AALBORG UNIVERSITY

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Case study:
The use of strategic communication tools throughout the Blue Lagoon website and the customer perception of them.

Master Thesis in Tourism
Student: Olga Mazurova
Supervisor: Lill Rastad Bjørst

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Abstract

This study examines what strategic communicational choices/tools are used to represent wellness throughout the official Blue Lagoon website and how the consumers perception correlates with the meaning conveyed within the diverse signs on the website. The theories drawn in the theoretical chapter are used as analytical tools further analyses this thesis. The analyses chapter represents how wellness is shown on the Blue Lagoon website and how the consumers perceive it.

Keywords:
Blue Lagoon, Wellness, Spa, Consumers

1. Introduction

As a destination, Iceland, located in a periphery in the middle of North Atlantics and well known as the one highly dependent on fisheries. This status haven't been changing throughout the history for many centuries. However, in the beginning of twentieth century Iceland was one of the poorest countries in Europe (Ólaffson, 2005). The whole fishing industry needed modernisation and industrialisation to bring the country to better condition. During the twentieth century cod fish has been the most important fish in Icelandic waters. Over the time Iceland has been experiencing the decline in catching the most valuable fish (Hagstofa Íslands, 2014a in Huijbens, 2011). The quotas for catching different kinds of fish were also seized down by The Marine Research Institute. Together, those facts brought Icelands' national economy into severe crisis. The development of tourism and natural resources seemed to offer a big potential for economical recovery (Jóhannesson, et al, 2015, p. 189).

Second half of twentieth century was associated with rapid growth in tourism industry in Iceland. The Icelandic Tourist Board registers the data about tourist arrivals, which shows the sustainable and progressive growth in tourist arrivals. (Jóhannesson, et al, 2015, p. 183).

Today, Iceland is famous for its wilderness and natural resources, and has a lot to offer for those, who interested in natural-based tourism.
However, Iceland is set apart from other Scandinavian countries when it comes to wellness tourism. According to Huijbens (2011) and his analyses of visiticeland.com, the country has no wellness tourism to offer. The whole destination is based on natural-based tourism, however the bathing tradition is also well recognised in other Scandinavian countries. Geo-thermal natural basins and swimming pools are mostly considered as additional supplement to tourism experience in Iceland (Huijbens 2011). However, there's a potential and

possibility for development of wellness tourism in Iceland. Natturainfo (2008) pinpoints that one of unique and selling resources in Iceland are water and geothermal energy. Huijbens in his paper called 'Developing Wellness in Iceland' (2011) concludes that wellness tourism in Iceland should be developed with the huge focus on water resources.

Blue Lagoon is one of the most popular Iceland's geo thermal basins and represents luxury wellness segment of the market. It was created in 1976 due to ongoing projects in nearby Svartsengi geothermal power plant. A few years after, people have noticed the healing benefits of water and this effect was especially positive for people with psoriasis. A few years later The Blue Lagoon was transformed into spa resort which offers a vast variety of services, which includes spa procedures and services, accommodation in Silica hotel, Lava restaurant, wide range of skin care products and many other services (http://www.bluelagoon.com).

Since Iceland located on periphery, there's a limited access to major marketing channels. Thus, the internet became the main marketing tool (Müller et al., 2007).
The promotion of the destination in a particular light requires the development of prominent associations and connections, which will exist not only in short-term need fulfilment, but also in long-term symbolic relationships (Dahlén, Lange & Smith, 2010).

This thesis is designed as a case study about wellness tourism in the Blue Lagoon, how it (Blue Lagoon) addresses and communicates with its customers throughout the website. Important to mention here is that this destination is positioned and promoted as destination which gives "extraordinary" experience and offers a number or wellness services and attractions. The multifunctional website includes many options to find out more about Blue Lagoon activities. The interactions between www.bluelagoon.com website and customers with the use of diverse strategic communicational tools in order to represent wellness, and how the consumers perceive wellness, based on the information from the website will be a subject of research in this thesis. The focus in this thesis is not only on what kind of strategic communicational choices are represented on Blue Lagoon website, but also on how these tools and choices help to distinguish destination as a wellness segment of the market.

Within this study a target research group, namely Danish consumers, was chosen due to the fact, that the author lives and studies in Denmark, and according to Icelandic Tourist Board, Danes are third largest group of visitors in Iceland, which explains this choice a feasible one (Icelandic Tourist Board, FERÐAMÁLASTOFA, 2016).

The communication process between the brand and customers, in this case between Blue lagoon and potential cuonsumrs, is a two-way process, which involves consumers to create or perceive the additional value to the main meaning of destination (Blackston, 1993). There's a tight connection bridge between how the Blue Lagoon is promoted and how this image evolves further in tourists perception. They can see the same pictures and signs, read the same stories but perceive it differently. Therefore, it is important to study the subjects from both perspectives. On one hand, the management of blue lagoon sends particular signals and uses particular strategic communicational technics and tools, but on the other hand consumers perceptions of this matter could be very different and could depend on a number of factors.

The main research questions are represented below:

1.1. Research questions

1) What strategic communicational choices/tools are used on www.bluelagoon.com website to distinguish Blue Lagoon as wellness tourism destination?

2) How does the individuals's perception of Blue Lagoon based on information from the website correlates with the message that the management of Blue Lagoon is sending to potential customers?

This thesis consists of Introduction, Methodology Chapter, Theory Chapter, Analyses Chapter, Conclusion and List of Appendixes. The interviews with Danish individuals are recorded and transcribed and attached on a USB stick together with this thesis.

2. Methodology

2.1. The choice of research area

In this master thesis the author studies the Blue Lagoon's website (http://www.bluelagoon.com) in order to identify how the strategic communicational tools help to distinguish the destination as an elite wellness tourism destination. On the other hand, the author examines how do the consumer perceive the same visual and textual information, and how do their understanding differs from initial message of the website.

The decision to pick Iceland as a destination to study and the Blue Lagoon in particular underscored by the fact that the author lives and studying in Denmark and has a special interest in Nordic tourism. Tourism in Scandinavia predominantly associated with nature and well-being, that can be also noted in Icelandic tourism. However, the Iceland is still undergoing its way towards distinguishing and developing the luxury segment of the tourism market.

2.2. Ontology, epistemology and methodology

In this master thesis Philosophy of Science considered as important part of the study, as it enables the author to give the opportunity to readers to understand how the study was constructed and how it follows the author's paradigm.

The concept of paradigm has been formulated in Guba and Lincoln (1994) work as "*basic belief systems based on Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological assumptions*" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:105).

The basic set of beliefs of the paradigm can be summed up by answering three main fundamental questions, which in turn connected between each other and have influence on one another (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:109). The questions are represented below:

- Ontological: "*What is the form and nature of reality, […] what is there that can be known about it?*"
- Epistemological: "*What is the nature of relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?*"
- Methodological: "*How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?*" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108).

Ontology. Within this master thesis ontology resolves the way how the reality is seen by the author. It is important to pinpoint that the reality is build up from various set of beliefs and constructions, and the understanding of what is "*real*" differs from person to person, and depends on personal and mental beliefs (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). This can be supported by the fact that each individual perceive the reality from different angles, as they have different backgrounds, experiences, levels of prior knowledge and ways how they look at the world.

Epistemology. In this master thesis epistemology implies how the author gets to know the reality. Epistemology is perceived from subjectivistic perspective, as the author believes that this will separate the author's personal constructions, and secure the process of gathering data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). However, the findings and conclusion will be influenced by authors personal constructions (as the first research question presupposes the explanation and analyses, which will be presented from authors sake) and the constructions of subject's of this study (interviewees, as they will talk about their personal perception of the website). So it can be concluded, that the thesis will be influenced by both parties.

Methodology. Methodology represents a number of particular ways and methods that are used in order to pursue desired knowledge about reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:111). The methodology will be assessed from *hermeneutic* and *dialectical* perspectives. The *Hermeneutic* means that the author will try to base the interpretations of data as precise and accurate as possible, and as following to contrast "*through a dialectical interchange*" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:111).

2.3. Hermeneutics

In order to get a deeper understanding of researchable data, the author of this thesis incorporate Gadamer's (2004) concept in this study.

"*Gadamer endorses the traditional conception of understanding an unfamiliar text or way of life as a holistic process, operating within a hermeneutic circle in which we move back and forth between specific parts of the 'text' and our conception of it as its totality*" (Gadamer in Outhwaite, p. 23, 1985). This means, that the author of this thesis will have continuous movement back and forth between the personal understanding of a subject matter and academical materials in order to get a deeper understanding of the research topic.

Gadamer also suggests that before the person get the understanding, he or she faces the pre-understanding which entail the possibility for interpretation (Gadamer in Outhwaite, p. 24, 1985). Nonetheless, Gadamer states that the understanding unites the researchers' personal constructions with the constructions of those, who wrote academical material (Gadamer in Outhwaite, p. 25, 1985). This thought is also supported by Guba and Lincoln (1994).

In order to get a stronger understanding of academical material the author of this study have to be "*open-minded and unprejudiced as possible, approaching the object without preconceptions*" (Gadamer in Outhwaite, p. 25, 1985).

2.4. Double Hermeneutic circle

Further, the idea of double hermeneutics was presented by Giddens (Outhwaite, 1985), which has a number of similarities with single hermeneutic circle, however the double hermeneutic concept includes the inner circle. The inner circle enables to get more profound understanding by adding interviews and involving other relevant actors within the study (Mills et al., 2009). It is crucian to understand the constructions of interviewees as much as to understand the academical data, because it opens new possibilities and perspectives within the study. Thus, Mills pinpoints his idea that the deeper understanding of a subject can be achieved when the researcher constantly moves back and forth between their own constructions, interviewees' constructions and academical data (Mills et al., 2009).

The above mentioned correlates with that Guba (1990) mentioned regarding the individuals constructions and that they should be interpreted as accurate as it possible in order to contrast them with other research data afterwards and to reach consensus (Guba, 1990). Guba also suggests that the researches should not change the way that individuals perceive the reality, rather try to explain their personal constructions to interviewees. This, however, will indirectly affect the respondents personal constructions (Guba, 1990:27). During data collection process the author didn't try to impose personal constructions to interviewees, but rather explained and clarified some questions from the interview guide in order to make sure that interviewees understand what they are being asked about.

As an example of the mentioned above the concept will be presented in regards of knowledge generation process within this thesis, where the double hermeneutic circle has a place to be. The knowledge generation process consists of 2 main stages in this study. The first stage is characterised with the interviewing process, where the authors personal constructions merged with the ones of interviewees during the data collecting process. The

second stage consist of interaction and contrasting of results from the first stage with the researchers perception and personal constructions of academical data and material. The mentioned above shows that the author continually moves back and forth between the data obtained from interviewees and academical material in order to get more profound understanding (Mills et al., 2009).

Going further, Phillips (1995) presented his ideas of some critics related to constructivist paradigm, as shown below:

Constructivists are relativists, as it can be concluded from earlier. Given the idea that the academic material found can't be used by another authors with another constructions, because that particular material is only valid under constructions that the author had in mind when it was written (Phillips, 1995). With above in mind, the author of this thesis will use the found academic material to create a base for this study and to make further analyses possible.

The conception of self-refutation mainly relates to the fact that '*everyone is right and no one is wrong*' (Phillips, 1995). In a way of saying, the discussed subject matter is only valid and relevant under particular constructions. As it has been mentioned earlier, each individual has their own personal constructions, which are based in turn on their perceptions of the world, experiences, academical backgrounds and understandings. As following, within the concept of this thesis, some interviewees' perceptions of the Blue Lagoon can be very different from the ones of other interviewees, things that are important for ones can be disregarded by others.

This, for example, can be seen from interviewees' perception of the main message that the Blue Lagoon is trying to communicate. It shows clearly, that their perceptions are very different, when one focusses his attention on luxury activities, while the other individual celebrates the nature:

"*It tries to communicate luxury and it tries to say that there is everything you need to have a nice wellness, you can do everything, and after you can go at the restaurant with the nice food, and buy some nice things to make you remember the good times*"

"*It think it's the story about the nature, it's all down to earth and all about getting you relaxed. It's called on of 25 wonders of nature, it's like from the old days. It was not something new that they build, the nature created the place*" (Interviewee #2).

2.5. Research strategy and Methodology

Prior to this master thesis, the author had a general level of pre-understanding of a research subject. The pre-understanding consisted of knowledge about marketing representations, strategic communicational tools, narratives and about semiotics. Equally important, that the interviewees, namely Danish citizens, had also a certain degree of pre-understanding about the topic. However, it differs from person to person, as they have different levels of experience and backgrounds.

According to Gadamer in order to reach a profound understanding of a topic the author of this thesis must navigate back and forth between the personal understanding of a subject matter and academical materials (Gadamer in Outhwaite, p. 23, 1985). Thus, the process of gaining the understanding is characterised with the continuos learning and exploring process until the moment when the author get the desired knowledge.

The author of this thesis developed a special research strategy, which allows the study to be consistent and logical. The research strategy is represented below.

Research strategy:

• Study and research available literature about marketing communications tools, narratives and storytelling, semiotic model and Icelandic tourism in general in order to build up the theoretic base for this thesis and to enable further analyses;

• Analyse www.bluelagoon.com website in order to identify which marketing communication tools are used to distinguish Blue Lagoon as elite wellness tourism destination;

• Carry on a series of qualitative interviews with Danish individuals in order to see how strategic communicational choices/tools that are used on the website affect potential tourists;

• Travel to Blue Lagoon in order to conduct the field research and observations.

When it comes to the interviewees, it's important to mention that one of selection criteria was the fact that they have an access to the internet and able to navigate online in order to

explore the Blue Lagoon's website and get some prior level of knowledge before the interviews are carried on. The author would like to specify that prior to actual interview, the interviewees had an assignment to get familiar with the Blue Lagoon website (bluelagoon.com). This decision is undermined by the fact that interviewees might need some time to get familiar with the topic and form their opinion about the research subject.

According to Kvale (1996) during the interview process, the knowledge is gathered by active interaction between the researcher and interviewees while they exchange their views. This statement strengthens the constructivist approach of this thesis, as it has been mentioned previously (Guba, 1990; Giddens, 1985).

Prior to conduction a series of interviews the author decided to use three key aspects in the interview, which help to reach the desirable results in interviewing process Kvale (1996):

What? - relates to investigation of a subject matter in order to achieve pre-understanding of it;

Why? - relates to the main purpose of topic or what is going to be found out during the interview process;

How? - relates to usage of different academical materials related to the ways, how the interviews should be carried on.

In this thesis the method of data collection was throughout the use of interviews. The questions in the interview guide serve the purpose of the study: to find out how do the interviewees perceive the Blue Lagoon based on the website (bluelagoon.com), what do they think about the Blue Lagoon as a brand, what is their idea about luxury tourism. It is important to mention that given the fact that interviewees have different backgrounds and levels of general understanding of a subject matter, the interview questions can vary from individual to individual. In some cases it presupposes a number of additional open questions, in other - clarifying questions, rephrased questions.

When it comes to the choice research methods, the most relevant and appropriate one is **qualitative method**, because one of the main purposes of this research is to study the individuals' perceptions and interpretations. This method is also suitable because it supports the social constructivist stance, which means that individual perceptions differ from one another and can not be generalised (Guba, 1990).

The tool for data collection is **semi-structured interviews.** This choice is underscored by the fact that semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to get more profound and adequate information from the interviewees, which will be used for analyses afterwards (Kvale, 1996).

The interview guide contains a number of topics with suggested questions. The semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to navigate between themes, and if needed, to change the interview themes in order to get the desirable answers from the respondents (Kvale, 1996). On the contrary, while conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher can not move aside from the interview guide and has to follow the guide and ask every question in order to get the desirable answers (Bryman, 2004). Nonetheless, the researcher has to guide the conversation in order not to miss the main focus on a subject matter (Kvale, 1996).

Additionally to mentioned above, Kvale characterises and interview process as "*a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest*" (Kvale, 1996). It is important that the researcher creates comfortable and relaxing atmosphere prior to the interview, since the more relaxed the respondents are, the more open they will be to give answers (Kvale, 1996).

The interview guide consists of three main sections; first of them is personal part, where interviewees present themselves and give their agreement for recording; second part is about their perception of Icelandic tourism, about their idea of the Blue Lagoon and what is luxury wellness tourism means for them. The last third part examines indivuduals' perception of the Blue Lagoon website.

A total number of interviews is 10. Eight of the were conducted in face-to-face way, which means that the researcher was able to see body language and make sure that the interviewees feel comfortable, while two others were carried on by Skype with video on, thus the researcher was able to note the body language and afce expressions too. In addition, the respondents had time to get familiar with the Blue Lagoon website (bluelagoon.com) to get the idea about it and to be able to participate in interview.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards, allowing the researcher to have the answers for the purpose of further analyses. As the thesis presupposes to be written in English, the interviews were also taken in English. The interviewees was asked the permission the be recorded and that their personal data, statements and quotes will be used in this study.

The data obtained from the interviews represents the empirical material of this study. Given the fact that this thesis is written on authors personal understandings and interpretations, the author is trying to be as subjective as possible and to not the affect the results in a negative ways. Additionally, the author tried to interpret and analyse the interview outcomes as accurate as possible. However, there might be some differences between how the respondents understand their own constructions and how they can explain them with the way how the author understands and interprets their (interviewees) constructions.

2.6. Research subjects

The Danish citizens were chosen to be the interview group for a number of reasons. First, given the fact that the author of this thesis lives and studies in Denmark, it is more accessible to attract danish individuals to participate in interview. Second, according to the Icelandic Tourist Board, Danish citizens is the third largest group of visitors (after Canada and China) through Iceland's biggest international airport Keflavik. In 2015 Keflavik opened its doors to 1,261,938 danes (Icelandic Tourist Board, FERÐAMÁLASTOFA, 2016).

2.7. Analyses

The first part of analyses will be build based on the authors personal interpretation of the Blue Lagoon website (bluelagoon.com) in order to address the first research question and determine what strategic communicational choices/tools are used at blue lagoon.com website to distinguish the Blue Lagoon as elite wellness destination. The relevant theoretic base will be drawn in the following Theory chapter, and will be further used as analytical tools. The second part of analyses will be based on the empirical material obtained during the interviews. It serves the purpose to understand how do the individuals' perception of the Blue Lagoon based on the information from the website correlates with the message that the management of of the Blue Lagoon is trying to communicate.

The reader, however, has to note that the conclusion and analyses drawn are only relevant and valid within the parameters of this study and cannot be generalised, since it based on interpretations of interviewees' personal constructions and views.

2.8. Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of this study is the timing factor. If the researcher had more time for gathering data and writing, the empirical material could have been broader and analyses based on it could have been more accurate. Given the fact that different authors might have different definitions and explanations for similar categories means that alternative choice of theoretical base might had opened new perspectives for the research and/or influence the conclusion.

In this study the research group is danish citizens, this fact brings some limits in the current research, as each culture is unique and the personal views and insights that could have been obtained from other nationalities could have brought new perspectives and make the outcome more diverse.

The other factor is the age of interviewees. In this study the age groups were not in the main focus, however the deeper comparison of personal constructions of individuals within different age groups could have been included.

Gender dimension is another limitation of this study. Olimpia suggests that the biggest consumer group for luxury wellness tourism is "*mainly women, especially in age groups of 18-39 or 40-59 years old, with superior education, with above the average incomes*" (Olimpia, 2009). In the thesis both men and women were interviewed. Factors such as education and income were also not in the main focus.

With all the cautiousness while developing an interview guide, the author is aware that the interview results might be slightly influenced given the fact that some of the interviewees might wanted to assist the researcher and said that they though would help this research.

The interviewees were not aware of the literature that was used in this study, in order to not influence their responses and also not to confuse them.

3. Theory

Throughout this chapter the following theoretical concepts will be represented below, as the author consider them to be relevant for this thesis:

- Brand identity
- Narrative and storytelling
- Tourist's narrative
- Pierce semiotic model
- Wellness tourism

3.1. Brand identity

Branding of destinations is now widespread. (Walmsley and Young, 1998) argue that in the area of tourism marketing, branding plays the key role. It important to draw a line between brand identity and brand image, as these categories have different meaning. "*Brand image is usually passive and looks to the past; brand identity should be active and look to the future*" (Aaker, 2004 in Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010). Therefore, brand identity is strategic.

Brand identity is complex which consists of many components and "*has to be coherent, integrated, adaptable, durable and therefore dynamic in the face of rapidly changing competitive and customer environmental factors*" (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010). The visual representation of main components of brand identity represented below.

The components of brand identity
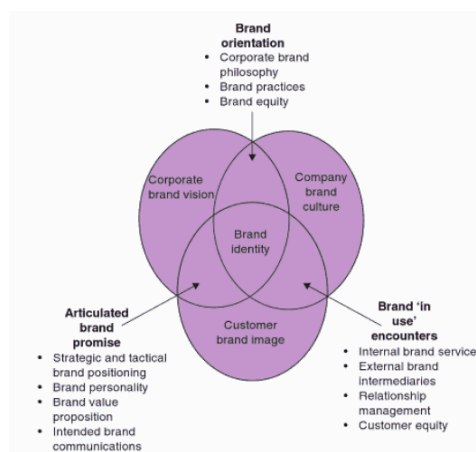
Source: after de Chernatony and McDonald (2003) in Dahlen, Lange & Smith (2010)

From this figure it can be seen that brand identity consists of three main components (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010):

- "*Corporate brand vision is the conception of the brand in its targeted market with a customer profile which is consistent with organisational goals and operating framework.*

- *Company brand culture is the level to which an organisation is market oriented and promotes the primacy of brand communications.*
- *Customer brand image is the result of experience of brand use and qualitative feedback from others exposed to the brand and marketing communications.*" (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010)

From the above we can see that brand identity is consistent and dependent on these factors.

The way how the customers see the brand is referred to "brand promise". "Brand promise" resulting the tactical and strategical positioning manipulation, the meaning and values that was initially inputed in the brand. Since the "brand promise" is a reflection that comes from the customer perspective, it's not always equates to initial mission of brand identity (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010).

Consumer judgement is very subjective and based on real experience and personal perceptions about the value of the brand.

3.2. Narrative and storytelling

Stories and narratives play a key role in tourism experience. In a general way of speaking storytelling experience is "*a continuous process of doing and undergoing that provides meaning to the individual*" (Boswijk et al, 2005 in Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie, 2010, p. 45).

Many destinations use narratives to create a particular brand image. The narratives can be seen as a "*dialogue between the company and customer*" (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010). Bruner (1991) supports this idea and pinpoint that shaping the real experience in narrative form lays in human nature. Further, Levy (2003) highlights the importance of using narratives in tourism: "Stories are bought and sold, they are part of the media of exchange, and they are vehicles for all other goods and services". Stories and narratives take the central place in marketing and branding of destination, they are not only used to carry the

meaning of the brand, but they are also have their own meanings and interpretations (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010).

Theres no such a precise formula of what makes the story good and what it should consist of, however Fog et al. (2004, p.43) identified and introduced four main key elements of storytelling: Message, Conflict, Characters and Plot.

- **The message**

When it comes to storytelling, most of the companies use it as marketing communicational tool to deliver the message to customer and which reflect positive image of the brand. It's important to stick to central message of the story. *"A story with more than one central message runs the risk of becoming messy and un- clear" (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p. 34).*

- **Conflict**

"Conflict is the driving force of a good story. No conflict, no story" However, conflict should not be in the centre of the story, as it puts the message on the second plan. Conflict is used to keep the customers interested and it's not negative in storytelling (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p.35).

- **Characters**

There are always positive and negative characters in fairy tale stories who have fixed roles. When it comes to marketing and advertising narratives, its important that readers and listeners can recognise and identify themselves as central characters of narrative to get personally involved with a story. If the emotional connections take place and readers are getting personally attached to the story, then the message will have greater affect on customer
(Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p.36-43).

- **Plot**

The plot is a sequence of events that happen throughout the story (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p. 44).

3.3. Tourist's narrative

Tourists obtain new experience throughout their travels. Bruner (1991) claims that tourists experience a transformation of self, while travelling. In his paper "Transformation of self in tourism" he links the tourist discourse (brochures and advertising) with actual tourism experience practices for both the tourist self and local self. However, in his paper he talks about Third World encounters of tourists and locals. Therefore, it's important to note the different nature and attributes of the destination (the Blue Lagoon) and Indonesia and East Africa. When it comes to discussion about power relations, it's essential to pinpoint that in poorest countries tourists have more influence and they are perceived by locals as "rich white people" (Bruner, 1990).

Bruner (1990) claims that tourism advertising can be more or less neglected by tourists "*as [advertising] characterised by extravagant promises and exaggerated claims that no one takes seriously, as just purple prose for the purpose of selling the tour*" (Bruner, 1990). Thus, the narrative created by the company differs from the one created by a tourist. "*A key tourist narrative states that the tourist is a member of the civilised world, even an elite member, with the resources, leisure time, and discriminating taste to travel*" (Bourdieu, 1984 in Bruner, 1991).

Woodside supports the idea that the tourists' narrative is something different from the discourse narrative and it solely shaped by individuals' life story (Woodside et al, 2007, 2010).

Despite the promises of advertising to provide tourists with life changing and unforgettable experience, the tourism self is changing slightly due to many factors. For instance, the majority of trips have short-term nature; tourism itself is associated with mobility, thus several destinations can be visited in one trip; limited opportunity to keep contact with locals, as they speak different language and most of time is spent being surrounded by other tourists (Bruner, 1990).

It can be further argued, that according to Bruner (1990) tourists travel mostly with a purpose to confirm and fulfil their imagination. Thus, it can be noted that prior their travelling, the tourists have already created a preconceptions which naturally might differ from the concepts of the tourist discourse.

3.4. Semiotics

"*Trough the tourism marketing, semiotics is based mainly on the use of images and text markers to add significance to this tourist destination and expectations that the tourist may have*" (Kolcun, Kot, & Grabara, 2014).

Destination marketers are trying to influence potential tourists and their decision making process by using mediated representations of destination. This have brought scholars to explore the "complexity of the images and rhetoric of advertising" (Askegaard, 1999 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). However, according to Hunter "*the power of representations has not been fully recognized because there has not been enough energy spent on the investigation of this mechanism, one the comprises the material components of every discourse in tourism*" (Hunter, 2008, p. 356 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Even though representations play a huge role in tourism marketing, there are still various ways of how scholars interpretative semiotics in their studies (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

In this master thesis Pennington & Thomsen's adapted model of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model is used. Adapted version means that Peirce's semiotic model is used in the context of tourism destination representations, which is relevant to the study. To increase the relevance of this model the author of the thesis keeps in mind the main key elements of Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of representations and discusses the relationships between its components in relation to destination (the Blue Lagoon). After this the author applies the model in order to analyse the Blue Lagoon website throughout own representations. Authors interpretations will show which meaning underlies in representations used on the website.

Visual representations such as photographs and attractions are the main focus for semiotic analyses in this study because they take up the most space of the website. Furthermore, photographs are predominant part throughout Blue Lagoon's website.

The idea of importance of using visual representations such as photographs in destination marketing is supported among many scholars (Kolcun, Kot, & Grabara, 2014; Jenkins, 2003; Hunter, 2008; Scarles, 2004; MacCannell, 1999, Pennington & Thomsen, 2010) and therefore in this context the decision to focus on analysing photographs seems more relevant and reasonable.

3.4.1. A Semiotic Model of Representation

The three main elements of Peirce's model of representation are presented below:

- At first, the semiotic process includes three elements, which are an object, a sign, and an interpretant. It's essential for the model that these elements should be present for representation to occur. There are invisible relationship between sign and object as well as between sign and interpretant in Peirce's triad. In other words, the analyses of representations should not ignore this relationship and analyses must have its starting point from examining the relationships between sign and object (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

- Secondly, Peirce's model of representations divides further the sign-objet relationship into icon, index, and symbol (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

- Thirdly, the concept called "collateral experience" is represented in the model. Collateral experience means that any person perceiving the sign must have some prior knowledge and relevant experience, which will enable a person to recognise a sign as a sign of particular object (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

The three main elements provide a framework to enable analysing of destination representation (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

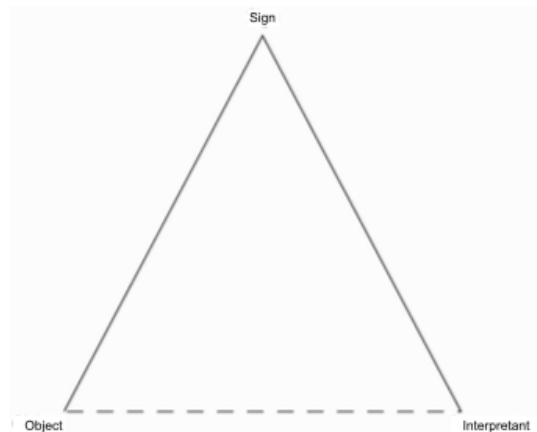Figure 1: The semiotic process

Logically thinking, the **object** is the first component in Peirce's model to discuss. The object can be real or imagined. According to Pennington & Thomsen, an *object* can be a whole destination or a "*specific portion of destination*". It can also range from a country (Iceland) to a smaller geographical units (The Blue Lagoon). In the context of this thesis, an object is

Blue Lagoon. The other thing to mention here, is that "a sign only represents particular aspects of the object, not the object in some conceived totality" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

The second element is the *sign*. "*In destination representation marketing, signs are typically embodied by either graphic or textual materials capable of signifying, such as photographs, films, maps or textual descriptions, and each of these represent some limited aspect of the object*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). The sign content is variable and it's ranging from different objects like the nature, geo-thermal basin to destination-related activities like bathing, dining, relaxing. Therefore, the Blue Lagoons website embodies the collection of signs which representing the destination (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Further, the last component in Peirce's triad is the *interpretant*. "*The interpretant is the content of a person's perception or comprehension of the sign and varies, depending on the sign's perceived relationship to the object, the person's collateral experience, and the context of interpretation*"(Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). In other words, in this study the interpretant can be seen in the face of interviewees and the researcher.
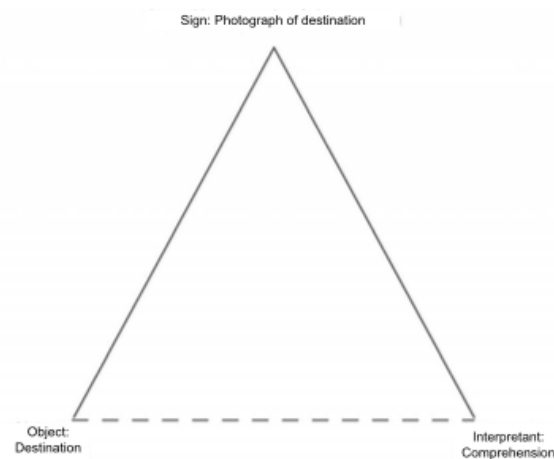

Sign: Photograph of destination

Object: Destination

Interpretant: Comprehension

Figure 2: The semiotic process applied to a destination development

3.4.2. The Sign-Object Relationship

As it has been mentioned before, in Peirce's semiotic model of representation, interpretation can vary in high dependency on sign-object relationship (Short, 2004, p. 225 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). "*In the representation process, a sign is related to its object in a particular manner and that relationship influences interpretants of the sign*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). The sign-object relationship is important, because it creates a meaning and enables the act of interpretation. In different words, the sign-object relationship resolves the way a sign is being interpreted.

To understand the complex sign-object relationship Peirce divided them further into iconic, indexical and symbolic relationship.

- "*When the sign-object relationship is based on the sign's resemblance to or qualities it shares with the object, the sign-object relationship is **iconic** and the sign is an **icon**"* (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).
- "*When an interpretant of the sign-object relationship is based on the sign's existential connection to the object, the relationship is **indexical**, and the sign is an **index**"* (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).
- "*When an interpretant of the sign-object relationship is based on social cultural conventions, the relationship is **symbolic** and the sign is a **symbol**"* (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Icon

Pennington & Thomsen pinpoint the importance of iconic sign-object relationship in advertising marketing because the sense of familiarity has a great role in destination image formation (Baloglu, 2001; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008, p.549 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). It is very important to note that icon should be recognisable, as iconicity is interdependent with the sense of familiarity. "*Furthermore, given the influence of representations on shaping prior expectations, icons can prepare tourists to understand what it means to experience certain aspects of culture in international travel*" (Prentice & Andersen, 2007 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Due to the fact that icon and object are tightly connected, it it can be noted that "*icon resembles the object, it emphasises recognisability and familiarity, which can exert a positive influence on attitudes toward destinations*" (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004, in Pennington

& Thomsen, 2010). However, when we look up at semiotic method, iconic familiarity can be understood from different perspectives. First, iconic familiarity can be a strong pull factor with a big influence on potential tourists. For instance, Eiffel Tower in Paris or Grand Canyon in Arizona are considered to be highly recognisable icons, and they have a very special status in destination representation marketing just because they are globally recognisable. On the other hand, iconic representations have negative sides too, such as they can become generic and lead the destination representation to lack of individuality and appeal (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Index

Indexical representations from perspective of the semiotic model associated with "*authenticity and underlie the documentary quality of a photograph, for example, thus enhancing the credibility of both the sign and the object*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Index can function as a promise for the tourists that the particular attributes of a destination that are visible on the photographs are really present in destination, when the tourists arrives. "The indexical aspect of representation suggests limits to the widespread idea that destinations are "constructed" through their representations in a variety of discourses" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). The other function of indexical representations is that in some forms of tourism, predominantly in cultural and heritage tourism, index functions as a guarantee of existence of local culture and/or heritage (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Even though indexicality helps to assure the exactness of the object underlying in representation, the index doesn't resolve how the authentic object are going to be represented. "*Although authenticity is used as a promotional device, what is "real" is open to interpretation. The marketers provide only the possible interpretation of past events*" (Waitt, 2000, p. 836 in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Nonetheless, the usage of indexical representation gives awareness for potential tourists about existing qualities of destination.

Symbol

"*The symbolic aspect of representations is often associated with cultural and heritage tourism because the meaning of a symbol is based on social or cultural conventions. The symbolic is often thought to be implied or connoted by the representation*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). For instance, pictures of nature may suggest to nature-based tourism

experience, portrayals of historical sites can show evidence to heritage appreciation. The usage of people in destination advertising may imply social interactions (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Moreover, the content that is being represented by a symbol can not be fully captured and expressed by an image, it's important that it is supported by contextual information. Thus, destination marketers expect the target audiences to have generalised understanding of symbolic content "*such as smiles associated with happiness and family activities associated with having a quality experience*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Semiotic model suggests that in order to analyse and interpret the symbolic representation the analyst should have some prior cross-cultural knowledge. This can be easily explained: "*symbols are based on shared social and cultural conventions, they represent cultural categories and social norms, ideals, and values*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Hybrid relationship

Destination representations can be highlighted in various aspects of sign-object relationship such as iconic, indexical or symbolic in order to pursue destination marketing advantage. When it comes to analyses it's misleading to recognise the sign only as an icon, index, or symbol due to the nature of sign-object relationships which is never singular, but **hybrid**. In other words, the sign should not be understood as being strictly an icon, index, or symbol, but in turn possessing iconic, indexical, or symbolic aspects (Wells, 1967, p. 104, in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

The way how the sign will be perceived by potential tourists is underscored by their collateral experience. Therefore the sign can be perceived mostly as an icon, index, or symbol depending on the level of tourist's collateral experience, and also depending on the settings and context where the representation is being placed (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Even thought hybridity of sign-object relationship undergone through large critic (Leja, 2008, p. 310, in Pennington & Thomsen, 2010), the author of this thesis argues that hybridity enables analytical flexibility in Peirse's semiotic model. This can be explained due to the fact that different tourists perceive the same sign in various possible ways, the sign can not be solely an icon, an index, or a symbol for an individual (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

3.4.3. Critics of Semiotics analysis

There are many theoreticians who cannot find the agreement about methodological aspects of using semiotics for data analyses. Chandler pinpoints that by saying that semiotics are "*loosely defined critical practice rather than a unified, fully-fledged analytical method or theory*" (Chandler, 1994). This means that the are no direct and precise instructions and ways how the signs should be interpreted. The interpretation is very dependent on the interpretant. Keeping in mind the mentioned above, the author of this thesis is trying to be as subjective as possible and considering her constructivist position, the use of semiotics in this study is still valid and relevant.

According to Chandler, to get the understanding of the meaning that is conveyed in visual representations, the interpretant have to have "*appropriate ideological identity*" (Chandler, 1994). In other words, this means that in order to understand the meaning, the interpretant should adopt their identity as a consumer of the product. However, some theoreticians argue that this concept is already lays in the basics of creating the brand narrative and tourist discourse (Johnson, 1996, 101 in Chandler, 1994).

The other weak point of using semiotics in analyses is the fact that results will be dependent of interpretants' proficiency. Leiss argues that the more experienced as skilled the interpretant is, the more deeper and precise the results will be. Skilled interpretant, in his opinion, can extract not only obvious knowledge, but also richer and more reliable data (Leiss et al. 1990: 214 in Chandler, 1994).

The author of this thesis was familiar with semiotics analysis prior to this research, however didn't had the experience with using it within the study before. Therefore, the author attempted to understand semiotics and how to apply it in the current study, based on the literature learned during this research. The author attempted to study the subject as deep and as precise as it was possible given the time factor in order to get adequate results and conclusion.

3.4.4. Strengths of Semiotic analysis

In this master thesis the semiotic model of representation is used as a conceptual framework, which helps the researcher with analyses of the Blue Lagoon website. Hodge and Kress distinguish the use of semitics in analyses and pinpoint that "*semiotics offers the promise of a systematic, comprehensive and coherent study of communications phenomena*

as a whole, not just instances of it" (Hodge & Kress 1988, in Chandler, 1994). Also, they claim that the use of semiotics is essential part of representation process.

Further Chandler argues that "*searching for what is 'hidden' beneath the 'obvious' can lead to fruitful insights. Semiotics is also well adapted to exploring connotative meanings. Social semiotics alerts us to how the same text may generate different meanings for different readers*" (Chandler, 1994).

Keeping in mind the above mentioned, the author sees the relevance and validity of using semiotic model for further analysis.

3.5. Wellness tourism

The term '*wellness*' is broadly used when it comes to Nordic tourism. Ardell gives the definition of wellness as "*a state of health featuring the harmony of body, mind and spirit, with self-responsibility, physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/diet, relaxation (need for destressing)/meditation, mental activity/ education and environmental sensitivity/social contacts as fundamental elements*" (Ardell in Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001).

Figure 3: Expanded wellness model (Source: Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001)

Wellness tourism is considered as one of subcategories of health tourism, therefore it summarises the relationships resulting from travels and residence of people, who are mainly motivated by preserving or promoting their health. Further, Mueller & Kaufmann name some of the attributes of wellness tourism destination, such as "*comprehensive service package comprising physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/ diet, relaxation/ meditation and mental activity/educatio*n" (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001).

Figure 4: Demarcation of wellness tourism in terms of demand (Source: Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001).

With keeping in the the mentioned above, the health can be considered as a state of being, while "*wellness entails an active moving towards a state of being of which being healthy is integra*l" (Huijbens, 2011). Thus, wellness tourism industry include a number of services and products to offer. The main purpose of those services and products is to maintain and improve individuals' state or physical well-being, state of their mind and soul.

When it comes to Icelandic wellness amenities, the country has to offer a number of geo-thermal natural baths and swimming pools. Huijbens argues that water resources are '*unique selling points*' of Iceland (Huijbens, 2011). Further he supports this idea by saying "*A bathing culture thus developed to become a modern dual manifestation of wellness, as a*

venue of regular physical exercise (body) and epicurean delights (social/soul)" (Jónsson &
Huijbens, 2005).

4. Analyses

The main purpose of this chapter is to analyse the website of the Blue Lagoon (bluelagoon.com) and determine what strategic communicational choices are used to show the destination as a wellness venue. Further on, the interviews will be analysed to identify individuals' perception of the Blue Lagoon website and their idea about the Blue Lagoon as a destination, and in which ways their perceptions and experiences differ from the initial purpose of the website.

The following chapter is dived into two parts, namely Analyses of the Blue Lagoon website and Interview analyses, which in turn address two main research questions.

4.1. Analyses of the Blue Lagoon website

Within the current website analyses the author uses expression "we", by which the author presupposes herself and the Reader. This is done on purpose in order to introduce the Reader for analyses part of this study.

4.3. Narratives and storytelling

Target audience

When we talk about the target group of the Blue Lagoon, it can be noticed that the target audience is not mentioned directly on the website, but rather suggested that it's for those who want to get '*extraordinary experience*'. The whole website is purely in English and it's not possible to switch the language. The video on the front page is very tourist-minded and introduces the viewers to the Blue Lagoon wellness activities, services and also includes a number of practical tips. Already with this information, the researcher assumes that the Blue Lagoon is mostly targeting international market.

Even though, the Blue Lagoon has 4 ticket categories ('*standard*', '*comfort*', '*premium*' and '*luxury*') which differ in price (from 40 till 195 eur) and services provided along with bathing experience, the main focus is made on the premium segment. The '*premium*' package is described as "*The optimal experience of the wonders of the Blue Lagoon: a majestic convergence of relaxation, rejuvenation, hospitality, and Icelandic cuisine*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016).

Yet again, the age group of visitors are not mentioned directly, however kids under 2 years old are not allowed in the Blue Lagoon, and teenagers up to 16 years are not allowed to get access to Exclusive Lounge and to experience 'luxury' package.

Overall the impression given by the website is that the target audience of the Blue Lagoon is wealthy international tourists, who want to get exclusive experience and willing to explore not only the Lagoon, but also additional wellness amenities and Icelandic cuisine.

Additionally, the Blue Lagoon is also targeting people with psoriasis. However, given the fact that their visits have not entertaining and relaxing, but yet medical purpose they are shown on separate page and not represented in any ways on the main page.

Message

To understand the message that the Blue Lagoon is trying to present, it's essential to look at brand identity and narratives on the website first. "*Storytelling as a branding tool is not about telling stories just for the sake of it. Rather, for most companies storytelling is about using stories to communicate messages that reflect positively on the company brand*" (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p.34).

The brief history of creation of the Blue Lagoon is presented on the website with a particular emphasis on power of nature:

"*The Blue Lagoon was formed in 1976 during operation at the nearby geothermal power plant. In the years that followed, people began to bathe in the unique water and apply the silica mud to their skin. Those with psoriasis noticed an incredible improvement in their condition. Over the years, Blue Lagoon has been innovative in harnessing this gift of nature to develop different spa services and products. Today, Blue Lagoon is recognised as one of the wonders of the world*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016).

From the above mentioned, it can be noted that the Blue Lagoon is being described as a very unique '*wonder of the world*', which was originally created by nature, and seen as a '*gift of nature'.* This assertion is making the reader to associate Icelandic nature with wellness services of the Blue Lagoon. Even though, there's a brief mention of people with psoriasis and how good the mineral water helps them with their skin conditions, the main focus of the brand the Blue Lagoon is wellness and beauty. Also, if we look at the main page from top and scroll down till the bottom there's not a single mention of psoriasis treatment. The website is trying to keep viewers' attention on wellness services and visual aesthetics.

The video on the main page contains a lot of useful information about the Blue Lagoon experience and wellness spa amenities for prospective tourists and visitors. However, the purpose of this video is not only to show what a visitor can do and experience, but also to demonstrate that everything is thought through, and that every need can be covered in a matter of a moment, and the only thing that a visitor should do is to *relax and enjoy*.

The other detail to note is an attempt to represent Icelandic authenticity. First, the voice behind the video has a specific Icelandic accent. Second, the two main characters in the video, the couple, wear famous Icelandic wool sweaters, which are very popular among tourists and are broadly offered in tourist shops. And the third thing to mention here is the food, throughout the video they make a special focus on that the Lava restaurant in the Blue Lagoon offers high quality food, made of '*natural Icelandic ingredients*'.

As it has been mentioned before, the rich mineral lagoon water helps people with psoriasis, and due to this fact the special clinic was build in the Blue Lagoon complex in 2005. When the reader opens the page on the website dedicated to psoriasis treatment there's also a special video, which makes the reader familiar with the services offered for guests, who is visiting with medical purpose. This video is different from the first one on the main page. It demonstrates highly professional and modern approach for treatment, offering a stay in a newly-build clinic, lagoon bathing and UV light therapy -treatments, special skincare products, gym, outdoor activities and restaurant. The voice behind the video sounds professional and doesn't have an accent. Like the first video, it demonstrates that every need can be fulfilled, but the special focus made on the *effectiveness of the treatment* offered with the guarantee of no side effects.

The Blue Lagoons' special focus on wellness and nature is reflected on their mission statement:

"*Blue Lagoon's mission is to promote wellness and energy for life through forces of nature. Using science and nature in harmony, we harness the incredible health-giving properties of Blue Lagoon and its active ingredients*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016).

Further, the Blue Lagoon is described as very special exclusive venue. The nature plays a big role in the Blue Lagoons brand identification. This can be seen from the statement on the main page, where it's called "*One of 25 wonders of the world*" and that further characterised as a place "*Surrounded with amazing nature, the Blue Lagoon is an oasis of relaxation*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016).

This gives the impression that the Blue Lagoon have a distinct and precise vision about the profiles of visitors and their possible needs. The website is user friendly and communicates with tourists, demonstrating them the extraordinary wellness amenities and innovative approach to utilise the goods of nature to provide the quests with unforgettable experience. The main message that the website is trying to communicate is that the Blue Lagoon is very unique place, surrounded by beautiful nature and offering a high class wellness services and able to cover all ind of needs. This makes the Blue lagoon more appealing as a brand for prospective visitors.

Conflict

"*The very lifeblood of a story lies in the field oftension between the two outer poles: unpredictable chaos and predictable harmony*"(Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2004, p.36). Thoughtout the website there's no prominent conflict as such, as the Blue Lagoon experience is represented in a way that is nearly perfect, and the visitors don't have to worry about anything, because prior to their arrival everything seems to be thought through.

Characters

Within the Blue Lagoon website the human images are broadly used. Nearly at every page we can see a human bathing in the lagoon and consuming different spa services.
The human images, or humans are the main characters on the website, and they represent potential tourists.
Icelandic nature is also broadly celebrated throughout the website and represents nativeness and authenticity of the destination.

Plot

The Blue Lagoon has a 40 years old history presented on the website:

"*The Blue Lagoon was formed in 1976 during operation at the nearby geothermal power plant. In the years that followed, people began to bathe in the unique water and apply the silica mud to their skin. Those with psoriasis noticed an incredible improvement in their condition. Over the years, Blue Lagoon has been innovative in harnessing this gift of nature to develop different spa services and products. Today, Blue Lagoon is recognized as one of the wonders of the world*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016).

The main idea of the plot is utilisation and consumption of goods and 'gifts' from nature. From a customer perspective, the plot is shown more precisely in the video on the main page, where the main characters arrive at the Blue Lagoon, check in, soaking up in the natural geo-thermal water, try the silica and algae masks, relax in a steam room, explore the cave, have a dinner at the Lava restaurant, shop some skincare products and the most important, enjoy their time in the Blue Lagoon.

Right now, the story is taking a new turn as the Blue Lagoon is expanding it's horizons and getting ready to offer more services and improve the quality of existing ones.

New development

The Blue Lagoon is currently undergoing through process of expansion. "*The lagoon grew by half and is now 8700 square meters and has a volume of 9 million liters*" (the Blue Lagoon website, 2016). This is done in order to enhance the experience and upgrade the overall level of the resort. After the renovation process is completed, the new luxury hotel will open its doors in 2017. Also, it is planned to renovate guest facilities and refreshment areas, adding a meditative spa area and some spots, where guests can get silica mask.

It is obvious that the Blue Lagoon is moving towards the improvement of the quality standards of services and aiming for a luxurious audience in the future.

The information about renovation is presented on the website on very every page and especially throughout the stage of purchasing tickets. The plan of expanding is also presented on the website and available in Appendix 1.

4.4. Semiotics

Keeping in mind the definition os semiotics, the author is focussing on the analyses of the Blue Lagoon website. Within this analyses the author attempted to identify and interpret a number of a signs throughout the website, which contain particular meanings and represents wellness. Peirce's semiotic model of representation was discussed above in theory part, and now is going to be used as analytical tool. Every element of this model is individually interpreted and analysed. It is essential to mention that the analyses of representations from the website is solely based on authors interpretations, thus the reflected meaning from representations is also dependent on authors interpretations.

Further, the initial analyses of the Blue Lagoon website is contracted with interviewees perceptions of the communicational tools, which are broadly used on the website.

C.S. Peirce's model of representations was adapted in this study as following:

Semiotic Model of Representation #1

Object: the Blue Lagoon
Sign: spa activities and products
Interpretant: potential Danish customers

Semiotic Model of Representation #2

Object: the Blue Lagoon
Sign: visual elements such as photos and videos
Interpretant: potential Danish customers

This particular choice of above mentioned models is underscored by authors' desire to see how wellness in the Blue Lagoon is represented throughout the website. The sign identified above are used to describe how they create the meaning and how they represent the Blue Lagoon. Concerning the interpretant, first the author interpreted with a theoretician approach, after that the model is presented and discussed. As following the interviewees were asked about their perceptions and ideas about the website.

4.5. A Semiotic Model of Representation

This chapter shows how the identified elements adapted in Peirce's model conceive their meanings and how they interact between each other.

4.6. Semiotic Model of Representation #1

C.S. Peirce's model of representations adapted in this study suggests three main elements, where the *object* is the Blue Lagoon, the sign presupposes spa amenities and products, and the *interpretant* is formed by the audience, namely potential Danish visitors.

Visually C.S. Peirce's adapted model of representations shown below:
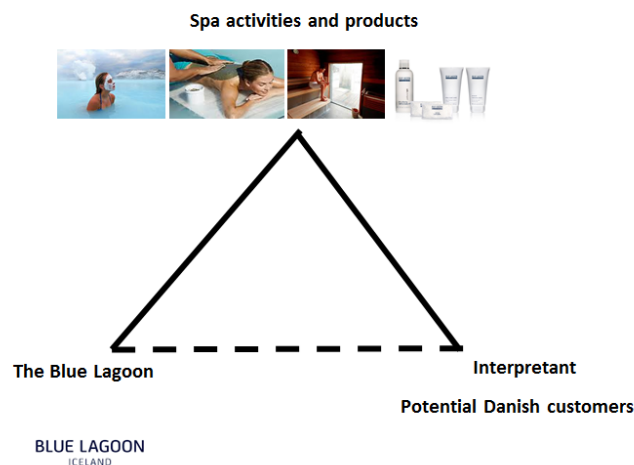
After identifying the tree main elements of the model, it will be further explained how the representations convey their meanings with the use of a number of tools, such as visuals. Prior to representation to take place, it important to consider that fact that three elements should be present in a model. Another thing to consider is the fact of presence of direct invisible relationship between the sign and object, and between the sign and interpretant (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Generally speaking, these 2 relationships as well as presence of the three elements in a model are essential for representation to occur.

Additionally, Pennington suggests that further the ***sign–object relationship*** should be considered in order to make the process of interpretation possible and to extract the meaning (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). In this thesis, the Blue Lagoon is the object, which is closely related to spa amenities and wellness products (the sign). As following, the sign-object relationship has a direct influence on interpretant (the author and Danish visitors).

The relations between the sign and interpretant is characterised with collateral experience. The authors' collateral experience was limited prior to starting this master thesis, however this has changed throughout the process of writing, as the author has gained new knowledge about the research subject.

While studying the Blue Lagoon website, it becomes very clear that the sign-object relationship are carefully thought through the website. This makes the potential customers unconsciously aware of this relationship, which in turn will benefit for the website, since the customers associate the sign with the object. For instance, when a potential customer sees particular spa amenities and a number of wellness products, the first thing to pop up in their mind is the Blue Lagoon, where they can experience all what they see.

Further, Peirce divides the sign-object relationship into **icon**, **index**, and **symbol**. However, a sign can not be solely an icon, index, or symbol, but rather have iconic, indexical, and symbolic aspects. The mixture of these aspects is understood as hybridity (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Looking at the website of the Blue Lagoon, it can be seen that spa activities and products are referred to by using a number of certain images, and they give the interpretant the idea about the object - the Blue Lagoon. The sign is incorporated in a photographs and videos in this study and entails a combination of *iconic* and *indexical* aspects.

This idea can be further explained by looking more closely at the exact spa activities and products. The act of bathing in a hot geo-thermal basin is an index, since it functions as a promise for the tourists that particular attributes and activities are present in a destination. However, the interpretant can not get the idea about the object, since it can not be understood where exactly this geo-thermal basin is located. In water massage, sauna and steam rooms, the cave and waterfall, the offer to use a mud mask and spa therapy can be explained the same way as bathing. However, when we look at special wellness products offered, we can see iconicity. These products represent the Blue Lagoon, they literally consist of the Blue Lagoon and the name of active elements (silica & algae) included are well known among people, who perceive their health and beauty, and people with psoriasis, who use it on medical purpose. Additionally, such products are only available for purchase in the Blue Lagoon or on the official Blue Lagoon website, therefore they have no relations to another destinations. Pennington support the mentioned above by saying that "*icon resembles the object, it emphasises recognisability and familiarity*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

It could be further argued, that the sign, namely spa activities and wellness products, should be known by interpretant. This knowledge can be gathered by obtaining collateral experience, thus the sign can be regarded as an icon. This happens due its direct resemblance with object - the Blue Lagoon, thus the recognisability is enhanced.

Additionally, Pennington argues that "*the indexical aspect of representation suggests limits the widespread idea that destinations are 'constructed' through their representations*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). The author of this thesis is completely agree with this position, as it would have been impossible to create a representation solely based on indexical signs. Moreover, it can be further added that it's even possible to confuse the object, when index sign is used, because the individual can not precisely identify the right object without having prior collateral experience. Also, confusion may occur given the fact that some individual features of a sign can remind the interpretant of another sign. As an example, one of the signs within 'spa activities and products', namely 'in water massage'

can be easily confused with 'in water massage' from another destination, and even not exactly associated with the right object, the Blue Lagoon.

When it comes to **sign-interpretant relation**, it can be a argued that the interpretation depends on interpretants' level of collateral experience. According to Peirce, **collateral experience** means that any individual perceiving the sign must have some prior knowledge and/or experience, which will allow an individual to recognise a sign as a sign of particular object without confusion (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). For instance, in current study, when the danish consumers look at the sign, namely spa amenities and products, a correlation to the Blue Lagoon might not always occur, since individuals have different levels of knowledge about the Blue Lagoon. However, after getting familiar with the website, it is certain that those selected individuals will associate the object, namely the Blue Lagoon, with the signs.

It can be noted further that the website is also trying to create memories in targets audiences' mind with the use of video and photographs, which in turn helps the customers to recall the Blue Lagoon and associate it with particular signs in the future. This can be further explained by the fact, that the majority of information throughout the website is represented as visual information with minimum of text. When individuals encounter textual discourse, they remember the idea incorporated in the text. On contrary, when they look at visuals, they memorise particular signs and associate them with the object (Hall, 1997).

4.7. Semiotic Model of Representation #2

In Semiotic Model of Representation #2 the *object* and the *interpretant* are the same as previously, namely the Blue Lagoon and Danish consumers, however the *sign* is different and now represented by the actual web page of the Blue Lagoon, namely photographs and videos. The choice to replace a sign is underscored by the authors desire to examine how the representations would change in this settings given the fact that the amount of visual information within the website , such as photographs and videos, exceeds the amounts of textual.

The blue Lagoon website per se –
Photographs and videos

The Blue Lagoon

Interpretant
Potential Danish customers

BLUE LAGOON
ICELAND
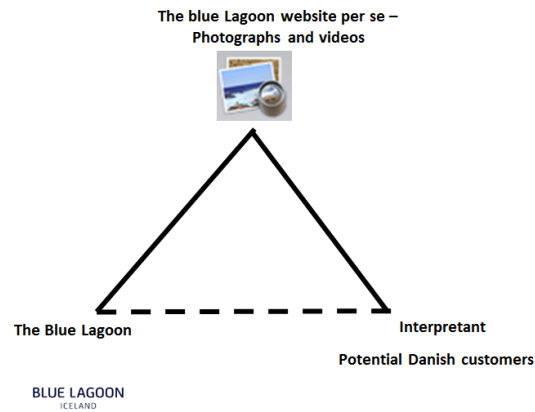
When adapting Peirce's model of representation in this thesis and studying the website with a special focus on visuals, such as photographs and videos, the author can clearly note that the sign has a combination of both *indexical* and *iconic* aspects. From the pictures and videos the interpretant can recognise the object, namely the Blue Lagoon, which supports the idea of iconic aspects of the sign. Also, the sign has indexical aspects, as it has been said earlier, since the visuals demonstrate what is present in the destination. Indexical representations associated with "*authenticity and underlie the documentary quality of a photograph, for example, thus enhancing the credibility of both the sign and the object*", says Pennington (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

Yet again, it's important to mention that the interpretant should have a certain level of collateral experience in order to be able to recognise a sign as a sign of particular object. Consequently, when an interpretant see natural landscapes and blue water of the lagoon, he or she will be able to recognise and relate it to the object, the Blue Lagoon. The level of collateral experience also matters, while interpreting the sign-object relationship, as it can affect the way how individuals perceive the representations in terms of Peirce's representation concept (more/less iconic, indexical, or symbolic aspects).

Further, Pennington suggest that tourist discourse websites, such as the Blue Lagoon website, represent the "*collections of signs of those destinations*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). The author of this thesis is agree with this assertion, as it can be clearly evident while looking at the Blue Lagoon website, that a number of diverse signs are present throughout the website with the main focus on the object, namely the Blue Lagoon.

As it has been identified earlier, the sign-object relationship on the Blue Lagoon website has both indexical and iconic aspects, incorporated in photographs and videos. This enables the viewers to recognise the place they desire to visit, and get the impression and idea of what else is there to experience. The meaning they it conveyed within the signs incorporated in visuals can be understood as the idea that the Blue Lagoon is a unique and modern wellness

destination, which was created by nature and offers a rich spectrum of wellness products and services.

It can be further argued about the presence of symbolic aspects of the sign. According to Peirce, "*symbols are based on shared social and cultural conventions, they represent cultural categories and social norms, ideas, and values*" (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). When examining the facial expressions of people from the photographs and videos, it can be noted that they all share the sense of enjoyment, as their eyes are closed and face relaxed. The smiles on the faces signify about the quality experience in the Blue Lagoon. It can be clearly noted, that the human feelings incorporated in visuals are reflected in a very sensual way. It looks like, that the decision behind doing this is underscored by the idea of the management of the Blue Lagoon to show to potential customers not only what the Blue Lagoon experience is about, but also how they would feel once they get there (Appendix 2).

However, the content that is being represented by a symbol cannot be fully captured and expressed by and image and need to be supported by contextual information (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). Symbolic representations are not left alone throughout the website, but rather followed by textual information when it's a photograph, and accompanied by a voice explaining the Blue Lagoon experience, when it's a video (Appendix 3).

Keeping in mind the above mentioned, it can be said that visuals play essential role in conveying the narrative of the brand to target audience. Visuals also give an advantage to the Blue Lagoon appeal towards customers, since the visuals are a powerful communicative tool to influence the customers, as the data collection revealed. The interviewees supported this idea and added that it's important to show the destination and activities that can be experienced, rather than providing the customer with toons of textual information.

4.7. Interview analyses

After completing the analyses of the Blue Lagoon website, it is time to go deeper and analyse the interviewees perception of the Blue Lagoon based on the website and further contrast their perceptions with the initial message of the website. Additionally, the way that wellness is shown with the use of diverse strategic communicational tools within the website will be contrasted with the way how the interviewees perceive wellness in the Blue Lagoon. For this purpose 10 Danish individuals were interviewed.

The following analyses will be build upon the theory chapter and the first part of the analyses chapter, namely Analyses of the Blue Lagoon website. The author will not go through the theory part again, but will rather identify relevant concepts within the theory and first part of analyses chapter. The purpose of this analyses is to address the second research question.

4.8. Narratives and storytelling

Narratives and storytelling was one of the strategical communicational tools used within the website, and will be the starting point in interview analyses. The concept of narratives and storytelling will be precisely discussed and analysed, including the subtopics such as *The message*, *Conflict*, *Characters*, *Plot* as it was presented in theory earlier.

The message

When asking the interviewees about the message that the website is trying to communicate, the responses were quite diverse given the fact that individuals have different life styles, perceptions of reality and ways to spend their holidays. For some, the message was interpreted as an invitation to visit the Blue Lagoon and experience wellness tourism and services, for others it was a demonstration of high-end standards and luxurious aspects of destination.

To begin with, a majority of interviewees interpreted the message as a demonstration of luxury wellness facilities of the Blue Lagoon, explaining the destination as a wellness place to relax and enjoy. This can be seen from some of the quotes below:

"*I think it is trying to tell people that this is luxurious and they have good facilities for people, and that they want to reach out to a lot of people…[it is for] people who have a lot*

of time and a lot of money to spend on a quality place. It was very luxurious to look at…" (Interviewee #5).

"*It tries to communicate luxury and it tries to say that there is everything you need to have a nice wellness, you can do everything, and after you can go at the restaurant with the nice food, and buy some nice things to make you remember the good times*" (Interviewee #10)

"*That this is what you need, and this is what you should do, and this is how wellness is supposed to be*" (Interviewee #1).

"*It tries to say that you just have to bring you and your wallet to the Blue Lagoon, and then they will take care of you*" (Interviewee #7).

While analysing the interviewees responses, the author noted that the interviewees don't see that the Blue Lagoon is trying to communicate and pose itself as a 'wonder of the world' and a place providing tourists with 'extraordinary experience' as it has been stated on the website.

However, one of the interviewees did not express his idea about the actual message that the website is trying to communicate, but rather saw it as an aggressive advertising tool:

"*Its an advertisement, they want the tourist to go there, and they are doing what ever it takes to bring new people, who has never been at Iceland, and Blue Lagoon in particular […] They want the viewers, to get idea about the place [the Blue Lagoon] to be all quiet and nice and relaxing. They want to create a need for this in the viewers mind*" (Interviewee #6).

Despite the fact, that the website is actively trying to communicate the importance of nature in the Blue Lagoon and create the association line between natural resources and wellness experience in the Blue Lagoon, the interviewees could hardly see the connection between the nature and wellness. Only 2 interviewees acknowledged the fact that spa amenities and services, and products in skincare shop is a result of utilising natural resources, while others saw wellness and luxurious spa services as attributes of the place without even mentioning the nature. Only 2 respondents said that the website is attempting to communicate the beauty of nature and relate it to the services that are offered in the Blue Lagoon:

"*I think the main goal of that website was to show the nature, and the nature of that place and what they really offer, and I think it was a good way to offer what you have. They really show a lot about the place, and the people, and their experience that they can have during their stay in Iceland. I think it was a good way of communication […] about how the Blue Lagoon was made […] and how it is good for the health.*" (Interviewee #3).

"It think it's the story about the nature, it's all down to earth and all about getting you relaxed. It's called on of 25 wonders of nature, it's like from the old days. It was not something new that they build, the nature created the place" (Interviewee #2).

Conflict

The conflict was not identified by the interviewees as they seem to perceive the Blue Lagoon as something that is close to be a perfect place. This way of perceiving of the Blue Lagoons' narrative correlates with the authors interpretation of the website, since no actual conflict was detected.

"Everything is on point, there is nothing wrong, its just beautiful, and everything is good, you don't have to think about anything, you just have to live" (Interviewee #1).

Characters

The interviewees identified people on the video and photographs as main characters. However, the author found it important to examine, if the interviewees can associate the main characters with themselves and if they can transmit themselves into the story. According to Peirce, if the viewers can recognise themselves in the main characters of the story, the emotional involvement occurs, and consequently the initial message of the website will have a greater affect on customer (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

While analysing interviews in order to find out, if the interviewees can relate themselves with the people on the pictures and videos throughout the website, it can be said that all respondents can imagine themselves experiencing the Blue Lagoon, while looking at visuals. Moreover, one of the interviewees supported this idea, by saying:

"I mean there has to be a person in the picture, then I can relate to it. So I feel like I'm the one in the picture" (Interviewee #4).

Further, the author can notice the emotional involvement of other interviewees too, as some of them had facial expressions of joy and some of them even closed the eyes for just a moment to imagine themselves and continued taking after a couple of seconds. Additionally, they not only think about themselves, but also about their personal settings:

"I saw the couple in the video and I could imagine myself with my girlfriend, she is also busy at work, so it would definitely be a place we would like to visit" (Interviewee #7).

"*You can go there with your husband and have some nice times together, you can relax, you can eat, you can sleep, you can have a nice weekend as a couple*" (Interviewee #8).

"*I could be one of them*" (Interviewee #2).

" *Yes, I would like to go there, when I see the pictures. I would go there to just be completely relaxing, not thinking about the job or other stuff*" (Interviewee #6).

Moving on further, the interviewees #5 and #3 sees a positive side of using human in visuals, moreover the emotional involvement can be detected, since they are talking about feelings:

"*I think they did a good job with describing how it felt and how it would be and how it was to be there*" (Interviewee #5).

"It really feels like you are there and you want to be there" (Interviewee #3)

The plot

The actual act of visiting the Blue Lagoon and consuming spa amenities and products is regarded as a plot of the story by many of the interviewees. However, not all of the interviewees related the plot as a sequence of events, that happen within the story, but rather expressed their idea about the plot as a their generalised perception of the Blue Lagoon and as a brief history of creation of the Blue Lagoon. It can be further mentioned that it was quite difficult for interviewees to focus on the plot and events that happen during the story, as the majority of them mainly focused their attention on aesthetic aspect of the website and a number of spa activities, that they would like to try. As it has been mentioned before, the emotional involvement occurred in every case of interviewing, and the author noted that it was also difficult for the interviewees to switch their attention after the interviewees imagined themselves having a good time in the lagoon. Therefore, they could hardly identify the plot of the story, but rather express the sensual part of the story while in the Blue Lagoon ,and consuming wellness services. It can be seen from some of quotation below:

"*[…] you can go there with your husband and have some nice times together, you can relax, you can eat, you can sleep, you can have a nice weekend as a couple*" (Interviewee #8).

"*They try to tell a story for a nice trip and a nice day at Iceland. A relaxing day*" (Interviewee #10).

"*[…] you that you can have a good time there and, you can relax, and you can let loose and don't think about the things that bother you. And get some relaxing time, I think that is what I got out the video*" (interviewee #5).

4.9. Semiotic model of representation #1

Within this section, the semiotic model of representation #1 will be looked at again in order to identify how the *interpretant*, namely the danish customers, perceive the *sign*, namely spa amenities and products, and how they relate it to the *object*, the Blue Lagoon.
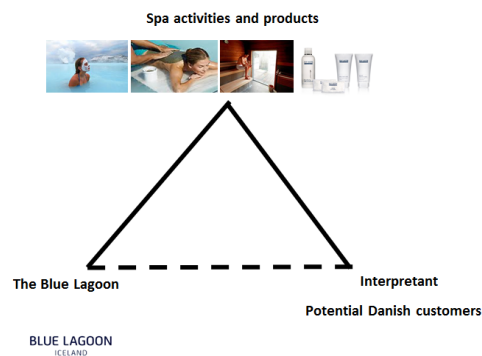
To begin with, the content of interpretation depends on prior collateral experience of the interpretant, the Danish customers. Given the fact that levels of collateral experience differ from individual to individual, the author will attempt to explain their interpretation as accurate as possible.

The interview analyses suggests that the interviewees perceive the sign mainly as an index, since the the sign functions as s promise that particular attributes are present in the destination. Further, the interpretant, namely the Danish customers, can not recognise the object, the Blue Lagoon, only by looking at the sign, spa amenities and services. This supports the idea, that the interpretant see the rather as an index.

However, one of the interviewees perceive the sign as an icon, since by looking at the sign, she could recognise an object. This was extracted during the interview, as she mentioned that when she looked at spa services and products, she could think about the Blue Lagoon, she also mentioned:
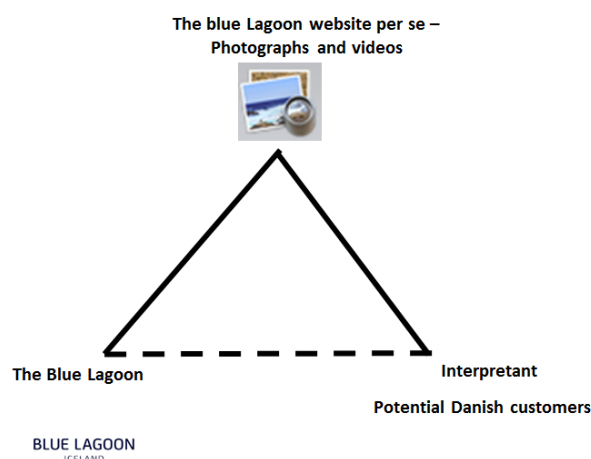
"*And all the products they had, it looks exclusive*" (Interviewee #5).

The fact that the interviewees perceive the sign predominantly as an index suggests that their level of collateral experience was lower that the authors, as the author perceive the sign as a combination of both the icon and the index. The author also suggests that if the interviewees were more familiar with the spa amenities and services offered in the Blue Lagoon, it would change the way how they perceive the sign, and enable them to see more iconic aspects of the sign.

Another important aspect to mention is that the interviewees might not been aware of the fact that a certain representation occurred, while they examined the website. This can be explained by the fact they looked at the website from consumer perspective and didn't attempt to find any possible interpretations. Further, the author argues that the representations occurred unconsciously in consumers' mind and basically influenced by the object they could clearly see throughout the website.

4.10. Semiotic model of representation #2

The choice to further study the semiotic model #2, which was discussed earlier can be easily explained by the fact, that visuals are broadly used throughout the website, and also by the fact that interviewees stated that visuals, such as photographs and videos, have given them more information than the text.

The blue Lagoon website per se –
Photographs and videos

The Blue Lagoon   Interpretant
                                   Potential Danish customers

BLUE LAGOON
ICELAND

First of all, based on the interview analyses, the author can note that the interpretant, namely the Danish consumers, perceive the sign both as an index and a symbol. The majority of interviewees mentioned that indexicity is an important aspect in tourist discourse, as it helps the consumer to document the authenticity and it also functions as a guarantee that several attributes are present in the destination:

"*It's better to use pictures and videos, I don't understand text alone, I cannot imagine anything without pictures*" (Interviewee #9).

"The video was very nice overview over the things, and I don't think I would get the same if I had to read it on a web page. Here it was easy to see what you get" (Interviewee #10).

"*It's a good way to show, instead of telling, so having a picture says more then a paragraphs could ever do. So having a picture of somebody laying in a blue lagoon vs explaining it helps a lot, also with the video where they explain everything, how you are going to do, how it works, how you get in, how you pay. Its really fluent, and you don't need to think about it, just book the ticket now*" (Interviewee #1).

From the above quotations, it can be also noted that the symbolic aspect has a great meaning for interpretant. Additionally, according to Peirce, a symbol cannot be fully captured and expressed by an image and should be supported by contextual information (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010). This idea is broadly supported among the interviewees. Yet again, symbolic aspect is associated with social and cultural conventions, which is also reflected within the interviews, as a number of individuals can interpret visuals and get the idea about the sensual aspect and feelings they would have, while examining the sign:

"*Personally I like it more when there is a mixture of this. A picture with a following description for the picture. Then I can remember the picture better when I have some text to relate to*" (Interviewee #4).

"*It should be and mixture, of course it is hard for a place like the blue lagoon to show how nice and relaxing a place it is, without using any kind of pictures. But there also need a description regarding information I think*" (Interviewee #6).

"*I'm not that good at reading all the text on websites, so I think it is good way to catch peoples eye and attention, and people are not doing that much of thinking while. I think it is better with the video and the pictures. It is also easy to imagine how it is up there […] it is very important so people can see how it is, and people can get the feeling of it*" (Interviewee #5).

Given the fact that photographs and videos include various signs, which in turn convey different meaning for consumers (Debord, 1995 in Hunter, 2013), it can be said that photographs and videos are subjective and open for interpretation. As it was discussed above, visuals are interpreted by consumer once they have been filtered through consumers' social conventions (Hunter, 2013).

It can be further argued that visuals function as representation and destination marketers have to desire which signs they are going to focus on in order to convey a certain meaning and represent a particular destination in a positive way.

Conclusion

Looking back at the research statement formulation, which attempted to identify what strategic communicational choices and tool are used on the Blue Lagoon website to distinguish the Blue Lagoon as a wellness destination, and how does the individuals perception of the Blue Lagoon based on information from the website correlates with the message that the management of the Blue Lagoon is sending to potential customers, it can be argued that the discussion of tools is a complex. Therefore, the study was narrowed down the communication tools to narratives and storytelling, and visuals. Further, the meaning and the effect of these tools discussed below.

The complexity of tools is explained by the fact that the tools reflect diverse messages and concepts that the Blue Lagoon is trying to convey, however it should be done in a way that will be accepted and successfully consumed by consumers. Also, while doing the analyses, the author noted that the tools are interconnected between each other. When looking at the Blue Lagoon website and attempting to identify how wellness is shown, it can be seen that the Blue Lagoon has a carefully thought through strategy that they use in order to affect potential consumers and look more appealing for them.

Storytelling and narratives

Narratives and storytelling is a powerful communicational tool which is used to present the destination in a way that will benefit for the destination. In this thesis narrative and stories were further classified into the *Message, Conflict, Characters, and The Plot* in order to analyse and systemise the ways how wellness is shown throughout the website and to further analyse how the Danish consumers utilise there representations. It was interesting to see the various ways, how the interviewees perceive the main message of the Blue Lagoon website. The differences between the main message on the website and consumer perceptions has been also identified. Even though, the consumers could see the message as in invitation to visit the Blue Lagoon, they could also note the aesthetic beauty and high-end quality of the destination, but it was rather hard for them to see the fundamental idea that the Blue Lagoon is attempting to position itself as an extraordinary place, which is resulting from utilising nature resources and usage of innovative technologies. Some individuals, however, managed to pinpoint the importance of nature in the story, and only 2 individuals could go deeper and extract the idea of that wellness and beauty result from the nature, and that it didn't come out from nowhere.

The lack of conflict was noted by interviewees. It was rather hard not to notice the absence of the conflict, when the visual representation was close to perfect, as the interviewees expressed.

Throughout the website the human images were used almost in every photograph, so it was easy for the interviewees to establish emotional connections and to relate themselves with the people in the visuals. This shows the efficiency of this strategic communicational tool. This assertion can be further supported by the fact that after discussing the question about characters in the story, it was rather hard for the interviewees to focus on the sequence of events, namely the plot, as they associated the events of the story with their feelings about it. Therefore the plot f the story was expressed in very generic way, where the interviewees spoke more about how they would feel.

Visuals

Visual representations play a huge role in the Blue Lagoon destination representation, as this place cannot be explained in words, but rather shown visually. The interviewees entirely supported this idea. The visuals were analysed with the help of Peice's semiotic model of representations, which required three main elements to present in the model (the sign, the object, the interpretant) in order for representation to occur.

First, the author interpreted the signs contained in the visuals from her own perspective, and further contrasted it with customers interpretation. The differences in interpretation were identified due to a number of factors:

- The author and the interpretant, namely danish consumers are characterised with different level of collateral experience; which in turn affected on the way now the sign will be interpreted;

- The Danish consumers were not aware about the literature of semiotic representations, also they were not aware of the fact that their interpretation will be further analysed, thus they looked at the website from purely customer perspective without trying to go deeper studying the signs;

- The danish consumers might have not been aware about the representations that actually happened in their minds, therefore they could not explicitly explain and reflect them;

- Given the fact of hybrid relations occur between the sign and the object, both the author and Danish consumers identified different aspects (iconic, indexical, symbolic) of the same signs. This phenomena is explained by the fact that individuals have diverse level of collateral experience and social conventions.

Summing up all the above, the Danish consumers found the Blue Lagoon website very user-friendly, informative, beautiful and useful. Even though, some of them call it too tourist-minded, the overall impression about the website is quite positive:

"*I think that it was a little bit too staged sometimes, you know… with the Icelandic sweater and like the beautiful couple entering, not that it was bad, it was just the only thing that was not that good. The accent when she spoke about the place… some people like it, some don't*" (Interviewee #2).

"*And it is very romantic, I think […] I think they are really successful in the way they communicate through this website […]*" (Interviewee #3).

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  Accessed 18.07.16

- The Blue Lagoon website
  http://www.bluelagoon.com

Interview guide

- Is it alright that the conversation will be recorded?

- Do you agree with that I will use your name, position and quotes in my master thesis in order for data analyses?

- Name

- Age

- Occupation

- What kind of holidays do you like?

- Have you ever travelled to Iceland and Blue Lagoon in particular before? (with who?)

- (If not) Would like to travel there?

- What do you think about Iceland in general?

- What attributes should have the destination to be considered as a wellness destination?

- After reviewing the website about the Blue Lagoon, what can u say about it?

- What elements on the website represent wellness?

- What do you think about wellness tourism in Iceland?

- What do you like the most about the website?

- Can you name anything you don't really like (on the website)?

- What is the website trying to communicate?

- When you look at the pictures of relaxing people can you imagine yourself in their place and how it would be?

- What story or a legend the website is trying to present to you?

- What do you think about using the photographs and videos on the website? Is it better than just textual information?

- Is it important that the website includes a wide range of visual information for prospective tourists?

- Was there anything specific that catches your attention?

List of Appendixes

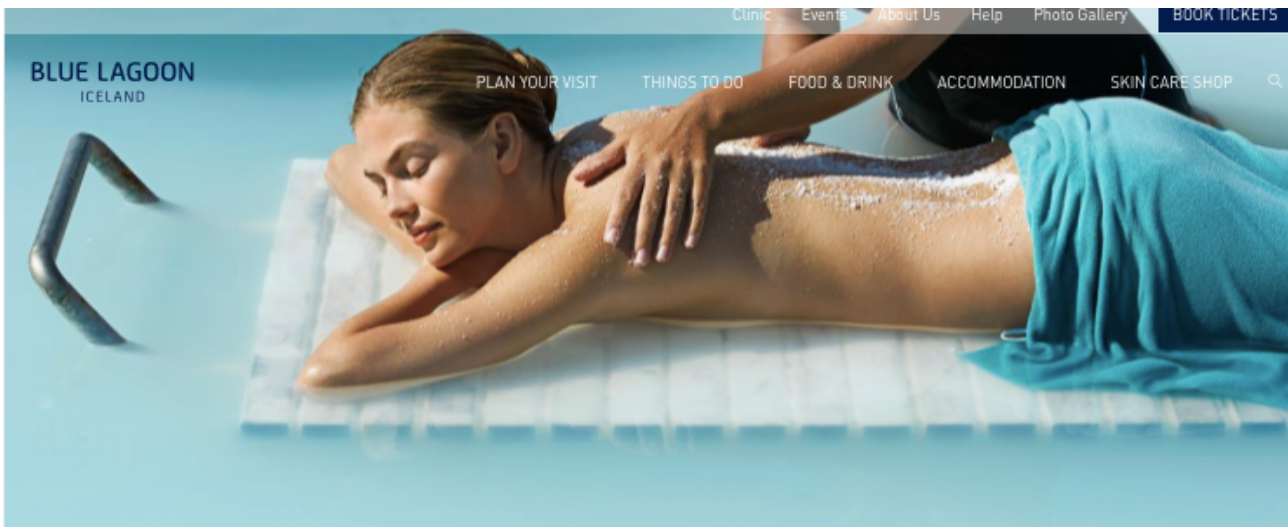## Appendix 1. The Blue Lagoon is growing

Appendix 2. Feelings incorporated in visuals

# Appendix 3. Visual representations accompanied by text

120 MINUTES OF WONDER

This extraordinary, 2-hour treatment cleanses and strengthens your skin, leaving you energized and nourished. It begins with a salt glow: your skin is scrubbed and polished with an invigorating combination of Blue Lagoon minerals and oils.

The salt glow is followed by a silica or algae wrap: your body is swathed in the element of your choosing and you float on a mattress while your face and scalp are gently massaged. The final stage of the treatment is a 50-minute, full body, in-water, relaxing massage.

2 hours: EUR 230
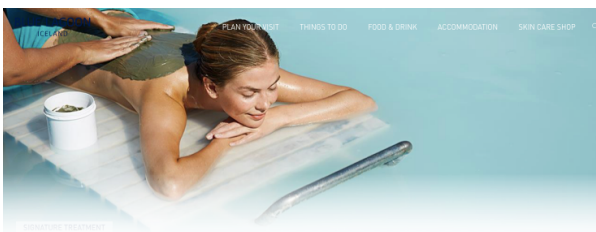
IN-WATER MASSAGE

You are floating in the soothing warmth of a wonder of the world. Your massage – deep, relaxing, and conducted with Blue Lagoon mineral massage oil – is a wonder unto itself. This in-water experience, the Relaxing Massage, is the foundation of all other Blue Lagoon massages and treatments.

RELAXING MASSAGE
+ Optional Extras
You choose the duration and the areas to focus on during your treatment.

- from **30** min
- from **75** eur

Read more >

Lagoon entry not included

BOOKING REQUEST
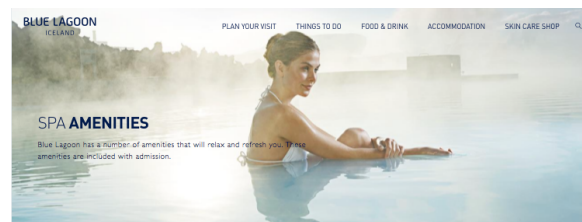
SIGNATURE TREATMENT
Scrub, Wrap, and Massage
Two hours of rejuvenating wonder: A cleansing, nourishing, strengthening, revitalizing experience.

- from **120** min
- from **230** eur

Read more >

Lagoon entry not included

BOOKING REQUEST

SPA AMENITIES

Blue Lagoon has a number of amenities that will relax and refresh you. These amenities are included with admission.

SILICA MUD MASK

The white facemask that you've probably seen in photos is the Silica Mud Mask. The mask is delivered at the Silica bar, located in the lagoon. You can apply as much as you want to your face and body, before leaving it on for at least 5 minutes. When you wash it off, you will feel a significant difference in the softness of your skin.

SAUNA AND STEAM ROOMS

Our sauna and steam baths are a big part of the Blue Lagoon experience. Carved into the lava rock, they reflect the stunning landscape around the Blue Lagoon.