



ICELANDIC TOURISM
RESEARCH CENTRE



Tourist images of Iceland

A regional comparison of tourism promotional material

Dennis Hermans

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TOURIST IMAGES OF ICELAND

A REGIONAL COMPARISON OF TOURISM PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

DENNIS HERMANS

ICELANDIC TOURISM RESEARCH CENTRE
MAY 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Iceland has experienced significant growth over the last five years as inbound international visitor numbers went up from 459.252 in 2010 to 1.261.938 in 2015 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2016). People travelling to and from Iceland carry not only their luggage but narratives and images about Iceland that they disseminate and mediate through the world. These narratives and images can reach millions of people worldwide and have the capability to change or reaffirm the destination image of Iceland. It is therefore important to understand the destination image communicated by the tourism industry in Iceland. In 2011 the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre contributed to this awareness by publishing a report on image production in North Iceland (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). However, as Gunnarsdóttir (2011) argued, the destination image of a country or region is constantly evolving and therefore it is important to continue to do research on this topic. This report will revisit the analysis performed in the 2011 report, explore the issues raised and add the latest insights from the Icelandic tourism literature in general.

At the destination level several ways of organizing stakeholder interests exist worldwide. These Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), both on national and regional scale, manage i.a. the destination image. In Iceland, regional tourism associations were established in the 1980s and each of them subsequently produced their own regional marketing bureau (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). Each year they contribute to the publication of the Official Tourist Guides, which has six different versions: one for each regional marketing bureau, except for the capital region. The first analysis here reported explores what kind of images these organizations choose to represent their region. The analysis had a twofold focus. Firstly all regions' images were considered combined and secondly an interregional comparison is provided.

The main analysis here reported focused on the images produced by all available tourism brochures and guidebooks in North Iceland, which can be compared to the analysis done in 2011 by Margaryan and Zherdev. An additional dimension was given by exploring differences between commercial and non-commercial sources in a separate analysis.

Besides the Official Tourist Guides, there is one other tourism brochure which is considered to be particularly important: the Visit Mývatn guidebook (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). This was analyzed separately.

Travel brochures were chosen as the most convenient and effective way to analyze the image production in North Iceland. Even with the proliferation of the Internet for both acquiring

information and for purchasing travel products, the continued importance of travel brochures cannot be ignored. According to Gunnarsdóttir (2011), regional and national marketing organizations continue to publish yearly brochures, spending considerable amounts of money. Thus the “pictorial content of brochures is undeniably of great importance and influence in image-making” (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011, p. 535). The images used by a region not only show how they want to promote their characteristics, but it also communicates a particular story. The promotional images can reveal values and ideas, and it shows and affects how the host population sees itself and its community (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

This report proceeds in five chapters. Chapter 2 explores existing knowledge about image production in Iceland and North Iceland in particular. Subsequently, chapter 3 presents the methodology which describes how the analysis was carried out. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the analysis and consists of three subsections: the Official Tourist Guide analysis, the Visit Mývatn Guidebook analysis and the North Iceland promotional material analysis. Chapter 5 is the discussion, which aims to explore how the results can be interpreted in the light of previous research and existing literature about image production in (North) Iceland. And finally, the concluding chapter 6 introduces the main lessons learned from this research.

The project is conditioned by the contents of the author’s internship project, which took place from February 2016 to June 2016 at the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre in accordance with an agreement with the University of Wageningen, The Netherlands, where the author was completing an MSc programme in Leisure, Tourism and Environment.

2 DESTINATION IMAGE

In a rapidly globalizing world, more and more destinations are known by tourists. Not only will this leave them with an ever more varied set of options on where to go for their holidays, but a tourism destinations' popularity is much more fluid than before, with winners and losers emerging ever more rapidly. The marketing of destinations, for example through the internet, has therefore become more important in order to attract tourists (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The information which is communicated about a certain destination to tourists influences the so-called destination image. According to Beerli & Martin (2004), the strategic management of a destination image is fundamental in the success of a particular destination. This is partly because a positive destination image will attract more tourists, but it is also important to make sure that expectations meet the actual experience at the destination. Beerli & Martin (2004) argue that tourist satisfaction and their intention to visit a destination again in the future depend on whether expectations, which are formed by communication of a particular destination image, correspond with the capacity of the destination to meet those expectations.

2.1 Images of Iceland

The destination image perceived by tourists before they visit Iceland has been formed through multiple processes of communication of particular stereotypes, narratives and images. Some of these relate specifically to Iceland while others are part of a broader discourse which involves Iceland, for example as a country of the North, a Scandinavian country or as one of the world's islands. This section will discuss the themes and events which have influenced the formation of the destination image of Iceland according to the literature.

Iceland is, along with the rest of the Scandinavian countries, considered to be a country where gender equality is very well established. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2015), Iceland had the highest gender equality in the world in 2015. Criteria for this list include women's economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2015). There are, however, a number of academics who question whether tourism promotional campaigns and material reflect the image of Iceland as a destination of gender equality. Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir (2011) discuss in their article how Iceland in the 1990s began to market itself as an exotic destination by emphasizing its 'beautiful and supposedly promiscuous young women'. Icelandair, which is the main airline of the country, launched a very infamous market campaign called 'one night stand in Reykjavík' in which tourists were enticed to visit Iceland by showing

images of a young couple taking a mud bath and the associated caption: 'a dirty weekend in Iceland'. Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir (2011) stress that this campaign was no one off incident, as the company still promoted Iceland by showing images of a 'lone and beautiful woman in a bikini bathing in a thermal pool' while they were writing their article.

Connected to the promotion of Iceland's beauty in terms of women are the efforts to market the city of Reykjavík as a perfect stopover destination and as 'the city that never sleeps' or 'the party capital of the world' (Jóhannsdóttir, 2006). Reykjavík is the capital of Iceland and it is a 45 minute drive from Keflavík, the main international airport in the country. About 97% of all incoming tourists who arrive through Keflavík airport visit the city of Reykjavík (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2015). For the majority of all tourists, it is the first impression they get from Iceland and it is therefore not surprising that the city is very present in the marketing of Iceland. Reykjavík received a lot of international attention after it featured in a show called 'Oprah Takes You Around the World'. In this show, it was emphasized numerous times that Reykjavík is a place of excessive drinking and promiscuous women (Jóhannsdóttir, 2006).

In contrast, the discourse about the rest of the country focused on its natural wonders, such as the waterfalls, volcanoes and geysers. Jóhannsdóttir argues that the representation of Iceland involves a discourse of "the country of ice and fire, of glaciers and geysers and natural energy sources, to contrasting dark, cold winters with hot women in the 'party capital of the world'" (Jóhannsdóttir, 2006, p.117). This distinction between the 'modern' and urban character of the capital region and the more 'natural, wild and pristine' image of the rest of Iceland has been addressed by Gössling (2006). He explains how there is a clear distinction between information about the city of Reykjavík and the rest of the country, as the former is associated with culture and modernity while the latter mostly communicates a narrative of nature phenomena.

Despite the efforts to diversify the destination image of Iceland by promoting city life in Reykjavík, nature remains a very important reason for tourists to come to Iceland. According to a survey amongst departing tourists in 2014 by the Icelandic Tourist Board, nature is by far the most important reason for people to visit the country. More than 79% of the respondents stated that Icelandic nature had a major impact on their decision to visit the country (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2014). In comparison, Icelandic culture or history held second place with only 40% of the people expressing its importance. The reputation of Iceland as a place for natural beauty and extremes has a long history according to Jóhannesson, Huijbens and Sharpley (2010). They argue that it has originated, at least partly, from a more general allure of islands (island-ness), as places of 'otherness', isolation and separateness (Jóhannesson, Huijbens, & Sharpley, 2010). However,

as Jóhannesson et al. (2010) state, island tourism has experienced the most rapid growth in warm-water island destinations, and the destination image of Iceland cannot be compared to islands like the Bahamas or Jamaica. Hence, in addition to the components of island-ness, the destination image of Iceland is also composed of certain imagery of the North (Huijbens, 2011; Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). The North has historically been associated with a kind of dualism in respect to its reputation, as both positive and negative narratives have existed. In a far past it became considered to be a place with a terrible natural environment where life was nearly impossible (Ísleifsson, 2015). When humans were described it was common to portray them as being savage, primitive and strange (Ísleifsson, 2015). As Ísleifsson argues, descriptions of the North and Iceland in specific were often “illustrations of great exoticism, an opposite side or backside of the dominant self-perception of the major Western European states” (Ísleifsson, 2015, p. 242). He describes this phenomenon as borealism, which is a specific, Nordic form of orientalism. However, especially after the mid-18th century, this discourse changed and the North became much more known as being civilized with ‘regular’ people (Ísleifsson, 2015). Ísleifsson (2015) argues that islands of the North were also associated with richness; places where resources were abundant.

Additionally, Gunnarsdóttir (2011) describes how the North is associated with a masculine landscapes, opposed to the more feminine character of warm-water islands. This masculinity refers to the active, wild and rough character of Iceland which is connected to themes of “adventure, excitement, and exploration” (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011, p. 540). These masculine landscapes were celebrated in Romantic ideas in the 18th and 19th century as being sublime, pure and awe-inspiring, instead of being places that were so harsh that one should avoid going there (Ísleifsson, 2011).

The government of Iceland has used several marketing campaigns to frame the country’s nature as being ‘clean’, ‘pure’, ‘pristine’ and ‘unspoiled’ (Huijbens, 2011; Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Karlsdóttir, 2013). Huijbens states that the Iceland Naturally campaign can be considered to be “the first step in Iceland’s image campaign” (Huijbens, 2011, p. 540). The purpose of the campaign was not only directed at tourism as it aimed to increase Iceland’s competitive advantage in general (Huijbens, 2011). The Icelandic Tourist Board (ITB) also contributed to the destination image of Iceland by setting up a campaign in 2007 which emphasized “an image of a clean and green natural exotic wilderness of extreme beauty” (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011, p. 38). Central to this campaign were the Northern Lights, the Blue Lagoon and the various geysers in Iceland (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011). The focus of Iceland as a destination with pure, unspoiled nature is accompanied by an apparent absence of people and culture

(Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). However, as Sæþórsdóttir (2014) argues, this destination image of wilderness might become problematic when more and more tourists come to visit Iceland. Research in 2013 showed that even though the majority of tourists still consider the number of visitors appropriate, it is expected that the rapid growth of tourism will put pressure on the wilderness image (Sæþórsdóttir, 2014).

2.2 Previous research

This report is developed from a research project on image production in North Iceland by Lusine Margaryan and Nikolay Zherdev (2011). In their report they discuss the results of their content and semiotic analysis of images in promotional brochures in North Iceland. The content analysis serves to explore image production mostly in a quantitative way, as it gives insight into how many images are present from each of certain predefined categories. The purpose of the semiotic analysis then is to describe 'how the photographs represent what they aim to represent' (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). The current study here reported will perform a content analysis and add perspectives to that as outlined in the introduction.

In the content analysis, Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) show that images related to activities (31%), nature/animals (27%) and tourist friendliness (23%) were most present in the promotional material in North Iceland. Together, these three categories accounted for 81% of all coded images, while the categories of people in focus, rural/urban landscapes and cultural heritage accounted for the remaining 19%. Besides this broad overview, they also give details about the images within the categories. Firstly, they mention that 87% of all images related to activities depicted active sports while only 13% showed passive activities such as whale watching and dining. Secondly, they argue that there was no sign of any human presence or impact in 18% of all nature-related images. This means that a majority of images with nature in it also showed infrastructure, buildings or people. Also related to the category of nature is that they explain how those images are distinguished among three different subcategories. Calm passive nature accounted for 44% of the images, wildlife for 33% and rough, active nature was present in 22% of all nature-related pictures. Furthermore, they argue that the depiction of infrastructure and facilities was done without any humans in sight. The reasoning behind this according to Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) is that tourism companies would like to focus the attention on the facilities without any disturbing elements. They do not, however, provide any supporting data from their analysis. The same goes for a statement which they make about the category of urban and rural landscapes, which states that most of the photos are aerial and settlements in

the north of Iceland are 'rarely more than dots in vast nature'. Even though it is not clear how they came to such conclusions, it does provide room for discussion and further exploration. Additionally, the report states that 66% of all people in focus were portrayed alone, 21% in couples and 13% in groups. They also argue that most cultural heritage in the pictures depicted material heritage, while only a small proportion referred to immaterial cultural heritage. Finally, the report states that 70% of all people in thermal baths were women, which is particularly interesting in light of Iceland's position in terms of gender equality.

In addition to the results from the content analysis, the semiotic analysis showed marketing emphasis on e.g. winter sports, but also hiking, bathing and horse riding were the most common activities to be shown in the promotional material. Secondly, they continue to draw attention to the gendered depiction of people in thermal baths by explaining how women in bikinis are often used as a decorative addition in these settings, and they question whether the supposed gender equality of Iceland is present in promotional material. Thirdly, the report suggests that an Icelandic version of the African 'Big Five' has been formed, as representations of the horse, puffin, whale and seal are omnipresent in tourism brochures. In relation to the human presence in nature-related images, they argue that people are often depicted with their backs towards the camera and small in relation to the surroundings. Margaryan and Zherdev claim this originates in Romantic landscape painting, where "persons looking away from the viewer were evoked to emphasize the otherworldly beauty of nature" (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011, p. 29). Additionally, Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) argue that even though cultural heritage is not very present in the promotional material, there is a great deal of unused potential in North Iceland in terms of this category. In order to support this argument they state that many events are not promoted. And finally, it is argued that North Iceland does not 'exploit' the images of Vikings or Saga-related themes. Instead, the promotional material gives more attention to the Jólaveinar, which is often presented to tourists as the Icelandic version of Santa Claus.

3 METHODOLOGY

This section explains the three different analyses performed during this research. Section 3.1 will start by elaborating some general information about the sample before moving to information about the coding of the images. It will also give more detailed descriptions about the individual analyses. Section 3.2 explains in detail how each category and subcategory was interpreted, in order to make the categorization transparent.

3.1 Sample and coding

In total 57 unique publications were used from which 2.331 images were analysed (Table 1). Some publications were used multiple times across the different analyses, such as the Official Tourist Guide of North Iceland which was used in 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. The sample for each analysis will be explained later in this section.

Table 1. Information about the sample

<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Publications</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Period covered</i>
<i>4.1.1. Official Tourist Guides Overview</i>	6	484	2015-2016 editions
<i>4.1.2 Official Tourist Guides Comparative</i>	6	484	2015-2016 editions
<i>4.2. Visit Mývatn Comparative</i>	3	480	2010, 2011 and 2016
<i>4.3.1. North Iceland</i>	50	1.638	Most recent editions
<i>4.3.2. Comparative North Iceland</i>	50	1.638	Most recent editions
<i>Total unique sample</i>	57	2.331	-

Every selected image from the brochures was numbered and assigned to a particular category, subcategory and topic by means of a code. The Microsoft Office program Excel was used for this purpose.

The first analysis (recounted in chapter 4.1.) the Icelandic Official Tourist Guides were used. For the analysis of the Official Tourist Guides a specific selection procedure of images was used, which will be explained in this chapter. The brochures for the other analyses did not require such a procedure, as every single image in those sources was used. Every image was assigned to one particular code, except for the pictures within the category of 'People'. In order to collect information about multiple components in these images, three different codes had to be assigned to every image. This will be explained further in the subchapter 'Categorization'.

For the two analyses of images in the Official Tourist Guides (4.1.1 and 4.1.2) all six editions were collected (East, West, Westfjords, North, South and Reykjanes). These six editions represent all geographical regions in Iceland except the capital area of Reykjavík, which has no comparable tourist guide and is therefore not included in the sample (see Figure 1). The purpose of these analyses was to explore which images the marketing organizations of each region use to characterize themselves. Hence, only non-commercial images were analyzed while the commercial images were not included in the sample. The distinction between non-commercial and commercial is further explained in the subchapter 'Categorization'.



Source: www.nordurland.is

Figure 1. Map of Iceland in terms of tourism marketing regions

For the analysis of the Visit Mývatn Guidebook (4.2) the most recent edition was collected from the Tourist Information Centre in Akureyri. The 2010 and 2011 editions were collected from the library of the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre in Akureyri.

For the two analyses of the promotional material of North Iceland (4.3.1 and 4.3.2) brochures were collected from several locations in Akureyri, such as travel agencies, hostels and the official Tourist Information Centre in Hof. As brochures were only collected at sites in Akureyri a comprehensive coverage of all published brochure material in North Iceland cannot be insured. Brochures which had, for example, information about tours in the whole of Iceland were not used. Therefore the selected brochures are considered a sample of the brochures from North Iceland and this sample included a total of 50 unique publications and 1.638 images.

The categories and topics were initially derived from the research by Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) on image production in North Iceland. During the analysis some codes were added,

deleted or merged when this was considered to be appropriate. The final result of this process, the coding scheme, is shown in Table 2 below. The analysis was documented in an Excel data file, which includes information about several characteristics of each image. Firstly, the image size was determined by means of four categories: small, medium, large and very large. An image comprising less than 25% of the page was considered to be small, between 25% and 50% was considered to be medium, between 50% and one entire page was considered to be large, and one entire page or larger was considered to be very large. Secondly, each image was given a particular code which consists of three different elements: a capital letter, a number and a lower case letter (for example: D1a). The capital letter represents the main category of the image (e.g. nature or cultural heritage). The number represents the subcategory of the image within the main category (e.g. wildlife within nature). The lower case letter represents the specific topic of the image within the subcategory (e.g. church within material cultural heritage). Thirdly, when applicable the image was also given an extra code. The specific rules for extra codes is further explained in the subchapter 'Categorization'.

Table 2. Coding scheme

Category	Subcategory	Topic and code			
Nature	Calm, passive nature	Still water	A1a		
		Meadow	A1b		
		Mountain	A1c		
		Northern lights	A1d		
		Hot springs	A1e		
		Other	A1f		
		Rough, active nature	Geyser	A2a	
			Volcano	A2b	
			Lava / Lava rocks / Lava field	A2c	
			Waterfall	A2d	
	Ocean		A2e		
	Dramatic mountain		A2f		
	Foggy and windy weather		A2g		
	Cliff		A2h		
	Glacier / Iceberg		A2i		
	Other		A2j		
	Wildlife	Wildlife	Puffin	A3a	
			Whale / Dolphin	A3b	
			Seal	A3c	
			Horse	A3d	
Fish			A3e		
Plant / Tree			A3f		
Farm animal			A3g		
Other birds			A3h		
Fox			A3i		
Reindeer			A3j		
Other			A3k		
People			Gender	Male	B1a
				Female	B1b
				Mixed	B1c
				One person	B2a
	Couple	B2b			
	Context	Group	B2c		
		Child	B3a		
		Adolescence	B3b		
		Adult	B3c		
		Elderly	B3d		
Age	Mixed	B3e			
	Urban	Aerial	C1a		
		Non-aerial far	C1b		
		Non-aerial close	C1c		
		Rural	Aerial	C2a	
Non-aerial far			C2b		
Landscape	Rural	Aerial	C2a		
		Non-aerial far	C2b		

Cultural heritage	Material	Church Monument person / Event D1a D1b D1c D1d D1e D1f D1g D1h D1i D1j D1k D1l D1m D1n D1o D1p D1q D1r D1s D1t D1u D1v D1w D1x D1y D1z D2a D2b D2c D2d D2e D2f D2g D2h D2i D2j D2k D2l D2m D2n D2o D2p D2q D2r D2s D2t D2u D2v D2w D2x D2y D2z D3a D3b D3c D3d D3e D3f D3g D3h D3i D3j D3k D3l D3m D3n D3o D3p D3q D3r D3s D3t D3u D3v D3w D3x D3y D3z D4a D4b D4c D4d D4e D4f D4g D4h D4i D4j D4k D4l D4m D4n D4o D4p D4q D4r D4s D4t D4u D4v D4w D4x D4y D4z D5a D5b D5c D5d D5e D5f D5g D5h D5i D5j D5k D5l D5m D5n D5o D5p D5q D5r D5s D5t D5u D5v D5w D5x D5y D5z D6a D6b D6c D6d D6e D6f D6g D6h D6i D6j D6k D6l D6m D6n D6o D6p D6q D6r D6s D6t D6u D6v D6w D6x D6y D6z D7a D7b D7c D7d D7e D7f D7g D7h D7i D7j D7k D7l D7m D7n D7o D7p D7q D7r D7s D7t D7u D7v D7w D7x D7y D7z D8a D8b D8c D8d D8e D8f D8g D8h D8i D8j D8k D8l D8m D8n D8o D8p D8q D8r D8s D8t D8u D8v D8w D8x D8y D8z D9a D9b D9c D9d D9e D9f D9g D9h D9i D9j D9k D9l D9m D9n D9o D9p D9q D9r D9s D9t D9u D9v D9w D9x D9y D9z D10a D10b D10c D10d D10e D10f D10g D10h D10i D10j D10k D10l D10m D10n D10o D10p D10q D10r D10s D10t D10u D10v D10w D10x D10y D10z D11a D11b D11c D11d D11e D11f D11g D11h D11i D11j D11k D11l D11m D11n D11o D11p D11q D11r D11s D11t D11u D11v D11w D11x D11y D11z D12a D12b D12c D12d D12e D12f D12g D12h D12i D12j D12k D12l D12m D12n D12o D12p D12q D12r D12s D12t D12u D12v D12w D12x D12y D12z D13a D13b D13c D13d D13e D13f D13g D13h D13i D13j D13k D13l D13m D13n D13o D13p D13q D13r D13s D13t D13u D13v D13w D13x D13y D13z D14a D14b D14c D14d D14e D14f D14g D14h D14i D14j D14k D14l D14m D14n D14o D14p D14q D14r D14s D14t D14u D14v D14w D14x D14y D14z D15a D15b D15c D15d D15e D15f D15g D15h D15i D15j D15k D15l D15m D15n D15o D15p D15q D15r D15s D15t D15u D15v D15w D15x D15y D15z D16a D16b D16c D16d D16e D16f D16g D16h D16i D16j D16k D16l D16m D16n D16o D16p D16q D16r D16s D16t D16u D16v D16w D16x D16y D16z D17a D17b D17c D17d D17e D17f D17g D17h D17i D17j D17k D17l D17m D17n D17o D17p D17q D17r D17s D17t D17u D17v D17w D17x D17y D17z D18a D18b D18c D18d D18e D18f D18g D18h D18i D18j D18k D18l D18m D18n D18o D18p D18q D18r D18s D18t D18u D18v D18w D18x D18y D18z D19a D19b D19c D19d D19e D19f D19g D19h D19i D19j D19k D19l D19m D19n D19o D19p D19q D19r D19s D19t D19u D19v D19w D19x D19y D19z D20a D20b D20c D20d D20e D20f D20g D20h D20i D20j D20k D20l D20m D20n D20o D20p D20q D20r D20s D20t D20u D20v D20w D20x D20y D20z D21a D21b D21c D21d D21e D21f D21g D21h D21i D21j D21k D21l D21m D21n D21o D21p D21q D21r D21s D21t D21u D21v D21w D21x D21y D21z D22a D22b D22c D22d D22e D22f D22g D22h D22i D22j D22k D22l D22m D22n D22o D22p D22q D22r D22s D22t D22u D22v D22w D22x D22y D22z D23a D23b D23c D23d D23e D23f D23g D23h D23i D23j D23k D23l D23m D23n D23o D23p D23q D23r D23s D23t D23u D23v D23w D23x D23y D23z D24a D24b D24c D24d D24e D24f D24g D24h D24i D24j D24k D24l D24m D24n D24o D24p D24q D24r D24s D24t D24u D24v D24w D24x D24y D24z D25a D25b D25c D25d D25e D25f D25g D25h D25i D25j D25k 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D33d D33e D33f D33g D33h D33i D33j D33k D33l D33m D33n D33o D33p D33q D33r D33s D33t D33u D33v D33w D33x D33y D33z D34a D34b D34c D34d D34e D34f D34g D34h D34i D34j D34k D34l D34m D34n D34o D34p D34q D34r D34s D34t D34u D34v D34w D34x D34y D34z D35a D35b D35c D35d D35e D35f D35g D35h D35i D35j D35k D35l D35m D35n D35o D35p D35q D35r D35s D35t D35u D35v D35w D35x D35y D35z D36a D36b D36c D36d D36e D36f D36g D36h D36i D36j D36k D36l D36m D36n D36o D36p D36q D36r D36s D36t D36u D36v D36w D36x D36y D36z D37a D37b D37c D37d D37e D37f D37g D37h D37i D37j D37k D37l D37m D37n D37o D37p D37q D37r D37s D37t D37u D37v D37w D37x D37y D37z D38a D38b D38c D38d D38e D38f D38g D38h D38i D38j D38k D38l D38m D38n D38o D38p D38q D38r D38s D38t D38u D38v D38w D38x D38y D38z D39a D39b D39c D39d D39e D39f D39g D39h D39i D39j D39k D39l D39m D39n D39o D39p D39q D39r D39s D39t D39u D39v D39w D39x D39y D39z D40a D40b D40c D40d D40e D40f D40g D40h D40i D40j D40k D40l D40m D40n D40o D40p D40q D40r D40s D40t D40u D40v D40w D40x D40y D40z D41a D41b D41c D41d D41e D41f D41g D41h D41i D41j D41k D41l D41m D41n D41o D41p D41q D41r D41s D41t D41u D41v D41w D41x D41y D41z D42a D42b D42c D42d D42e D42f D42g D42h D42i D42j D42k D42l D42m D42n D42o D42p D42q D42r D42s D42t D42u D42v D42w D42x D42y D42z D43a D43b D43c D43d D43e D43f D43g D43h D43i D43j D43k D43l D43m D43n D43o D43p D43q D43r D43s D43t D43u D43v D43w D43x D43y D43z D44a D44b D44c D44d D44e D44f D44g D44h D44i D44j D44k D44l D44m D44n D44o D44p D44q D44r D44s D44t D44u D44v D44w D44x D44y D44z D45a D45b D45c D45d D45e D45f D45g D45h D45i D45j D45k D45l D45m D45n D45o D45p D45q D45r D45s D45t D45u D45v D45w D45x D45y D45z D46a D46b D46c D46d D46e D46f D46g D46h D46i D46j D46k D46l D46m D46n D46o D46p D46q D46r D46s D46t D46u D46v D46w D46x D46y D46z D47a D47b D47c D47d D47e D47f D47g D47h D47i D47j D47k D47l D47m D47n D47o D47p D47q D47r D47s D47t D47u D47v D47w D47x D47y D47z D48a D48b D48c D48d D48e D48f D48g D48h D48i D48j D48k D48l D48m D48n D48o D48p D48q D48r D48s D48t D48u D48v D48w D48x D48y D48z D49a D49b D49c D49d D49e D49f D49g D49h D49i D49j D49k D49l D49m D49n D49o D49p D49q D49r D49s D49t D49u D49v D49w D49x D49y D49z D50a D50b D50c D50d D50e D50f D50g D50h D50i D50j D50k D50l D50m D50n D50o D50p D50q D50r D50s D50t D50u D50v D50w D50x D50y D50z D51a D51b D51c D51d D51e D51f D51g D51h D51i D51j D51k D51l D51m D51n D51o D51p D51q D51r D51s D51t D51u D51v D51w D51x D51y D51z D52a D52b D52c D52d D52e D52f D52g D52h D52i D52j D52k D52l D52m D52n D52o D52p D52q D52r D52s D52t D52u D52v D52w D52x D52y D52z D53a D53b D53c D53d D53e D53f D53g D53h D53i D53j D53k D53l D53m D53n D53o D53p D53q D53r D53s D53t D53u D53v D53w D53x D53y D53z D54a D54b D54c D54d D54e D54f D54g D54h D54i D54j D54k D54l D54m D54n D54o D54p D54q D54r D54s D54t D54u D54v D54w D54x D54y D54z D55a D55b D55c D55d D55e D55f D55g D55h D55i D55j D55k D55l D55m D55n D55o D55p D55q D55r D55s D55t D55u D55v D55w D55x D55y D55z D56a D56b D56c D56d D56e D56f D56g D56h D56i D56j D56k D56l D56m D56n D56o D56p D56q D56r D56s D56t D56u D56v D56w D56x D56y D56z D57a D57b D57c D57d D57e D57f D57g D57h D57i D57j D57k D57l D57m D57n D57o D57p D57q D57r D57s D57t D57u D57v D57w D57x D57y D57z D58a D58b D58c D58d D58e D58f D58g D58h D58i D58j D58k D58l D58m D58n D58o D58p D58q D58r D58s D58t D58u D58v D58w D58x D58y D58z D59a D59b D59c D59d D59e D59f D59g D59h D59i D59j D59k D59l D59m D59n D59o D59p D59q D59r D59s D59t D59u D59v D59w D59x D59y D59z D60a D60b D60c D60d D60e D60f D60g D60h D60i D60j D60k D60l D60m D60n D60o D60p D60q D60r D60s D60t D60u D60v D60w D60x D60y D60z D61a D61b D61c D61d D61e D61f D61g D61h
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3.2 Categorization

Each image was analyzed and subsequently allocated the code which fitted it best. The guiding criteria for this was which aspect of the picture was in focus. For example, an image of a car in front of the northern lights was coded with northern lights (Figure 2). An image of a person staring at an impressive waterfall was coded as waterfall. And an image of a hotel near a lake was coded as accommodation. For some categories an extra analysis was done and an extra code was assigned in order to give some more insights about a certain topic. The background and the assessment of these extra codes is included in the elaborations below.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016



Source: East Iceland: The Official Tourist Guide 2015-2016




Source: Visit Myvatn: The Northern Lights Capital of Iceland 2016

Figure 2. Northern lights (left above), waterfall (right above), lodging accommodation (below)

Commercial and non-commercial

During the analysis a distinction was drawn between commercial sources and non-commercial sources. The purpose of doing this was to explore whether there are any differences between the images used by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and tourism companies (glacier tours, hotels, etc.). DMOs include the regional marketing bureaus and other local tourist information centers. Tourism companies, instead, include all organizations who are directly trying to sell their product or service. Because there are also a lot of advertisements in the promotion material of DMOs (Figure 3), these images were not considered in the analysis. Thus, in the non-commercial sources only the images were analyzed which did not relate directly to a commercial company.


HÉRAÐ



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☞ Spending summers in the cozy Kjarvalshvammur, the artist Kjarval painted works here from 1948 to 1969. At the age of 73, he rowed and sailed the boat (still kept in the lower hut) between the mouth of the river and the village in Borgarfjörður Eystri.

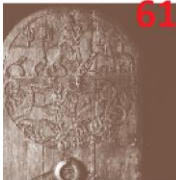
☞ Galtastaðir is a typical 19th-century turf house, inhabited till 1967. Such homes were often heated by cows kept under the living room or *bæðstofa*, which was also used for sleeping and handicrafts. Galtastaðir is part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection.



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☞ The reconstructed Geirstaðir church typifies one religious architecture style after 1000 and is largely based on an archaeological excavation carried out elsewhere on the same farm. During summertime, the church is open to visitors free of charge.

☞ Valbjöfstaður - The inner door is a replica of the famous Valbjöfstaður door, dating to the 13th century and displayed in the National Museum. The carvings are some of the oldest woodwork preserved anywhere in the Nordic countries. The church's chalice and baptismal font date to the 18th century.



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☞ Skriðuklaustur - The ruins of the pre-Reformation monastery are open to visitors, as well as the unusual mansion built in 1939 by the writer Gunnar Gunnarsson. The Gunnar Gunnarsson Institute operates Skriðuklaustur as a cultural centre, next door to the Vatnajökull National Park visitor centre.

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www.east.is

Kverkfjöll - Sigurðarskáli www.fljotsdalsherad.is/ferdafelag

	GPS 64.44.850 N / 16.37.890 V	
	Winter (+354) 863-5813 Summer (+354) 863-9236	
	Size / sleeps 75 persons	

Geldingafell www.fljotsdalsherad.is/ferdafelag

	GPS 64.41.711 N / 15.21.681 V	
	Winter (+354) 863-5813 Summer (+354) 863-5813	
	Size / sleeps 16 persons	

Kollumúlavatn - Egilssel www.fljotsdalsherad.is/ferdafelag

	GPS 64°36.680 N / 15°08.750 V	
	Winter (+354) 863-5813 Summer (+354) 863-5813	
	Size / sleeps 22 persons	

Snæfell - Snæfellsskáli www.vjp.is

	GPS 64.48.250 N / 15.38.600 V	
	Winter (+354) 471 3060 Summer (+354) 842 4367	
	Size / sleeps 45 persons	

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Source: East Iceland: The Official Tourist Guide 2015-2016

Figure 3. Non-commercial images (left) and commercial images (right)

Nature

The category of nature was subdivided into three distinctive categories: calm and passive nature, rough and active nature, and wildlife. Rough and active nature encompasses all phenomena which clearly project power and which leave the observer feeling somewhat overwhelmed or overpowered (Figure 4). It includes geysers, waterfalls, volcanoes, lava (including lava rocks and lava fields), cliffs, glaciers, the ocean and dramatic mountains.



Source: Eagle Air Iceland, Your flight to adventure 2015 (Ragnar Th. Sigurdsson)

Source: Saga Travel: Day Tours from Lake Mývatn 2015-2016

Figure 4. Rough, active nature

Calm and passive nature encompasses the opposite; all phenomena which appear to be relatively powerless and which give the observer a feeling of calmness and tranquillity. This subcategory includes still water, meadows, the northern lights, hot springs and 'calm' mountains (Figure 5).



Source, pictures left and right: Austur Húnavatnssýsla Official Tourism Guide: Milli fjalls og fjöru

Figure 5. Calm, passive nature

The third subcategory of wildlife includes all animals and plants. An extra code was used to determine whether there was any human presence or impact visible in the picture. If this was the case, a 'Y' was put into the extra code field. If not, a 'N' was used. This was done for all three subcategories within nature.

Landscapes

In the category of landscapes, a distinction was made between rural landscapes and urban landscapes. To make sure that the analysis would be as consistent as possible, the definition from Statistics Iceland was used. This definition states that an urban area has at least a population of 200 and 1) a clearly visible network of streets, or 2) a name, or 3) a maximum of 200 meters between houses (Statistics Iceland, 2015). Both the rural and urban categories were further subdivided based on the position of the camera. A distinction was made between aerial photos (Figure 6), non-aerial photos from far away (Figure 7) and close-up non-aerial photos (Figure 8). An extra code was used to determine whether the weather in the image was appealing (extra code: A) or non-appealing (extra code: N). If it was not possible to determine, a hyphen '-' was used.



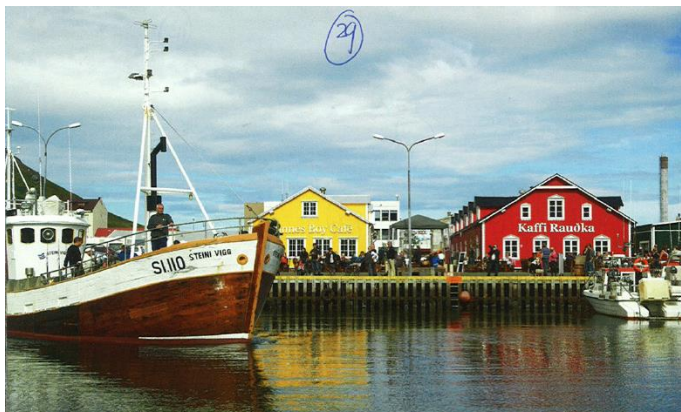
Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 6. Aerial photo



Source: Austur Húnavatnssýsla, Official Tourism Guide: Milli fjalls og fjöru

Figure 7. Non-aerial photo from far

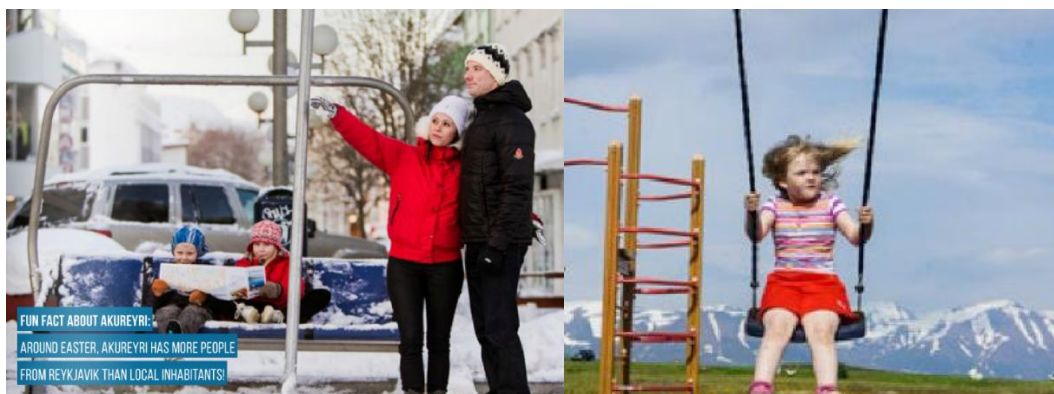


Source: Fjallasýn Guided Travel 2015

Figure 8. Non-aerial photo from close

People

Every image which had a person or multiple persons in focus was eligible for this category. If the people in the picture were clearly engaging in a particular activity the image was assigned to the category of 'Activities'. If this was not the case, the image was assigned to the category of 'People'. Subsequently, three different components of the people in focus were evaluated: gender, context and age. Besides male and female, the image could also be categorized as mixed when both genders were represented in the picture. Context refers to the composition of the people in the image; a single person, a couple or a group of people. And finally, the age of the people in the picture was categorized as children, adolescents (roughly between the age of 12 and 18), adults, elderly (roughly 65 years and older) and mixed. An extra code was used to roughly determine the season in which the people in the picture were photographed. The extra code 'W' was used for winter and fall, and the extra code 'S' was used for summer and spring (Figure 9). If it was not clearly visible, a hyphen '-' was used.



Source, pictures left and right: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 9. People in Focus: winter and fall (left), summer and spring (right)

Activities

People engaging in all sorts of activities were subdivided into active and passive activities (Figure 10). The main criteria to determine to which subcategory an activities image belongs was the extent of physical activeness required by the activity. An activity such as hiking or cycling requires people to become active, while activities such as whale watching and bathing are more passive. Within both subcategories which specific activity was depicted in the image was determined. The resulting topics include the most common activities, while in both subcategories the topic 'other' included less common activities.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Source: North Sailing Whale Watching 2015

Figure 10. Active activity (left), passive activity (right)

Cultural heritage

In the category of cultural heritage, a distinction was made between material and immaterial cultural heritage (Figure 11). The subcategory of material cultural heritage includes objects such as churches, museum items and monumental buildings. The subcategory of immaterial cultural heritage includes, for example, images of traditional dances and mythical characters.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Source: The Travelling Viking, Day Tours

Figure 11. Material cultural heritage (left), immaterial cultural heritage (right)

Tourism infrastructure

In the research by Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) what is here termed tourism infrastructure was called 'tourist friendliness'. Tourism infrastructure better reflects what the images represent. Images of tourism infrastructure were not further distinguished in terms of a subcategory because it was not thought to be helpful for any type of analysis. Instead, every image was only assigned to a specific topic within tourism infrastructure. Examples of topics within this category were lodging accommodation, museums and transport (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Tourism infrastructure

The practice of assigning an image to one particular category, subcategory and topic is problematic in the sense that there will always be a certain overlap. The final judgement about the main focus of the image is left to the observer, which makes the analysis at least to some extent subjective. The descriptions above aim to explain my interpretation of each category and subcategory. In my view, this increases the transparency of the research and it will help other researchers to do the same analysis in another context or period of time. However, it might still be unclear how certain topics are distinguished from each other and therefore some 'conflicting topics' are discussed next.

Conflicting topics

Firstly, there is some overlap within the subcategory of 'Wildlife' and some topics within the category of 'Activities'. Horses, whales and fish are considered to be wildlife while horseback riding, whale watching and fishing also include these animals. Every picture of a whale together with a person was put into the category of whale watching while a picture of solely a whale was assigned to wildlife (Figure 13).



Source: North Sailing Whale Watching 2015

Source: Dalvík Arctic Whale Watching brochure

Figure 13. Whale watching (left), whale (right)

An image was considered to belong to horseback riding when it was clear that the person in the picture was engaging in that activity. Every other picture of a horse with or without people was assigned to the subcategory of wildlife (Figure 14).



Source: Pólar hestar, Riding Tours in Iceland 2016 (left: Björgvin Hilmarrsson - right: Katharina von Keudell)

Figure 14. Horseback riding (left), horse as wildlife (right)

In terms of fishing, every image of a fish out of the water was considered to relate to the activity of fishing (Figure 15). Images of a fish in their natural environment without the presence of humans was assigned to the subcategory of wildlife.



Source: Húnaþing vestra Official Tourist Guide 2013

Source: Strytan Dive Center (Erlendur Bogason)

Figure 15. Fishing (left), fish as wildlife (right)

Secondly, without any detailed explanation it is difficult to distinguish the topics of 'food and beverage', 'restaurant' and 'dining' (Figure 16). The topic of food and beverage belongs to the category of cultural heritage and it therefore only includes images of typical Icelandic, or local, food or drinks. Judgement about this requires some knowledge about Icelandic culture but often associated text in the brochures can assist to make an appropriate decision. Images of food or beverage which are not clearly related to any cultural heritage are assigned to the topic of restaurant. The topic of dining refers specifically to images in which a dining table with people is in focus. If an overview of a restaurant with ten or twenty people having dinner is depicted, it was put into the topic of restaurant.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Source: Visit Mývatn: The Northern Lights Capital of Iceland 2016

Figure 16. Food and beverage (left), restaurant (middle), dining (right)

Furthermore, the distinction between the topics of 'museum' and 'museum item in focus' also needs some elaboration (Figure 17). A museum item in focus refers to any image which depicts one particular object from a museum. Every other image which illustrates the inside or outside of a museum was assigned to the topic of 'museum' within the subcategory of 'material cultural heritage'.



Source pictures left and right: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 17. Museum (left), museum item in focus (right)

Finally the topics of 'geothermal bath', 'hot springs' and 'bathing' are distinguished from each other. Geothermal baths or pools are part of the category 'Tourist infrastructure' and therefore mainly depict the facility, while bathing refers more to the activity of people in that facility. Hence, when a person or multiple persons are in focus while they are bathing this is considered to be an image of the topic 'bathing'. When the picture shows hot steam and/or water coming out of the earth without it being a site for bathing, it is considered to depict the nature phenomenon of 'hot springs'.



Source pictures above: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Source Mývatn Naturebath brochure

Figure 18. Geothermal bath (left above), hot springs (left below), bathing (right)

4 RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of each analysis. Firstly, section 4.1 describes the findings for the two analyses of the Official Tourist Guides. Secondly, section 4.2 explains the findings for analysis of the Visit Mývatn guidebook. And finally, section 4.3 describes the findings for the analysis of tourism brochures in North Iceland.

4.1 The Official Tourist Guide

The analysis of the Official Tourist Guides consists of two different analyses. First, section 4.1.1 analyses the images of all six editions combined. It aims to give an overview of the images used in the Official Tourist Guides. Second, section 4.1.2 compares the different editions with each other. It aims to explore differences between the regional tourist guides.

4.1.1 Overview analysis

This section provides an overview of the images used in the Official Tourist Guide of all regions in Iceland (Figure 19). These images will be categorized, but before going into the details of each category, some general remarks will be made about the images and the analysis performed.



Figure 19. Cover page of the Official Tourist Guides

As can be seen from Table 3, the total amount of pages of all guidebooks combined is 1.048. On these pages 484 images were shown, which means there is an average of 0,46 image per page. The methodology section (chapter 3) of this report explained what is considered to be an image.

Table 3. Images per page

	Total pages	Total images	Images per page
<i>The Official Tourist Guide</i>	1.048	484	0,46

Each image was put into one of the six distinctive categories. Figure 20 shows the share of images in each category. Nature-related images are without any doubt the most used category in the guidebooks, as they comprise 58% of all images. The categories of landscapes and

activities take second and third place, with respectively 13% and 9%. The least used category is tourism infrastructure which comprises only 5% of all images.

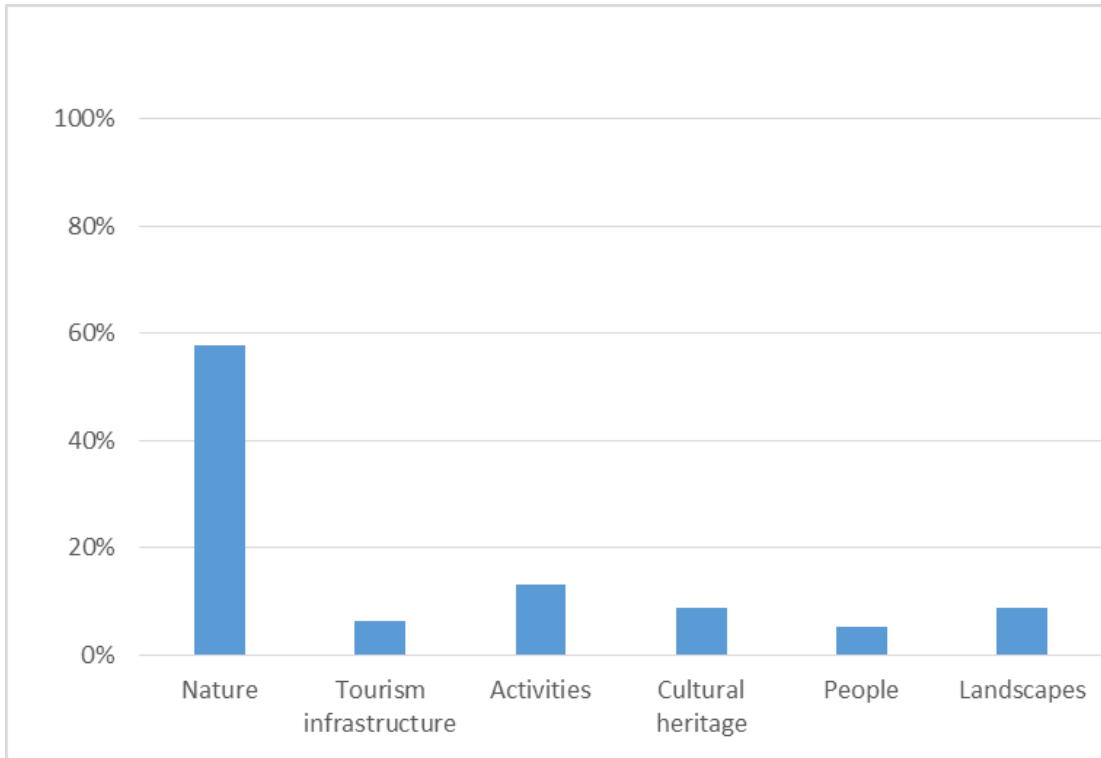


Figure 20. Images by category

Nature

The majority of all pictures in the Official Tourist Guides show some sort of nature (58%). In the majority of these pictures (66%), human impact or presence is not visible in the image. The category of nature is divided into three distinctive subcategories: calm/passive nature, rough/active nature and wildlife. Most nature-related images depict rough/active nature, such as volcanoes and waterfalls (53%). Calm/passive also is quite present in the guidebooks (31%), but wildlife only comprises 16% of all the images in this category.

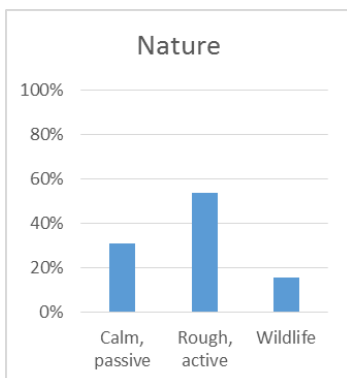
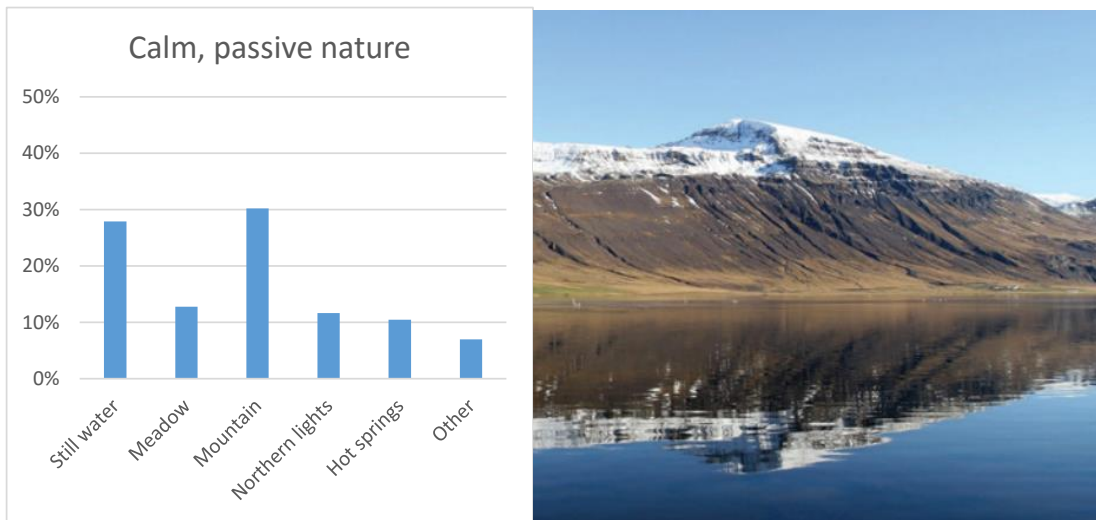


Figure 21. Subcategories Nature

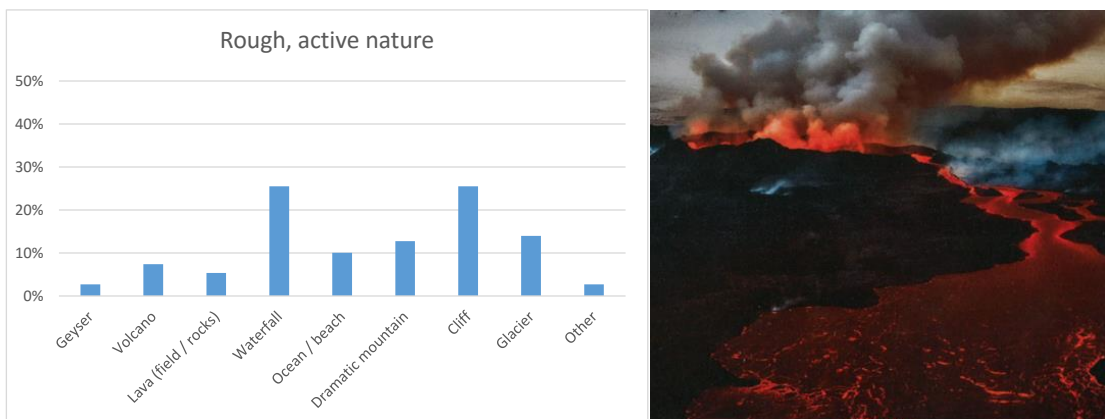
About half of the images within the subcategory of calm/passive nature show still water and mountains. The remaining 43% are illustrations of meadows, glaciers, hot springs, the northern lights and others.



Source: Austur Húnavatnssýsla Official Tourism Guide: Milli fjalls og fjöru

Figure 22. Specifics Calm, passive nature

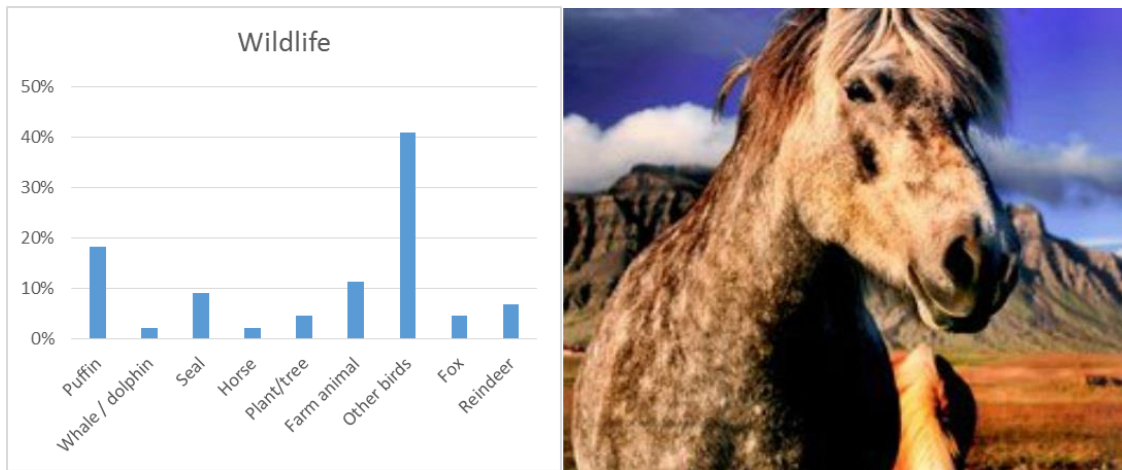
The subcategory of rough/active nature is dominated by two main types of images: waterfalls (26%) and cliffs (26%). Volcanoes, glaciers dramatic mountains and images of the ocean or beach are also often depicted.



Source: Eagle Air Iceland, Your flight to adventure 2015 (Ragnar Th. Sigurdsson)

Figure 23. Specifics Rough, active nature

Finally, images of wildlife are dominated by pictures of birds (41%). Interestingly, the whale is only visualized once without human presence. All other times this popular cetacean was depicted in the context of whale watching and therefore these pictures are not considered in the category of nature but in activities. Besides birds in general, the puffin is the most popular in the guidebooks (18%).



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 24. Specifics Wildlife

People

Pictures which clearly have people in focus comprise 6% of all pictures and these were further explored by classifying them according to three different criteria: gender, context and age (Figures 25-27). In terms of gender, there was quite a diversity of people as the number of males, females and mixed couples or groups were almost equal. In terms of context, there appeared to be a preference for images depicting one person (55%). Groups were also quite common, but pictures of two people (e.g. couples) were not very present in the guidebooks. Finally, in terms of age, children were found to be most popular in the guidebooks. Almost half of the pictures only had children in focus. Adults were also common, but elderly were nearly absent. Only one picture in all guidebooks showed an elderly person in focus. Additionally, pictures of people in the guidebooks were not ethnically diverse. The brochures show only white people, while there is not a single picture of a person who looks African, Latin American or Asian.

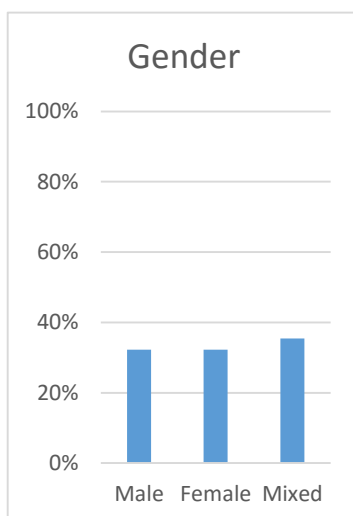


Figure 25. Specifics Gender

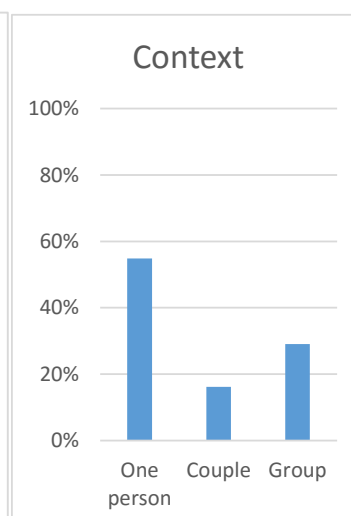


Figure 26. Specifics Context

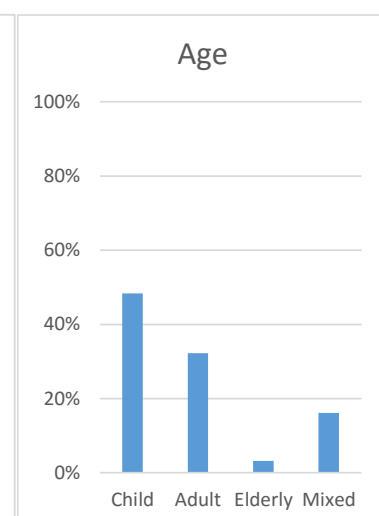


Figure 27. Specifics Age

Landscapes

The pictures of landscapes encompass a total of 13% of all pictures in the guide books and they were subdivided into rural and urban landscapes. The Official Tourist Guides depict slightly more urban landscapes (60%) than rural landscapes (40%) (Figure 28). Within each category, a distinction was made between aerial pictures, non-aerial pictures from far away and close-up non-aerial pictures. Rural landscapes were mostly depicted from a non-aerial perspective, both from far away and close-up. Urban landscapes were mostly depicted from a non-aerial perspective while taking the picture from far away. Comparing both subcategories it becomes clear that rural landscapes are more often depicted from non-aerial close, while aerial pictures and non-aerial far are preferred for images of urban landscapes.

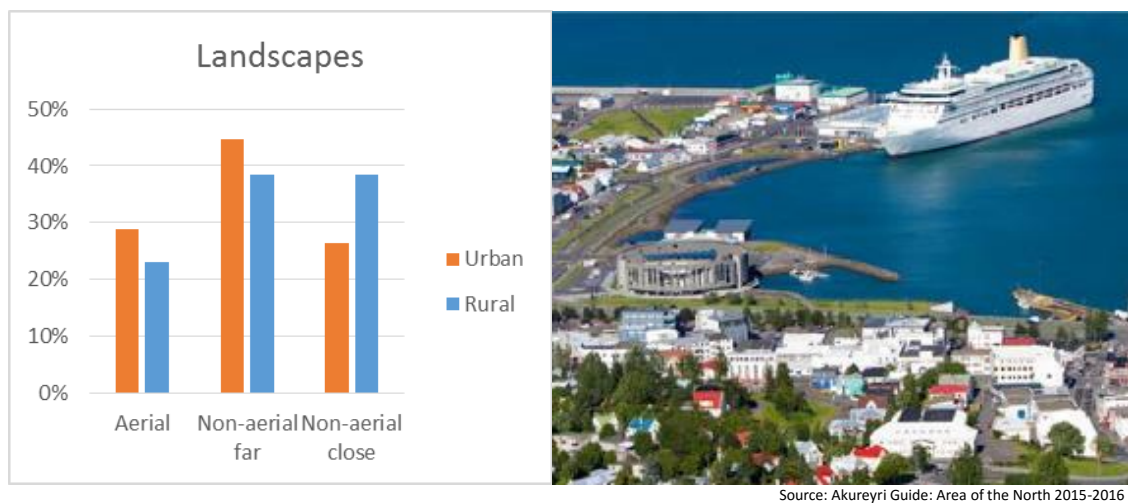


Figure 28. Specifics Landscapes

Cultural heritage

The category of cultural heritage represents 8% of all pictures in the Official Tourist Guides. Immaterial and material culture heritage were two types of images within this category. Most images showed material culture heritage (76%) and therefore this will be explored further. As can be seen from Figure 29, there is quite a diversity of material cultural heritage in the guidebooks. Pictures of churches and monumental buildings were however most often depicted. Other popular images feature turf houses, museum items and food and beverages.

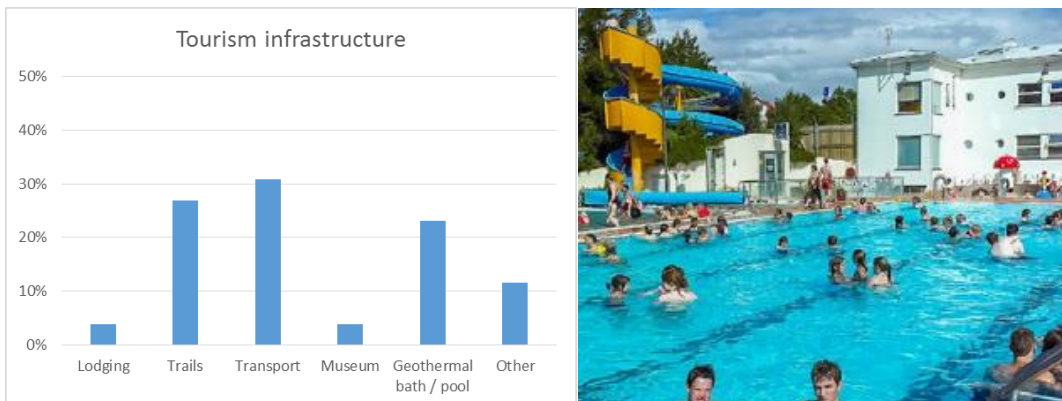


Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 29. Specifics Material cultural heritage

Tourism infrastructure

Pictures of tourism infrastructure comprise 5% of all pictures in the Official Tourist Guides. They mostly depicted hiking and cycling trails, transport (such as boats or cars) and geothermal baths or swimming pools. Images of accommodation (such as hotels) and museums were also present but not very common.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 30. Specifics Tourism infrastructure

Activities

Finally, activities were present in 9% of all pictures in the Official Tourist Guide. The category of activities was divided into subcategories of active and passive activities. The guidebooks mostly showed active entertainment (71%) and to a much lesser extent passive activities (29%). Within the active entertainment there was a wide range of different activities in which hiking and horseback riding were most popular.



Source: Húnaþing vestra Official Tourist Guide 2013

Figure 31. Specifics Active activities

4.1.2 Comparative analysis

This section elaborates on the comparative analysis of the Official Tourist Guides. The sample of the analysis includes six brochures which consist of 484 images and 1048 pages. The section consists of three different parts: descriptive, categories and nature.

Descriptive

Figure 32 shows the total amount of pages and images used by each Official Tourist Guide. As can be seen, South Iceland uses the most pages for their guidebook, with North Iceland and East Iceland in second and third place. Reykjanes uses the least amount of pages. In terms of images, West Iceland and Reykjanes use the least amount of images and East Iceland by far the most.

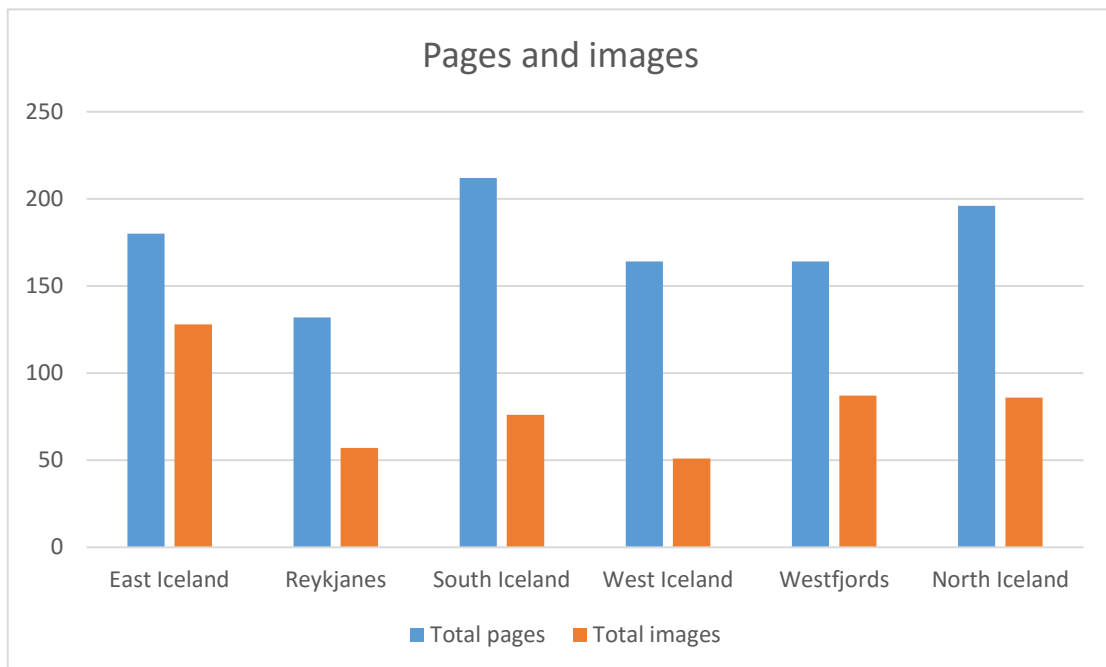


Figure 32. Pages and images

Figure 33 shows that East Iceland uses the most images per page (0,71) and there is a significant difference with the Westfjords, which takes second place (0,52) and West Iceland, which uses the least images per page (0,31).

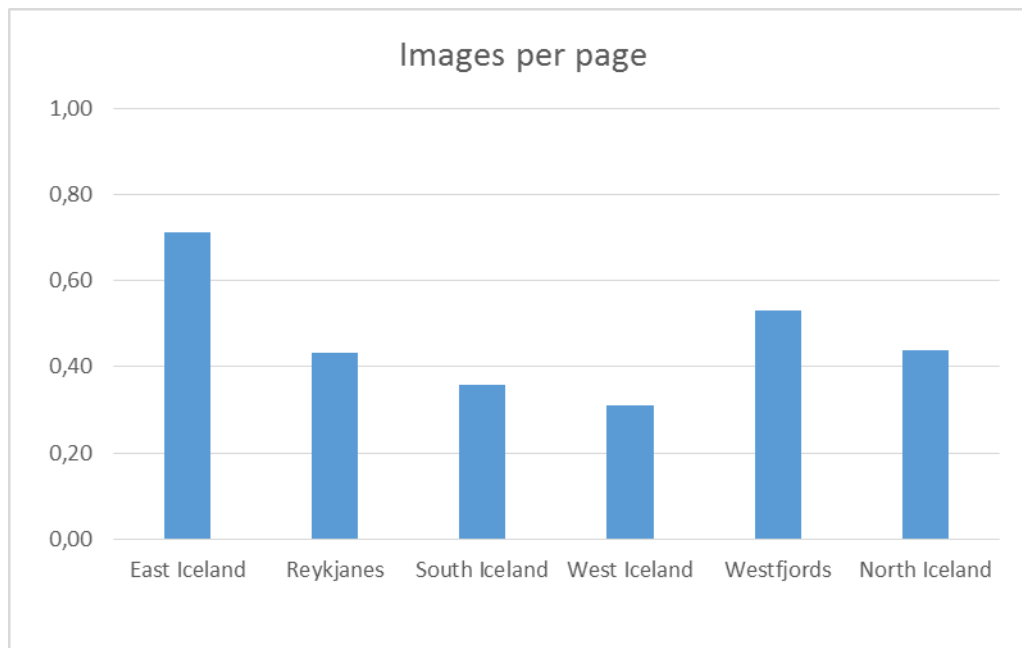


Figure 33. Images per page

Categories

Nature is in every region by far the most illustrated category in the Official Tourist Guide. This is hardly surprising of course, as nature is considered to be an important reason to visit Iceland by 79,6% of tourists (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2014). However, there are differences between the regions in terms of the number of images of nature as compared to the total within each brochure. The tourist guide of South Iceland uses the most nature-related images (75%), while North Iceland (50%) and the Westfjords (43%) use the least nature-related images. Cultural heritage is the second most depicted category in three of the six guidebooks. East Iceland (13%), Reykjanes (12%) and West Iceland (16%) all depict images of their cultural heritage. However, especially South Iceland (1%) and North Iceland (2%) rarely show this category in the Official Tourist Guide. Images of activities which can be undertaken by tourists in the region are most common in the guidebooks of South Iceland (12%) and the Westfjords (12%), and less common in the region of Reykjanes (5%). Significant differences in the relative amount of printed images exist within the category of landscapes. While North Iceland (34%) and the Westfjords (17%) often visualize their urban and rural areas, similar images are almost non-existent in other regions, especially in South Iceland (5%) and West Iceland (4%). Images which feature people in focus and tourism infrastructure are, on average, the least common to be seen in the Official Tourist Guides.

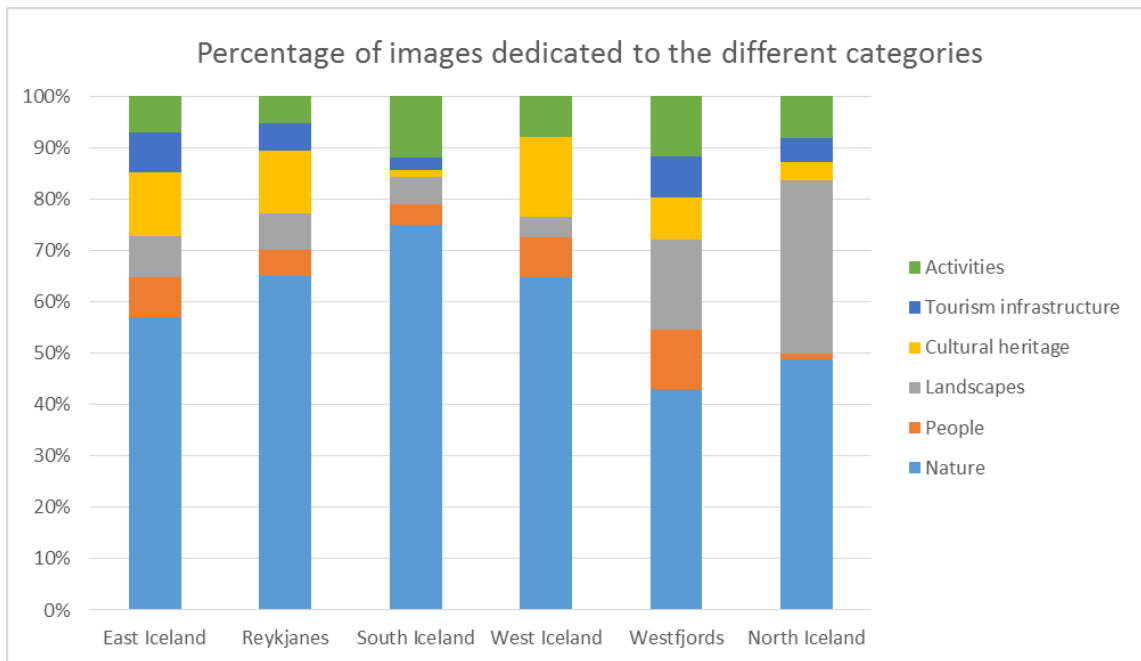


Figure 34. Percentage of images dedicated to the different categories

Nature

The category of nature is the most depicted category in the Official Tourist Guide of every region in Iceland (Figure 34). The number of pictures made it possible to analyze this category a bit further by dividing it into three distinctive sub-categories: rough/active nature (e.g. volcanoes and waterfalls), calm/passive nature (e.g. still water and meadows) and wildlife as outlined in the previous section. The output of a regional comparisons of this analysis is shown in Figure 35. In every region rough/active nature is the most printed image in the guidebooks. Sometimes the difference with calm/passive nature is very small, such as in East Iceland and the Westfjords, but in most cases rough/active nature is by far the most depicted type of nature. Wildlife is often not very present in the guidebooks, but there exist some differences between the different regions. West Iceland (6%) almost never shows their wildlife, while it is especially often visualized by East Iceland (22%).

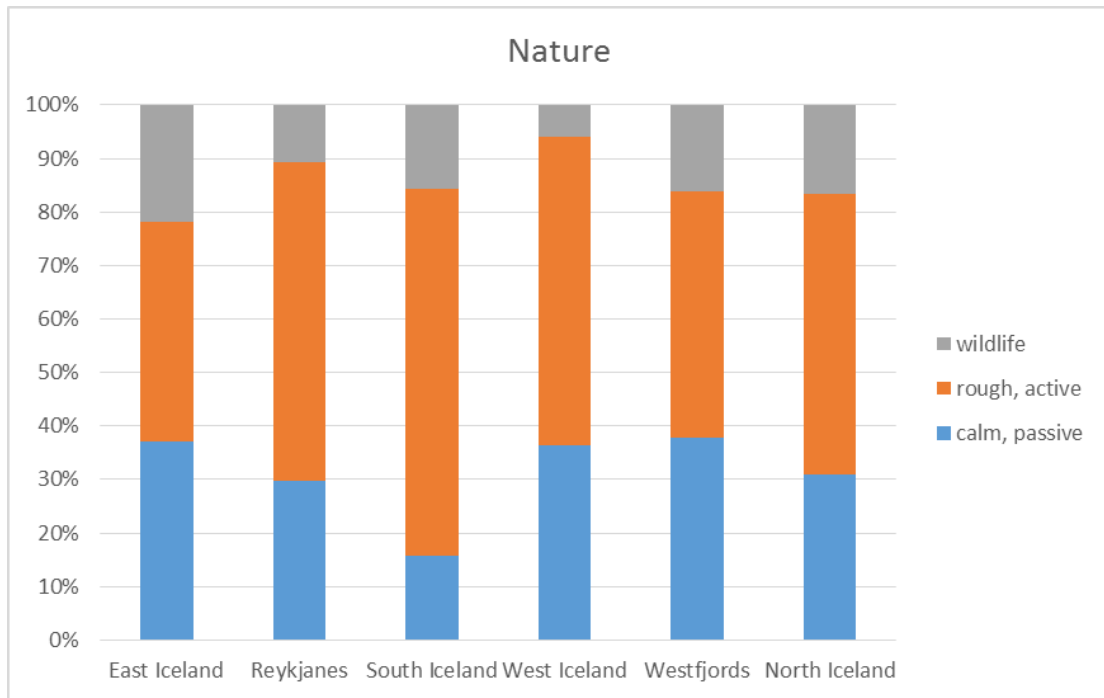


Figure 35. Proportion of each subcategory within Nature by all regions

4.2 Comparative analysis – Visit Mývatn Guidebook

The cover of the Visit Mývatn tourist guidebook of 2016 is adorned by the subtitle: “The Northern Lights Capital of Iceland”. Several other places in North Iceland also use the word “capital” in their promotion material, for example Akureyri (Capital of the Shining North) and Húsavík (Whale Watching Capital). Compared to previous editions (2010 and 2011) of the guidebook, it seems like branding the Mývatn region in this way is relatively new, as the phrase did not appear on the cover of former guidebooks. Although all three editions illustrate and mention the northern lights, the amount of attention to the phenomenon has increased recently. In order to see whether there has been an actual shift in the marketing emphasis of the Mývatn region, a comparative analysis between the three editions was done. This analysis includes 480 images. Figure 36 shows that there were no considerable changes in terms of the image categories. The 2016 edition depicted slightly more nature-related images than previous editions, but this is only a small change.

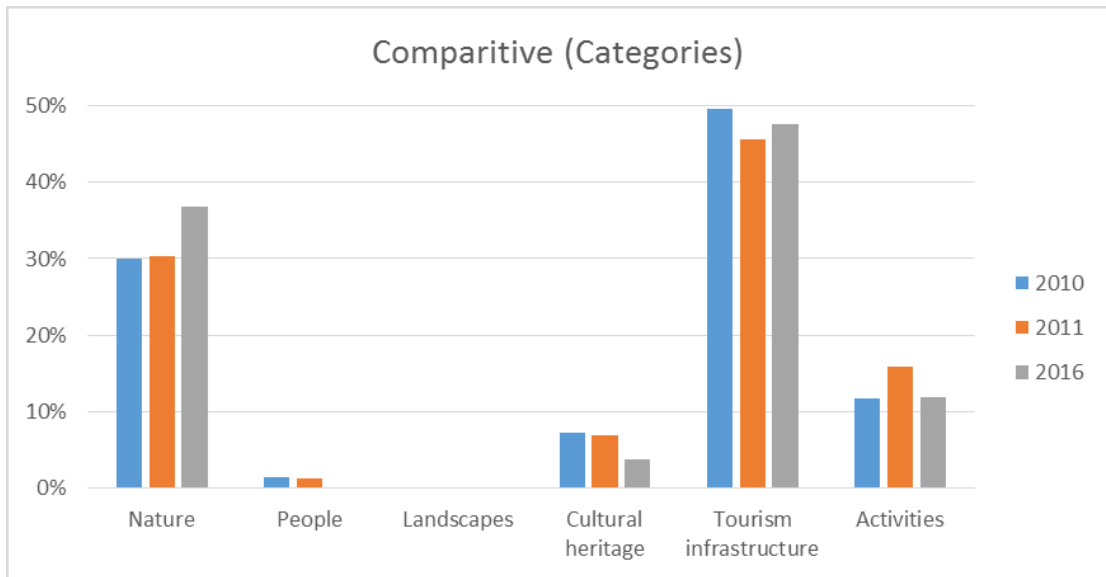


Figure 36. Comparative analysis for the proportion of categories

When zooming in on the type of nature-related images (Figure 37), it can also be said that there were no considerable changes in the distribution among the three subcategories of nature. All three editions of the Mývatn Guidebook show more or less the same amount of nature-related images in each subcategory.

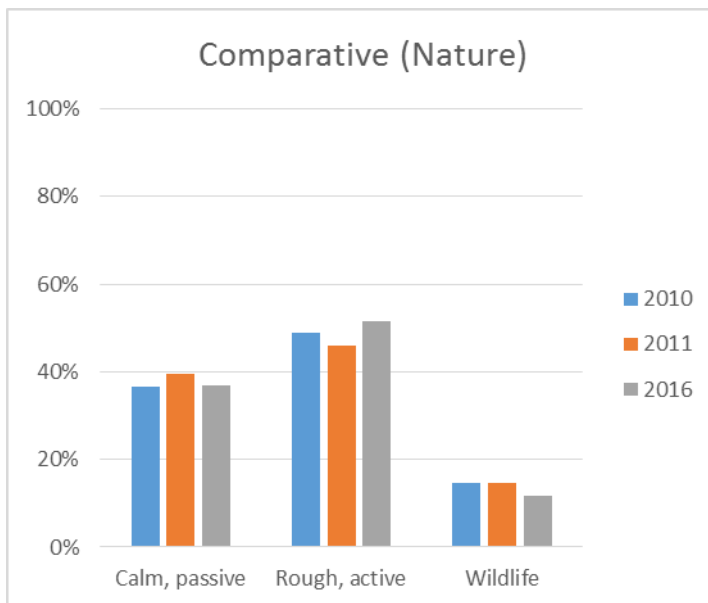


Figure 37. Comparative analysis for the category of Nature

However, when looking at the depicted images within the subcategory of calm, passive nature, a very significant difference can be observed (Figure 38). The northern lights received some attention in the editions of 2010 and 2011 (respectively 20% and 16%), but the edition of 2016 by far exceeded this (60%). It is important to mention that the guidebook does not tend to change a lot over the years, and most images are ‘recycled’. The layout of the pages might be different, but the majority of all illustrations stays the same. For example, 111 of 158 images which were used in the guidebook of 2011 were also used in 2010 (although there were more changes between 2011 and 2016). Because of this, it is even more striking to see such an increase in the use of images of the northern lights. The first six pages and the cover of the most recent edition are almost entirely devoted to images of the northern lights. With the subtitle “The Northern Lights Capital of Iceland” it looks like a recent and deliberate attempt of the region to brand itself as the best destination in Iceland for observing the phenomenon.

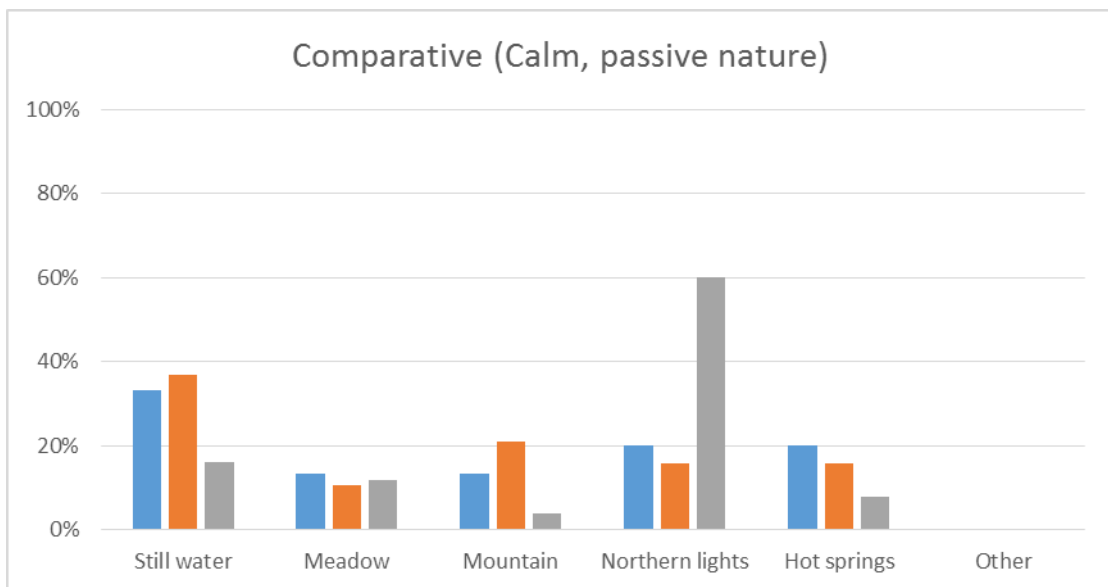


Figure 38. Comparative analysis for the subcategory of Calm, passive nature.

4.3 Images of North Iceland

This section elaborates the analysis of tourism brochures in North Iceland and consists of two analyses. First, an overview analysis will give detailed information about the types of images used in the tourism brochures. Second, the comparative analysis explores the differences between commercial and non-commercial sources. The sample of the analyses includes 50 publications and 1.638 images.

4.3.2 Overview analysis

Figure 39 shows the composition of the images used by the sample of tourism promotional material in Northern Iceland. Nature and tourism infrastructure are the most common categories, together comprising more than 50% of all images. All kinds of activities are moderately present in the brochures, while cultural heritage, people and landscapes are relatively infrequent motifs.

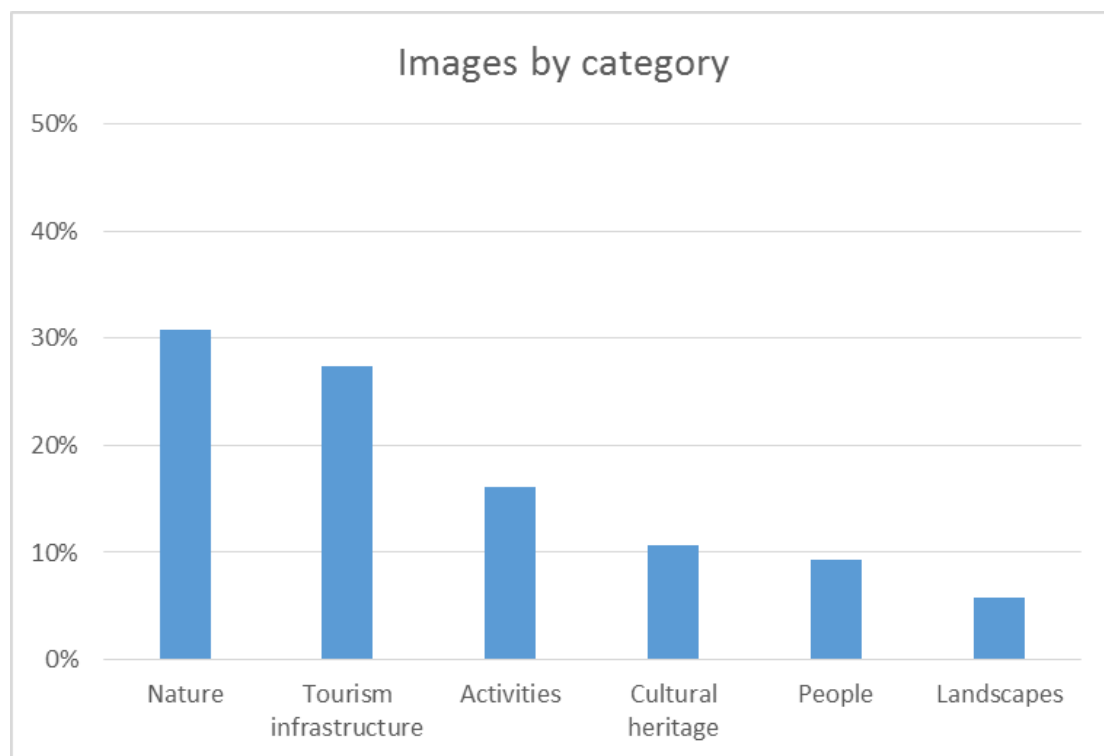


Figure 39. Images by category

In addition, each picture was categorized according to its size. Images which composed an entire page or more were considered to be very large. Images bigger than half a page were categorized as large, while images with a size between 25% and 50% of a page were considered to be medium. Every image smaller than 25% of a page was categorized as small. Figure 40 shows the overall distribution of images among the main categorizations for each image size. Cultural heritage, landscapes and people are mostly visible in medium and small sized images. Nature comprises a bigger percentage of all pictures when image size increases.

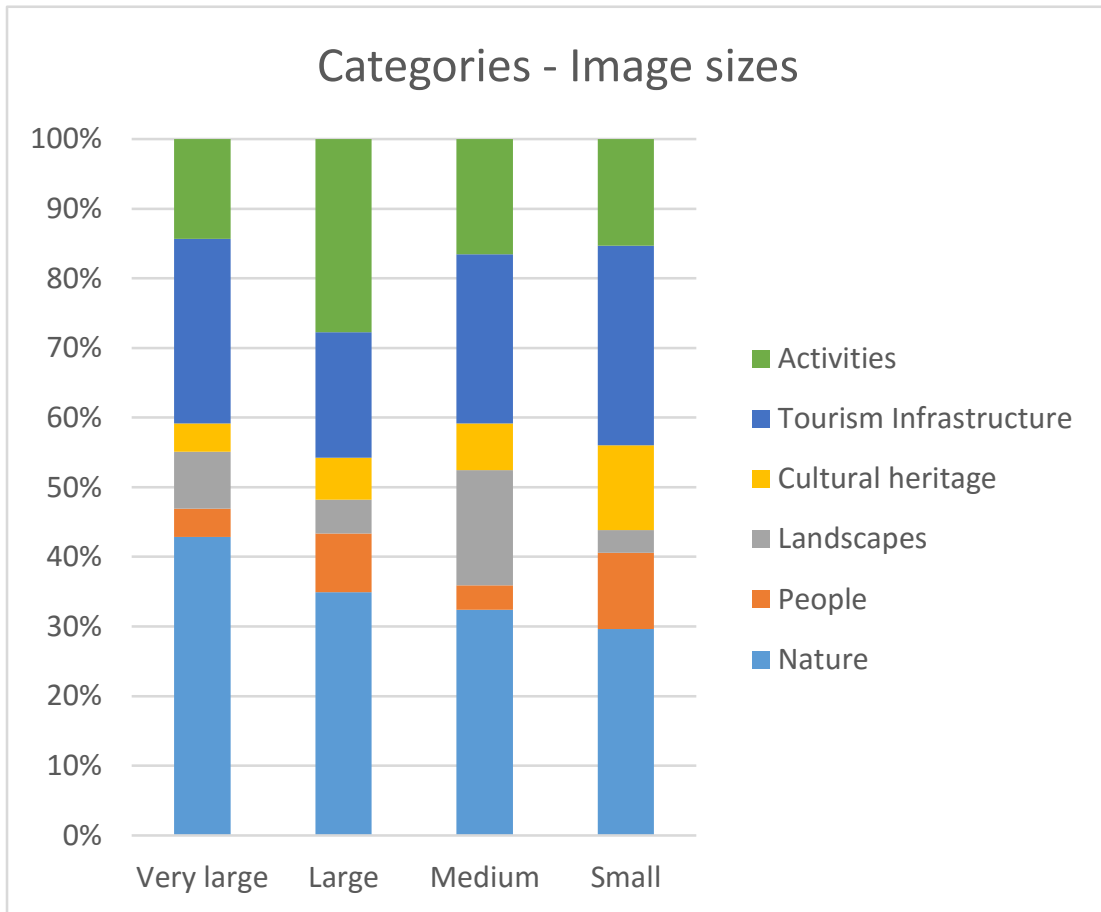


Figure 40. Proportion of categories for image sizes

Nature

The most depicted category of images is nature (31%) in the north Iceland brochures. In slightly more than 60% of these pictures, there is no visible human presence or impact in the image. As Figure 41 shows, human presence is least visible in images of wildlife. However, this is mainly because images of wildlife in combination with humans was often categorized as being a tourist activity, such as horseback riding and whale watching. If you would include those images in this assessment then 45% of all wildlife images would have human presence, which is comparable to the other subcategories.

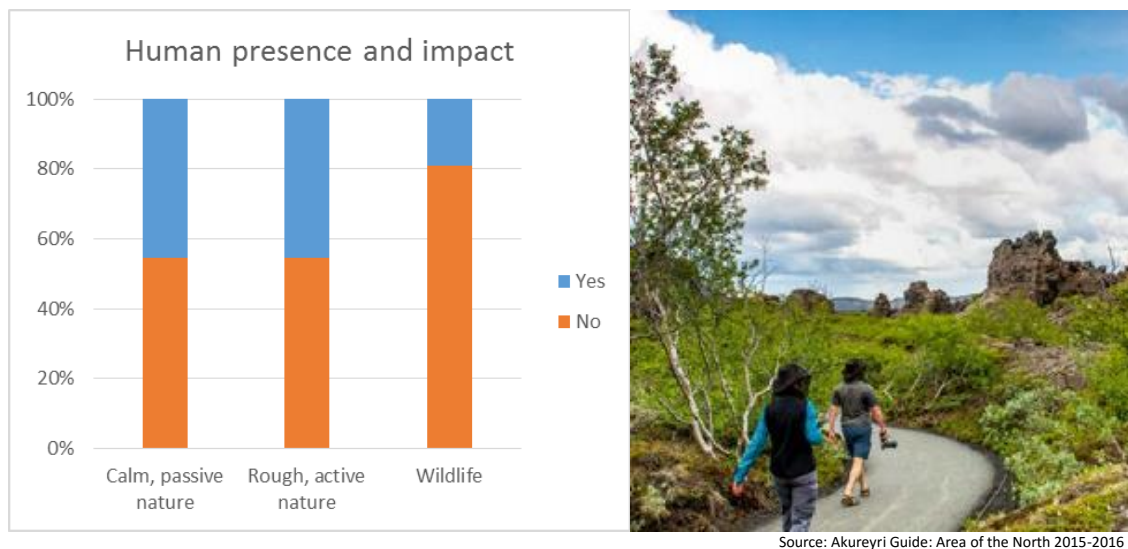


Figure 41. Human presence and impact

A majority of the nature-related images depict rough, active nature (43%). Waterfalls (26%), lava fields and rocks (17%) and cliffs (16%) are most present within this subcategory. Calm, passive nature is also present in the tourism brochures (33%). This subcategory includes many pictures of the northern lights (36%), while still water pictures such as lakes are also present (23%). The third subcategory of wildlife images represents the least amount of nature-related images (25%). Within the Icelandic “big four”, which includes the puffin, Icelandic horse, seal and whale according to Margaryan and Zherdev (2011), the greatest attention is devoted to the puffin and the horse. Overall, the puffin represents about 18% of all wildlife pictures and the horse 15%. The analysis of the Official Tourist Guides in Iceland showed that the puffin also amounts to exactly 18% of all nature images in those sources. Furthermore, there are many images of other birds (22%) and of farm animals (21%).

Tourism Infrastructure

The second biggest category is images of tourism infrastructure (27%) in the north Iceland brochures. Most pictures within this subcategory have no humans in sight (72%). Accommodation, such as hotels and guesthouses, are by far most depicted (39%). There is also considerable attention (19%) devoted to all sorts of images relating to tourism transport, such as buses and rental cars.

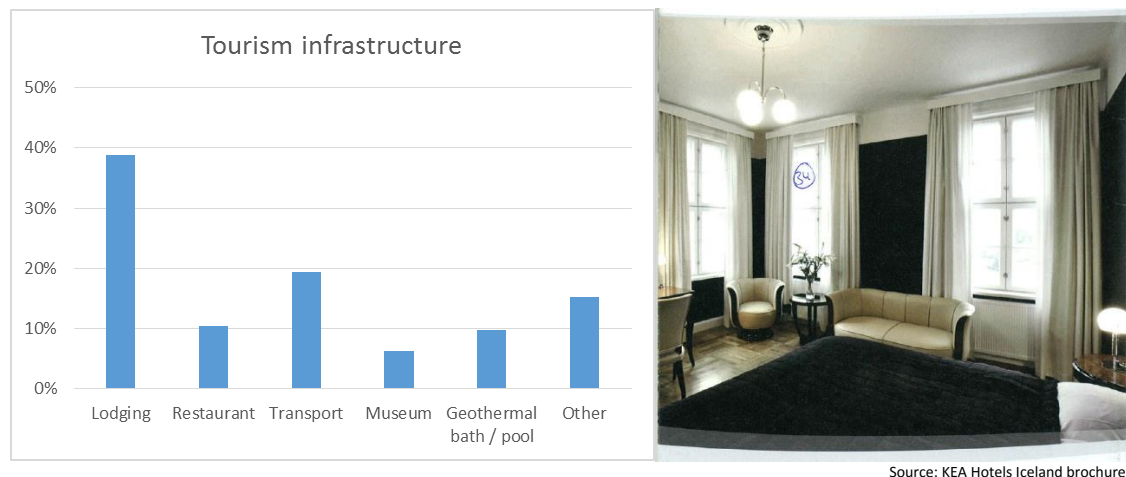
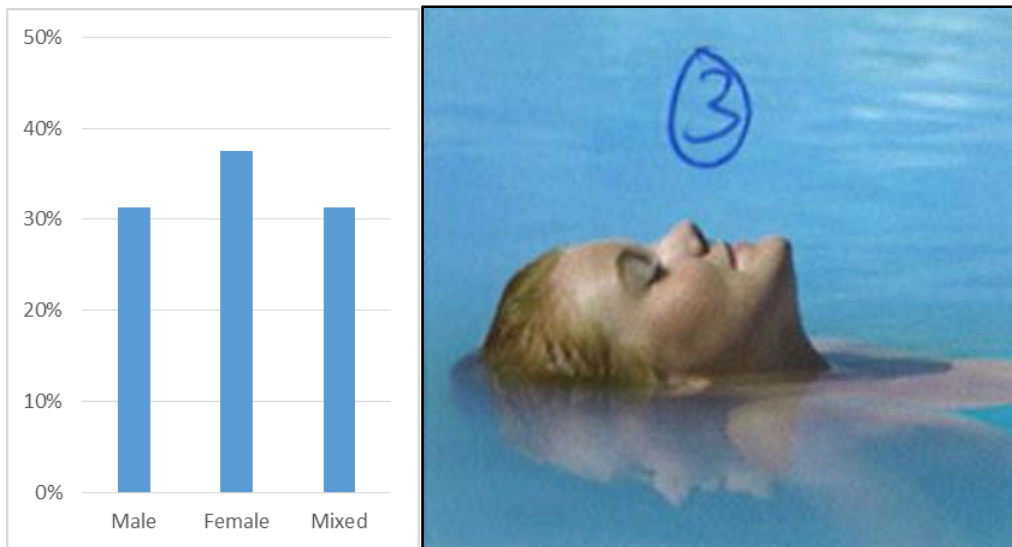


Figure 42. Specifics tourism infrastructure

Activities

Images of people engaging in all sorts of activities, both passively and actively, represent 16% of all pictures reviewed. About 60% of these images depict active sports, such as hiking, winter sports, horseback riding, rafting, caving and cycling. The remaining 40% represent more passive activities, such as whale watching and bathing. In the 2011 version of this research, it was stated that about 70% of people involved in pictures of bathing were women (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). Subsequently, the issue of gender equality was raised and it was stated that women are “the usual decorative addition” in this context (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011, p. 29). In order to verify whether this was also the case in the tourism promotional material of 2016, an extra analysis focusing on the gender of people in thermal baths was carried out. The results can be seen in Figure 43, which shows that there were only slightly more women (38%) depicted in this context than men (31%), while also a third of the pictures show women and men together (31%). The same analysis was done for the activity of horseback riding. In this context, most images depicted women and men together while very few (9%) only showed men engaging in the activity.



Source Mývatn Naturebath brochure

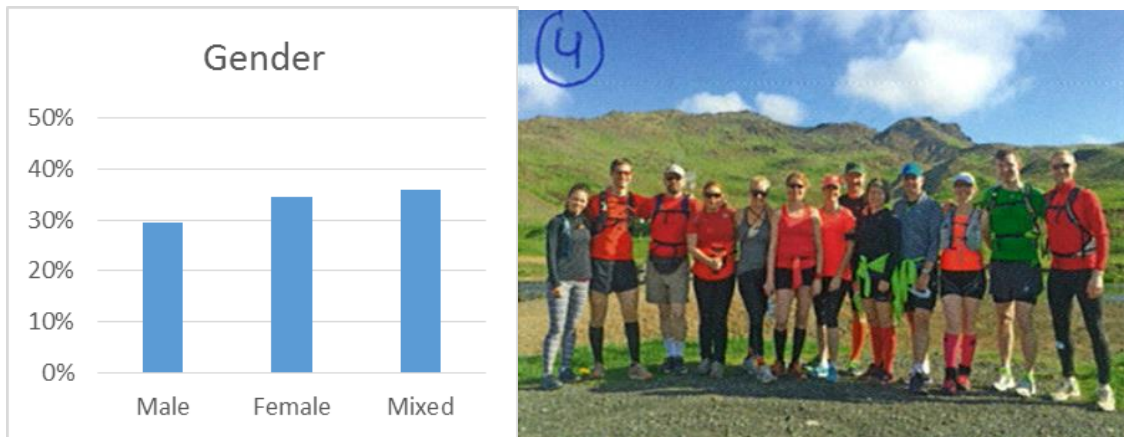
Figure 43. Gender in bathing

Cultural heritage

A relatively small amount of the reviewed images show the cultural heritage of Northern Iceland (11%) in the north Iceland brochures reviewed. Material cultural heritage is more present than immaterial cultural heritage (respectively 68% and 32%). By far the most popular content of material cultural heritage had museum items in focus, while churches and other monumental buildings were also present. The immaterial cultural heritage almost entirely depicted mythical characters such as the Icelandic Jólaveinar and people from the Icelandic Medieval Saga’s.

People

Images in which people are the main focus comprise about 9% of all pictures. As before, the three main characteristics of these pictures were analyzed: gender, context and age. As can be seen from Figure 44, there was no considerable difference between the proportion of pictures showing men (29%) and women (34%). In terms of context, about half of all images depicted a single person, while about 30% of the pictures showed groups of people. By far the most people in focus could be considered adults (66%), while children were also seen. Elderly and adolescents were almost completely absent in the promotional material from north Iceland. Additionally, in terms of ethnicity, the pictures only showed white people instead of showing some sort of diversity including Africans, Asians and Latinos.

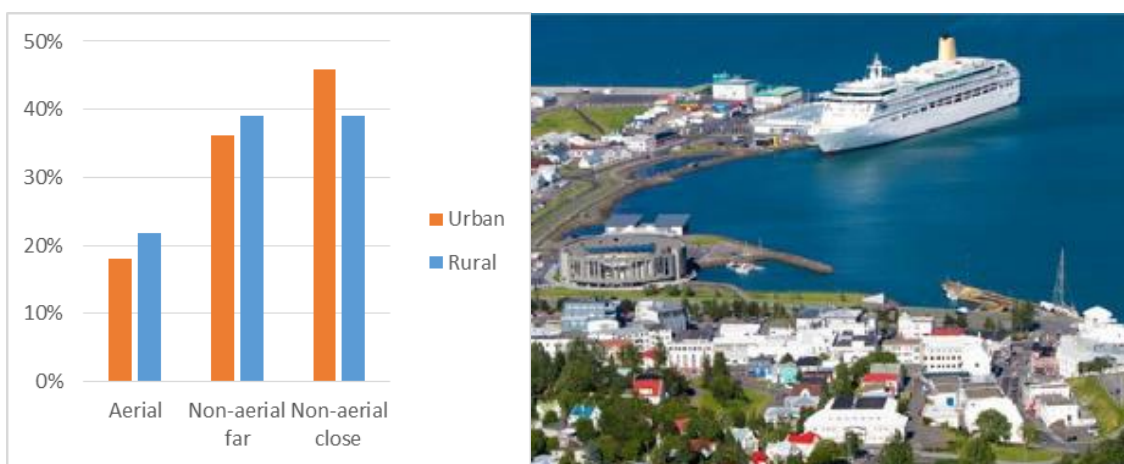


Source: Arctic Running brochure 2014-2015

Figure 44. Gender within People

Landscapes

This subcategory refers to all images of rural and urban landscapes. The tourism brochures of North Iceland depict much more urban landscapes (76%) than rural landscapes (24%). In the 2011 version of this research, it was stated that most pictures of rural landscapes were aerial images in which “houses are rarely more than dots in the vast nature” (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011, p. 28). The situation in 2016 seems to be quite different; only 24% of the rural landscapes were considered to be aerial images. About 39% of the pictures represented villages from far away while the same amount of images showed a close up of the rural areas. Urban landscapes were mostly depicted close up (46%), while the aerial perspective was least used for this subcategory.



Source: Akureyri Guide: Area of the North 2015-2016

Figure 45. Specifics Landscapes

4.3.3 Comparative analysis – Commercial vs. non-commercial sources

The final part of the analysis aims to explore whether there are any significant differences between commercial sources, such as brochures of whale watching companies or hotels, and non-commercial sources, such as the Official Tourist Guide of North Iceland. As explained before, the sample of this analysis is the same as the sample of 4.3.1, i.e. all tourism brochures collected from North Iceland.

Figure 46 shows the composition of image categories used in both types of sources. As can be seen from the figure, the proportion of nature-related images is almost the same in both types of sources. The same goes for images relating to activities. The main difference between commercial and non-commercial sources exists with the amount of images devoted to tourism infrastructure. One third of all images in commercial sources depict this category, while it is only 12% in the non-commercial sources. Instead, non-commercial sources have cultural heritage, landscapes and people more in focus. Landscapes comprise only 3% of the images in commercial sources and the 8% of cultural heritage is mainly due to two museum brochures which had a lot of illustrations of museum items in focus. Without these two sources, cultural heritage was relatively absent.

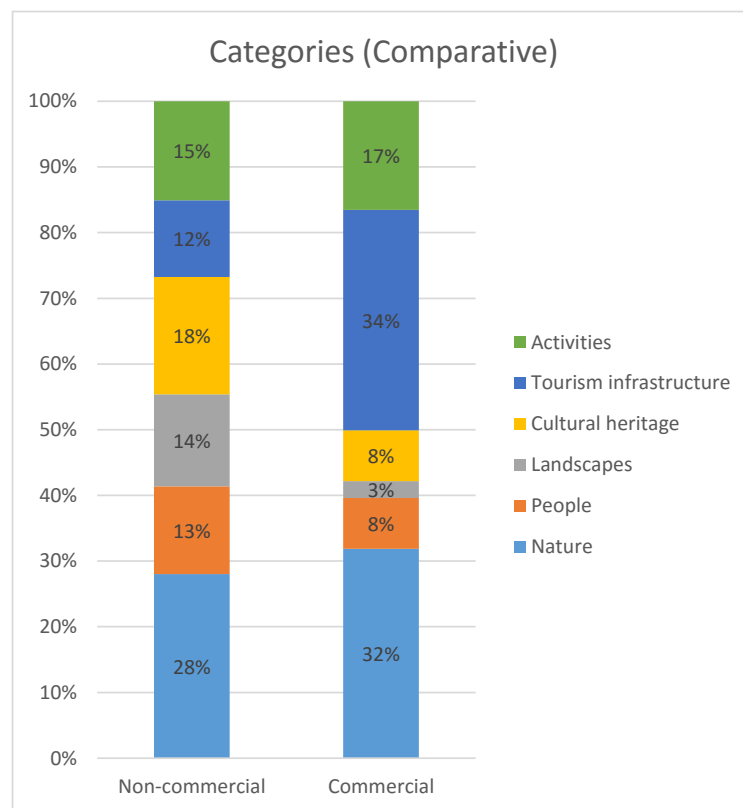


Figure 46. Comparative analysis of images by category

In order to emphasize the difference between commercial and non-commercial sources, an analysis of image sizes was also done here. As explained before, each image was categorized according to its size: small, medium, large and very large. Figure 47 shows that commercial sources use almost only big images for nature, tourism infrastructure and activities. Arguably the commercial sources do not attach much value to cultural heritage, landscapes and people when promoting their company or product. Non-commercial sources are much more diverse, as cultural heritage, landscapes and people comprise about 36% of all very large and large images. In contrast, these three categories only comprise about 8% in commercial promotional material.

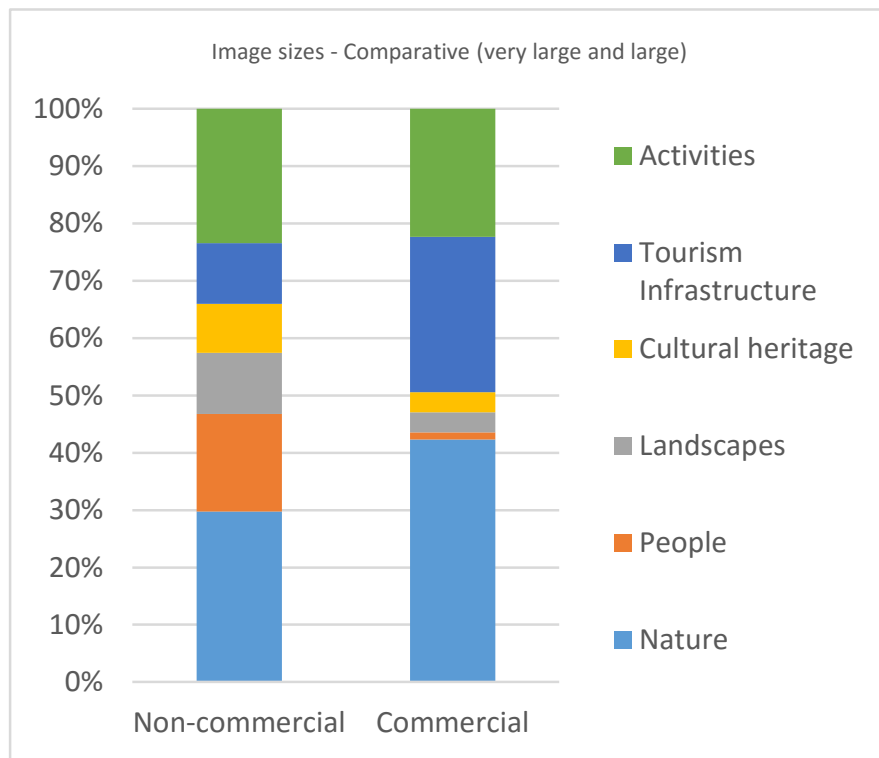


Figure 47. Comparative analysis of the proportion of categories for large and very large images

Nature

The main difference between the commercial and non-commercial brochures exists within calm and passive nature. The commercial sources show much more images of the northern lights than non-commercial sources (Figure 48). Within rough and active nature it becomes clear that non-commercial sources show significantly more pictures of cliffs, while commercial sources use that space mainly for images of lava, lava fields and lava rocks (Figure 49). Commercial sources show more images of whales, while these images are almost entirely substituted by images of seals in non-commercial sources (Figure 50). Another significant difference in terms of wildlife is that commercial sources show more images of puffins, while non-commercial sources give room also to relatively many other birds.

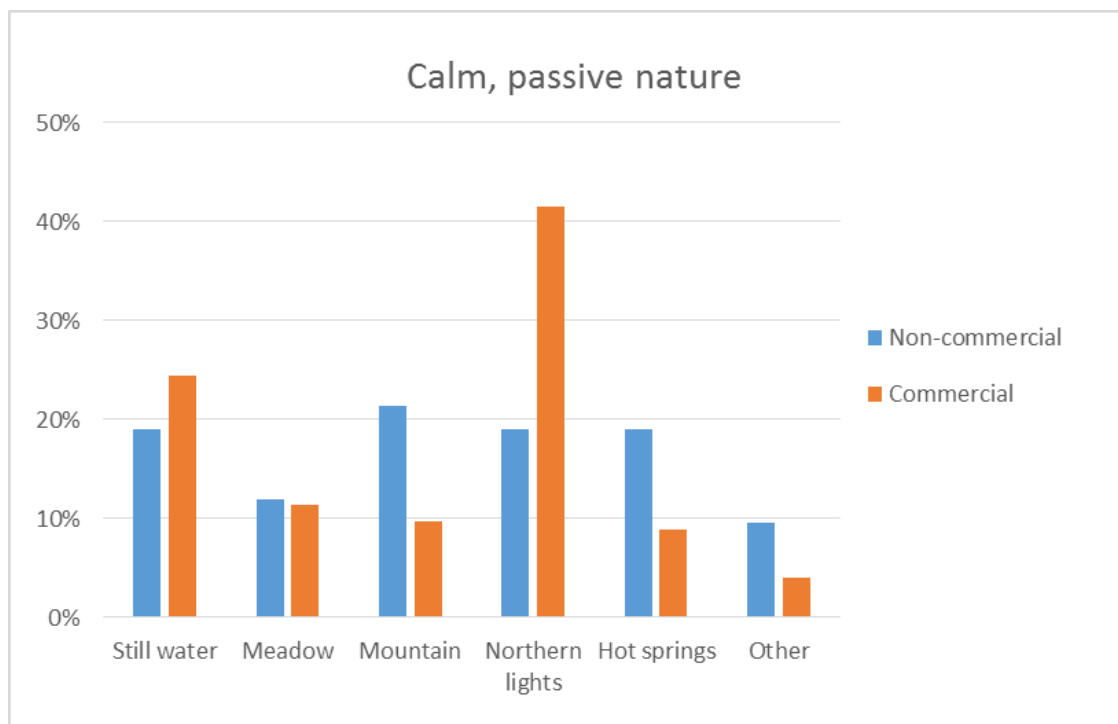


Figure 48. Comparative analysis for Calm, passive nature

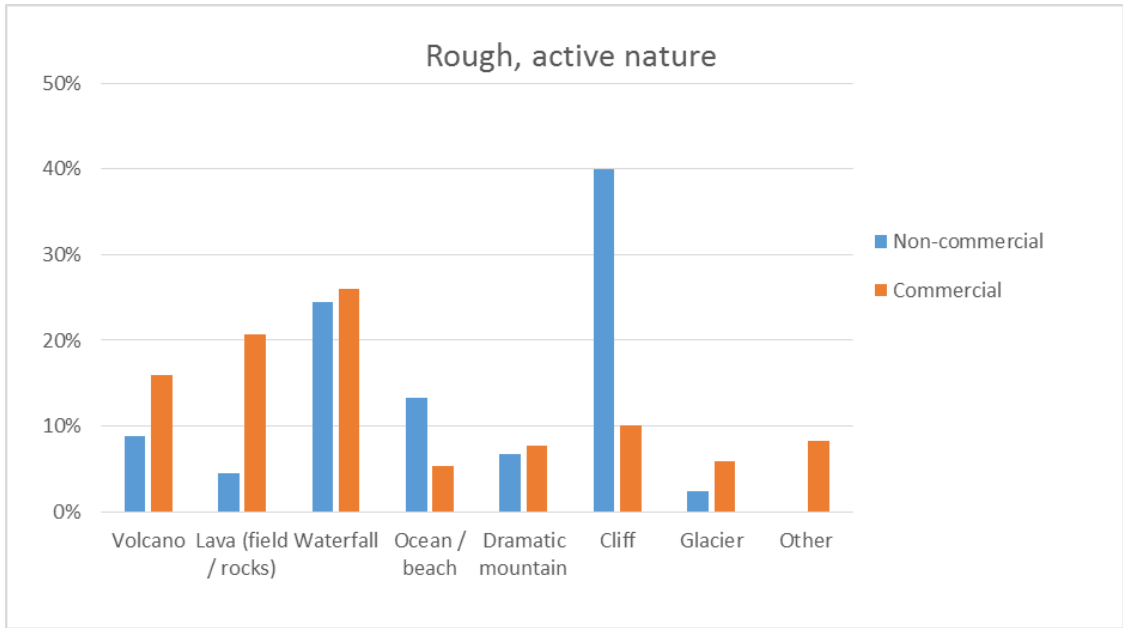


Figure 49. Comparative analysis for Rough, active nature

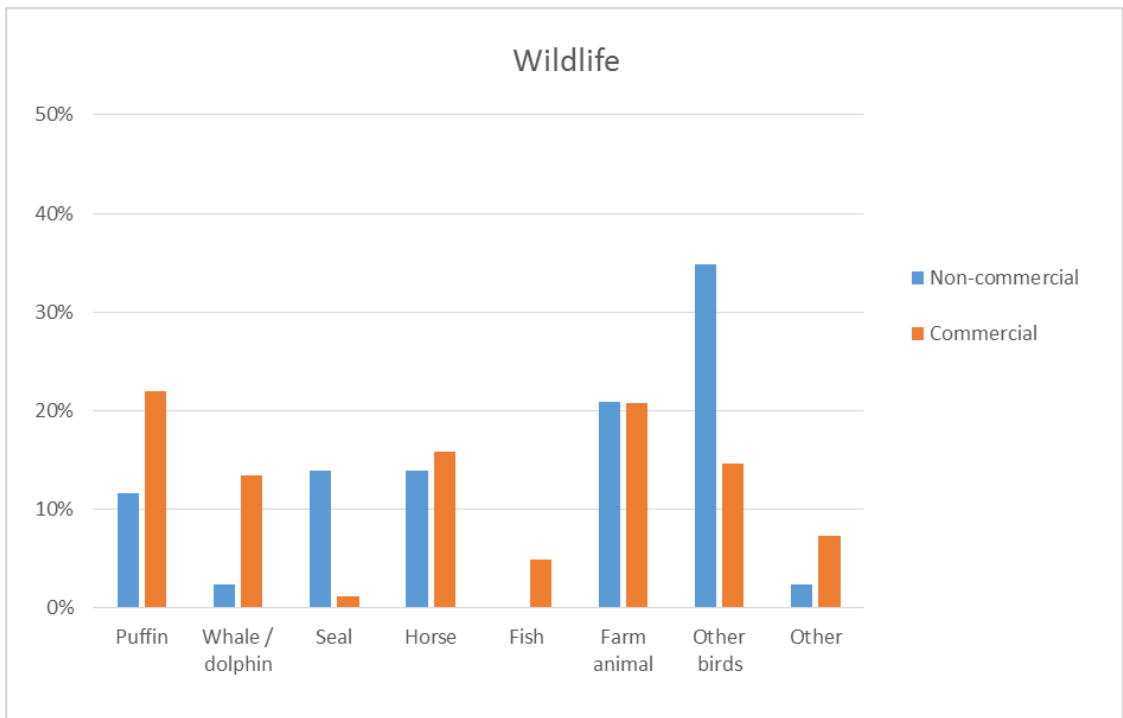


Figure 50. Comparative analysis for Wildlife

People

The most interesting difference between the commercial and non-commercial brochures in the category of people, relates to the age of the subjects (Figure 51). While non-commercial sources seem to depict a more diverse range of people in terms of age (despite ignoring elderly people), commercial sources almost only depict adults.

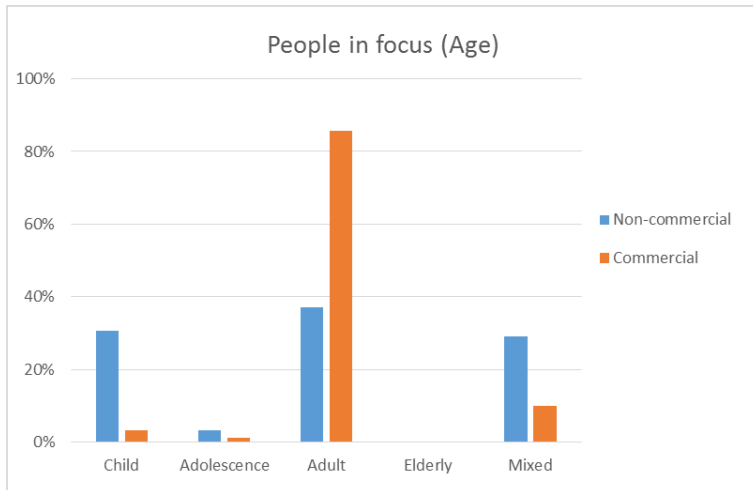


Figure 51. Comparative analysis for the age of people in focus

Cultural heritage

The main difference in terms of cultural heritage is that commercial sources mainly depict museum items in focus, while non-commercial sources offer a much more diverse spectrum of cultural heritage images (Figure 52). Churches, for example, comprise over 20% in non-commercial sources while being almost absent in other sources.



Figure 52. Comparative analysis for Cultural heritage

Tourism infrastructure

In terms of tourism infrastructure, commercial sources within the category of tourism infrastructure prefer images relating to lodging, such as hotels and guesthouses (Figure 53). Non-commercial sources on the other hand have much more room in their promotional material for other themes, such as museums, hiking trails, information centers, shops and geothermal baths or pools.

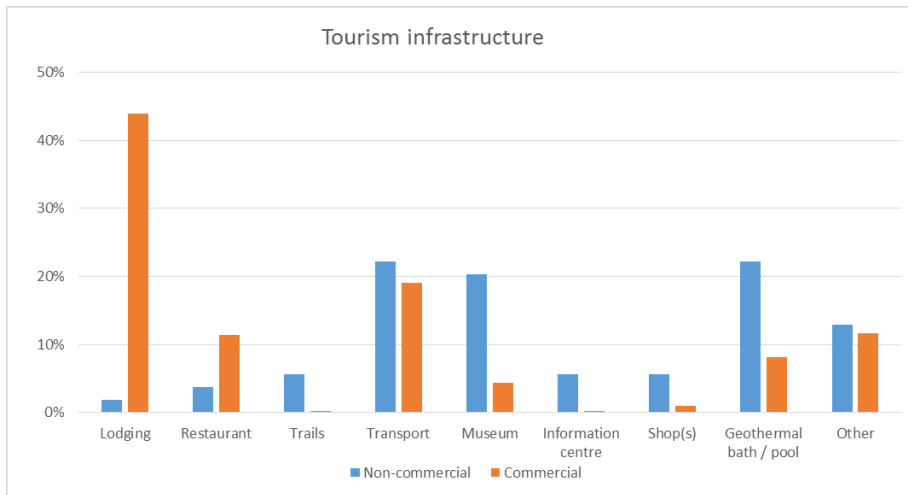


Figure 53. Comparative analysis for Tourism infrastructure

Activities

In terms of active activities, non-commercial sources mainly depict winter sports, horseback riding and some other activities (Figure 54). Commercial sources do not illustrate winter sports as much but focus more on images of hiking/running, cycling and caving.

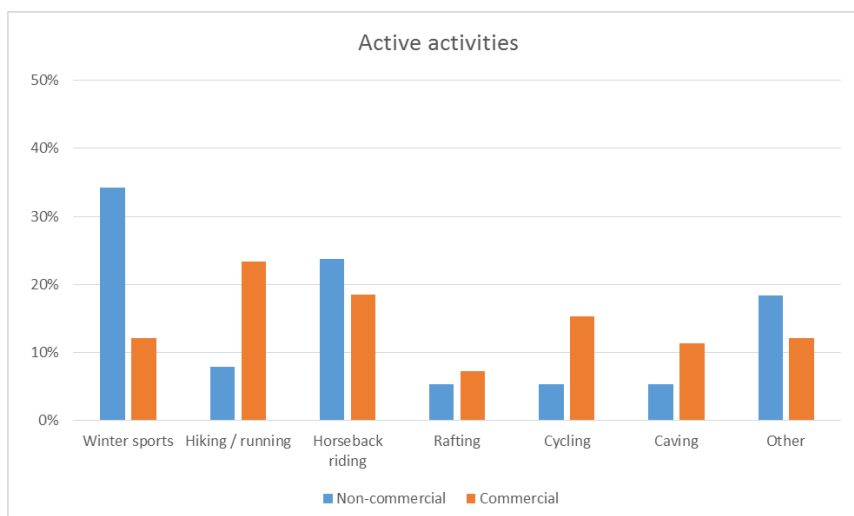


Figure 54. Comparative analysis for Active activities

Within the subcategory of passive activities, the main difference between the sources is that commercial sources mainly show images of whale watching, dog sledding and bathing while non-commercial sources use this space for images of fishing and concerts (Figure 55).

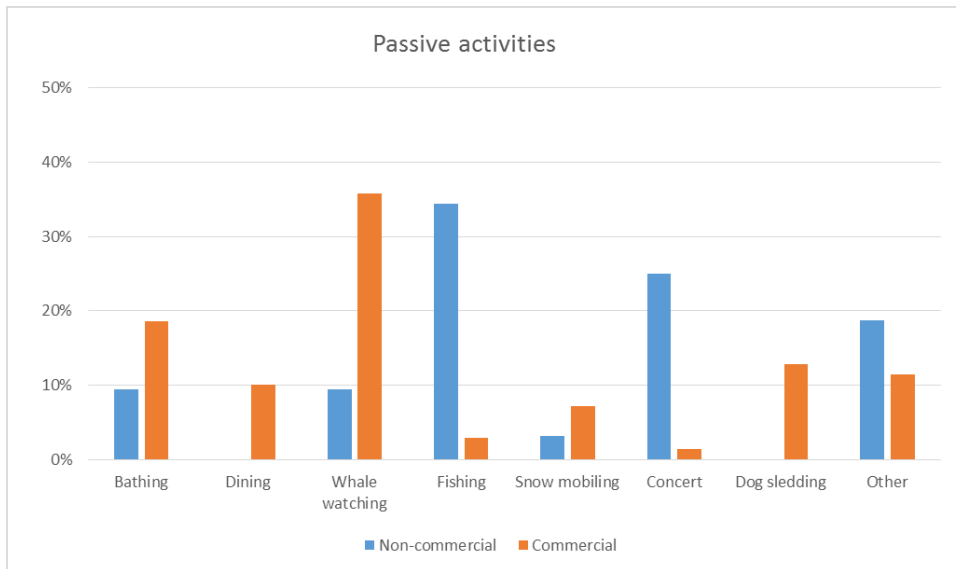


Figure 55. Comparative analysis for Passive activities

5 DISCUSSION

The results from the different analyses performed in this research contribute empirical insights into two existing bodies of knowledge. First, several themes within the literature about images of Iceland can be reflected upon, both in general and specifically on its tourism destination image. Second, the results of this research can be compared to the results, discussion and conclusions of the comparable research performed in 2011 by Margaryan and Zherdev. This discussion chapter will do both, starting with the latter.

Margaryan and Zherdev (2011) found in their research that the tourism brochures in North Iceland were largely dominated by the categories of nature, activities and tourism infrastructure. Although not quite as prevalent, a similar conclusion can be made from the analysis of this research, as these three categories account for 74% of all images opposed to the 81% found in 2011 by Margaryan and Zherdev. Nature-related images are most present in tourism brochures, especially in the Official Tourist Guides in Iceland (58%) but also specifically in North Iceland (31%). The central position of nature within the images of North Iceland becomes more prominent when you consider that there are relatively more nature-related images when image size increases, i.e. the larger the picture the more likely it is of nature. This shows that the visibility of nature, in terms of the number and the size of images, is very high in tourism promotional material in North Iceland, as Iceland in general.

The focus on nature is in line with the apparent destination image of Iceland, which reflects that nature is Iceland's most significant feature outside the capital region (Gössling, 2006; Jóhannsdóttir, 2006). The findings are also in line with previous research, which showed that nature has been central to the promotion of Iceland as a tourism destination (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011). Research has also shown that nature is the most important reason for people to visit Iceland (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2014) and this analysis demonstrates what is meant by nature. Rough and active nature, especially waterfalls and lava fields, is most present in the tourism brochures. Arguably the promotional material simply offers what tourists want to see or what Iceland has to offer, but it is important to realize that this destination image is essentially formed by these tourism brochures and by implication is the likely substance of what visitors mean when they say they come to Iceland for nature. As Urry (2002) explained in *The Tourist Gaze*, people are stimulated by tourism marketing to look at particular aspects at a destination. This social construction of the destination image is explained by Gren & Huijbens:

The naïve or simplified taken-for-granted notions of representation, as mirroring or objectively corresponding to a separate reality “out there”, are not adequate or valid. Tourist destination images are always packaged around a series of selected real and imagined features, and they are being constructed and manufactured for specific touristic purposes by marketers and researchers alike. (Gren & Huijbens, 2009, p. 16)

These aspects are then reinforced through tourists’ pictures, narratives and tourism brochures (Konijn, Sluimer, & Mitas, 2016). The focus on nature as North Iceland’s most important feature within tourism brochures is the result of this construction and can be subject to change. It must be noted however that every destination is limited in the production of a destination image by the specific characteristics of that destination (Gren & Huijbens, 2009).

Previous research argued that nature is often pictured without any human presence or human impact, such as roads and buildings (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). Although the absence of humans is less apparent in this analysis than in the results of 2011 (62% opposed to 81%), the current findings reaffirm the absence of people in tourism promotional material of nature. It is also in line with the fact that several academics argue that Icelandic nature is promoted as being unspoiled, clean, untouched and pristine (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Gunnarsdóttir, 2011; Huijbens, 2011; Karlsdóttir, 2013). The purpose of these images and narratives of Icelandic nature is to correspond to the quest of contemporary tourists for authenticity (Gren & Huijbens, 2009). Gren & Huijbens describe tourism as a modern form of pilgrimage in which tourists are looking for a world which was lost at home but still exists in some way in the tourism destination. The absence of human impact and presence in the tourism images communicate a message of ‘authentic’ and ‘unspoilt’ nature, opposed to human-made landscapes in which many European and American tourists live in their daily life.

Furthermore, Gunnarsdóttir (2011) also argues that Iceland is part of the North, which implies that there is a focus on landscapes characterized by rough, active nature such as volcanoes and waterfalls. The analysis confirms this, as the majority of nature-related images in both the Official Tourist Guides as the promotional material in North Iceland illustrate this subcategory. This is particularly interesting because the analysis from 2011 indicated that the opposite was true: 44% was considered to be calm, passive nature and only 22% represented rough, active nature.

The depiction of women in tourism marketing in Iceland, for example in the ‘one night stand in Reykjavík’ campaign by Icelandair and the narratives in the show ‘Oprah Takes You Around the World’ (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Jóhannsdóttir, 2006) is not supported by the current

findings. Both in the literature as in previous research it is specifically argued that women decorate the theme of bathing. However, this cannot be supported by findings of this research as women and men were almost equally depicted in images related to bathing. The same thing can be said about the activity of horseback riding and in general women and men were found to be equally represented in images of people, both in the Official Tourist Guides and specifically in North Iceland. However, it has to be noted that there is a significant lack of images of elderly people, as well as people from non-western ethnicities.

In terms of activities it was argued in previous research that this category is largely dominated by activities which require its participants to become active, opposed to passive activities such as whale watching (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). Active activities accounted for 81% of all activities in 2011, but the domination seems less apparent in this research (61%). It was also argued by Margaryan and Zherdev that there had been a recent effort by North Iceland to promote itself as a winter sport destination. The images in promotional material show that a significant share of the activity-related images refer to winter sports (17%), but this cannot be compared to 2011 as the claim was not supported by data. The number of images of winter sports was relatively less in the Official Tourist Guides across Iceland, so the region of North Iceland puts more emphasis on winter sports. It is difficult to investigate whether this effort is effective, but research shows that seasonality has decreased in North Iceland over the last years (ITRC, 2016).

Additionally, it was argued by previous research that humans are not present in tourism infrastructure, because it would distract from the focus on the facilities (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). This absence of any 'disruption' in the depiction of tourism infrastructure can be explained by the message tourism companies want to communicate to tourists. They want to show potential visitors that their facilities are empty, vacant spaces, waiting for them to be discovered and utilized. Or as Hunter puts it:

Photographic representations in tourism tend to depict vacant and pristine spaces awaiting the tourist. And potentially, it could be suggested that any tourist market would interpret the representation in terms of an experience, awaiting fulfilment at that destination. Specifically, photographic representations in tourism define "groomed spaces" that are readily identified as a tourism product – part of a destination completely commodified and ready for consumption. (Hunter, as cited in Gren & Huijbens, 2009, p. 47)

The absence of people in tourism infrastructure was also not supported by any data in the 2011 report, but the analysis in this research supports the claim as 72% of all images of tourism

infrastructure do not show people in the picture. Finally, it was argued in the previous report that towns are often nothing more than dots in vast nature and that they are most often pictured from an aerial perspective (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). Once again, there was no supporting data which can be used to compare. This research, however, does not support these claims, as 39% of all rural landscapes are shown close up and only 22% from an aerial perspective. Interesting, however, is the dominance of urban landscapes in the tourism brochures (76%). Only 24% of all landscapes depict rural landscapes such as small farming and fishing communities. There seems to be a strong preference in the tourism brochures of North Iceland to show the larger villages and towns. The Official Tourist Guides of Iceland show relatively more rural landscapes (41%), but urban landscapes are still most present (59%).

The purpose of the comparative analysis of the Official Tourist Guides in Iceland was to explore whether there were any differences in how they promote their region. Although nature was the most depicted category in all regions, there were some significant regional differences. South Iceland dedicated 75% of their images to nature, while the Westfjords used 43% in comparison. North Iceland used a considerable number of images to show their rural and urban landscape (34%), while other regions such as West Iceland (4%) dedicated a much smaller share to this category. These findings are particularly interesting in the light of claims that people in the different regions feel that their region is not adequately represented as the images merely reflect Iceland in a miniature, while failing to illustrate distinctive characteristics of their region in comparison to others (Gunnarsdóttir, 2011).

Finally, the comparative analysis of commercial and non-commercial images in North Iceland gave some valuable insights. It showed that commercial sources tended to show more images of tourism infrastructure while non-commercial sources filled this space with images of cultural heritage and landscapes. This can be explained by the fact that commercial sources are trying to sell their product and therefore want to show many pictures of it, while non-commercial sources try to promote specific qualities of the region instead. In this light it is also logical that commercial sources show much more images of puffins, whales and the northern lights because these nature features are very popular in tour offerings in Iceland and greatly promoted. It appears that these companies have picked these three features as their flagships and we can expect a continuing dominance of the puffin, whale and northern lights in commercial brochures. The selection of images based on their capacity to produce profits can also explain the preference of commercial sources to mainly show museum items in cultural heritage, while non-commercial sources also show features like churches and monumental buildings. Overall, commercial sources show a clear preference for the categories of activities, nature and tourism

infrastructure (82%). In contrast, non-commercial sources show much more diverse images and only use 55% for these three categories. Additionally, commercial sources mainly depict adults, which could be explained by the fact that they are trying to address the people who are likely to make purchases. It should be noted, however, that these adults are sometimes part of a family with children, whose interests are important in decision making.

6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this report is to revisit and explore the issues raised and analysis performed in a 2011 report from the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre (Margaryan & Zherdev, 2011). Awareness about image production in Iceland generally and North Iceland more specifically is important because as it relates to the type of tourist that is being attracted and their possible expectations reflected in their behavior and activities. It is important to realize that a destination image, at least partially, is a social construction which can be shaped and changed. The purpose of this report is to give insight into the destination image of Iceland and North Iceland which is currently promoted and to give people the opportunity to reflect on this.

The first analysis of the Official Tourist Guides showed how nature is by far the most depicted category of all marketing regions of Iceland combined. More than half of the nature-related images depict rough, active nature, in contrast to 30% which shows calm, passive nature. Images of waterfalls and cliffs are particularly popular in this respect. The destination image of Iceland put forward by the images in the Official Tourist Guides is currently one of a predominantly nature-based tourism destination, but is this also how the regions want to promote themselves? Does this attract the right type of tourists and does it result in a maximization of the potential benefits of the region? The analysis showed that elderly and people from non-western ethnicities were largely absent from the tourism guides. Arguably this inaccurately reflects the tourism population and does not contribute to stimulate people with these characteristics to visit Iceland. Moreover will this image material attract the type of tourists the regions' DMOs want to have visit Iceland?

The comparative analysis of the Official Tourist Guides aimed to raise awareness on how North Iceland currently is, or is not, trying to differentiate itself from the other regions in Iceland. The analysis showed that images of rural and urban landscapes receive much more attention in N. Iceland than in other parts of Iceland. It also showed that nature is less often emphasized, while cultural heritage is almost absent in comparison to other regions. The purpose of the Official Tourist Guide is to help people decide where to go in North Iceland and therefore it shapes the expectations, the behavior and the movements of tourists. The results of this analysis can help to reflect on how the Official Tourist Guide of North Iceland is doing this and how it is different from the other regions.

The analysis of the Visit Mývatn brochure showed how Mývatn followed Akureyri and Húsavík in branding itself by means of a particular theme, in this case as 'the northern lights capital of Iceland'. It shows how a region can change the destination image which is communicated to

tourists and it would be interesting to see whether this results in more visitors, different types of tourists and different motives to visit the region. More research into this can contribute to knowledge about how a region can influence its destination image and its visitors.

In 2011 an analysis was done off all available tourism brochures about North Iceland and this report aimed to reproduce this for 2016. The conclusions and comparisons revealed three main themes. Firstly, it showed how nature, activities and infrastructure dominate the images in North Iceland. This was also the case in 2011 but the total share of these three categories decreased slightly. Secondly, some specific elements could be analyzed again, such as the apparent preference for depicting women in a bathing context. The analysis in 2016 showed that there was no reason to believe that gender equality was not reflected in the tourism promotion of North Iceland. And finally, the analysis allowed for data to be gathered about some presumptions of the research in 2011. It was concluded, for example, that there was not a clear preference for showing rural and urban landscapes from an aerial perspective. Additionally, this analysis allows reflection on how tourism companies and organizations promote North Iceland; which characteristics are being emphasized and to which areas in the region are tourists being steered.

In the context of the North Iceland promotional material a final analysis explored if there were any differences between commercial and non-commercial sources. This showed that commercial sources almost entirely focus on nature, activities and tourism infrastructure, especially when image size is considered. Non-commercial sources depict a much more diverse destination image of the region. This analysis shows the different interests which are at stake. It shows how both types of organizations try to emphasize different qualities of the region, based on how they think it would benefit them the most. It also demonstrates how a destination image is an interest driven construction and not an objective representation of the region, as it is the result of deliberate choices about the images which are used.

Thus, some key results of the report can be summarized as follows.

- Tourism brochures in North Iceland continue, although less apparent than in 2011, to be dominated by images of nature, tourism infrastructure and activities. A comparative analysis showed that this is especially the case within commercial sources, while non-commercial sources have more room for urban and rural landscapes, cultural heritage and people.
- A large majority of images in The Official Tourist Guide of North Iceland are pictures of nature, often without human presence, which is in line with the most important reason for tourists to visit Iceland.
- The tendency to depict women as 'decorative addition' in settings like bathing could not be reaffirmed by the results of this research.
- Tourism brochures in North Iceland lack ethnic diversity and they also very rarely depict elderly people.
- Images of touristic activities performed by people mainly show activities where people have to be active, such as winter sports and hiking.
- The tourism infrastructure in North Iceland is clearly depicted without the presence of people, arguably in order to present the facilities as empty and vacant spaces.
- Tourism brochures in North Iceland lack images of rural landscapes, while they seem to prefer to show larger villages and towns.
- The comparative analysis of the six Official Tourist Guides showed that there are considerable differences in how they present themselves, although nature is most popular among all regions.
- Commercial sources appear to focus on specific activities and nature (puffin, northern lights and whale watching), which is expected to continue in the near future.
- The analysis of the Visit Mývatn Guidebook showed that there has been a recent and deliberate attempt to rebrand the area as being 'the Northern Lights Capital of Iceland'.

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