. Iceland is known for its wilderness area and “untamed nature”, confirmed by the recent eruptions in Eyjafjallajökull in spring 2010 (see: Benediktsson, Lund & Huijbens, 2011). Well-communicated events, as for example sport events and political summits, are platforms for symbolic action where wider messages can be broadcasted. The Climate Summit in Denmark provided some excellent opportunities to forward the green agenda, although the disappointing results tended to trim down the effects as symbols for the image of the country (Ooi, 2010).

Emerging from the above is the necessity of all stakeholders in a particular region to collaborate, be it through policy led, top-down, initiatives or bottom-up voluntary and grass root mobilization. A reasonable approach is to expect tourism stakeholders in a particular region to collaborate and thus in effect be partners in the promotion of a regional identity, albeit each with their own

specific marketing niche. This, the branding literature would term co-branding and elaborates on the many dimensions of how to achieve this. Aaker (1996) demonstrates that the companies in collaboration must have a deep understanding of their customers' motivations in order to create and enhance the loyalty for more products in a co-branding group. Furthermore, the quality levels must be comparable, and the product character stable and unshakeable, as a compromise there will harm the collaborating partners. In the cases of successful co-branding, a mutual respect and trust has been built up over time. Suppliers are likely to be more willing to launch into risky partnerships if they have the prospects of lasting contracts that guarantee a return from their innovation and other investments (Crotts, Aziz & Rashid, 1998).

According to Lee and Decker (2008) there are three distinguishable effects of co-branding:

- Mutual effects which occur if there is a high degree of product fit, where the two products are interlinked.
- Extension effects happen later as a responsive consumption behaviour. By remembering an experience, the customer will also be likely to bring back memorabilia and choose product's from the region during daily shopping.
- Reciprocity effects are the long term effects where the customer on a more permanent base perceives the quality of a product in a certain manner.

Below the potentials of the Mývatn region as a Nordic wellbeing destination will be explored in relations to both the branding literature presented above and the key terms introduced as components in marketing the region as a health and wellness destination, i.e. nature, wilderness and geothermal bathing.

The Mývatn region as a potential Nordic wellbeing destination

In the 2010 survey, visitors to the Mývatn region were asked: “what does Nordic Wellbeing mean and contain from your point of view?” Almost half (39%) of the respondents replied. Those mostly (41%) talked of pure nature and environment, the calmness and tranquillity. They also mentioned people and culture (10%) and healthy food (10%). The emerging vague ideas of nature, calmness and healthy food are in line with those proposed as Nordic wellbeing from the literature review above. But almost a fifth (19%) of those answering said that they had no idea. This quintile follows the almost 60% who did not reply, which indicates that people do not have a clear image of Nordic wellbeing. Moreover this low level of recognition was also prominent in the interviews, basically tourism stakeholders in the Mývatn region would not recognise what Nordic wellbeing might entail. This indeed sets the challenge for the project which aim was to partake in Nordic wellbeing destination development.

Above the Mývatn region, with specific focus on the Mývatn Nature Baths has been introduced along with literature on health and wellness, the perception of nature and wilderness and that of branding places. Here these three will be brought together under the terms of the analytical framework sketched above, drawing on Anholt (2005) in order to address the challenge set by the project. The subtitles below indicate the focus of each of the points for the Mývatn region.

Strategy – getting people to talk

What Anholt (2005), proposes as being at stake when it comes to strategy is having a vision or goal and defined means of getting there. In the Mývatn region many stakeholders are involved in defining the region as a tourism destination. First and foremost are locals who own the two big hotels. Foremost of these is the owner of the hotel Reynihlíð who was instrumental in setting up the Mývatn Nature Baths, along with the Visit Mývatn information centre with the general manager of the MNB. Obviously these two are key to the successful branding of the Mývatn region as a wellbeing destination, but in order for the message to be convincing and coherent, there is a desperate need for consensus building. This can be facilitated by the local tourism association, but this is a voluntary organisation of tourism stakeholders, with no formal mandate as such. Nonetheless this is an open forum for discussion and should be used for consensus building, since

a joint message from this platform is likely to transform into more coherent product offerings – inwards for service providers in the region, but also outwards to regional and national marketing agencies. However the message will be mediated, it will deal with the region as a general wellbeing destination and not a specifically Nordic one.

Outside the group of regional stakeholders are policy makers and the wider national framework for tourism support in Iceland. In the Mývatn region predominantly two parties are key players there. One is the Regional Development Agency, based in Húsavík and the other is the Icelandic Innovation Centre also based there. Both receive funding and are administrative units of the ministry of industry, which after 2007 became also the ministry of tourism. Both have been promoting tourism development in the NE region, the former through a five year strategic plan. There one defined tourism product of nine defined for the Mývatn region was a spa and wellness tourism product focusing on developing spa retreats with packages including nature, culture and recreation. The latter has promoted tourism through funding development project focusing particularly on product development. They have a special focus on health and wellness, as set out in a meeting amongst stakeholders in the greater NE region 24th November 2009 introducing funding opportunities. These two seem to work in different directions, even though they share office space in Húsavík and belong to the same ministry. Neither of these directions holds any specific reference to a Nordic wellbeing brand in particular. This two directional official policy is not a convincing message to local stakeholders and does not seem to provide faith in a top-down policy led initiative in terms of health and wellness strategy for the Mývatn region.

Lastly, but indeed compounding the difficulty of the top-down establishment of a wellness destination is the tense relationship between tourism entrepreneurs and the medical establishment with the former unable and unwilling to invest in the needed research in order to establish the properties of products promoted for wellbeing and thus focus marketing better, albeit towards medical tourism. And the latter unwilling or unable to participate and integrate alternative methods and wellness products into their scheme. This tension on the other hand confirms the presence of the welfare state in health and wellness provision and the need to find ways of integrating the medical establishment into destination development for the benefit of

both, but with clear distinctions (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001: 16). Through the medical establishment the only relation can be established with Nordic wellbeing as people from the medical establishment keenly reference Nordic role models as their aspirations.

With all three levels in mind it seems that for now, the establishment of a unique selling point for the Mývatn Region will be hard to realise in terms of wellness, catering to the more complex consumptive practices that entail the pursuit of wellness, of which health is indeed integral. In this sense the research confirms Smith & Puczkó's (2009: 58) sentiment that know-how and desire is lacking from tourism in delivering holistic products incorporating mind, body and spirit. From the perspective of the Mývatn region it seems that the locals need to talk and what the people need to talk about is the substance at the most basic of levels.

Substance – wellbeing with water

One of the key areas of the NICE funded research project is to establish the Nordic content of a wellbeing concept. Interviewees in Iceland were queried on this in a twofold manner. Firstly, on the conception of Nordic wellbeing and what that constitutes. Secondly, the question was if and how learning could be derived from Nordic health and wellbeing operations. As already stated; what emerged very clearly was that the entrepreneurial perception of a specific Nordic wellbeing concept was very vague. Still hints of what was outlined above as Nordic wellness tourism emerged through notions of solitude, nature, and primarily cold and a general recognition of lived Nordic values as applicable to the people of the Mývatn region and forming a substrate to the idea of wellness.

In terms of learning from other Nordic countries those belonging to the medical establishment were in formal relations with other Nordic colleagues and implementing in Iceland best-practices from other countries. Business entrepreneurs on the other hand mainly saw management practices and service infrastructure to be more developed in the other Nordic countries and that they could learn from that.

What clearly emerged though through the interviews is that what Iceland has is hot water and combined with nature, cold and isolation the hot water provides for wellness through the continual juxtaposition of hot and cold, in effect a cleansing pulsation for body and spirit. This could indeed provide the content of a specific Icelandic wellness tourism product that is in line with parts of the Nordic vision on wellness. These interview findings allow for a glimpse of how the region could promote itself as a Nordic wellbeing destination; through water for wellness.

Thus it would seem that the hot water social ecology of which Jónsson and Huijbens (2005) speak is, when it comes to tourism, about rest, relaxation and epicurean delights, i.e. wellness through water (see: Jónsson, 2009). Access is being created to hot springs and hot water round the country but the MNB is a concrete manifestation of this perception of wellness tourism. The resource is there, but there is no sustained engagement with the terms of wellness and the product development potential integral to it being a continual aspirational activity as set out in the literature review above. In addition there is neither vision in a regional perspective or national perspective apart from that set out and being promoted by the Waterfriends design team at their initiative. At the entrepreneurial level, water is being used as a complementary service with only the vaguest hints at benefits or wellbeing. But as has been made clear with the idea of wellness as aspirational, referring simply to the fact that it is possible to feel better is not a fruitful avenue for marketing, more substance is needed as to the how and why one might feel better and this requires engagement with destination specific resources, i.e. the water qualities in the MNB. This will allow for the more complex consumptive practices to emerge through the aspiration towards wellness (Boyle & Rice, 2003, quoting Bourdieu, 1989), and strategic marketing segmentation based thereupon.

Another key substance in Iceland, and indeed closely related to the experiencing of water, is Icelandic nature – mostly void of human impact. Those visiting the Mývatn region are primarily motivated by nature in a characteristically nature-based tourism destination. Under these terms I propose that nature-based tourism that involves passive recreation such as gazing at vast tracks of perceived wilderness be a health and wellness tourism product. Framing this tourism product I propose should be the term *agoraphilia* involving peace and quiet, feeling of space and

authenticity as emerged from customers themselves. This could also function as a significant profiler of Nordic health and wellness tourism.

On a more general level and in light of the presented findings above I postulate that the uses of geothermal waters for health and wellness tourism development might benefit from a more explicit reference to natural experiences. In the case of the MNB this refers specifically to the view to the highland wilderness interior of Iceland afforded by the Mývatn Nature Baths. The Icelandic wilderness offers peace and quiet, as well as the lucid interplay of light and colour that has inspired many an artist both past and recent. For health and wellness tourism development worldwide spas and bathing spots are the most common infrastructures developed for this type of tourism (Smith & Puczó, 2009). These spas and bathing spots, be they geothermal or not, should ensure that they are nestled in peaceful surroundings with views that allow for a grasping of vast wilderness and nature. These could then allow tourists the “reconnection to reality itself” and open their minds to perfect beauty and that which life is about (Skúlason, 2005: 7). From the survey it seems clear that it is possible to convey on site messages to tourists about what the place they are visiting is about. Thus I propose that an explicit reference to the qualities of nature as affording this sense of oneness and plenitude should be an integral part of health and wellness product development. The products develop for health and wellness tourism should thus facilitate a sense of calm and internal expansiveness and the term I propose for use is *agoraphilia*.

Structures – developing a mode of collaboration

The issue of structure deals with social infrastructure and the way it revolves around tourism development and how this development has unfolded till now.

Lee & King (2008) found, through three rounds of Delphi surveying, that safety issues, environmental protection of a unique resource and the development of quality service infrastructure was a key concern for the future development of hot spring tourism in Taiwan. In the Mývatn region the focus is on service infrastructure, where entrepreneurs are mainly busy trying to keep up with demand and providing basic services to the ever increasing number of people coming to the region in the summer months. As a result quality has often suffered and

issues of environmental protection put aside for the provision of services. This is most clearly manifest in the debate around the planning permission for building the service facilities of the MNB. The municipality and entrepreneurs, along with the national power company, joined hands in lobbying for a compromise in the law protecting the nature of the Mývatn region in order to have it built. But the whole region is subject to a special law protecting the unique nature of the Mývatn drainage basin first put in effect in 1974, later to be amended in 2004. Quoting from tourism strategic plan made for NE Iceland (see Hull, 2008: 18):

Lake Mývatn should receive special consideration due to its pseudo-craters, Dimmuborgir, the lake and adjoining freshwater rivers, the mud pools, Myvatn Nature Baths, and Krafla, all sensitive areas that need to be monitored so as to conserve these resources and preserve the long-term integrity of this fragile region. This should be done in cooperation with the Environmental Agency of Iceland.

Therefore wellness tourism in the region can only be considered in its infancy as a basic business operation without vision, strategy or the potential to generate formal linkages to impact regional marketing dynamics. What the NICE project seems to have provided for though are some hints at how this situation might be improved.

The workshop hosted in December 2010 gave indications of how collaboration could be facilitated and how communication can be a common source of knowledge. What proves important is the way in which intersectoral knowledge flows can be assured, e.g. through integrating professional networks and diversified employment strategies by service providers. But most importantly an active dialogue needs to be established with the customer as issues of health and wellness are driven by societal discourse and reflect an ethos of modern day individual health awareness. It is very important to learn from the customers and what it is that they want. The substance of the branding strategy needs to tailor to these wants.

Listing the items scoring above five on figure 7 above we get an idea of what it is the people visiting the Mývatn region might be after: Feeling of space, midnight sun and light summers, authenticity, mountains, lakes and other water areas, pure and clean nature and environment, peace and quiet and plenty of nature activities. The indications for the substance of a wellbeing destination should be clear. Communicating these and streamlining employment strategies to these knowledges is of key importance.

Symbolic action - creating a hype?

As mentioned above the Regional Development Agency in Húsavík made a tourism strategic plan for the NE of Iceland in 2008. This planning entailed a mapping of the tourism resources of the NE of Iceland. Many of these resources were indeed found to be in the Mývatn region as e.g. the health and wellness one as stated above. As part of creating the nine product packages, workshops were held in seven locations in the NE region. One of these workshops was hosted in the Mývatn region and can be said to have been a starting point for later identity formation of the region at least from the top-down perspective. Naturally a host of other workshops and meetings had been held prior to this through the local tourism association, but not much in terms of vision, goals or strategy remains from these and none revolved around pin-pointing an identity for the region. The focus of the tourism strategy for the Mývatn region in terms of health and wellness seems to revolve around the existing infrastructure of the Mývatn Nature Baths with hints of the involvement of alternative health practitioners and the promotion of local healthy gastronomy (Hull, 2008). The Mývatn Nature Baths predominantly emerged as a spa and a recreation option but the region's identity in terms of health and wellness is far from being sketched.

What is being proposed above is that Mývatn, able to afford access to the wilderness parts of Iceland, either through passive gazing or active engagement, should offer a health and wellness brand that highlights this and the geothermal waters of the region. The idea is simply that the passive nature experience can be had in water gazing at mountains a far and could be themed under the *agoraphilia*, or the love of nature and open spaces – from an experiential perspective.

Conclusions – inventing or embracing branding values?

In the above wellbeing, health and wellness are seen as umbrella terms and *Nordic Wellbeing* is defined on the basis of natural resources and lived values in the Nordic countries. Nordic wellbeing is thus a more specific segment area to be identified as an industry area and conceptualised in terms of concrete products, which can be marketed on the home market, but also in a competitive market, e.g. internationally. The Icelandic brand of health and wellness is here seen as part and parcel of the Nordic wellbeing umbrella, but most certainly differentiated in terms of resource specificities. As part of a branding approach, the health and wellness products, be they Nordic in general or Icelandic in particular need to be differentiated from other wellbeing concepts in competing countries. Intuitively the images of *Nordic Wellbeing* are typically oriented towards nature and outdoor experience and enjoyment combined with achievement, healthy local gastronomy, local culture and cleanliness of air, nature and water. However, these features are hardly sufficient and specific enough to encapsulate a branding platform for a consistent business innovation and development and for an efficient promotion. What is hereby proposed is that drawing on these rather vague and general characteristics of what is termed Nordic wellbeing, an Icelandic health and wellness product can carve out an international marketing niche.

The findings presented in the report above sustain the four basic assumptions guiding the project as set out in the introduction.

- First, the resources of importance for the development of wellbeing tourism in NE Iceland are water and wilderness. These resources are both of material and immaterial kind in the sense that the wilderness to be experienced is very real and out there as is the geothermal water, but people's perceptions of its wellbeing attributes have to do with prevalent ideas on what it means to be healthy and well, of both mind and body. Escaping from urban environments and everyday stress is indeed part of common conceptions.
- Second, that the creation of a unique wellbeing destination in Mývatn, or any other destination for that matter, demands active communication between all stakeholders in the region in order to promote a coherent idea of wellbeing in the region. This requires that all identified resources be themed and integrated

into the product and knowledges garnered through professional networks be translated into employment strategies.

- Third, that the collaborative practice of inventing a wellness destination have significant side effects in terms of product, process and marketing innovation in local SMEs. This is related to the second point, but here a more specific focus is on the products developed from the health and wellness concept. As in the case of the Mývatn region, facilities for outdoor recreation and cosmetics are being developed. But it is proposed above that a framing of the products offered should be via the term *agoraphilia*, however that will be presented in marketing slogans.
- Fourth, that the contribution to Nordic wellbeing image and brand may serve to strengthen regional health and wellness product development initiatives and thus contribute to future development. As stated above, based on what is termed Nordic wellbeing, on the most general level an Icelandic health and wellness product can carve out an international marketing niche, but does not relate specifically to a coherent Nordic vision.

At current and based on findings from the research the potential to lend wellness resources a Nordic component is underdeveloped in the Mývatn region, firstly as a *Nordic Well-being* concept is rather vague and secondly as the engagement with the term is non-existent. The general image sketched above of *Nordic Wellbeing*, Iceland can subscribe to even at the entrepreneurial level in individual destinations. But under the terms of the NICE funded project the aim was to set out a content for a *Nordic Wellbeing* concept and this research indicates that this will have to do with the juxtaposition of hot and cold as the oscillating force propelling the aspirations of wellbeing, as well as gathering a sense of wholeness through experiencing wilderness areas. This is what wellness tourism in Iceland can offer a specific Nordic wellbeing product, which then on the whole is valuable when attracting people to the North as it will add diversity and depth to an already existing nature experience tourism product.

In terms of Iceland and the laboratory area of NE Iceland around lake Mývatn the main conclusions can be framed through the lens of strategy, substance, structure, and symbolic action.

The main conclusions are as follows:

- **Strategy:** There is no productive strategy process that has been initiated, and no established formal links bringing together actors from the wellness industry and beyond. The tourism strategic plan done in 2008 is the only documented strategy hinting at a wellbeing component for the Mývatn region. The rest of the development seems to rest in the hands of the major stakeholders in local industry.
- **Substance:** The region does have two significant “landmarks” for wellness and wellbeing and that is the unique nature of the region along with the abundance of geothermal water in varied manifestations. Attributes related to Nordic “lived values” are embedded in for example natural environments and the population, but in the Mývatn region a lack of trust was identified by many. In tacit ways lived values tend to constitute important qualities of the wellbeing region, the lack of trust might thus hamper the development of a wellbeing destination.
- **Structure:** The bottom-up process has been valuable for the participants, but there are many structural divides in the field, particularly between public and private sector, traditional and alternative health services, small and large enterprises, commercial and voluntary actors. The importance of building bridges is a clear conclusion from the process, and there has been persistence in this aim. There is a need for a joint platform and consensus building in order to provide coherence to the product development and identity constructed for the region.
- **Symbolic action:** Logo and slogans have not been produced. From the outset, there are no unique selling points that unify the region’s products and the aspirations and needs of the guests. The creation of a hype has not been initiated.

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VISITOR SURVEY WELLBEING IN MÝVATN 2010

The aim of this study is to find out what kind of attributes affected your decision to choose Mývatn as a destination. In addition, our goal is to pin-point the central elements of wellbeing tourism products here from your perspective. This survey is part of a project on Nordic wellbeing product development funded by the Nordic Innovation Centre. The main objective of the project will be the creation of a customer-driven Nordic wellbeing concept around Nordic resources based on unique values.

By answering these questions you are helping local businesses in the Mývatn region developing their tourism product, also you contribute to tourism development in the Nordic countries. We would be grateful if you could use 10 minutes of your time to respond to this survey.

1. **Gender:** Male Female

2. **Year of birth:** _____

3. **a. Country of residence:** _____

b. Postal code: _____

4. **What is your level of education?**

(Only tick the highest level)

- University degree
- Technical/Trade school/Vocational
- Upper secondary school
- Elementary school/Grammar school

5. **What is your income compared to an average income in your home country?**

(Only tick one)

- Below average
- Average
- Above average
- High

6. **What is the main purpose of your visit to this area?** (Only tick one)

- Holiday
- Visiting friends/relatives
- Business trip
- Course/lecture/education
- Shopping
- Other, what _____

7. **Who are you travelling with?**

(Tick more than one if appropriate)

- Alone
- Spouse
- Family/with child(ren)
- Friends
- Work colleague(s)
- Other, who _____

8. **How many nights do you stay in the Mývatn area?**

_____ nights

9. **a. Have you been to Mývatn before?**

(Only tick one)

- Never
- Once
- 2-4 times
- Over 4 times

b. If you have been in the area, were you there during (Tick more than one if appropriate)

- Summer
- Fall/Autumn
- Winter
- Spring

MÝVATN AS WELLBEING DESTINATION

Well-being tourism includes different services and products. The main purpose is to maintain and improve holistic well-being, which means well-being of body, mind and soul. Well-being services and products also include elements of pampering, refreshing mind and body, fitness and sports - even some luxury in addition to just nurturing health.

10. What makes the region an interesting wellbeing destination? (Please write your answers on the lines. What is most interesting goes on line 1, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

11. Rate the importance of the following points when choosing this area as a destination. Please tick suitable answer for each attribute (1= insignificant... ...7=very important).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Plenty of nature activities							
Peace and quiet							
Wellbeing and wellness services (e.g. baths)							
Forests							
Pure and clean nature and environment							
Lakes and other water areas							
Mountains							
Nordic climate							
Snow and ice							
Location							
Accessibility							
Nordic culture							
Local lifestyle/way of life							
Local and regional food							
History of the area							
Quality of product and services							
Exotic and mystique of the North							
Reliable and well designed services							
Four distinct seasons							
Nordic service standards							
Professional people/service							
Summer activities (e.g. hiking)							
Winter activities (e.g. skiing)							
Fall activities (e.g. mushroom picking)							
Spring activities (e.g. bird watching)							
Ecological destination							
Products from nature (berries etc.)							
Authenticity							
Midnight sun/light summer							
Nordic design products							
Comprehensive service packages							
Feeling of space							
Warm weather							
Outdoor fitness facilities							

Something else, what _____

12. What have you done/you are going to do during your stay in the Mývatn region (activities/services)?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor group exercises | <input type="checkbox"/> Swim/bathing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biking | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake cruising | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a massage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking alternative treatments (e.g.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Nordic walking | <input type="checkbox"/> sauna treatments or reiki |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthy food | <input type="checkbox"/> Orienteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking part in self development course/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor group exercises | <input type="checkbox"/> study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to spa | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in the nightlife | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking different treatments (e.g. facial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to sauna | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in "role" freeing activities (e.g. plays) | <input type="checkbox"/> or foot care) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Practise yoga | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going for walks | <input type="checkbox"/> Rowing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going to a gym | <input type="checkbox"/> Running | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gymnastic exercises/aerobics | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking | | |

Something else, what? _____

13. Rate the importance of following elements of wellbeing tourism product for your tourist experience.

(Please tick suitable answer for each attribute (1= insignificant... ..7=very important).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activities of spirit and mind, and self-development (e.g. relaxing excursions in nature, yoga, meditation)							
Health promoting and enhancing services (e.g. Nordic Walking on lake shores or in forest, traditional treatments and preventive care)							
Healthy cuisine							
High quality accommodation							
Different beauty treatments (e.g. facials and foot care)							
Activities aiming to relaxation and comfort (e.g. swimming in natural waters, sauna experience, baths in hot water barrel)							
(Tailor-made) movement/ fitness services (e.g. guided tours and exercises, different sport and fitness activities)							

14. a. Did you purchase any product or service to improve your health/wellbeing whilst staying in the Mývatn region? Yes No

b. If you said yes, what kind of product and service you purchased (you can add the name of the business where you bought it) _____

c. How would you rate the quality of the product/service provided?

- Excellent Good Average Bad I don't know

15. What does Nordic Wellbeing mean and contain from your point of view?

PARTICIPATING IN PRODUCT/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

16. Have you previously participated in new service development process by:

- giving a personal interview
- participating in a focus group interview
- answering a survey
- giving feedback to producers/service providers
- customer panel
- other method(s), what kind? _____
- I have never participated any of these

17. Do you agree or disagree with following statements? Please tick suitable answer for each attribute (1=I totally disagree... ..7=I totally agree).

I am willing to participate in new wellbeing tourism service development in the Mývatn Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... by describing what kind of services I want use.							
... by describing the problems I have seen in services that I have used.							
... by suggesting possible solutions to the problems I have identified in existing services.							
... by evaluating existing services by telling my likes and dislikes.							
... by participating in idea group sessions of new wellbeing service development.							
... by providing a new service wish list I liked to have in Mývatn.							
... by rating my liking, preferences and purchase intents of all the new developed services.							
... by evaluating the concepts of new developed services and by giving feedback on them.							
... by estimating the overall saleability and profitability of the new service.							
... by joining the top management in selecting team members for new service development groups.							
... by suggesting improvements by identifying fail points in planned new services.							
... by participating and estimating the new service delivery trials by evaluating the front-line service persons and key contact employees action.							
... by using simulated service as a customer.							
... by providing feedback on the marketing strategies of the new services and by suggesting improvements.							
... by recommending new services to other potential service users.							

I'm interested in being involved in tourism product development process in the Mývatn region

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Thank you very much for participating!

Saturday 4.9.2010	Sunday 5.9.2010	Monday 6.9.2010	Tuesday 7.9.2010
<p>10.30 Finpro Finland's Trade Center Gonzagagasse 16, 1010 Vienna</p> <p>11.00 Drive: 1010 Vienna – 7132 Frauenkirchen (1 hour)</p> <p>12.00 St. Martin's Lodge http://www.stmartins.at/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - newly opened lodge + therme located right by a lake <p>13.00 Lunch / St. Martin's Lodge</p> <p>14.30 Drive: 7132 Frauenkirchen – 8283 Bad Blumau (2.5 hours)</p> <p>17.00 Rogner Bad Blumau http://www.blumau.com/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Best Health Austria" certified wellness hotel famous for its architecture <p>17.30 Hotel Tour</p> <p>18.30 Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bad Blumau concept <p>20.00 Dinner / Bad Blumau</p> <p>Accommodation: Rogner Bad Blumau / 181.90,- including dinner, breakfast and Spa and Sauna open till 23.00 Treatment reservations before hand tel. +43 3 383 5100 0</p>	<p>9.00 Time for Spa and Treatments</p> <p>10.30 Drive: 8283 Bad Blumau– 5330 Fuschl am See (3.5 hours)</p> <p>12.30 Lunch on the way</p> <p>15.00 Ebner's Waldhof am See http://www.ebners-waldhof.at/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wellness hotel with "Alpine Wellness" -concept <p>16.00 Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alpine Wellness Concept – project experiences by Mr. Znidar / Carpe Diem Consulting <p>17.30 Hotel Tour</p> <p>19.00 Dinner / Ebner's Waldhof am See</p> <p>Accommodation: Ebner's Waldhof am See / 125,- including dinner and breakfast and Spa and Sauna. Spa open 7:00-19.00.</p>	<p>9.00 Drive 5330 Fuschl am See – 5771 Leogang (2 hours)</p> <p>11.00 Priesteregg http://www.priesteregg.at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A chalet village with wellbeing <p>12.30 Drive: 5771 Leogang – 5771 Leogang (15 min)</p> <p>13.00 Forsthofalm http://www.forsthofalm.com/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A solid wooden hotel with wellness. Focus on sustainability. <p>13.00 Lunch / Forsthofalm</p> <p>14.30 Hotel Tour</p> <p>15.30 Drive: 5771 Leogang – 6353 Going (1 hour)</p> <p>16.30 Bio-Hotel Stanglwirt http://www.stanglwirt.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wellness hotel famous for it's spa design <p>17.00 Hotel Tour</p> <p>18.00 Time for Spa and Treatments</p> <p>19.30 Dinner / Stanglwirt</p> <p>Accommodation: Stanglwirt / 187,- including dinner and breakfast, Spa and Sauna open till 20.00 Treatment reservations before hand tel. +43 5 358 2000 950</p>	<p>9.00 Drive: 6353 Going - 6444 Längenfeld (2 hours)</p> <p>11.00 Aqua Dome http://www.aqua-dome.at/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Famous therme <p>12.30 Lunch / Aqua Dome</p> <p>14.00 Drive: 6444 Längenfeld - 6020 Innsbruck (1 hour)</p> <p>15.00 University of Innsbruck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austrian Wellness <p>16.30 Free time</p> <p>Additional Resorts 0.5- 1 hour drive from from Innsbruck: http://www.lanserhof.at/ http://www.schwarz.at/ http://www.waldklause.at/</p> <p>Accommodation: The Penz Hotel http://www.the-penz.com/ 115,- including breakfast</p>



ICELANDIC TOURISM
RESEARCH CENTRE

DECEMBER 2010