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Searching for the Urban Oasis

Day spas and Rethinking the Relationship
between the Body and Healing Places

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Abstract

This thesis develops and extends recent work in geography on the therapeutic experiences of places and the body, in an examination of well-being in the day spa. Drawing on the concepts sense of place, place identity, and therapeutic landscapes, developed in place and well-being literature, the thesis explores how the day spa is produced and experienced as a site that contributes to diverse forms of well-being. The importance of the spa design, experience, individual choice, and the regulation of the body within the spa setting, provide an insight as to how the day spa develops the reputation of being a healing place. Using original data collected from interviews and observations from the study sites, Ponsonby and Newmarket in Auckland, the thesis argues that, how the day spa is produced and experienced reflects Western lifestyle commitments, cultural constructions that regulate the appearance of the body, and the commodification of well-being experiences. The treatments, services, and overall design of the day spa, tailor the idea of well-being and healing to meet contemporary sociocultural expectations of society. These arguments are located within the connection the day spa has to the body industry, the selection of treatments and services provided, and how nature is simulated as an ideal in the day spa setting. This suggests that the day spa is ultimately a source of therapeutic experiences, where its ability to contribute to one's sense of well-being depends on the relative experiences the individual has with that place. The day spa becomes an oasis; both a safe haven and a mirage through its regulation and control over the body and understanding of well-being.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Place is a dynamic element in health and wellness management, an industry in which healing and place are nearly always inseparable. It is a critical human need to have locations that offer healing, rehabilitation and support general well-being. From across history, some examples include the Turkish bath houses of Izmir, and the in-patient dependency treatments available at Hamner Springs (Canterbury, New Zealand). Healing can occur in various domains such as the physical, mental, or spiritual, and in several places throughout both the natural and built environment. Because of this flexibility in domain and place, exploring the positive healing, or therapeutic characteristics of place, is an increasingly important determinant of personal and collective health. This is due to the idea that places contribute to the development of physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of well-being.

In premodern and traditional societies, natural landscapes were associated with healing, where bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, and thermal pools, were typically located. Some notable examples of healing waters include Epidauros, Greece (Gesler, 2003), Bath, England (Gesler, 1998), and Te Aroha, New Zealand (Foley *et al.*, 2011). Nowadays, the built environment plays an important role in healing and wellness management because built settings lend favourable clinical and scientific management practices to treat various illnesses and conditions. Additionally, the opportunity to visit traditional, natural environments has become challenging due to the constraints of urban life and its commitments, including the expansion of urban centres.

In order to meet needs, given these constraints, certain facilities have been developed within urban areas to offer healing and wellness management and bring characteristics of the natural setting into the built environment. This research specifically focuses on day spas as an example of such urban-based facilities. Further, this research investigates how these businesses provide the desire for healing, relaxation, rejuvenation and other “felt needs” that enhance one’s well-being through particular actions (usually ritualistic), treatments, and services, within the time and accessibility constraints that urban lifestyles impose.

The integration between natural and built environments in pursuit of well-being management has been the basis for many geographic studies (Hoyez, 2007; Little, 2012; Thorsen, 2015; Thomas, 2015). In particular, this perspective has contributed to the expanding literature associated with sense of place, place identity, and the concept of therapeutic landscapes.

Geographers have focused on place as a signifying tool. This allows the characteristics of the place to be used to promote a particular cause, often emphasising a specific identity. Kearns and Gesler (1998), make the point that, to develop a link between place and health, the notion 'sense of place' is used. Sense of place reflects the relationship held between daily experiences of a place, and the perception an individual has of their place in the world. These experiences are linked to particular places and thus, acquire a personality (Jeong and Santos, 2004; Arefi, 1999).

Sense of place is a broad concept, but a key component to understanding sense of place is the individual. It is the individual who brings their personality, past experiences, emotions, and understandings to a place, to form a sense of place (Ujang and Zakariya, 2015). The way an individual looks at a place continues to evolve as a person's life cycle progresses and as the landscape around them is transformed (Wilkie and Roberson, 2010). Sense of place thus emphasises both local and extended influences. This relates to the impact that globalisation has on local communities and the type and breadth of services made available, including the type of day spa treatments available (Williams, 1999).

Another relevant concept is place identity which stems from the idea of 'being', as the very essence of place. Place identity is a major component for the identity of the self and is deeply woven into human experience. As a result, migration, culture, or the symbolic context of a place, can also shape place identification and personal identification (Williams, 1999; Kearns and Gesler, 1998). Identity manifests through ideas, preferences, values, objectives, and beliefs, that are relevant to place and how the place is understood and perceived. This makes it more precise than sense of place as a concept alone (Casakin et al., 2015).

Though place is perceived through the interaction of people and culture, the effect that non-human entities and objects have on place making, is important when understanding the concept of therapeutic landscapes. The qualities that make a space therapeutic or healing, often link to the presence or connection with non-human entities and objects within it. This includes animals, plants, water, or created objects, such as computers, or fitness machines (Conradson, 2005). This connectedness allows consideration of the qualities and attributes of

a place, sometimes referred to as the ‘spirit’ of a place, in reference to the emotional values associated with a place that inspire the individual.

Therapeutic landscapes differ over space, time and between individuals. The qualities of these particular places may become reinvented as a result of changing views about well-being. What appears to be a therapeutic landscape in a particular setting may not carry over to other situations. This is simply because there are no universally accepted criteria for healthy environments, nor do individuals experience environments in the same way due to cultural or gendered specificity of therapeutic landscapes (Williams, 1999; Smyth, 2005). As this argues, therapeutic landscapes are best explored as *therapeutic experiences* due to the transformable nature and outcomes shaped by individual involvement in place.

1.2 Producing and experiencing well-being – Thesis Rationale

Despite the various studies carried out on the impact that place has on individual and collective well-being, and the presence of therapeutic landscapes, very few researchers have focused on facilities that were once strictly associated with the natural environment and reconstructed for the built environment. For instance, Gesler’s (2003) work on Bath, England, demonstrates how hydrotherapy became a popular Roman pastime and was effectively used for the body to manage its way back to health. Hydrotherapy was founded on cold-water wraps, baths and showers, but morphed over time to warmer, water-based treatments such as spas and ultimately to electric baths (Durie, 2006). Thus, water acted as a promoter for a therapeutic idea (Foley, 2014).

In recent years, research on spas has occurred for their health benefits broadly within town settings (Foley et al., 2011), or as therapeutic site for body regulation practices (Little, 2013). Specifically, most studies inquire about spas from a tourism perspective, navigating the preferences of spa-goers (Kucukusta and Guillet, 2014; Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015; Kamata and Misui, 2015), or as tourist destinations for health and wellness fanatics (Gustavo, 2010). Though the ideas of well-being and therapeutic spaces are debated in multiple studies, just how the production and experience of well-being within these facilities occurs, has not adequately been explored.

From a geographic perspective, environments rely on the interaction between people and place. The social, cultural, and economic values applied to the setting give it meaning and

how the setting is characterised can affect the individual and their place in the world. As Little (2013) suggests, day spas are sites of bodily regulation and control. But this is only developed through sociocultural and economic ideologies such as the commodification of health and leisure activities, along with ideas of ageing, and gender constructs, which contextualises notions of well-being.

Without exploring how well-being is produced or experienced in the day spa – a therapeutic space which provides a variety of treatments and services for improving one’s health, well-being, and bodily appearance – studies fail to provide reasons as to why spas have been able to evolve, and how they hold a reputation for wellness and healing of the body. For this reason, this current research investigates how day spas in contemporary Auckland, are produced and experienced as sites that contribute to physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual forms of well-being.

1.3 Objectives

Broadly, this thesis examines how the urban lifestyle has challenged the relationship between the body and healing places. In particular, the research considers how day spas are produced and experienced as places that contribute to physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual forms of well-being. This consideration allows for the opportunity to explore textual readings of spa settings, understand user experiences, while investigating how well-being, healing and the body are framed within the spa setting. Qualitative analysis will be carried out in this exploratory study through semi-formal interviews, non-participatory observation and by investigation of secondary material.

Three questions are posed to assist the investigation of how well-being and healing are manifested within day spas and what place-based processes occur to initiate this possibility.

1. How do day spas approach healing and well-being?

Here, I want to investigate the treatments and services offered, and the way these correspond with those needing healing from an illness or health issue compared to people simply needing help managing their well-being.

2. What kinds of place-based processes inform these diverse approaches to healing and well-being?

Society is made up of various systems that interact with one another to produce social and cultural values. I want to explore the processes that occur in society that could initiate the approaches to different treatments and services for healing and well-being and how these help characterise the day spa setting.

3. How do day spas evoke a relationship between the body and nature to restore wellness?

I want to reflect on the traditional characteristics of the spa setting and consider how this has been transformed into the contemporary day spa setting through therapeutic experiences, science, and the idea of the landscape as a text that can be read.

By addressing the foregoing questions, this research will provide an understanding of how ideas around healing, well-being and the body have changed in response to Western lifestyle commitments, being part of a consumer society, the influence of gender constructs, and corporeality. In addition to scholarly understanding, there may be benefits of this research to providers and users of day spas in the form of enhanced understanding of spatial dimensions of their chosen source of well-being management.

1.4 Thesis Organisation

This thesis will be organised into six chapters as follows:

Chapter One has introduced the study as one that focuses on the impact that places have on well-being. The place that this research focuses on specifically is the day spas in Auckland. A set of businesses where I have sought to explore how they are produced and experienced as sites that contribute to multiple senses of well-being. How this quest for well-being is presented and achieved is the foundation for my objectives. These express my goal of investigating how healing and well-being are approached, the place based processes that inform these approaches, and how a relationship between the body and nature is emphasised to restore wellness.

Chapter Two reviews relevant literature that pertains to the topics of this thesis and bears on the research questions posed above. This chapter is divided into three sections that correspond to the three main themes of my research. Firstly, the notion of place will be explored where ideas on sense of place and place identity will be reviewed and discussed. Secondly, the concept of well-being will be discussed as emerging from the concept of health and how it has diversified into various forms such as therapeutic landscapes. This connects the importance of place to the production and experience of well-being. Thirdly, the development and characteristics of day spas will be explained. Here, the importance of the natural landscape and its healing qualities in the traditional spa will be discussed, highlighting how contemporary day spas have packaged and presented nature.

Chapter Three discusses the spatial context and location of this study. In particular, the importance of choosing Auckland as a research site and two of its suburbs, Ponsonby and Newmarket, will be emphasised. Particular demographic and location factors mean that these suburbs are optimal choices for developing day spa facilities.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology used to collect and process information and data for this research. The study is exploratory in nature and uses qualitative methods which enabled the ideas, values, and opinions of day spas users to be sampled, assessed and analysed.

Chapter Five is the synthesis and discussion of my primary research data in the context of the research questions and literature. Interview excerpts, observation findings and secondary material are analysed in light of my objectives and divided into five sections. The formulation of the day spa environment will be initially discussed. I argue that framing nature as a socio-political issue, serves to transform the sense of place and identity associated with day spas and its association with wellness, as a relational therapeutic experience. This gives way to ideas of the spa experience. Lastly, corporeal anxiety, gender constructs and the body industry that reflect place based processes, and support day spa development, will be addressed.

Chapter Six summarises the research, reflecting on the production and experiences of well-being in day spas as reflected through ideas of therapeutic experiences, and the contextual nature of place. At this point, I return to the overarching idea of this thesis (as expressed in the thesis title), and elaborate on the idea of day spas as the urban oasis, both a safe haven, but also as a mirage for the control and regulation over the understanding of well-being and the body. The limitations of this study will be discussed, reflecting on the methodology of this study and lastly, future research ideas will be outlined.

Chapter Two: The Ability to Heal: Place, Well-being, and Day Spas

This chapter draws on the concepts of place and well-being to understand how day spas are produced and experienced. In the first section of the chapter, the concept of place will be elaborated. Specifically two concepts, sense of place and place identity, will be considered in relation to day spa development. In the second section of the chapter, the notion of well-being will be explored with its connection to health, and the development of the new health paradigm. Additionally, the idea of the therapeutic landscape will be discussed. In the final section of the chapter, the day spa will be explained. Reflection on the connection day spas have to water and its role as a place for body and gender regulation will be established before exploring its association with consumerism.

2.1 Introducing Place

In a generic sense, place refers to a geographic locale that can be comparable and synonymous with the terms area, region, or location (Cresswell, 2004). In human geography, place is a concept that has held a greater significance since the ‘new’ cultural turn during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, place is no longer seen as a physical or environmental outcome of describing a location, but rather, a major factor in how social relationships are formed in space and produced through mobilities, flows, and differential power relations (Williams, 2015; Cresswell, 2011). This change in conceptualization has emphasised the role of power and politics in the creation or remaking of place, and that place is socially constructed. It is important to see day spas as being socially constructed places because they are developed through cultural and social values. It is these cultural and social values that contribute to the production and experience of wellness in day spas in different ways.

Place becomes a unique point of interaction within social, cultural and economic networks, as it can influence systematic processes at various scales in society, and impact one’s well-being. Places can also be distinguished by their environmental qualities, the name, local culture, objects, intensity of meanings, memories, and stories that people can derive from it or ascribe to it (Relph, 2008; Conradson, 2005).

Places are continually reproduced and open to contestation due to collective and individual experiences occurring on that site. The change associated with places also impacts experiences felt by people as place does not have permanent boundaries. This means they can become smaller, larger, or completely disappear (Williams, 2015; Williams 1998). From this fusion of environment and culture, significant cultural landscapes are developed. Within these cultural landscapes, a sense of place is formed by the personal experiences, social mediations and constructions of place that occur on that site. Through sense of place, place attachment and place identity are developed, influencing the way people think, see, and feel the physical world (Relph, 2008; Williams, 1999).

As a foundation for this research, I will discuss sense of place and place identity as they assist in understanding the experience of day spas, and how they are produced as sites that contribute to personal well-being. Further, the non-permanence of place can be reflected in the way businesses offering day spa services open and close, change and evolve their services, and occupy different locations over time in addition to the changes in the market and physical environment around them.

2.1.1 Defining Place

Place is a complex concept due to its lack of definite interpretation. In some instances, researchers have defined place only for its physical factors while the social meanings and emotions are less explored. In other cases, and in keeping with contemporary literature, place is understood as comprising a mix of physical, social, cultural, and economic factors (Ujang and Zakariya, 2015; Noormohammadi, 2012). Place is not simply a physical location nor could it successfully be researched as such, alone.

Agnew (1987), suggests there are three basic attributes to a place: location, locale, and sense of place. Place varies in scale from the size of a neighbourhood, to a town, and can also specify the location or the 'where' of something. A natural spa may encompass an entire town such as Hanmer Springs, New Zealand, whereas a day spa business may be confined to a specific site such as a unit in a shopping complex or a renovated house in a suburban area.

The locale denotes material things that structure social and cultural life in a place, such as population, roads, town centres, natural phenomena, and buildings. Hanmer Springs for example, is a town with a total population of 729 people and was built around a hot spring (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). A day spa business can only provide services to a limited number of people at a time, and can be situated in various buildings along main or suburban roads. Because of the different size of locations and what they contain, both sites have

different meanings and characteristics attributed to them that are influenced by insiders and outsiders to the place. This can influence what forms of well-being are provided and how valuable the experience is. This emphasises sense of place.

Accordingly, the emotional bonds that people establish with place play an important role in the way place is perceived and interpreted. Yet at the same time, the perception and cognitive representation of a place can also affect the bonds established between an individual and that place (Casakin and Bernardo, 2012; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015).

2.1.2 Sense of Place

Sense of place is an interactive relationship held between the daily experiences of a place and the perceptions of one's place in the world. A key component of understanding sense of place is the individual. People bring their personality, background, past experiences, emotions, and cognitive understandings to a place and proceed to form a sense of the place (Foote and Azaryahu, 2009). Though an individual may bring all of these reactions and responses to places, they are not static. The way an individual regards a place continues to evolve as a person's life cycle progresses, and as the landscape around them is transformed (Wilkie and Roberson, 2010). Sense of place provides the foundation for place attachment and place identity to form. Thus, sense of place is a relevant concept for this thesis as it connects with people's identity, their identification with place, and the well-being that is generated by the experience of 'being' in particular places.

2.1.2.1 Genius Loci

Sense of place can be conceptualised in two ways. The first, termed '*genius loci*', is used to explore the various factors which define the character, local distinctiveness of a specific place, such as the topographical, spiritual, or built environment, and lastly, people's psychological and emotional engagement with place.

Genius loci cannot realistically be discussed in isolation as it is comprised of factors such as economic and political dimensions (Stedman, 2003). However as Morel-Edniebrown (2012) suggests, *genius loci* is distinct within the city because the ways in which people use and adapt the city fabric to their needs, is what gives texture and richness to the urban experience. *Genius loci* is not so much a symbol of the place to be seen and understood, but a highly personalised filter to make sense of what is personally relevant.

Spas are well known for their association with water and the supposed healing qualities of water. The connection the day spa has to water emphasises the idea of *genius loci*. Water is not simply a symbol of the spa, but the dominant mode through which healing within the spa setting occurs, making it significant for all spa-goers. The presence of water produces a sense of authenticity in day spas because water was the defining factor for traditional spa development when they were historically focused around natural springs such as Bath in England or Te Aroha in New Zealand (Gesler, 1998; Foley et al., 2011). With this in mind, modern spas create a sense of place by using the term “spa” in their business names or by providing water features in their facilities, to express the deep-rooted value of water in the advancement of the spa experience.

2.1.2.2 The multidimensional construct

The second conceptualization of sense of place focuses on how people experience, use, and understand a place. With the concept of sense of place, buildings, streets, or landscapes exist in relation to human emotions and feelings. Referring to Agnew (1987), sense of place specifically reflects the subjective and emotional attachments that people have to place.

Every physical setting can be experienced in a certain way as a result of the fit between self-identity and location (Williams, 1999). Individuals bring their own beliefs, values, and opinions to places, but also share a sense of place with others in a group on a social and cultural level (Convery et al., 2012; Campelo et al., 2014). Hence, a sense of place is not only specifically an individual experience, but also a collective one, as Wilson (2003), conceptualises.

The postmodern sense of place emphasises both local and extended influences. This relates to the implications that globalisation has in local communities. People are simultaneously networked by local and outside linkages. That is why sense of place can be differentiated between being locally specific, and a global process that constitutes local senses of place (Massey, 1994; Williams, 2015). By integrating the world into a single economic system through supply chains and flows of people, the way that we understand a place is challenged by resources and information. At the same time, the emotional attachment that sense of place provides, can be disrupted through the standardization of landscapes, a form of inauthenticity that is a by-product of globalisation (Arefi, 1999; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015).

The challenge faced by day spa businesses revolve around finding a balance between preserving a sense of local identity, but at the same time, doing what it takes to survive in the

changing global economic system. Sometimes this means replicating the same day spa environment, or providing treatments that have been sourced elsewhere in the world, or are available in another facility nearby. In the end, the only differentiating factor may be quality and price.

In this context, day spas not only provide basic beautification treatments, but also provide treatments of cultural and symbolic origins from around the world. For example, Ayurvedic massages from India, Thai body massages or traditional Chinese medicinal herbs can be found in multiple day spa businesses. These examples link to the idea that health and global health treatments can be commoditised and altered to fit western health issues, such as to relieve stress or reduce weight, rather than be used for their actual purposes such as sinus relief, or arthritic issues.

Sense of place is a broad concept with much conceptual ground to cover. Indeed, Kaltenborn (1998) concludes that sense of place should be examined as a broad emotional attachment, comprising intertwined and inseparable components; place identity and place attachment. This argument has been supported by other researchers (Arefi, 1999; Casakin et al, 2015; Jeong and Santos, 2004), who have suggested that sense of place gives way to the formulation of place identity and place attachment. Additionally, those two subsets are intertwined and are often used to explain the same outcomes. Places that have been attributed meaning have a sense of identity. For day spas, this identity can be as simple as being a site for healing and wellness, or can correspond to deeper levels of value and emotion, and act as a site of health consumption.

2.1.3 Place Identity

Place identity stems from the idea of being shaped by, identifying with the very essence of place, or belonging to a specific place through interaction. Place identity is a major component to the identity of the self which is manifested through own ideas, preferences, values, objectives and beliefs. These are based on the idea of belonging to geographically defined groups as well as how the place is understood and perceived.

Accordingly, places can be seen as social categories with a shared social meaning as a result of the interaction between the elements of a group, not only as a scenario where interaction occurs. Therefore, places and identities are mutually constructed and constituted. Identity is founded in both the person and object, the culture to which it belongs, and varies

as circumstances and attitudes change. Because place identity is associated with the self, it is important to explore, as it additionally affects a person's sense of well-being. This factor makes it significant for understanding day spa businesses and how individual companies approach healing and well-being in a variety of ways.

Place identity exists through two dimensions. The first dimension involves cultural characteristics such as the historical, social, and geographical factors that help form the distinctiveness of places. Spas have historically been associated with healing and wellness. It was customary to see the users of spas being either of higher class in society or belonging to the very ill.

The second dimension emphasises human qualities such as security, love, esteem, and belonging among others. Spas, besides providing healing and wellness are also sites for self-improvement and self-acknowledgement. They act as a place to improve one's health or to simply be pampered and relaxed. They also suggest nurturing and comfort for users who may not receive such feelings elsewhere.

In addition to the dual dimensions, place identity can be conceptualised in three forms according to Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996). Place can be experienced as, part of the self, congruent with values and behaviour that affect a person's day to day existence, and lastly, an emotional link to a place. In particular, the latter two conceptualisations are relevant to exploring day spas as they both have strong links to well-being and the production of wellness.

2.1.3.1 Values, attitudes and beliefs

Place is deeply woven into human experience and, as a result, culture, or the symbolic context of a place can also shape values, attitudes, and behaviour of an individual which can affect their day-to-day existence (Williams, 1999; Brettell, 2006; Price, 2013). Additionally, as Jeong and Santos (2004) suggest, contested meanings of place lead to the reconstruction of regional and symbolic identities and can challenge an individual's sense of place-in-the-world.

As Little (2012) explains, traditional spas were sought out by elite clientele who saw spas as a site to treat illnesses by bathing in the waters, and also as a place for socialising. This idea has dramatically changed because of the link spas now have with politics and culture. In contemporary society, spas have been reconstructed as businesses in urban centres that appeal to all citizens, those who are fighting illnesses, and those who aren't. They have also been

constructed as sites for disciplining the body in terms of rejuvenation, beautification, and ageing.

Symbolically, spas are no longer simply associated with bathing, but as a place for pampering and self-improvement. In some instances metaphors can help the way people interact and develop links with the spa environment. Visual metaphors in the design of a building, cultural metaphors, and decorative motifs can stress certain elements that represent the local culture (Casakin and Elliot, 2012). In day spas, flowers are often displayed as they symbolise femininity, beauty, and purity. Day spas furthermore advertise these features in their treatments and services, prompting a relationship between body and nature to restore wellness, providing an emotional link.

2.1.3.2 Place as an emotional link

Place identity can emphasise an emotional link to a place and can be integrated with the idea of place attachment. Hernandez et al., (2007) has suggested that people develop stronger bonds with the city than those established with the neighbourhood because neighbourhoods are interchangeable places, playing only a minor role in place identity development. This partly has to do with the multitude of symbolic meanings associated with the city and the various cultural values people bring to the city. Place has no boundaries, and on a city level, there are a larger number of values, opinions, and beliefs to consider with respect to the constitution of place due to the multiple social groups. As Hoyez (2007) states, larger social groups establish the important and respected places that benefit the local residents, while displacing people outside of the social group. This observation can relate back to how day spas are popular in large cities for middle class populations due to the individualised treatments that fit into everyday schedules. For lower class individuals, day spas may not provide a sense of identity due to costs and limited accessibility. Instead, naturally occurring therapeutic places such as parks or beaches are preferred, as there is no associated cost, and because of the intermediate connection it provides to the community.

The different types of populations in an area can contribute to varying place identities on the urban scale through the social and cultural characteristics they contribute. This can have an impact on the link between mind, body, and society. In some cases, a long established population may react negatively to newcomers and the changes they inevitably bring (Shutika, 2012).

Traditionally spas were natural occurrences such as springs and grottos, valued for health and spiritual reasons. The transfer of spa qualities to salon businesses affected the

popularity of spas as it challenged the way spas were regarded. Instead of being a place of bathing and socialising, it was transformed into a site where the body was to be disciplined and regulated. For example, a business practicing traditional Eastern medicine may include “spa” into their business name or treatments, despite having no link to traditional spa therapies. Over time, the changes that occur in a place can be accepted as it may encourage positive changes to the community. This increasing diversity of day spa businesses enables healing and well-being to be approached in various ways, meeting the expectations of people from different cultures, and encourage people to explore the different forms through which healing can be gained.

Despite many researchers dividing place attachment and place identity, some say that the relation between the two is hard to distinguish because both concepts can be used interchangeably. Because the concepts can be used interchangeably, it can be difficult to distinguish which of the two develops first (Hernandez et al., 2007). Studies on place attachment or place identity tend to research ‘natives’ with long residence in a place, then discuss the idea of place identity or place attachment separately. Consequently, what the research may prove may not be applicable to newcomers in a place. Additionally, the scale of place attachment or place identity does not get taken into account for the ‘non-natives’ connection to a place. Someone seeking well-being treatments may visit a day spa and gradually move from feeling like an outsider, to being an insider, as the frequency of visits increase and bring a greater sense comfort and familiarity.

Another form of emotional link is through the ‘icon-isation’ of a place whereby landscapes or settings are replicated. The meaning, identity, and sense of place that the original place produces, is simulated in another setting because of the *felt* value associated with it (Hopkins, 1990). The value and experience of a place are the factors that shape the identity of its citizens, and help establish an identity for the place itself (Kearns and Barnett, 2000). However, what must be noted is that the placial icon is not an exact duplicate as the icon only exists to provide a spectacle for people. The day spa creates the illusion of being in nature through its treatments, services, and décor, to enhance the experience its users have. This establishes the day spa as a place of well-being and a place people can maintain their personal identity by enhancing their body with treatments and services.

2.2 Well-being and Therapeutic Landscapes

2.2.1 Introduction

Understandings of well-being have unfolded over time in different guises making it a complex and contested concept as it is produced in and through specific geographic contexts (Schaaf, 2012; Andrews et al., 2014). The loose consensus is that well-being is fundamentally about ‘being well’. This view can be associated with the emergence of well-being through health, and the division between biomedicine and holism. This is important to discuss as it emphasises the transformation of understanding health as more than simply concerning illness and diseases, but also involving their prevention. Day spas contribute to the production and experience of well-being as they are sites which contribute to the maintenance of health and where users can become educated in how to prevent future illnesses.

Well-being has strong links to place, where certain places have been connected to health and are reputed to have strong therapeutic or healing qualities. Despite studies often considering well-being on only the micro or macro scale, this research provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between both scales. Particularly, the individual and business (micro) relationship, and the relationship between the business and the city (macro) scales, and how they contribute to different senses of well-being at the individual and collective levels. Through this developed connection, the notion of therapeutic landscapes arises (Gesler, 1992). Therapeutic landscapes are significant to this research as day spas are therapeutic places or healing places, providing experiences which can contribute to enhancing one’s well-being.

Well-being can be thought of as a specific form of being, where it is an experienced state as Kearns and Andrews (2010) explain. Self-help programmes and fitness helped frame well-being as not just a state of health, but rather a feeling that could improve the mental and physical state of an individual (Andrews, et al., 2014; Schwanen and Atkinson, 2015). Well-being however, also suggests being somewhere. Thus, well-being has a relationship to geography whereby, location, age, and culture affect the characteristics of well-being for a person. For example, day spas provide different services which a range of people, from the young to elderly, and of different cultures, can choose from. The day spa represents itself as a place where people can feel better about themselves, and be better about looking after their well-being, by choosing treatments depending on their individual preferences. This often comes at a cost where day spas often encourage a second or third visit in order for the user to

maintain their newfound state of well-being. Ultimately, it is the users' responsibility as to whether or not they return for subsequent treatments.

The interest in well-being is wide ranging and as Fleuret and Atkinson (2007) have suggested, well-being is under-conceptualised. There are a vast set of interpretations as a result of the lack of theoretical development. Initially, well-being emerged through the notion of health, and the division between biomedical treatments and holistic treatments. This factor is critical to understanding the services day spas provide, which aims to encourage a sense of managing both health and well-being.

2.2.2 Understanding Health

Well-being has been closely allied with health as Atkinson (2013), states. The acceptance of the term increased as the concept of health progressed from only being associated with illness (Kearns and Andrews, 2010). Since the World Health Organization (WHO)'s, 1948 framing of health as "a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", the definition of health has transformed. Health can concern physical and mental fitness, the presence or absence of diagnosed diseases, as well as the corporeal, emotional, and social well-being of people in their everyday lives. Further, it can be considered a commodity to be given, lost, bought, or sold (Gatrell and Elliott, 2009; Curtis, 2004; Gesler and Meade, 1988; Kottow, 1980).

Healthcare provision has changed under the market-led transformation of the health sector and society at large. In particular, health and health based facilities such as day spas have helped transform health into a commodity and product through its new construction as a quality and service (Kearns and Barnett, 2003). As an outcome the individual has the opportunity to shop around for the best facility based on the quality and services provided. Despite spas being considered as a facility of holistic health and cosmetic enhancing, spas are gradually expanding to include biomedical treatments and services. The integration of both biomedical and holistic perspectives and its foreseeable success emphasises that health is a socially constructed system that interacts with other sociocultural factors in society (Smyth, 2005).

Health is affected by bodily variation, range of illnesses, and the resources to provide health care, which are in turn, affected by three different systems. First, there is the cultural system which includes how certain beliefs about health and illness are developed. Second is the

economic system which influences how illnesses are treated and how costs are paid for. The third system is government systems which determine state involvement in health care. These factors have guided the development of two major perspectives associated with health, the biomedical and holistic perspectives.

2.2.2.1 Biomedicine

The biomedical view focuses on the scientific aspect of illness and diseases, investigating the causes and developing treatments that focus on the repair of illnesses and diseases from a cellular level (Fadlon, 2005).

In this perspective, the human body is perceived as a machine in which organs can be treated in isolation from other parts and emphasises the importance of science and technology. Biomedicine, however, fails to assess the social and environmental factors that can affect the health of an individual. It is this reductionist view of the body that is biomedicine's mightiest consequence as it is characterized by the search for the "magic bullet": the one treatment, drug, or chemical factor that treats or cures diseases. Yet, this attribute fails to see the environmental, cultural and social factors that attribute to health and illness, restricting the provision of healing therapies (Britten, 2008; Baer, 2002). Because of this severed link between communicating the illness to the patient and negligence towards other factors contributing to the illness, Britten (2008), states that people are sometimes inclined to look towards holism for answers and cures, where both the meaning of illnesses, and how to manage ailments, is communicated.

2.2.2.2 Holism

Holism focuses on the physical, mental, spiritual, social and environmental factors related to health and sees ill health and health on the same continuum (Williams, 1998). Holism has an individualistic perspective whereby the person is in charge of their health and well-being, and can choose which treatments are best suited for them. Holism does face criticisms due to its unscientific underpinnings, where treatments are variable depending on the individual (Smyth, 2005), and the efficacy of treatments are unknown, and not clinically proven.

There is common agreement that holism cannot cure everything nor can biomedicine as these perspectives focus on different aspects of (ill)health (McKee, 1988; Williams, 1998). However, if integrated, the chemical, genetic, social, environmental, and mental aspects of health and well-being can be understood and assessed respectively. A more fulfilling

maintenance of one's own health and well-being can be attained, along with increased knowledge about health and well-being therapies and treatments.

For example, in order to maintain well-being, some people consider being in nature as a cure and implementers of biomedicine understand this. There is no strict divide between the two perspectives as there is a constant blurring of boundaries between what would strictly be considered biomedical and holistic, respectively. Health is not simply about disease and healing, but about prevention and lifestyle. The denial of integration is what makes health an important concept to discuss when researching the production and experience of spas.

Spas prove that the integration of biomedical and holistic forms of healthcare can provide a seamless and broad understanding of health and well-being as medical issues can affect one's sense of well-being. This can partly be the reason why day spas are sought out. They provide a sense of comfort, stress relief, and education on how to maintain and manage one's health and well-being, alongside improving lifestyle (Kearns and Collins, 2010; Williams, 2010).

Understanding the importance of well-being encourages health geographers to rework the concept of health as more than the absence of illness and disease. It allows them to highlight the significance of the spiritual, mental, and emotional aspect to health and everyday life (Curtis and Riva, 2010).

2.2.3 Understanding Well-being

Due to the lack of a singular definition for well-being, scholars have criticised what well-being truly defines. As mentioned by Fleuret and Atkinson (2007), well-being can equate to the quality of life. This can be divided between consumable luxuries, emotions, spirituality, and vital resources such as quality of air, water, and shelter (Pacione, 2003). Well-being is not simply an academic idea, but now a political idea appearing across a range of literatures.

Three theories have been developed in order to understand the concept of well-being. These are the theory of needs, relative standards theory and the capability theory. Though these three theories raise important points in understanding the concept of well-being and how it applies to individuals and society, they fail to combine both objective and subjective stances, and instead, take one side or the other.

The theory of needs contends that in order to have a sense of well-being, satisfying individual needs must occur first. This theory by Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, developed a three tiered hierarchy of needs. Vital needs, such as air quality, water quality,

safety, and security are placed at the bottom of the pyramid, signifying that physiological needs must be met before other needs (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). Following this are the protection needs, such as group identities, social relationships, personal relationships, and belonging. These create a sense of security and this precedes material affluence. Self – transcendence is situated at the top of the hierarchy where there is a connection between material affluence and the satisfaction of needs (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Aslam and Corrado, 2012). Here a person can become the most that they can be, with the help of resources such as consumer products and luxuries.

The components of the needs-based theory do not function on their own as they do not recognize human variability as Fleuret and Atkinson (2007), emphasise. In other words, not every individual in society is the same; therefore this theory cannot be applied to everyone, and sometimes needs are simultaneously gained. For instance, a person may find their social positioning to be more important than the environmental factors around them, but because of their social positioning they may gain objects that increase their self-transcendence. In this case, the objects can be pampering services that raise the person’s self-esteem. The higher social positioning one has may encourage them to visit day spas more often due to their associated high income, and affect the way they approach healing and well-being experiences.

The relative standards theory reflects well-being as both relative and subjective (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). Well-being is established from a construction that both individual and social standards work together to give people different levels of well-being. Individuals may compare with other individuals, but on a social scale, the standards are the same for everyone. Well-being in this case varies from person to person, but is still subject to contextual effects (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). Well-being can be linked to individual happiness, but this happiness is conditioned by the context in which the person lives. For example, day spas produce and provide experiences that enhance well-being spiritually, mentally, or physically. A woman may visit a day spa to physically manage her well-being such as through a massage, but the day spa exists contextually as a site that disciplines the female body to look an expected way, based on sociocultural ideologies.

There are flaws with the relative standards theory that limit its effectiveness in conceptualising well-being. In this theory, well-being is the equivalent to satisfaction, but well-being goes beyond individual satisfaction (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). This perspective does not explore how different groups define satisfaction and how they evaluate this from the resources and information they have. Fleuret and Atkinson (2007), investigate the concept of

well-being in regards to the development of different kinds of spaces, both physical and social, and how they visualise health as an important component of well-being.

Specifically, there are four forms of spaces that contribute to the understanding of well-being that emerge from the concept of health. The first space is the space of capability, which may empower or prohibit well-being through self-fulfilment. For example, ideas of the body and ageing that affect well-being can be understood through this lens. It is through spaces of capability, ideas of what kind of body, or age a person must be to enjoy things in society, is emphasised.

The second space is integrative spaces, whereby they are positive effects on dimensions of well-being. For example, this can be seen with the example of Bath, England. On the micro scale, the Roman baths are well known for their healing properties. However, on the macro scale, the city also contributes to the idea of healing by providing various other places of healing besides spas.

The third space is spaces of security. This addresses the relationship between social, spatial and individual support in addition to the feelings and perceptions that affect well-being. Security is a sensation in this case, and can be encouraged by certain spatial or social qualities. For example, day spas that have qualified staff members, or have won awards, are more likely to be visited because clientele feel safer with qualified staff members.

Lastly, the fourth space is therapeutic spaces. Therapeutic spaces relate to well-being as a site with healing or therapeutic qualities. Therapeutic spaces can take any form in both the natural and built environment. As I examine day spas in this research, a major component to understanding this phenomenon is acknowledging the concept of therapeutic spaces due to the emphasis on healing in various manners. This emphasis allows a shift in priorities in the study of well-being from diseases and illnesses towards everyday mental and physical health healing places which will be elaborated in the next section (Andrews, 2004).

2.2.3.1 Therapeutic Landscapes

The initial idea of a therapeutic landscape was as a physical place with healing associations to which people would travel for treatment or healing physically, psychologically, or spiritually. Over the past twenty years, the concept has been expanded to include natural and built physical landscapes, localised and ordinary places of relaxation, rest and fitness such as day spas or gyms, social and symbolic environments, and landscapes of the mind or, imagined landscapes. Therapeutic landscapes provide an alternative perspective by including the importance of culture in how healing and well-being is facilitated.

As Smyth (2005) suggests, the therapeutic qualities of a place can be reinvented due to the changing views about well-being and the contextual factors associated with place. Because of the contextual aspects of place and well-being, Conradson (2005) proposes that therapeutic qualities within a setting are best deemed as an *experience* due to it arising from a relational outcome between a person and place. This research aims to support Conradson's (2005) argument, contending that day spas can produce well-being through a variety of experiences associated with their treatments and services.

In order to understand the therapeutic landscapes perspective, the importance of co-presence, symbolism, and landscape qualities must be discussed. This study on day spas aims to fill the gap between iconic and localised therapeutic settings by emphasising that therapeutic landscapes are contextual, such as the historical transformation of focus from 'natural' (often hot spring) spas to day spas. Predominantly, research on therapeutic landscapes has ignored understanding gendered specificities, scale conflict, or the importance of experiences felt by the individual. These factors however, will be explored within this research as they are critical to the day spa experience.

2.2.3.1 Evolution of therapeutic landscape ideas: Social construction and co-presence

The concept of therapeutic landscapes was first introduced to geography by Wilbert Gesler (1992), who defined it as a place that had a reputation for achieving physical, mental, and spiritual healing, well-being, and facilitated recovery from illness. In 1993, the concept was further extended to suggest therapeutic landscapes as both a descriptor and metaphor, which could be used to aid the understanding of how healing occurs in certain places. Additionally it highlighted the capacity of how a site is promoted and maintained as a place of healing through people or beliefs (Foley, 2011).

Literature exploring therapeutic landscapes emphasises that a sense of co-presence is necessary, where relational dynamics such as those between nature and people, culture and landscape, or healer and patient, are intrinsic to shaping any place (Andrews, 2004; Foley, 2011; Lea, 2008). The idea of co-presence can be supported by the two components that are integral to therapeutic landscape functioning. The first is the inner/meaning included in the setting (built or natural), such as sense of place, symbolic landscapes, and everyday activities. The outer/societal context emphasises beliefs, social relations, and social inequalities. These characteristics combined, illustrate that physical and built environments can have blurred boundaries. With the addition of social conditions and human perceptions, an atmosphere associated with healing can be produced.

In early research, therapeutic landscapes were established within physical, psychological, or social environments. Gesler explored the healing qualities of traditional healing sites such as Epidaurus, Greece (1993), Lourdes, France (1996), and Bath, England (1998). The breadth of these research environments encouraged the concept to be applied to everyday settings and situations that provide healing or therapeutic qualities for people. In particular, the theory has been associated with holistic health care practices (Williams, 1998), religious observances and how they produce healthy places (Dyck and Dossa, 2007), how therapeutic places can be created and reproduced globally (Hoyez, 2007), understanding pluralistic medical fields (Thorsen, 2015), the magical healing properties of alpine areas (Williams, 2007), self-exploration and renewal through wilderness experiences (Palka, 2009), children's health camps (Kearns and Collins, 2000) and landscapes of the mind (Baer and Gesler, 2004).

This evolution in understanding presents itself as an evident example of the transformation of understanding health and well-being (Andrews, 2004). The change in expectations and applications of health and well-being characterise the change in values and beliefs in Western society. Furthermore, the shift away from iconic and formal settings to include more localised, and ordinary spaces of care in the built environment, situate therapeutic spaces as a relational outcome between the individual and their broader socio-environmental setting as suggested by Conradson (2005). This shift lends itself to forming the day spa.

The meanings associated with therapeutic landscapes are socially constructed and evolve over time. In the case of the spa – traditional or commercial – the meanings are accepted by the public who are seeking comfort and healing. Thus, therapeutic landscapes are able to reinvent themselves because of the changing views of well-being over time, alongside the co-presence of factors (Buzinde and Yarnal, 2012).

2.2.3.2 Understanding the landscape in therapeutic landscapes: Positive or Negative?

Landscapes can be seen as an interpersonal image that is experienced alone or in company, and situate people in terms of their present histories and culture. Landscapes can represent many things, from places of origin, to what one perceives as healthy, and what generates a sense of well-being for the individual and others (Gastaldo et al., 2004). Gesler (2003), emphasises that various cultures defined by gender, ethnicity, and social position, react to specific healing environments. Because of this interaction with demographic factors, the landscape is no longer regarded as a physical entity, but rather, a culturally constituted phenomenon (Gastaldo et al., 2004). This refers to how everyday experiences are completely shaped and inevitably constituted by the beliefs and values in a person's culture.

It is through culture that the individual views phenomena in a specific way and through which social action and productive activity is determined (McCracken, 1986). Just as the way the world is determined by our ideological values and beliefs, therapeutic landscapes are also individualised depending on the same collection of narratives. The landscapes that individuals have the choice to experience, either physically or mentally, influence their overall health and well-being. Some may see a day spa as an optimum place of enhancing well-being while others could go to a beach and expect the same outcome.

Baer and Gesler (2004), state that therapeutic landscapes are as much of a physical escape as they are a psychological one. They go on to say that therapeutic landscapes can also have no therapeutic or positive qualities, but this is hard to define as the boundaries of the 'landscape' are not distinct. In this sense, where a therapeutic landscape starts and ends cannot always be pinpointed to a particular site. This is a feature literature fails to discuss in many circumstances. If a person feels better in one particular place it is hard to tell if that place has therapeutic qualities or if it is due to psychological factors, and whether places do have the potential to heal or hurt (Wakefield and McMullan, 2005).

Most research is undertaken at a macro scale, where towns or regions can be investigated for therapeutic qualities (Bell et al., 2015; Bignante, 2015; Wakefield and McMullan, 2005), or the micro scale such as certain facilities or businesses (Andrews, 2004, Foley et al., 2011; Hoyez, 2007), but very few examine therapeutic landscapes on a multiscale platform. Therapeutic landscapes are understood to be more than an objective reality as each individual can experience a landscape differently.

As Gesler (1992) states, therapeutic landscapes are created from a combination of social, economic, and symbolic environments. This allows different therapeutic landscapes to exist and overlap in one location in some instances, based on people's own views and understandings (Thorsen, 2015). For example, if well-being is felt on a regional level and on a neighbourhood level, so too can the effects of therapeutic landscapes. Speculatively, reputable, traditional sites have everlasting therapeutic qualities, such as traditional hot spring spas, but so do day spa businesses that have evolved their treatments and services to meet societal needs. Both forms of spas reflect therapeutic qualities on different scales and can be explored to see where boundaries begin to blur, for example. As this thesis investigates with respect to day spas, therapeutic landscapes are relational outcomes due to issues of scale, social constructions, co-presence, and symbolism.

2.2.3.3 Symbolism

Understanding the notion of the symbolic landscape is intrinsic to therapeutic landscape study because of the valuable role the mind plays in perceiving place, and visualising the activities that occur within it through symbols or images (Bell et al., 2015; Rose, 2012).

Healing or the maintenance of health occurs along a symbolic pathway of words, feelings, expectations, values, and beliefs where. For example, symbolism is found in the naming of things, classification of illnesses, and forms of therapy. The research carried out by Gesler et al., (2004), highlights the dominance of ideas associated with the physical landscape for hospital designs in the UK. As an outcome, increased emphasis on the importance of social and symbolic landscapes was placed, in order to provide healthier environments through garden features at hospitals, or including scenery as part of healing time. Day spas, for example, can portray a symbolic connection to healing through business names and design techniques. Symbolism helps portray the meanings associated with the landscape and what qualities they have in terms of well-being or healing, but can also affect how people function within society. As Williams (1998) suggests, the information that creates a concrete or abstract symbol is culturally defined.

There is substantial literature on nature within the concept of therapeutic landscapes such as Thomas' (2015) research on the therapeutic qualities of blue and green spaces for women, and the study carried out by Bell et al., (2015) on the therapeutic qualities of the coastal landscape for locals. Initially, it was perceived that natural landscapes had higher levels of healing qualities than the urban landscape, and also enhanced the activities that were carried out within them. This was because natural landscapes were heavily claimed to represent an escape from modern life, removing the stresses of contemporary living and thus, in some cases, removing the individual from causes of illness.

There is still a strong claim over the idea that natural landscapes or objects have higher healing qualities, and this is being reincorporated into contemporary society. Additionally, the blurring of boundaries between human and non-human phenomena in contemporary society enables the self to become acknowledged as a hybrid entity, open to constant change, rather than being fixed and absolute (Haraway, 1991). This approach privileges the body as metaphor rather than the simple material body. Particularly, this is established through the use of symbols and metaphors, as seen in the day spa setting, to restore wellness. It is also seen when the body is compared to natural phenomena to evoke a relationship and a sense of wellness (Davis et al., 2003).

While nature is addressed in the therapeutic landscapes literature, this area of scholarship fails to investigate the problem of gender divisions in society and how that can alter the healing qualities associated with a setting. Day spas are often important sites for women as they act as an escape from everyday routines and also encourage relaxation and pampering. While day spas provide these opportunities, they also discipline and regulate the body through generalised treatments and services that are based on sociocultural values and expectations for both women and men. Hence in some instances, the day spa may not be a site of healing but a site for judgment for not looking like the ‘ideal’ woman or man.

2.2.3.4 Building on Conradson’s ideas

The idea of a ‘relational self’ is the subject of research by Conradson (2005), where the relational dynamics of the self and the landscape are explored. His study gives attention to the bio-physical environment and the individual’s experience of other natural phenomena. It is suggested that the landscape, or significant places, occupy a role in the formation of the individual as a stable relation between mind and body. Through this process, the self is developed in relation to ‘significant others’ such as people, objects, events, and settings that shape the self meaningfully—consciously and unconsciously, throughout a life span.

This thesis builds on Conradson’s insights as therapeutic landscapes literature generally fails to emphasise that therapeutic spaces differ over space, time, and individuals. Though therapeutic landscapes have been defined quite broadly, they have been known to have an experiential dimension (Williams, 1999). What may be considered as a therapeutic landscape in one setting may not be considered so in other situations, as there is no universal standard for healthy environments. That is why it is best to examine therapeutic spaces as involving, and being shaped by experience. By this, therapeutic landscapes become a relational outcome whereby, they may be perceived or used differently by different people due to contextual factors such as scale or gender.

Therapeutic landscapes reflect the values of society, meaning stereotypes about normalised sexuality, race, gender, and body image, are reinforced through the ordering of space (Smyth, 2005). The construction of such places points to the socio-political dynamics that define society. For example, health care is more of a commodity than a public right, due to socio-political factors. This causes populations to view health differently and potentially change how landscapes of healing are produced or reproduced in some situations, for women, men, ethnic groups, marginalized groups, and other segments of the population (Buzinde and Yarnal, 2012). Despite most therapeutic landscapes being perceived as positive places, there are chances that they hold negative perceptions for some groups of people within society.

2.3 Day Spas

2.3.1 Introduction

The human need to have a place that offers healing and rehabilitation has been present for many centuries. In particular, sites such as mineral springs, spas, or other water forms, have been sought out for their healing properties and improvement in health such as Epidauros (Gesler, 1992), Bath (Gesler, 1992) or Tovernalt Holy Well (Foley, 2011). These types of sites have evolved over time, whereby the qualities associated with traditional spas has been introduced globally, and applied to local economies through the development of salons and spa businesses.

In contemporary day spas, healing and rehabilitation is promoted through treatments and services that improve the health and well-being of the client, and redistribute some of the traditional qualities found at historical spas. Specifically, bodily regulation, relaxation, and pampering are used to produce and provide experiences of well-being in the day spa, enabling the business to present itself as a site of consumption for health improvement (Dimitrovski and Todorovic, 2015).

2.3.2 Spas and water

The historical understanding of the word 'spa' derives from the name of the Belgian town Spa, where a curative, thermal spring was discovered during the 14th century. 'Taking the waters' was seen as a popular treatment for diseases in classical times and this tradition was also associated with the bathing culture that was predominant in Europe (Cohen and Bodeker, 2008). Spas could be differentiated into two types according to Tabbachi (2008). The first type was mineral spas that included natural hot springs that had healing properties, and cold water springs, that could be used for drinking. Secondly, thalassotherapy spas existed, which were based on hydrotherapy using sea water, seaweed, or mineral-bath sea salts.

Water was a major component to spa therapies and the curative powers of water are what spa services are formed around. Symbolically, water was associated with purity, used in religious rituals, and for hygiene. The traditional spa movement was devoted to the water-cure or hydrotherapy, whereby the minerals associated with water and different temperatures of water gained a reputation for purportedly curing a variety of illnesses, diseases, and local fevers (Cayleff, 2010). The appeal of being healed through natural phenomena like water

encouraged the rich and famous to visit spas for cures and a chance to relax and socialise. With the introduction and growing popularity of modern medicine, the spa ‘cure’ was nearly abandoned except for its core idea as a place set apart from the everyday lifestyle that could offer an escape and relaxation. This idea was absorbed and transformed into a contemporary form of a spa reflecting the needs of a new generation, the maintenance of well-being through nutrition, bodily regulation and consumption (Table: 1).

SPA TYPE:	OTHER NAMES:	DESCRIPTION:
Day Spa	Urban spa City spa Beauty spa	A spa offering various services on a day use basis. Most treatments focus on pampering, facials, body scrubs and massages.
Mineral Spa	Hot spa Spring spa Hot pools	A traditional, water based spa that is a source of natural mineral springs including seawater that is used in hydrotherapy treatments.
Medi-Spa	Clinical spa Body spa Medical spa	A facility that focuses on both medical and spa related services. Most offer cosmetic treatments based on appearance and body enhancement
Resort/Hotel Spa	Retreat Amenity spa	A spa that is located within a resort-like environment where spa, fitness and lifestyle services are offered
Club Spa	Fitness spa Weight-loss spa Longevity spa	A facility that mainly focuses on fitness, but also offers a variety of day spa related services such as massages or facials.
Cruise Ship Spa		A spa that is located on a cruise ship. This facility provides spa and fitness services along with spa-cuisine.
Destination Spa	Spa escapes Lifestyle spa therapy Wellbeing spa Wellness spa Yoga and Retreat spa	A facility that is often based in natural environments. The facility focuses on providing guests opportunities to improve their lifestyle and health through professional services. Provides onsite accommodation, education programs and healing services.

Table 1: O’Dell (2010) describes seven types of spas known worldwide. Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009) have listed more than thirty forms of which many can be allocated to one of the seven forms as they simply take another name to reflect local societal and cultural values. (Source: Erfut-Cooper and Cooper, 2009; O’Dell, 2010).

The essence of the spa, as a place of restoration and health through hydrotherapy, has remained somewhat constant, even though popularity associated with spas has fluctuated through history. As Tabbachi (2008), and Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009) state, contemporary spas presently use the term ‘spa’ as a link to resorts or leisure complexes that provide health, beauty, pampering, and exercise services without the connection to a mineral spring. By introducing and including activities such as massages, facials, and nutritional treatments as the epitome of the contemporary spa, the importance of water shifted to treatments concerning body maintenance, and attempts to regulate and discipline the body which became the new western interest.

2.3.3 Spas and bodily regulation

The wellness sector has rapidly expanded, as its focus on the prevention of illness and the maintenance of health cater to health conscious people around the world, of all different age groups. Stein et al., (1990), suggests that the resurgence of the spa industry coincided with the fitness craze and the supplementary increase in self-awareness. Contemporary day spas have emerged as a response to people’s desire to attain well-being. In doing so, day spas have become leaders in the new social centrality of health; the medicalisation of western habits whereby, growing allocations of leisure time to body care has emerged.

Social class, status, hierarchy, and dominant cultural ideologies are central to the understanding of societies and their idea of health and well-being as Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009), explain. These factors can be seen to influence the formulation of treatments and services provided at day spa businesses. For instance, treatments not only highlight issues that are of high importance to some people, but they also promote fixing issues that people may not consider to be an issue at all. The prime example of this is ageing, which is illustrated as an outcome of ill health and lack of bodily maintenance, rather than simply an inevitable, biological outcome.

The rising concern with the self in the post-modern perspective of health also promotes one’s emotional and mental state (Straughan, 2010). Katherine Hayles (1997) has defined this concern as ‘corporeal anxiety’, in which knowledge of the body is advanced through biotechnology. As a result, feelings of anxiety over the fate of various corporeal elements can occur, and at the same time, a desire to then augment or enhance these elements through various means arises. Little (2013), suggests that corporeal anxiety has enabled the day spa to engage with the body industry and one of its largest aspects, pampering.

Pampering, as Little (2013) suggests, provides an example of the intersection between health, well-being and what is considered as the appropriate body. Pampering describes a range of practices, whereby people are indulged and treated through various luxuries such as lotions, and environments that are constructed and perceived as comforting through the use of music and décor. Pampering also incorporates a sense of receiving something that a client may not receive at home or in their day to day existence. Sometimes, spas incorporate a sense of exoticism which helps enhance the physical and mental well-being of the individual through disciplining the body. This can sometimes help monitor new needs and desires that are expected by the individual (Sharma and Black, 2001).

Besides the drive to live a simpler, happier life, conforming to images of body perfection and eternal youth are also additional factors that elevate spas as worth visiting (Henderson, 2003; Smith and Puczko, 2008). As Gustavo (2010), and Little (2013), suggest, spas can be conceptualised as modern day temples in which the newfound corporeal anxiety has motivated people to turn the medical gaze upon themselves, privileging time for body care and management. Walton (2012), however suggests, that the concentration on the medical gaze has become diluted over time, especially in the more fashionable spas. This may have to do with other activities that go on around spa businesses or in spa businesses that produce a sense of well-being. For example, spa businesses may no longer only provide hydrotherapeutic healing techniques, but provide massages, facials, or other body treatments that arguably represent a hybrid of western and eastern, or natural and scientific techniques that produce a sense of well-being (Kucukusta and Guillet, 2014).

2.3.4 Gendering the spa

In contemporary society, femininity is a socially constructed classification, associated with a gendered body that speaks to both domination, and authorization, from patriarchal social powers (Reischer and Koo, 2004). Many feminist theorists deny that there is a division between nature and culture; instead they claim that the natural body is socially constructed through medical and biological discourses that cause them to be associated with a sociocultural perspective. Nevertheless, the construction of gender in a place such as the day spa can affect the development of an individual's personal and social identity, how they are accepted, and how they experience well-being.

Some suggest that women participate in practices of femininity in the day spa setting to achieve the standards of beauty constructed by a domineeringly, patriarchal, and ageist

society, which include imperatives of looking youthful, slim, and wrinkle free (Reischer and Koo, 2004; Davis et al., 2003; Goffman, 1979). By participating in such practices, women allow themselves to be considered objects in the social realm. Their submission to cultural norms of feminine beauty assists an ongoing struggle against the physical realities of growing older and the defeat of the natural body.

Women also can be argued to be performing beauty related practices from a position of agency and free choice (Gagne and McGaughey, 2002). In this view, women are not simply submitting to the patriarchal ideology that is dominating society, but rather, engaging with it, while aware of both the associated benefits and disadvantages of doing so. The natural body is seen as passive material that must be built upon, or adapted through supporting cosmetic interventions that help emphasize youthfulness, and physical attractiveness (Davis et al., 2003; Reischer and Koo, 2004).

A significant factor that increases gender marginality particularly for women is the process of ageing. Ageing is often characterised as a betrayal caused by the outer body whereby it does not reflect the youthfulness of the inner body. The problem lies in the fact that the body acts as the symbol, which observer's associate personal identity with. As stated earlier, one's identity is partially developed through social relations and attributions.

A postmodernism sensibility has led to the blurring of stages within the life cycle and the associated experiences and characteristics. The middle age period holds the greatest significance, as it is the time during which one's body becomes 'ambiguous'. As Gullette (1998) states, it is a transitional period when the individual is culturally neither young nor old. The lifestyle choices associated with middle aged people have been extended to include those within the later phases of ageing (Biggs, 1997). By extending the life choices, ageing is advertised as a flexible experience due to the increased use of science and technology that can alter the way our bodies suggest that we are ageing.

Ageing is a point of concern for many people using day spa facilities as it impacts upon their cultural gender expectations. As Andrews (1999) states, the popularly preferred method of successful ageing is to not age at all, or to at least minimize the degree to which it is apparently occurring. If evidential ageing does occur, it is seen as a lifestyle choice that is associated with unregulated care of the body. Inevitably, the day spa focuses on this concern and promotes products that direct attention to bodily appearance as a dominant mode of well-being management.

2.3.5 Spas and consumption

The increased focus on the self and bodily maintenance has promoted the expansion in day spa products and treatments. According to O'Dell (2010), experience and customer demands are what the spa industry is built on, meeting the needs and income levels of its numerous clients. One way in which the global spa industry has responded to the needs and income levels is through the production of different types of spa facilities.

As stated by the International Spa Association (cited in O'Dell, 2010: 45), there are seven different types of spas. These are: club spa, cruise ship spa, day spa, destination spa, medical spa, mineral spring spa, and hotel or resort spa. With this diversity in forms and locations, there is also diversity in the conceptualisation of services, which links to advertising and marketing as O'Dell (2010). Some day spas mention the ability to “take time out in a calm and peaceful environment”, “take a journey to a tranquil state”, “experience the best with professionally trained staff”, “no down time”, among many others. Rest and recreation is promoted more often in today's society in order to cope with the mounting stress that is associated with the fast pace lifestyle many people live. Treatments needing weeks turn into hour long sessions or, multiple treatments are ‘packaged’ into one appointment (Little, 2012). People expect to receive as much benefit as possible from the treatments in a short amount of time, in hopes to achieve better health and looks, before they return back to their jobs and family.

It is through these enchanting rituals and actions that day spas are able deliver the sensation of well-being to their clients by mass producing the idea of serenity, selling dreams, lifestyles, and identities in order for their client list to grow. It is with this in mind, that it can be said that health and health services have been reinvented as a capital. Treatments and services associated with spa businesses promote this idea emerging through themes of globalisation and urban consumerism (Gustavo, 2010).

Consumption practices have been expressed unevenly, or in hybrid ways according to Norberg-Hodge, (1999). This is evident in the types of treatments available in spas that are provided under a western monoculture. Local cultures and practices are removed to make way for generalised treatments that revolve around fighting the signs of ageing and body deterioration. Additionally, O'Dell (2010) explains that spas habitually involve selling lifestyles, often converting Eastern culture, traditions and philosophies into commodities to produce a certain type of atmosphere that targets user's emotional states. Eastern therapies are integrated into western forms in order to attract as many clients as possible and are packaged,

staged, and experienced. As Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper (2009) emphasise, spas are arenas of economic activity but are also greatly dependent on cultural work.

Commodities have a significant role in mediating social life. Practices and preferences can be instrumental for not only place identity development, but also self-identity development, making it a crucial factor to understand the production of well-being (Mansvelt, 2005). Featherstone (1982) states that luxury, youth, and images of beauty are linked to goods and the purchase of goods. Leisure activities are also included into the commodity market in order to enhance the demand. Particularly, the emphasis on body maintenance suggests work on the inner body and outer body. The inner body can be concerned with health, and optimum functioning of the body which requires maintenance when suffering illness or deterioration associated with ageing. The outer body is associated with appearance and the ability to control the body in social spaces. Combined, the individual is prompted to seek out instrumental strategies to combat the signs of ageing and degrading appearance (Valentine, 1999). Day spas are often sought out for treatments that work on the outer body, such as facials or other beautification methods, but also the inner body, through diet consultations or fitness management.

The day spa is regularly focused on manipulating the body and senses through the material world, hence the prominent importance on appearance. Not only do they shape experiences for people, but the spa speculatively also maps itself onto the bodies of clients as the body and senses are stimulated and configured in the pursuit of well-being and wellness (O'Dell, 2010; Balsamo, 1996). Materiality and corporeality can be said to be intertwined according to O'Dell (2010), but they are also limited to the space of the spa facility. This makes spas an important space to explore as expressions of geographies of well-being, and for their ability to emphasise which aspects of culture and economy are considered effective in the pursuit of well-being.

2.4 Closing Thoughts

Place involves articulating the link between social status and material conditions, which can be used to analyse a range of situated health effects that are suggestive of a link between mind, body, and society (Kearns and Gesler, 1998). Place exists on many scales and can hold various meanings due to multiple social factors and social groups. Place cannot be assumed to be a simple location, nor can a setting be investigated by ideas such as sense of place, due to its breadth.

It is best to conclude that to truly understand a place, place identity and in some instances place attachment are needed. These concepts measure different aspects of interaction with the environment as they are affected by different variables such as personal experiences, behaviours, collective beliefs, or constructions. Additionally, place identity and attachment are not bound by the size of a city; but rather, reflect the multiple characteristics associated with place due to the blurring of boundaries between different places, and the differing values and beliefs.

Most people are searching for a place that makes them “feel right” and that can be the result of both human and non-human entities. Though research on place is expansive, little work has been done on the effect non-human entities and objects have on place making. This is important when understanding the concept of therapeutic landscapes, as the qualities that make the place therapeutic or healing often link to the presence of non-human entities and objects such as animals, plants, water, or created objects such as computers, or fitness machines (Conradson, 2005; Hanlon, 2014). This recognition allows a shift away from the study of human impact, to the qualities and attributes of a place or the spirit of a place, which inspires the individual to seek out places that privilege well-being management, such as day spas.

As the concern and interest in well-being has expanded over the recent decades, from its minor association with health and biomedicine, to the more recent and broader environmental and holistic qualities, it has failed to produce a fundamental definition for itself and how it occurs (Andrews, et al., 2014). Indeed, work has positioned well-being as a mental and physical state of health attained by fulfilling personal needs, but this loosely explains how well-being develops as a feeling and what the precursors are for this.

What is also crucial to understand is that however defined, well-being can have no form or expression without the consideration of place. The processes of well-being, including the

social and psychological resources, fundamentally emerge from place (Atkinson et al., 2012). Settings can influence well-being but ideas or forms of well-being can also influence how settings are developed. However, the presence of power imbalances needs to be addressed, as this has a stronger hold on how some spaces or places may contribute more to well-being than others (Carlisle et al., 2012).

The application of the therapeutic landscape theory across the natural, built, and imagined settings is worth expanding upon as therapeutic landscape *experiences*, as these spaces become integrated with contextual factors. Accessibility, economics, and culture can influence therapeutic landscapes and treatments. Health-enhancing qualities of place can range from the micro level, in which clinics and practitioners can exist, and up to the macro level where, therapeutic functions are available on a town or regional basis. It needs to be remembered however, that therapeutic landscapes change through time, and treatments are also reconceptualised to fit the context. Therefore, it is important to note that people, place, and time have a strong hold on how therapeutic landscapes are created and recreated.

The therapeutic landscape idea advises that the urban environment comprises more than composite elements of tangible built form. Rather, it is an interpretable text through symbols and metaphors which contribute to meaning and well-being in the broader canvas of urban life. Therapeutic experiences can also be felt in both traditional and non-traditional landscapes such as doctors' offices, man-made parks, or day spas, where nature is applied to the experience through treatments and decor (Gesler, 1992; Kearns and Barnett, 2000).

Conradson (2012), and Schwanen and Atkinson (2015), argue that in order to understand how well-being functions, the importance of space and place to well-being, and vice versa, needs to be explored on both the micro and macro levels, instead of simply investigating well-being broadly. In particular, the role of people, local businesses, and other phenomena that contribute to well-being such as the environmental and governmental issues, need to be researched as one integrated performance. Most concepts of well-being take either an objective or subjective stance, but what is needed is a combination of both.

Day spas are important places in society where they are a site through which well-being can be produced and experienced (Little, 2015). Despite the various forms contemporary day spas take, the main goal is commercial; to make a profit through promoting a healthy lifestyle and enhance an individual's sense of well-being. This has been promoted through bodily regulation and discipline, and by characterising well-being and culture as commodities (Valentine, 1999; Balsamo, 1996).

It can be suggested that spas are players in the cultural economy, as they manipulate the body and senses through products that offer harmony, serenity, beautification, or rejuvenation. Additionally, there has been relatively little research developed on the contemporary day spa as a therapeutic environment that promotes well-being.

This study aims to fill this gap and discover how contemporary day spas are produced as therapeutic environments alongside promoting a sense of well-being. What previous studies have failed to emphasise is that there is a difference between attaining well-being and attaining beauty. In terms of research on women, writers have tended to see the idea of well-being and beauty as the same thing or attained together. I will explore the production and experience of the multiple forms of well-being within day spa businesses in Auckland. Through exploring the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, dimensions, my hope is to find a boundary between the quest for well-being and beauty, and outline the importance of therapeutic landscape experiences, and the performative relationship it produces between body and place.

Chapter Three: Locating the Oases

3.1 Introduction

With a total population of over 1.4 million people as of 2013, and 33.4% of the total New Zealand population, Auckland has become the most populous region in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). In connection to these statistics, Auckland has faced significant land redevelopment and sociocultural reconstructions, making it a captivating study area to explore the formulation of well-being in places and individuals. In particular, the promotion of the day spa as a place where one can seek and manage well-being has become a common business in two specific suburbs of Auckland, Ponsonby and Newmarket, which this research investigates (Figure 1 and 2). The underlying cultural values, and beliefs associated with these two suburbs have recreated the day spa as not only a location to manage one's well-being and identity, but a place that informs the Auckland societal expectations of what the body should look like.

3.2 Auckland

As the Auckland population continues to grow, so too has urban sprawl. As a result, the access that Auckland 'locals' have to natural environments such as forests and beaches, has become increasingly limited due to the lengthened journey it takes to get to such places.

According to Statistics New Zealand (2013), 79.4% of Aucklanders had ease of access to bush or forest during 2010, while in 2012, this decreased with only 73.3% people having ease of access. This problem has encouraged the integration of aspects of the natural environment into the built environment in which people are able to gain the therapeutic qualities associated with 'natural' areas without having to endure the journey. Specifically, day spas have been created as functional wellness based facilities, in which people can receive therapeutic treatments and services that have links to the natural environment.

In addition to urban sprawl, many people living in Auckland are well aware of the associated stress that derives from living in a large metropolitan area, which is also the financial and industrial centre of the country. Numerous lifestyle choices are promoted in Auckland

through the media in which the key idea is to look and feel good by being distressed, relaxed and specifically, rejuvenated. In particular, day spas are promoted as places in which these things are accessible, given the time pressures associated with city life.

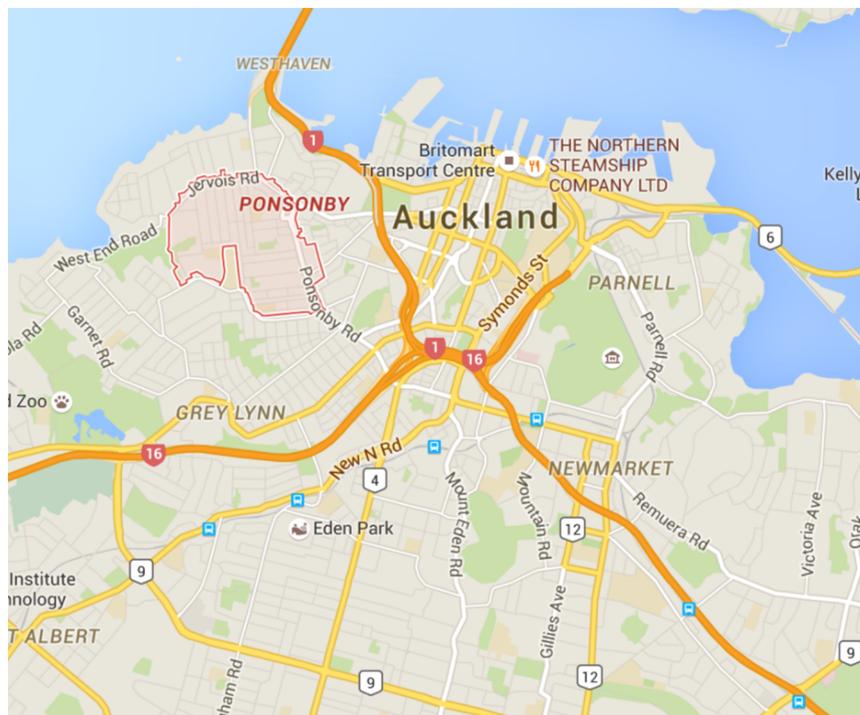


Figure 1: Maps locating Ponsonby (upper) in the city of Auckland. The neighbourhoods are outlined in red (Google Maps, 2016).

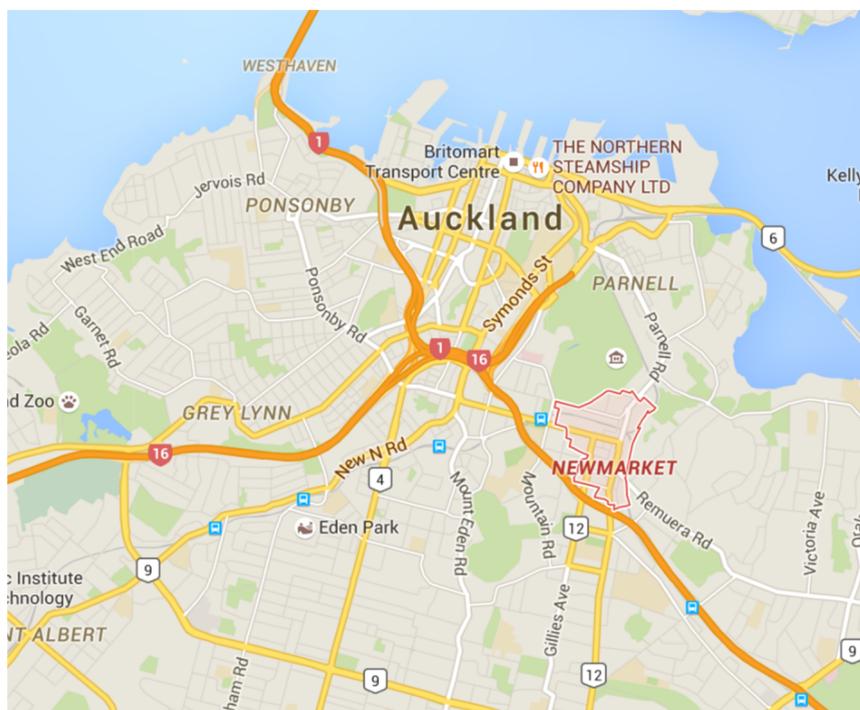


Figure 2: Map locating Newmarket (lower) in the city of Auckland. The neighbourhood is outlined in red (Google Maps, 2016).

Day spas regulate the body through the promotion of certain expectations held in society. Day spas are often constructed as explicitly feminine locations providing various treatments that support the appearance of women more so than men. In Auckland, 2013 figures indicated that males comprise 687,492 of the population, and females dominate with 728,058 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The prominence of day spas thus may be linked to the 6% greater number of females living within the region compared to males.

The felt need for an opportunity to escape everyday urban life and to manage one's well-being is also sought by many. Combined with being easily accessible in the built environment within the schedule of the everyday routine, day spas have become valuable to the Auckland lifestyle as they provide the opportunity for escape while still being locally accessible. The prominence of day spas as a staple wellness management source is reflected in their predominant location in the suburbs of Ponsonby and Newmarket, specifically their proximity to the central business district (CBD), ease of access from motorway systems, and demographic factors such as age groups and income. Another potent factor is the association between these suburbs and landscapes of retail consumption.

3.2.1 Ponsonby

Located about 2.3 kilometres away from the CBD, Ponsonby is well known for its restaurants, entertainment, boutique stores, and the 'alternative lifestyle' of many residents. Being one of the first areas in Auckland to be developed, Ponsonby has a long history full of sociocultural change that has been preserved, and can be witnessed by walking along its main road, Ponsonby Road.

While walking along Ponsonby Road, one can see the evidential change in neighbourhood quality that occurred as a result of urban renewal and gentrification through the 1970s up until the 1990s. As the poor and minority social groups, whose members once resided there became peripheral, the affluent, young, professional families of European descent moved in (Carlyon and Morrow, 2008). With this change, artists, writers, musicians, students, and architects moved to Ponsonby bringing with them alternative lifestyle elements such as bohemian or hippie-like qualities. This engagement with the alternative lifestyle challenged the social order and made Ponsonby alone, a very vibrant, energetic, area to live in and this 'vibe' still exists today – albeit in a more commodified form – through the various amenities it provides.

Unlike the CBD or Newmarket, Ponsonby has a distinct design quality which may be a result of its eclectic mix of Edwardian architecture and 1920s bungalows that line the streets instead of towering office buildings and shopping malls.

A community ‘vibe’ is also strongly felt where local cultural expectations are deeply ingrained in the people and is apparent in the layout of the suburb. The importance of well-being is emphasised through its eclectic mix of restaurants, night clubs, and fashion stores that contribute to various forms of therapeutic healing, wellness, and personal identification.

The diversity of day spas available along Ponsonby Road also reflects significant cultural values, where some present eastern philosophical connections or accentuate the importance of bodily appearance. The place identity characteristics that Ponsonby exudes make the presence of day spas understandable. There is a focus on quality through its neighbourhood design, and bodily appearance expectations with the citizens. Yet, the variation in day spas available in Ponsonby, compared to other locations in Auckland, can be connected to demographic factors such as, personal income and dominant age groups (Table: 2).

Ponsonby, although being split into two slightly unequal halves – the east and west, respectively, still has a combined level of median income that is considerably higher than the national average (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). As a result, the diverse number of day spas available in Ponsonby might be explained by the associated higher income of its residents. By being in an area of high median income, the facilities are potentially able to support themselves through the relative affluence of the local clientele. This is further assisted by the median age groups of both halves of Ponsonby which are near the Auckland median age (35.1), (Table: 2).

As of 2013, those aged from 49-68 years were considered the baby-boomer generation (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). With this information based on life expectancy data and other factors, many people are finding value in the production and use of anti-ageing treatments to resist signs of ageing, and to meet the social expectations of appearance held in society. This will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

	PONSONBY EAST	PONSONBY WEST	AUCKLAND REGION
MEDIAN INCOME 15+	\$51,300	\$49,600	\$29,600
MEDIAN AGE 15+	36.0	35.2	35.1
POPULATION	3,318	2,445	1,415,550

Table 2: Data sourced from Statistics New Zealand (2013). The data shows the median income, age, and population of people living in Ponsonby East and West compared to the Auckland Region. These numbers provide some information as to why day spas are heavily situated in this suburb. Note: Dollar values are in New Zealand Dollars (NZD) and are for individuals, not households.

3.2.2 Newmarket

On any given day, Newmarket is a hive of activity as the neighbourhood is centred on a major arterial road near the Auckland CBD. Not only is it a major conduit for traffic including cars, buses, and trains, but it also has a very high volume of foot traffic which emphasises its popularity in Auckland for both locals and tourists.

Newmarket features a concentration of some of the most globally renowned fashion brands and because of that, the neighbourhood is well known as a high-end retail centre. The main road, Broadway, is 1.7 kilometres long, and features an array of clothing, beauty, electronic, and jewellery stores in addition to restaurants and retail banking branches. Broadway is home to Westfield Newmarket, a shopping mall featuring numerous specialty stores and a supermarket. Walking along Broadway reflects perhaps, the ‘urban essence’ of what it is to be in Auckland where there are people everywhere, a gridlock of traffic, and various stores selling all sorts of items.

The presence of all the activities occurring in Newmarket is not simply based on its location but also sociodemographic factors of the suburb. With its approximately 4.0 kilometre connection to the CBD and accessibility to the motorway, Newmarket is home to 2,961 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Additionally outlined by Statistics New Zealand (2013), Newmarket has a median age of 29.8 with females dominating the 15 - 64 age groups. This provides a possible reason for the various day spas evident among Broadway, in the shopping mall, and on the side streets linked to Broadway, in the midst of the extensive retail collection. Newmarket essentially becomes a hub of bodily regulation and discipline, similar to Ponsonby. The extensive amenities and services available in Newmarket additionally

promote a sense of wellness within its landscape, supporting residents and visitors, by strengthening connections to societal values and expectations.

3.3 Summary and Selection Justification

The importance of ‘looking good, and feeling good’, has a noticeable impact on the dynamism of the Ponsonby and Newmarket landscape where the provision of day spas, initially associated with wellness, is now connected to promoting the bodily expectations and regulations that exist within society. This has occurred through the sense of identity Ponsonby and Newmarket exhibit.

The sense of wellness people anticipate from the qualities associated with the natural environment, promotes the development of day spa facilities in urban areas such as Ponsonby and Newmarket where, wellness can be provided without having to journey out of the city. This development is further aided by other types of businesses within the built environment such as retail shopping centres, restaurants, and appearance based facilities such as hair salons, which produce a sense of wellness for its consumers.

The demographic value of the locations and the consumers also supports the success of the day spa industry in Auckland. Both Ponsonby and Newmarket have significant populations within an age range that most day spa treatments and services can tend to. Further, a great proportion of the populations have an adequate, median personal income that empowers the day spa consumers to return.

The availability of day spas is also dependent on the place identity a location promotes. The history associated with Ponsonby, and its various cultural values, promotes day spas as a place where independence, and the alternative lifestyles found within the area can be accepted, and enhanced through treatments for well-being management. Day spa facilities in Newmarket also promote themselves as places people can connect with. Particularly as an escape from the stresses of everyday life, while being easily accessible, near the CBD, and other services and amenities one may need. Ponsonby and Newmarket also promote its connection to fashion and the importance of appearance through its various clothing stores. An individual can connect to these places as sites they can visit to develop their self-identification through the purchasing of clothes, jewellery, or having treatments carried out in day spa facilities.

Ultimately, well-being holds symbolic significance in the locations of the day spas in Auckland, where the addition of these facilities has further enhanced the place identity of both Ponsonby and Newmarket. This is particularly why both of these suburbs were chosen as study sites instead of other suburbs in Auckland, where day spas were less frequently found, and did not support the place identity of the suburb to the same degree. Instead, other facilities such as restaurants, hotels, or shopping malls, dominated.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter One, this research aims to investigate how day spas are produced and experienced as places that contribute to various forms of well-being. To carry out this investigation, analysis of preferences, approaches, sociocultural factors, and relationships that are formulated within the day spa setting need to be documented. These help define and create the day spa as a healing place and a site to experience well-being.

Studies involving healing places and their effect on the body have been carried out from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including a focus on customer experiences, and the marketability of healing places. For example, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with companies, and secondary material, Little (2015), investigated the experience of fitness holidays and the effect that these have on the connection between healing, health, and the body, and, which body form was being marketed through contemporary ideas of well-being. Straughan (2010), used in-depth interviews to examine the development of salons as sites for wellbeing management and bodily regulation for women. Elsewhere, Rose (2008) has argued, healing places need to be analysed for the experiences they produce. With specific focus on the individual's mind, body, and spirit as the effects of healing are based on relative outcomes between the individual and the setting.

As emphasised in Chapter One, analysing such issues relies on the exploration of ideological values within society. In an attempt to bridge healing place effects, and outcomes with personal experiences, the research strategy adopted in this study promotes the importance of the perspective of people using day spas as healing places. Due to this focus, a qualitative approach was deemed the best way to record the values, opinions, and benefits that articulated the experiences of day spa users. This is because qualitative methods enable the analysis of the different ways in which individuals construct and represent the actions that are occurring in their world (Robinson, 1998).

As Pickles (2008, cited in Robinson 1998: 409) argues, social knowledge is fundamentally a process of interpretation, not just understanding. By carrying out qualitative research, the investigator is able to engage with the perspective of participants, understand the elements within places, and interpret the meanings and activities within a place that are

contextually significant. Predominantly, these are formulated through place-based processes that affect the relationships held with other social systems and people. For instance, this includes the contextuality of local cultural values, the commodification of well-being, and the development of the body industry, which are relevant for day spas and this study (Robinson, 1998; Gattrell and Elliott, 2009; Del Casino et al., 2000).

Qualitative methods are especially useful for problems that require an insight and understanding of explanatory concepts such as “well-being” and when describing the detail of settings, which were both relevant in this study (Robinson, 1998). The primary, qualitative methods that were used in this research included non-participatory observation, and semi-structured interviews in combination with secondary material to justify the observations and interviews carried out. The methodology and use of data and information was approved by the University of Auckland Committee for Human Subject Research and Ethics (Case number: 014/800).

4.2 Interviews

With the assistance of day spa users, interviews were undertaken in October to November, 2015. Participants were selected if they were over the age of 18 and from those that had visited facilities located in Ponsonby and Newmarket, Auckland. Initially, participants were selected through a referral sampling technique starting with four mutual people who were interested in the study. These participants, with whom contact had already been made, used their social networks to support me, the researcher, with the aim of finding others to possibly participate in the study. The more relationships that are built through mutual associations, the more information that can be shared, collected and interpreted as stated by Valentine, (1997). This technique allowed me to assemble a purposive selection of participants in terms of age and gender, and investigate if there are any differences in understandings of wellness, healing, and the impact place processes have on day spa production and experiences. Overall, 20 interviews were carried out with predominantly women (16), and a small number of men (4), who all slightly varied in age.

The initial participants in the recruitment process were contacted by email to first establish if they were interested in participating in the research. Attached was the Ethics Committee approved participant information sheet so they could read what the study was about. If the

contacts agreed to participate, a time and date were arranged to meet where we went through the participant information sheet again and covered the details of the consent form.

All interviews conducted were one off and semi-structured. By using a semi-structured format for the interview, the conversation was able to flow naturally and there was more focus on the participants answer rather than on the questions I asked as the researcher. This allowed a textual, multi-layered analysis of the participant engagement with the day spa. This approach also meant that participants were more at ease for answering questions. Following the semi-structured format meant that there was an opportunity to explore issues that became conversational, rather than controversial (Robinson, 1998). This is the reason why semi-structured interviews were carried out in this study rather than sampling participants through structured questionnaires.

Additionally as Robinson (1998) states, an interview checklist is one of the important features of the interview schedule, since it allows participants to explain issues in their own words in the scope of their everyday life situation. A flexible schedule for the question checklist, such as not sticking to the exact question order, or asking leading questions at the end of an interviewee's story, such as *how* or *why*, the researcher becomes a listener rather than a controller of the situation. It essentially brings the participant into the research process, and adapting the interview to the participants needs (Longhurst, 2003; Dunn, 2010; Robinson, 1998). I wanted to understand if there is a connection between the urban lifestyles these participants have, and the way that they interpret wellbeing and healing. Further, I wanted to know if this reflected the type of treatments and services the participants seek out to maintain and create their sense of well-being.

4.3 Non-participatory Observation

In addition to the interviews, non-participatory observation was used as a technique to gain information about the perceptions individuals had about the day spa settings they had visited in Ponsonby or Newmarket. Observation is more than simply seeing. It also involves touching, smelling, and hearing the surrounding environment (Rodaway, 1994; Kumar, 2011; Curtis et al., 2000).

As Kearns (2010) states, one particular form of observation is complementary observation. This acts as a supplementary piece of information collected alongside other forms of data

such as interviews. I used this approach in this research, where observations of the businesses acted as a complementary piece alongside the interviews conducted. I did not have any restrictions as to what was to be observed and documented. This enabled me to document aspects of the spa premises without having to worry about engaging with the wrong aspects of the day spa vicinity, if my observations had been controlled. Observation can be, and was here, transformed into an effective and ethical practice, where I remained on public streets, and focused on the outside presentation of the day spa facility.

My aim was to immerse myself in the field, particularly Ponsonby and Newmarket, where I was investigating day spas. I spent time walking along the main streets, Ponsonby Road and Broadway, taking critical note of the context in the neighbourhoods, observing the shops, restaurants, and other services that contributed to the production of the well-being landscape I was investigating. Walking through the main roads where day spa facilities were clustered put me into the consumers' shoes. I actively took part in the landscape, imagining, and observing what would motivate day spas users to come here. I took notice of the quality of day spa, the issues of concern that were targeted in treatment lists, and if they were within a reasonable price range. I noted my exploration, reflecting back on theories of consumption, therapeutic landscapes, and the commodification of health which helped me understand the value of sense of place, and how intrinsic it is to the formulation of well-being.

Observation would not have been a reliable method on its own for this research, as the perspective is relative to the person. As an outsider to the day spa experience, my understanding of the settings would be considerably different than spa users who navigate the place for specific purposes and outcomes (Robinson, 1998).

4.4 Secondary Sources

This research focused on exploring the production and experience of well-being in day spa facilities. Part of the production and experience of well-being can be found within secondary material such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and company websites that promote the business for its various treatments, services, beliefs, and values. I also reviewed government documents to understand the sociodemographic factors that describe Ponsonby and Newmarket. By gathering secondary material, I was able to understand the place-based processes that may possibly impact the approach day spa businesses have towards nature, well-being, and the body through its treatments and services.

4.5 Ethics

Prior to conducting the fieldwork and before any participant recruitment was done, approval was granted for my interview and observation techniques by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee: approval number 014/800. All participants were required to receive a participant information sheet that detailed the research procedures along with a consent form that needed to be signed by the participant prior to the interview (see Appendix). Due to the study focusing on the production and experience of well-being, special care was taken to ensure cultural sensitivity, plus sensitivity of the age, and gender of the participants. As my questions were to reflect personal preference and opinions revolving around day spa usage, providing a safe and comfortable environment was of upmost importance for myself as the researcher and for the participants. This was critical in order for the participants to feel free to talk, and scheduling interviews at a time and place that was comfortable for both parties.

Participants were also given the option of deciding if they would like to be recorded or would simply like to talk as I wrote notes about the interview. As Crang and Cook (2007) explain, the presence of a recorder can often inhibit people, and prevent them from expressing what they truly think. All participants had the choice to decline answering any questions they were not comfortable with, could withdraw at any point prior to December 1st, 2015, and were to remain anonymous in any published work. Any quotes used would be associated with a coded name and were given the option to be kept informed of the processes and outcomes of the study.

4.6 Analysis

All information collected during fieldwork was considered in light of the literature and theories discussed earlier in the thesis. Some participants accentuated certain themes while others emphasised integration between multiple themes, as explored in the next chapter. Since this research focuses on the production and experience of well-being within the day spa setting, I wanted to understand the interviews and the observations I had undertaken as symbolic texts. This would provide further understanding as to how clients of different cultures interpret the day spa setting and surrounding vicinity, as members of various cultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live, by

interpreting phenomena through symbolic value. I was able to determine symbolic meanings and interpretations of phenomena discussed and observed during my fieldwork by reading the data collected as texts, giving depth to my findings.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has covered the methodology used for this study. By using a qualitative method for gaining information through interviews, observations, and secondary sources, I was able to understand the production and experiences of well-being. The chosen qualitative methods (interviews, observation, and textual analysis), focuses on the experiences held by participants and the symbolic construction of place promoted by entrepreneurs. Information ranging from transcripts to photographs was therefore textually analysed for their symbolic and thematic values.

Chapter Five: Analysing the day spa

5.1 Introduction

This research investigates how day spas are produced and experienced as places that contribute to physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. People may visit a day spa to maintain their physical well-being while others see day spas as a place in which they can manage their social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In both perspectives, day spas are a place of healing that to some degree for the individual, contributes to a variety of forms of well-being.

According to Gustavo (2010), day spas have imposed themselves as new leaders in the postmodern perspective of health. Their new concepts and services are able to meet the challenges that the 21st century urban consumer faces personally and socially. This assertion was explored in the present study by identifying how day spas variously approach healing and well-being, the place-based approaches that inform these approaches, and how day spas evoke a relationship between the body and nature to restore wellness. My findings contribute to the understanding of these issues, supporting theories and ideas reviewed in Chapter Two, and additionally provide findings that may transform the idea of the day spa as we presently comprehend them.

My work is built on both interview responses and observations. With respect to the latter, visual geographies are becoming increasingly important in research as they help mediate the rest of our senses and experiences within a certain place (Rodaway, 1994). For this reason, I have incorporated advertisements and photographs as informational sources into my analysis of day spas in combination with interview excerpts, and consider herein, how visually-communicated information contributes to multiple forms of well-being. Advertisements can also mediate non-visual experiences such as symbolic connections and can help redefine environments or places.

In the first part of this chapter, I outline the ways in which the formulation of the day spa environment affects the production and experience of well-being in the day spa. In particular, the location, design, and the simulation of nature are analysed, and how these challenge the sense of place and therapeutic experience associated with the day spa.

In the second section of this chapter, I explore the spa experience and how the day spa business has diversified itself into multiple forms with the use of various factors. For instance, this includes the introduction of massages, inclusion of global treatments, the promotion of ‘escape’ and how these affect what type of clients visit the facility. I argue that the diversification of the spa experience accentuates the role of how healing and well-being are both approached within the same facility and produce a sense of place identity. Following this, the way individuals choose day spa facilities, and the importance of time and location within the day spa setting, will be addressed.

In the final section of this chapter, the role of place-based processes is considered and described whereby, the integration of well-being and beauty reinforce the differentiation between healing and well-being. This will be explored through the connection day spas have with the body industry, and its transformation as a setting into a place that controls and regulates the body through gender and age beliefs. Additionally, the place-based processes that inform the treatments and services within the day spa, and regulate the body, also evoke a relationship between nature and the body with nature contributing to the ‘ideal’.

When a place is visited, people attribute to the place a quality or an “atmosphere”, which draws them there. This chapter validates the contention that day spas are attributed atmospheres in this way. The senses of place and identity associated with the day spa are what lead people to visit or return, as it formulates attitudes and beliefs about what the therapeutic experience is to people, and enables day spas to be healing places.

5.2 Formulating the day spa environment

5.2.1 Design Layout

Design and layout play a crucial role in developing a therapeutic setting such as the day spa, within the urban landscape. This includes features both on the outside and inside of the day spa facility, but specifically on the inside. The experiences and emotions that are relevant to producing the therapeutic experience exist within the facility itself, where it reveals the intention of the business and how it attracts or retains clientele. Additionally, this is the space where the participants spend most of their time. Thus, proportionally, more effort is expended on developing the interior as a place that is more comfortable and nurturing.

I investigated the entrances to day spas in both Ponsonby and Newmarket to gain an understanding of the identity the places produce. I did not have permission to take photographs within the facilities so I carried a journal to record my observations.

Day spas in Ponsonby and Newmarket are laid out similarly to each other, suggesting a reflection of the postmodern idea of health ‘marketization’ where facilities are upgraded to improve the efficiency of people’s well-being. They empower people to develop self-efficacy while meeting visitor needs through the control of the environment, making it contrived but “homely”, or familiar.

Outside of the businesses, customer car parking is available; however the size of the car parks (i.e. the lots as a whole), are relatively small compared to local retail stores, suggesting the small number of clients expected at any given time. Furthermore, the way in which the day spas are constructed, suggest an intentional connection to local history and promotion of local sense of place. Many of the businesses within Ponsonby are based in the Edwardian villas or 1920s bungalows that Ponsonby is well known for (Figure: 3).

At the front of the business interior is a reception desk and controlled waiting area. According to participants, the size of the building itself suggests the number of clients expected at one time, and people usually only wait a few minutes before a therapist comes to greet them and commence treatment. This is unlike a typical doctor’s clinic where it is an uncontrolled environment with patients entering and exiting constantly, regardless of whether they have an appointment. Furthermore the scale of the premises is suggestive of the small number of therapists that work within the day spa. In that sense, the day spa facility seemed to produce a

sense of calm through its controlled environment of the waiting room and the small number of people.



Figure 3: A day spa facility and its exterior design (Source: Observation data, 2016).

“I don’t see many people. The waiting room is only for those who have an appointment because most people would call in or book online to make one, not physically come in.”
- Teni

Art work or plants near the reception could be identified through doorways and windows which aided the therapeutic qualities of the building. Most day spas that I researched were on the main roads in Ponsonby and Newmarket and provided elements that symbolically suggest a sense of comfort or homeliness for visitors who were entering. This contrasted with the busy and noisy environment right outside the front door.

Endorsed products were tidily displayed near the reception desk for those who wanted to make a last minute purchase to take home. Brochures and information pamphlets were also provided for those who wanted to learn more about the products, with some being provided outside the business on the street. All therapy based rooms were located at the back of the facility, down hallways, or behind curtains that divided the reception area.

5.2.1.1 Style

Architectural design and physical layout of the building both play an important role in facilitating the feeling that the spa is distinctly separated from the normal pulse of everyday life (Figure: 4). In day spas, the architectural design symbolically frames the spa experience and mediates the expectations of guests, and helps complete and complement the setting, products, and attitudes associated with the site (Little, 2012).

“I felt like I was taken in a time portal to an exotic resort. I didn’t feel like I was in Auckland anymore, that’s for sure. The music and the sounds, the mood lighting... just a perfect blend that made the place feel so much more beautiful.” – Jeff

“My room was quite simple, but not so simple like a doctor’s office. This room had more feeling to it and that’s what made it comfortable. It was sort of like a fancy bedroom but without the bed, maybe a bathroom actually, but with a small “bed”. The smell of flowers and humming or mantra music they chose made it a really calming experience.” - Alison

By mixing the right symbolic features and designs, day spas can create a space that is like a second home for clients. This is supported by numerous spa magazines that provide a feature section on new design layouts that enhance the user experience and promote it as a “home away from home”. In some instances, spa magazines can promote day spas that have been developed inside of a residential building to enhance the idea of a “luxury lifestyle”. At the same time, providing day spas inside apartment buildings strengthens the bonds between the residents where in one example I came across, because the spa was exclusive to residents, the residents also had a say in the decision making process for branding and services (McCave, 2016).

5.2.1.2 Appearance

Frequent reference was made by participants that the spa environment that they visited was one that was beautiful, relaxing, and nurturing. In result, many of the interviewees state that those were all key factors for encouraging them to return as it enhanced their experience by being in a secure space. Additionally, having a well-designed spa setting helped many of the participants to relax and let their thoughts go elsewhere. For example:

“The room made me feel like I was a queen. So beautiful and feminine with coloured wallpaper, like a yellow or burnt orange. They had beautiful white gowns and slippers and simple music that sounded like, what do you call it, binaural? The room had this feeling of serenity, and full of pure energy from the candles, the water flowing in the pool and the elegant accessories in there, like the bath and tables.” - Sam

“I have been to a variety of spas before, but the ones that have me coming back are the ones that are designed beautifully and stylishly. If I feel comfortable, nurtured and relaxed in the space I will come back. If it’s a simple room with no effort put into designing it, I won’t be coming back. I want an escape; a white room doesn’t provide that for me”. - Lydia

“Thankfully all the day spas I have visited are designed so well, so feminine, I might add. But I am glad they designed the place well. I like spa therapies, but being in a room with a stranger touching you feels awkward, especially if there is no music or artwork to focus on.” - Mel

Removed for copyright reasons. Image available at:
erbanspa.co.nz/gallery/

Figure 4: One spa provides a gallery on their website of what their treatment rooms look like. This helps the visitors make their choice about the day spa and shows the importance of design and layout (Erbanspa, 2016).

The image that day spa businesses project is also supported by their purpose to reflect the 'ideal bathroom' according to O'Dell (2010). Though the bathroom retains a purpose as a place for hygienic functionality, it is also a place in which one could seek solitude and fortify oneself, or be pampered and taken care of. This purpose correlates with day spas designing their rooms in a manner that reflects something familiar yet more luxurious.

5.2.2 Simulating Nature

The presentation of 'nature' within day spa advertising is crucial to this analysis where, the day spa landscape can be read as a text. Throughout this research, natural images or natural phenomena appeared in multiple ways. In particular, photographs, business names, and treatment styles collectively suggested the centrality of nature to the day spa experience. It is also a form through which the day spa formulates its landscape. The multiple ways nature is articulated in the day spa environment reflect how wellness is promoted within that setting, and how the day spa produces the body as a space for nature to be validated. Additionally, the reconstruction of nature asserts the effect of the therapeutic experience, where the use of nature is based on its traditional well-being qualities.

5.2.2.1 Integrating the built and natural environments

The natural environment is often illustrated as the optimal destination for restorative or healing opportunities, and for its ability to enhance activities that are carried out in it. This is largely to do with the idea that natural environments are far more restorative and can be viewed as a symbolic mix of values, ideas, and philosophies, which are advocated for in the built environment (Ulrich et al., 1991; Ivarsson and Hagerhall, 2008).

Accessibility to nature becomes an issue in the urban setting because people do not have the time to travel out of the city to interact with nature. As a result, the integration of both the built and natural environments is becoming a favourable outcome for many societies. In particular, day spas endorse nature's association with wellness to such an extent, that they attempt to simulate it and incorporate it into almost every spa location to enhance the consumerism of its users. By calling upon the powers of nature to have a healing effect upon them, day spa users are also at some level complying with the underlying cultural understanding of the healing capacity nature has.

5.2.2.2 Icons and Fantasy

Nature is an important reference point as it justifies the day spa as a therapeutic place that carries out practices associated with well-being or healing, and is also present in the form the body takes. As Little (2013) suggests, nature is a performative actor in the quest to achieving the healthy body and feeling of well-being. This performance, enacted by ‘nature’, develops through the synergistic relationship between symbols and metaphors that are associated with the ‘natural world’, which are then applied to the day spa landscape (Wylie, 2007).

This has been exercised through place marketing strategies that make the facility desirable and unique through words, feelings, and beliefs that are symbolised in services and treatments associated with nature or naturally occurring phenomena. Provided is an example of advertising from a local day spa business:

“Our Body Wrap treatment starts with an invigorating dry body brush treatment to stimulate the circulation, followed by a Luscious Body Polish to smooth the skin and Body Wrap to nourish and rejuvenate”.

- *Mud Slide: detoxifying and nourishing.*
- *Tropical Heaven: uplifting and replenishing.*

(Skin and Soul, 2016).

As a result, nature can be described as a placial icon. The material and symbolic factors of nature are imitated, transformed, and reincorporated into arenas of health and consumption practices such as day spas, to produce a sense of being elsewhere (Kearns and Barnett, 2000; Hopkins, 1990). By applying this strategy, businesses and practitioners are able to produce a place that has unequivocal ‘felt’ value among individuals and societies and is a repository of meaning (Hopkins, 1990). Many of the day spa treatment descriptions from businesses in Ponsonby and Newmarket integrate the senses to produce fantasy and ingrained desires wanted by many. As Kearns and Barnett (2000) state, the sounds and smells associated with a place enhance its distinctiveness, but identity is mainly communicated through visual cues that can be found physically within the environment, or reproduced in printed representations of products and services, as illustrated:

“Seasonal body scrubs to polish the skin, removing dull dead cells while it stimulates lymph and blood circulation. The natural fragrances such as Wild Lime & Coconut Sugar Scrub and Mandarin & Cinnamon Sugar Scrub leave you divinely scented.” – White Beauty and Lounge, 2015.

“These treatments incorporate beautiful NuMe coconut body butters, lotions oils and sugar rubs straight from the islands and are both natural and paraben free. Close your eyes and we will take you there.” - White Beauty and Lounge, 2015.

Introducing special design features or services that emphasise a sense of elsewhere-ness enables the day spa to recreate an identity. This resonates with the growing intrusion of fantasy and spectacle that is put into everyday places as explored by Hopkins, (1990).

As symbols, placial icons are significant as they can be used to control environments or enhance the ability of healing (Cosgrove, 1987). For example, Figure 5 shows a day spa that deploys a placial icon, evoking ‘nature’ through its business name, “Lotus Therapies”. Symbolically, the lotus is associated with renewing oneself and purity. By producing nature as a fantasy and spectacle, the day spa promotes nature as an imaginative, therapeutic experience for the user, where the use of music, design, or prompts by the practitioner encourage the user to draw on the surrounding phenomena to take herself or himself into a state of elsewhere-ness.



Figure 5: A day spa business photographed iconising nature through its business name (Source: Observation data, 2016).

Fantasy and spectacle are also used to divert the attention of the consumer away from the fact that the day spa is simply another site of consumption. Nature is specifically a selling point in spas, where nature's ability to resist time, changing very slowly over millions of years, is used as something users can aspire to on a smaller scale through the use of 'natural' services and treatments.

Rather than using traditional methods of engagement or reliance on the health giving properties of nature for instance, day spas present a fantasy through their artificial health environment and use of technology. Technology is used to produce a sense of 'nature' or 'naturalness' in its treatments and services. Though nature and what it stands for is valued to an extent, it is tailored to meet the approval standards of Western society where science dominates the health and well-being sector.

Despite most day spas simulating nature, some facilities provide nature as more than a mere placial icon, such as a realistically accessible source of well-being maintenance. While investigating the business websites, I came across two companies based in Auckland that worked with a larger provider which offers resort opportunities in natural locations that were purportedly 'wild' or 'untouched' by development and urban change. For example, one day spa businesses provided the opportunity for women to take a journey to Te Wahi Ora, Piha, in West Auckland. Further, one participant I interviewed was given a business card for a company that provided holistic retreats in Alaska and Canada:

"The therapist said it was a retreat specifically designed to reconnect our Inner Self so our Spirit could be nourished. It's amazing how far some people will go, but I don't think I am one of them to go all the way to Alaska for it." – Caroline

5.2.2.3 Water, water, everywhere, but not in the day spa?

As discussed by Little (2012), historically spas were one form of natural settings that had the reputation to heal and provide therapeutic qualities. Significantly, this was because of the presence of water in the traditional spa where the properties of the water was the basis of healing. Though the reputation for spas as a site to rejuvenate and heal continued, the idea of water being the basis for healing did not. Today day spas provide very few treatments or services that include the use of water. This finding was puzzling, as one would expect visiting a day spa would mean access to some form of water.

In some of the day spas, baths or saunas were the only source of hydrotherapy. Baths were available to relax muscles before full body massages and blended with aromatic body and

bath products. But with many of the users interviewed, water only existed as a preparing solution, such as to simply wet the skin or for some users to drink before a treatment was to be conducted:

“Water? It’s funny, because I don’t think I have ever seen water in the day spa before. Not pools or tubs anyway. They did offer me water to drink.” – Tasha

“I only saw water within the room for me to drink. There was water in a jug for the therapist to wet the cloth with.” – Louise

In some day spas, water took on an aural and visual quality in attempt to affect the emotional states of the visitors. However, according to many of the participants, the water features were noticed but not actively contemplated, having little to no effect on their emotions.

“The day spa I visited had this beautiful fountain in the front entrance. You could see the water running down the statue and into the pool, but I don’t think it made any difference as to how I felt, it was simply really nice to see something so natural and unique”. – Nina

This finding supports the idea that nature is simulated within the day spa setting to produce a sense of being elsewhere, but not as the predominant natural phenomenon. The production of well-being can be achieved through many routes that connect the mind, body, and soul in the day spa and this does not of necessity, invoke the use of water. Speculatively, the ‘wateryness’ of Auckland in terms of weather and proximity to the sea may decrease its novelty and dilute the need for incorporating water into spa treatments

There are spa facilities where water does take on a new purpose. One of the extreme ways in which water is included into the spa industry is through float lounges where guests are enclosed in a shallow fibreglass tank with a highly concentrated saline solution that is at body temperature. Once inside the tank, the guest floats in total darkness, being cut off from the outside world and their own senses. It is through this treatment that the body has an opportunity to take care of itself, specifically the mind and brain function (O’Dell, 2010). By participating in experiences such as floating in a dark capsule, the body has an ability to go back to the true self, and have a ‘resetting of the batteries’, experience.

In this example, water still does not take its true, original form. The experience of a floating tank is a modern piece of technology. In some aspects, the capsule reflects a space age experience of apparent weightlessness and at the same time it is claimed to enhance blood circulation and strengthens the immune system. In this research, only one person experienced this form of therapy and she had this to say of her time in a capsule at a Ponsonby facility:

“It was an interesting experience. It’s hard to describe how beneficial floating in the capsule is. It’s dark, quiet, not something I would suggest for someone claustrophobic, but the ultimate form of self-healing and step to well-being management. There is no one around you. It’s entirely up to your body and mind to work together and heal through water.” – Rose

5.3 The Commodification of Well-being and the Spa Experience

Recently, O'Dell (2010) proposed that Western society is moving beyond the focus of selling dreams, identities, and lifestyles, to selling experiences. Of course amusement parks, themed restaurants, and supermarkets strive to produce and stage experiences, but the attempt to commodify (turning or treating services, goods or ideas as a commodity) experiences, specifically well-being experiences, is becoming a major focus in the day spa industry.

The ability to commodify experiences in day spa settings occurs through the manipulation of the body and senses using elements of the material worlds. Well-being is presented as a quality anyone can have through the use of spa products that affect the body in different ways. As a result, well-being becomes *hyper-real*, through its commodification, pricing, and packaging of myths and symbols, that people feel a connection to. In addition to the packaging of well-being, the values and meanings associated with the body have been packaged to create the body industry, something that the economy can profit from.

Thus, to keep up with consumer demands, day spas have diversified the forms that they take and the treatments that they offer which relate to consumer values. Expectations and customer demands are the foundations on which the spa industry builds upon as the level of income users have, and their preferences link to the facility forms that are developed (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper, 2009).

5.3.1 Diversification of the spa

O'Dell (2010) describes seven major forms of spas worldwide; this can be viewed in Chapter Two (2.3.1). By diversifying the types of spas there are available, the healing and well-being experiences, the philosophy and conceptualisation of the service – whether it is holistic, spiritual, appearance, or luxury based, also change. Spas become more than sites to enhance one's well-being through relaxation or rejuvenation, to some extent they also become a site to enhance appearances. As O'Dell (2010) suggests, at one time, traditional European spas heavily focused on inner health. When the activity was incorporated into modern American culture, the spa transformed into a place associated with beauty and outer appearance because of its link to Hollywood. Though New Zealand has European linkages,

day spas in Auckland follow American contexts, following their health marketization approach.

Day spas provide a new lease of life for many well-being and beauty based facilities, where many former beauty salons build upon any existing spa related phenomena, or incorporate the word 'spa', to increase client numbers (Figure: 6). Media and images available in the public sphere become crucial assets, where professional definitions are modified. This includes ones that health seeking individuals use to construct meanings of social phenomena such as accepted body types and ideas of beauty.

In this situation, spas stimulate the senses through various experiences and services, creating impressions and emotions. This is a highly influential way for healing systems and well-being facilities such as day spas to gain legitimization and can potentially affect the visitors in ways that may not be completely apparent to them outside of the day spa setting. It also shifts analyses towards the consumption and presentation of health, rather than its production and practice.



Figure 6: A nail and beauty salon incorporating the use of the word spa in Ponsonby. Next door is a medical spa that focuses on beauty but from a medically intensive perspective (Source: Observation data, 2016).

I found that many of the day spas in Ponsonby and Newmarket offered medically based treatments such as fat reduction treatments, lip enhancement services, and IPL hair removal to

reinforce their therapeutic value. Similarly, many medical spas also provided beautification treatments traditionally available in day spas such as facials, waxing, or eyebrow tinting (Figure: 7). Though both suburbs had clearly defined medical spas, ordinary day spas were found to have recently added medical based treatments to meet consumer demands and increase client numbers so clients could visit one place for all their well-being needs.



Figure 7: A medical spa expanding their product range by offering both beauty therapy and appearance enhancement treatments and services. A medical spa is oriented towards corrective procedures such as Botox, and hyperpigmentation issues, more so than supportive treatments like facials and massages as found in day spas (Source: Observation data, 2016).

Few of the medically based treatments and services I reviewed, proposed a ‘natural’ focus. As Fraser (2001), describes, the use of nature acts as a source of legitimization for scientific procedures. Clients are led to believe that the use of nature implies that, though science plays a large part in the execution of the treatments, there are no adverse effects. Many treatments are believed to be ‘natural’ because they are non-invasive or non-surgical. For example, a day spa facility available in both Ponsonby and Newmarket advertises a weight-loss treatment that froze and reduced fat cells without having to perform any surgical procedures. By metaphorically accentuating the “natural”, positive, therapeutic effects of the day spa through available services and business names, day spas are able to mask their associations with consumerism, while latching onto the fears of ageing and appearance.

The increased importance of connecting to client concerns through treatments shows how cultural and economic processes are increasingly becoming blurred. Economic processes are culturally embedded since they could never be conducted independently of meanings and norms that are often portrayed through symbols. Symbols help confirm what we know and believe and provide knowledge about the social identity of a place (Gesler, 1992).

In this research, day spas are invented and constructed materially, and mythically constructed through the use of symbols and language in promotional material that depicts it as a site for

healing and rejuvenation. This not only affects the experiences people have within them, but has a way of integrating into the bodies of the users. Day spas create a symbiotic relationship between users and the products, effectively communicating the product focus and how users will benefit through its use. Additionally, treatments and services that reflect well-being maintenance or enhancement enable people to feel nurtured and valued for being who they are and wanting to look after themselves. This is often reflected in day spa advertisements which often quote about finding the “true you” or with treatments called “The New You”, “Recreate Yourself” or “Turn Back Time”. While day spas advertise this possibility, it tactfully removes the money economy from view.

“The treatments are so futuristic but natural at the same time. You don’t need to have a needle stuck inside you to get the best results anymore. I think science has finally realised that nature can be quite ‘high-tec.’” - Janelle

“I feel like a different person when I leave the place. I feel new and motivated and energised. I can’t find that feeling elsewhere in my life.” – Lydia

“I feel important when I go. The people that work there do everything to make me comfortable and happy. It’s so rare to find that in the outside world today. I am always looking after people; it feels nice to have someone look after me even if it is only for an hour or two.” – Jacey

“I feel secure, like they can take away all my problems, no matter what. It’s so calm and inviting. It’s almost like, every time I come here, I am just dropping off all my problems. When I leave I build them up again through work and family and then when I need an outlet, I come here.” – Bianca

5.3.2 The Escape

Day spas advertise the idea of escape, serenity, and tranquillity for people who want to be ‘elsewhere’, or want to get away from the normal routines of everyday life, but cannot travel far due to accessibility.

Natural environments are heavily claimed to represent an escape from urban life, removing the stresses of contemporary living and, in some cases, removing the individual from causes

of illness. For example, idyllic environments are often promoted as a destination for a getaway, such as the seaside, lakes, mountains, or forests. ‘Getting away’ from modern life however, does not necessarily require that the natural setting be distant. Instead, it should hold the same values and characteristics of nature, and be accessible, even if it is artificially developed. This has been carried out by changing the physical or mental imagery of places to attract people to it, as witnessed in my findings.

In order to produce the effects of escape and serenity, the body and senses are stimulated and manipulated in the pursuit of wellness. This is dependent on rituals, props, and representations of phenomena such as nature, or scientific objects. These provide spas with the energy to create experiences of escape for its users, and highlight homage to the Self (O’Dell, 2010).

The idea of ‘escaping’ to the day spa to heal connects to Gustavo’s (2004) idea that the day spa is reinforced as a temple for the body. Users seek out day spas in order to find themselves once again, similar to the purposes of a pilgrimage, only performed through technological treatments and services. Furthermore, many of the treatment descriptions I observed were worded as though they were a form of escape for the user, or a way to leave negativity behind. One day spa in Ponsonby provides a section on their website that is labelled, ‘Escapes’. Visitors to the website can choose from a selection of treatments that emphasise the opportunity to transport the mind and body into an imagined ‘elsewhere’, while being pampered.

5.3.3 Familiarising the spa with touch

Along with the diversification of spa types over time, the types of treatments available have changed. As stated previously, with hydrotherapeutic treatments becoming increasingly inaccessible or unavailable, day spas have come to base their businesses on other therapeutic, healing treatments. Of the total 11 day spa businesses I investigated in this study, six businesses in Ponsonby and Newmarket used the word ‘spa’ in their name, yet only three of those businesses actually provided hydrotherapeutic treatments for which “spas” are known to possess.

When asked what services they thought day spas provided, participants listed various treatments they believed to be associated with the day spa. The treatments participants suggested is significant when discussing the importance of massage therapy in the day spa. In

particular, out of the 20 participants interviewed, only two participants included hydrotherapy as a treatment form in the day spa, while massage therapy was selected by all 20. Alongside massages, anti-ageing therapy was also selected by all twenty participants (Figure: 8). As such, the word ‘spa’ is used to offer a sense of familiarity for its visitors. By entering a place that emphasises the word ‘spa’, visitors symbolically associate the place with well-being and body maintenance, despite having very few hydrotherapeutic treatments.

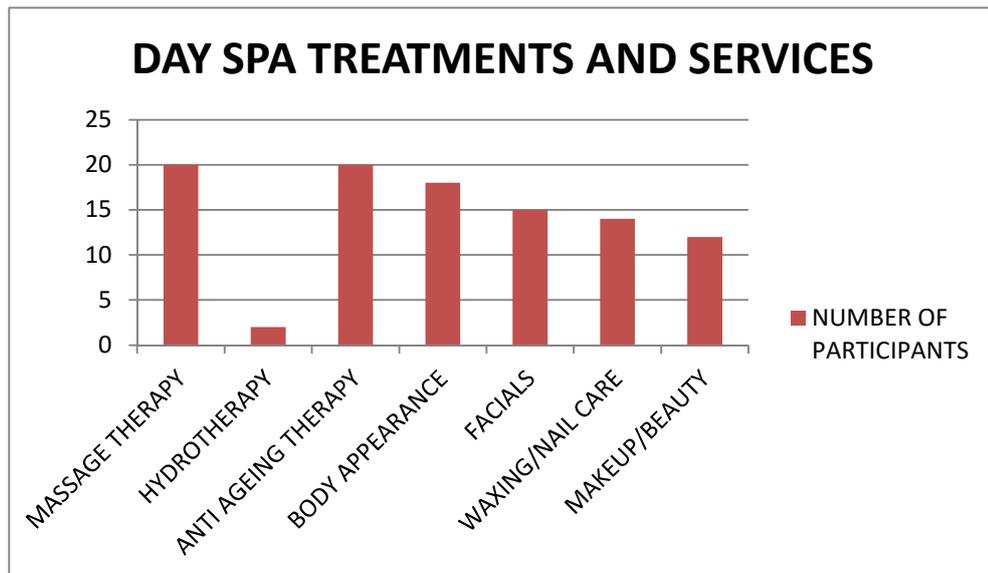


Figure 8: A bar graph showing day spa treatments and services participants believed day spas in Auckland City provide. (Source: Interview data, 2015)

In particular, massage therapy has become a popular form of healing and wellness management because people can *feel* the treatment working. Saying this, understanding why we react to certain senses, offers a range of indications about the place within which the reaction is experienced. Not only are the senses a medium through which to gather information about the environment, but they are also a message providing a distinct perspective of the world.

There are a vast number of metaphors that link to the importance of touch. “Stay in touch” and “rubbing someone the wrong way” are two examples of its use. Touch, or the haptic sense, is important to discuss, as the way that one is touched can define experiences and relate to different emotions such as hate, love, or care. The term “touch” is not bound to fingers alone, but to the whole body through multiple forms (Rodaway, 1994). Thus, the haptic sense can be applied to the understanding of massages in the day spa settings addressed for this study because massages are not restricted to only the use of fingers, but include objects and

oils. They are one of the most sought out treatments and there are variations and objects that are used to carry out the treatments. The way massages affect our haptic senses plays a large part in its availability. ‘Touch’ inevitably mediates the body and world around it through the skin.

Unlike speaking, touch also communicates through the heaviness or duration of the touch and where it is located. It is through such factors the person learns where they are, and who they are with, such as someone who cares or is hateful (Rodaway, 1994). In the day spa, the calming and soothing touch of a therapist’s hands often indicates that the environment the person is in is a place of nurturing. This is indicated in various advertisements that are found in day spas where the touch of the massage therapist is framed as a vital source of trust and emotional repair, as though the therapist will be able to draw out all the negativity from the body and empower the individual.

Moreover, in multiple day spas investigated, the use of disembodied hands, or hands holding objects are heavily featured in day spa advertisements. This illustrates the importance of the *hands* of the therapist but not the therapist themselves. Figure 9 symbolically proves the hands are the healers rather than the therapist and who is important.

Removed for copyright reasons. Image available at: <http://www.morethanskin.co.nz/treatment-menu>

Figure 9: Many day spa facilities promote the importance of massage therapy and the importance of the therapist’s hands through such images (Source: More Than Skin, 2016).

5.3.4 East meets West

O’Dell (2010), states that health and relaxation are signature qualities for the spa industry, through which they can describe their treatments, services, and attract visitors.

However, what are predominantly carried out are the packaging, staging, and commoditization of expressions of culture, and specific health-oriented experiences. Despite being an economic activity, day spas are entangled with cultural processes that help them achieve the production and experience of well-being. In particular, many day spas promote treatments and services that are globally sourced and diversely approach healing and well-being. It also emphasises that the day spa is a site for consumption, and participates in the process of globalisation.

Globalisation involves the circulation of cultural products and practices on a global scale according to Hoyez (2007). In her study, the author comments on the globalisation of practices as reflecting an interconnection between identities which creates a new culture composed of the various contributing cultural practices (2007). For example, Ayurvedic head massages that are available at various day spas in Ponsonby and Newmarket are reinterpreted as simply a massage devoid of the spiritual and philosophical foundation that is associated with traditional Ayurvedic treatments. Many businesses are now blending Eastern traditions and philosophies to promote the use of their facility. By incorporating a blend of Eastern and Western treatments and services, the day spa is able to increase the number of their clients from various cultures by making them feel a greater sense of ease and belonging (Figure: 10).

Therapists are also able to provide and educate day spa users with new forms of well-being management by framing eastern treatments as exotic or unique. In doing this, day spas idealise the countries of origin, transforming the therapeutic experiences associated with the treatment into something hyperreal. The day spa setting itself is also often made into an idealised reflection of the original therapeutic landscape.

The hyperreal experience is a cultural and economic relationship as Rodaway (1994), suggests. It is grounded in the images and themes in a product or setting, which is established as a commodity. These images or themes increase the desire for a certain phenomenon within the consumer and in most cases, causes them to return repeatedly to fulfil those desires, be it exoticness, serenity, tranquillity, or wellness.

In Ponsonby there is an Ayurvedic clinic that defines itself as a spa. This is one of the peculiar aspects about Eastern based healing therapies in Auckland: many of them transform themselves to reflect the expectations and constructs of Western society. The transformation of treatments or businesses related to Eastern traditions reflect the dominance of the postmodern medical gaze where there is an invisible, yet resilient framework to follow in the production and experience of well-being and healing. In this case, the business is promoted as

a 'spa' to blend into the well-being market (Figure: 11). Moreover, this spa facility provided Ayurvedic massages and facials, excluding the traditional herbs and spiritual education that makes up a large component of traditional Ayurvedic teaching.

In this co-optation of exoticism, a picture of India's past becomes *de facto*. The description of contemporary India is introduced through images and literature as the essence of the "mystic East" idea. This day spa facility, with its stylised interior, treatments, and name, transforms into an idealised Indian landscape that fits into Ponsonby's alternative lifestyle. From the outside, the facility appears to be a house, while inside; the place, by looking at the company website, transforms to invoke people to believe India is the same, with the deep reds, oranges and yellow colours used, incense sticks, candles, lotus flowers, and wooden tables in the therapy rooms. It encourages visitors to identify with the place as an exotic escape, ignoring the fact that it is only packaged and presented that way. Treatments also were fixed on the issues that people living in Auckland expect. For example, many were based on stress relief, youthful appearance, weight loss, or detoxification.

Occasionally, it is not necessarily important to reproduce the setting. In some cases, the emotions and identity linked to eastern traditions is strongly infused into the facility. This is reinforced with objects such as statues of Hindu deities, Indian artwork in the entrance of the facility, and flower garlands that reflect an Indian cultural identity. As a result, the day spa business appropriates these globalised sources of Eastern identity, culture, and environment factors to reproduce a potentially more beneficial therapeutic landscape that is a balance of the idealistic and realistic. The sense of place produced through these actions transforms the concept of well-being within the day spa facility, and the associated experiences.



Figure 10: A spa integrates the use of Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Massages. They further symbolise their openness to people of all cultures by using different languages and race. (Source: Observation data, 2016).

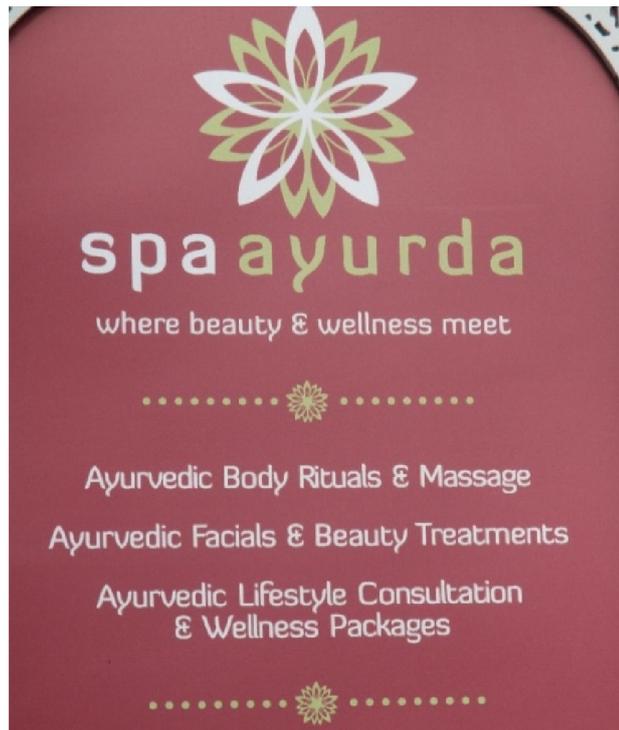


Figure 11: The Ayurvedic spa connects to India through its Ayurvedic treatments and colour scheme that is symbolic of India but also with the West through the use of the word 'spa' (Source: Observation data, 2016).

5.4 Individualising the experience

The new paradigm of health emphasises the shift of medical attention from curative to preventative care whereby advice, treatments, and services are not simply associated with curing an illness, but with *how* illnesses can be prevented. The preventative outlook additionally highlights the role of the individual being responsible for their own health, well-being, and overall body maintenance.

With the individual in charge of their bodily maintenance, the care for the body becomes an aesthetic project as Little (2015), comments. The goal here is to have the best life and best health possible, but in accordance to the accepted societal norms (Corvino, 2004). The idea of what is best ultimately refers back to socially determined and potentially oppressive ideas of what is considered to be the ‘natural’ body; an appropriately shaped, sized, and attractive body, disregarding the role of genetics, past illnesses, and trauma (Longhurst, 2011).

In today’s society, the body loses control over its natural form through overeating, inadequate nutrition, lack of exercise, and high stress levels. As a result, places such as day spas have filled a niche in reinforcing specific programmes for clients that enable them to meet perceived social requirements by regaining control over their bodies. Treatments and services within the day spa can be a resource in constructing the body and personal identity. At the same time, the practitioners also direct what is possible for the body (Gagne and McGaughey, 2002). This is supported by advertisements that show the ideal and unideal body with before and after pictures, through which day spas can establish body expectations, and demonstrate efficacy of their services.

Reinforcement for the individual’s responsibility over their own body maintenance also appears in treatment and service choices in many of the day spas that participants visited, and in businesses I analysed. Clients are often encouraged to gain familiarity and understanding of the practices and products available, so their selection reflects particular needs. As a result, treatments are more likely to positively affect the client’s sense of well-being by transforming the body into a better state. This is produced through brochures on particular products that are endorsed in the facility, or on company websites which have a section on products used.

What is additionally seen on most day spa websites is the grouping of treatments and services under a broad, bodily ‘issue’. This reflects the fact that the body and how it is managed is controlled by societal norms and expectations. All problems are expected to fit under specialised lists to make the path to treatment simpler. As Little (2015) states, treatments and

services are often designed and consumed with specific messages about the appropriate body image.

“The therapists always categorises [sic] my issue under some larger problem. I would never have thought that my problem was associated with that. But maybe it is just easier for them that way, like doctors do with heart issues.” – Michael

As Kearns and Barnett (2000) suggest, people are now used to the organised, yet generalised health systems present in society. For example, as McKee (1988) suggested, there is a categorisation of illnesses, whereby symptoms and treatments are generalised by a predeveloped list. This can be applied to the provision of treatments and services in day spas which are generalised and categorised into particular focus areas. Specifically, these are mostly to reduce the signs of ageing, enhance femininity in women, masculinity in men, and to ultimately gain the “natural” body. This view is supported by day spa ‘menus’ and descriptions that are available in brochures and on company websites. While it allows users to personalise their treatments, it also acknowledges the body project on a larger, societal scale, by generalising conditions (Figure: 12).

In some instances, treatments are expected to be carried out multiple times to be beneficial for the individual. In other cases, individuals were targeted by the incentive of getting a free treatment if they followed the prescribed amount by the therapists with statements such as, “prepay for 5 full priced sessions and receive the 6th session free”. This iteration also links to medical views of treatment where, a total dose of an active ingredient is administered over time and in multiple treatments. By carrying out treatment repetitions that ensures the best outcome for their body, users are affectively becoming subjects, conforming to the ubiquitous power of society, and the body industry, whom control the ways in which the bodies can be seen and disciplined. Specifically, the users are subject to a medical gaze in which the body is fragmented and focus is on one particular section of the body.

Spas are places for socialisation and education that can later impact on one’s identity, wellbeing and conceptualisation of place. They are also sites at which users are able to concentrate on their desires. Day spas offer an oasis in which those with the means can search for a quick fix of energy or find relaxation. This ability varies from spa to spa, and from person to person, due to the performance of the body, place, and social processes supporting the experiences.

Day spas are also sites of ritualised practices, where the uses of towels symbolically associate with the shift in attention from one section of the body to the next. The body, as a result, is portrayed as open to the power of touch, in one place at a time as seen in the previous figure. It also emphasises objectification, as the focus is only on a certain part of the body, similar to that of a surgeons focus (O'Dell, 2010).

Day spas additionally reward particular types of bodies. Treatments are promoted for certain types of bodies, such as those who are hard-working, suffering from a sports injury or women who are currently pregnant, or have recently given birth. This 'reward system' was present in all day spas analysed in both Ponsonby and Newmarket.

"I learn a lot through my treatments at day spas. It's also just a really fun, girly day out. I don't think day spas have to be about the self, you can share the experience with others too, like friends or your partner." – Natalia

Removed for copyright reasons. Image available at: <http://www.formespa.co.nz/site/webpages/general/treatment-menu>

Figure 12: A day spa in Ponsonby provides a treatment menu online for its visitors to select from (Source: Forme Day Spa, 2016).

5.4.1 Qualities

The transformation of the body often starts as a precursor to the well-being experience. By challenging the individual's body to change, other areas of the person's life in turn, are transformed. Within the day spa, education provided by the therapists encourages users to seek out well-being and healing responsibly, and independently.

The ability to provide education for its users puts considerable emphasis on the quality of day spa businesses as more businesses providing the same treatments and services enter the market. As many of the participants explained, the main factor that supported their initial visit or return to a day spa was based on the level of quality of the services and the competence of the staff. Businesses understand that as well, so therapist skills and qualifications are stressed on many company websites and product origins are shared.

Additionally, consumer awards and testimonials were also highlighted on the business pages, providing a sense of trust for new clients looking at the websites. As Little (2012) comments, this helps emphasise a scientific and technical credibility of the day spa business. It also enables the client to feel that their expectations will be met and that there are qualified practitioners for every issue.

5.4.1.1 Time and Location

Two of the integral aspects of the day spa facility are the length of its treatments and the day spa location. Together, these factors contribute to the number of clients that the day spa receives, but it also determines what *type* of clients they receive.

Upon investigating the brochures and treatment menus on company websites, a majority of the treatments and services were noted with the duration of the treatment. What was particularly interesting was that treatments, unless they were packages that had a running time of up to five hours, were able to be carried out within two hours. The time durations for treatments can be linked to the busy schedules that many people living in Auckland have. A number of the participants in this study stated how busy they were in activities that included looking after family members or work commitments. This 'temporal squeeze' encouraged them to seek out day spa services because of the quick yet effective treatments provided that was able to almost immediately resolve a problem.

The length of the treatments also signifies that the spa is a *day* spa. The length of the treatments is not meant to be particularly long because the facilities are not equivalent to a resort spa. The length of the treatment also suggests that the client is expected to return in the near future for additional services and in result, is subject to participating in consumerism.

Additionally, the location of the day spas served as another vital factor in the visitation of clients. The nearer the facility to their home or work the more the 'barrier' to going was reduced. The day spas researched in this study were all located on a main arterial route within Auckland that leads to the CBD and could be accessed from a motorway, or were easily accessible by train and bus. Figure 13 depicts one day spa within Newmarket that is located on the major arterial route called Broadway. 500 metres ahead was a motorway exit going both north and south and within 100 metres, the fashion and retail section of Broadway existed, where two other day spas are located (Figure: 14).

The location of the day spa facility also symbolically suggested its quality, where the cultural significance of the neighbourhoods suggested the type of efficiency that would be reflected in the treatments. With Ponsonby and Newmarket, well known in Auckland as middle to high-end fashion and retail districts, that significance of quality is expected to be replicated through all businesses within that locality. The locations of day spas also suggest that these businesses participate in the commodification of well-being, in that the retail outlets nearby suggest that the price of the treatments would be relatively expensive. The price is also affected by the median income of local residents meaning day spas often frame their prices in reference to local residential wealth.



Figure 13: A day spa in Newmarket near the motorway (bridge in right corner), and near retail stores (Source: Observation data, 2016).



Figure 14: The fashion and retail section of Broadway within close proximity of day spas (Source: Observation data, 2016).

“If they are easy to find, like on main roads or in big shopping areas, it is great. That way I can get the rest of my errands done.” - Lucy

“Location links to quality. So when I see the location I can decide whether or not it is worth me visiting.” - Matthew

“If they are easy for me to get to and from, that’s great. But the most important thing for me is the neighbourhood, if it is a good one or not. That way, I know I am going to a proper place.” -Rose

“I have never been too bothered about the location. Somewhere close is great, but I need to know that the people are qualified and have the right treatments I am looking for. But location is always a good indicator on what kind of people they cater for. Like European treatments or Asian treatments. It depends on what you are after and the quality.” – Caroline

5.4.1.3 Embodied places on the internet

The internet provides a new form of spatialization and supports the new health paradigm by placing the responsibility of body care into the individual’s hands where, people can choose treatments through the selection provided on websites. The internet has made spa and wellness related information readily available for people so they can make their decisions from home, rather than traveling to the facilities to decide which treatments and services to select. Further, the internet also promotes the newfound commodification of health with the ability to shop around for wellness treatments.

Parr (2002), comments on the idea that the body is rendered invisible in cyberspace and becomes irrelevant because it cannot be viewed. This may be a strong reason as to why day spas provide the ability to book online as the visitor does not have to fear being criticised or pressured to choose a different treatment when walking into a facility. Interestingly, treatment lists in the facility itself do not provide treatment descriptions or a price list as provided on the company website.

Because of the growing amount of information available, some participants stated they found it difficult to choose treatments or services because there is such a diversity to cater for all issues and demands. This situation has encouraged the development of online communities which facilitate messaging practitioners and other day spa goers. Comment or question sections are provided on company websites, where visitors can write to the facility and

receive in depth information on the treatment or service they are interested in. Fact pages are also available that provide information on services or the business (Gattrell and Elliott, 2009). In this sense, the ability to communicate online allows the connection to everyday life for those who want the day spa experience and would rather hear about it from a professional (Figure: 15).

Despite rendering the body invisible, day spa businesses reconfigure the body to an ideal. While providing treatment information, the websites also provide information on how to attain the ideal body through blogs, and regular website updates which can be identified by dates at the bottom of the website page. In most cases it is easier to manage websites than brochures or pamphlets because of the cost associated with editing and printing the information.

The internet furthermore provides an insight into familiar discourses such as healthy eating, exercise, or how to always look the best. This can be kept up to date easily, as seen on the Day Spa Magazine website, compared to providing such information in brochures or pamphlets. Reddy (2004), states that the production and promotion of lifestyle and health magazines have helped continue the tradition of self-help literature aimed at the middle-class. Printed ideas further encourage the institutionalisation of health as a central value of modernity, and as a commodity that could be consumed by the masses. By telling viewers how to manage their bodies, company websites are said to be invoking a particular type of medicalised gaze, or specific textual reading of the body through its use of photos, descriptions and pricing. As a result, the body becomes a symbolic entity that aids in the construction of identity for the self.

Contact Us

To send us an enquiry please fill in the following form, and we will endeavour to reply within 24 hours.

First Name:*	<input type="text"/>
Last Name:*	<input type="text"/>
Company:	<input type="text"/>
Email Address:*	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
Message:*	<input type="text"/>

*indicates required fields

SUBMIT

Figure 15: A day spa provides a messaging system for its website visitors to use (Source: More than Skin, 2016).

5.5 Regulation of the Body and Corporeal Anxiety: The Urban Reality

Upon investigating day spa websites, a significant element of these businesses was the combination of beauty and well-being treatments. This included facials, massages, detoxifications, and spa packages that were characterised as generating transformative breakthroughs for the body and mind. By integrating well-being and beauty, day spas are able to advocate control and regulation of the body from both the inside and outside, and through multiple practices.

5.5.1 Integrating Well-being and Beauty

Beauty is often considered to be highly subjective, such as a gendered trait of desirability for females. However, beauty is more than a matter of aesthetics or certain tastes; rather beauty acts as an index through which social values and beliefs are expressed. (Reischer and Koo, 2004). As Balsamo (1996:78) discusses, the body becomes a site whereby women accept meanings associated with ideal beauty whether conscious of it or not. In this sense, the female body becomes an advertisement for dominant cultural meanings:

“Look at the models for the spas. They are all slim, toned, beautiful and white. It’s the expectations of society in one picture.” – Nina.

The body industry emphasises the link between looking good and feeling good. In result, the boundaries between the medical and cosmetic gazes are blurred as practices from both fields are often required to make looking good and feeling good, possible. This has enabled appearance to become a newly instated, well-being concern. The focus on body size and appearance has also meant that a connection between health, well-being, and beauty has appeared with many day spa facilities integrating treatments and services to target all three aspects.

Despite providing beauty therapies, day spas differentiate themselves from beauty salons due to having a holistic and well-being focused perspective (Figure: 16). Beautification still remains a prominent factor for many women in order to maintain a healthy and fit body, where looking good, and feeling good is not simply a result of relaxation and rejuvenation, but also cosmetic intervention. Beauty can be considered as a medical commodity where, in

day spa treatment lists, the payment for products and services are often rendered invisible (Frank, 2002; Clarke and Griffin, 2007; Peiss, 1998).

One day spa in Newmarket provided beauty treatments and products alongside general day spa treatments such as facials, massages, weight treatments, skin enhancement and waxing. This was a clear sign that beauty and wellbeing have been integrated in at least this well-being based setting, in order to meet all the demands women have. Additionally, this day spa was located in a shopping mall making it easily accessible for all clients (Figures: 17 and 18).



Figure 16: Two day spa businesses next door to each other, separating the beauty and wellness aspects (Source: Observation data, 2016).



Figure 17: A day spa located inside a shopping mall providing both beauty and wellbeing services together (Source: Observation data, 2016).



Figure 18: The day spa has separated wellbeing and beauty in the sense that beauty products are placed outside while cosmetic treatments occur behind the curtains (Source: Observation data, 2016).

5.5.1.1 Body Matters

Bodily regulation is associated with ideas of surveillance and control in modernity, which operate through venues such as day spas, and social practices (e.g. gender constructs, age, and appearance values) using the promotion of the body industry. The day spa pushes the expectations of the body industry as a place where bodies are shaped, modified, and managed using an assortment of practices, treatments, services, and technological devices (Little, 2015; Balsamo, 1995).

The body industry introduces the idea that a healthy body is a ‘natural’ body, and it is only through the ‘natural’ body that one may attain wellness (Fraser, 2001). By losing control of the body through contemporary lifestyles and diets, the chances of attaining wellness become limited. At the same time, so too does the attractiveness of the body and its appropriate sizing. A beautiful body is controlled by size and appearance, reflecting social and cultural cooperation. However, if the body desired does not meet the expectations of society, it can be compared to civil disobedience (Reischer and Koo, 2004). As a result, nature is packaged and presented through the body, not as a placial icon, but an *ideal*.

By associating nature with the body to invoke a sense of wellness, day spas benefit not only through the number of clients they receive, but also potentially through enhancing their image in the community as a redefined centre of health maintenance using ‘natural’ methods. As Balsamo (1996) comments, returning bodies to ‘nature’ or using facilitators of nature, allows bodies to regain their original condition and form through treatments and services available at day spas, while disregarding the central factor of genetics.

“Biostem uses APPLE STEM CELLS to help your cells become YOUNGER, as a result your skin density will increase, sagging skin will get tighter, deep lines and wrinkles will diminish. The perfect way to turn the clock back.” (Acajou, 2016).

The natural body is a misleading construct that fails to acknowledge that all bodies are inevitably shaped and controlled by cultural discourses and norms. Bodies are not formulated entities that are then worked upon by culture. They, in their first instance rely on culture and its associated resources to be formulated (Fraser, 2001; Clarke and Griffin, 2007).

Experiences such as visiting a day spa are felt by the individual through emotions that are not only biologically based, but socially and culturally ingrained. Like our self-identity, emotions

are influenced by the encounters we have with other people and objects, making our emotions a corporeally anchored way of knowing the world (O'Dell, 2010). In turn, this contributes to developing the inner and outer identities of users and what it means to look and feel good.

In contemporary western consumer cultures, a myriad of industries have emerged that promotes the care of the body. In day spas, the increase of alleged anti-ageing skincare products, facials, and cosmetic surgeries reflect that in order to care for the body, the main focus should be on the body's appearance, since it affects one's identity in a social context (Andrews, 1999).

The self is an embodied self. Bodies are not only shaped by the opinions or feelings of outside influences, but also mediate the relationship between people and the world, and how people understand it, thus acting as agents:

"We know how important skin confidence is to you. That's why we developed a programme to specifically treat and improve skin tone, texture, and slow down the signs of ageing" (Caci Medispa, 2016).

"They focus a lot on beauty and the body in the 'now'. The treatments mostly have an instant effect on the outside unlike going to the gym or meditation classes that work from the inside out and take a little longer to fully affect you. The first thing people see is our face or body, you have to make sure that part is looking its best and day spas understand that." – Nina

The material body gains its cultural meanings and values through its appearance whereby individuals are often judged by their appearance in social interactions. Interactions are further affected if bodies are young or old, thin or overweight; female or male. The reactions received are intrinsically affected by one's embodiment and can affect the formation of the self (Gagne and McGaughey, 2002). If the body does not accurately represent who we believe we really are, then day spas provide two options to assist: firstly, to readjust the idea of whom we believe ourselves to be, to reflect the physical reality, or secondly, to alter the body itself. The body's wholeness and happiness relates to the perfection of each of its parts (Frank, 2002). However, the body can never be idealised because of the necessary focus on fragmentation in day spas.

Despite fragmentation being a popular approach in the biomedical perspective of health, the idea transports itself into realms of holism and well-being facilities such as day spas, where

there is a focus on fixing particular parts of the body. The fragments that are promoted in the facilities never add up into a coherent whole (Figure: 19).

Removed for copyright reasons. Image available at:
www.spaayurda.co.nz

Figure 19: A website fragmenting the body in its treatment advertisements. Only certain parts of the body are emphasised (Source: Spa Ayurda, 2016).

In contemporary society, bodily modification and management is enhanced by the availability of technologies and practices that increase the ability to prolong, or produce youthful appearances (Figure: 20). As life expectancy increases, the necessity to remain youthful looking is a powerful cultural symbol. This can be attainable at a price through the constant innovation by the cosmetic industry, and the new products that offer youthfulness (Morton, 2015). As Frank (2002) mentions, once a person receives a treatment, the desire for further treatments increases, as individuals strive to perfect the body:

“I thought I had certain areas that needed improvement, but with age, there is constant improvement needed everywhere. I find myself returning more frequently than I ever thought possible. But I just don’t think I can catch up with how fast my body is deteriorating and it’s terrifying because I don’t feel like what I look like.” – Lydia

Often the body is manipulated by messages within promotional sources that pair images of an ideal body, with a product that promises to close the gap that exists between the consumer's body and the ideal body. The ideologies that have defined what a woman is, and what she can and should do, have been based on the physicality of the ideal body, usually that of a model. This ideal body form is often used to invite consumers to the business and to enhance the expectations of clients (Figure: 21). Furthermore, models or products are marketed as a bridge towards achieving the perfect body, or good life, as though individuals can transform into the models, by using specific products (Frank, 2002).

The construction of the ideal female form not only acts as a way to reflect women's position in society, but it also offers the ability to negotiate and reconceptualise that position. Social situations are reflected through bodily symbols enabling the body to be viewed metaphorically as a text that can be read as both a symbol, and a signifier (Douglas, 1992). In all the photographs provided here as evidence, the models appeared to look remarkably similar in terms of body size, colour, tone, and shape.



Figure 20: A day spa facility in Ponsonby that suggests 'naturalness' in its business name, although a number of its treatments and services are technologically based and focus on appearance (Source: Observation data, 2016).



Figure 21: This model is promoting microdermabrasion – a skin surface treatment that smooths and evens the texture. The model is touching her face as a suggestion that microdermabrasion is what has perfected her skin (Source: Skin and Soul, 2016).

5.5.1.2 Gender

Unlike other well-being facilities, regulating the body in day spas does not occur through diet and exercise programmes. Rather, the day spa disciplines the body through the promotion of Western gender constructs. While the way the average Western consumer uses and experiences products is evolving, such as consuming experiences rather than dreams or lifestyles, the female consumer has always been, and continues to be manipulated by commercial interests.

While some believe that gender is not a prominent issue regarding consumption, it does have an impact in the day spa setting and was a predominant factor through the language and symbols that I came across in my investigation. In day spas, the body and its natural characteristics have become definitive symbols of female identity. This is because they legitimize social constructs of gender, where in order to get the attention of women; it is through visual cues (Balsamo, 1996). Additionally, the day spa is a site where the majority of visits are undertaken by women, meaning the target is influenced by the dominant consumer. This was reflected in this research with 16 out of the 20 participants that were interviewed, were women.

Following Little (2012), the day spa becomes a therapeutic space that responds to and creates new femininities. Women's well-being and ability to perform physically and mentally, requires relaxation for both the body and mind, including the opportunity to indulge and escape from normal responsibilities. It was because of these factors that several participants of this research initially visited day spas, to get away from the everyday responsibilities.

I just needed to get away from everything, you know? My life is so busy, work, children, household maintenance, it's ridiculous. It's so pure, simple and calming [to visit the day spa]! Everything [that] my [daily] life isn't." – Alana

"Children! My life is so crazy and busy because of them. I have no time for myself." – Katy

The day spas investigated in this research strongly accentuated their treatments and services towards pampering and indulgence, making them a luxury and a familiar aspect of everyday life. The luxury and indulgence provided by the spa serves as a way to treat certain bodies while still regulating them, stressing the relationship between fitness, well-being and a particular body form.

This integrated target effect leads to women visiting spas more often than men. Day spas reinforce ideas associated with contemporary gender identities such as being the youthful looking woman, or being fit and toned, through various treatments. The day spa incorporates treatments aimed to combat these through pampering and relaxation activities, nutritional or dietary advice, and skin management, to enhance the individual's overall well-being.

Day spa treatments and services reflect differing degrees of urgency and significance. The individual's self-esteem, and self-actualisation, are expressed and pursued through the purchase of commodities. These commodities become more than material objects, they become products that have a complex set of meanings or messages associated with them (Frank, 2002). With the constant expectation that women provide emotional and productive labour for the family and workplace, the increase in spaces for relaxation has been encouraged. Taking care of the body, as Little (2015) states, is not simply about treatment of illness and disease, but also about rest, relaxation, and recovery.

Gender relations also appear to disadvantage women in later life. The ageing female body is particularly marginalized for its growing absence of womanliness, youthfulness, and the reduced capacity to represent culturally normative attributes of their gender, which inevitably has been defined in masculine terms (Schwaiger, 2006). In my findings, anti-ageing work is a predominant service that is performed by female practitioners and consumed primarily by female clients because of the strong sense of familiarity and shared marginality. One

participant clearly described the sense of relief it was for her to have an anti-ageing treatment because of the harsh expectations many women receive for their appearance.

“I never had a male therapist perform anti-ageing treatments or for the consultation. I don’t think men understand what it feels like to have your identity based on your looks or your age.” – Ella

Additionally, body hair removal for women has become a significant feature of a contrived femininity and a frequently encountered treatment in day spas. Having hair visible on a woman’s body represents a symbolic threat to the gendered social order. This is further promoted by waxing advertisements in day spas of women who have no hair on their body.

Though day spas are predominantly associated with women, more facilities are providing services for men who also are being brought into the pampering market, which challenges their gender identities. Ageing male bodies are marginalized because of its association with deteriorating masculinity. In result, older males are also feminized, facing similar burdens as ageing females. As Coupland (2007) suggests, the traditional notions of masculinity have been disturbed, as the public gaze has turned onto men.

In result, men have become more aware of their appearance. It is increasingly becoming a new norm for men to remove body hair through depilation, as it represents the ability to have control over their lives (Frank, 2014). As I found out, this becomes a dichotomy for men where, if they appear to be self-absorbed in their body appearance, their level of masculinity declines. “Work” has always been understood as a central factor to the lives of men and a major basis of their identity as it often seen as a source of masculinity. “Beauty” and “caring,” on the other hand, are often viewed as something naturally feminine (Ahmed, 2005).

“Dad might already turn to golf for stress relief, but this massage takes it to another level, gently help alleviate tension and melt those knots. A perfect gift that melts away the stress of a hardworking soul and leaves him feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.” (Spa Ayurda, 2016).

“I feel incredibly vain going to a day spa. I don’t know many men who do that, but I need to always look my best. I am the face of a company; I need to secure my masculinity. The day spa provides that opportunity for me.” – Anthony

5.5.1.3 The process of ageing

The particularity of treatments and services available in day spas suggests that socio-political issues are framed through nature. Specifically, the issue of ageing is resonated through being natural and unnatural. Day spas heavily focus on the well of ‘eternal youth’, as a basis for their treatments and services. Social anxieties and dilemmas associated with appearance have created the day spa as an arena where individuals can gain an advantage that they can use against everyone else, that advantage being youthful through anti-ageing treatments.

To age is to lose symbolic capital and self-worth. Consumer culture promotes fear and insecurity about ageing and its associated appearance. This is inspired by magazines and advertisements that promote products that emphasise age-reversing properties. Though, websites and brochures may not outwardly state treatments to be anti-ageing, all day spas analysed in this research provided anti-ageing or “appearance enhancement” treatments.

“I would say [that] women in their 30s or older [should] seek day spas out [for use]. I think that’s when women start to panic and try reversing all those years of eating bad, the alcohol, going to sleep with makeup on, late nights, and smoking.” - Jess

“I would say young women who want to prevent the ageing process as much as possible and who want to manage their body [should] go to day spas. Older women in their 40s and overweight who are trying to go back in time to their younger, prettier selves because they have aged faster than they thought possible.” – Mischa

For those who submit to the demand of maintaining a youthful and socially acceptable body often rely on a social ‘mask’ to conceal ageing and to protect themselves from being stigmatized and embarrassed within an ageist society. As an outcome, ageing in Western consumer societies is not an opportunity to reinvent oneself but rather, it is a conflict between the aspiration for social value and compromising with the cultural norms that devalue ageing (Schwaiger, 2006; Reischer and Koo, 2004).

Though there is a symbolic appreciation for nature and its ability to age invisibly, science dominates the outcomes of many treatments that involve age rewinding. This is seen in Figure: 22 which was taken outside of a spa facility. For this anti-ageing treatment, nature and science have been integrated through the use of plant stem cells that fight the signs of ageing.

Unlike other anti-ageing treatments that occur within the spa setting, this particular treatment offers an at-home routine to maintain the visage.

As Williams (1999) states, identification with place is influenced by the stage of the life cycle the individual is in. In most cases, there is a greater enhancement of place identification with age. As day spas promote themselves as a place to manage the appearance of people, those who are battling with their appearance are likely to identify with the day spa as a safe haven or oasis. With New Zealand's ageing population day spas target its treatments to the largest population, specifically being the 'middle' or 'older' generation through anti-ageing treatments, relaxation or rejuvenation services.

"I think the professionals are feeding off of our fears or becoming weak, slow or old. There are more (day spas) today than when I first moved up here 15 years ago and it's probably got to do with the ageing population, the income people earn and the busy lifestyle people have here where they don't have time to do things on their own, so they buy their happiness like everything else." – Janelle



Figure 22: A treatment focused on anti-ageing, using natural ingredients, specifically Apple stem cells, targeting middle-class, middle-aged people (Source: Observation data, 2016).

5.6 Summary:

The production and experience of the day spa through design features, treatment availability, and bodily regulation and control indicates that the day spa setting is a contextual phenomenon based on the values and beliefs that the broader society holds. In particular, day spas in the suburbs of Ponsonby and Newmarket in Auckland City are formulated through the emotional and cognitive understandings of the individual that supports the place identity produced by the day spa.

The layout of the day spa environment promotes the idea of therapeutic experiences that provide a positive sense of wellbeing through the use of human and non-human entities as described by Conradson (2005). How individuals manipulate such phenomena dictates their understanding and experience within a place as the therapeutic qualities of a place are based on the relative outcome between the individual and the place. For example, nature is illustrated as a placial icon within the day spa through visual and haptic cues which creates a sense of 'elsewhereness', enabling people to temporarily 'get-away' from their busy everyday life without truly getting away at all (Hopkins, 1990). Integrating the traditional values and ideas of healing from the natural environment, with the accessibility and functionality of the built, the day spa becomes a simulated "ideal" where the best of both environments are available and are promoted through designs, treatments, and services.

Treatments and services offered by day spas enhance the therapeutic qualities of the place by establishing a sense of place that clients can experience. The diversification of spas in contemporary times and the associated treatments means the diversification of experiences for clients, where the varieties of spas produce a form of well-being – physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, for every individual.

Additionally, this diversification also encourages individuals to choose their own treatments and services', corresponding with the idea that well-being is commodified, where people 'shop' around for the right day spa that fits their individual needs. This is aided by day spa business websites that list available treatments and the qualities associated with that place, its location, and duration of treatments. This contributes towards developing the day spa as a healing place for people and its ability to develop a sense of self through the use of its treatments.

The day spa promotes its connection to the body industry through which the idea of the self is enhanced. By producing certain ideas about the body and how it should appear using advertisements and treatment selection – which has been stimulated by sociocultural values such as gender and age constructs, the day spa regulates and controls the body. The day spa is a feminised place predominantly made for women and this is emphasised by the integration of beauty and well-being treatments within the same place. The day spa also produces a sense of corporeal anxiety through its regulation and control over the body and how it should look like, promoting body appearance as a significant source of well-being. Furthermore, society has again incorporated nature into the day spa, suggesting that the ‘natural’ body advertised and promoted through treatments, is the ‘ideal’ body form.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This final chapter reviews, and reflects on the findings from this research about how day spas are produced and experienced as places that contribute to multiple forms of well-being. The first part of the chapter will review what was researched and the objectives that were selected to carry out the study. Following this, the significance of this study in relation to broader understandings of well-being and place will be reflected upon. In the second section, the empirical discoveries will be elaborated in relation to the study objectives. Lastly, the third section will include a reflection on the methodology used and associated implications, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Day spas and the contribution to well-being

At the outset of this thesis, the role of place in health and wellness management was established. Place is a perceptibly important determinant of individual and collective health because of its impact on well-being and inseparability from the concept of healing. It is a human necessity to have therapeutic locations available that offer healing, rehabilitation, security, belonging, or support of general well-being, and people explicitly search for these types of places.

The ability of places to meet these requirements, whether in the natural or built environment, contributes to its reputation that is attributed by the way people perceive the place's efficiency of providing such needs, positively or negatively. The capability of a place being able to positively fulfil certain needs or provide therapeutic, healing qualities, often leads to a conventional truth about a place that is culturally constructed through experiences, ideologies, feelings, and perceptions that a group of people associate with. In result, these experiences, feelings, or perceptions about a place, can affect the personal identification of a person and contribute to their understanding of physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual forms of well-being.

Following the idea of Conradson (2005) as a basis for this research on day spas as healing places, the qualities that define a therapeutic or healing place can be based on both human and non-human entities. Additionally, these placial qualities differ over space, time, and with individuals. Instead of defining the day spa as a therapeutic landscape, it can be defined as a

place of therapeutic experiences, due to the contemporariness of the day spa environment, its qualities and attributes in treatment, service range, and relative outcomes based on individual involvement with the place and treatments.

Day spas have developed a reputation for providing forms of well-being. They have recreated themselves as locations for well-being management by providing therapeutic experiences, the opportunity to relax, rejuvenate, or repair the body. In order to understand how this reputation is achieved, this current research investigated how day spas in the central Auckland suburbs of Ponsonby and Newmarket are produced and experienced as a site that contributes to physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual forms of well-being.

How the day spa is produced and experienced has not adequately been explored, where many studies are based on international spas and inquire from a perspective based on wellness tourism or place identity alone. By first analysing the production and experiences of a healing place, an insight into how a place has advanced and managed to hold a positive reputation for wellness and therapeutic qualities, can be established. Furthermore, the use of such information can provide additional knowledge for other places associated with well-being, and how the relationship held between the individual and the place is crucial to the delivery of positive or negative therapeutic effects.

Three objectives were developed which supported my findings. The first question investigated the diverse approach to healing and well-being in treatments and services. The second question explored the place-based processes that invoked the use of available treatments and services. The third question sought to analyse how a relationship between the body and nature evokes a sense of wellness. Investigating through the selected objectives enables this study to ascertain how the day spa promotes ideas of healing and well-being, but tailors the understandings to meet sociocultural expectations of contemporary society.

In particular, how the day spa is produced and experienced as a site that contributes to well-being, is a reflection of Western lifestyle commitments, consumerism, and sociocultural constructs that control and regulate the appearance of the body. This will be addressed in the next section where the diverse approach of treatments and associated experiences will be discussed with specific reference to the diverse treatment range including the familiarisation of touch and Eastern healing methods. The importance of consumption, gender, and age constructs will provide an understanding of the importance of place-based approaches and the effects it has on the available treatments and services in day spas. Lastly, the artificiality of

nature will be emphasised in respect to how a relationship between the body and nature is evoked in the day spa to produce a sense of wellness.

These findings ultimately lead to the understanding of the day spa as an urban oasis, where it is both a safe haven yet a mirage for regulation of the body and the understanding of well-being.

6.2 Understanding the production and experiences of the day spa:

6.2.1 A treatment for each and every one of us

Day spas diversely approach healing and well-being within the same facility through the integration of beauty with well-being and the inclusion of global forms of treatments. The day spa familiarises clients with a sense of well-being through treatments and services, which are advocated and tailored by society. Specifically, focus is on one's appearance, and how well-being is a global phenomenon, covertly making it an activity of consumption. This highlights the sense of place the day spa produces, where the diversity in treatments and services can aid the day spa to connect with the emotions of the clients who have various cultural or ethnic backgrounds, past history, and experiences.

By targeting both beautification and well-being needs within the day spa, not only does the facility increase its client numbers, but it also tailors the understanding of well-being and healing. The experience of well-being is tailored by the integration of medical and cosmetic treatments and the pluralistic nature of health as Balsamo (1995) suggests. A combination of both medical and cosmetic treatments is necessary in order to produce a sense of positive well-being and reliability. The availability of various treatments serve to authenticate the treatment the individual chooses, magnifying the therapeutic experience of the day spa as an *individualised* experience due to the decision making role the individual has in treatment choice.

The day spa manipulates the management of well-being with the maintenance of appearance where, 'looking good' resonates with 'feeling good'. More so, the idea is generated that those who work hard; have a high income or have a family to look after, deserve the most benefits. Hence, through pricing and packaging of treatments with myths and symbols, the day spa is able to connect to certain groups of people in society that can relate to the idea of "deserving a

break”. Thus, most day spas in the research areas provided the same treatments and services to enforce the idea that there are specific manners and standards through which well-being can be attained in Western society.

The diverse forms of treatments and services available in the day spa are also a result of globalisation. Eastern healing methods have progressively been introduced to a few day spas to promote a unique sense of identity as it competes with other day spas in the vicinity. The globalisation of treatments also reflects an interconnection between cultural identities, which in result creates a new well-being culture composed of the various contributing cultural practices (Hoyez, 2007). As a result, the new tailored form of well-being that focuses on bodily regulation and appearance develops; changing what the ‘healing place’ such as the day spa contains, yet also proves the day spa is a site for consumption.

6.2.2 Commodification of well-being and the body industry

The diverse forms of treatments available in the day spa are further invoked by place-based processes. Most significantly, the commodification of well-being and the sociocultural construction of gender are the factors that serve the development of the day spa. The interconnection between the two has resulted in the development of the body industry, in which the appearance and experiences associated with the body are turned into objects of consumption.

The body industry enhances the sense of self within the day spa setting, along with developing the day spa as a place of therapeutic experiences that positively affect one’s well-being. As O’Dell (2010) describes, there is a focus on the selling of experiences rather than simply lifestyles or desires. Experiences are imbedded in cultural values and expectations. The day spa packages well-being with myths and symbols people have a felt connection to, which are then applied to the body. This is characterised through the modification and management of the body through the use of different services, practices, treatments, and devices (Little, 2015; Balsamo, 1995).

The role of gender constructs heavily motivate the production and experiences of the day spa, where social gender constructs discipline and regulate the body. The day spa promotes specific forms of treatments that discipline the body to look its best through the use of symbols and myths which resonate with visitors. In this circumstance, the economy and

culture come together to produce new values and beliefs in society that are packaged and presented in ways that reflect human needs and expectations.

6.2.3 The Role of Nature

One of the significant findings of this research was the role that nature plays within the day spa setting where its associated philosophies and ideas based on healing have remained intact, while its physicality has not. The role that nature plays, as a simulated ideal within the day spa setting, is crucial to understanding how the day spa evokes a relationship between the body and nature to restore wellness. This in turn, supports the interconnection between place identity and the development of therapeutic experiences, where the ‘iconisation’ and idealisation of nature promotes the identity of the day spa as a new form of ‘healing place’.

While traditional and premodern spas were often based in the natural environment rather than the built environment, spas could be found in built spaces such as the popularly known, town of Bath (Gesler, 2003). It was the ability to *journey* to the spa which was a significant part of the therapeutic experience where, the healing properties associated with the natural environment were taken into consideration. The natural environment, or being around natural phenomena, provided spa-goers a chance to escape from urban life and heal. Today, day spas are essentially located within urban, built environments with little to no use of practical natural phenomena. Instead they are portrayed in two manners: as a placial icon, and a bodily ideal.

Nature being simulated as a placial icon produces the sense of ‘elsewhereness’, where the use of natural phenomena can enhance the identity of a place where it is not typically found, such as in the built environment (Hopkins, 1990). Rock pools, fountains, palm fronds, or music based on the sounds of nature, are some of the many techniques day spas use to provide clients with the sense of going on a journey— a traditional component to the spa experience, without leaving the facility based in the city.

Nature’s role as a placial icon establishes the identity of the day spa as a healing place due to the reputation nature has acquired over time with its ability to meet human needs. With its ‘iconisation’, the day spa in turn recreates its reputation to be similar to that of the natural environment, but as a specialised, recreated form, due to the artificial basis of its use. Day spas deliver ‘enough’ of nature, to evoke a relationship with the body without removing the

predominant characteristics of technology or science that dominates society, and secures a sense of reliability.

In this case, the best of nature is applied to the day spa setting, rather than specific forms. Particularly, water, the principal component of the traditional spa, is rarely used in day spa treatments due to the ease of accessibility to water in Auckland. Additionally, the tailored, sociocultural expectations of the type of 'healing' society requires, emphasises the immediate 'felt' effect of treatments such as massages or body scrubs. The therapeutic experience a person has in the day spa is amplified by the place identity of the day spa, where visitors feel or perceive the portrayal of nature and connect to it in a way that enhances their personal well-being mentally, emotionally, or spiritually.

Nature is also formulated as an ideal within the day spa through bodily appearance expectations. The ideal body is deemed 'natural' if it meets sociocultural expectations in terms of shape, height, colour, and tone for which all clients should aspire to look like. The natural body is a misleading construct however, as the ideal body is inevitably shaped and controlled by cultural discourses and norms. Additionally, the natural body is portrayed as the only way to attain a sense of wellness, linking to the idea of 'looking good, feeling good'. This aspiration is conveyed through the various natural treatments where some are not natural at all, but defined as so due to the valued philosophies based on the natural environment and its ability to enforce sociocultural bodily expectations, and the inevitable purchase of the treatment.

In this sense, the construction of the ideal or natural body and distribution of it within the day spa, suggests how far Western society has tailored the idea of well-being. It can only be accessed through meeting appearance expectations of society, and is commodified and treated as though it is a purchasable object for particular groups in society. This highlights the fact that the day spa is produced and experienced in connection to sociocultural ideals.

6.3 The Oasis

The diverse options and origins of treatments available in the day spa, the promotion of the body industry, and the simulation of nature, interconnect to produce an understanding of the day spa as an urban oasis. Here, the day spa is both a safe haven for people to

temporarily escape from the city and heal, yet it is also a mirage, where it produces a regulated and controlled understanding of well-being and the body.

The day spa in some instances can be produced and experienced as a safe haven, providing temporary refuge for people who want to briefly escape their routine everyday lives to heal or rehabilitate. By enabling the individual to choose their treatments, the reputation of the day spa as a healing place is amplified as it corresponds with the idea that the therapeutic experience is a result of the individual interaction with a place. However, while the day spa is a safe haven and suggests forms of healing and rehabilitation, it illustrates the attainment of physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being as a result of looking after one's body and appearance. Thus, day spas focus their treatment and services around bodily appearance which indisputably reflects sociocultural values and expectations about the body.

As a result, the day spa is a mirage where it is not always a safe haven because of how it regulates and controls the understanding of well-being, as something only attainable through ideal appearances. Furthermore, the day spa is a mirage because it produces the body as an outcome of meeting social, corporeal expectations, not a client's own expectations. The day spa challenges the relationship between the body and healing places by indicating the forms of healing treatments and services clients can select from, and when they can be rewarded with a sense of well-being.

6.4 Limitations to the study

A limitation of the study is its small sample size. Whilst the number of participants was appropriate to the geographic scope of the study, namely two neighbourhoods in the city, the conclusions drawn from the small sampling may not be applicable to other locations in the city or to the day spa industry in other parts of New Zealand. However, this extension of findings beyond the domain of investigation is not the goal of qualitative research.

In terms of the selection of participants, the findings may have varied had different individuals been recruited. Specifically, if day spa therapists or providers within the study sites were included, they would have provided a different perspective on the production and experiences of the day spa. For example, are the therapists as cognizant of the diverse approach to healing and well-being as the users are? What does the day spa provide for the therapist in terms of identity and well-being management? This would have also aided the

observations made on company websites and how treatments and services are differentiated. Furthermore, therapist recruitment may have provided insight into the economic geographies of the day spa and their development in Auckland City.

By interviewing the users of day spas in this research, it strengthened the symbolic and cultural understanding of the day spa. If the therapists were also included into the study, the marketing and economic insight of the day spa, and the particular processes that support the commodification of well-being, would have been gained.

6.5 Future Research

This study has contributed to achieving a convergence between health geography and geographies of consumption. This is built on earlier investigations of consumption spaces of health care (e.g. Kearns and Barnett, 2003; Kearns and Barnett 2000). While there are other studies focused on *spas* specifically, they are from a wellness tourism perspective where spas are explored on an international level and how they meet the requirements to be a wellness destination for tourists. Only a small amount of peer-reviewed research within the context of day spas has been carried out from a geographic perspective. Additionally, there has been no significant research carried out on the development of day spas within the New Zealand context. Future research might usefully build on this pilot investigation by undertaking comparative research with other urban centres in New Zealand and examining the impact that ethnic groups have on the variance of treatments and services.

In particular, an investigation of the treatments and services available in day spas outside of Auckland, in contrast to the day spa treatments available in New Zealand's only metropolis may provide awareness of the impact that globalisation has on consumption behaviours. Furthermore, this may support the understanding of well-being and the deliverance of therapeutic experiences outside of a metropolitan centre such as Auckland, and if the appearance of the body has a stronghold over the treatments as they do in Auckland. Incorporating perceptions of treatments and services held by users and providers from various ethnic groups could potentially improve understanding the contextuality of place identity, its connection to sociocultural values and norms that promote day spa development, and other sources of therapeutic experiences within the built environment.

Appendices

Appendix One: Participant Information Sheet



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Participation Information Sheet (Users of Day Spas)

Title of Project: Searching for the urban oasis: Day spas and rethinking the relationship between the body and healing places

Researcher: Kailas Moral

My name is Kailas Moral and I am a Master of Science student specializing in Geography at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Professor Robin Kearns. I am conducting a research project that explores how bodily healing has been tailored in urban environments through the development of day spa facilities.

Project description and invitation:

With rapid urban expansion and urban life being predominantly time constrained, the availability of places that contribute to maintaining one's own wellbeing has diversified immensely. In particular, the development of urban day spa therapy facilities has provided people with the opportunity to seek wellbeing management and healing on a psychological and physical level without having to compromise their busy day to day life by leaving the city.

In Auckland alone, the number of day spa facilities available has increased exponentially in recent years, where facilities and certain treatments have become more accessible in certain urban suburbs rather than others. This increased popularity and availability gives me the motivation to find out how day spas diversely approach healing and wellbeing and what kind of urban, place based processes inform these diverse approaches to healing and wellbeing. Furthermore I want to understand how day spas evoke a relationship between the body and nature to restore wellness. In turn this will allow me to recognize how the urban lifestyle challenges the way people understand the concept of healing the body and healing places.

For this research, I will be investigating the placement of day spa facilities in two well-known suburbs of Auckland, Newmarket and Ponsonby where numerous demographic factors contribute to the number of day spas available and the treatments they provide.

I invite you to take part in this research project because of your interest and use of day spa facilities and treatments which enables you to participate in this research project. Your involvement will include a one-time interview conducted by me that will be audio recorded.

By participating in this research project, you will be helping me to find out how are day spas produced and experienced as places that contribute to physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Project Procedures:

Participants will be involved in a one-time audio recorded interview that will be conducted by the researcher at a place of your choosing, such as a café within the area or the University grounds, during the period of 15th of October 2015 to 15th of November 2015. Interviews will take a maximum of 30 minutes to complete. Questions about the use of day spa treatments, reason for the spa treatments and personal thoughts on healing and wellbeing will be asked.

Participation in this research project is voluntary and participants will not be personally identified in the research. Comments made by the participant will be published under a coded name. If necessary, the audio recorder will be turned off at any time the participant wishes.

Data storage/retention/destruction/future use:

Once interviews have been transcribed by the researcher, you will have the option of reviewing the transcription if you wish to edit any comments made. The transcript will be sent within three weeks of the initial interview.

If any alterations are made, the transcript must be returned to the researcher within one week of receiving the transcript.

Audio recordings collected from interviews will be electronically stored and kept confidential on a password protected computer for six years at which time they will be deleted and removed entirely from the computer system.

Participants will also be given the opportunity to receive a copy of the recording within three weeks of the initial interview.

If you choose to participate in this research project, your consent form will be kept in a locked cabinet on University premises for six years at which time it will be shredded.

The data from this research will be used to complete my thesis and may be used in academic presentations and publications. Although participants will not be named in the research, information will be presented in a way so that individuals will have their identity protected.

Right to Withdraw from Participation:

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, a reason will not be expected. If you do consent to participate and later wish to withdraw your support, you may withdraw at any time and any information you provided up until the 1st of December 2015.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

All information about participants in this research project will be held confidential and data will be presented in the thesis and subsequent presentations and publications in a way that does not personally identify individuals. The researcher may quote and publish comments made by the participants but these will be reported under coded names.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research, please contact Professor Robin Kearns or Dr. Tara Coleman.

For general research queries, please contact Kailas Moral.

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If you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact: The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, the University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Phone: (09) 3737599 (ext 83711).
Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz.

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ON 06-06-2015 for (3) years, Reference Number 014/800**

Appendix Two: Participant Consent Form



CONSENT FORM (USER OF DAY SPAS)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Title of Project: Searching for the urban oasis: Day spas and rethinking the relationship between the body and healing places
Researcher: Kailas Moral

I have read the Participation Information Sheet, I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that I will be audio-recorded.
- I understand that if asked, the recorder can be turned off at any time.
- I understand that I will not be personally identified in the thesis and subsequent presentations and publications.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time and to withdraw any data traceable to me up to a specified date (1st December 2015).
 - I wish / do not wish to receive a transcription of the interview

Email: _____

- I wish / do not wish to receive a copy of the interview audio recording.

Email: _____

- I wish / do not wish to receive summary of findings.

Email: _____

- I understand data will be kept for six years after which they will be destroyed.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 06-06-2015 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 014/800

Appendix Three: Interview Questions

What made you seek out a spa facility?

Why do you wish to visit day spas more often? What feeling does it provide for you?

Did the day spa have a certain type of design that made it appealing for you? (This can be answered as 1. The design of the actual place or 2. if you looked at a website. You can discuss the layout or phrases or treatment names etc)

How does the location of the day spa affect your choice of visiting it?

If day spas weren't situated in urban areas where do you think you would find relaxation or wellness management within the city?

What type of treatments do you prefer?

When you think of a day spa, what type of treatments do you expect to find there, or what makes a day spa a day spa?

What are your initial thoughts or feelings when you visit a day spa?

How are day spas different from other facilities that are focused on relaxation, healing and wellness management?

Do you think Day Spas have a target market? Who do you think this target market is and why?

Why do you think day spas are becoming more popular and accessible?

Do you think day spas are the modern escape?

How would you define wellbeing?

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