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ÁFANGASTAÐURINN AUSTURLAND

DESTINATION EAST ICELAND

REPORT:

Analysis and strategy:
Destination East Iceland
Brand & Design platform
December 2015

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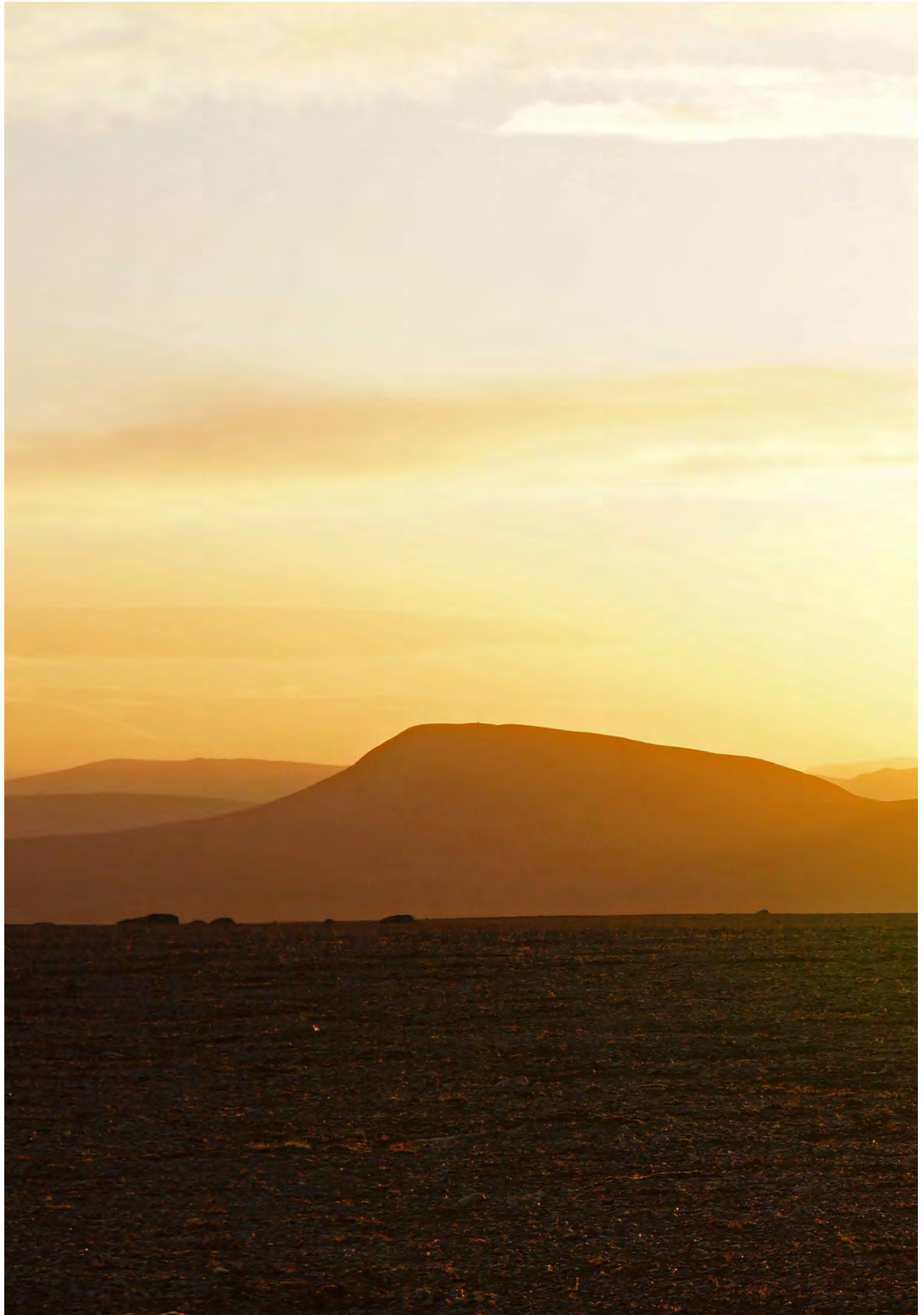
DESTINATION EAST ICELAND

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FOREWORD

Samvinna og samstaða er það sem oft hefur einkennt Austurland, en aldrei eins og nú í verkefninu Áfangastaðurinn Austurland. Slík vinna byrjar með sterkri forystu í samfélaginu okkar og fyrirtækjum og með því að gera okkur grein fyrir styrkleikum, veikleikum, ógnunum og tækifærum og bregðast við þeim.

Með því að standa saman getum við gert Austurland að framúrskarandi stað til að búa á og heimsækja með því að einbeita okkur að sjálfbæru heilbrigðu samfélagi í sífelldri endurskoðun og framþróun.

Við á Austurlandi erum brautryðjendur í þeirri vinnu sem unnin hefur verið í tengslum við Áfangastaðinn Austurland og þegar Ferðamálasamtök Austurlands (FAUST) hóf þetta ferli, settum við okkur háleit langtíamarkmið í tengslum við þetta verkefni og gerðum ráð fyrir að með gífurlegri aukningu ferðamanna inn á svæðið þyrftum við að skýra stefnuna í okkar landshluta.

Við erum komin hálfa leið og hefur þátttakan í verkefninu verið frábær, að því hefur komið fólk úr öllum geirum, frá öllu Austurlandi og ber að þakka alla þá óeigingjörnu vinnu sem fólk hefur sett í þetta verkefni svo það megi verða sem best, sem mest lifandi og fyrirmynd fyrir aðra landshluta að vinna að.

Þannig að þegar þú lest þessa skýrslu, leyfðu sjálfum þér að fara á flug, sjáðu þetta fyrir þér, notaðu þetta, vertu með. Vonandi færðu nýjar hugmyndir eða sjálfstraust til að dusta rykið af gömlum hugmyndum um það hvernig megi þróa núverandi eða nýjar vörur og upplifanir. Mundu að við erum í þessu saman, við fyrir Austurland, Austurland fyrir okkur. Þorum að vera við sjálf.

Nú er komið að því að sagan okkar lifni við, því Austurland hefur svo sannarlega sögu að segja, sem enginn ætti að missa af því að upplifa.

Diana Mjöll Sveinsdóttir,
Formaður stjórnar FAUST



INTRODUCTION

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland was founded from the local and regional needs, and has since the start been based in the communities of East Iceland. The initiative emerged from a strong conviction that destination development should be an involving process, and work in synergy with regional development.

We are many who have much to gain. By implementing a system for collaboration and sharing, Áfangastaðurinn Austurland intends to establish a community movement, and a framework for a continuous creative mindset and development of our destination. A sustainable way for generations to come.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has conducted an extensive research; including studying of the national perspectives of Icelandic Tourism Industry, connecting to regional strategies, community involvement in workshops and seminars, visitor studies, survey, interviews and benchmarking.

It was brought up as objectives in early stages of the project, to build up a Destination Management Organization for Austurland, and to prepare a regional Destination Management Plan. An important step was taken during 2015, when the municipalities agreed on to establish a regional destination platform. The purpose of the platform will be to enable and enhance the cross border collaboration, and to ensure a professional management of the destination of Austurland.

Project Organization

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland was initiated by the regional tourism organization FAUST - Ferðamálasamtök Austurlands. The project is run from the regional business development organization Austurbrú, in close collaboration with the municipalities, authorities, stakeholders and residents.

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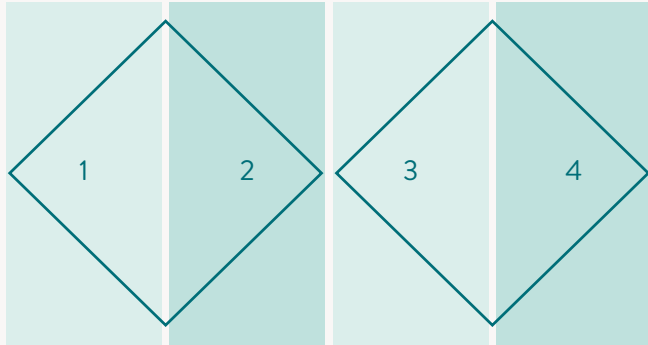
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OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT PLAN

The project plan of Áfangastaðurinn Austurland, follows the steps of a Double Diamond Process.¹ This means that the process passes from points where thinking and possibilities are as broad as possible, to situations where they are deliberately narrowed down and focused on distinct objectives.



Double Diamond Process:

1: Start-Up - Think broad and discover / 2: Analysis & Strategy - Narrow down and define direction / 3: Creation - Ideate and develop concepts / 4: Implementation - Specify and introduce

Project design brief

The original design brief address to the following objectives:

1. Build a Design Strategy:

“The future destination Austurland”. Aims and strategies for developing the destination; the experiences and services, in order to attract visitors and residents to the whole region of East Iceland.

2. Create a Design Program:

Building a “toolbox” from the specific needs regionally and locally, to guide future actions.

3. Apply Design:

Design and develop places and services on the basis of the design strategy and the design program.

The purpose of the initiative is to implement destination design on Austurland, in order to develop the region with focus on the well-being of communities and residents, and to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination.

Important for the initiative is a sustainable approach; considering economic, social and environmental aspects, on basis of heritage of places, and existing and future needs of people.

The cross-border collaboration and intersectoral co-creation is essential. The development process is based in a deep dialogue with all the community. This involves all the municipalities in the region, companies, associations, and people who live and work in Austurland.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland works from a joint development process owned and run by all the stakeholders together. The process is open for participants from all across the community, from young to old, from different disciplines and backgrounds. Áfangastaðurinn Austurland intends to establish a community movement, and a framework for a continuous collaborative development over time.

The initiative adapts to regional strategies and established urban planning within each municipality, and implements the design strategy based on tailored local needs.

The aim is to develop Austurland to a top class destination, and an outstanding work and living area. A municipal and regional storefront that attracts residents, companies and investments.

Additional objectives

During the project, extra layers have been added to the project plan. The process has involved extensive research, collecting necessary data and input, and development of destination development strategies.

The municipalities of Austurland have agreed on establishing a regional destination platform. Áfangastaðurinn Austurland serves as the basis for the platform, aiming to establish a Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO).

Within the work of preparing a regional Destination Management Plan (DMP), Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has a central role. The initiative links closely up to the DMP. Áfangastaðurinn Austurland implies focus on action and tangible sustainable and holistic results, based in a qualitative and community driven planning process.

Project plan

Project plan updated and confirmed November 2015.



START-UP:

SEP 2014 - FEB 2015

- Project plan and brief
- Stakeholder mapping, processing and evaluation
- Start-up seminar and destination design workshop 1
- Processing; analysis and evaluation
- Initiating process



ANALYSIS & STRATEGY:

- NOV / DEC 2015

Build a design strategy

- Research; dialogue, interviews and surveys
- Business intelligence analysis and bench marking
- Destination design seminar and workshop 2
- Evaluating development opportunities
- Develop a design strategy for the region



CREATION:

- MARCH 2016

Create a Design Program

- Evaluate design concepts and visual identity
- Develop design program including toolbox with guidelines
- Evaluation and refining
- Initiating the development of a RDMO



IMPLEMENTATION:

2016 - 2017

Apply Design

- Establish the RDMO and prepare a DMP
- Agree on the DMP
- Introduce design program and toolbox within the communities
- Apply design program on selected touch points; places and services
- Define marketing- and communication channels
- Implement destination design program and spread knowledge



METHOD

Destination development can be complex, focusing on cultural, economical, environmental and social aspects. Within the initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland, the tools and methods being used are based in destination design. This implies an attitude, and a mindset, caring deeply about heritage of places, and meeting existing and future needs of our destination with a sustainable approach.

The destination design process helps us to bring shared understanding and to create shared visions. Everyone is invited to take part in the process. We need to involve the whole range of user groups; the stakeholders, inhabitants and visitors of the destination.

By jointly defining the guidelines from the values, a destination platform is created based on the common visions of the stakeholders. Everyone should feel that there is a democratic basis of the destination, since everyone is part of it, act as ambassadors and mediators of the destination's story. The visions must also be based on a common understanding of the preconditions and opportunities for development.

The first step of the destination design process focuses on understanding. There is a lot to take into account; everything from regional perspectives, market research, brand strategies, positioning, heritage, local needs and visitors' experiences. Based on all the input, aiming to include all the needs, a destination design strategy is developed. It sets the foundation for developing destination design program. A design program and a toolbox with guidelines are being produced, explaining how the destination can be strengthened through specified actions.

The destination design process communicates and interacts with residents and visitors, and serves as a basis for initiating, or further develop the refinement of products, places and services.

Destination design can be explained as the process of creating and telling a good story. In order to create an attractive story about our destination, and bringing it to life, we need to make it together. We are all actors in the story.

DESTINATION DESIGN : TELLING A GOOD STORY

This is how a destination design process may be explained:

1. UNDERSTANDING : PREPARING THE STORY
2. CREATE : BUILD UP THE STORY
3. IMPLEMENT : TELL THE STORY
4. BRING TO LIFE : THE STORY LIVES



RESEARCH

In order to evaluate the destination development opportunities for Austurland, an extensive research study has been conducted. A portion of it is reported here.

Participants from all over the region have been able to partake in preparing of the destination design strategy. Through seminars and workshops, and an open communication of the project during its progress, opinions from visitors and residents have been collected, and preconditions have been analyzed in relation to regional and national objectives and strategies.

Stakeholder mapping

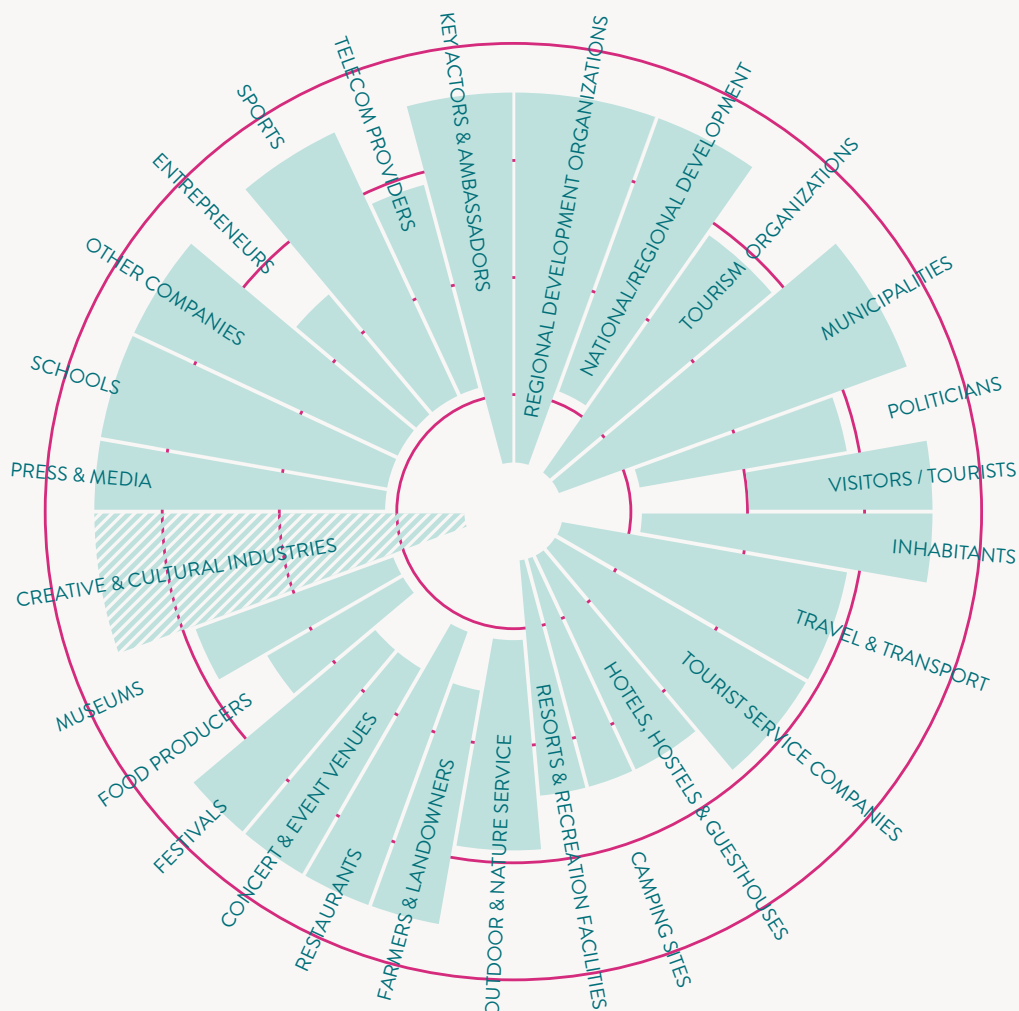
A stakeholder mapping provided a picture of, and the relations between, the various actors connected to the destination.

As one of the most important groups, creative and cultural industries were marked. Indicated to be contributing to employment, driving development, and for bringing places to life and attracting visitors.

Pointed out as key stakeholders and central players were organizations within tourism, authorities and functions for travel and transport, tourist service companies, hotels and guesthouses, camping sites, resorts and recreation facilities.

Other stakeholders identified to be of general importance were regional development organizations, municipalities and authorities. Many individuals were also pointed out to have a central role. People who are engaged in the society, acting as influential ambassadors or able to contribute with energy, knowledge and experience.

Stakeholder map describing the actors roles as central players, key stakeholders, primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders.



Start-up seminar and workshop

A Start-up seminar and workshop was held during the first step of the project.

The outcome from the workshop indicated the best memories for visitors to Austurland, to be the contact with people and nature-based experiences.

From the inhabitant perspective many live in close relations to the nature, they appreciate time together with the family and have strong bonds to East Iceland. Job opportunities and the feeling of being welcomed into the community were pointed out as important aspects for new residents.

Accessibility to the destination, transport, infrastructure and service, were some of the areas analyzed to be in need of more attention. Also to define vision statements for the destination of Austurland, and to develop the all-year round tourism were highlighted.

Other topics brought up were enhanced cooperation between municipalities, need for better service along the roads, development of local products, activities and entertainment.

START-UP SEMINAR & WORKSHOP



10 Questions Destination Survey

A survey was conducted to map the opinions about Austurland among residents and visitors. The survey was active during one month and collected around 900 responses.

The survey was the first of its kind in the region, aiming to get input for developing the destination with focus on attractiveness, and well-being of communities and residents.

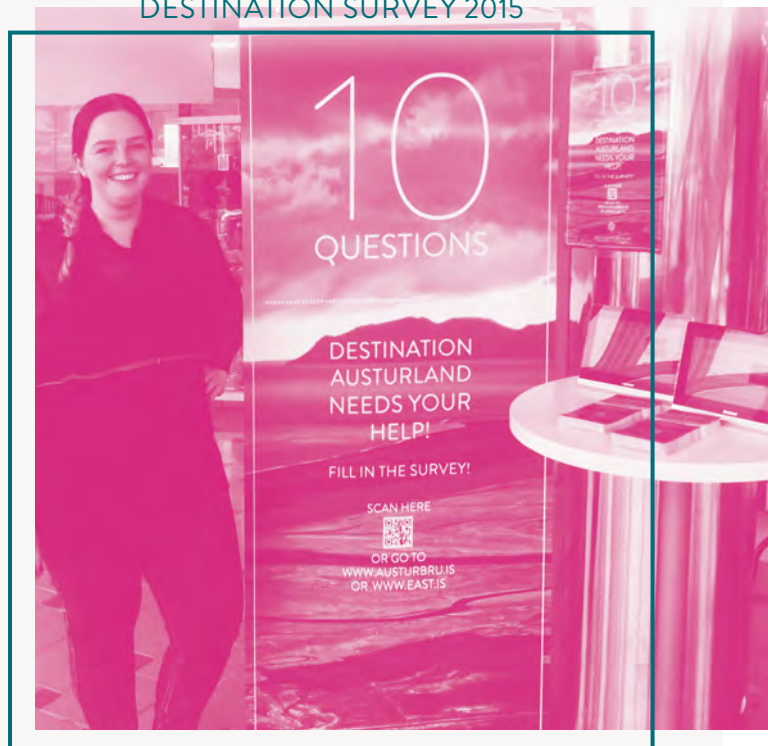
Most of the responses were collected from residents. The answers from visitors mainly came from Icelanders, Europeans and North Americans.

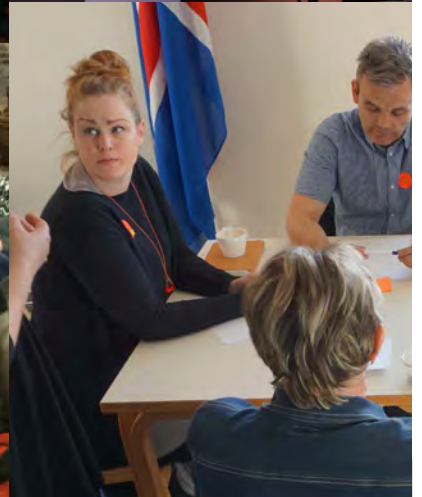
Both visitors and residents highlighted nature, wildlife and outdoor activities as the best experiences of Austurland. Among visitors, the words to describe Austurland were beautiful nature, tranquil, wonderful and hospitable. The residents mentioned various places, nature, summer weather, hiking, events, family, tranquility and beauty.

Many places were mentioned, both from visitors and residents. Notable was that no one place stood out. A lot of different places all over Austurland were mentioned as attractive.

Indicated as areas in need of more attention were transportation, service and capacity during ferry days. Also, residents mentioned: infrastructure, maintenance of public areas, opportunities for further studies and conditions for welfare and daily life.

DESTINATION SURVEY 2015





Strategy seminar and workshop

A strategy seminar and workshop invited everyone to get involved into the regional destination development. A lot of people contributed during the day. Special guests were invited to share their expertise within Icelandic tourism, marketing perspectives, creative entrepreneurship, destination development, professional brand development and design.

The workshop provided input to the development of the destination identity platform. Seven groups were brainstorming about the vision, the purpose, the promises, the position, the values and the lasting impressions and memories.

An open call was made, encouraging everyone to partake in further steps of the project. People were given the option to sign up to different focus areas; such as environment, architecture, service and hospitality, outdoor experiences, activities, transport, food, products or other.

Input and feedback

All through the project, various stakeholders have been introduced to the process. Input has been collected from visiting places of interest, and insights about regional tourism industries and other sectors. An extensive study of the content of Austurland has been done, including inventories of activities, environments, places, buildings, products, materials, culture, design, marketing material, information, online attendance, nature, attractions, food, history, maps, signage and people.

The municipalities of Austurland have continuously received information, and had update meetings discussing strategies and sectoral targets, and the Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative has furthermore been communicated to SSA, Íslandsstofa and SAF*.

Prioritize focus areas to highlight, define how the Destination Austurland identity can be experienced in connected products, services and places, and then develop.



* SSA (Samband sveitarfélaga á Austurlandi) / Íslandsstofa (Promote Iceland)
/ SAF (Samtaka ferðaþjónustunnar - The Icelandic Travel Industry Association)



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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The business intelligence analysis has collected knowledge about the tourism sector and regional development, aiming to provide a picture of the opportunities and challenges.

Growth of tourism

Increase of tourism globally

The tourism industry has developed, and travelling has become more accessible on a global market.

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. The number of travelers worldwide has increased enormously, and there is no sign that it will stagnate, quite the contrary.²

Since 1950 the number of international tourist arrivals has increased from 25 million to over 1.1 billion in 2014. That is a growth by 4532%.

International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to continue to increase to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 and 1.8 billion by the year 2030.

Increase of tourism to Iceland

The number of foreign tourists to Iceland has more than tripled since 2000.³ That is significantly faster than world tourism growth over two decades.⁴

Europe is the most visited region in the world, attracting half of all international arrivals. In 2014 the international tourist arrivals to Europe were up 3%. At the same time, Iceland reported a growth of 24%; the fourth consecutive year of double-digit growth, reaching close on 1 million arrivals.⁵

Iceland has had an average year-on-year increase of 22% in the number of foreign tourists over the past five years, a growth rate that is five times greater than in the rest of the world. The Road Map for Tourism, published by Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation together with SAF, refers the development to increased international media coverage, increased supply of flights and exchange rate developments, combined with effective marketing and other interrelated factors.⁶

At the projected rate of growth, international tourist arrivals to Iceland have been estimated to reach more than 2 million by 2030.⁷ The latest figures from Ferðamálastofa* however, show a growth of 30 % for 2015. If the annual growth rate will be the same for the next couple of years, the number of visitors to Iceland will reach 2 million already in 2017.

Growth of Icelandic tourism sector

The growth of the tourist sector and its development, entail great opportunities for the community to increase prosperity and positive regional development. Tourism has played a major role in Iceland's economic growth in recent years and at the same time created thousands of new jobs.⁸

Since 2010, the number of those working in tourism-related industries has increased by 37.6%. The total number of individuals working in tourism-related industries was 21,600 in 2014. Tourism's share of foreign exchange earnings has grown from 18.8% to 27.9% between 2010 and 2014.⁹

It is estimated that foreign exchange earnings of the industry as a whole will increase significantly; a rise from 350 billion in 2015 to more than 620 billion in 2020 and probably over 1,000 billion 2030. These are very large sums given that the estimated total foreign exchange earnings of the population in 2015 will be about 1,140 billion million.¹⁰

Challenges from Growth of Tourism

The report Northern Sights from 2013 investigates the future of Icelandic tourism. While increasing tourism will bring significant benefits, the report also emphasizes significant challenges for the country.¹¹

Conserving nature, engaging visitors to spend more during their stay, reducing the seasonality of tourism, and spreading visitors further around the country are examples of those challenges.

The future vision for Icelandic tourism should be to maximize tourism's contribution to the whole of Iceland with managed and sustainable growth of visitors inspired by Iceland's distinctive nature, unique culture and warm-hearted welcome.

Market knowledge

Visitors to Iceland

Tourism in Iceland has been highly seasonal, with around half of all visitors arriving in just three months of the year (June-August).¹²

Over the past three years, the increase in the number of tourists has been proportionately greater in winter than in spring, summer and fall. The difference is mostly in the capital area and less in the countryside.¹³

The figures for Tourism in Iceland 2015 show that travelers from Central and South Europe were prominent during the summer months, while travelers from the Nordic countries, North America and from countries categorized as "elsewhere" were distributed evenly over the year. Travelers from the UK were the exception, as around half of these visitors came during the winter months.

The annual increase in tourism in Iceland is expected to continue to exceed global trends, due to, among other things, a growing enthusiasm for winter, outdoor and adventure tourism and a thriving interest in Iceland in general.¹⁴

Target audience segments

The report Northern Sights suggests defining tourist segments for Iceland. A managed and sustainable approach should be achieved by targeting a set of tourist segments which are attractive to Iceland because of their size and spend patterns, the seasons they travel in, and the regions they might travel to, and for whom Iceland has a strong intrinsic appeal.¹⁵

The report highlights five target visitor segments for Iceland in the next ten years:

- *Older Relaxers*
- *Affluent Adventurers*
- *Emerging Market Explorers*
- *City Breakers*
- *MICE (Meetings, incentives, conferencing, exhibitions)*

Growing target segments at the expense of non-target segments increases both average stay length and spend.¹⁶

The marketing guidelines of Íslandsstofa describe the "Enlightened tourist".¹⁷

Knowledge about Visitors

Some findings from the Icelandic Tourist Board Survey:¹⁸

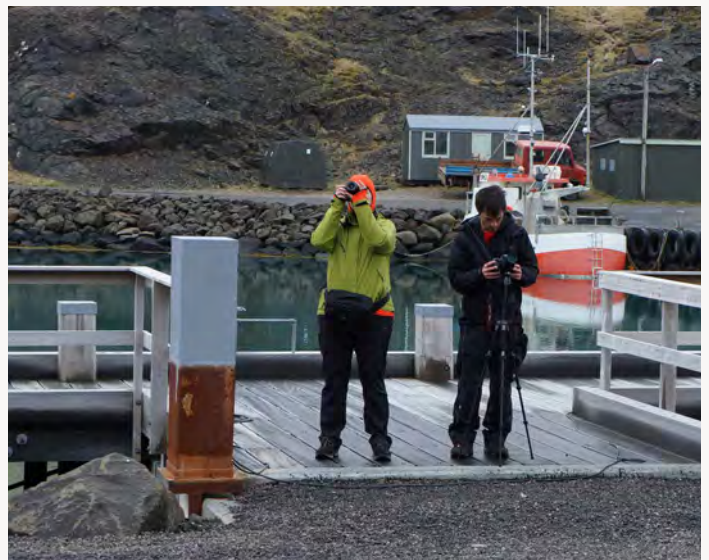
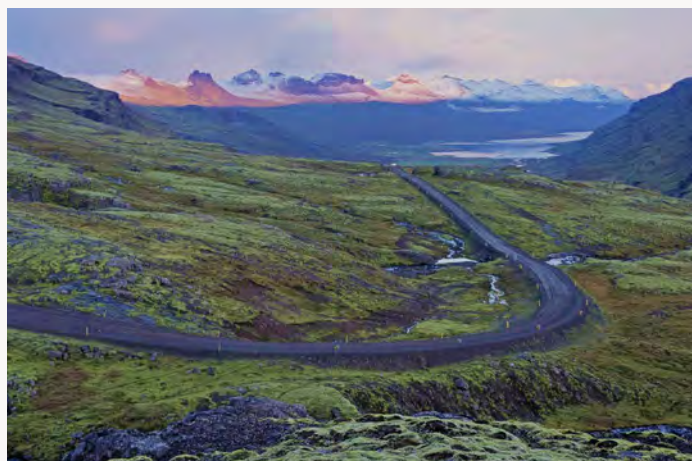
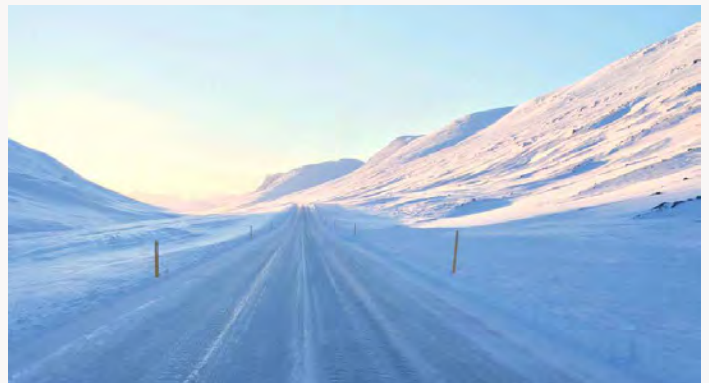
- Iceland attracts mostly prosperous individuals who are well employed and are interested in nature.
- A trip to Iceland can involve a long decision-making process, but most book their trip with short notice.
- Most get the idea of travelling to Iceland from a general interest in nature and the country and from friends and relatives.
- The Internet is by far the most useful information source for foreign tourists.
- While nature is the main pull factor to Iceland, Icelandic culture seems to be gaining ground.
- When choosing a tour operator, having quality certification is a very important factor.
- The vast majority of visitors to Iceland are on holiday.
- More come on package holidays in the winter than in the summer.
- Traveler's stays during winter are more commonly in the southwest of Iceland. In the summer, however, more than half of guest nights are spent outside of the Capital Region and Reykjanes peninsula.
- Foreign travelers use nature-related recreation activities extensively and rate such activities highly.
- The south of Iceland is the area outside the south-west corner that most travelers visit.
- The vast majority of trips to Iceland meet expectations, and many intend to visit Iceland again.

The Icelandic nature has a major impact on visitors' decisions to come to Iceland. Many also mention Icelandic culture, history and reasonable deals.

Besides nature, visitors think that Iceland's strengths as a tourist destination are its people, hospitality and the diversity of activities on offer.

Some possible improvements that visitors mention:¹⁹

- Service orientation and hospitality
 - Professionalism
 - Accommodation quality
 - Tour pricing
 - Back-up plans if the weather fails
 - Introduction to Icelandic cuisine
 - Hotel architecture – some clash with their environment
 - Offer recreational packages
 - Better guidance and information provision on tours
 - Roads and public transport around Iceland
 - Avoid mass tourism / limit access
 - Provide better information on where to find the main tourist attractions
- Provide more information on Icelandic culture and history
 - Safety at tourism locations
 - Change Iceland's image as an expensive destination
 - State prices in foreign currencies
 - Weather forecast and signs in English
 - Public lavatories
 - Make it easier to exchange foreign currency into Icelandic króna
 - Hiking trails
 - Advertise the country more



Regional development

The Strategy for Austurland 2015-2019 defines the objectives and the action plan for the regional development.²⁰

Following visions has been set up for the future Austurland:

- Innovations, entrepreneurs and existing companies should be supported.
- Austurland will have a vigorous and diverse culture life, that enriches people's life quality.
- Education level in Austurland will be comparable to other regions, and educational offerings and services will increased. Active cooperation between education, culture and innovation that strengthens entrepreneurship and creative industries.
- Austurland is an interesting option for young people to live and work.
- The quality of life has been further reinforced.
- We are taking care of our children and young people, and ensure that they have good memories from their childhood in their town.
- Transportation will be better between towns, within the region, and to the region by air, road and boat.
- Growth, innovation, quality and cooperation will be characteristic elements of the cultural sectors in the region.
- Regional cultural centers will be developed and strengthened.
- Art education of children and youth will be strengthened as part of both formal and non-formal education.
- There will be more artists active in the region.
- Art and design will be regional core values. Building on economic and cultural policies.
- Austurland will be known as a tourist destination with a strong infrastructure and quality of service closely connected to human life, nature, culture and products of the region.
- It will be important to use resources locally. Quality conscious, knowledge in sustainability, environmental awareness and service are key factors for supporting the community development.
- We will work with innovation centers in the region to in order to increase effectiveness and promote progress.
- The marketing will be strong, and tell about the many available opportunities in Austurland
- Research will be increased on diverse fields.





BENCH MARKING

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The bench marking focus on collecting input and investigating possible development opportunities for Austurland. It provides knowledge and inspiration for the destination development strategy.

Trends in Tourism

The future of tourism depends on changes in our surrounding world. Some of the changes are ongoing, while some will affect us further ahead.

One of the change drivers is obviously the global growth of tourism. The global aspect is also connected to the travel behaviors. People are travelling longer distances. It has become possible through easier access and cheaper airfares. This opens up for more visitors from new emerging markets, and results in increased competition from new destinations in addition to the traditional ones.

Since travelling has become more accessible and people have more choices, consumers can also be savvier. The modern traveler is constantly connected, able to find information on the Internet, and even plan and book online. The expectations on the travel can be more pre-determined, with less room for hassle. The travelers of today are oftendiscerning and well informed, and request personalized, authentic experiences.

The Future of Hosting

In order to enhance our knowledge about, and understanding of, the future visitor's behaviors and needs, we must look into what trends and external factors that will have affect on short, and long terms.

So, how would the future of hosting be organized?

Future hosting is challenged to think in new ways when it comes to markets and target groups. Segmentation can no longer uppermost be done by geographical boundaries, but more from temporary needs and desires.

As "homozappiens" we have developed into changing our behavior between different roles and contexts. What the consumer pays for depends on the kind of trip and travel companions. We need to be able to customize, and specialize, and at the same time be flexible.

More of the hosting will be digitalized and automated, especially the classic tourist information.

The personal hosting becomes hyper-localized. The locals, other guests and also earlier guests will become more important as hosts. Visitors will have less direct contact with people acting as hosts in official meaning. Instead, everyone on the destination, or online, will act as hosts.

When one part of the hosting has been digitalized, and the other has been decentralized, one important piece remains. The professional experience coaching. Highly skilled tourist information officers already do it, but can get more time for it, if administrative assignments were better streamlined.



TEN TRENDS AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF HOSTING:

1. INTERNATIONALIZATION AND MARKET CHANGES TOURISM
2. TECHNOLOGY IS INCREASINGLY INTEGRATED IN OUR LIVES
3. DIGITALIZATION OF EXPERIENCES AND SERVICES INCREASES
4. PROFUSION OF INFORMATION IS CONSTANTLY
5. BIG DATA IS COLLECTED AND ANALYZED IN GREATER RANGE
6. AUTOMATION SPREADS FAR AND WIDE
7. TIME AND ENERGY IS THE FUTURE SHORTAGE PRODUCTS
8. EXPERIENCES BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN STUFF
9. EXPERIENCES AND SERVICES ARE GENERATED PEER-TO-PEER
10. HOMOZAPPIENS REQUIRE A FLEXIBLE HOSPITALITY



Destination organisation and management

In order to build a long term, sustainable and profitable growth from tourism, destinations have to be managed. This requires a collaborative platform to work from, preferably connecting to stakeholders from all across the community. Involving interests from the municipalities, authorities, private sector, residents and other functions.

Destination management is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contributes to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.²²

Destination management includes the planning, development and marketing of a destination as well as how it is managed physically, financially and operationally.

Destinations have to ask themselves if they are marketed by advertising or by the real product. To keep being real, depends on the management.

DMO

A Destination Management Organization (DMO) can vary in form, function, governance and size but essentially take a lead role in the management and development of tourism in a destination. These may be a single organization, such as a local authority; an informal partnership or a legal entity, such as a community interest company, that includes representation from both the private and public sectors.²³

DMO can sometimes be referred to as a Destination Marketing Organization. But since the responsibilities extend far beyond the traditional role of promotion, sales and advertising, a Destination Management Organization that fully embraces the role is more up to date.

DMOs today should not only lead on marketing, but must also be strategic leaders in destination development. This role requires them to drive and coordinate destination management activities within the framework of a

coherent strategy. Promotion must attract people to visit in the first place; creating a suitable environment and quality delivery on the ground will ensure that visitors' expectations are met at the destination and that they then both recommend the destination to others and return themselves on a future occasion.²⁴

Many destinations have Destination Management Organizations to lead the way. Strong destinations in England, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada and Sweden are no exceptions.

Destination British Columbia is organized in Regional DMOs. The regions submit annual marketing plans and mid-year market reviews, and reporting and tracking of development projects. The generic destination sell is continuously measured and followed up on. Community Tourism Foundations (CTF) Programs assist the communities in creating strategic tourism development and marketing plans. The CTFs are professionally led and community-driven, and focus on going from planning to implementation.²⁵

The DMO Swedish Lapland is responsible for managing the destination of northern Sweden. It is an organizational collaboration between regional public and private actors, both operationally and strategically. The joint efforts, which are based on publicly based funding, maximizes the opportunities for direct effects on growth, new jobs and companies, and ensure a long-term and sustainable regional development.²⁶

The industry interacts from the destination brand Swedish Lapland as the common communication platform, and spreads knowledge about the destination together with their own brand, the brand of Sweden and local place brands with an increasing international recognition and attraction.

Swedish Lapland also has a co-financing model for marketing and communication.

DMP

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources.²⁷

If there is an existing DMO, or equivalent group of stakeholders, it should be responsible for leading the development of the DMP.

Destination Management Plans should cover all the fundamental aspects of destination management, including:

- Tourism performance and impacts
- Working structures and communication
- Overall appeal and appearance, access, infrastructure and visitor services
- Destination image, branding and promotion (marketing)
- Product mix – development needs and opportunities.

Separate DMPs could be prepared at all levels, where destinations were felt to need and merit one. However, it is important that they should relate strongly to each other across the levels. Alternatively, a single DMP could have elements within it that address smaller nested destinations.

When setting up a DMP the following questions should be asked:

- *Agreeing to plan together*
 - *Why do this and who to involve?*
- *Gathering the evidence*
 - *How well are we doing now?*
- *Setting the direction*
 - *Where do we want to get to?*
- *Identifying the action*
 - *What do we need to do to get there?*
- *Measuring progress and keeping it going*
 - *Have we got there yet?*

Experiences

The main competitive advantage of destinations is to create value and meaning through storytelling, service and memorable experiences. Destination design is an efficient method in order to analyze, test and develop the desired customer experiences through all touch points. The customer journey is central; before, during and after the visit. Map, analyze and develop the whole experience.

Increasing expectations from international guests require higher standard on packaging, and to make experiences accessible.

The national strategy for Tourism Scotland 2020 aims to provide a consistently high quality of visitor experience at all points along the customer journey.²⁸

The value for the customer, and for the supplier, increases with a developed and diversified experience. The product will bring a greater value and price, with the degree of refinement and packaging of the experience.²⁹

Experiences incorporate commodities, goods and services and use these as elements in developing tourism offers that are designed to create lasting memories. Not all businesses deliver experiences, but they represent a choice for tourism businesses to move up the ladder of economic opportunity, differentiate their businesses and provide a new level of visitor experience to their guests.³⁰

Developing experiences starts with knowing more about our visitors. The more detailed customer information we got, the deeper will our understanding be of our visitors' travel values, social values and travel behaviors. This information becomes useful when designing experiences, and developing products and packages.

The performance of a destination is measured from KPIs (Key Performance Values) as visitor volumes, expenditure and capacity. It is also important to monitor the overall visitor satisfaction and experiences. For this purpose the tool Net Promoter Score (NPS) is commonly used.



Food

Food is an important ingredient of the experience. Food connects all of us. Everyone must eat.

Food Tourism is to promote restaurants, ingredients, local cuisine, cooking and events as sellable products. Food experiences attract people to a place, in the same way as cultural, recreational, historical or geographical elements.³¹

The Norwegian project, Taste of National Tourist Routes, is a good example of how design and gastronomy together have created innovative tourism experiences that strengthen the attractiveness of rural areas.

The aim was to contribute to the overall experience around the tourist attraction National Tourist Routes. To provide travelers with a variety of flavors, food and beverage by using Norwegian raw ingredients. To represent a high level of hospitality, and to offer experiences that appeals to all senses. To provide an overall experience of the food in its context, and to serve food that is genuine for the location and has a history. The connection to the cultural landscape and the hosting are of central importance. Common basic values with attention to the raw ingredients, quality and history, inspired by the food manifest of New Nordic Kitchen.

Tourist routes

The National Tourist Routes has become a very successful example, attracting visitors to Norway from all over the world. The concept has been developed around the unique experience of driving through the Norwegian nature, with close contact to mountains, rivers, fjords and coastline.³²

In addition to food, the tourist experience has been strengthened from adding art and architectural resting points on beautiful spots along the road, and by adding storytelling and information about the cultural heritage and landscape.

The National Tourist Routes in Norway have received many awards and distinctions, which has contributed to attracting visitors.

Tourist routes are an international recognized concept, easy for tourists to understand and relate to. There is also proof of that tourist routes contribute positively to regional business development in rural areas.

In the United States, the national program Scenic Routes aims to contribute to the economic development in local communities, and to preserve and strengthen the scenic, cultural and historical resources around the tourist routes.

The Wild Atlantic Way has been developed on the west coast of Ireland. It is a tourist route divided into five sections. The concept has been designed as an independent brand with its own identity, packaging and marketing. The focus is on nature experiences, but also on a range of quality secured attractions, food, local culture and other experiences along the way.

The project has been inspired from Norway. Through combination of packaging, branding and destination development, and by highlighting both route and around experiences, a very attractive, marketable and accessible tourism product has been produced.

Place innovation

Northern Sweden has managed to turn the sparse geographic structure and the cold climate into something positive that attracts visitors and investors. Between 2011-2014, all the municipalities in the region jointly participated in a destination design project. The project combined history, culture and nature with design and architecture. The aim was to increase the attractiveness through working with the physical environment, the content and develop the way the destinations promote themselves.

As a continuation, the municipalities now collaborate in a project focusing on place innovation in Swedish Lapland. The project aims to explore how places can be developed through an innovative interplay between the physical form, content and marketing, with the purpose to create new products and services within the tourism industry.

Examples on place innovations are the Icehotel, the Treehotel, Forest hotel, Aurora Safari Camp, Aurora Sky Station, Nutti Sámi Siida, Ice Music, Arctic Bath and Naturum Laponia.

Sustainable Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.³³

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, and has a considerable role to play in delivering sustainable development in many countries. At the same time it must be well managed so that it benefits local communities and the natural and cultural environments upon which it depends.

Sustainable tourism should not be regarded as a separate component of tourism, as a set of niche products, but rather as a condition of the tourism sector as a whole, which should work to become more sustainable.

In order to ensure that the principles of sustainable tourism development will be followed, the goals and strategy of Wild Atlantic Way are organized under the headings of the VICE model, which is an acronym for Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment.³⁴

Building a sustainable tourism is not a strategy for growth at any cost. So says the national strategy for Tourism Scotland 2020. The ambition is a strategy for sustainable growth, and to proactively seek out more efficient practices that benefit business, communities and environment alike.³⁵

The Tourism Strategy for New Zealand emphasizes on the connections with other strategies and initiatives. Since the tourism sector is so intimately woven into New Zealand's economy and across New the communities, there is a need for a nationwide commitment to sustainability.³⁶

The concept of CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility has become a central part of corporate strategies for tourism business. Environmental protection, fair working conditions for employees and contributing to the welfare of local communities are key issues in the strategies of international tourism corporations.³⁷

Tourism businesses have strong relationships to the local communities in which they are operating; therefore, they also have a strong influence on the socio-economic development of these regions.

For customers as well as for employees, the integration of CSR strategies is becoming more and more important. To operate successfully in the future it will be necessary for tourism businesses to continuously implement and successfully establish CSR strategies in the long term.

Community Benefit

An extensive American study investigated the reasons for community attachment. Community attachment is an emotional connection to a place that transcends satisfaction, loyalty, and even passion. A community's most attached residents have strong pride in it, a positive outlook on the community's future, and a sense that it is the perfect place for them. They are less likely to want to leave than residents without this emotional connection. They feel a bond to their community that is stronger than just being happy about where they live.³⁸

When examining each factor in the study and its relationship to attachment, the same items rise to the top, year after year. Most important were the social offerings; places for people to meet each other, and the feeling that people in the community care about each other. Another central aspect was the openness, and how welcoming the community is to different types of people. Also the aesthetics and the physical beauty of the community.

The life quality of residents in a destination, and for the wider local economy, can be affected positively in many ways from growth of tourism. By strengthening the visitor economy, services enjoyed by local people, such as restaurants, attractions, arts and entertainment will benefit. Looked at the other way, actions directly aimed at making somewhere a better place to live and work will also make it a more appealing place to visit.³⁹

Strengthening and promoting the image and awareness of a destination and the services available can be highly important in attracting new business and investment across all sectors. Tourism has demonstrated its ability to stimulate growth in jobs and is a relatively accessible sector in which to start a new business. The health of tourism related businesses can be very important to other parts of the local economy who supply them, such as food producers, maintenance services and others.



DESTINATION DESIGN STRATEGY

The Áfangastaðurinn Austurland design strategy is a result from a comprehensive process through united efforts from the community.

However, in order to achieve our goals for development, and to establish a long term and sustainable strategy for the destination, it will require our collective actions. The destination design strategy needs approval, involvement and engagement from all of us.

National perspective

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland is fully supporting the seven focal points for 2015-2020, set in the Road Map for Tourism in Iceland.⁴⁰

That is to build up a firm foundation for destination management emphasizing on the following objectives:

- a better *coordinated management* of tourism with a holistic approach
- enhance *positive visitor experiences* from hospitality, quality, service and more
- provide more *reliable data* from intensified research of the tourist sector
- ensure an efficient *nature conservation* in synergy with tourism
- enhance *skills and quality awareness* within the tourism industry
- increase *profitability* from tourism based on realistic targets
- increase *distribution of tourists* season-wise and geographically

The road map also prioritizes in the work plan for 2016-2017, to make Destination Management Plans (DMPs) for every region in the country. This is in line with the Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative.

Regional perspective

In the regional strategy for Austurland 2015-2019, the vision for the region is to be an exemplary society with a robust and diverse economy and cultural sector. A community, built on a strong welfare and characterized by solidarity, trust and a strong network within and outside the region. It is good to live in the East, and people experience a balance between professional and personal life.⁴¹

The vision describes Austurland to be a known tourist destination that has a strong infrastructure and quality of service closely connected to human life, nature, culture and products of the region.

This is in line with the Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative, focusing on well-being of communities and residents and developing the region to attract visitors, residents, companies and investments.

Three levels

The strategy for the destination design of Austurland is divided into three levels:

1. Design Strategy

The Design Strategy is based in the brand platform for the destination of Austurland. This is further connected to all the experiences that are packaged and offered within the destination, on the basis of defined attributes of Austurland brand.

2. Design Program and Toolbox

The Design Program consists of guidelines specifically developed for Austurland, to be helpful when developing and implementing the contents of the destination. The Design Program is also connected to a toolbox, or a set

of tools, to be spread to all actors of the destination. The toolbox contains everything from graphic guidelines to photography principles, and manifests for services and experiences. Special focus areas to prioritize for Austurland, have been pointed out when conceptualizing products, activities and places.

3. Implementation

The implementation of the design strategy and design program is closely connected to the destination development plan. Before going to action, the development opportunities of specific places, products and activities must be evaluated. Then the development is being planned from what is possible to accomplish in short terms and in longer terms, and ultimately formally agreed on and put into a time frame.

The three levels of Austurland Destination Design



Brand platform

The destination design strategy is based upon the experiences of Austurland. The experiences of the destination depend on all the touch points that occur during the journey of it. The purpose of the destination design is to define how we want the destination to be experienced, and to develop the touch points in order to achieve it.

Touch points are situations; services, places and environments that affect the user experience in a good or a bad way during the journey, and are remembered over time. We must always avoid unwanted experiences, and we must keep up the work to enhance good experiences.

With this kept in mind, the brand of Austurland not only depends on what is seen, it also promises unique experiences, and provides expectations and feelings.

Branding the destination of Austurland is not about marketing a product. It is about communicating experiences. It also serves as a guide for developing experiences, which will bring the brand to life.

The soul of the destination design is defined in the Áfangastaðurinn Austurland Brand Platform. It is developed from a community-based process, with connection to the Icelandic marketing guidelines.



Áfangastaðurinn Austurland Brand Platform

OUR STORY

Austurland is characterized by small villages, dramatic coastlines, narrow fjords, waterfalls and mountains. The nature is always close and the sceneries are breathtaking. The destination offers outstanding outdoor experiences all year around. A great range of some of Europe's best hiking trails, rugged and exciting highlands, the Vatnajökull National Park, scenic routes through overwhelming landscapes and along wild coastlines on the edge to the north Atlantic.

The Austurland lifestyle is relaxed but at the same time very active, with a close connection to the landscape and shifts in nature. Vibrant creative power characterizes the communities and brings people together. The bonds to the proud cultural heritage are strong. There is always a story to tell, and new stories are continuously shaped.

OUR BRAND VISION

Our guiding star! - What we strive for every day

WE ALWAYS AIM FOR AUSTURLAND TO BE A WONDERFUL STORY

Our vision is to create a strong brand that always aims for Austurland to be a wonderful story. We are communicating experiences and emotions connected to our overwhelming wild nature, vibrant creative communities and true authentic lifestyle with a living history. If you have been to Austurland you have experienced a destination full of surprises and inspiration for all senses. You will feel refreshed, renewed and uplifted, and you will forever become a part of Austurland.

OUR MISSION

We are communicating experiences and emotions with a personal approach that inspires and surprises the audience, while working with every visitor, resident and company as a part of the Austurland story.

OUR AUDIENCE

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland aims to develop the destination in order to attract visitors, and to grow the prosperity from tourism. At least as important aim for the initiative is to include regional development; focusing on life quality of the residents, public service, a good business climate and balance overall.

In order to define travelers to Austurland, the audience is segmented from whom we want to attract. The segmentation targets international consumers based on their motivations for travel and how they travel, rather than from their demographic profile.

From defining the target audience, we aim to understand our best customers.

Overarching target audience:

The overarching target audience for Iceland is described as followed:

The “Enlightened tourist” target group:

Between 20 and 65 years old

- Urban profile
- Above average education
- Above average income
- Above average consumption of internet, mobiles and media

People that do not want to follow the herd

- Want to travel independently
- Interest in culture, ideas and lifestyle of other people.

People that want to travel to new and exciting destinations

- Want to go on vacation during winter time
- Are open to new experiences
- Seek new challenges
- Are ready to share their experience with others

Austurland target audience

To better understand who we are talking to, the target audience has been segmented into social profiles specifically for Austurland. This provides us with richer insights on behaviors and preferences, expectations, needs and how to communicate with our audience.

The social profiles are developed on basis of the significant shift in consumer behaviors. We need to be able to customize, and specialize, and at the same time be flexible. The suggested target tourist segments for Iceland has been taken into account, and combined with regional patterns of tourism and daily life. The aim is to focus on developing our destination for sustainable tourism in line with our regional development.*

The value of our destination increase when we are shifting from products to experiences, and we need to understand our best customers who value the experiences we develop.

Selective Explorers

- Passionated about travelling and adventure
- Prefer to go off the beaten track
- Like to be surrounded by different people and environments
- Want to know where the food comes from
- Willing to pay for quality
- Well-informed with a curious mind
- Have a responsible side

Gentle Adventurers

- Want to have the unexpected but reasonable
- Impressed by local food, culture and people
- Request organized freedom; prefer marked trails and not to rush into any nonsense
- Request experience guiding and planning; like to manage things by themselves, but appreciate good service and help to do so
- Collecting stories to tell friends about their trips; very active on social media, posting a lot before, during and after the travel
- Admire nature and people; show respect towards environment and cultural heritage

Active Relaxers

- Love the outdoors, hot tubs and a cold beer
- Like lazy mornings but have nothing against some sweat after that
- Like to watch the volcano but don't need to understand how it works
- A coastal tour with picnic - a perfect day
- Value well organized travel packages that take care of all the details
- Appreciate comfort with good food, good service and good company

Nature Nerds

- Like to watch the mountain and understand how it was created
- Visit the museum for lunch and hike in the afternoon
- Geology is my heart issues - the mountain is not just a mountain!
- Request nature specialist guiding
- Request good planning
- Well prepared and equipped
- Value good information and service



Odd Creatives

- Charging the batteries in the East
- Take a lot of pictures
- Feel inspired
- I am a bohemian - love the rural lifestyle!
- Looking for unique and fulfilling experiences
- Networking with creative people
- Engaged in cultural events
- Well-travelled and urbane



OUR ATTRIBUTES

Values

What we feel, and what is most important to us.

What our brand should stand for over time.

Values that set us apart from other destinations.

- EXCEPTIONAL
- TRUE
- UNITE
- RESPECTFUL
- DIVERSITY
- BALANCE

Personality

How we choose to express ourselves in communications

and how we want the audience to think about our brand

- AUTHENTIC
- HONEST
- WELCOMING
- FASCINATING
- OPEN
- CREATIVE

OUR PROMISES

Rational

What do we have that we can promise the audience?

Specific arguments and selling points.

- OVERWHELMING WILD NATURE
- VIBRANT CREATIVE POWER
- TRUE AUTHENTIC LIFESTYLE

Emotional

Connects to our values and give power and energy to the

brand. Promises for us to strive for, and that

enables us to make decisions and choices. Contributes to differentiation and makes us less copyable.

- FOREVER BECOME A PART OF AUSTURLAND
- FULL OF SURPRISES AND INSPIRATION FOR ALL SENSES
- FEEL REFRESHED, RENEWED AND UPLIFTED

OUR BRAND TRIGGER

What you can expect from a visit to Austurland.

From this one line, that explains it all, we are able to

evaluate all of our touch points. Our products, places, activities and services and how they are experienced.

It is a lens to assess all our communications through.

EAST ICELAND WONDERS

The wonders of Austurland consist of unique places, people, culture, overwhelming nature, northern lights and fog. The wonders are everywhere. We want our visitors to experience the East Iceland Wonders, in every single detail.

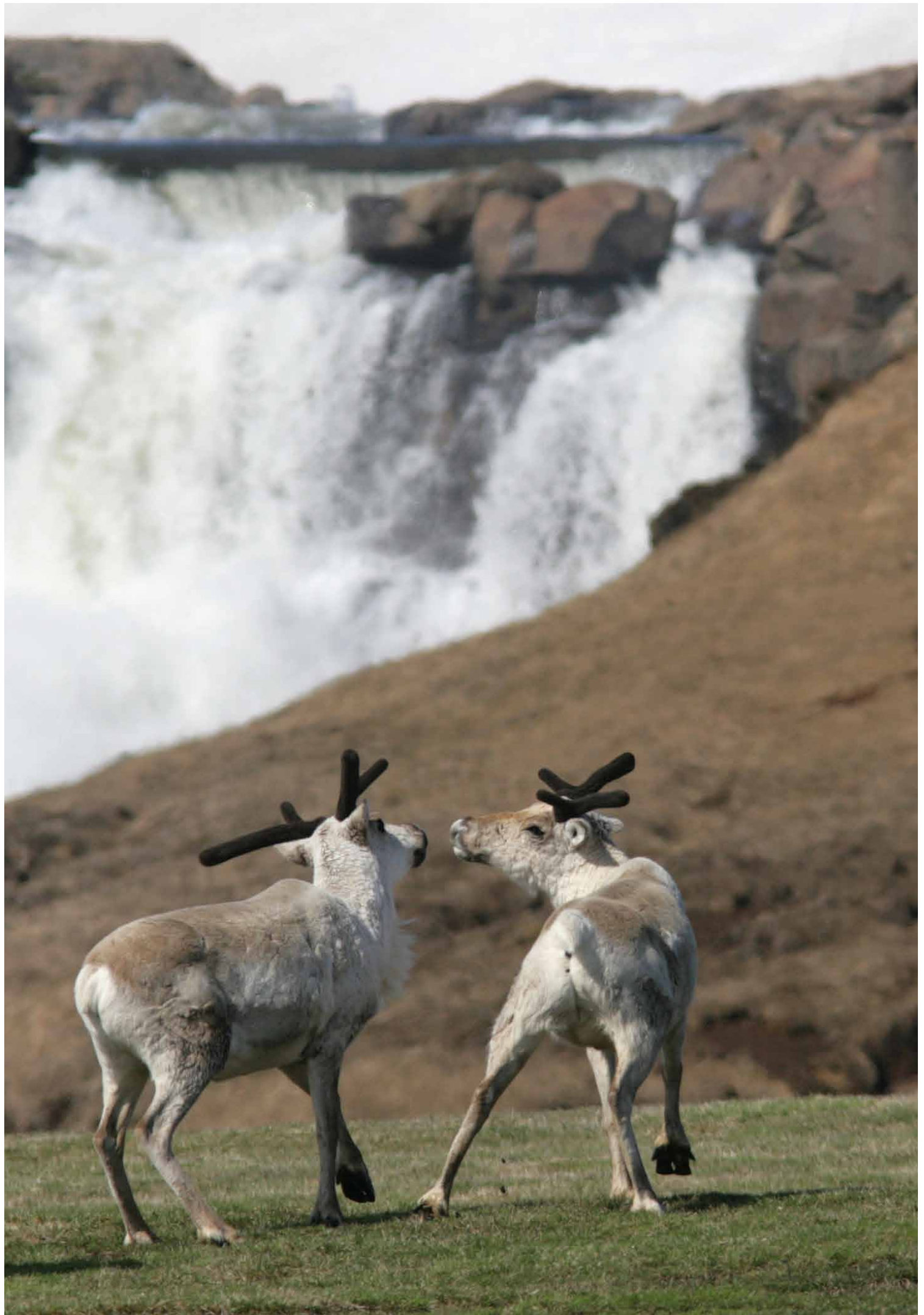
With all senses. From the tastes of Austurland, to the scents, the sounds and the sights.

Our brand trigger 'East Iceland Wonders' reminds us to always aim for delivering the best experience, from our soul.

Visitors to East Iceland will bring and share the stories about our truly wonderful destination.

A full-page photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in a dark, starry sky. The aurora appears as vibrant green, ethereal curtains of light, with some brighter, more intense sections on the right side. Below the horizon, the dark, silhouetted peaks of mountains are visible against the glowing light. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

EAST ICELAND WONDERS



FOCUS AREAS

The following focus areas are analyzed to be of particular significance for Austurland. These are areas that have unique potential, and should get special attention, when developing the contents of the destination.

The focus areas foster the concept of slow travelling, aiming for our audience to stay longer in Austurland and get the best out from their visit to our destination. The focus areas are also in line with the priority of well-being of communities and residents.

Our aim is to develop high quality and unique products and experiences that bring extra value to visitors and residents, and generate positive and exciting stories to tell about Austurland

Outdoor activities

The nature is the main attraction of Austurland, and it offers a lot of outdoor activities.

Outdoor Activities is a very general focus area, and could easily be divided further. It comprises everything from nature related experiences to outdoor recreation and action, such as hunting, sports, boat trips, hiking and horseback riding.

Nevertheless, since many of the tour operators offer a wide range of activities, it motivates to arrange all of them within the same focus area.

The service factor is one important aspect to attend, among many other things like guiding skills, maps, hiking trails, signage, equipment, safety and more.

Explore

Austurland is a spacious destination with a lot to explore.

The scenic routes take the visitors through overwhelming landscapes, through deserted highlands and valleys, and along wild coastlines on the edge to the north Atlantic. It is like a pearl necklace with all the beautiful spots along the routes, unique attractions, thousands of waterfalls and small towns in each fjord.

The routes, and the opportunities for exploring more of Austurland, are definitely one of the main experiences for the destination to develop. Information and marketing is required, as well as opportunities for itinerary planning, better service stations along the roads, enhanced accessibility to places and way finding.

Food

Everyone must eat, and the food is a crucial matter for the experience of a destination.

Food tourism is a growing trend, and Austurland owns great opportunities to develop and getting better known for its local food. Lamb, fish, reindeer, berries and mushrooms; the pantry of Austurland is full of local delicacies.

Food tourism also comprises more opportunities for side attractions; as collecting, hunting, fishing or preparing the food. By providing knowledge and telling stories about the ingredients, the experience enhances and the value for the audience increases. It is also important to ensure the supply of local ingredients, and be able to serve dishes from the fjords and the landscapes of Austurland.

Culture and creativity

Culture and creativity connects to the people, and the soul, of the destination.

Austurland is characterized by a vibrant creative power, full of art, design, music and crafts inspired from nature and local heritage. The region offers several music and culture festivals, art schools, museums and centers where creative people meet.

The cultural and creative sector is important for the region, contributing to development and growth, and brings uniqueness to the destination. These are the ingredients that should always be involved in all parts of the destination development.

Advices for developing experience concepts

With inspiration from, and on the basis of the Austurland destination brand and the focus areas, experience concepts, products and packages, can be developed.

Important when developing new, or existing concepts, is to consider the user needs. For whom will the product be designed?

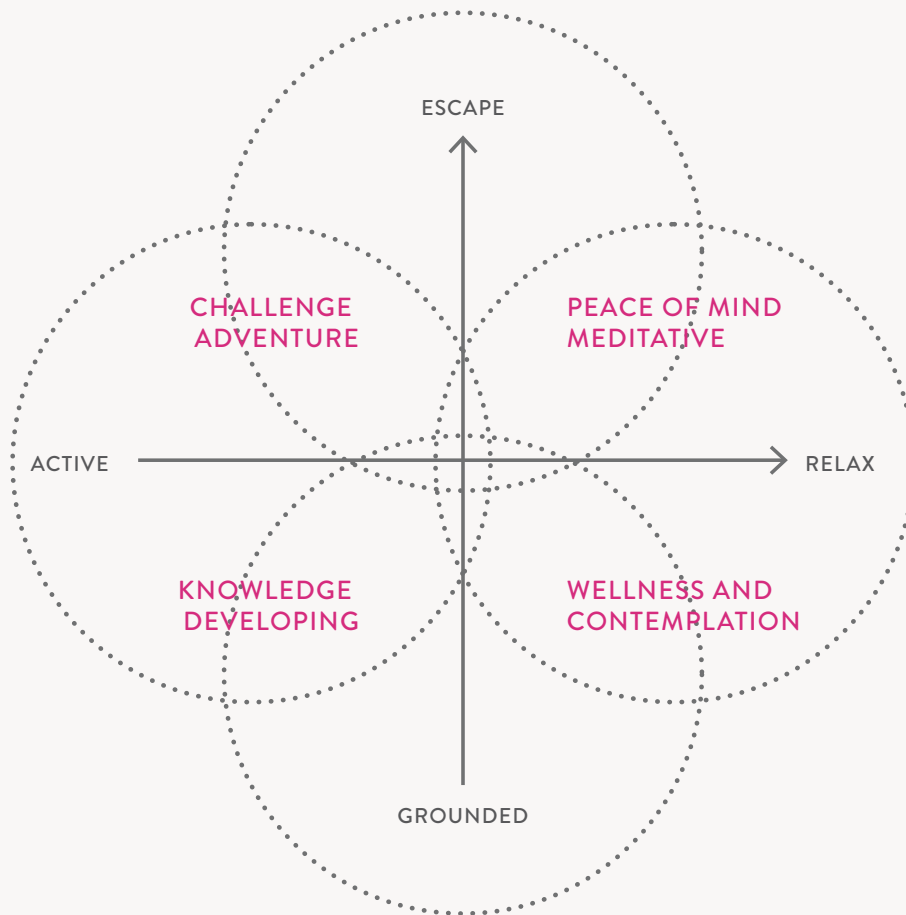
We should always aim for developing customized and sustainable solutions from the user's specific and future needs.

We also need to look into the interactions with our visitors. Coordinate and develop the touch points to optimize the flow. Work with the available resources. Use what we have.

Connect to the actors involved throughout the experience chain. We must collaborate, since it is always the combination of actors who creates the product and its experience. The product is never stronger than its weakest link.

Evaluate the experience. In what way does the product communicate the wanted experience?

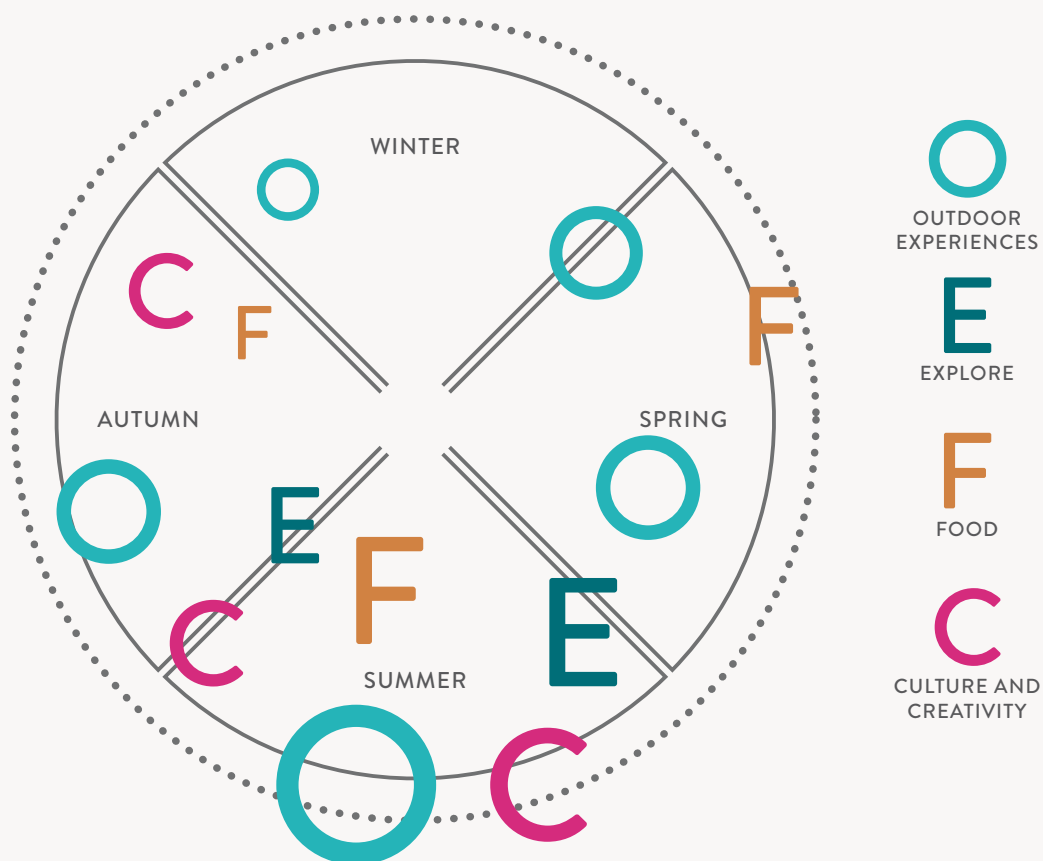
Customizing experiences from whom we want to attract based on motivations, behaviors and preferences, expectations and needs



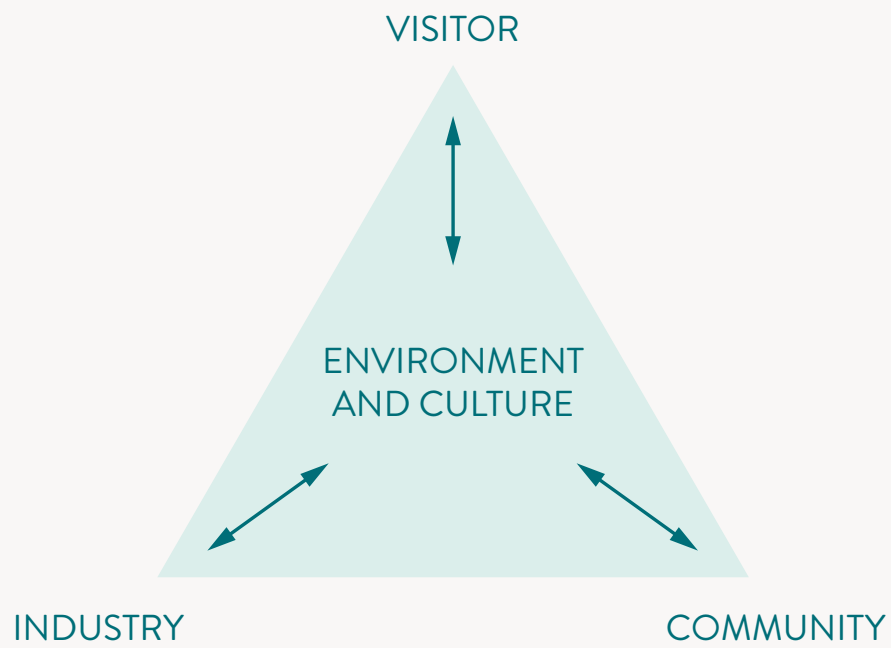
What should be highlighted and when?

Different experiences can be available during the year.
Also look into the opportunities of developing experience concepts, new or existing, with a seasonal approach.
Concepts for winter, spring, summer and fall.

Develop and customize experience concepts with seasonal approach



The VICE model



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

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A destination can be likened to a stage, where the show represents the meeting between the audience and the cast members. The story is in need of a good script. Directing and casting, memorizing the lines and orchestrating the touch points with the audience. Timing, structure and discipline, on the side of the artistic performance. A well-coordinated work behind the scenes is a prerequisite for being able to deliver a good performance. The stage is also a good tool to evaluate what activities should be a part of the show, and what must function backstage.

It requires engagement both backstage and onstage, when developing a destination, establishing a RDMO - Regional Destination Management Organization and preparing a DMP - Destination Management Plan.

Destination management is a subject of growing importance as destinations compete to provide the highest quality of experience for visitors; and to manage the impacts of tourism on host communities and environments.⁴²

To compete effectively, destinations have to deliver wonderful experiences and excellent value to visitors. The business of tourism is complex and fragmented and from the time that visitors arrive in the destination, until they leave, the quality of their experience is affected by many services and experiences, including a range of public and private services, community interactions, environment and hospitality. Delivering excellent value will depend on many organizations working together in unity. Destination management calls for a coalition of these different interests to work towards a common goal to ensure the viability and integrity of their destination now, and for the future.

Before the visitor is attracted by marketing or arrives at the destination, the right social, economic and physical environment in which to develop tourism must exist. A strong and authoritative DMO will be necessary to provide the leadership and to drive and co-ordinate this process.

The VICE model presents destination management as the interactions between the *visitors*, the *industry* that serves them, the *community* that hosts them and the *environment* where this interaction takes place. The last of these, the environment, can be understood in its broadest sense to include built and natural resources on which many tourism products are based.

The Destination Management Plan is a key instrument for building partnership and commitment. It should set out clearly the plan of action.

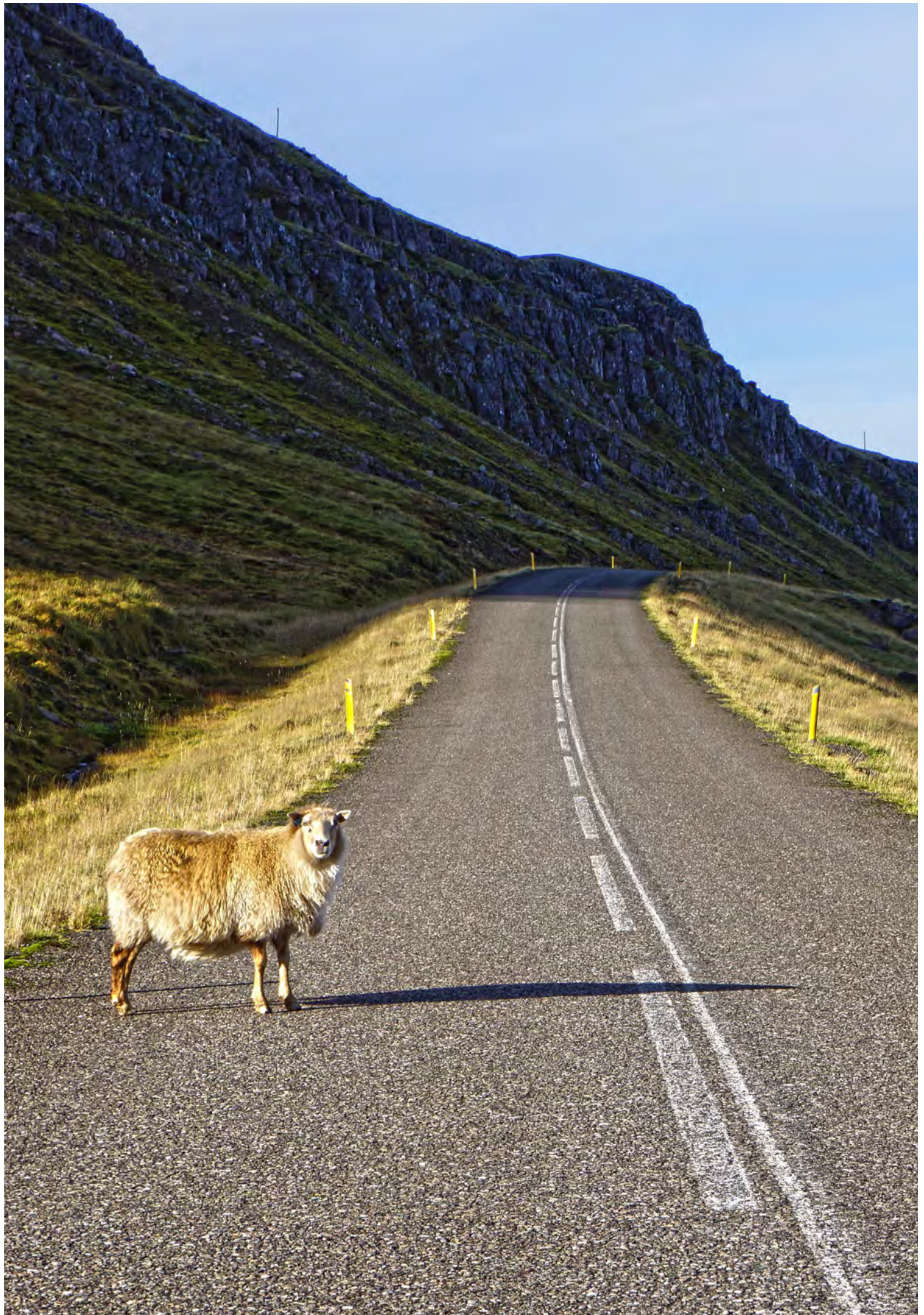
The DMP can play a very important role in identifying how the full range of local authority policies and services (in planning, transport, environmental management, leisure and recreation, culture and the arts) can support the visitor economy on the one hand and be supported by it on the other. By showing these links it prevents tourism being treated in a silo, rather than as a core contributor to economic development.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland will keep focusing on a sustainable destination design in line with continuous development and planning. Much of the further process will need support and ownership from the regional authorities.

The aim is to build a long term flourishing destination, benefitting all parts of the community. This destination design strategy has set the direction.

Now it is up to all of us, to bring our united efforts together, and to develop our destination and our region. We are all part of the value chain. No matter to what extent we are involved, everyone are important for our success.

Hopefully this report has given you more insights and knowledge of the opportunities we have, and inspiration to join, follow or support the initiative.



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