WELLBEING TOURISM IN FINLAND:
Finland as a competitive wellbeing tourism destination

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Summary:

The aim of this report is to examine Finland’s attributes and competitiveness as a wellbeing destination. This is done using Finnish case studies: describing and analyzing perceptions and opinions of tourism professionals, experts, entrepreneurs and regional developers of the Finnish laboratory areas, namely Jyväskylä, Vaasa and Vuokatti/Kainuu regions, in order to identify the competitive advantages of Finland as a wellbeing tourism destination. The model of a sustainable wellness destination by Sheldon and Park (2009) is applied as a framework for this study. Following this framework supporting factors and resources of wellness tourism, core wellness resources and attractions, wellness destination policy and planning, and wellness destination development and management are examined in the Finnish context complemented by the case studies. For instance, the following issues are discussed: 1) the unique selling points and value creating attributes of the areas, 2) networking and destination management in the areas, 3) information acquisition, 4) innovation driving forces, and 5) ideas and visions for the Nordic Wellbeing concept.

The report is mainly based on three different kinds of material and data: 1) secondary sources including analyses that have been undertaken by the laboratory areas and the Finnish Tourist Board, 2) interviews with stakeholders in the laboratory areas, and 3) participation in laboratory activities such as seminars and workshops. However, the interviews constitute the main data of this report.

Four assumptions guided the study:

1. The five Nordic countries and their destinations have a variety of resources of importance for the development of wellbeing tourism and these resources are both material and immaterial.
2. The creation of a unique wellbeing destination propositions demands multifaceted process including simultaneous collaborative measures and political emphasis that go far beyond launching slogans and financing campaigns.
3. The collaborative practice of inventing a wellness destination has significant spin off effects in terms of product, process and marketing innovation in local SMEs.
4. The contribution to the Nordic Wellbeing tourism image and brand depends on many underlying factors in the Nordic context, including policies and activities in other fields with overarching symbolic value.

The Finnish Tourism Board advocates wellbeing tourism as one main future area of tourism. How this policy statement unfolds in different parts of Finland is still to be seen. The findings presented indicate an urgent need for vigorous efforts to set up regional wellbeing destination policies for destination management organizations to act upon. The risk is that wellbeing tourism in Finland will be most amorphous, thereby jeopardizing joint marketing and branding initiatives. The wellbeing destination development model discussed and used in this report is neither claimed to be exclusive nor exhaustive, but is presented as a tool to be further developed, but also as a management tool to get the wellbeing tourism development in Finland going.

The managerial implications offered at this stage pertaining destination development fall into two categories; 1) Resource scanning and service development, and 2) Networking and learning. Nature,
Culture, knowledge and technology were identified as critical resource categories in the laboratory areas studied. Wellbeing tourism in Finland is in the process of formalization. It still lacks structure, a good reason for all actors interested in wellbeing tourism to closely monitor, as a learning process, how the wellbeing tourism concept is conceptualized. It is also recommended that the development process should adopt a bottom-up approach and acknowledge the importance of co-operation and networking, not least due to the many small tourism firms which will be involved in the development of wellbeing tourism in Finland.

All the wellbeing tourism initiatives identified and analyzed for this report are founded on extensive networks of tourism actors of different types. What seems to be very important in such initiatives is seamless coordination of actors, activities, and resources, preferably guided by comprehensive policies. Neither can one disregard the importance of management, nor the impact on national strategies.

The Finnish wellbeing tourism concept is in a critical phase. There are areas in Finland which are already making good progress and other areas where the first step is yet to be taken. The impending risk, in a national perspective, is that in the future there will be not one “Finnish wellbeing concept” but a heterogeneous set of wellbeing concepts, which will jeopardize all branding attempts. A Nordic Wellbeing tourism concept has been on the agenda for some time, but the challenges this level of branding includes must be acknowledged. The success of a Nordic Wellbeing tourism concept is dependent on how the different Nordic countries succeed. In the case of Finland the next strategic steps must focus on;

   a) Identity, service packaging, and
   b) Synchronized and coherent communication.

Wellbeing tourism in Finland will only prosper if a distinctive identity for is created for it. Wellbeing tourism must not be confused with wellness or health tourism, but branded as a unique form of tourism. Wellbeing tourism, appealing to body, mind and soul, must be presented as a package. Finally, segmentation and communication seem to be of utmost importance for success. Internal communications among actors on a destination are considered, in this early phase of development to be, equally important as external communications directed at carefully selected target groups.

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The project also raised interest among students. Tommi Nissinen and Jonna Kauppinen of the University of Eastern Finland, Department of Business wrote their Master’s theses as well as Esa Naukkarinen of the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences and Erika Airaksinen of Vaasa University of Applied Sciences their theses connected to project activities in the laboratory areas.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In recent decades, the popularity of the Nordic countries as tourism destinations has increased (Hall et al. 2008; Müller & Jansson, 2007). There are many attractions, but generally nature and natural phenomena play an important role. These countries are favored by a significant variety of landscape types and climates, and there are numerous options for activities in all seasons. As traditional tourism destinations become more crowded, people are looking for alternatives, not so crowded and densely populated areas. To answer this, Nordic countries can provide for many unique tourism experiences, but, the tourism business tends also to consider and cater for major international trends. One of these trends is wellness, wellbeing and health tourism products and services in all their aspects and variations.

As noted by Sheldon and Bushell (2009) health, wellness and wellbeing tourism has received little scholarly attention, and the issue is usually seen through the lens of the spa tradition. There has been even less research in the Nordic countries. Tuohino and Kangas (2009) presented some characteristic of wellness tourism in Finland in the compendium edited by Smith and Puczko (2009) on the topic. In addition, Finnish wellbeing tourism – a wide perspective (Björk et al., 2011), Finnish wellbeing tourism – the development of the Lake Wellness Concept (Konu et al., 2010), Finnish Wellbeing Tourism Segments (Konu, 2010), Predicting Factors of Finnish Tourists’ Interest in wellbeing tourism holidays (Konu & Laukkanen, 2010) - has been examined in the last few years.

The Finnish Tourist Board has recognized the importance of wellbeing tourism development in Finland. This has assumed the form of Finnish wellbeing tourism strategy developed in 2008. In the strategy Finnish Tourist Board (2008b) defines three different kinds of wellbeing tourism goals for the period 2009-2013. These are operational goals, image goals and quantitative goals. Operational goals include the implementation of terminology and theme-based thinking in the field; company commitment to internationalization, networking, and joint marketing; identification of core products; new product innovation in wellness tourism and support for common product ideas; renewal of old products; continuous service chains; creation of cooperation models with food, cosmetics, and treatment product producers as well as equipment manufacturers; an improved quality level – corresponding to the requirements of a well-traveled international tourist (addressing quality and product criteria); cooperation in distribution and pricing; year-round product offering and sales; identification and copying of good operation models; clarification of the division of labor among operators by development phase; diversification and augmentation of the offering of accessible wellbeing tourism; and a product and/or quality label to support the development and marketing of wellbeing tourism.

The image goals set are a unified image for Finnish wellbeing tourism, and that Finland should be known as a leading wellbeing tourism country in the Nordic region – to be achieved by creating an offering based on international trends and the increasing demand, and by including wellbeing tourism as a strong part of the country brand (Brand Finland) through marketing communications. Finally, the quantitative goals include a growth target defined as +6% per year in overnight stays.
(Finnish Tourism Strategy, 2008b), and an increase in the international customer base for the companies participating in the product development process.

This report is set in the context of a Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe) funded project called Nordic Wellbeing - A Health tourism approach to enhance competitiveness of Nordic Tourism enterprises and destinations. The project involves researchers from each of the Nordic countries assigned with the task to detail the innovative and entrepreneurial aspects of selected health and wellness tourism destinations in each country. On the whole, the Nordic Wellbeing project takes an innovation perspective related to developing a particular Nordic content of wellbeing to be offered by tourism enterprises and destinations across the five Nordic countries. Wellbeing is seen as an umbrella and Nordic Wellbeing as a more specific segment therein to be identified as an industry area and conceptualized in terms of concrete products, which can be marketed on the home market, but also in a competitive market mainly within the EU and which therefore needs to be differentiated from other wellbeing concepts. 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, natural surroundings 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. It is not feasible to sell resources – these resources need to be developed into products and services. This particular paper is derived from research on the Finnish case, which revolves mainly around the build-up and entrepreneurial vision of three laboratory areas: Jyväskylä region, Vuokatti and Kainuu region, and Vaasa region.

Four assumptions guided the study:

1. The five Nordic countries and their destinations have a variety of resources of importance for the development of wellbeing tourism and these resources are both material and immaterial.
2. The creation of a unique wellbeing destination propositions demands multifaceted process including simultaneous collaborative measures and political emphasis that go far beyond launching slogans and financing campaigns.
3. The collaborative practice of inventing a wellness destination has significant spin off effects in terms of product, process and marketing innovation in local SMEs.
4. The contribution to the Nordic Wellbeing tourism image and brand depends on many underlying factors in the Nordic context, including policies and activities in other fields with overarching symbolic value.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this report is to examine Finland’s attributes and competitiveness as a wellbeing destination. This is done using Finnish case studies: describing and analyzing perceptions and opinions of tourism professionals, experts, entrepreneurs and regional developers of the Finnish laboratory areas in order to identify the competitive advantages of Finland as a wellbeing tourism destination. The model of a sustainable wellness destination by Sheldon and Park (2009) is applied as a framework for this study. Following this framework supporting factors and resources of wellness
tourism, core wellness resources and attractions, wellness destination policy and planning, and wellness destination development and management are examined in the Finnish context complemented by the case studies. For instance, the following issues are discussed: 1) the unique selling points and value creating attributes of the areas, 2) networking and destination management in the areas, 3) information acquisition, 4) innovation driving forces, and 5) ideas and visions for the Nordic Wellbeing concept.

The study is organized with case studies in so-called laboratory areas in Finland. As the term suggests, the researchers work closely together with local actors. The laboratory areas are the arenas for a systematic collection of empirical information about the health and wellness products and their suppliers. Eventually the information from the three case studies will undergo a comparative analysis with an emphasis on the issues of unique selling points and perspectives for further innovativeness. In addition, the concept and vision of Nordic Wellbeing concept is defined from the Finnish perspective.

The report is mainly based on three different kinds of material and data: 1) secondary sources including analyses that have been undertaken by the laboratory areas and the Finnish Tourist Board, 2) interviews with stakeholders in the laboratory areas, and 3) participation in laboratory activities such as seminars and workshops. However, the interviews constitute the main data of this report.

1.3 Concepts and definition of wellbeing and wellness tourism

Issues of health and wellness are certainly not new, although they are only now emerging in the tourism literature. In this Section concepts of wellbeing and wellness are brought to bear on tourism more generally and then on Nordic tourism specifically. There have been several definitions and interpretations of the concepts and in some cases wellbeing and wellness are treated as synonyms and used interchangeably depending on which body of literature the text draws on. Hence the goal of this Section is to define the meaning of wellbeing and wellness tourism in Finnish context.

In the tourism context, there has been confusion about when to use terms wellness and wellbeing. In the tourism field there are also other concepts connected to the theme. For instance, concepts like health tourism and health-care tourism are used alongside wellbeing and wellness tourism. Health tourism is traveling outside home to take care of one’s health (García-Altés, 2005, 262; adapting Ross, 2001). The goal of the trip can be to cure illness or prevent it, and to promote wellbeing. According to García-Altés (2005) the health tourism demand has increased for several reasons such as diverse demographic, economic and lifestyle related factors. These factors are, for example, population aging, changes in lifestyles, alternatives in tourism (experienced travelers are seeking new experiences), and problems in general health care.

Wellbeing and health-care tourism are acknowledged as sub-concepts of health tourism. Wellbeing tourism differs from health-care tourism regarding tourists’ motivations. In health-care tourism the main motive is to treat illness, whereas in wellbeing tourism the main motive is to prevent illness or maintain one’s health and wellbeing. Besides preventing illness and sustaining wellbeing, the goal of wellbeing tourism is to have experiences of pleasure and luxury. Regarding the tourism products and
services wellbeing tourism and health-care tourism are not very far from each other. To give an example; the health-care tourist may use the same recreational services as the wellbeing tourist and health-care tourists and wellbeing tourists may frequent at same destination at the same time. (Konu, 2010; Konu et al., 2010; Finnish Tourist Board, 2005; Müller & Lanz Kaufmann, 2001; Suontausta & Tyni, 2005)

Müller and Lanz Kaufmann (2001, 3) define wellness tourism using Kaspar’s (1996) broader definition of health tourism as a base of their own definition: “Wellness tourism is the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health. They stay in a specialized hotel which provides the appropriate professional know-how and individual care. They require a comprehensive service package comprising physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/diet, relaxation/meditation and mental activity/education.” The definition emphasis maintaining and promoting own health. In addition, it highlights an extensive product and service package which meets tourist’s expectations as the aim is a state of holistic wellbeing.

The Finnish Tourist Board (FTB 2005) produced its own definition and recommendations regarding different concepts of health and wellbeing tourism. In their definition health tourism is a main concept which divides into two: to health-care/medical tourism and wellbeing tourism (see Figure 1). Health-care/medical tourism includes treatments, operations and service packages connected to treating illness. Wellbeing tourism is more like an entity which includes versatile products and services intended to promote and maintain holistic wellbeing. In this case holistic wellbeing means wellbeing of body, mind and soul. Workplace health promotion (mentioned in Figure 1) includes features from both health-care/medical tourism and wellbeing tourism because it subsumes several different services and activities. In the Finnish Tourist Board’s definition a wellness product is seen as a part of wellbeing tourism and may contain all or just one of the wellbeing services presented in Figure 1 (Finnish Tourist Board, 2005; Suontausta & Tyni, 2005).
In the Finnish language as well as in the tourism context the words wellness and wellbeing are ambiguous; both words are translated into ‘hyvinvointi’ which causes confusion and misuse. Wellness tourism is often connected to luxury products and five-star hotels. That is to say, wellbeing tourism may include products and services from a wider scale. It may include pampering, diverse activities, and experiences of luxury not necessarily connected to high-class hotels. In Finnish wellbeing tourism the most important travelling motives are most likely connected to relaxation and physical activities. This also appears on examining the product and service supply of Finnish wellbeing tourism companies. Most of the products and services of spas, the various treatments and activities offered are connected in one way or another to physical activity or relaxation. Thus wellbeing tourism as a concept better reflects the supply of Finnish wellbeing because the supply concentrates mainly on sauna and active wellbeing services. To conclude, in the Finnish context, the wellbeing tourism concept is more suitable because the wider description reflects better the Finnish understanding of ‘hyvinvointi’. (Kangas & Tuohino, 2008; Konu, 2010; Konu et al., 2010; Björk et al., 2011)

As can also be noted above, the way in which wellness translates into various languages is mostly a matter of cultural preference and the local perceptions, preferences and manifestations of health. Lindahl (2005) in her autobiographic reflections on health and wellness in Scandinavia reflects that the Nordic countries have a contribution to make in terms of global wellbeing. Her emphases are on personal spaces e.g. through design, healthy home-grown food, traditional family values and outdoor walking. Smith and Puczkó (2009) sum up the Nordic emphasis: In Scandinavia, there is a major
emphasis on outdoor recreation such as Nordic walking, cross country-skiing, and lake swimming, even in winter.

The cold and ways of coping with it are integral to wellness in the North and the cool, crisp air, along with vast 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 programs, equality in opportunity and outcomes as explicit goals in social policy with relatively even income distribution, large public sector as proportion of a GNP, extensive income transfer programs and services, high/full employment and high taxes (Greve, 2004; Lahelma et.al., 2002; Lundberg et.al., 2008).

The value underpinning the Nordic welfare state goes some way to explain the values underpinning conceptions of Nordic Wellbeing and wellness, albeit vague today. The emphasis on personal space, through notions of design, solitude, vastness of horizon or the embrace of the boreal forest all point to the ways in which the individual and her rights are upheld in the welfare state model. Equal opportunities through income, public sector and transfer programs are manifest in the open access policy to wilderness areas, sometimes laid down in law, allowing for opportunities for 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) in this context even goes so far as to suggest in this report 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.

At the most general level, the welfare state has directly impinged upon tourism by subsidizing holidays for health and recreation to secure equal access for all. But as Hjalager (2005) concludes, these general policies are being moved towards specific targeted actions for groups such as the elderly and disabled.

The specific products on offer today that can be described as Nordic wellness and health tourism are many and varied. With the aim of a tentative typology of the service offering in Nordic countries a short excursion will be made through each. 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, Müller and Saarinen (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 the reference to Hjalager (2005), service offerings have largely been dictated by the needs of the welfare state, but this 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. 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
large in Norway however, and they claim to be powered by it, entailing a sense of spirituality or self-actualization through experiencing nature.

Generally speaking the Nordic service offerings have an international outlook drawing in varied components of health and wellness from around the globe, based on what is fashionable at each point in time. In this way it is hard to talk about a Nordic Wellbeing and health tourism, although some individual entrepreneurs will try and Lindahl (2005) is a case in point.

1.4 Description of laboratory areas

Three laboratory areas (see Figure 2) were chosen, as the aim was to find diverse regions for wellbeing tourism development. The arguments for choosing Jyväskylä were its geographical location in the middle of Finland surrounded by lakes, which offers an ideal environment for water-based wellbeing tourism development. Vuokatti in turn is an area with a wide range of year-around activities and Vaasa for its coastal location and the context of the archipelago.

Figure 2. Finnish laboratory areas (Map by Laura Koskinen).
According to the official definition the municipalities in the **Jyväskylä region** are Jyväskylä, Laukaa, Muurame, Uurainen, Hankasalmi, Petäjävesi and Toivakka (Jykes, 2010). Jyväskylä is formed “the centre of Finland” as it is situated in central Finland. It is also a part of Finland’s Lake District. In addition, co-operation with neighboring municipalities is considered fairly important in the area and the role of the development-axis Äänekoski-Jyväskylä-Jämsä is highlighted. Himos area is also seen to have a significant role in the region as it is an important tourism resort.

Many of the interviewees (see Section 3.1.) described the region as a vital education cluster due to the availability of education at many different levels. University and its importance were mentioned several times. Due to the number of schools, Jyväskylä was seen as a student city, which was also one reason why the area was deemed youthful. Jyväskylä town was described as small and compact. One of the respondents said that it is not very international yet (from the tourism point of view), but it has lot of potential to develop. Regarding tourism the area was seen as a congress and trade fair destination, which was mainly based on the events organized by the congress and trade fair centre Paviljonki. In addition, some of the interviewees highlighted the natural beauty and features of the area such as hills, lakes and forests. Culture and cultural elements were mentioned, e.g. by emphasizing that Jyväskylä is a home town of the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. Jyväskylä region was also seen as economically and socially active and easily accessible. The industrial activity in the area gives its own special flavor to the region, too. However, the role of Jyväskylä region as a tourism destination is not yet very clear.

**Kainuu region** consists of nine municipalities, namely Kajaani, Sotkamo, Kuhmo, Paltamo, Ristijärvi, Hyrynsalmi, Suomussalmi, Puolanka and Vaala (Kainuu, 2010). The biggest tourism resort in Kainuu is **Vuokatti**. Vuokatti is situated in the municipality of Sotkamo. Vuokatti is the centre of tourism in Kainuu because the area has facilities for several tourism services and activities, especially winter sports. Vuokatti region is described as the tourism resort with most activities and facilities compared to other resorts in Finland. The area is profiled as an activity and sport tourism destination and most of the tourists come to exercise and experience outdoor activities. In addition, the area is known as a family destination. The area was also seen as traditional tourist resort. It was said that the area does not have just a ski resort or sports centre but also includes several other services, such as a spa. The resort was established there because the area had a good environment and conditions. The main advantages of the area were seen to be the great variety of services offered and the fact that the area provided products and services all year round (and also has customers all year round). Seasonality does not seem to be problem in the area, which also has a strong brand in Finland.

Nature was seen as a key element in tourism in the Kainuu region. It was the basis of most of the activities in winter and in summer. The area was seen to have the potential to differentiate itself from other places by using nature and natural resources e.g. in wellbeing tourism. The importance of local and traditional services and products and bringing these into tourism products and services was also realized. Kuhmo area was reportedly more peaceful than Vuokatti. In Vuokatti there are also places meant for nightlife, and there is a more recreational feeling in the spa. The Kuhmo area concentrates more on peace and quiet and more individual products and services (not so much high volume products as in Vuokatti). Vuokatti region was seen to have a lot of potential but one of the respondents still felt that all the potential has not yet been transformed into reality.
**Vaasa region**, Ostrobothnia, located on the west coast of Finland consists of 16 municipalities (Isokyrö, Mustasaari, Korsnäs, Kruunupyys, Laihia, Luoto, Maalahti, Pedersören kunta, Vähäkyrö and Vöyri) of which six are towns (Pietarsaari, Kaskinen, Kristiinankaupunki, Näripiö, Uusikarlepyy and Vaasa). The main gateway to the region, due to its central location and its infrastructure, is the city of Vaasa, which acts as a hub in the regional tourism system. Tourism in the region is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Large family attractions, as for example, the Tropiclandia waterpark and the amusement park Wasalandia located in Vaasa, are mixed with small scale nature and culture based tourism attractions in peripheral areas. Leisure travelers outnumber business travelers in the region. However, the business travelers are important for the tourism sector because they travel year around and thereby, to some extent, mitigate the seasonality effects. One can also notice how the business travelers act as quality catalysts by demanding quality products and good service. The region of Vaasa is characterized by its archipelago, the UNESCO World Heritage site Kvarken Archipelago, and its cultural legacy.

The respondents add to the description of the region as a tourist destination by pointing out the great number of activities offered, such as fishing in the pike paradise (http://www.kvarkenfishing.fi), daily cruises to the lighthouses and pilot stations in the area, canoeing, trekking, winter bathing, ATV safaris, and horse riding, as well as a few cultural events. The region hosts a considerable number of museums, festivals and second-hand shops for tourists to discover. Furthermore, even the many guest harbors on the west coast offer a certain type of attraction, not at least for maritime visitors. The city of Vaasa does not have one tourism profile, but appears as a fusion of a variety of activities and experiences. The visitor attractions available are divided into three main categories “History and Culture”, “Nature Experiences”, and “Health, Experiences and Exercise”. Wellbeing tourism in the area is not established as a unique form of tourism, although most of the components exist, to be identified, assembled, packaged and marketed.

### 1.5 Structure of the paper

Wellbeing tourism in Finland is in this report analyzed through the theoretical lens of Sheldon and Park (2009). Their sustainable wellness tourism destination model presented in the next section identifies four distinct dimensions for analysis in support of destination development. The three laboratory areas, Jyväskylä region, Vuokatti and Kainuu region, and Vaasa region, were scrutinized to identify unique selling points (USPs) in Nordic, Finnish wellbeing service packages, and structural prerequisites for successful wellbeing tourism developments. The findings are presented in Section Four, after a discussion of methodological issues in Section Three. Section Five presents Finland as an actor on a Nordic arena and as a part of Nordic Wellbeing tourism cooperation. The last Section concludes the paper and gives some guiding principles for further development.
2 A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE WELLNESS TOURISM DESTINATION

Ritchie and Crouch (2005) propose a conceptual model of destination competitiveness. The model is based on a comparative and competitive advantage concept. The former concerns the endowment resources of the destination and the latter refers to resources deployment. (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008) The model includes several components. These are the global (macro) environment, the competitive micro environment, core resources and attractions, supporting factors and resources, destination policy, planning and development, destination management, and qualifying and amplifying determinants.

Sheldon and Park (2009) developed the model of destination competitive and sustainability by Ritchie and Crouch to be more appropriate in the wellness tourism context (see Figure 3). Sheldon and Park highlight that it is crucial to identify the supporting factors and resources for wellness tourism because it would not be possible to develop wellness products if the destination cannot provide basic infrastructure and guarantee access to the area. In the model of Ritchie and Crouch (2005) branding, awareness and image are situated under the heading qualifying and amplifying determinants. However, Sheldon and Park (2009) argue that these branding efforts should be situated at the stage of where the core resources of wellness tourism are identified. They explain this by stating that the wellness resources connected with culture and cultural elements of the host community are a crucial part of the identity/brand of a destination.

Sheldon and Park’s (2009) model differs from Ritchie and Crouch’s (2005) as they make wellness destination policy and planning the third stage. This is because they believe that wellness tourism cannot be sustainable if it has no clear vision, goals and positioning on the market. The planning stage is followed by destination development and management. At this stage it is guaranteed that the wellness products provided and offered are of high quality. To realize this, the stage includes things such as training and education of personnel (human resources) and offering opportunities to join certification programs. (Sheldon & Park, 2009)

The concepts of wellness and wellbeing tourism are closely related, and consequently, as has been discussed in Section 1.3, have occasionally been used as synonyms. The Finnish Tourism Board defines wellness tourism as a subcategory of wellbeing tourism, and Sheldon and Park (2009) put a special focus on wellness tourism. We assume that their model for destination development is equally valid for analyzing wellbeing tourism destinations, in the sense that the same resources and structures are in use in both forms of tourism.

For the abovementioned reason, later in this report, the term wellbeing will be replaced by the term wellness in the model of Sheldon and Park (2009).
Sustainable Wellbeing Tourism Destination

Wellbeing Destination Development and Management
Human resources, training, education, networks of actors and quality programs

Wellbeing Destination Policy and Planning
Strategic planning, vision, goals, policies, network collaborations, monitoring and evaluation

Core Wellbeing Resources and Attractions
Unique wellbeing destination features: natural and cultural resources, traditional healing/therapeutic/wellness/wellbeing resources

Supporting Wellbeing Resources and Factors
Infrastructure, superstructure, hospitality, destination atmosphere (a sense of place)

Figure 3. A model of sustainable wellbeing destination (Sheldon & Park, 2009, adapted from Ritchie and Crouch, 2000).
3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The data for this report were gathered by using various methods. First of all, the researchers looked into different reports and studies and in the wellbeing and wellness tourism field. In addition, complementary information was taken from each laboratory area for a wider perspective on the operational environment for wellbeing tourism development in the areas. Second, thematic interviews were concluded in each area to examine different stakeholders’ views on the area and tourism development in the area. The focus of the questions was on the respondents’ background and what they consider to be the USPs of their area and of the Nordic countries. In addition they were asked about the networks and destination management in the area under study, how they gathered their information, their vision and concept and what drove their innovation. In addition, they were asked to describe what Nordic Wellbeing contains and what in their opinion it should be composed of. Third, customer surveys were implemented in all the laboratory areas to explore the customer perspective.

3.1 Interviews

Data for the study was gathered by thematic interviews. These interviews were conducted in laboratory areas: Jyväskylä region (11 interviews), Vuokatti/Kainuu region (11 interviews), and Vaasa region (10 interviews). The interviews were conducted in fall 2009 and in spring and summer 2010. The interviewees were chosen in different ways: some were identified by the authors, some by following the suggestions of regional developers and some by representatives of the laboratory partners. The interviewees were tourism and wellbeing professionals, such as tourism entrepreneurs, experts and regional developers. The framework for the semi-structured questions was made jointly by the Nordic researchers participating in the Nordic Wellbeing Project (see Hjalager et al., 2011). The Nordic Wellbeing team undertook study visits to the laboratory areas, and the interviews were closely connected to the specific environments and the local future potentials. Thus the interviews were semi-structured also in the sense that issues could be raised during the visit. Throughout the study, the local actors were extremely willing to share their views, and to add information during follow-up interviews and during workshops. The interviews took from 40 minutes to two hours. The interviews were taped and later transcribed. Interviews were analyzed by using content analysis.

Content analysis is deemed as an accepted method for textual investigations (Silverman, 2006) and as a suitable analysis method for any material that is in written form, including transcribed interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). There are two ways to implement content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. In quantitative content analysis, the researcher defines a set of different categories and then counts the number of words or phrases that are falling into each category. In qualitative content analysis, instead of making frequency counts, extracts illustrating particular categories are used. (Silverman, 2006). In this kind of content analysis different “mentions” are brought up and quotations under different categories are provided (Wilkinson, 2004).

In this study, (qualitative) deductive content analysis is used. This means that the framework of the analysis is based on existing theory (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). It was assumed that the content of the interviews can be categorized according to the model of sustainable wellness destination (Sheldon &
First, the framework of the analysis is established based on the existing theory. Second, diverse categories derived inductively from the data are defined to fit the framework, and the data is resolved into the categories formed. (see e.g. Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002)

### 3.2 Customer survey

The customer survey was conducted in all three laboratory areas. In Vuokatti the study was implemented during spring 2010 and summer 2010. In Jyväskylä region the study was made during summer 2010 and in Vaasa region during late summer and fall 2010. The survey was the same in each laboratory area, except that in Jyväskylä region a question about information sources was added. The data was collected using self-administrative questionnaires in all regions. Altogether 496 responses were obtained, 197 from the Vuokatti region, 279 from the Jyväskylä region, and 20 from the Vaasa region.

The survey was four pages long including questions e.g. on customers’ interests, their interest in participating in product development and estimates of the importance of diverse destination attributes. The main 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. One of the aims of the survey was to get customer feedback on how the seasonality problem could be tackled; what customers appreciate/want to do when they are on holiday in any of the Nordic Wellbeing laboratory areas. The results of the customer survey are reported elsewhere (Paija et al. 2011).

### 3.3 Secondary sources

Secondary data (books, articles, websites, etc.) were used to examine the current wellbeing tourism development situation in the laboratory areas, and to monitor components of wellbeing tourism service products. Websites were consulted as follows,

**Jyväskylä region**
- [http://www.jyvaskyla.fi](http://www.jyvaskyla.fi)
- [http://jyvaskylanseutu.fi/matkailu](http://jyvaskylanseutu.fi/matkailu)
- [http://www.himos.fi](http://www.himos.fi)
- [http://www.jklpaviljonki.fi](http://www.jklpaviljonki.fi)
- [http://www.vesiliikunta.com](http://www.vesiliikunta.com)
- [http://www.peurunka.fi](http://www.peurunka.fi)
- [http://www.firstbeat.fi](http://www.firstbeat.fi)
- [http://www.jykes.fi](http://www.jykes.fi)
- [http://saunafrohinland.fi](http://saunafrohinland.fi)
- [http://vesiliikunta.com](http://vesiliikunta.com)
Kainuu region
http://www.vuokatti.fi
http://www.wildtaiga.fi
http://www.sotkamo.fi
http://www.visitkajaani.fi
http://www.kainuu.fi

Vaasa region
http://www.pohjanmaanmatkailu.fi
http://www.matkailupohjanmaa.fi
http://matkailu.vaasa.fi
http://www.kvarken.fi
http://www.7broar.com
http://www.3towns.com
http://www.epmatkailu.fi/wellbeing_in_south_ostrobothnia.html
http://www.isokyro.fi/patikka/

The links presented are neither exhaustive nor exclusive, but can be used by those wishing to critically assess the current status, and potential future of Finnish wellbeing tourism.
4 WELLBEING TOURISM IN FINLAND – A WIDE PERSPECTIVE

In the following section the three Finnish Wellbeing tourism laboratory areas are examined using the framework of a Sustainable Wellness Tourism Destination (Sheldon & Park, 2009). Different data and materials are used to compose a view of each area. Finally Finland as whole is additionally analyzed using the same framework. Later we investigate if the bottom-up approach would bring new aspects and development ideas for Finnish wellbeing tourism development.

4.1 Jyväskylä region – from know-how to successful tourism products

Examining Jyväskylä region and its prerequisites as a sustainable wellbeing tourism destination (see Annex 2) it was evident that basic resources of substance were recognized and there are few things that are much highlighted considering tourism development in the area. According to the interviews conducted in the region, the main resources and strengths of Jyväskylä region are high-level education (e.g. the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Applied Sciences), know-how in technology, wellbeing and sports, and industrial activity (e.g. the forest industry). It was emphasized that the combination of all these fields would bring added value for product development processes.

From the tourism point of view, Jyväskylä was seen as a place for congresses, meetings and trade fairs with a major emphasis on work related travel. On the other hand, the region was seen as rising wellbeing and leisure tourism destination. This was supported by the facilities at Himos, Peurunka and also businesses in Jyväskylä (e.g. in Laajavuori). It was mentioned that the region has a wide service offering: there are e.g. spas, skiing centers and holiday centers. In addition, the importance of different events were mentioned, especially the internationally known rally event Neste Rally Finland. It was noted that the region has three clear tourism networks. One function in Jyväskylä and concentrates on organizing congresses and events. Another function in the Himos area and it was described as more of a winter activity network. Finally, the network in Peurunka was seen to provide different tourism services all year round. It was also noticed that there is other co-operation in the area, too, but at the time of the research the co-operation was not yet organized into networks. The places mentioned also had different infrastructures that support the tourism activities in the area: ski centers, cultural attractions, spa facilities, second homes and cottages for rent. The publicly accessible spaces were also seen to be important and it was also recognized that tourists used the basic infrastructure in the area, e.g. a trail around a lake in Jyväskylä city.

In addition to the geographical areas and business and leisure aspects, the importance of diverse natural resources was recognized. The value creating attributes in tourism were seen to be connected to nature, services, infrastructure and atmosphere. The general assumption was that tourists appreciate natural attributes and environment of the area. The natural elements mentioned were lakes, waters, forests and hills. Four distinct seasons were also mentioned, and especially winter. Adjectives connected to nature and environment were peacefulness and quiet. Quietness was connected to the tourists’ motives to get away from noise. Jyväskylä region was also seen as easily accessible (nationally and internationally) and many of the interviewees highlighted that the accessibility of services in the area was good. The distances to different services and places were reportedly short, too. All the aspects mentioned above can be identified as very basic resources and conditions that are the basis of any kind of tourism development in the region. Also, even though the
interviewees said that these natural resources added value for tourists, they also pointed out that the natural resources are very little utilized in tourism products.

Regarding the local culture and other issues connected to localization only one person was mentioned – Alvar Aalto. Jyväskylä is the birthplace of the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. There are also several buildings in the town designed by him. In addition, there is a museum dedicated to his work. Apart from this the utilization of locality and, for instance, storytelling was very rare.

In relation of wellbeing tourism and wellbeing tourism development some themes were stronger than others – namely sauna, wellbeing technology and water sports. Sauna as a resource was mentioned several times as a key resource. Sauna was connected to concept of the Sauna from Finland, which is under development in the area. The aim of the process is to connect businesses in the sauna industry, tourism, wellbeing/wellness and service sectors. According a study made by Jyväskylä Regional Development Company Ltd. (JYKES), businesses in the area believe that the sauna theme can create a more positive image of the region. In addition, the theme was seen as a chance to improve the competitiveness of the area by motivating business and product development. The Sauna from Finland theme was also seen as an umbrella for marketing. (Harju et al., 2009) Interviewees mentioned the sauna manufacturers when talking about the area as a sauna region. For instance, the sauna stove manufacturer Harvia has its facilities in the area. The interviewees found that the concept of Sauna from Finland can be a supporting factor in product development processes. In general, the importance of product development was emphasized, and in addition to sauna products water sports services were mentioned. There were ideas about how sauna could be highlighted in the area. These ideas included the development of sauna village or a sauna museum. The Sauna from Finland network has been very innovative and they have collected material for various sauna (tourism) products by organizing competitions where users were asked to recount their own sauna experiences. In addition, they developed a new product, Sauna yoga (www.saunafromfinland.fi).

In the region new hydrotherapy activities for wellbeing services are developed. The Finnish Institute of Aquatics, located in Jyväskylä region, is developing new water activities and equipment for water activities. The institute is also in charge of educating fitness instructors for various water sports such as water running (with a water running belt), using submerged trampolines, and aerobics and training in water. These training and aerobic forms are AquaBailamos, AquaBoxing, AquaTrim, AquaArmyInterval, AquaHappyFeeling, AquaKickRock, AquaJogging, AquaLineDance, AquaAttack, AquaCapoeira, AquaFunk, AquaDisco, AquaHarmony and AquaPilates (www.vesiliikunta.com). New equipment to support exercising in water has also been developed. Wellbeing technology was also seen as one of the strengths in the Jyväskylä region. For instance, a technology business called Firstbeat produces products and services for monitoring health and wellbeing. Firstbeat cooperates with the Finnish heart rate monitor manufacturer Suunto. With the help of the software it is possible to assess physical workload, daily stress and recovery, health promoting effects of physical activity, effectiveness of fitness training, and energy expenditure and weight management (www.firstbeat.fi). The stress monitoring has also been tested in tourism settings in Jyväskylä.

To develop a unique wellbeing tourism profile, these three issues, sauna, water sports and technology, should be tied more closely to the tourism services and resources in the area. At the
moment the sauna resource is the best utilized in the product and service development processes. However, there is still a lot to do to combine the potentials of different sectors into wellbeing tourism products. In addition, there is a demand for coordination for development processes and for a higher tourism profile for the area.

The positive attitude to education and the usefulness of educational institutions in the development processes is a strength e.g. in the product development processes. However, the businesses need to have the motivation for the processes in order to develop sellable and realizable products.

**Jyväskylä** - Three individual tourism networks. The tourism functions in Jyväskylä region are quite scattered around the area. The area is rather big, and there are three identified tourism networks active in the area. One functions in Jyväskylä and concentrates on organizing congresses and events. Another operates in the Himos area and is a designated winter activity network. Finally, the network in Peurunka provides various tourism services all year round. Peurunka was also seen as a potential wellbeing destination. In development processes the role of development organizations in the region is fairly strong. These organizations coordinate various R&D projects in the area and work closely with businesses. One aim in the region is to connect the competences and selling points of other industries to the tourism sector and integrate these with saleable and packaged products. However, at the moment the resource activation is rather fragmentary.

### 4.2 Vuokatti and Kainuu region – a wide range of possibilities for activities

In Vuokatti and Kainuu region (see Annex 3) the basic resources of the area were recognized and it was evident that the focus was on natural and topographical resources. In addition, the possibility of participating diverse activities in the area was seen as one of the unique selling points. Vuokatti area was also seen to be profiled around “sport culture” which has partly been built around good success of sports clubs of the area. The most visible “landmarks” and/or main actors in Vuokatti are Vuokatti Sports Institute, Katinkulta Spa and Vuokatti Slopes.

The value creating attributes in tourism were seen to be mainly connected to nature, wide range of activities, availability and good quality of products and services. Additionally, the most important tourism resources are connected to the natural elements and infrastructure of the area. Natural geographical features were seen as one important profiling feature in the area. Attributes used to describe nature and natural elements were silence and quiet, space and tranquility. The interviewees thought that tourists appreciate the nature and environment of the area. The natural elements mentioned were lakes and the four distinctive seasons that also mean that the nature looks different at different times of the year. This also makes it possible to provide diverse seasonal activities in the area. Otherwise, nature and environment were described as peaceful, clean and quiet. Respondents appreciated natural surroundings not only as something to see, but also the chance to feel closeness with nature and even to be a part of it. It was also noted that it is important to concentrate on topics and features that are found to be suitable to the area, e.g. wildlife. It was emphasized that the area needs to have its own unique system and products, and it should not try to copy something unsuitable from somewhere else. This referred to utilizing nature – especially the unspoiled natural area – as a base of tourism products. It was realized that the area has a lot of unique selling points.
such as cleanliness, nature, space, and the fact that the region was seen as a different and peaceful place. However, the challenge is how to transform these into tourism products, particularly so that it does not harm the natural environment.

In addition to natural resources, the area also has rather unique features and infrastructure that support winter sports and profiling Vuokatti as a ski resort. These are a ski tunnel and a snowboard tunnel that can also be used for training in summer time. In addition to winter activities other activities and services are provided all year round. These activities include fishing, golf and diverse indoor activities such as spa services, indoor swimming and indoor sports. The local atmosphere and mentality of the local people (mentality of Kainuu/people of Northern Finland) give customers a feeling of tranquility; there is no haste and they get a convivial feeling. In one case a representative of the businesses mentioned that they had used locally produced food in their (wellness) menus. Otherwise the local culture of the locality was not mentioned. On the other hand, the international atmosphere was seen as one possible pull factor to the area. The internationality comes from the presence of world class athletes who come to train in Vuokatti.

Considering the area from the wellbeing tourism point of view, the wellbeing tourism in Vuokatti region centers mainly around the activities provided and hence the customers and tourists have to have an active role to enhance their wellbeing. The activities include diverse indoor and outdoor sports and exercises. In addition, there is a spa, Katinkulta, in Vuokatti. The spa is one of the landmarks of the area and it can also be assumed that it attracts a particular kind of visitors to the area.

In lights of the interviews it is fairly obvious that the area has several diverse actors and stakeholders who have partly different goals. For instance, Vuokatti Sports Institute was said to provide world scale training in skiing and their staff was complimented on their excellent know-how in sports and in services needed by professional athletes. It was also recognized that these athletes are their main target group. On the other hand, many other businesses are concentrated on different tourist groups. However, it seems that the wide appeal in the service offerings has been formulated as one of the most important unique selling points of the area. The co-operation works between these different stakeholders as witnessed in the common marketing activities.

The development processes and organization in the area are fairly well rationalized. However, this often depends on the business or the network the business is a part of. In some cases businesses could also recognize and analyze unsuccessful innovations and they have learned from these. As mentioned above, some individual businesses have good know-how in product development and commodification and the role of creativity was deemed very important in the development processes. In Vuokatti there are few very good cases of new innovations and new products. One example is the villas of Vuokatin Aateli. Vuokatin Aateli concentrates on offering high quality accommodation in villas and apartments, and they are use the latest technology in their luxury villas. This includes carbon dioxide measuring in order to automatically modify the air-conditioning of different rooms to keep the oxygen level optimal for guests. Apartments and villas are also monitored remotely. The manager, located elsewhere, can help if the customer has problems with some equipment. In addition, the system will alert management if a guest has forgotten to turn off the water before leaving or if a window has been left open in winter. Such systems help the
proprietor to monitor the quality and keep the accommodations in good shape for future guests. In this case the entrepreneur himself was taking part in the development processes of the measurement equipment because at that time he was planning to use this kind of technology it was not yet developed.

In Vuokatti region traditional marketing channels had a very strong role. This was seen both positively and negatively. The product know-how in product development was seen to be fairly good. However, the problem was in many cases that the development processes were concentrated on individual businesses and the development work was rarely done in networks. In addition, the role of customer information was highlighted but its use was not visible in practice. All in all, it was reported that the product development needs new ideas and viewpoints so that businesses can develop products and services that attract new target groups. There was criticism that it seemed at the time that the development was focused more on quantity (e.g. adding the amount of beds) instead of improving quality.

To develop wellbeing tourism products and services the developers and businesses need to recognize the customer needs and what they expect of wellbeing tourism products in the area. To help businesses to identify these issues a customer survey was implemented in the Vuokatti region (The customer research report will be published separately, Paija & Konu, 2011). Businesses and developers can utilize this information later on to support their product development processes. At the moment the profile of Vuokatti region is fairly diversified as the area aims to offer everything to everyone. The solution to this could be to develop more focused product lines e.g. Vuokatti wellbeing under the main marketing slogan “Versatile Vuokatti”. The basic resources for developing wellbeing tourism in the area exist but these could be better transformed into or utilized in wellbeing tourism products. The locality and storytelling could also be more tied to (wellbeing) tourism products and services.

**Vuokatti** in Finland is adopting a mixed strategy of collaboration and entrepreneurship. In Vuokatti the role of the marketing organization is very dominant. The brand of “Versatile Vuokatti” is well known in Finland and the purple colour in the logo is well recognized. The marketing cooperation seems to work fairly well in the area, even though some smaller businesses have stated that they do not necessarily have much to say in the process compared to bigger companies in the area. It is evident that the common marketing actions also knit actors better together and thus balance the competitiveness in the region. The collaboration functions best in marketing, while at the moment the product development processes and transforming the local resources into tourism products is mainly undertaken by individual businesses. However, the importance of strategic networks is recognized when e.g. information about customer needs is gathered to support the development process.
4.3 Vaasa region – Wellbeing tourism: the next step

Vaasa region (see Annex 4) presented through the lens of the interviews reveals a mosaic of actors, activities and resources positioned in two different types geographical contexts. The archipelago, sea, seashore and the beach, and the adjoining land constitute a unique and particular context with influence on wellbeing tourism being developed. Another context for wellbeing tourism to germinate from can be found one step inland from the seashore. Here, a typical Ostrobothnian rural milieu dominates the content of wellbeing tourism developments, i.e. an area where historical heritage and regional culture echo between the traditional red farmhouses with white corners encircled by arable and pasture land - proof of active farming.

Discussing wellbeing tourism with the interviewees revealed that there is no single perspective on what wellbeing tourism is. Some of the informants explained that wellbeing tourism is about spa and pampering, in contrast to those who stressed that this type of tourism includes different types of physical activities. A third group, a minority though, were of the opinion that wellbeing tourism is an “inner journey”, a combination of new experiences and inner harmony, as well as a decent level of physical activities. The words used by all informants to describe wellbeing tourism were relaxation, freedom from stress, and “contrast to everyday life”. Very few talked explicitly about health and curing illness. It was most obvious that wellbeing tourism is about improving the current health status among the visitors and tourists.

To identify the necessary resources in the Vaasa region to be used in wellbeing tourism development is not an issue according to the interviewees. There are at least three core resource dimensions that have to be successfully merged. These are the environment (context) in general and the archipelago and the sea nature in particular, service quality, and locally produced food. The environmental resources mentioned most often by the informants were silence, clean air, four seasons, ice, winter and unspoiled countryside. The archipelago was presented as a unique basic resource of which the UNESCO World Heritage status is a proof. However, discussing the Kvarken World heritage site with the informants elicited mixed responses due to the question of how to balance development with conservation.

Wellbeing tourism in the region has to be unique, stand out, and be marketable. All informants agree on this, and add cultural aspects to nature as a USP. Local dishes and locally produced food were mentioned especially as core resources in wellbeing tourism offerings. The food and the dishes have to reflect the cultural heritage, be full of flavor, and nutritious, i.e. healthy. Core activities discussed regarding wellbeing tourism in the Vaasa region, were of three different types. Sauna and sauna bathing were presented as a very essential dimension in the local wellbeing concept. Spa treatments, massage and meditation were discussed in terms of pampering. The last category of activities was related to exercise, fitness and working out. The informants tried to be very explicit, explaining what type of exercise they thought of. Wellbeing tourism should not be a training camp. The physical activities offered have to be customized and integrated with other activities offered as a package that appeals to “mind and soul”.
The infrastructure in the region is perceived as good, except for the car ferry traffic between Finland (Vaasa) and Sweden (Umeå). The current situation is most often compared to a time period called the “tax-free period” which ended in 1995 when Finland joined the European Union. One should also recognize the electrification of the railroad between Vaasa and Seinäjoki, which will facilitate access to the areas. Tourism facilities are also well developed to meet the current demand, but should, probably be updated if the region should whole-heartedly decide on wellbeing tourism. In the Southern part of Ostrobothnia there are already some pilot projects focusing on conceptualization and packaging of wellbeing tourism. A latent resource also discussed by some of the informants was the wealth of second homes in the area. How the tourism sector could benefit from this large amount of unused capacity has long been an issue. The occupancy rate of these second homes is very low, even during the high season. To rent these privately owned cottages is not a high priority among the owners.

Wellbeing tourism development in the Vaasa region is in an initial phase. There are currently no regional policies or planning instruments to support a regional wellbeing tourism strategy. Wellbeing tourism is discussed and the few initiatives that can be identified are scattered around, and take place only in certain designated areas. Most initiatives are project based (for example HYMA1 and HYMA2) and coordinated by external actors. These initiatives also benefit from external funding (ERDF). The outcomes of these initiatives are packages of wellbeing services and joint marketing programs. The informants explained how the area hosts most of the resources needed for developing wellbeing tourism. What seem to be lacking are appropriate networks and cooperation initiatives, because no single tourist firm can produce a total wellbeing tourism package on their own.

Branding the region of Vaasa as a wellbeing destination generated three different perspectives. A majority recognized the potential in branding the destination and thought that wellbeing would be a good option. However, they were acutely aware of the work to be done and that branding is a long process. There was also a category of informants reconciled to the idea of Ostrobothnia as a wellbeing destination, but who conceded the fact that the region already hosts a large range of tourism packages. The last category of informants was skeptical about the wellbeing tourism concept, and found it hard to conceptualize and sell. There were also discussions about how to proceed with the wellbeing tourism concept, and if brand labels were developed who would be eligible to use them. Another issue, probably a more important one, was who would be invited to participate in such development projects.

**Vaasa** - Actors in the region are currently aiming at re-defining their tourism services. The majority of the tourism firms in the laboratory area of Vaasa are small (micro) and seasonal. Their primary goal is, and has always been, to make their visitors (guests) feel good and satisfied. This basic marketing logic seems to have gained another dimension in terms of customer wellbeing. There is today an intensified focus on wellbeing as a concept among the entrepreneurs. It is not so much about adding new services to their range, but to re-define existing services to better fit the wellbeing trend. The destination environment is water and the archipelago, as well as local nature and culture. The service infrastructure is good, but could be improved. The car ferry service to Sweden especially could be better. However, this is not the most critical aspect for wellbeing tourism development in the region. The lack of a well organized wellbeing tourism network is more critical to further development.
4.4 Finland as a sustainable wellbeing tourism destination

4.4.1 Supporting factors and resources for wellbeing tourism in Finland

Considering tourism in general, Finland has good basic infrastructure and accessibility is quite good (e.g. airports, roads, railroads, accommodations, restaurants). In addition, the good quality services and the Nordic service standards strengthen Finland’s profile as a high quality destination. In addition, Finland is known for its wellbeing society. For instance, Finland is one of the top five countries amongst of the world’s 21 richest countries for children’s wellbeing (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2007). It is also stated that Nordic people have a generally healthy attitude and this can be seen, for instance, in many fitness activities which are part of everyday life. Some of these activities have also been adapted in wellness centers in different parts of world (e.g. Nordic walking). (Smith & Puzckó, 2009)

Wellness, as a dimension of wellbeing, can also be connected to some of the supporting factors. These may be, for instance, hotels and accommodation facilities including wellness services or restaurants mainly offering healthy food. (Sheldon & Park, 2009) Finland is marketing itself by cultivating an image of peace and quiet in natural settings (Finnish Tourist Board, 2008b). This creates an image of a relaxing atmosphere for the destination.

Finland has many supporting factors and resources for wellness tourism. There is good know-how about different (traditional) healing practices, and use of natural resources such as berries and using them for health. Technological solutions and innovations can also be taken to the wellness and wellbeing tourism sector. One example of this is Polar offering “training computers” measuring heart rate during exercises. In addition, there are several Finnish cosmetic suppliers (e.g. Lumene, Cutrin and Frantsila) focusing on using natural resources in their products. These businesses use raw materials such as cloudberry, blackcurrant, cranberry, blueberry, lingonberry, birch, linen, heather and peat. These cosmetics suppliers cooperate with several tourism businesses. (see e.g. Hjalager & Konu, 2011)

4.4.2 Core wellbeing resources and attractions

Finnish wellbeing tourism focuses mainly on nature, peace and quietness, activities, and also some cultural offerings (Kangas & Tuohino, 2008, Finnish Tourist Board, 2008a, Björk, 2011b). The natural core resources are pure nature or unspoiled countryside including, for instance, forests, lakes and other water areas, hills, large wilderness areas. Finland also has four distinct seasons that can be utilized in different tourism products. It seems that Finnish people usually pursue wellbeing through physical activities. This can also be seen from the supply of Finnish wellbeing tourism companies as their offering of wellbeing is concentrated mainly on activities and sauna (Kangas & Tuohino, 2008). Finnish wellbeing innovations are generally known internationally. Sauna and Nordic walking especially have strengthened their position in general knowledge as Finnish products (Finnish Tourist Board, 2008b). At the moment the problem is that these sauna and Nordic walking products and
offerings in Finland are not easy to find for international tourists. As stated above (Finnish Tourist Board, 2008b), there are some wellbeing tourism products and services but they are divided under several different headings, such as special interests, accommodation, what to do and activities (see also Finnish Tourist Board, 2008a).

The Finnish Tourist Board (2008b) has listed the characteristics of a basic wellbeing holiday offering including core wellness factors and attractions connected to natural, cultural, and traditional healing/therapeutic/wellness resources. The basic wellbeing holiday offering includes elements such as getting away from everyday routines, enjoying peace and nature, relaxing, and “recharging one’s batteries”; outdoor recreation, exploring nature, events related to Finnish culture, and retreats; traditional Finnish forms of sauna bathing; a pleasant, esthetically pleasing, and authentic environment; personal service; healthy, preferably locally produced food, with information available to the customer on the origin and nutritional content of the food; attention to the environment and sustainable development in the offering; consideration for the aging customer base and people with impaired mobility; and an esthetically pleasing, well looked-after environment.

In addition to the basic offering, there are two targeted customer and offering groups. These groups are Health and Fitness Exercise, and Pampering. Health and fitness activities also utilize Finnish sports equipment and technology. Overall, the characteristics of health and fitness holiday are defined as follows (Finnish Tourist Board, 2008b): activities (Nordic walking, hiking, walking, snowshoeing, skiing, swimming, winter swimming, golf, etc.) – the difference is that the main motive is not participation in activities but taking care of one’s health and fitness; trained and professional instructors, fitness and other tests, and personal training; massage and other restorative treatments; and use of Finnish technology related to the wellness theme and instruction in its use. The health effects of winter swimming can also be achieved also by using cryotherapy, which is in use in several wellbeing and wellness facilities in Finland (Smith & Puzckó, 2009).

The pampering theme includes several different spa and beauty treatments. This offering is the closest to international understanding of wellness, but it has to be stated that there is no actual wellness offering that fulfils international requirements in Finland. (Finnish Tourist Board, 2008b). The Finnish Tourist Board (2008a) has also summarized characteristics that are included in pampering. These are a high-quality environment (accommodation, pool, treatment departments, etc.); special attention to delicious (gourmet) food; emphasis on personal, high-quality service; additional programs, such as cultural offerings, shopping, etc.; and a “passive” holiday, in which the customer enjoys the service.

4.4.3 Wellbeing destination policy and planning

Wellbeing tourism is one product theme to be developed in the Finnish national tourism strategy published by Ministry of Trade and Industry (KTM, 2006). This led to the development of a ‘Development strategy for Finnish wellbeing tourism in international markets, 2009-2013’, in 2008. As the Finnish wellbeing tourism strategy is quite new its implementation is ongoing. There are plans to develop more comprehensive wellbeing tourism products and services for foreign markets.
The vision for Finnish wellbeing tourism defined by the Finnish Tourist Board (2008b) is: “Finland is known as a country that can offer wellbeing, rest, and relaxation. Its wellbeing offering is clearly defined. The offering has been put together in a manner that is marketable and follows sustainable development. It comprises packages or modules that are easy to purchase and internationally known. Wellbeing tourism is a year-round activity that can extend the tourism season in Finland. Wellbeing tourism has become part of the Finnish tourism brand, one that customers associate with clean air, water, and forests and with de-stressing, relaxing amid stillness, tranquility, and exercising in a naturally beautiful landscape and a high-quality aesthetic environment. There is clear specialization in the sector (menus for special diets, technology, etc.).”

In Finland some studies have been conducted to support wellness tourism development. Research concentrates on the customer perspective in wellbeing tourism, and in more detailed on tourists’ motivations and experiences (see e.g. Konu & Laukkanen, 2009; Konu, 2010; Konu & Laukkanen, 2010; Pesonen & Komppula, 2010). This research information can be utilized in development and planning processes.

4.4.4 Wellbeing destination development and management

In Finland there are so far no official associations in the wellbeing sector, governmental organizations supporting the co-operation between wellness industry and public sector. However, the government provides support for social holidays that often take place in wellness or wellbeing facilities. In addition, there are a rehabilitation programs for war veterans (Aho, 2007).

There are ongoing actions implementing the Finnish Wellbeing Strategy. One of the aims is to create standardized products for international wellness markets. In the process new kinds of cooperation and cooperation models between the wellness industry and public sector may take shape.

In Finland there is a fairly good training system for service personnel in the wellbeing sector. In addition, a new full-time degree program in Experience and Wellness Management has started (Haaga-Helia, 2010). In Turku there is an ongoing project on Innovations and Learning in Spa Management (ILIS, 2010). One goal of the project is to create common vocational training and virtual education models (including language and cultural skills) in cooperation with higher education, enterprise partners and other associates.

Finland as a sustainable wellbeing tourism destination is in an early state of development. The three laboratory areas analyzed for this study reveal a huge potential. Wellbeing tourism, as a unique form of tourism, is not context specific, as, for example, alpine tourism or fishing tourism. Wellbeing tourism has its focus on the perceived wellbeing of the visitors, a state which can be achieved in the sauna landscape of Eastern Finland, just as well as on a small island in the archipelago of Ostrobothnia. Nature, culture, knowledge and technology are presented as critical resources in wellbeing tourism offerings. A proposed bottom-up approach to wellbeing tourism development in Finland ought to be founded on existing resources and presented as an arena for physical and mental exercise. However, the challenges for future development are aspects of coordination and joint marketing efforts, not forgotten an honest focus on visitors’ needs and preferences.
5 THE NORDIC WELLBEING CONCEPT AND VISION FROM THE FINNISH POINT OF VIEW

This Section is based on the interviews made in the Finnish laboratory areas. Interviewees were asked to describe unique selling points and value creating attributes of the Nordic countries, and give their opinions and describe the content of the Nordic Wellbeing concept.

5.1 Unique value creating attributes of the Nordic countries

The Nordic countries can be considered as a destination product. A destination product takes shape from various attributes and elements. In this report a destination product is seen to contain destination environments, service infrastructure and tourist destination experience (Murphy et al., 2000; see Figure 4). Destination environments include natural environment, economic factors, cultural factors, political/legal factors, technological factors, and social factors. Service infrastructure includes recreation and attraction services, catering services, travel services, shopping services, transportation services and accommodation services. A tourist destination experience is formed from a combination of these elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination environments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist destination experience</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 4. A conceptual model of the destination product (modified from Murphy et al., 2000, 46).
Attributes connected to destination environments were the Nordic climate, peace and quiet, forests, unspoiled natural surroundings and environment, lakes and other water areas, snow and ice, mountains, location, Nordic culture, local lifestyle and way of life, history of the area, exotic and mystique of the north, four distinct seasons, ecological destination, products from nature (berries etc.), authenticity, and midnight sun and light summer nights. Technology and use of technology was also one aspect that came up.

Unspoiled natural environment was mentioned several times, for instance, emphasizing the cleanliness compared to other places: “Well, I think nature is one of the key aspects and it is known that it’s quite clean compared to the other places” (M6V, free translation by authors). The natural surroundings and their appeal also connected to the local culture and to Nordic way of life: “…certain things are coming from nature... it is managed to keep the nature appealing, if you are thinking even of Norway, Sweden and Iceland, and it comes from people’s culture and way of life.” (M3V, free translation by authors).

Interviewees included in service infrastructure attributes such as multiple nature-based activities, wellbeing and wellness services (e.g. sauna), accessibility, local and regional food, quality of products and services, reliability and well designed services, Nordic service standards, professional people and services, summer activities (e.g. hiking), winter activities (e.g. skiing), fall activities (e.g. mushroom picking), spring activities (e.g. rafting), Nordic design products, and comprehensive service packages.

One of the interviewees mentioned the cleanliness and functioning of services of the Nordic countries by comparing them to those in other countries: “The Nordic countries are acting smart as a whole, and you can see it indirectly too. What I mean is that when you are looking, for instance, at Greece and Italy that have ancient good attractions and things, and they can ‘harness’ tourism, but you can see under the surface that it might be very dirty and littered, and transportation and traffic are not well organized, all this kind of things.” (M3V, free translation by authors). Sauna was seen as the best known wellbeing and wellness service of the Nordic countries. One of the interviewees commented that there is sauna in almost in every wellness centre in Europe: “Well it is sauna. It is probably it. And is it Swedish sauna or Finnish sauna, well that's the question.” (F4S, free translation by authors). She said that even though it was not always clear if it was Finnish or Swedish sauna, it was connected to the Nordic countries.

Tourist destination experience was seen to come from a combination of the destination environments and service infrastructure: “...lots of untouched nature, in other words, in tourism it is accessed rather easily and safely and you can go there and experience it.” (F7S, free translation by authors). Untouched nature is connected to good accessibility and a safe way to experience it. One entrepreneur described the cleanliness of the natural environment as part of the tourism product as follows: “…I organized a mushroom hunt for German food reporters... ...there was a man who had picked mushrooms all his life... ...it was very nice to be able to talk about the mushrooms more deeply. And that, that he was so overwhelmed, that he couldn’t remember the last time he had had red boletus on this scale. Last time he had seen these was five years ago in Germany, and that is because the soil has become acid and mushrooms don’t grow there anymore. And here we come back to the clean nature...”. (F6S, free translation by authors). Cultural differences were also seen as something tourists want to experience and this came up from the juxtaposition of south and north: “Well then
there is a thing such as the mystique of the north for people coming from the south – they want to experience something different.” (M8S, free translation by authors).

The attributes belonging to the destination environments mainly contained aspects of natural environments. Attributes connected to service infrastructure concerned mainly recreation and transportation services, and high quality of services. It also became evident that the tourist destination experience is composed of combination of a destination environments and service infrastructure. Attributes and issues emerging from the interviews emphasized natural assets (e.g. cleanliness of air, nature and water), outdoor experience and enjoyment combined with achievement, and cultural elements (e.g. healthy local gastronomy and local culture) (see Figure 5). In addition, many adjectives were connected to the Nordic countries. These were, to give few examples, safe, cool, silent, real, empty, easy, unique, clean, exotic, fresh, cold and idyllic. Most of the adjectives were used in a positive way even though some issues were also discussed critically (e.g. the image of the Nordic countries as expensive countries).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination environments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Forests, fjords, lakes, water, snow, polar region, mountains etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social equality, democracy, cultural connection, locality, high education level, wellbeing, safety, high living standards, lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cultural influence of east and west, architecture, history, Santa Claus etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nordic values, appreciation of nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Good infrastructure, Nordic standards, level of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accessibility of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transportation services (bus, train, plane), boat routes, maritime connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Big tourism destinations/resorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High quality accommodation, cottages/villas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Human resources: high quality service, know-how, motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nature activities, different activities in different seasons → independent and guided activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wellbeing services (sauna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Local food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist destination experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Getting in touch with own wellbeing through nature and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Concentrating on oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Comprehensive experience of natural waters: feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Experiencing the clean and easily accessible natural environment safely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feeling of visiting a place where only few people have been (different destination compared to many other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-development and realizing things in peaceful environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Slow-life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Destination product features of the Nordic countries.
It was challenging for the interviewees to define those aspects and attributes that give added value for tourists in the Nordic countries. Many of the interviewees mentioned nature as a unique attribute, but later on started to think what aspect of nature makes it so special and gives added value for tourists. Keeping in mind the idea of strengthening the image of the Nordic countries as a wellbeing destination they started to mention the wholesomeness of forest berries and health effects of exercising in forest areas.

5.2 Content of Nordic Wellbeing

The interviewees were asked their opinion about the content of Nordic Wellbeing. In addition, they were asked if they thought Nordic Wellness differed from Nordic Wellbeing. The concepts were seen and commented from two points of view: some defined the contents of the concepts and others discussed the concepts from the development perspective. Many of the respondents found differences between the concepts. Most commonly Nordic Wellbeing was seen as a wider and more abstract concept than Nordic Wellness. In some cases the concepts were also seen as synonyms. This was mainly the case when the concepts were described using product elements. Nordic Wellness, however, was seen to include more luxury items than Nordic Wellbeing which was described in more abstract terms. There were also a few respondents who could not define the Nordic Wellness concept. They felt that the concept was very strange and too complex and preferred to use the word wellbeing.

Nordic Wellbeing was described from different perspectives. It was described from a general and comprehensive perspective, and also by specifying the tourism and tourism product context. Some of the interviewees mentioned products, services and elements that the concept may include. These were, for instance, different activities (e.g. running, Nordic walking and hiking), wellbeing services (e.g. massages, sauna and spa treatments), and resources that were also mentioned when the unique selling points of the Nordic countries were discussed. These resources included locally produced and “clean” (Nordic) food (also including ingredients from the forests e.g. berries), nature and natural elements (e.g. lakes and forests), culture, and natural ingredients that can also be used e.g. in different treatments. In addition, infrastructure and various fitness and sport facilities were mentioned. Some of the interviewees also connected medical services to Nordic Wellbeing. Utilizing resources (nature, infrastructure, facilities etc.) in services makes it possible for customers to do different things and to participate in a variety of activities according to their own abilities and interests. It is possible to do different things individually or with other people. Additionally, there are opportunities for various treatments and also to use technical equipment for stimulation and new challenges. This all is supported by good accommodation and catering facilities and the chance to have fun and enjoy oneself. These elements form a comprehensive package of high quality designed in the Nordic way. One respondent hoped that the focus of products and services would have a more spiritual context in future.

The Nordic Wellbeing products and services were mentioned to be of high quality and reliable. The importance of co-operation was emphasized when product development and service packages were discussed. Accessibility and availability of services was deemed essential. The importance of customers being able actually to buy products and services at the travel destination was mentioned
because it was felt that it creates trust and an image of reliability regarding the area and products it offers.

Quite many of the interviewees connected more abstract issues to the Nordic Wellbeing concept. Nordic values such as equality, respect for others, appreciating, supporting, and taking care of others, and appreciating nature, were mentioned several times. How to connect these values to tourism products was also discussed. The human-nature relationship was seen as an especially meaningful and important part of Nordic Wellbeing. It was deemed important that when Nordic Wellbeing is discussed the importance of nature and the Nordic way of life should be highlighted.

Nordic Wellbeing was also described as holistic wellbeing including wellbeing of mind, body and soul. Aspects of intellectuality were also mentioned. Some of the interviewees felt that holistic wellbeing comes partly rising from the Nordic values, but also from the environment. In many cases it was seen to include: “...simple, slow-life, relaxation and tranquility, real experiences that partly arise more strongly from local culture” (M1J, free translation by authors). The concept was also described with adjectives such as authentic, ecological, and exotic. Being together with others and having fun was also one aspect that was connected to the theme. The chance to be oneself was also emphasized. This included being in harmony with one’s own body, mind and also the social or natural environment. Nordic Wellbeing and services connected to it were seen as a chance to balance stress and stress factors of individuals improving their wellbeing. Wellbeing was thought to be achieved if the individual has an active role in taking care him/herself (physically and mentally). In the Nordic contexts holistic wellbeing was seen to come from the different Nordic environments and unique features and resources of the Nordic countries.

Interviewees were also asked which dimensions (social, physical, emotional, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, occupational) were the most important for their understanding of Nordic Wellbeing. Figure 6 shows that environmental, emotional and physical dimensions dominated the interviewees’ perceptions of Nordic Wellbeing.
Many of the interviewees approached the Nordic Wellbeing concept by describing the end state that people will achieve by using services and products under the concept. The main aim was to help customers to get the feeling of wellbeing. It was also noted that this was very subjective and it is challenging to provide the prerequisites that makes the feeling possible for everyone – it cannot be achieved by offering the same products and services to everyone. The feeling of wellbeing was seen to come from a clear mind, a clean and healthy body, clean and pure nature, fresh air, and from interaction with nature.

Some of the interviewees approached the concept more generally taking it more social perspective. In this respect the role and wellbeing of local people was big. It was deemed important that the region should also provide good life for local people. These ideas and issues were connected to the discussion about welfare state (e.g. subsidized health care, education, social security), and to mental, environmental, social and community wellbeing and welfare.

Few of the interviewees took a development point of view and noted that it would be interesting to test different products and services in different Nordic countries and in diverse areas. The idea behind this was to find out if Nordic Wellbeing as a concept including a variety of products and services can be used in different environments, for example, in rural areas and in towns. Whether the concept can be transferred in these different environments where e.g. infrastructures are very different needs to be investigated.

Many of the interviewees saw Nordic Wellness as a narrower concept than Nordic Wellbeing. Nordic Wellness was in many cases seen to include only things connected to physical activity or to pampering. In the physical activity perspective, Nordic Wellness includes some activities (e.g. Nordic walking, activities in nature) or activity equipment or environments (e.g. gym). In some cases Nordic Wellness was only seen as sports and active training. One of the interviewees also described it as

![Dimensions of Nordic Wellbeing](image-url)
“sports madness”. In addition, different healthy diets were also included in Nordic Wellness. Things connected to the pampering theme were spas, massages, beauty treatments, saunas, and cosmetic products. In addition, one of the respondents said that wellness is more passive than wellbeing. Different treatments were seen to be connected to nature and natural resources, such as plants that can improve health. Traditional activities and treatments that were seen to improve health were also connected to Nordic Wellbeing, among them winter swimming in an ice hole, “traditional Finnish manipulative therapy à la Kalevala”, and cupping. Many of the interviewees emphasized that these services and activities could be additional services connected to Nordic Wellbeing.

Nordic Wellness was also discussed with regard to products. One of the interviewees thought the Nordic Wellness products are better developed and include more luxurious elements than Nordic Wellbeing. Some of the interviewees felt that Nordic Wellness is a wider concept than Nordic Wellbeing. It was seen to include similar elements that were discussed in context of the Nordic Wellbeing, but in addition, it includes more high class services and luxury elements (e.g. luxurious accommodation). Services were also believed to be more personalized and customized. Some of the interviewees saw the concept as more a technical term and connected it to product development processes where e.g. equipment and frameworks were developed to support product development. Nordic Wellness was also seen to include the production of technological solutions, fitness concepts, preventive health care systems, and various equipment (e.g. for gyms or training equipment for elderly people). Nordic Wellness was seen to represent high quality in different fields, such as in cosmetics, expert services, food and diets, and training of athletes. However, it was pointed out that this high quality should be brought up more efficiently.

One of the interviewees felt that there are no clear images for the Nordic countries, Scandinavia or Finland as wellbeing destinations. It was mentioned that a shared understanding of the Nordic Wellbeing and Nordic Wellness concepts were needed. This was considered important if and when products and services are provided and marketed under the themes. However, one of the interviewee said that it was not clear what concept should be used. Many of the respondents said that Nordic Wellbeing is much better than Nordic Wellness. On other hand, there were also a few opposite opinions. There was also criticism that only one concept should be used to avoid confusion. It is not possible to brand things and issues connected to the wellbeing and wellness of the Nordic countries if there is not a shared understanding what concept should be used. It is also important to transfer ideas and frameworks to businesses so that the ideas can be transferred to actual business activities.

To conclude, most of the interviewees found that the resources connected to the environment and natural surroundings, Nordic values and the human-nature relationship were the base of the framework for Nordic Wellbeing products and services. These were also things that give partly content and unique characteristics to different wellbeing tourism products, services, and activities offered in the Nordic countries. The desired end-state for customers was feeling of wellbeing realized through holistic wellbeing experiences. The interviews show that the majority of the respondents prefer the Nordic Wellbeing concept because Nordic Wellness products and services are seen in many cases to be part of the wider Nordic Wellbeing concept.
6 CONCLUSIONS

This report set out to examine Finland’s prerequisites and its competitiveness as a wellbeing destination. Three laboratory areas were chosen for detailed analysis. Entrepreneurs, experts, regional developers, and tourism professionals in the regions of Jyväskylä, Kainuu, and Vaasa were interviewed. The purpose was to identify unique selling points and value creating attributes, regional network structure and management, acquisition of knowledge and innovation drivers, likewise the interviewees’ perception of the Nordic Wellbeing concept.

Wellbeing tourism as a unique tourism form is under way and supported by the growing number of tourists looking beyond mere hedonic tourist experiences. Wellbeing tourism defined as trips taken by people who temporary relinquish the places where they normally live and work for reasons of self-indulgence, health retreats, and their personal wellbeing, and the sum of phenomena and relationships arising therefrom (Björk, 2011a; 2011b) assumes a holistic and long-term perspective. Wellbeing tourism is to be packaged as a fine blend of services appealing to body, mind, and soul. The aim of this report is to discuss wellbeing tourism in Finland with reference to destination development, and to contribute to the ongoing discussion of how to conceptualize wellbeing tourism. This is done through the lens of a modified destination development model, which was based on the model presented by Sheldon and Park (2009).

Three laboratory areas in Finland were analyzed for this study, Jyväskylä, Kainuu and Vuokatti, and Vaasa, and the dimensions of interest were core resources, supporting resources, destination policies, and destination development and management. Findings based on face-to-face interviews with key tourism actors in the laboratory areas support an increased focus on wellbeing tourism in Finland, as proposed by the Finnish Tourism Board. It is not difficult to identify core and supporting resources to be used in wellbeing tourism packages. However, most of the resources are very basic and undeveloped, and might not fit into the wellbeing tourism concept as such. It is therefore suggested that wellbeing tourism service development be given is top priority, not least because wellbeing services are found in different service sectors. The theoretical framework used for this study was based on a destination development model consisting of five levels (Sheldon & Park, 2009). In light of the empirical findings presented, we argue that there is an emerging structure in support of the two first levels (supporting and core resources) of the model. Regional embedded wellbeing tourism policies and development plans, the next two levels of the development model of Sheldon and Park (2009), are still to be developed and implemented.

The Finnish Tourism Board advocates wellbeing tourism as one main future area of tourism. How this policy statement unfolds in different parts of Finland is still to be seen. The findings presented indicate an urgent need for vigorous efforts to set up regional wellbeing destination policies for destination management organizations to act upon. The risk is that wellbeing tourism in Finland will be most amorphous, thereby jeopardizing joint marketing and branding initiatives. The wellbeing destination development model discussed and used in this report is neither claimed to be exclusive nor exhaustive, but is presented as a tool to be further developed, but also as a management tool to get the wellbeing tourism development in Finland going.
Wellbeing tourism as a fairly novel concept, still suffers from a more extensive elaboration. Discussions about how wellbeing tourism can be linked to more general concepts such as quality-of-life, happiness, and wellbeing are particularly welcomed. Another window into future research on wellbeing tourism is to focus on how small and middle-sized tourism firms manage to reconfigure their business culture, settings, and mindsets to meet the expectations of those visitors looking for wellbeing tourism experiences.

The managerial implications offered at this stage pertaining destination development fall into two categories; 1) Resource scanning and service development, and 2) Networking and learning.

Wellbeing tourism as a unique form of tourism is not context specific, as, for example, alpine tourism or fishing tourism. Wellbeing tourism has its focus on the perceived wellbeing of the visitors, a state which can be achieved in the sauna landscape of Eastern Finland, just as well as on a small island in the archipelago of Ostrobothnia. A critical issue in the resource reconnaissance and service development process is to identify region specific and unique resources to be packaged into service offerings of value. Nature, culture, knowledge and technology were identified as critical resource categories in the laboratory areas studied.

Wellbeing tourism in Finland is in the process of formalization. It still lacks structure, a good reason for all actors interested in wellbeing tourism to closely monitor, as a learning process, how the wellbeing tourism concept is conceptualized. It is also recommended that the development process should adopt a bottom-up approach and acknowledge the importance of co-operation and networking, not least due to the many small tourism firms which will be involved in the development of wellbeing tourism in Finland.

All the wellbeing tourism initiatives identified and analyzed for this report are founded on extensive networks of tourism actors of different types. What seems to be very important in such initiatives is seamless coordination of actors, activities, and resources, preferably guided by comprehensive policies. Neither can one disregard the importance of management, nor the impact on national strategies.

The Finnish wellbeing tourism concept is in a critical phase. There are areas in Finland which are already making good progress and other areas where the first step is yet to be taken. The impending risk, in a national perspective, is that in the future there will be not one “Finnish wellbeing concept” but a heterogeneous set of wellbeing concepts, which will jeopardize all branding attempts. A Nordic Wellbeing tourism concept has been on the agenda for some time, but the challenges this level of branding includes must be acknowledged.

The success of a Nordic Wellbeing tourism concept is dependent on how the different Nordic countries succeed. In the case of Finland the next strategic steps must focus on;

a) Identity, service packaging, and
b) Synchronized and coherent communication.
Wellbeing tourism in Finland will only prosper if a distinctive identity for it is created. Wellbeing tourism must not be confused with wellness or health tourism, but branded as a unique form of tourism. Wellbeing tourism, appealing to body, mind and soul, must be presented as a package. Finally, segmentation and communication seem to be of utmost importance for success. Internal communications among actors on a destination are considered, in this early phase of development to be, equally important as external communications directed at carefully selected target groups.

The following Figure 7 summarizes the key factors of Finland as a wellbeing tourism destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellbeing Destination Development and Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Project and concept development</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Implementation of wellbeing tourism strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Co-operation networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sauna from Finland network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Existing wellbeing products and product themes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellbeing Destination Policy and Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Finnish national tourism strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Development strategy for Finnish wellbeing tourism in international markets 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- FTB blueprints for wellbeing products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- National and regional visions of wellbeing tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vision to be the Sauna District of Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Role of regional development organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Co-operation between different industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research and development activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Wellbeing Resources and Attractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Nature, lakes, forests, natural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Four distinct seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Finnish design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nordic walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sauna service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wellbeing and wellness tourism facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Factors &amp; Resources for Wellbeing Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Good basic infrastructure that supports tourism activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tourism facilities and variety of attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sauna manufacturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wealth of second homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Know-how in wellbeing technology and innovations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge of healing practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge of use of natural resources such as berries and their use for health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Know-how in water sport activities (development activity forms and water training equipments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Finland as a wellbeing tourism destination.
REFERENCES


http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccce1cc225678b004e73ed/d86764d4e91d6e64c225735b0032a957/$FILE/A144%20Hyvinvointimatkalau_peruskartoitus.pdf


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ANNEX 1. HAASTATTELURUNKO – NORDIC WELLBEING

TAUSTATIEDOT
- Alueen peruskuvailu ja alueen määritelmä
- Haastateltavan tausta (key actor)
  o Tausta ja koulutus
  o Suhde alueeseen
- Tiedot toimijan koosta ja kehityksestä ja kehittämisen aikatauluista, muutokset toiminnassa (työntekijöiden määrä, liikevaihto, käyttökate, menestystä mitattaavat tekijät)
- Omistussuhde (taustaorganisaatio)
- M/N

ARVOA TUOVAT TEKIJÄT (USP)
- Laboratorioalue
  o Alueen päärresurssit? Unique selling points?
  o Mistä alue on tunnettu (paikat/asiat/palvelut)?
  o Mikä alueella olevat tai siihen liitettävät asiat/tekijät/avustajat tuovat lisäarvoa asiakkaalle tai matkailijalle?
  o Mitä asiakkaat/matkailijat arvostavat alueella eniten?
- Pohjoismaat
  o Alueen päärresurssit? Unique selling points?
  o Mistä alue on tunnettu (paikat/asiat/palvelut)?
  o Mikä alueella olevat tai siihen liitettävät asiat/tekijät/avustajat tuovat lisäarvoa asiakkaalle tai matkailijalle?
  o Mitä asiakkaat/matkailijat arvostavat alueella eniten?

TOIMIJOIDEN VERKOSTOITUMINEN JA KEHITTÄMISTYÖ ALUEELLA
- Ketkä tai mitkä toimijat ovat alueen kehittämistoiminnan vetureita?
- Ketä ovat alueella vierailevat asiakkaat/matkailijat
  o Onko eri sesonkin aikaan erilaisia matkailijoita?
  o Jos on, niin millaisia eri aikoina?
- Millaiseksi näet asiakkaiden tarpeet tällä hetkellä?
- Millainen kilpailukyky on alueella?
- Onko eri sesonkiin aikoineen erilaisia matkailijoita?
- Millaisia näet asiakkaiden tarpeet tällä hetkellä?
- Millainen kilpailukyky on alueella?
- Onko eri sesonkin aikaan erilaisia matkailijoita?
- Onko vesihylke ratsastaa alueen toimintaan tai omaa toimintaansa johonkin, niin mihin vertaisitte sitä?
- Miten tuotekehitysprosessit etenevät alueella?
  o Onko verkkokontakteista tai yhteisyyden tekemää tuotevalmistamista?
- Onko teillä tärkeitä suhteita/yhteistyökuvioita alueen yhteistyön sektorin toimijoiden kanssa?
  o Miksi näitä suhteet ovat tärkeitä?
  o Onko suhde muodollinen/epämuodollinen, säännöllinen/satunnainen
- Onko teillä tärkeitä suhteita/yhteistyökuvioita alueen koulutusorganisaatioiden kanssa?
  o Miksi näitä suhteet ovat tärkeitä?
  o Onko suhde muodollinen/epämuodollinen, säännöllinen/satunnainen
- Onko teillä tärkeitä suhteita/yhteistyökuvioita alueen vapaaehtoistoimijoiden/yhdistysten kanssa?
  o Miksi näitä suhteet ovat tärkeitä?
  o Onko suhde muodollinen/epämuodollinen, säännöllinen/satunnainen
- Onko teillä tärkeitä suhteita/yhteistyökuvioita alueen julkisen sektorin toimijoiden kanssa?
  o Miksi näitä suhteet ovat tärkeitä?
  o Onko suhde muodollinen/epämuodollinen, säännöllinen/satunnainen
- Millaisia näitä puolalaisia suhteita ovat verrattuna muihin suhteisiin (esim. kansallisesti tai kansainvälisesti)? (TÄYDENTÄVÄ KYSYMYS TARVITTAESSA)
TIE DON HANKINTA TUOTEKEHITYKSEN TUEKSI
- Mistä saatte tietoa oman kehittämistyönne tueksi?
- Mistä saatte erilaisia ideoita/virikkeitä/inspiraatiota?
- Mikä on paikallisten toimijoiden rooli tiedon hankinnassa verrattuna ulkomaalaisiin (matkan)välittäjiiin? Esim. hyödynnetäänkö pohjoismaista tietoa/kansainvälistä tietoa?
- Miten tieto liikkuu laboratorioalueen eri toimijoiden välillä? Haastateltavan ja muiden toimijoiden välillä?
- Motivointeke/innostatteko alueen muita toimijoita sen pohjalta, mitä olette oppinut omassa toiminnassanne?

INNOVAATIOTEKIJÄT
- Mitä ymmärrätte sanalla innovaatio?
- Mistä saatte uusia ideoita?
- Miten idea muutuu innovaation kautta tuotteeksi?
- Millaisia ongelmia innovaatioprosessissa on ollut?
- Onko teillä jotain esimerkkejä epäonnistuneista innovaatioista?
- Miksi ne ovat epäonnistuneet?
- Miten sovellate/soveltaisitte uusia ideoita pohjoismaisessa kontekstissä? Onko teillä jotain esimerkkejä?
- Miten asiakastietoa ja asiakkaita hyödynnetään toimintojen kehittämisessä (innovaatioprosessissa) a
- Millaisia tapoja teillä on keskustella asiakkaiden kanssa? Onko teillä mielessä joitain uusia tapoja, joita haluaisitte kokeilla?

NORDIC WELLBEING SISÄLLÖT
- Mitä sana hyvinvointi tuo sinulle mieleen?
  o Wellness?
  o Wellbeing?
- Mitkä tekijät/ulottuvuudet ovat mielestäsi keskiössä: sosiaalinen, fyysinen, emotionaalinen, älyllinen, hengellinen, ammatillinen, ympäristöön liittyvät tekijät?
- Miten näet Nordic Wellbeing:in?
  o Mitä pitää sisällään?
  o Mitä kuvaat?
- Miten näet Nordic Wellness:in?
  o Mitä pitää sisällään?
  o Mitä kuvaat?
- Mikä on Nordic Wellbeing:in merkitys paikallisyhteisössä ja laajemmin yhteiskunnassa?
- Miten näet Lake Wellness:in suomalaisessa kontekstissä?
  o Mitä pitää sisällään?
  o Mitä kuvaat?
## ANNEX 2. JYVÄSKYLÄ REGION AS A WELLBEING TOURISM DESTINATION

### Wellbeing Destination Development and Management
- Education and training: University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finnish Water Sport Institute
- Sauna from Finland network enhancing the co-operation between industries

### Wellbeing Destination Policy and Planning
- Role of regional development organizations
- Tourism development strategy: role of wellbeing tourism (sauna)
- Vision to be the Sauna District of Finland
- Monitoring/evaluation: study about tourists' wellbeing tourism experiences (“ELÄMYS ON SELLANEN, ETTÄ SEN MUISTAA LOPUN IKÄÄ” Tutkimus hyvinvointimatkailun elämys sellisyydestä Jyväseudulla, Pro gradu)
- Co-operation between different industries

### Core Wellbeing Resources and Attractions
- Lakes, forests, natural areas
- Finnish design: Alvar Aalto
- Sauna service providers
- Tourism networks: event organizers, Himos, Peurunka
- Sauna from Finland network
- Wellbeing and wellness tourism facilities: Laajavuori and Peurunka Spas

### Supporting Factors & Resources for Wellbeing Tourism
- Good basic infrastructure that supports tourism activities (travel connections etc.)
  - Location at Central Finland
  - Sauna manufacturers
  - Know-how in wellbeing technology
- Know-how in water sport activities (development activity forms and water training equipments)
## Wellbeing Destination Development and Management

- Previous tourism development projects in (wellbeing/wellness) tourism
  - Wild Taiga network
  - Kalevala Spirit

## Wellbeing Destination Policy and Planning

- Tourism development strategy: role of wellbeing tourism
- Role of public sector in tourism development (Maakuntaliitto, Sotkamo municipality)
- Marketing co-operation and shared marketing activities: Versatile Vuokatti
  - Vuokatti Vision
- Monitoring/evaluation: study about customer involvement ("ASIAKKAIDEN OSALLISTUMISHALUKKUUS UUSIEN HYVINVOINTIMATKAILUPALVELIJEN KEHITTÄMISEEN VUOKATISSA", pro gradu)

## Core Wellbeing Resources and Attractions

- Forests, slopes, Kalevala culture, peace & quiet, wildlife
  - Katinkulta Spa
- Wellbeing service providers
- Sport and fitness activities

## Supporting Factors & Resources for Wellbeing Tourism

- Good basic infrastructure
- Tourism infrastructure: slopes, different accommodation facilities, activity providers, sport institute
  - “Kainuu spirit”
  - Locally produced food
- Utilizing technological innovations behind the scenes of tourism products (“sensing accommodation”)
## ANNEX 4. VAASA REGION AS A WELLBEING TOURISM DESTINATION

### Wellbeing Destination Development and Management

- Project and concept development (Wellbeing tourism in South Ostrobotnia)
- Education and training (HANKEN School of Economics, University of Vaasa, University of Åbo Akademi, VAMK University of Applied Sciences
  - Co-operation networks

### Wellbeing Destination Policy and Planning

- Development of wellbeing tourism in Ostobotnia facilitated by two projects
  - HYMA1 (2006-2007) and HYMA 2 (2009-2011)
  - “Hyvää oloa Pohjanmaalta” -vision: “… South Ostrobotnia’s wellbeing services, from feel good packages to the wellbeing of body and mind, not forgetting options for those who prefer an active holiday…”

### Core Wellbeing Resources and Attractions

- Kvarken Archipelago - World Heritage Site
  - The archipelago and sea nature
  - Locally produced food
  - Silence and space
  - Traditional healing resources
- Wellbeing tourism product offering is divided under three main themes:
  1) Sauna and Delicacies (different types of Sauna),
  2) Spas and Treatments (spa and peat therapy),
  3) Health and Fitness (sport and meditation)

### Supporting Factors & Resources for Wellbeing Tourism

- Good basic infrastructure and accessibility
  - Tourism facilities
- Good variety of attractions
- Some preliminary conceptualizations
  - Wealth of second homes