
From postmodern wellness tourism towards transmodernity. Interpretations and predictions of the Finnish wellbeing tourist

Abstract

This article focuses on describing, interpreting and predicting the change of Finnish wellness tourism from postmodernity towards transmodern wellbeing industry. By the transmodern wellbeing tourism industry, we are referring to the post-fordist, ecologic and ethical sustainable concept. The key objective of this article is to depict the postmodern wellness industry and wellness services in Finland and make a concept description of transmodern wellbeing traveler. Using action research of Finnish wellness companies, We are describing and interpreting in succinct form the change from postmodernity towards transmodernity in Finnish well-being tourism. Analyzing wellness tourism researches and using deconstructive and reconstructive writing, We will deconstruct a descriptive, interpretative and phenomenological sketch of the Finnish postmodern wellness tourist and reconstruct transmodern selfness tourist. The findings from this deconstructive and reconstructive writing show that the Finnish strategic and operational service landscape will be change towards transmodern wellbeing industry.

Keywords *Posmodernity, Transmodernity, Wellness industry, Selfness tourist, Wellbeing industry*

Theme *What's going well in research!*

Focus of Paper *Theoretical/Academic*

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Introduction and objectives

On the meta-strategic level, Finland has tried to construct its tourism, hospitality and experience industry's (THE-cluster) competitiveness ideology and the causal topology of economic emergence by marketing its competition edges: credible, coolness, creativeness, contrasting. In the national and regional tourism strategies have defined many wellbeing tourism objectives for the period 2009-2020. The key goals are conceptual, operational and business oriented:

- 1) the implementation of wellness and wellbeing concepts,
- 2) the servialization and productization of THE-companies,
- 3) the internationalization, networking and joint marketing of THE-companies,
- 4) the identification, developing, marketing and selling of core wellbeing products and services,
- 5) the development of service and technology innovations of wellbeing tourism,
- 6) the development of year-round service offering and sales,
- 7) the improved quality,
- 8) the cooperation in distribution and pricing and
- 9) the sustainable service development. (Aho 2007; Björk 2011a; Björk 2011b; Björk & al. 2011; Finnish Tourist Board 2008a; 2008b; 2005; Hjalager & al. 2011; Konu 2010; Konu & al 2011; Konu & al 2010; Konu & Laukkanen 2010; Saari 2015; Tuohino & Kangas 2009.)

The Finnish THE-industry and Visit Finland have understood the importance and image of wellbeing tourism development but its customer, business and service insight and foresight analysis have been insufficient (Aaltonen 2001; 2007; 2010).

The purpose of this paper is to describe the change from postmodern commercial fitness and wellbeing industry (wellness tourism) towards transmodern wellbeing industry in Finland. The key objective of this article is to describe the postmodern wellness industry and wellness services in Finland and make a concept description of Finnish transmodern wellbeing traveler. We are depicting and predicting in succinct form the change from postmodernity towards transmodernity in Finnish well-being tourism. Secondly, this article of sociology of tourism will attempt a descriptive, interpretative and phenomenological sketch of the Finnish postmodern wellness tourist and transmodern selfness tourist. Thirdly this paper will describe and construct the strategic and operational landscape of the post-Fordist wellbeing industry in Finland.

Methodology

The methodology of this article is based on deconstructive and reconstructive writing. By de-constructive writing, we mean document and concept analysis by describing and interpreting the most used, key theme, Finnish wellness tourism. By reconstructing writing, we are creating a new abstract construction, transmodern wellbeing industry. The new concept (transmodernity) is social construction and contextual concept which includes ecologic, aesthetic and ethical phenomena. To deconstruction of postmodern term, it needs to create a new term, not to synthesize the concepts in opposition, but to compare their differences and concept-make a social constructive interplay between wellness industry of public sector and private sector, commercial spa industry and companies. De- and reconstructive writing means searching, analysis making and creating of researcher team and experience learning. The innovative construction needs critical reflections according to wellness/well-being practices.

The constructive philosophy thinking is based on Derrida's studies and texts of phenomenology and post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy. In the 1980s, the Postmodernism era, deconstruction was being put to use in a range of theoretical enterprises in the humanities and social sciences including tourism, anthropology, consumer and hospitality studies. In the continental philosophy tradition, debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and philosophy of (experience) culture still refer to it today. (Honkanen 2004.) Within mass tourism, it has inspired deconstructivism, and it remains important in general within entertainment, music and media criticism. (Bauman 1995; Bocoock 1993; Debord 1983; Derrida 1967; Edwards 2000; Featherstone 1995; Giddens 1991; Schulze 1992.)

Constructive and phenomenological concept-making of wellbeing industry is anchored in present and near future time and space in a particular chronotope, we are able to move across time and space by bridging gaps between postmodern and transmodern services and products. In conceptual constructive writing. We have to consider that the changing Finnish strategic business landscapes, linear developments are continuously interrupted, consciously or unconsciously, by non-linear developments, and the best practices are quickly turned into old practices. Instead of ensuring the Finnish THE-industry future, best practices can threaten it by creating obstacles for innovation and renewal. Under these conditions transmodern smart future-making is becoming more critical to wellbeing organizations' success than complex, postmodern mass production thinking. (Aaltonen 2007, 25.)

There are two strands of thought that have underpinned concept-making theory and concept research: cognitive and social-constructionist. The differences between the two approaches are minor and perhaps somewhat semantic. According to the cognitive approach ecologic concept-making draws upon the shared schemata within a social group. These schemata can be called 'cognitive frameworks', 'perception filters' or 'mental models', and through them, and the previous experiences of the concept-maker, the Finnish well-being industry is construed. The constructionist approach places more emphasis upon phenomena and argues that situations are formed within, not only communicated through, mass experiences. New concept-making is seen as a discursive process, where the discourse defines possible selves and their associated actions. The discourse cannot be simply changed by will because the companies and customers both influence it and are influenced by it. The constructionist approach regards concept-making as an ongoing process of negotiation through which the group is formed and structured. (Aaltonen 2007, 25; Watson & Chiappini 1998).

Finnish postmodern wellness tourism and tourist

By postmodern THE-industry, we mean dynamic, nonlinear and partly hypercyclic business environment, the global and national hotel and restaurant chains, shopping centres, congress centres, event centres and experience centres and multi-sensory experience services (Aaltonen 2001; 2007, Heikkinen 2003). Ever since the 1980's (or, for some researchers, the 1950's), the analysis of the consumption habits of consumers in the THE-industry has become more complex as a result of expanding and globalized service supply and demand. Postmodernism shows in the fragmentation and insecurity of the mass market and in the emphasis on the consumers' multiple needs and desires to consume (Cf. Bauman 1993; 2000; Heikkinen 2003; Heikkinen & Kortelampi 2002; Honkanen 2004; Williams 2002, 173-213.) The logic of hospitality service, experience service and wellness service consumption have loosened and regulations have been discarded which can be described as fusing or hybrid consuming (Heikkinen 2015; Inkinen 2002; Karvonen 1999).

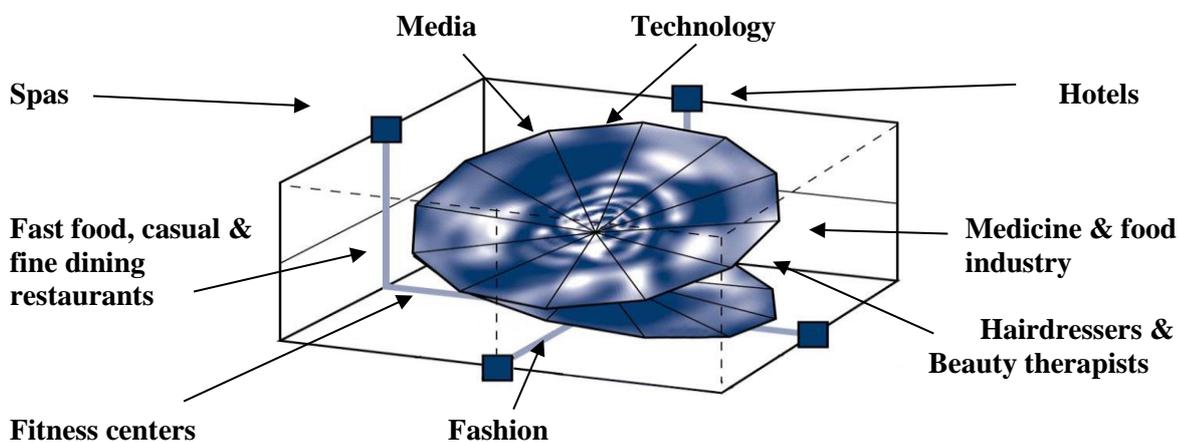
In the Finnish THE-business environment, specially winter and sport resorts are representing typical after modern playfields of hyper-real, anti-hierarchical and context-dependant tourism (Heikkinen 2003, Jameson 1986; Uriely 1996; Urry 1990.) They are supporting the consumers' searching of experiences, wellness, individuality and other people. The wellness companies (including spas, stadiums, sports halls, fitness centres, beauty salons, plastic surgeries) are living and polyphonic miniature of the whole phenomena of postmodernism. Their success is based on growing consumption of wellness lust. This means that the traveler not just buy and enjoy the experiences and wellness services and products but loves her/his lust. The experience lust and wellness lust generates the wellness tourist to have more lust!

The postmodern Finnish wellness tourist behaviour may be chameleon-like which means divided and ever-changing mindset. S/He reveals his/her flexibility as a health-oriented consumer when his/her grounds for choosing wellness products and services may be obscure, flimsy and whimsical. The wellness motifs, lifestyle and expectations towards services and products are contextual changing according time and place. This chameleon tourist represents fast-experience and mass consuming with plenty of rational and irrational wellness service and product choices (Sheldon & Bushell 2009; Saari 2015; Smith & Puczkó 2009; Suontausta & Tyni 2005; Tuohino & Kangas 2009). There may be polarised elements in the health behaviour that manifest himself/herself in a "both-and" attitude, nonchalance, straight or an unconditional attitude (Bauman 1993; 2000). A situation-bound wellness tourist can embody conviction and carelessness, presence and otherness. S/He is simultaneously selfish, independent, and looking for a sense of security.

The Finnish wellness industry based on mass service production does not offer opportunities for truly individual services either. The wellness customer moves fast in the open, contextual, layered, socio-cultural, economic and technical-rational texture playfield (Heikkinen & Kortelampi 2002; Heikkinen 2003). The blue circle in the figure one demonstrates the situational behaviour of the consumer, who wants to succeed and survive in everyday life and also seek enjoyment, pleasure and experiences from different services offered by the THE-industry. The customer and consumption behaviour depends on the life situation, values, cultural

taste, buying power and different motives (the spiral structure) (Paija & Konu 2011). The spiral structure also aims to show the age complexity, time complexity and choice complexity of customer and consumer behavior (Aaltonen 2007, Partanen 2002). The wellness traveler moves freely in THE-industry from top quality beauty shops, fitness centres, luxury hotels and fine dining restaurants to experience spa and fast food restaurants during her/his journey, as the situation requires or resources allow (Inkinen 2002; Heikkinen 2003). Especially, the entertainment spas are offering more wellness designed services and products for sale (for example bigger rooms, healthy food and beverages, entertainment, clothing, music, medicine) (García-Altés 2005). They are also concentrating on more and more global brands and trademarks and thus limits the choice available to the consumer's. At spas, services designed by combining several technologic and wellness experience services have replaced traditional and classical treatments. (Heikkinen & Kortelampi 2002.) The wellness tourist is also following sport, food and fashion trends and superstars sportive and luxurious lifestyles. The (social) media is influencing the choices of foreign and international super-branded destinations, hotels and spa chains increasingly.

FIGURE 1 The postmodern Finnish wellness industry and playfield of the wellness consumer.



In these hybrid-markets, all global and local sport, beauty, fashion, food and lifestyle brands and products are side by side and on top of each other in a hypercyclical rotation. The concepts of health, wellness and quality have suffered an inflation of sorts in this market. Small companies and consumers have been made into objects of the mass culture, accepting the situation, being even pleased with it.

The growing business problem of Finnish wellness industry is after all that the heavy users of wellness services claim that they have 'experience it all' and nothing that is on display has an impact on them. Still they are restless; they want to see and experience something completely new. The wellness travelers are searching new destinations and experiences and service and product innovations at the same time they should diminish the travelling and wasting because of the climate change (Simpson & al. 2008).

Transmodern wellbeing tourism and selfness tourist

Some glocal THE-companies have started to take seriously the climate change, green economy and groups of the critical ecologic consciousness consumers (for example some young university students, the academic lower middle class, families with children, the elderly). Some Finnish enterprises have understood that the carbon and zero-waste strategies, eco-efficient service production and well-being of all consumers are vital for their business. Sustainability and energy strategy are competitiveness factors not competition edges. Instead of gloomy predictions about the disastrous future and globe, companies wish to send a positive environmental message their operations on carbon, water, energy and waste management. Also, some futures researchers, Jensen (1999) and Aaltonen and Jensen (2012) among others, wish to remove dystopia and

negativity from the air and to work against the effects of the risk society described by Beck (1999) by introducing old strategic tools in a new form, such as Mr. & Mrs. Future. Another similar socio-constructing trend in the times is *transmodernism*, which represents a new rise of human values, meaningful reality and life (Dussel 1978; Vittalo).

Environmentalism, sustainability and ecology are key aspects of the transmodern wellbeing tourism theory; not only does transmodernism embrace environmental protection, yet it also stresses the importance of sharing economy (for example Airbnb business concept, Restaurant day, Cleaning Day and Sauna Day events), building communities and togetherness. It accepts technological change, yet only when its aim is that of improving life or human conditions. Generally transmodernism, or the thoroughly open modern society, seeks to improve people's harmony between nature and human activities. Other prominent aspects of transmodernism are those of democracy and listening to the local people. Transmodernism on addition takes strong stances on common welfare, promoting the emancipation of women and female rights, yet also promoting several traditional moral and socio-cultural values and micro-enterprises values; the importance of the family business is particularly stressed.

The transmodern ideal approach is belief on fundamental changes in the glocal THE-economy. It forces Finnish THE-industry to switch from mass production to a new business strategy known as *flexible specialization*. By flexible specialisation, we mean post-Fordism, ethical, sustainable, technologic and humanistic business culture. In destination's business strategies and master plan strategies it means (g)local hotel and restaurant concepts, micro-resorts and small events, which are offering simple service and product portfolio.

This liquid transmodern THE-cluster is characterized by the following attributes:

- Transparency and flexibility in service production and
- Small-batch and eco-efficient service production
- Specialized eco-products and eco-services
- New information and service technologies
- Hyperconnected consumers
- The feminization of the work force. (Aaltonen 2001; Bauman 2000)

Instead of producing generic multi-services and goods, responsible firms find it more valuable to produce diverse service process targeted at ethical consumers, appealing to their premeditated sense of taste and wellbeing lifestyle. The Finnish transmodern wellbeing traveler appreciates multi-sensitive services, cultural roots and basic values. S/He does not want the role of the king as a fast moving and wasting world traveler. Real wellbeing traveler behaviour manifests itself as deep-ecological choices and local cultural tastes. Even though the concept of transmodern taste leads us to challenging eco-sociological and semiotic questions about ethical and sustainable choices and multi-cultural differences. S/He is not unconditional in his/her requirements but expect transparency, quality and safety from the service and food chain. S/He understand the human factor and mistakes that are present in all services. S/He do not expect perfectly flawless service, but follow the fluctuations of price and quality closely.

In wellbeing sector, the transmodernity is western ecologic-technologic-humanistic me-oriented lifestyle (metaphysical I-hood). At its most ideal, transmodernity should show *eg* in the satisfaction and physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of individuals. Rationality is apparent *eg* in high awareness of own health and nutrition issues. The Finnish mass wellness tourist change selfness traveler. S/He has a strong sociocultural and life scientific basis in his/her customer behaviour. The transmodern selfness consumer is responsible of her/his own health. Instead of postmodern mass wellness tourist the thoroughly modern selfness traveler becomes a modern aesthetic (hyper)local nomad, whose most important goals are sustainable living and human growth. Wellbeing and lifestyle service production and specially consumption become rational and very selective: wants and desires are replaced by premeditated needs, the consumer "calms down", the traveler really slow down, the management and control of one's own life is emphasized (me-management) (Konu & al. 2010; Konu & Laukkanen 2010; Pesonen & Komppula 2010). From sociology of consumption point of view s/he is self-directed and independent, but not selfish. S/He exhibits self-control and self-discipline (me-management). The consumer may exhibit Spartan self-restrained that manifests itself as a certain aesthetic, "peace of mind", slim body and strict eating and drinking habits. S/He can measure own body and optimize own life with biological and technological tools (About biohacking Arina 2015; Nafus & Sherman 2014). The wellbeing of perfect self and loved ones come before anything else.

The quality and ecologic awareness of the Finnish consumer can be seen in the choice of the certified green destinations and hotel and local restaurants. Transmodern customer combines traditional and modern features, but the majority of the motives for choosing services are in line with sustainable development and aesthetic values. Also deep aesthetic and culturohistorical knowledge is an important factor in choosing a travel destination (Cf. Boniface 2001). The transmodern consumer needs to have up-to-date and sufficient information about the destination before making the choice. The (manipulated) comments of social medias, old repertoires of guide books (turns of phrase and descriptions) or general eco-labels and brochures of the destination/hotel do not interest them. They want researched information and total ecologic quality strategies. They want to hear classical or new stories and want to have experts as their tourist guides. S/He prefers to spend time at home and travels near instead of far. Simple being and genuine experiences give them spiritual and metaphysical satisfaction. S/He appreciates the basic products (for example good treatments, good food, clean hotel room) and genuine hospitality services (xenophilia) but also local luxury and premium products. The restaurant customer appreciates traditional and hyperlocal food and prefers to eat in peaceful and stress free surroundings.

In the spas he or she does not seek entertainment and water extremities – so called postmodern, commercial “wettainment” – but instead appreciates for example the slow fitness services, beauty services, relaxing atmosphere of nature, winter and green gardens and saunas (transmodern flow). The environment-oriented selfness tourist aim at a modest, ordinary consumption and life, also in destination. Some abhor the amount of things and events in the market and give themselves to total minimalism.

In Finnish well-being industry, thoroughly modern thinking manifests itself in green strategies. The transmodern company has to be based on a researched and measured sustainability, eco-concepts, eco-efficient and eco-service designed processes and skilled staff (Heikkinen 2015; Sheldon & Park 2009; Simpson & al. 2008). The company aims at improving customer satisfaction/pleasure and a total value-based model. The company is a so called happy organization or a dream organization. The sustainability of a small business in the hotel and restaurant industry is based on *eg* a credible local brand, a convincing green management and the overall environment quality of the operations. (Heikkinen 2002.)

Discussion and conclusion

We Finnish tourism business researchers have acted upon the research, development and economic growth related wishes of TEM (Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy), TEKES (Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation), among others, without being critical of these postmodern marketing and technologic strategies of Finnish THE-economy. At the same time, we have also forgotten something vital. The fast-cycled consumption of THE-services are bringing more and more counterforces. The social travelers are criticising the global culture of experience and material production and are strengthening their position everywhere in the West. The basis for resisting the power of the mass tourism and experience market can be ethical, cultural, political, economic or ecological. The critical consumers are a very heterogeneous but rather well networked group. They are united by *eg* their resistance of postmodern travelization the faceless market, the profits of the huge companies and by the boycotting of environmentally harmful destinations and products.

In Finland, the main paradigms have been digital marketing, the creation of experience services and wellness services, and the development of SME profitability and production capacity, even though the most significant and pertinent societal challenge has been all the while visible: *climate change*. The key problem is that we researchers and The Finnish THE-cluster, among wellness industry, can see it, but we don't believe it! We still believe in the eternal nature of economic growth in tourism, believing that we will find something innovative and major that will radically support competitiveness and the competitive edge of destinations, brands and SME enterprises concerned, although what lies in front of us is a huge mission to reduce carbon dioxide. We must embrace the next radical dimension of mass commercial wellness sector: the transmodern wellbeing industry. The radically green traveler tribes are still marginal in Finland, but in Central Europe they are already an important influence in THE-industry.

We have to analyze the transmodern green consumers who are using the means of the media when wishing to reveal how little the companies actually cares about nature and wastes, about ethical production chains or the sustainability or continuity of life. Due to the requirements of both the EU and the green and sustainable wellbeing tourism industry, we in the service business educational and academic field have to react because the task to develop the ecological competitive edge as well as eco-efficiency of THE-industry will fall to us

in the future. What is at hand is a real mission in seeking to ensure the carbon and waste management of companies and the public sector, as well as the well-being of customers.

The Finnish postmodern wellness tourism strategy and wellness companies are in a critical phase. THE-industry is speculating and counting if they should expand the service portfolio and invest on “hard” basic hospitality infrastructure (restaurant concepts, rooms, cottages/villas, congress centres) or concentrate on “soft” business areas: service, design, people, hospitality or “slow” tourism services as wellbeing and sustainable services (Hall & al. 2008; Harju & al. 2009; Hjalager 2005). There are nature, golf, lake and sport destinations in Finland, which are already making good progress, where the first step is yet to be taken towards transmodern eco-destination, so-called *perfect eco-destinations* (Heikkinen 2015).

At moment, in a national perspective, there is not one “Finnish wellness concept” but a heterogeneous set of wellbeing concepts, which will jeopardize all branding attempts. A common Finnish wellbeing tourism concept has been on the agenda for some time, but the challenges this level of conceptualizing and branding includes must be acknowledged (Björk & al. 2011; Greve 2004; Hjalager & al. 2011; Hjalager & Konu 2011; Konu & al. 2011). The success of a Finland the next strategic steps must focus on:

- a) Green wellbeing tourism strategy
- b) Identity, service packaging of individual wellbeing products and eco-efficient services for transmodern health, nature, city and selfness travelers, and
- c) Service development of eco-destinations and eco-concepts. (Heikkinen 2015; Richie & Crouch 2005)

Wellbeing tourism in Finland will only prosper if a distinctive identity for is created for it. Finnish wellbeing tourism must not be confused with European and Estonian mass wellness tourism, but (eco)branded as a unique form of individual or small-scaled health and nature tourism (Hall & al. 2008). Wellbeing tourism, appealing to body, mind and soul, must be presented as a hand-tailored and premiumized selfness package. Finally, precise eco-position strategy, concept and customer segmentation and open communication seem to be of utmost importance for success.

Our concept analysis and Finnish wellbeing tourism strategy need absolutely deeper and larger international research program. The emergence of ecological disasters and signs of global warming created the concept of ‘sustainable development’ which gave values and a code of conduct for a new kind of ecologically-sensitive development. But if old tourism research paradigms are not enough to prevent the deteriorating trends, will these values be questioned, including the almost universal and national beliefs in continuous and infinite economic THE-industry growth? Will alternative transmodern belief and ecologic innovation systems be created to better fit the realities of the 21st century? (Aaltonen 2007, 95.)

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