Promoting Reykjavík as a Tourist Destination

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Promoting Reykjavík as a Tourist Destination

An Interactive Qualifying Project Submitted to the Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

Visit Reykjavík is the official tourism organization for promoting the activities in the capital city area. They would like visitors to participate in local events instead of attending primarily nature-based activities. As a result, the goal of this project was to determine how to better market Reykjavík as a tourist destination. We evaluated how organizers advertise events in Reykjavík and how tourists discover events through interviews and surveys. The team recommended changes to *Visit Reykjavík's* website in order to improve the user and event organizer experience. Improvements included targeted website marketing, an interactive activity map, and a simplified event input form. We further suggest utilizing Google Analytics to verify the website's effectiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHORSHIP

Special Contributions	
Name	**Contribution**
Sam Grillo	Photography
Coulter Ralston	Report Formatting
Kenny Rhodes	Google Analytics Analysis
Rachael Sallie	Website Creation

All members of the team contributed equally to the content of the report. Sections were originally written by individual team members, then they were reviewed and edited by the team collectively. Constant collaboration assisted us in creating a cohesive report without inconsistencies in language. All analysis of data was completed together as a team, which enabled us to take different perspectives into account when analyzing interview and survey data.

We all have a variety of interests that interacted to produce a better report. Sam is an avid photographer, which allowed for stunning photos to complement the text in our relevant sections. Coulter loves to organize reports and presentations into interactive experiences for the audience, so his personal contribution went into formatting the report. Kenny is interested in statistical results, especially those pertaining to website analytics. His primary focus outside of writing was assessing website data. Rachael loves web development and even has had work experience in that field. She worked hard to develop a model website to show our recommendations and introduce the team. Our team's website can be found here.

Note: *All images and figures without attribution in the captions were photographed or created by the team.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Imagine missing out on any number of amazing experiences the city of Reykjavík has to offer because you were uninformed about events in the city; how would your experience change? Could the marketing of Iceland as a nature destination be limiting visitors' exposure to activities in Reykjavík?

Background

The volatility and sudden growth of tourism in Iceland can be traced to the recent, dramatic history of the country. In 2008, after a nearly catastrophic financial collapse, Iceland identified tourism as an industry to boost its economy and utilized its unique geological features as a focal point to attract visitors (Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010). However, nature-based tourism results in a fluctuating number of visitors, as seen in **Figure A**.

While the tourism industry has been successful, both tourists and Icelanders have concerns about the effects of uncontrolled sight-seeing on Iceland's environment. An evaluation conducted in 2000 found that many hiking trails in Iceland had already reached their capacity of human exposure (Minister of Tourism, 2018, p.4). As more visitors come to Iceland's nature, sites begin to lose the untouched feel that tourists expect. Promoting Reykjavík as a destination is more in line with sustainable tourism.

Reykjavík has made efforts to promote itself as a cultural hub as an alternative to Iceland's focus on nature-based tourism. For example Reykjavík has already joined the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC), and local activities are advertised through online sources such as *Visit Reykjavík*.
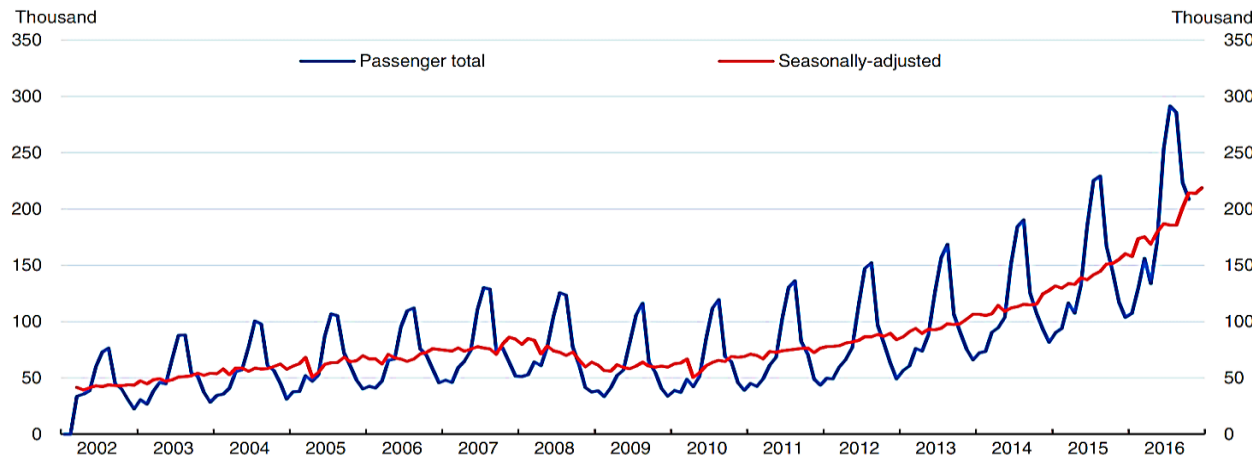

Figure A. International travel at Keflavik is highly seasonal, Retrieved from Sustaining nature-based tourism in Iceland (OECD Economic Surveys, 2017).

Tourists flooding the walkway at Þingvellir National Park.

Methods

An outline of our goal, objectives, and methods can be seen below in **Figure B**. We used several strategies to complete objectives that aimed to better market Reykjavík as a tourist destination. These methods are listed below their objective in dark blue.

Figure B. Visual representation of methodology.

Results

During our assessment of advertisements to meet objective one, we made the following observations:

- 80% of physical advertisements posted in downtown Reykjavík were for local activities.

- 47% of social media posts were for local activities.

- 27% of events on tourist websites advertised local activities.

- 28% of advertisements across all mediums were for local activities (**Figure C**).

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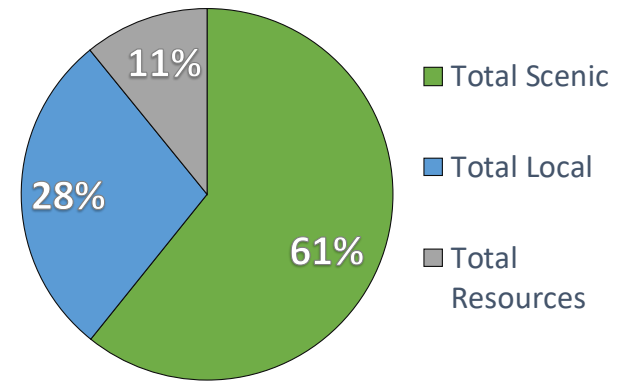
Figure C. Percentage of advertising found in brochure, website, and social media data; n=4432

During our surveying of visitors to meet objective two, we discovered:

- A majority of respondents use online resources to seek information (**Figure D**).

- Nature tours are the most popular tourist interest, but tourists are interested in other events as well (**Figure E**).

- ~50% of respondents booked or attended a nature tour, often more than one.

- ~25% of respondents booked or attended a cultural event, usually only one.

During our interviews with event organizers to meet objective three, we learned:

- Many organizers cited limited marketing resources, such as time, money, or human capital.

- Many organizers said they were not advertising on VisitReykjavik.is.

- Some organizers thought the form for submitting events on VisitReykjavik.is could be improved.

We also accessed *Visit Reykjavík's* Google Analytics and were able to view a large amount of statistical data about their website. This data was useful in determining user demographics and how people actually use the website.
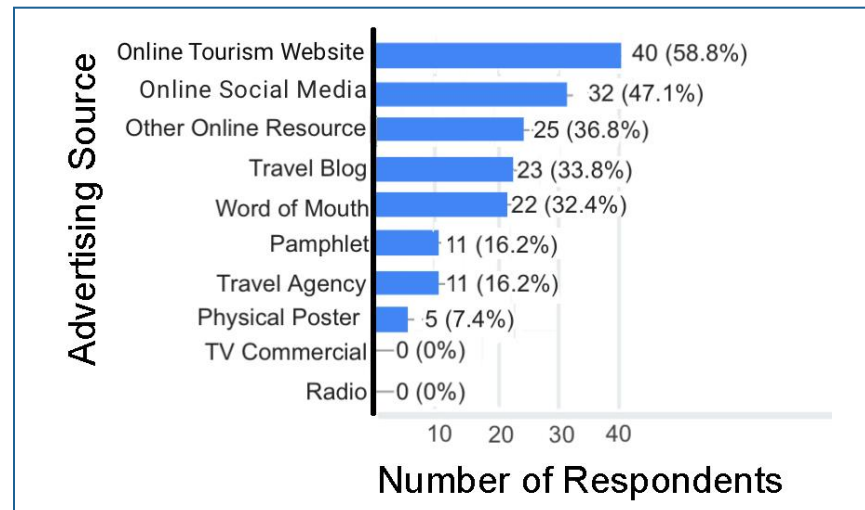
Figure D: Number of respondents by advertising source; n=68.
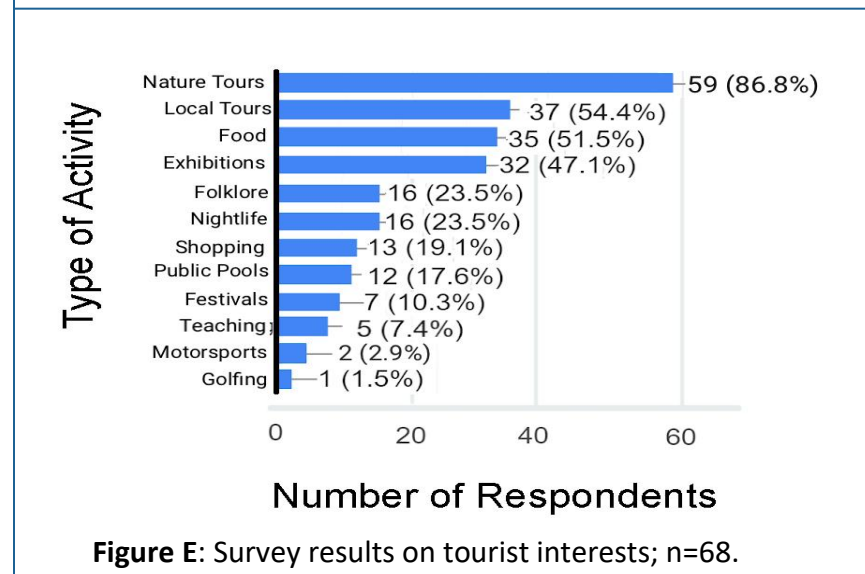
Figure E: Survey results on tourist interests; n=68.

Discussion

Website data exhibited the largest disparity between local activities and nature activities, having 34% more nature advertisements than local ones (n=3961). Our survey results showed that tourism websites are the most popular source of information. If online sources are skewed towards promoting nature activities, then this could influence the perception that Iceland is only interesting as a nature destination.

Businesses we interviewed often had limited resources for marketing. Their workforces typically consisted of small teams where marketing was a secondary job responsibility. Many places could not afford a large marketing budget, leaving businesses to advertise mainly online through websites and social media. However, with so many specialized apps and websites, searching for activities to do in Reykjavík can be difficult. This sentiment is well expressed by one source stating, "We are only a country of 400,000, why are there so many apps?" (Rebekka Sigurðardóttir, personal communication, September 5, 2019).When we walked around downtown Reykjavík, we were surprised to see the lack of physical advertisements. We learned that advertising on the streets was expensive and that there is also a cultural stigma associated with physical outdoor advertisements. In general, advertising on the street is seen as intrusive and is not a commonly used method, and therefore does not represent all the events Reykjavík has to offer. An example regarding large advertisements can be seen in the H&M Case Study.

Case study: H&M

Regulations around marketing limit the ways Icelandic event organizers can advertise. According to the Business Conduct and Marketing Controls Act, all advertisements must be in Icelandic if the advertisement is "intended to appeal" to Icelandic consumers. For example, H&M came to Iceland in 2017 and constructed a giant H&M shopping bag in a public square to advertise the store's arrival. The construction of the advertisement violated the law, and it also was seen as a monstrosity to the local residents in their well-loved Lækjartorg Square (Iceland Review, 2017). A full reading of the article can be found here.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to improve tourist interaction, measurability of the *Visit Reykjavík* website, and event organizer involvement. We have created a sample mock website to provide a visual example of these recommendations. **Figure F** displays main focus areas, as well as specific recommendations within these focus areas that serve as components to accomplish the ultimate goal of better promoting Reykjavík as a destination city.

To ensure the sustainability of our recommendations, we also included two areas of ongoing consideration. It is worth considering potential consequences of bringing more visitors to the city. A first step could be for city planners, local agencies, and permanent residents to identify a model city in order to maintain the cultural image of Reykjavík. Secondly, the alignment of

Reykjavík with the UN Sustainable Development Goals would help establish sustainable urban planning and tourism practices that can be carried on in all dimensions of the economy.

We believe the results of our recommendations will allow *Visit Reykjavík* to become an effective and responsive bridge between event organizers and visitors. Digital improvements will connect visitors to activities they are already interested in. This change will not only generate attendance and engagement in the city, but will also help to broaden Iceland's tourism sector as a whole. By balancing strain on the environment and encouraging sustainable interest in Reykjavík's activities, the tourism industry can continue to be a reliable source of income for Iceland.

Area of Focus	Recommendation
Enhance the user experience on the Visit Reykjavík website	Showcase a variety of events on the homepage
	Utilize card carousels on the activity page
	Install event filters
	Develop a local map to assist in directing users to events
	Utilize Google posts
Utilize Data to Asses Solutions	Create Google Conversions
	Make the homepage the primary landing page for your advertisements
	Provide feedback to event organizers
Improve the experience for event organizers when they advertise through Visit Reykjavík	Develop a simpler event form
	Reach out to event organizers

Figure F. Recommendation table for *Visit Reykjavík*.

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INTRODUCTION

A rainbow was painted on Skólavörðustígur to celebrate Pride in 2019.

Imagine relaxing in the warmth of a geothermal pool as the spectacle of the aurora borealis dances overhead, or drinking a traditional coffee at one of Reykjavík's top cafés. Throughout the city of Reykjavík, festivals, restaurants, and museums offer a variety of exciting experiences for tourists. One can spend an afternoon examining the peculiarities of the Phallological Museum or spend the night enjoying dinner with live performances at Petersen svítan. Now, imagine missing the experiences the city of Reykjavík has to offer because you were uninformed about events in the city. How would your experience change? Could the marketing of Iceland as a nature destination be limiting tourists' exposure to activities in Reykjavík?

A delicious cup of coffee from a local café.

The number of tourists visiting Iceland has increased from just over half a million in 2011 to more than 2.3 million in 2017, and as a result, tourism's direct contribution to GDP has risen over 4.9% in the same time period (Sustaining nature-based tourism in Iceland, 2017, p. 60). Nearly all visitors to the country (92% travelers) visit the capital city of Reykjavík during their stay (Ferðamálastofa, 2018). Despite a large number of tourists spending time in Reykjavík, only 8% included the city as one of their three most memorable experiences when surveyed about their visit (Ferðamálastofa, 2016). However, over three times the respondents included nature as a highlight of their trip. As a result of this disparity, the goal of this project was to determine how to better market Reykjavík as a tourist destination.

The aurora borealis just outside of Reykjavík.

BACKGROUND

Restaurants advertise delicious

Icelandic food in the streets.

Iceland's dependence on a volatile tourist market

The volatility and sudden growth of tourism in Iceland can be traced to the recent history of the country. In 2008, after a nearly catastrophic financial collapse, Iceland identified tourism as a way to boost their economy alongside resource-based markets such as the fishing and energy sectors (Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010). The steady influx of visitors to Iceland became a major factor of growth for Iceland's GDP and, as shown in **Figure 1**, the tourism industry's contribution to GDP has tripled from 3% to 9% since 2010.

Growth in a nation's GDP per capita is representative of improvements in the standard of living of its citizens. Therefore, expanding this sector improved the lives of Icelanders, contributing 804,000 ísk ($6,500) to the 9.03 million ísk ($73,000) GDP per capita (The World Bank, 2019). One newspaper even stated that in 2015 "the tourism sector made up one-third of the country's economy" (Valle, 2019). In addition, tourism directly generated an estimated 13,500 jobs in 2017 (7.2% of total employment) and is expected to generate more jobs over the next ten years (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018).
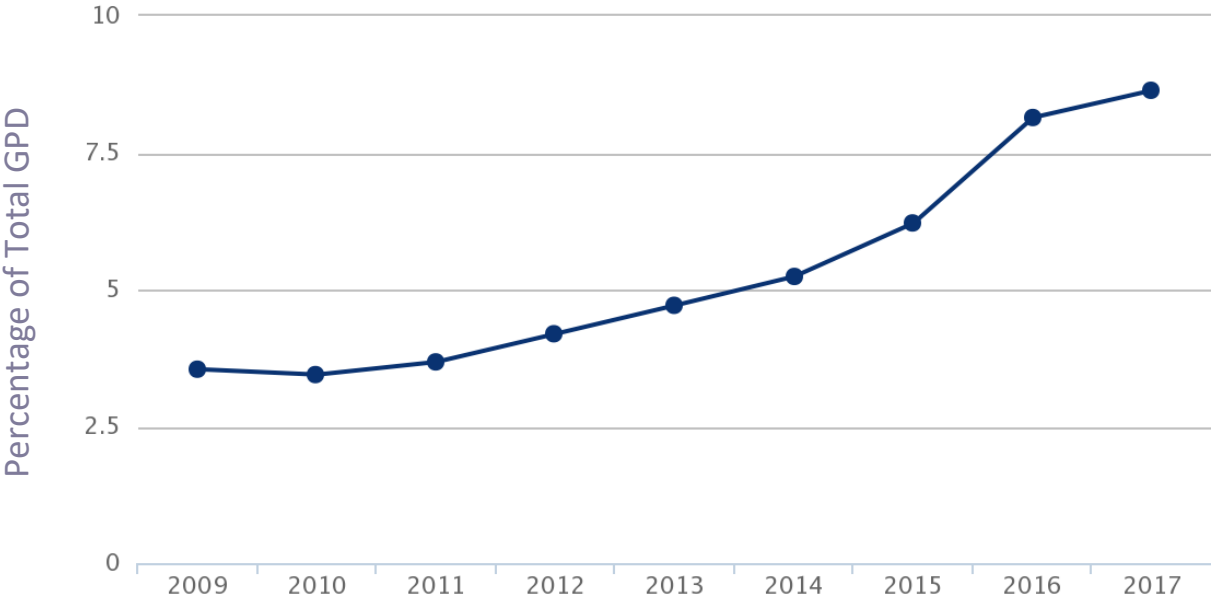
Figure 1. Tourism direct contribution to GDP, %. Retrieved from Five companies captured three fourths of the advertisement revenue of the media in 2017 (Statistics Iceland, 2018).

Variable factors and seasonality

While tourism was vital to Iceland's recession recovery, a competitive global market is not without risks. The bankruptcy of Wow Air in early 2019 is believed to have significantly contributed to that year's decline in tourism. The flight data alone, seen in **Figure 2,** indicates that tourism from early 2019 was down 13% from the 2018 January - July numbers (Ferðamálastofa, 2019).

Vox newspaper reported that "Wow Air's bankruptcy has had such a negative effect on Iceland's tourism sector that the country's economy, which was previously estimated to grow by 1.8 percent, [was] instead on track to contract by 0.4 percent," (Valle, 2019). There are many uncontrollable factors that affect tourism, making it a fragile and sometimes unreliable market.
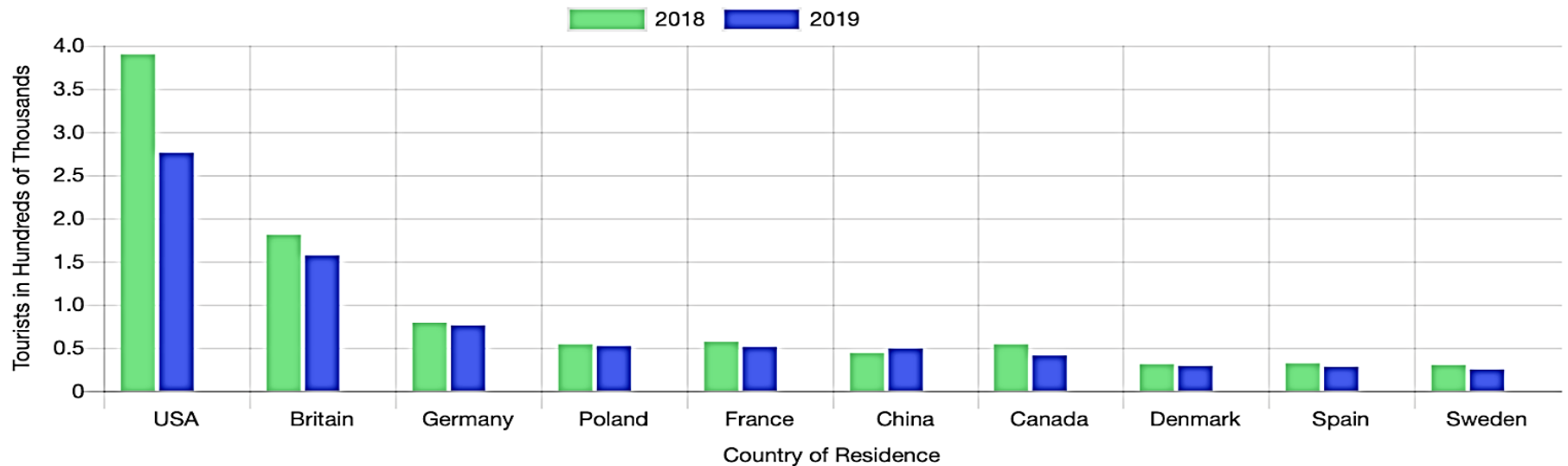
Figure 2. Tourist arrivals in Iceland by plane from Jan - July 2019, Adapted from Ferðavenjur erlendra ferðamanna (Ferðamálastofa, 2019).

Although Iceland advertises itself to be a year-round destination, there are dramatic fluctuations in when tourists tend to visit. These trends can be seen in **Figure 3**, where the peaks of the blue lines, representing passenger totals, are always in the summer, and flight data from Keflavik Airport shows that an average of 70,000 more tourists visit per month in the summer season than during the off season (Ferðamálastofa, 2018). There was a 34% decrease in tourist arrivals by plane during the off-season months as compared to the peak tourist season arrivals of that same year. Tourists visit mostly in the summer because these are the warmest and sunniest months and because tourists come predominantly to experience Iceland's nature (World climate guide, n.d.).
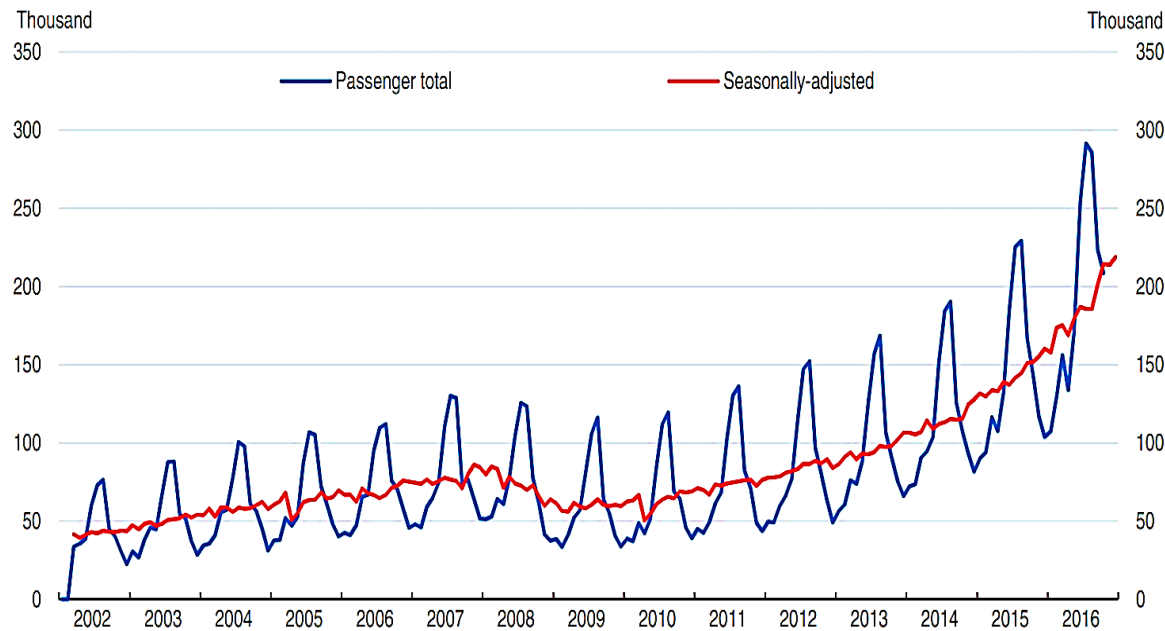
Figure 3. International travel at Keflavik is highly seasonal, Retrieved from Sustaining nature-based tourism in Iceland (OECD Economic Surveys, 2017).

Nature as the primary tourist driver

The Icelandic tourism industry has built itself on emphasizing adventure experiences in the country's unique lava-fields and geothermal landscapes. However, both tourists and native Icelanders have concerns about the effects of uncontrolled tourism on Iceland's environment. Between 30-55% of foreign visitors surveyed in various locations across Iceland thought there were too many visitors in popular destinations, while 40% of native Icelanders felt that the region is reaching the limit on the number of tourists it can handle (Minister of Tourism, 2018, p.4). In a survey of over 500 people visiting Iceland, one response stated that "[there should be] more people regulating tourists who climb fences and trample the flora and vegetation" (Ferðamálastofa, 2016). Another survey supports these findings, with 52% of Icelandic respondents believing that tourism is having a negative impact on the environment (Guðjónsson, 2015).

The influx of sight-seers damages popular locations, and some of these landscapes can no longer tolerate more tourists. An evaluation performed in early 2000 found that Skaftafell, Lónsöræf, and Landmannalaugar had already reached visitor capacity (Minister of Tourism, 2018, p.4) Furthermore, some natural Icelandic attractions are not permanent. Climate change has already altered weather patterns and natural features in the country (Jalbert, et al. 2018). For example, 56 of the 300 small glaciers in North Iceland have been lost since 2014, and the rest are expected to be lost over the next 200 years (Ástvaldsson, 2019). Other landmarks are susceptible to natural attrition or global warming, as well. As noted, the Great Geysir "in 1916… stopped erupting all of a sudden, much to the [dismay] of Iceland's locals and tourists alike! It did briefly surge back into life in 1935, but by 1950, its activity had lessened considerably, and it became fully dormant not too long after" (Arctic Adventures, 2019). The OECD states that "sustaining a nature-based tourism for Iceland will require more [coordinated] policy across government" and that "protecting the unique environmental attractions of Iceland - while mitigating adverse social impacts" is an important challenge Iceland will have to face as tourism progresses (Sustaining nature-based tourism in Iceland, 2017, p. 59). Overall, the fragility of the landscape remains a risky focal point for Iceland's tourism campaign.

Tourists flocking to Gullfoss in the Golden Circle.

Limiting the number of tourists at a natural site is essential to the success of scenic tourism. While 45% of tourists report that they come to Iceland's nature for the "untouched nature, purity" of its landscapes (Óladóttir, 2019), as tourist numbers increase, these landscapes lose their untouched feel. This puts Iceland at risk for a decrease in tourism as people flock to more pristine destinations like Greenland. A recent article states that "Everyone's doing Iceland right now. What was once an off-beat destination is now becoming a regular stop to or from Europe or an easy add-on ... Greenland, who's been there? Scientists?" (Mulligan, 2017). Expectations of "untouched nature" are becoming unrealistic as Iceland's tourism grows, but with Iceland's focus on nature tourism, the country may experience a decline in visitors.

Other activities and visitor expectations

Fortunately, there are numerous alternatives to adventure tourism in Iceland. Reykjavík offers activities including performances, art openings, and major events, such as Reykjavík Culture Night and the Winter Lights Festival. Live bands can be heard at bars and other venues. Galleries such as the Reykjavík Art Museum and the National Gallery "showcase the works of classic Icelandic artists" (Reykjavík the capital of Iceland, n.d.). There are other opportunities for vacationers to understand Icelandic culture including folklore tours, Icelandic chocolate making classes, and day tours managed and led by local residents (*Visit Reykjavík* Activities Page, 4/13/19). However, despite the

events available in Reykjavík, scenic experiences outside of the city attract more participants. **Figure 4** presents activities that tourists paid for during their trips to Iceland, with local activities indicated in brown and scenic activities in blue (Óladóttir, 2018, 169). The data are based on events that were paid for instead of simply events attended. However, the figure still offers insight into the popularity of the indicated activities. For example, 43% of visitors admitted to spending money on museum attendance, but fewer than 13% of respondents spent money to attend local events or festivals, and only 4% participated in "other cultural events". By comparison, more than 30% of respondents paid for at least one sight-seeing tour, nature bath, or whale watching tour (Óladóttir, 2019).

Survey results from a study on tourist's opinions of Iceland show that tourists see Iceland as a scenic nature destination with its image including "a safe place, adventurous, friendly and hospitable, and natural beauty" (Gudlaugsson & Magnússon, 2012). Iceland's reputation as a nature destination began after the Eyjafjallajokull volcanic eruption in 2010, when "international media was plastered with awe-inspiring images of Icelandic nature" (Hauksson et. al., 2018). Because nature put Iceland on the map as a tourism destination, "83% of inbound tourists name Icelandic nature as the main reason for their visit" (Hauksson et. al., 2018). This exacerbated expectations of the tourist focus on Iceland's natural beauty, rather than on what the city of Reykjavík has to offer.
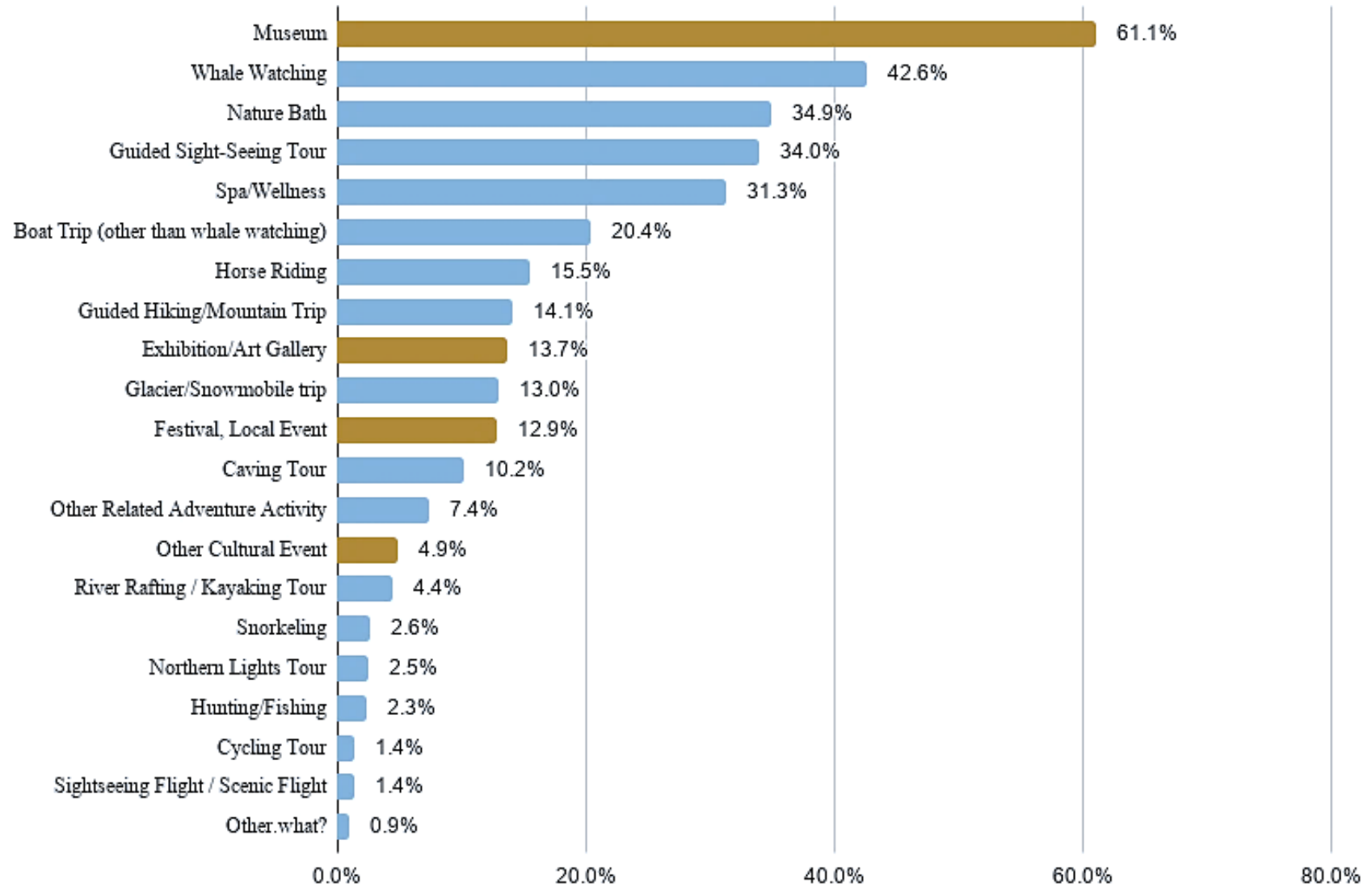
Figure 4. Percent of Tourists Involved in Activities, Adapted from *Tourism in Iceland in figures*, Óladóttir, O. Þ., (2018).

Promoting Reykjavík

Cities adapt and develop based on the needs of its inhabitants and visitors, and therefore are considered a more reliable destination for tourism activities than nature. One report states, "as society is in constant change so are cities, trying to adapt and meet the needs of residents and visitors as well as making [cities] an attractive destination for future visitors" (Blanco, 2012, p. 4). A city's culture, society, and events are what bring tourists from around the world with their "vibrancy, excitement and diversity," and have been attracting people since "the spawning of urbanization" (Blanco, 2012, pp. 4-8). Cities also cater to a wider audience than other types of tourist attractions because "they are easy to reach and have a lot to offer" (Blanco, 2012, p. 8). Cities advertise themselves by displaying the qualities that make them unique. For example, Athens, Greece is known for its "splendid monuments" erected by "a multitude of conquerors" throughout its history (Blanco, 2012, p. 20). Other cities market their cuisine, such as New York City, which has [75 Michelin star restaurants](). Additionally, campaigns have been created to further promote cities as tourist destinations.

The World Tourism Organization's 5th Global Summit on City Tourism discussed strategies for marketing and developing the identity of a city. Members discussed the correlation between city tourism and cultural heritage, and the importance of involving local partners to "protect, correct, and promote what you have" in order to develop the city's local identity (World Tourism Organization, 2016). They also discussed how interactions between visitors and locals create "an authentic and unique visitor experience" (World Tourism Organization, 2016).

A view of downtown Reykjavík and all of its unique architecture.

Reykjavík is proud of its history and culture.

To better promote Reykjavík as an interesting destination, Iceland joined the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC). The ECOC represents a variety of European cities, and its goal is to market the cultural aspects of member cities. A study regarding European involvement in the ECOC found that wealthy, cultural visitors are attracted to member cities, which helps to establish a cultural image for that city (Palmer et al., 2004, p. 20).

Several other organizations are focused on communicating the availability of events to tourists in Iceland as a whole. The official tourism website for Iceland is titled Inspired by Iceland. Inspired by Iceland provides a calendar-based festival sheet, maps displaying activities based on type, and lists of things to do in Iceland (What to do in Iceland, n.d.). *Visit Reykjavík's* website also provides event information grouped by type and date, and between these websites and others, tourists can access event information prior to their visit (*Visit Reykjavík* Activities Page, 4/13/19)

Improved marketing outreach

Basic marketing strategies can explain why tourist activity in the city is not as prominent as it is for the scenic activities outside of Reykjavík. Marketing requires the identification of needs and behaviors, the converting of needs into demands, and the moving of products to customers to achieve the objective set by a specific organization (Singh, 2018, p. 5).

Segmentation is a tool used in marketing that "helps you know which groups exist so you can later identify which groups to

target" and is "used to better understand the target audience" (Qualtrics UK, 2019). Segmentation is a comprehensive approach to marketing that takes in a variety of information regarding consumers and uses that information to establish a marketing plan that targets relevant customers more effectively. For example, a possible source to develop segmentation could be survey data (Singh, 2018, p. 12).

Forgoing the process of segmentation can create a strategy that ignores the diversity of tourists found in Iceland. For example, using Google Analytics that targets specific audiences based on their search history makes use of segmentation, but simply displaying one's event online for everyone to see does not.

To market tourism effectively, one must keep in mind cross-cultural contact, specifically when regarding various demographics. The different demographics of tourists in Iceland was previously described in **Figure 2.** The context of where the contact occurs, language barriers, length of stay, and the environment are all important elements when marketing to diverse demographics (Singh, 2018, p. 136). Cross-cultural contact is complex since each cultural connection is different for each of the nationalities visiting Iceland.

A diverse crowd roams the streets of Reykjavík.

Furthermore, individuals of different ages, household incomes, and cultural backgrounds show varied trends in their attendance of specific events. A survey focusing on tourist demographics and their interests showed that an average of 43% of all visitors paid for museum attendance (n=2000). Certain nationalities such as those from Spain, Italy, and Sweden paid for museum attendance significantly less often than the average respondent. Age also plays a role in attendance, with visitors older than 55 attending museums 8% more than the average tourist (Óladóttir, 2018, pp. 170-171).

Leveraging social media

Social media has become a necessity to keep up with trends and news, and to network with other users. Erin Williams, the cultural development officer for the Worcester Cultural Coalition, says that when it comes to marketing cultural events, the best strategies use multiple platforms. Spreading information through a variety of sources is critical to gain interest in events. Sources can include a subscribed newsletter, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other websites and social media venues. Once the event has been broadcasted, Erin noted that the most important way to influence attendance is to then spread information through word of mouth, and the best way to stimulate conversation about an event is to ask open-ended questions to target audiences using social media (Erin Williams, personal communication, April 17, 2019).

Aside from inspiring interest in users, social media can also reveal information necessary for segmentation. "Instead of focusing on

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demographics like gender, age and income etc. we should focus on the apparent behavioral preferences of each group and [what should be marketed to the individual] can be studied through their likes and dislikes [on social media]" (Ather, Khan, Rehman, & Nazneen, 2019, p. 196). Each group's likes and dislikes can be seen through their social media presence. Groups' likes and dislikes reveal how one should look to market to those specific groups. Social media is relevant in both spreading the word about events and also determining the target audience.

Site specific limitations of advertising

Marketing regulations limit the ways Icelandic event organizers can advertise. According to the Business Conduct and Marketing Controls Act, all advertisements must be in Icelandic if the advertisement is "intended to appeal" to Icelandic consumers. Advertisements must also be posted so that they are not offensive to any viewers including children (Business Conduct and Marketing Controls Act, 2019). Regulations restrict the way information can be spread to consumers. For example, if all advertisements "intended to appeal" to locals were in Icelandic, it may deter tourist involvement in local events. Another example of a limitation is censorship of advertisements regarding bars, as these are not approved to be seen by children in Iceland.

Certain advertising media are thought to be more popular than others in Iceland. For example, according to Statistics Iceland, "newspapers are the most important advertising medium", as 38% of advertising revenue is from newspaper advertisements (Statistics Iceland, 2018). There is a "very high" newspaper

readership, with the principal newspapers being Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið (Commercial Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, 2019). The next highest revenue advertisement media include television at 21%, radio at 17%, and web at 13% (Statistics Iceland, 2018). Advertisements such as billboards are much less common in Iceland, with only 3% of the advertising revenue share being spent on outdoor advertisements (Statistics Iceland, 2018).

Case study: H&M

An example of limits placed on attempted campaigns illustrates the extent to which the city rejects popular strategies used elsewhere. There have been issues with physical advertisements such as billboards in the past few years as new businesses have moved to Iceland. H&M came to Iceland in 2017 and constructed a giant H&M shopping bag in a public square to advertise the store's arrival. The construction of the advertisement not only violated a law "that prohibits advertisements targeting Icelandic consumers from being in any other language than Icelandic," it also was seen as a monstrosity to the local residents in their well-loved Lækjartorg Square (Iceland Review, 2017). The large shopping bag was removed prematurely due to public uproar over the imposing advertisement. A full reading of the article can be found [here](#).

Summary

Our review of the literature revealed three key points about how marketing impacts tourism. Iceland focuses on "selling" its natural beauty, however this comes with the cost of overcrowding popular destinations. Reykjavík provides many activities that do not rely on nature, but the perception of Iceland as an adventuring hub limits the activities that tourists even consider. The use of marketing strategies such as segmentation and targeted social media marketing can promote a destination while avoiding existing limitations.

METHODOLOGY

Our team gains valuable insight from Rebekka at the Student Cellar.

Visit Reykjavík wanted to encourage tourists to spend more time in Reykjavík and take part in local activities. Our goal and objectives for this project are summarized in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5. Visual representation of methodology.

1. Observe how events in Reykjavík are advertised

We used categories including tourist resources, scenic, and local to organize data from website evaluations, brochure data, and the spatial mapping of advertisements. These data were coded to extract pertinent information.

Websites and social media assessment

We used a participant observation approach as a tourist searching for activities to do in Iceland, specifically around the capital area. On websites we counted events both from the broad list of activities listed and from a weekly event page if the website had one. These websites included _Visit Reykjavík_, _Inspired by Iceland_, Get Your Guide, What's On, and Viator.

We investigated social media sites such as Instagram that promoted events in Reykjavík. We conducted content analysis by counting the number of posts made within the previous thirty days and found the percentage and number of posts promoting an event or activity. We also noted the number of likes and the hashtags used for each post. Social media postings were found on Instagram at _Visit Reykjavík_, What's On, and Inspired by Iceland. Facebook sites included _Visit Reykjavík_'s page. We recorded the social media mentions of event names, locations, attendance data, and language.

Spatial mapping

Spatial mapping looks at trends in a community through its geographical and social composition (Beebe, 2014, p. 70). We

used a map of central Reykjavík and marked the location of all advertisements. The use of Google Maps assisted us in accurately depicting the region of study. Furthermore, we used Maps to compare street campaigns and advertising locations with foot-traffic data and business locations. During our analysis, we also considered if the advertisement was displayed in a rentable advertising space, the type of event being advertised, and the location of the event.

Brochure analysis

In addition to online resources and physical signage, we also counted and categorized the events advertised in brochures in places frequented by tourists. We conducted this analysis in hotel lobbies and tourist information centers within Reykjavík.

Brochures commonly found at hotels.

2. Understand how tourists discover events in Reykjavík

We gathered information from tourists at public locations such as parks and information centers. At each location we used surveys to identify where tourists learn about events. These surveys were administered on our smartphones through Google Forms in areas frequented by tourists. The survey included twelve questions and consisted of multiple choice and optional open-ended questions. Our complete survey can be found in **Appendix A**.

3. Determine how organizers promote their events

We investigated the marketing strategies of event organizers through semi-structured interviews. With the help of our sponsor, we compiled a list of initial contacts. We conducted semi-structured interviews to learn how local events were being marketed in Reykjavík. Through snowball sampling, we learned about other local event organizers and interviewed them as well. These interviews began with a general prompt and continued with a series of topical questions to direct the conversation towards more specific information about their marketing strategies and interest in attracting tourists. The full set of interview questions can be found in **Appendix B**.

These interviews were conducted in public places that were convenient to the individual being interviewed. Interviews lasted around a half-hour each and were recorded only with the interviewee's explicit consent. One team member acted as scribe and another as main speaker. These interviews were recorded through notes on a computer or tablet, and then coded.

The team actively seeking out tourists for their survey.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The team is working hard to consolidate
the data and present relevant findings.

Results

After completing our advertisement assessments, surveys, and interviews, we confirmed some expected results and also made many additional discoveries. The following section provides insight into the perspectives of tourists and event planners alike.

1. Event advertisements in Reykjavík

To assess physical advertisements, we mapped ads seen on the streets of downtown Reykjavík. We also collected data on brochures in hotel lobbies, and assessed the advertisements on websites of several tourist organizations.

Mapping street advertisements was done with a spatial map. While exploring popular tourist streets and destinations, we found 30 unique advertisements, some of which were seen multiple times during the assessment. We included both fliers posted to electrical boxes and formal stands on the spatial map. **Figure 6** shows an advertisement on an electrical box, and **Figure 7** shows an example of a formal stand. **Figure 8** places icons on the map to represent the locations and types of advertisements (for local, scenic, or a tourist resource). We found that 80% of the advertisements were for local events, 13% were for nature tours and the rest were for tourist resources such as bus transports. About 75% of the advertisements were in English (n=30). In terms of placement, about half were placed on electrical boxes and half on official advertisement stands.

Figure 6. Advertisements on an electrical box.

Figure 7. Formal advertisement.

Figure 8. Spatial map of advertisements seen in downtown Reykjavík in late-August, 2019.

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While observing and recording advertisement placement, we observed that the ads posted on electrical boxes were glued to the metal and were frequently out of date. These ads were also stacked on top of layers of older ads. They tended to appear in multiple sets, where several were posted on one electrical box, and nearly every electrical box displayed the same posters for festivals and music groups. In contrast, advertisements displayed on stands were mostly clothing advertisements from large companies such as 66° North, or the occasional city map with local event advertisements placed underneath. The Hard Rock Café advertisement, for example, was found in a stand and directed tourists to the restaurant's location using a distance icon rather than providing the street address of the restaurant. Outside of these 3 formats, we did not find any additional examples of street advertisements.

When we assessed brochures at a sample set of six hotels and one tourist center, we found that 58% of brochures advertised nature-based events, 35% advertised local events, and the rest advertised tourist resources such as bus transfers to the airport (n=356).

We evaluated events on five popular tourist websites and four social media pages of tourist websites. The summary of the data for all sources can be seen in **Figure 9.** Additional information on different source analysis can be seen in **Appendix C.**
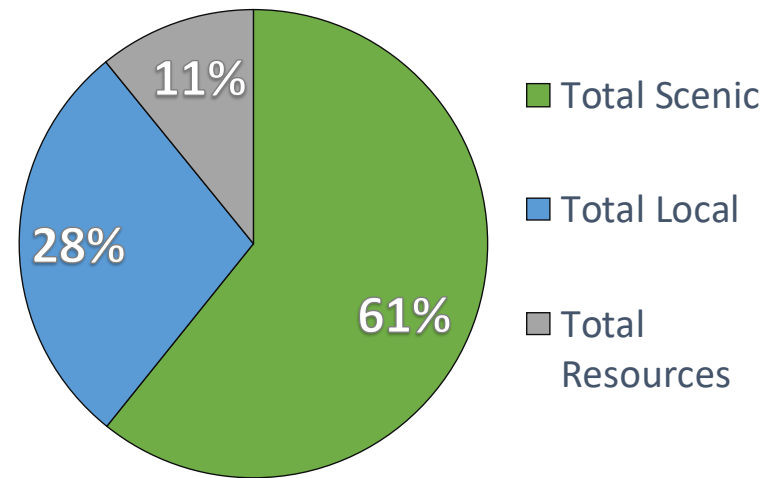
Figure 9. Percentage of advertising found in brochure, website, and social media data; n=4432

Google Analytics

Another way to determine both the effectiveness and the use of website event advertisements is through the use of web based analytics tools, specifically Google Analytics. *Visit Reykjavík* has access to Google Analytics, which can be used to view statistical data about their website. A subset of this data was useful in determining user demographics. For example, the largest group of users access the *Visit Reykjavík* website from within Iceland with 18% of global traffic coming from the country. However, only 2.2% of traffic within Iceland uses the website in the Icelandic language (n=51,000), and this group visited only one page 80% of the time.

Statistics like these can be used to build custom analytical results for evaluating websites, including conversions, where conversions are goals for how a user interacts with a website that are set by the website owner and tracked by Google. For example, a goal could be to collect data on how many users who visit a product page actually end up on the website's order confirmation page.

2. How tourists discover events

We received survey responses from 68 respondents on the streets of Reykjavík, and gained new insight on the interests and behaviors of tourists seeking event postings. To that end, we learned that the majority of our respondents used an online resource such as *Visit Reykjavík*. Of the respondents who used the *Visit Reykjavík* website, 92% felt it was at least somewhat helpful (n=26). Additional statistics on tourist informational resources such as word of mouth, travel agencies, and more can be seen in **Figure 10**.

Where do you typically seek out event information? Check all that apply.

68 responses
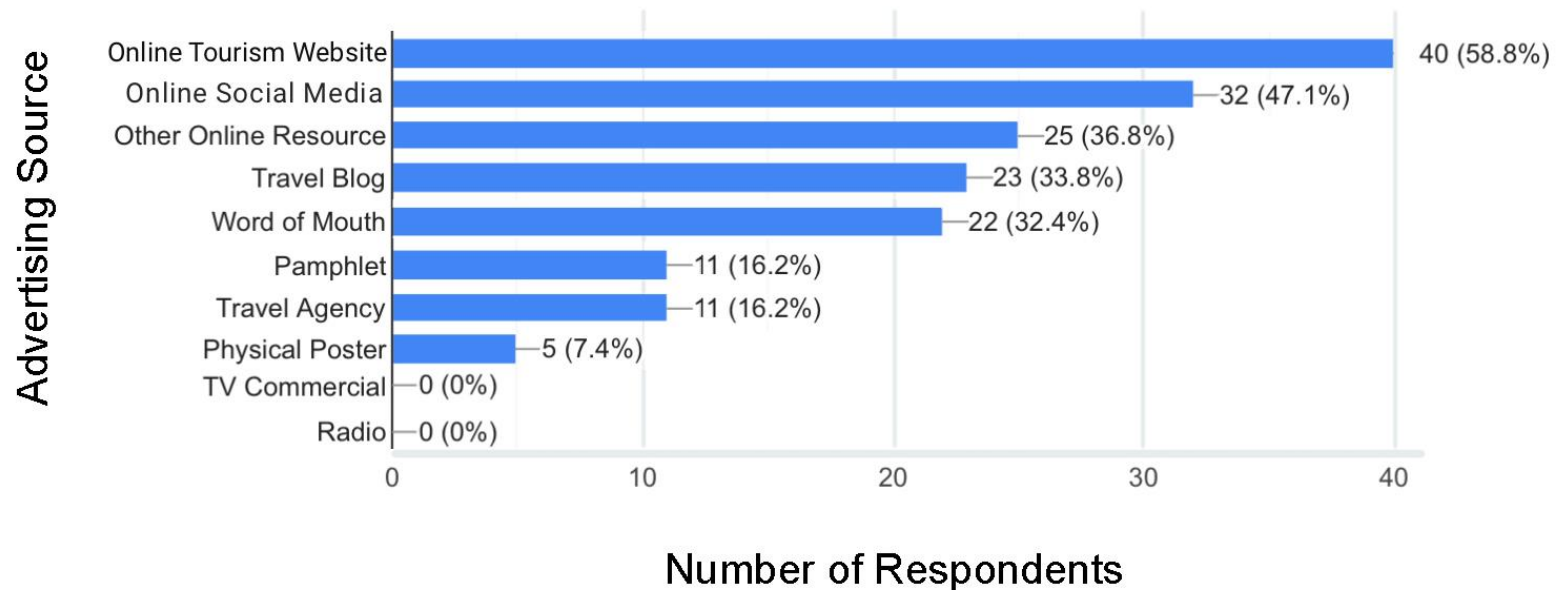
Figure 10: Number of respondents by advertising source; n=68.

The survey also revealed that a majority of our respondents stayed in Iceland for at least three days, with 46% staying between 3 days and a week, and 38% staying longer than a week. During the typical tourist stay, **Figure 11** displays the activities that our respondents were interested in.

Nature tours were the most popular choice, and rated 30% higher than the second most popular choice. Local tours, food, and exhibitions were all mentioned by roughly half of the respondents. Just over half of respondents booked or attended a nature tour, while just under a quarter booked or attended a cultural event. The majority of those who attend nature tours booked more than one, while the majority of cultural event attendees went to just one event. In one open response question, nearly 76% of respondents who answered this question claimed to have no trouble finding information about things to do in Iceland (n=29). Of those who did have trouble, the most common issues were related to maps and directions. When asked what they wanted to see in terms of advertising, respondents offered many different responses. Topics mentioned by multiple people included not wanting more advertisements, wanting cheaper options, needing more details on advertisements, and seeing more nature advertisements.

What types of activities are you interested in attending in Iceland? Check all that apply.

68 responses
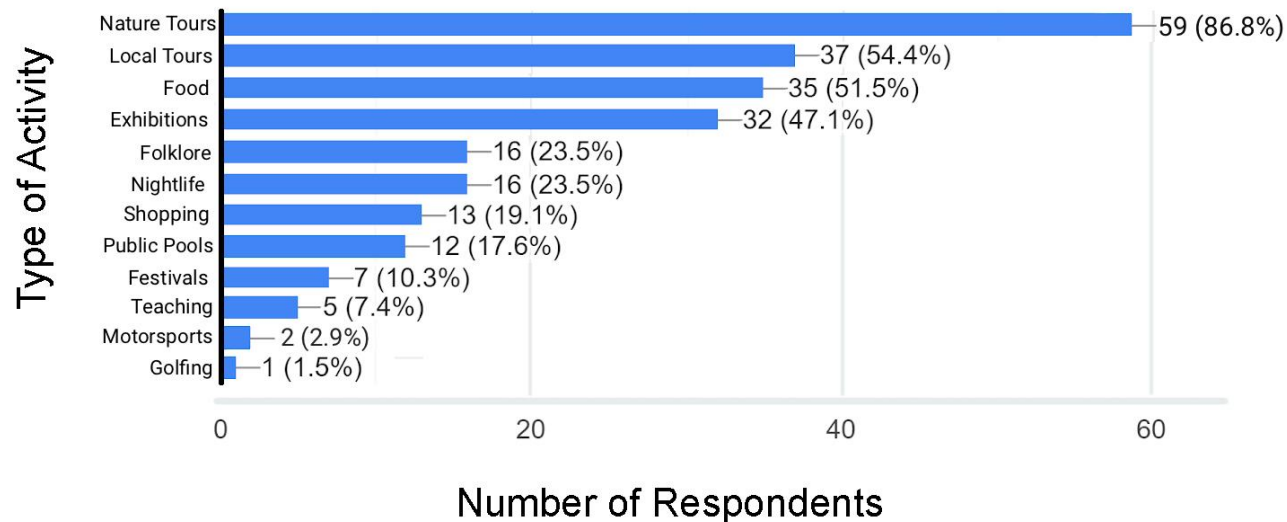
Figure 11: Survey results regarding what activities the tourists were interested in; n=68.

During conversations with visitors while administering surveys, some said that they would have enjoyed going to more local activities if they had known about them.

3. Determine how organizers promote events

We reached out to event and activity hosts to learn about how they market their businesses and programs to both the Icelandic locals and tourists. We identified six groups: Bryggjan Brugghús, the Department of Culture and Tourism, the Reykjavík City Events Department, Stúdentakjallarinn (The Student Cellar), BERG Contemporary Art Gallery, and Gamla Bíó. Each event host had their own strategies for marketing activities and different reasons to seek increased tourist attendance. These interviews impressed on our team the limited budgets, human resources, and time event organizers have to devote to marketing their events. In addition, organizers had insights into how events are marketed and how portions of *Visit Reykjavík's* website could be improved. Summaries of these interviews can be found in **Appendix D**.

The team interviewing Kristína at BERG Contemporary.

Discussion

Our findings revealed interesting trends in how visitors respond to ads and their expectations pertaining to certain activities. These trends included how Iceland is viewed abroad, the implications of the language barrier, and the limitations event organizers face when marketing their events.

Influencing the perception of Iceland

Based on our survey data, 87% of our respondents were interested in attending nature tours. As we noted earlier, most advertisements are focused on nature activities outside of the

A group of tourists visiting Jökulsárlón (Glacier Lagoon).

city, while less than a third of ads featured local activities. Website data exhibited the largest disparity between local activities and nature activities, having 34% more nature advertisements than local ones (n=3961). This issue is made even more evident when compared to our survey results. Tourism websites are the most popular source for information, and if online sources are skewed towards promoting nature activities, then this could influence the perception that Iceland is only interesting as a nature destination. Iceland's emphasis on nature correlates to the expectations of tourists. With so many advertisements promoting Iceland's nature, tourists who are planning their trips will expect Iceland to be primarily a nature destination. Due to this perception, they may not spend as much time searching for other types of activities during their trip.

The tourist perception of Iceland as a nature destination results in a dramatic difference in activities attended; we saw that the frequency of cultural events attended or planned in the city was half the frequency of nature tours. We also saw that for those who attended or planned on attending cultural events, a majority attended or planned just one. The opposite was true for nature tours, where a majority of tourists who booked or attended a nature tour planned on doing more than one. It is clear from our data that the perception of Iceland as a nature destination is reflected in the mindset and activities of tourists with scenic events being prioritized over the activities located within Reykjavík.

The language barrier

Despite the availability of map applications for smartphones, tourists expressed difficulty with maps and directions. In fact, our survey indicated that the most common problem faced by respondents was understanding directions and locating places. Some businesses recognize this issue, and address it with signs such as the one shown in **Figure 12** where, rather than using complicated street names, the Hard Rock Cafe directs tourists to their business using landmarks or symbols.

To give another example of the language barrier and difficulties with directions and maps, our team lived on Skólavörðustígur, which none of us could pronounce. We simply called it Rainbow Road based on its identifying rainbow colors. Many street names use characters not found in common languages, requiring visitors to download an Icelandic language keyboard just to type a street name into Google Maps.

Tourists' difficulty with directions and street names could be contributing to the popularity of commercial nature tours over local activities. Every tour our group has attended offered pick up and drop off at hotels, which eliminated any need for reading maps. By comparison, attending local activities required the navigation of Icelandic streets, which, due to the complexity of the Icelandic language, can be difficult to distinguish and comprehend for people who are not living in Reykjavík for more than a few days. In a casual conversation, a local stated that the Icelandic language is so complex that even if someone moved to Iceland 50 years ago, natives can tell that they are a foreigner in

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the first sentence of their conversation (personal communication, August 25, 2019).

Similarly, some tourists expressed to us that they were interested in attending cultural events in the city, but were afraid the events would be completely in Icelandic. In fact, our team has experienced this issue personally: We read about an event online in English, but then arrived to find out the host only spoke Icelandic. In some cases, the events are in English, but they are not well-attended because tourists assume that they will be in Icelandic. This miscommunication and added complexity may be deterring tourists from attending local events.

Figure 12. A formal advertisement of Hard Rock Café

Limited resources

One common trend we noticed throughout our interviews was that the event organizer often had limited resources devoted to marketing. These businesses typically consisted of small teams where marketing was a secondary job responsibility. Many event organizers could not afford a large marketing budget, leaving businesses to advertise mainly online or on electrical boxes on the street. Event organizers we spoke to made use of Facebook, Instagram, and their own websites to advertise. Many also used Google Ads or Facebook Ads as a relatively inexpensive way to advertise online. Some used specialized apps or websites to reach their target audience. These websites included _Untappd_ for

Official advertisement methods are limited to large events and successful companies.

Bryggjan Brugghús and _Artsy_ for BERG Contemporary Gallery. Google Analytics was also utilized by several event organizers, which is free to use. However, with so many specialized apps and websites, it can still be difficult to search for things to do in Reykjavík. This sentiment was well expressed by one event organizer saying, "We are only a country of 400,000, why are there so many apps?" (Rebekka Sigurðardóttir, personal communication, September 5, 2019).

When we walked around downtown Reykjavík, we were surprised to see the lack of advertisements. During our interviews we were informed that it costs over $1,000 a week to rent ad space on the type of ad stands defined in **Figure 7**. Since most of the official ad stands were occupied by international businesses, presumably only large companies can afford to rent these spaces. For small organizations that did not want to rely solely on online advertising, some displayed their ads on electrical boxes. In our walks around the city, we saw many new advertisements added to the boxes. In one case, we saw a new ad for a jazz festival a few days before the festival was to take place, suggesting that these types of ads are made to be short-notice and not expected to remain readable for very long. As a result, these posters seem to be more suitable for music events and festivals. For example, during our interview with BERG Contemporary, we discovered that advertising on electrical boxes is not considered appropriate for all businesses, as some feel this method is unprofessional.

Price was not the only thing that stood in the way of how advertisements were made available to tourists. During our interviews we discovered that there is a cultural stigma against advertising out in the streets. Iceland values community happiness, nature's wellbeing, and a friendly atmosphere. Masses of commercial advertisements and billboards would not be compatible with the small-town feel of Reykjavík. In the United States and elsewhere, many of us are used to an overwhelming amount of advertisements, as seen in locations such as Time Square in New York City. In Iceland, cultural expectations suggest that residents want to leave the notifications and commercials on their digital devices, and enjoy the city as it is. In general, advertising on the street is seen as intrusive and is not a commonly used method, and therefore does not represent all the events Reykjavík has to offer.

The balance between local residents and tourists

Some Reykjavík businesses cater to a mix of both local residents and tourists, and target tourists to supplement attendance during times of low local attendance. For example, Elvar says, "Icelanders, they love to go out to drink Friday and Saturday but from Monday through Thursday they mostly stay home" and in, "June, July Icelanders go for vacation" (Elvar Ingimarsson, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Similarly, the Student Cellar, which caters primarily to students at the University of Iceland, supplements attendance with tourists while students are away for the summer (Rebekka Sigurðardóttir, personal communication, September 5, 2019).

A few event organizers mentioned that they do not advertise certain aspects of their business because some of their events are recurring and the locals know when and where these activities occur. For example, the Department of Culture and Tourism said they do not advertise Culture Night because it is like the 4th of July in the United States, and they expect the local residents to know about the holiday celebrations (Department of Culture and Tourism, personal communication, September 3, 2019). Additionally, Elvar does not advertise the Jazz performances at Bryggjan Brugghús because they are at the same time every week, and the locals know where and when they are. They do, however, note that the local hotels tell tourists about the performances (Bryggjan Brugghus, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Although tourists do attend some of these events, these advertising practices may be limiting tourists' ability to attend such events, as the number of respondents who learned about events by word of mouth was only 22% (n=68).

In summary, Iceland is a well-established nature destination, and the high number of online advertisements for nature events correlates to this trend. By comparison, when city-centric events are advertised, tourists appear to struggle with the language barrier regarding directions and event information, and even event presentation if not in English. Local businesses tend to advertise online through Facebook and Instagram because strict regulations and cultural stigmas limit the use of physical advertisements on the streets. Many of these businesses cater primarily to locals, but supplement lacking local attendance.

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

The lead singer of Vök performed at Culture Night, which is the birthday celebration of Reykjavík.

Visit Reykjavík faces some choices in finding the right balance in promoting the city's local events. Our recommendations focus primarily on enhancing the *Visit Reykjavík* website so that it is easy for tourists to explore, modified to provide statistics that can measure website success, and intuitive for event organizers to use.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to improve tourist interaction, measurability of the *Visit Reykjavík* website, and event organizer involvement. We have created a sample mock website utilizing some of the following recommendations to provide a visual example. The MDBootstrap Framework was used to create our mock website, but other frameworks can be used to implement the following suggestions. **Figure 13** displays some main focus areas, as well as specific recommendations within these focus areas that serve as components to accomplish the ultimate goal of better promoting Reykjavík as a destination city. A full list of supporting evidence behind the motivation for these recommendations can be found in **Appendix E**. Screenshots of our mock website for offline viewing can be found in **Appendix F**.

Area of Focus	Recommendation
Enhance the user experience on the Visit Reykjavík website	**Showcase a variety of events on the homepage**
	Utilize card carousels on the activity page
	Install event filters
	Develop a local map to assist in directing users to events
	Utilize Google posts
Utilize Data to Asses Solutions	**Create Google Conversions**
	Make the homepage the primary landing page for your advertisements
	Provide feedback to event organizers
Improve the experience for event organizers when they advertise through Visit Reykjavík	**Develop a simpler event form**
	Reach out to event organizers

Figure 13. Recommendation table for *Visit Reykjavík*.

Focus area: *Visit Reykjavík* website user experience

These recommendations focus on enhancing the website so that it is easy to use for tourists. Every tourist we surveyed that used the *Visit Reykjavík* website said it was at least somewhat helpful, but while analyzing the data from Google Analytics, we found some areas for improvement.

Showcase a variety of events on the homepage

The homepage should show the variety of what Reykjavík has to offer. Since many other websites perpetuate the view of Iceland as a nature destination, *Visit Reykjavík* can challenge this perception by showcasing activities in the city. While *Visit Reykjavík* already implements a featured events program highlighting what is happening in the city, and should continue to do so, a carousel, which is a cycling slideshow of web content (in this case, images), will expose visitors to a variety of activities offered in the city that they may not have considered. The homepage as of August 29, 2019 had a carousel with two images, but additional images may enhance the webpage. An example of a longer carousel can be seen on our mock website here. Each image in the carousel could represent a different category of activities in the city and contain a very brief description. Each image could also link to a page with similar activities so tourists could be easily directed to the activities of interest.

Utilize card carousels on the activity page

On Visit Reykjavík's page displaying activities, several carousels of cards could be used to display a variety of activities in each category. A series of cards can be seen in **Figure 14** and here on our mock website. Visit Reykjavík's activity pages as of June 30, 2019 displayed each event card at once in one large grid. In a card carousel, each category could have its own row of 3 or 4 cards at a time that could be cycled through by the user. This format will showcase fewer events at a time so that the user is not overwhelmed with all of the events available.
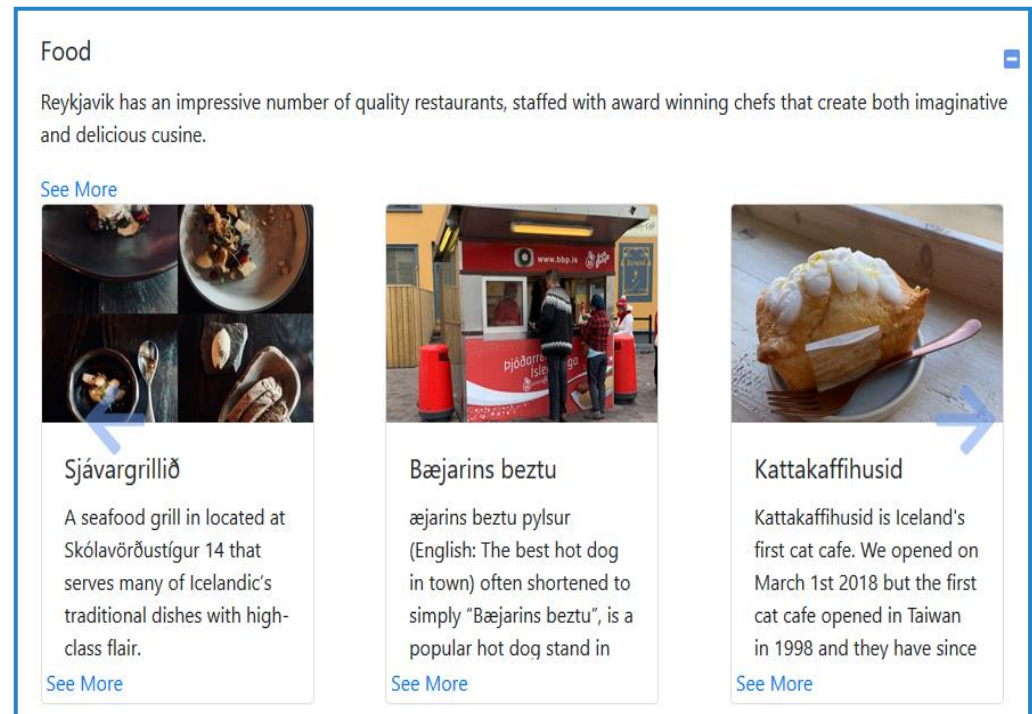
Figure 14. Recommended card carousel.

Install event filters

Our survey data revealed that there were some unique interests that tourists are looking for in Iceland. For example, "motorsports" was an answer that was not considered when creating the survey, yet two respondents stated "motorsports" as

Figure 15. Recommended event filter feature.

an interest. Unique interests of tourists can be easier to accommodate by implementing tags and filters. Event organizers can tag their events so tourists can easily filter their searches on the website. Activity filters can then allow tourists to consolidate their search to more specific types of events that cater to their interests. These filters can be seen on the left side of this mock website page here and in **Figure 15**. Our website showcases a couple of simple filtering options, but additional filtering options, as well as an advanced search, could be implemented. Advanced search options could include filtering by specific tags such as family-friendly and LGBT, or searching by hours of operation. As a result, tourists will be able to find more events that are specific to them, which could promote more activity in Reykjavík.

Develop a local map to assist in directing users to events

Language barriers make it difficult for tourists to navigate the city. To remedy this, we recommend developing an interactive online map that features all of the events around the user's location. For example, instead of viewing an advertisement for an event posting located at "Skólavörðustígur 7", users will see an interactive map that shows exactly where these events are located. This feature should be compatible with both desktop and mobile devices to ensure that a visitor exploring Reykjavík can see all nearby activities. This feature may also indirectly benefit event organizers. If the website offered suggestions based on the user's location, tourists may discover and attend activities they were previously unaware of. Therefore, simply hosting an event at one's own location indirectly advertises nearby events. An

example of an activities map can be seen in **Figure 16** and also [here](#) on the mock website. Our example map used the [OpenLayers](#) JavaScript library, which is available for free, but other map APIs may be used for this feature as well.

Utilize Google Posts

Google Posts are the boxes organizations create that show up when a user googles a certain phrase or business. For example, if one were to google the name of an organization such as "What's On", a box shows up at the top right of the Google results page summarizing the basics of that business in a [My Business profile](#), as well as the topic they are promoting (**Figure 17**). *Visit Reykjavík* could create a Google Post so that if someone googled certain keywords, a box with current events could pop up at the top of

their search results, and provide event information. The logistics of creating a Google post can be found [here](#).

Focus area: utilize data to assess solutions

Additional data collection and analysis of websites is common in the web industry and is a tool for improving websites (Zheng, 2014). Information about how the website is used can inform effective marketing strategies, as well as convince event hosts that it is worth advertising on *Visit Reykjavík*.

Figure 16. Recommended activity map feature.
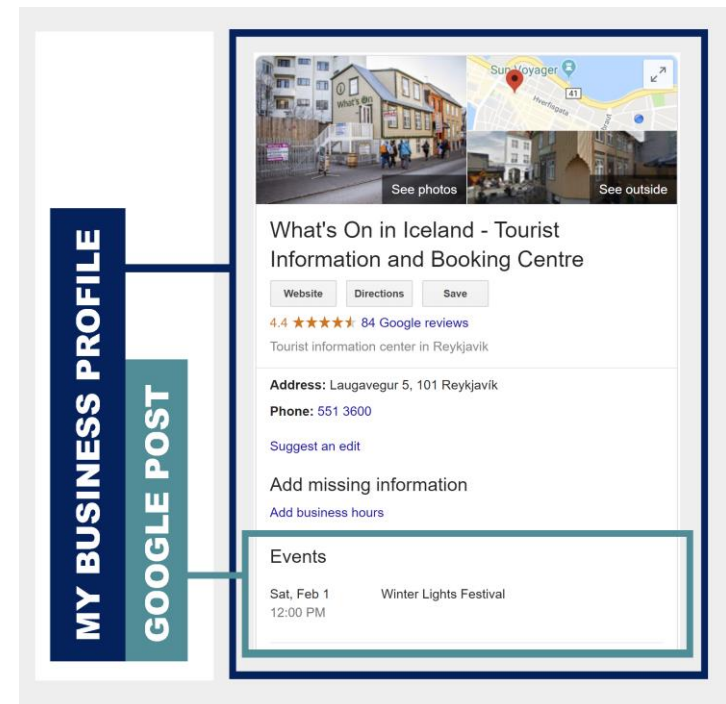
Figure 17. Google Post example.

Create Conversion goals on Google Analytics

In order to evaluate the success of pages on the *Visit Reykjavík* website, or any changes made to it, Google Analytics is a free and powerful suite of tools. One of the most powerful tools that is not being used by *Visit Reykjavík* is "conversion goals". These are free to implement and are used to collect data to answer a specific question about how the website is used. For example, a goal could be set up to see how many people click the buy button for the [city card](#) after viewing its information page, or the success of event postings could be determined by tracking how many people navigate to the organizer's website. This information will be useful to validate the success of changes to the website, as well as provide information about the effectiveness of the website to event organizers. Conversions can help refine ad campaigns, because the user's path to a successful conversion can be tracked. This pathway can then be promoted to more users through an advertisement aimed at that pathway. Buying a city card is an example of a trackable conversion goal. Setting up goals can be as easy as tracking views of the city card order confirmation page, or as involved as adding code to user interface elements to track user interaction on a page as an event.

Google Analytics is a powerful tool for assessing the user base and engagement with the website, and while we focused mainly on bounce rates, user demographics, and the lack of Conversion goals, further analysis of Google Analytics would be a valuable area of future study.

Make the homepage the primary landing page for advertisements

Google Analytics revealed that the Culture Hill page was the most visited page on the *Visit Reykjavík* website during July, August, and September of 2019. The [bounce rate](#) on this page was 72%, meaning most people that visit this page do not further interact with the page. The bounce rate for the homepage was much lower at 42%, which is closer to an average bounce rate (Peyton, 2019). Additionally, the average amount of time spent on the homepage was 2 to 3 minutes versus only an average of 37 seconds spent on the Culture Hill page. Advertising the pages on VisitReykjavik.is with the smallest bounce rates and the longest viewing times may direct visitors to the most effective portions of the website.

Provide feedback to event organizers

Many businesses that we spoke with use Facebook, Instagram, and their own websites to advertise. Facebook and Instagram have business profiles that provide data on how many users see their content. Google Analytics can be used to assess the traffic and demographic data of a website. For example, Bryggjan Brugghús uses Google Analytics to measure the success of their marketing (Elvar Ingimarsson, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Solveig from Gamla Bíó offered insight as to why event organizers use these specific platforms by stating "because I see how it is doing, and when I don't see any results [from the website] it is [discouraging]" (Solveig María Ívarsdóttir, personal

communication, September 17, 2019). We recommend that *Visit Reykjavík* uses analytics data from their website to keep event organizers informed on the status of their advertisement campaign. This will result in a higher retention of organizers utilizing *Visit Reykjavík's* Website, and as a result, more activities will be displayed.

Focus area: *Visit Reykjavík* event organizers' advertising experience

This focus area is designed to improve the advertising experience for event organizers on the *Visit Reykjavík* website.

Develop a simpler event form

We learned from investigation and interviews that the event form on *Visit Reykjavík* was tedious to fill out, and one organizer would rather spend her time elsewhere (Solveig María Ívarsdóttir, personal communication, September 17, 2019). The current event form on *Visit Reykjavík* requires a login and event descriptions to be posted in both Icelandic and English. However, What's On is another website that advertises events in Reykjavík, and organizers expressed that their event form is much simpler to use. The What's On form is a single page with a minimal amount of required information. Since local marketing teams are typically small and have few resources, simplicity is essential to encourage event input on the website. Reducing the form to be no longer than a single page will help the form appear less tedious to those filling it out. Since only 2.2% of users are viewing the website in Icelandic, removing the fields for descriptions in Icelandic may

help reduce the size of the current form. Some visual elements could be made optional, such as the map for the address selection, which will make the form appear less intimidating.

Since event organizers must create an account in order to post their event, the form process can be simplified by auto-filling information that is likely to stay consistent for each event. If an organization's website and address is collected upon account creation, this information could automatically be filled into their respective fields on the event form, thus reducing the work the event organizer must do to post an event on *Visit Reykjavík*. Our recommended event form can be seen here. A comparison between the old event form and our recommended event form can be seen in **Appendix G**.

Reach out to event organizers

We interviewed several local businesses, and many of them said they either have never advertised on *Visit Reykjavík* or had not advertised on the website recently. Once changes are made, the final step is to re-introduce the improved website to event organizers. Reykjavík's businesses typically consist of small teams, and marketing is seen as a secondary priority. Feedback on event postings' viewing traffic and simplified event forms will entice event organizers to start or return to advertising on *Visit Reykjavík*. Therefore, *Visit Reykjavík* will market to tourists, thus allowing businesses to focus more on attendance from Icelanders.

There are multiple options for promoting the enhanced website to organizers. A relatively simple method is for *Visit Reykjavík* to

send emails to local organizations. Another method is to have a few companies work with *Visit Reykjavík* and help refine the website. This second method may advertise the website through word of mouth, which has worked effectively in Nantucket, a small island off the eastern coast of the USA (Fred Looft, personal communication, September 23, 2019).

A recommended timeline for all focus areas we covered can be found in **Figure 18** to assist *Visit Reykjavík*'s implementation process.

Ensuring the sustainability of our recommendations

As cities grow in popularity, and more tourists spend time in the city, the identity of the city may become compromised. Reykjavík is not known as a metropolis, but rather its appeal relies on a unique mix of activities and culture in a small town setting. As the tourist population grows in relation to residents, the city may risk losing the charm both for local residents and in terms of feeling an authentic connection between tourists and local culture. It is

worth considering potential consequences of bringing more visitors to the area. Balancing the influx of tourists with the core identity of Reykjavík will continue to develop the city as a unique destination. To promote Reykjavík in the most sustainable way possible, we identified two ongoing considerations to guide the city's development as a destination.

Identify a model city

Visit Reykjavík wants Reykjavík to be able to compete with nature tourism, but by doing so may compromise the community's small-town feel. Reykjavík's appeal is that it is not as large as Paris and London. These other cities have a developed metropolitan feel that Reykjavík does not. How can a city promote itself as a destination without compromising its identity? How many additional travelers can the city sustain without compromising its unique image?

A first step could be for city planners, local agencies, and permanent residents to identify a model city. Wellington, New
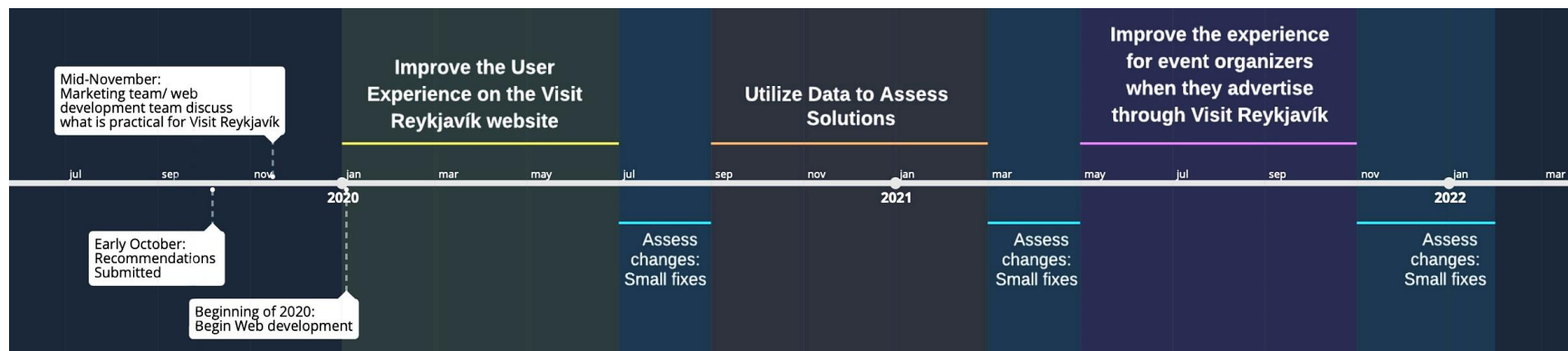

Figure 18. Recommendation timeline.

Zealand and Portland, Maine are good examples of significant cities with tourist economies at a smaller scale that preserve their local charm. A part of this exercise is to find consensus on a vision for the city over 5 years, or 10 years that still resonates with the values and authentic character of Reykjavík. As tourism increases within the city, it is important to keep in mind how many visitors Reykjavík can actually sustain, and how much growth is too much. The H&M Case Study reported earlier in this report showcases the emotional response residents express when an industry goes too far against the values of Reykjavík. As Reykjavík grows, the city must develop its tourism sector in a sustainable way.

Develop with Smart City values

A positive benchmark can be found in the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). These goals focus on sustainable tourism, and as stated, "It's important that efficient urban planning and management practices are in place to deal with the challenges brought by urbanization" (Sustainable Development Goals, 2015). The alignment of Reykjavík with Smart City frameworks would be a first step into establishing sustainable urban planning and tourism practices that can be carried on in all dimensions of the economy, from public transportation to how events are marketed. Smart City planning uses information and technologies to increase the city's efficiency, disperse information, and improve citizen welfare (Rouse et.al., n.d.). The tourism boom in Iceland was a lucky chance when Eyjafjallajokull erupted in 2010 and put the island on the map, but the country's striking nature alone may not be able to support the tourism sector indefinitely

(Hauksson et. al., 2018). Developing a purposeful approach to attracting visitors using Smart City analytics will help protect the city from outgrowing its local identity and in turn promote a resilient economy.

Conclusion

We believe the results of our recommendations will allow *Visit Reykjavík* to become an effective and responsive bridge between event organizers and visitors, while being cognizant of their responsibility for sustainable planning. In order to get visitors to spend more time within the city, digital improvements will connect visitors more logically to activities they were already interested in. This change will not only generate attendance and engagement in the city, but will also help to broaden Iceland's tourism sector as a whole.

Visitors have been crucial for the economic gains that Iceland has seen over the past decade, but without a concerted effort to ensure the longevity of this appeal, there is no guarantee that Iceland will remain the captivating, untouched country it is advertised to be. By balancing strain on the environment and encouraging sustainable interest in events and cultural activities in Reykjavík, the tourism industry can continue to be a reliable source of income for Iceland.

We would like to thank *Visit Reykjavík* for welcoming us to their workplace and providing us with a collaborative environment to develop our project. We had a great time working with *Visit Reykjavík* and wish them the best as they move forward.

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APPENDIX A - SURVEY FOR TOURISTS

We are American students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute working on a research project regarding Icelandic tourists and their attendance at local activities in Reykjavík.

GOAL: This project is assessing how events are marketed to visitors to Reykjavík.

Informed Consent: *This survey should take about 5 minutes. Our research will be published. Please understand that you are allowed to stop the survey at any time and can refuse to answer any questions. You are welcome to ask any questions about our study before we start.*

You can contact us:
Collectively at gr-A19VisitEvents@wpi.edu
Individual emails:
Sam Grillo sgrillo@wpi.edu, Coulter Ralston cqralston@wpi.edu
Rachael Sallie resallie@wpi.edu, Kenny Rhodes karhodes@wpi.edu
Our advisors:
 Fred Looft fjlooft@wpi.edu and Ingrid Shockey ishockey@wpi.edu.

Survey Questions:
1.   How long is your stay in Iceland?
      ☐ Less than a day
      ☐ A day
      ☐ Two to Three Days
      ☐ Four days to a week
      ☐ Greater than a week

2.   What is the purpose of your stay in Iceland? (Please check all that apply)
      ☐ Leisure Vacation
      ☐ Business Trip
      ☐ Visiting Family/Friend
      ☐ Other (please state): _____

3.   Where do you typically seek out event information when planning events for a trip, before you leave for that trip? (Please check all that apply)
☐ TV Commercial
☐ Radio
☐ Physical Poster
☐ Pamphlet
☐ Travel Agency
☐ Online Social Media (Facebook or Instagram)
☐ Travel Blog
☐ Online Tourism Website (Such as *Visit Reykjavík* or Inspired by Iceland)
☐ Other Online Resource
☐ Word of Mouth
☐ Other (please state) _____

4.   Where do you typically seek out event information when planning events for a trip after you have arrived at your vacation location? (Please check all that apply)
☐ TV Commercial
☐ Radio
☐ Physical Poster
☐ Pamphlet
☐ Travel Agency
☐ Online Social Media (Facebook or Instagram)
☐ Travel Blog
☐ Online Tourism Website (Such as *Visit Reykjavík* or Inspired by Iceland)
☐ Other Online Resource
☐ Word of Mouth
☐ Other (please state) _____

5.   Have you attended or already booked a nature tour?
☐ Yes
☐ No

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6.   If so, how many?
        ☐ 1
        ☐ 2-4
        ☐ Five or More

7.   Have you attended or already booked any cultural events? (museums, art shows, festivals, concerts, etc.)
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

8.   If so, how many?
        ☐ 1
        ☐ 2-4
        ☐ Five or More

9.   Have you visited the *Visit Reykjavík* website?
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

10.   If so, how helpful was the information?
        ☐ Not at all helpful
        ☐ Not very helpful
        ☐ No opinion
        ☐ Somewhat helpful
        ☐ Very helpful

11.   What would you like to see in terms of advertising or brochures?

12.   Did you have trouble finding information about anything?

APPENDIX B - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

We are American students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute working on a research project regarding Icelandic tourists and their attendance at local activities in Reykjavík.

GOAL: This project is assessing how events are marketed to visitors to Reykjavík.

Informed Consent: *Please understand that you are allowed to stop the interview at any time and can refuse to answer any questions. We may quote a statement with your name and profession in our final paper, with your approval. If we wish to use audio recording, we will notify you and only proceed with your approval. You are welcome to ask any questions about our study before we start. Our research will be published.*

You can contact us:
Collectively at gr-A19VisitEvents@wpi.edu
Individual emails:
Sam Grillo sgrillo@wpi.edu, Coulter Ralston cqralston@wpi.edu
Rachael Sallie resallie@wpi.edu, Kenny Rhodes karhodes@wpi.edu
Our advisors:
 Fred Looft fjlooft@wpi.edu and Ingrid Shockey ishockey@wpi.edu.

Grand Tour Question:

How long have you been an event organizer in Reykjavík? OR What got you into this particular business/industry?

Interview Prompts:

1) How are you currently advertising your business/event?
   a) Do you use different marketing strategies for different events / target audiences?
2) Tell us more about how you develop marketing materials.
   a) Which marketing materials seem to be the most effective?
   b) Are different marketing materials more effective at different times of the year (ex. Tourist season vs off-season)?
3) Who do you specifically try to market to?
4) What marketing trends are you seeing these days?
5) How would you describe the current attendance of your event?
   a) What demographics do you notice are currently attending your event? (Tourists vs locals)
6) Do you advertise on *Visit Reykjavík* and is the website easy to use?
7) Do you know any other event coordinators we could also talk to?

APPENDIX C - CATEGORIZED TOURIST RESOURCES

Brochure Results:	Numbers	Percents	Social Media Results:	Numbers	Percents
Total	356		Total	85	
Total Local	126	35.39%	Total Local	40	47.06%
Total Scenic	205	57.58%	Total Scenic	45	52.94%
Total Resources	25	7.02%	Total Resources	0	0.00%
Tourist Website Results:	Numbers	Percents	Overall Results:	Numbers	Percents
Total	3961		Total	4432	
Total Local	1,068	26.96%	Total Local	1,258	28.38%
Total Scenic	2,439	61.58%	Total Scenic	2,693	60.76%
Total Resources	454	11.46%	Total Resources	481	10.85%

APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Below is a summary of the interviews we administered as part of our methods. Each Interview's title is the name of the establishment or organization followed by the people we spoke with.

Bryggjan Brugghús

Elvar Ingimarsson (Manager) & Arturo Santoni (Brew Master)

Elvar Ingimarsson and Arturo Santoni from Bryggjan Brugghús provided us with analytics and insight into how they market. Their bar and restaurant hosts a variety of performances and they offer tours of the brewing apparatus. The brewery's online presence includes their website, Facebook page, and Instagram.

The website is used to book brewery tours, view the food menu, and obtain general information about the bar. Their Facebook page contains posts about upcoming events and jazz performances, while their Instagram primarily covers their craft brewing process.

To reach locals, Elvar told us "Facebook is totally enough... Facebook people have at least 800 friends and it multiplies." (Elvar Ingimarsson, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Bryggjan Brugghús is also on *Untappd*, an app that connects beer lovers to craft brewers in their area. This service provides them analytics data that they shared with the team and is shown below.
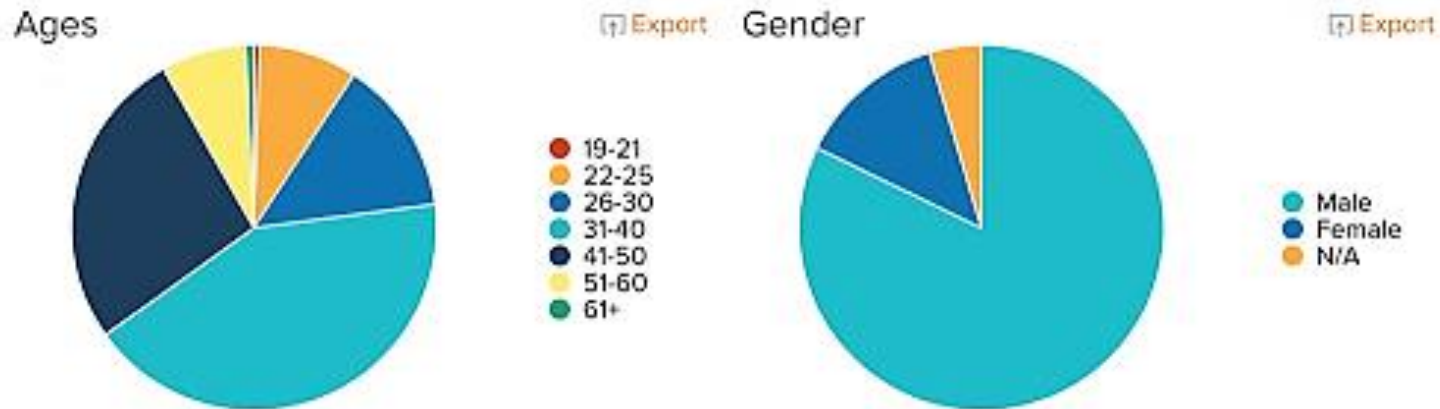
Figure 19. Untappd Data from (Bryggjan Brugghús, personal communication, August 30, 2019)

Bryggjan Brugghús puts out physical advertisements "2 days before the event to try and catch the tourists traveling in that period" (Elvar Ingimarsson, personal communication, August 30, 2019). However, they do not buy professional advertising signage as it is too expensive. Locals make up 85% of their patronage according to Elvar, in part because the local people escape downtown tourist areas by coming to their area. This is not to say they do not want to attract tourists to the business. Elvar also stated that "Icelanders, they love to go out to drink Friday and Saturday but from Mon - Thurs they mostly stay home," and that during these other days they receive a lot more tourists (Elvar Ingimarsson, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Additionally, locals often leave the country for vacation during the summer months resulting in low local attendance.

Bryggjan Brugghús utilizes Facebook Advertising services and Google Analytics to reach tourists. When discussing Facebook Advertising Elvar said, "We use the campaign add service, yes. This campaign for this certain festival was like $500. That's nothing actually...We have a good guy that is actually targeting the right audience, like a Facebook group" (Bryggjan Brugghús, personal communication, August 30, 2019).

Department of Culture and Tourism

Kristín Viðarsdóttir & Lára Aðalsteinsdóttir (Project and Event Managers UNESCO City of Literature)

Kristín Viðarsdóttir and Lára Aðalsteinsdóttir from the Department of Culture and Tourism met with us to discuss how they advertise and organize events regarding literature in the city. They believe that the "City becomes more alive when you see [Reykjavík as a] historic place" and told us they have walks around the city regarding literary history. People can walk until they find QR code signs they can scan, or they can be guided with the Reykjavík Culture Walks App. They promote this app through their website and google ads, though they have a small marketing budget. They mentioned that maintaining their marketing materials is relatively easy. Many of their events have low attendance but since the events are free of charge they have no way of tracking how many people actually attend. They stated it would be "Nice to know if they have an audience" but they have noticed even a small entrance fee drastically reduces the attendance of their events (Department of Culture and Tourism, personal communication, September 3, 2019).

Reykjavík Events Department

Guðmundur Birgir Halldórsson & Björg Jónsdóttir (Event Managers)

Guðmundur Birgir Halldórsson and Björg Jónsdóttir from the Events Department handle the planning of city events, such as Culture Night and the Winter Lights festival. They told us that the department is not responsible for the individual attractions offered during Culture Night such as concerts or food trucks. Instead, they handle the logistics of closing roads, blocking off space, and registering performers/other festivities. Their role in Culture Night makes it difficult for their office to know how the event will go or market what will be available at the event. They also do not have much of a budget to do advertising. However, major events like Culture Night have been occurring for twenty six years and are well known enough to not require a substantial ad campaign. For example, we were told that Culture Night in Iceland is comparable to Independence Day in America in terms of knowledge about the event among the local population. The department was also able to give us a range of prices for advertisements, with professional street advertisements costing around $1,600 and a full page ad in the newspaper costing $2,400. The Event Departments told us that these high costs in combination with the department led to focusing on

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advertising to locals, if anyone. This is done primarily through Facebook due to financial reasons (Events Department, personal communication, September 3, 2019).

Stúdentakjallarinn

Rebekka Sigurðardóttir (Communications Icelandic Student Services)

Rebekka Sigurðardóttir from Stúdentakjallarinn (The Student Cellar) spoke to us about how her business functions and how students are the main driving force behind the events offered at the Student Cellar. The Student Cellar is a nonprofit that offers students an escape from classes while also serving as a place to host student-organized events. Rebekka said that events occur almost every night and the venue is a welcoming environment to the general public and students alike. At the moment the atmosphere is tailored to college students, but the goal is to create an atmosphere for everyone.

Rebekka also offered insight as to how the Student Cellar advertises their restaurant and events. The Student Cellar has used the popular newspaper Reykjavík Grapevine to advertise their restaurant, while students are responsible for advertising their own events, which is often done through Facebook and other forms of social media. After further discussion about how businesses advertise, Rebekka said, "We are only a country of 400,000, why are there so many apps?" expressing the disconnect of information regarding events in Reykjavík (Rebekka Sigurðardóttir, personal communication, September 5, 2019). She believes that there is definitely an overload of information available. The interview concluded with a discussion of local activities that were currently available. Despite living in Reykjavík for two weeks, we were not previously aware of these events.

BERG Contemporary

Kristína Aðalsteinsdóttir (Gallery Operations Manager)

Kristína Aðalsteinsdóttir, the Gallery Operations manager for BERG Contemporary, told us about their marketing methods. She said that all three galleries in Reykjavík are on *Artsy*, an online platform for collecting and discovering art, and BERG is on Facebook and Instagram. As an art gallery, we were told there is a higher emphasis on looking clean and professional, so images for ads and posts are done by professional photographers. However, this is apparently not very time consuming and she gets the images back within the day. Marketing was not a large time commitment at the gallery, instead, most of their small team's efforts are put towards running or planning new installations. Our team observed that appealing to a large audience was not the goal at BERG, rather they wanted to reach people who cared about art. They

understand that they are in a niche market, and advertised to that market. During our interview, Kristína realized that it had never occurred to her to advertise on the street because that style of marketing does not correlate with their target audience.

Gamla Bíó

Solveig María Ívarsdóttir

We spoke with Solveig María Ívarsdóttir, who is the marketing and events manager at Gamla Bíó. Gamla Bíó was an old cinema and opera house, but now it serves as a venue for live music, weddings, and other events. The Peterson Suite is located on the top floor of Gamla Bíó, and it offers a place to enjoy a drink with a view of Reykjavík.

Solveig María began by sharing all the events the venue has to offer, and she further described how she marketed these events. Gamla Bíó offers live music weekly along with promotional events such as "Bubbly Thursdays" and "Happy Wednesdays". Solveig María markets these events and the venue as a whole through Facebook, Instagram, What's On, Grapevine, Google Posts, radio, and physical advertisements on the streets. She mentioned that they primarily use Facebook events in Icelandic to get information to locals and will only post the event in English if the event is something she thinks particularly caters to tourists. Often, their events are centered around a famous Icelandic native, or Icelandic music that tourists would not know. Solveig stated that "It depends on what I'm posting or where I'm posting if I'm using English [and Icelandic] or only Icelandic. It's very mixed" (Solveig María Ívarsdóttir, personal communication, September 17, 2019). Gamla Bíó is not located in a centralized location, and because of this they post signs on a nearby corner to direct tourists to their venue. She stated, "It's very hard to get people to know about this place. Tourists, they are only stopping here for a few days, and there are so many things to see and do, and sometimes they are just dropping in because they see something. That's why we take our signs to the Laugavegur to direct them here" (Solveig María Ívarsdóttir, personal communication, September 17, 2019). They often have issues with their signs being removed due to the competition for area on the streets and the city's ban of physical advertisements in public walkways.

We also gained insight through how event organizers currently feel about the *Visit Reykjavík* event posting process. Solveig María has used both *Visit Reykjavík* and What's On to advertise events to tourists, but now she only uses What's On. She thought that *Visit Reykjavík*'s website was unappealing and was too tedious to register an event.

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APPENDIX E - RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONING

This chart visualizes the recommendations we have for the *Visit Reykjavík* website, and also provides insight to why these recommendations are relevant.

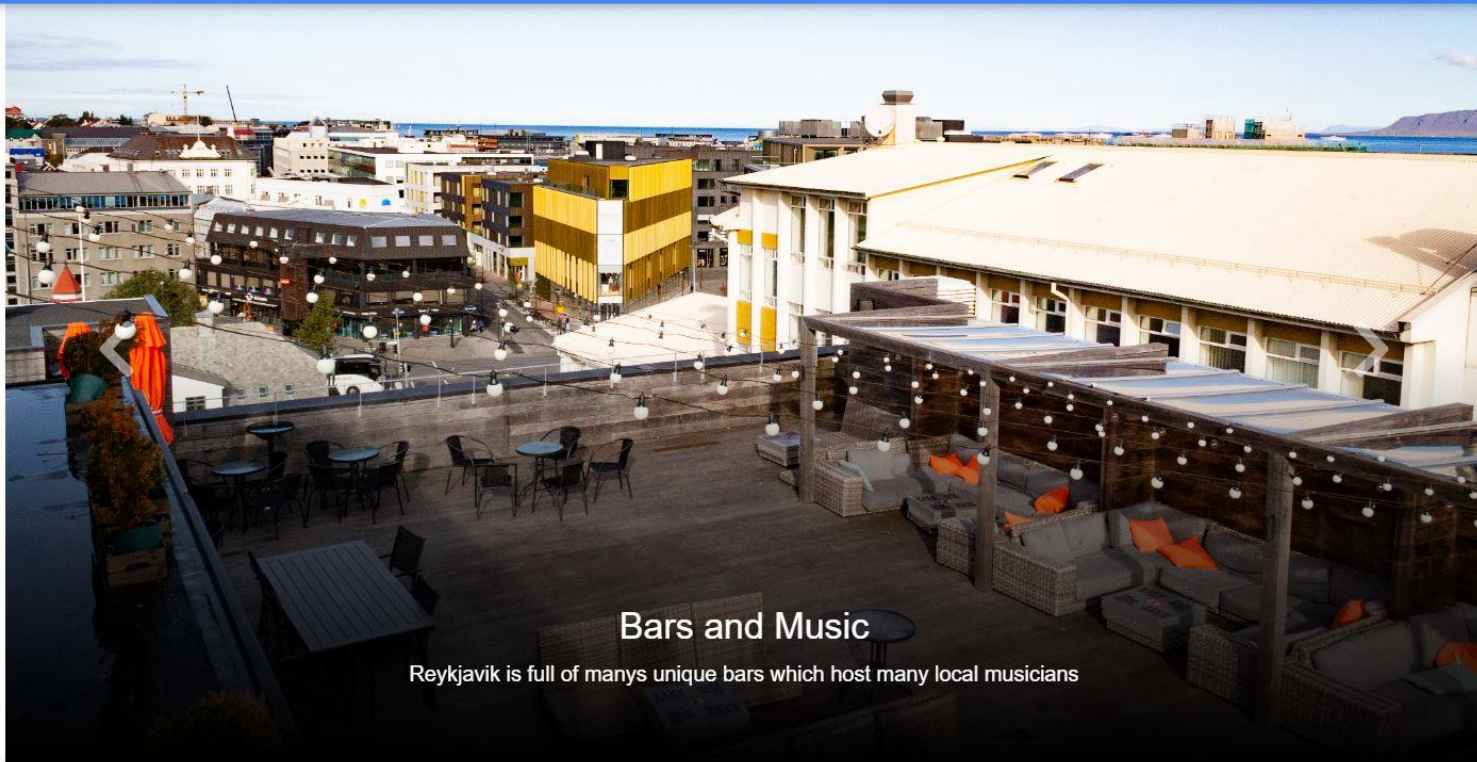| Area of Focus	Recommendation	Existing Problem	Data Supporting	Effect of Solution
Enhance the user experience on the Visit Reykjavík website	Showcase a variety of events on the homepage	The current homepage has a carousel of only two images, which we feel does not capture what the website contains. It has one is of Hallgrimskirkja and one of the pools.	▪ The average amount of time a user is on your homepage is 2-3 mins. ▪ The circles that overlay the carousel have a bounce rate of 70% + meaning they are ineffective.	▪ Having a greater variety of images cycling through will advertise more types of events.
	Utilize card carousels on the activity page	An overwhelming amount of data may be presented on a single page.	▪ "We are only a country of 400,000, why are there so many apps?" which expresses the overabundance of information in Iceland regarding tourism	▪ Tourists have fewer activities to look through at a time, so they will not be overwhelmed. ▪ This also promotes user interaction, which will encourage the user to stay on the sight longer.
	Install event filters	Visit Reykjavík wants to establish the city as a tourist destination but many of the city's events get lost in the nature tour events.	▪ On 13.4.19 we found 29% of the events page were nature tours ▪ During late 2019 we found that 73% of events advertised on competing websites were not events within the city	▪ Having filters will allow tourists to consolidate their search to more specific types of events that cater to their interests.
	Develop a local map to assist in directing users to events	Visitors have a difficult time navigating the city due to the language barrier.	▪ The Hard Rock Café used an advertisement that points out the direction to their establishment rather than stating its address.	▪ Tourists will be able to see where local activities are locationed. ▪ Other local businesses can benefit from businesses located near them that use this feature.
	Utilize Google posts	More people should be using VisitReykjavík.is.	▪ 40% of the tourists we surveyed had visited VisitReykjavik.is	▪ If more people are using the website, people may find reasons to stay in Reykjavík longer.

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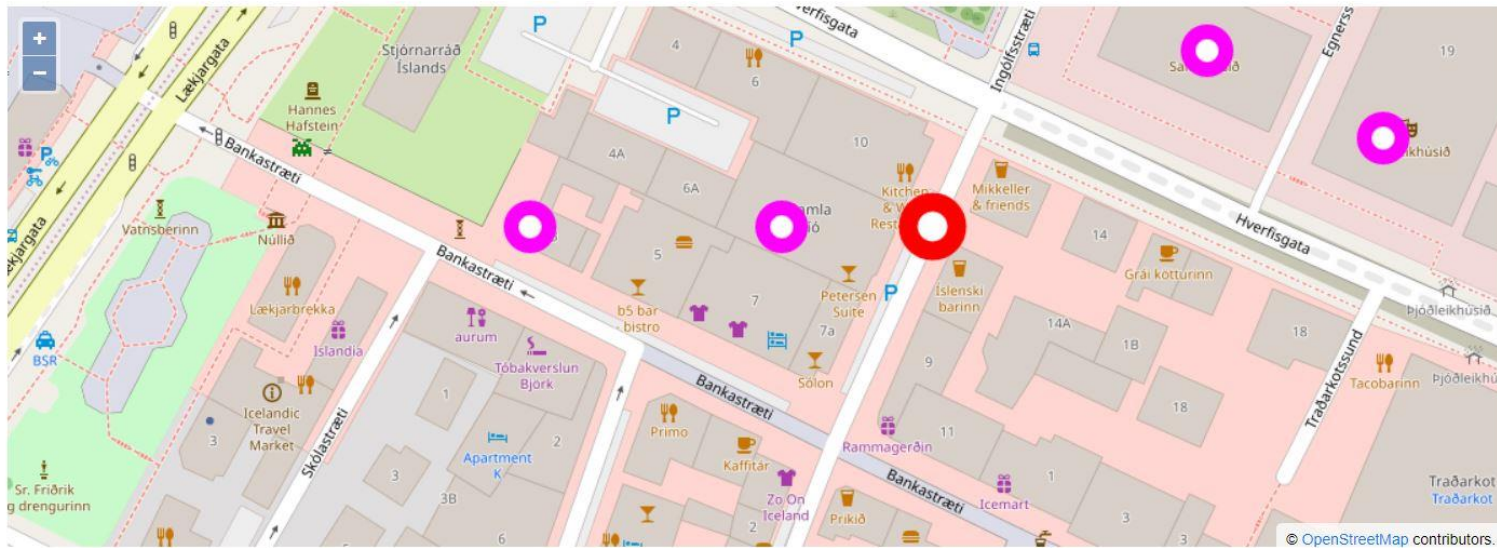| Area of Focus	Recommendation	Existing Problem	Data Supporting	Effect of Solution
Utilize Data to Asses Solutions	**Create Google Conversions**	Currently conversions are not implemented even though they are a powerful analysis tool.	▪ Google Conversions allow a company to track website usage.	▪ This will allow you better understand what works for their website and what does not.
	Make the homepage the primary landing page for your advertisements	Currently most people enter the website on pages that aren't the home page and then don't interact with the website.	▪ The current most common landing page is the /culture-hill page and it had a bounce rate of 70%, while the home page had a bounce rate of 40%.	▪ People will see more of the website initially if they begin on the homepage, rather than if they start on a secondary page.
	Provide feedback to event organizers	The Visit Reykjavík website does not provide event organizers information about how their.	▪ Brygan and Bruggús currently gets feedback on their business from Untappd. ▪ Gamla Bío expressed the data she gets from Instagram and Facebook was valuable feedback and a feature ▪ "It was like, it took time and I did not see any results so I was like '[forget] this'. I will go spend my time elsewhere."	▪ Event organizers will be more likely to continue to post on the Visit Reykjavík website.
Improve the experience for event organizers when they advertise through Visit Reykjavík	**Develop a simpler event form**	The form is currently tedious to fill out, and event organizers want it to be as simple as possible.	▪ "It felt like [the form] took a longer time than usual because you have to put everything in Icelandic and many categories and the text had to be a specific [amount of characters] and you also had to put the English version also."	▪ A simpler form will encourage more event organizers to advertise their activities through Visit Reykjavík.
	Reach out to event organizers	Event organizers have some experience with the Visit Reykjavík site already and may need to be convinced to try it again.	▪ "Yes we have used [Visit Reykjaík.is] but I am not sure how tourists using it … Because last time we were using it, I felt like it was not very good, but maybe it's better now?"	▪ There will be a greater variety of events on the website for tourists to see.

APPENDIX F - MOCK WEBSITE

This is a collection of screenshots from our mock website to provide our recommendations for *Visit Reykjavík* to offline viewers.

Home   Event Map   Things To Do   Add Your Event   Back to IQP Website

Find Nearby Events

© OpenStreetMap contributors.

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Home   Event Map   Things To Do   Add Your Event   Back to IQP Website

Food   −

Reykjavik has an impressive number of quality restaurants, staffed with award winning chefs that create both imaginative and delicious cusine.

See More »

Filters

Price
- ☐ $$$$
- ☐ $$$
- ☐ $$
- ☐ $

Categories
- ☐ Food 10
- ☐ Bars 7
- ☐ Museums 13
- ☐ Monuments 5

Sjávargrillið

A seafood grill in located at Skólavörðustígur 14 that serves many of Icelandic's traditional dishes with high-

Read More »

Bæjarins beztu

Bæjarins beztu pylsur (English: The best hot dog in town) often shortened to simply "Bæjarins beztu", is a popular hot dog

Read More »

Kattakaffihusid

Kattakaffihusid is Iceland's first cat cafe. We opened on March 1st 2018 but the first cat cafe opened in Taiwan in 1998 and

Read More »

Bars   −

Reykjavík's legendary nightlife, or "jammith" as the locals say, is certainly gaining a reputation for being one of the hottest places to party in the world today!

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Submit a New Event

Title

Choose an image   Browse

Short Description   Long Description

Website
www.visitreykjavik.is

Address
123 Rainbow Road   1234   Reykjavik

Start Date   End Date

APPENDIX G - EVENT FORM COMPARISON: OLD VS NEW

***Visit Reykjavík's* Old Event Form:**

Intro *   ❸

Text *   ❸

0

Tags   New tag   Tag   Add   ❸

English

Title *   ❸

Place *   ❸

Intro *   ❸

62

Intro *   ❓

Text *   ❓

0

Tags   New tag   Tag   Add   ❓

Add new language

             Language   Add

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✓ Location * ❓

Google

Þessi síða getur ekki hlaðið Google kort rétt.

Áttu þetta vefsvæði?   Í lagi
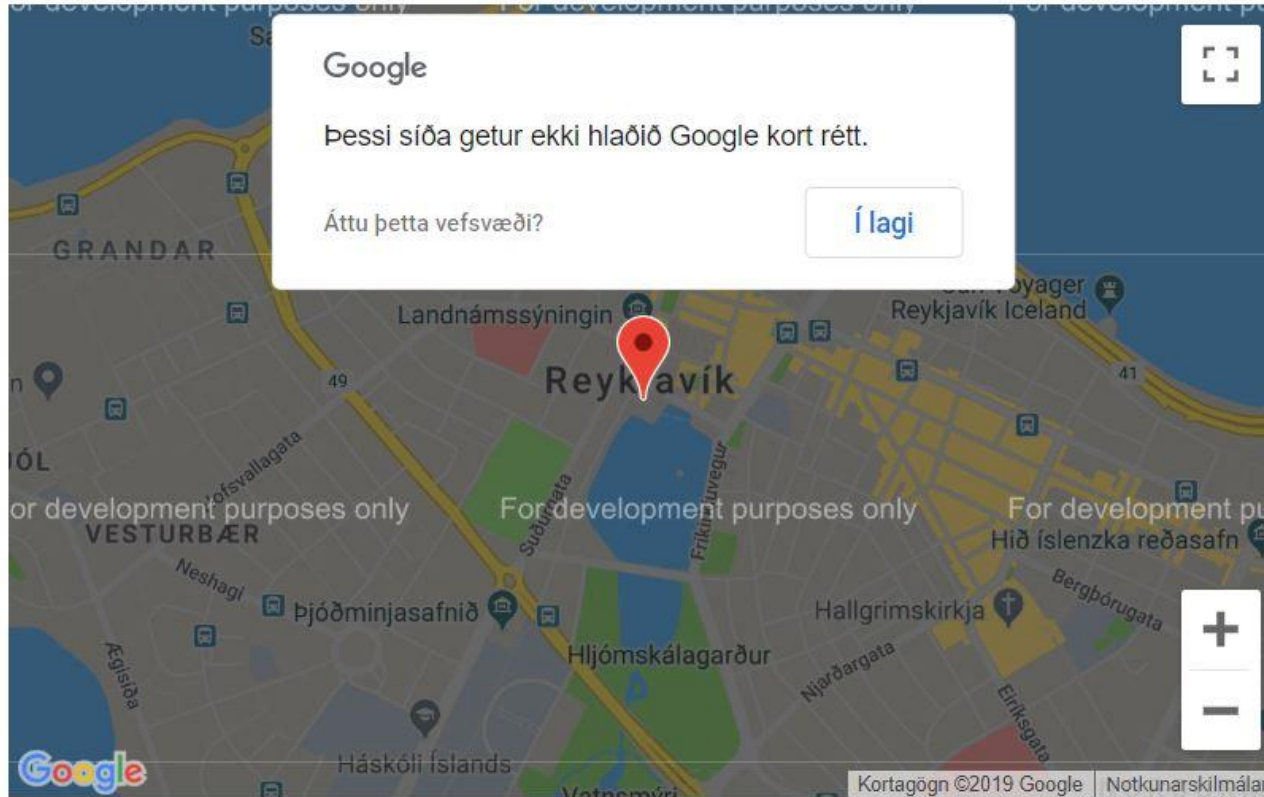
Type in the address or select it from the map

| Streetname house number, zip code |

Street *

Postal code *

City / town *

❤ Date *   ❓

✓ Single	X Multiple

Start   17.09.2019   12   :   30

End   17.09.2019   14   :   30

Add date

All dates

No dates added

> **Contact**   ❓

> **Media**   ❓

> **Extra**   ❓

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Our New Recommended Event Form:

Submit a New Event

Title

| Choose an image | Browse |

Short Description   Long Description

Website
www.visitreykjavik.is

Address
123 Rainbow Road   1234   Reykjavik

Start Date   End Date
mm/dd/yyyy   mm/dd/yyyy

Start Time   End Time

Tags