

Introduction

Over the past decade the demand for and provision of tourist opportunities aimed at improving health and well-beingⁱ has grown rapidly, not only in quantity but also in terms of the range of different possibilities available to the consumer. Wellness tourism is now a label applied to holidays as diverse as meditation retreats, spiritual visits, fitness holidays, adventure tourism, life coaching, beauty therapy, organ transplants and cosmetic surgery (see Atkinson, Fuller and Pinter 2012, Bushell and Shelton 2009, Picard and Robinson 2012). With the growth of opportunities for wellness tourism has come recognition of the importance of health and quality of life to consumers looking for meaning in the ways they spend their vacation time. The range of wellness holidays available together with the diverse and increasingly sophisticated motivations for their consumption suggests that there is a need to engage seriously with the concept of wellness tourism as academics and to look beyond the search for luxury and hedonism characteristically associated with its growth and popularity. In particular, there is a need to consider the idea of a wellness holiday not simply as time out from daily routines but as a transformative experience, often with life-changing effects or at least lasting benefits to health and wellbeing.

In this paper I explore fitness holidays as an important element of wellness tourism. I argue that underlying the appeal and popularity of fitness holidays are important questions about managing and maintaining the healthy body. Specifically, fitness holidays constitute a particular response to the pressures to conform to certain ideals of size, weight and appearance. Such pressures, as I discuss here, may be articulated as part of shifts in health practices in which the individual is encouraged to take greater responsibility for physical fitness and where discipline and regulation of the body are required as part of a broader 'biological citizenship' (Rose and Novas 2015). I also suggest

in the paper that fitness holidays encapsulate a particular approach to individual fitness and corporeal care, emphasising the development of personal programmes of exercise and relaxation as part of an approach to health in which the individual is encouraged to learn more about the 'needs' of their bodies and the value of different health and fitness practices. They also stress the importance of natural health and exercise practices arguing that the natural environment provides the best context for fitness holiday clients to acquire the skills and knowledges needed to regulate and manage their bodies. This emphasis on the development of bodily skills and understanding is, I argue, part of a wider socio-medical shift in which individuals are encouraged to gain biological, medical and technical knowledges in order to maintain bodily fitness and wellbeing.

In the paper I start by contextualising the arguments within recent research, drawing particularly on the growing geographical literature on wellbeing and the body and on therapeutic practices and environments. I then go on to explore the relationship between fitness holidays and bodily maintenance through some examples of the provision and consumption of fitness holidays. I refer to original research in which I undertake interviews with fitness trainers and analyse promotional and web-based material which provide responses on the experience of fitness holidays from clients.

Fitness, discipline and the body

There is now a significant geographical literature exploring the nature and implications of what has been termed a 'new' paradigm of health. This work has documented the shift in medical attention and advice from curative to preventative care and the developing emphasis on individual responsibility and bodily scrutiny and maintenance (Moore 2010, Frayn and Lee 2008). Incorporated within this shift have been strong medical and moral messages about the requirements of a healthy lifestyle and the associated need to manage the body as a project in accordance with accepted norms of fitness and size. In drawing

attention to the management of the body in discourses and practices of health and wellbeing, research has identified the rise of an increasingly important industry (Black 2002, Straughen 2010) through which bodies can be shaped, modified and managed using an array of practices, treatments and technologies as diverse as cosmetic surgery, weight loss programmes and pampering. The body industry stresses the strong link between ‘feeling good’ and ‘looking good’ (see Morton forthcoming) and is central in blurring the boundaries between the medical and the cosmetic (see Holliday and Sanchez-Taylor 2006), reinforcing the importance of body shape, size and appearance as a health concern. While the exercise and nutrition programmes studied in my research may seem far removed from the cosmetic and surgical practices used in other parts of the ‘body industry’, they are driven by the same ideals of bodily size and shape and subject and, to some extent, the relationship between health and beauty. Such programmes are embedded in wider normatively inflected discourses linking understandings and practices of bodies, health, activity and beauty.

Commentators have explored how aspects of the body industry reflect ideas of control and discipline drawing on Foucault’s work on biopower, governmentality and care of the self. For Evans and Colls (2009) in their work on obesity, for example, Foucault provides a way of looking at the emergence of medical power and of discourses around bodily size. Their work shows how the adoption and normalization of accepted knowledges and ‘truths’ in the understanding of fatness and obesity are reproduced in government guidance and medical practice. This medicalisation serves not only to render some bodies unhealthy but also, more broadly, to regulate and monitor bodies of citizens in order to promote social order. So these processes are not disciplinary and restrictive but are also about fostering bodies’ productive capacity. Other researchers have made reference to the shift in Foucault’s work from disciplinary regimes to the production of the self. The notion of the ‘care of the self’ has been applied to the study of bodily management through multiple therapeutic and well-being practices (see Heyes 2006, Lea 2009, Longhurt 2011)

to explore the ways in which the individual creates and cares for their body as an 'aesthetic project' or 'work of art'. Care of the self consists of a set of repetitive practices in which the individual is encouraged to 'live a beautiful life' in order not only to strive for personal health but also to be an effective citizen (Longhurst 2011). In attending to the 'care of the self' the individual is enabled to transform him/herself and become a subject.

Studies have differed in the extent to which the care of the self is read as an oppressive or an enabling strategy. In discussions of weight-loss programmes for example, Heyes (2006) refers to the care of the self to contest the view that bodies engaged in practices of dieting (as introduced through Weight Watchers Clubs) are rendered entirely docile through the discipline and control required to conform to the programme. Rather, she suggests, such bodies are enabled to transform themselves and to gain strength and confidence through the achievement of a suitably sized body.

“'Docile bodies' analysis can elide the emotional, psychological and practical functions of an organized weight loss programme. Such businesses exploit not only the desire to produce an appropriate body (with all the symbolism that adheres to it) but also the sense of self-development, mastery, expertise and skill that dieting can offer” (Heyes 2006: 137).

As Longhurst (2011) notes, however, others have contested the argument that subjects engaged in self transformation through adoption of Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence' are enabled to manage their bodies in the way that they chose. Individuals are still constrained by the ubiquitous power of society to control the ways in which bodies are seen and valorized. Thus their bodily projects take place within very oppressive ideas about the notion of the appropriate and healthy body as discussed above.

Running through these theoretical and empirical ideas about power and control of the body are interesting questions about skills and knowledges. In the encouragement to

attend to the care of the self through a shifting array of medical and cosmetic practices, the individual is required to gain familiarity with and understanding of the products and practices available and to make choices based on their particular needs. Increasingly, the body industry presents these choices as a set of packages to the individual which link a range of dietary, cosmetic and health practices, designed with a specific body in mind. In her study of ageing and the body, Morton (forthcoming) looks at how subjects develop an often detailed knowledge of the technologies used in cosmetic procedure and of the chemical treatments employed to enhance and modify the body. These are highly personalised and often seen as part of a wider 'body project' alongside other dietary or cosmetic practices. As above, different readings of the development of skills and knowledges can be read both as potentially liberating for the subject, providing them with the means to make important and informed choices about the health of their bodies, and as oppressive in the power that they then hold to shape the practices adopted by individuals.

These ideas about the ways in which we construct, articulate and manage the body in order to achieve what is considered to be a fit and healthy body have influenced the study of fitness tourism as I show below. They have helped in thinking through not only the ways in which notions of well-being are shaped and communicated but also debates around the how individuals are empowered and enabled to choose and manage their bodily fitness. Before turning to the research, however, it is important to briefly note the centrality of nature as a concept that links aspects of body maintenance with the spaces and practices of fitness tourism. Nature is also provides an important reference point in terms of the geographical literature on wellbeing and embodiment. Nature is present in the form of the body, the practices of fitness and the therapeutic spaces within which the bodies and practices are performed.

Again there is a substantial literature which explores the ways in which 'naturalness' is framed within the notion of therapeutic landscapes. The perceived healing qualities of

natural landscapes have been shown to be influential not only in specific sites and activities/practices but also in the broader attitudes that have shaped the access to and use of the countryside (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010). Natural landscapes are widely claimed to represent an escape from modernity and from the strains and stresses of contemporary living - a view, heavily influenced by the legacy of a post-Enlightenment romanticism (Conradson 2005) - and to be healthier, by definition, since being spaces of 'nature' removes the individual from causes of illness.

The focus on nature in this paper is not simply as a quality of therapeutic landscapes but as central to the notion of fitness and thus to the kinds of tourist experience sold in fitness holidays. As alluded to above, the pressure to maintain a healthy body through disciplinary strategies and the care of the self incorporates important ideas about the natural body and while it is recognized that cosmetic surgery and even less invasive forms of beauty therapy can help us achieve desirable and appropriate bodies, it is the 'natural' body that demonstrates a greater commitment to meeting the goals of health and wellbeing. Running through popular discourses of the fit and healthy body is the belief that the 'natural' body is the fit, appropriately sized and attractive body (Hurd Clarke and Griffin 2007). Despite lay knowledges which attribute, in a rather contradictory way, certain aspects of bodily 'failure' to chance and to some kind of accident of nature (thus some bodies are 'naturally' rounder, bigger, heavier, weaker or less mobile than others), there is a strong belief that, in their natural state, bodies are fit and healthy. Such arguments suggest that what we have done to allow the body to lose control - through over-eating, lack of exercise or involvement in risky behaviour such as drinking or smoking - places un-natural demands on the body and threatens its well-being. Returning bodies to nature or the 'pre-cultural' (see Balsamo 1996), it is claimed, allows them to re-gain their original condition and fitness and achieve a purer and more desirable (and healthy) size and shape. For some this kind of natural fitness is far superior and more enduring (and ultimately safer) than achieving a desirable body through cosmetic surgery.

Health, lifestyle and fitness tourism

The research on fitness tourism which I discuss below is based on primary and secondary data. The research focuses mainly on two particular companies or providers of fitness tourism (called here Farm for Fitness (FfF) and Fit and Wild (F&W)) based in London. Both the businesses offer what is termed ‘transformational’ or ‘holistic’ fitness tourism. Their holidays combine exercise with ‘healthy eating’ and lifestyle coaching as well as various forms of exercise. In a volatile market, both the companies I researched had been in existence for about ten years and so represent established enterprises. I selected these companies as offering differently priced holidays (one (FfF) at the ‘cheaper’ end of the market and based in the UK (South West and the Peak District) and the other (F&W) providing much more exotic holidays based in Western Europe and Africa) but both apparently committed to promoting fitness through exercise and ‘healthy eating’. In the analysis that follows I have used in depth interviews conducted with key representatives from the companies. Three interviews were with company owners/managers and then a further two with fitness trainers (who were also involved in the setting up of the companies and designing the exercise and nutrition programmes). Interviews were conducted in ‘neutral’ settings; the two with the trainers took place in a café, the bar of a local sports center since they normally worked in ‘the field’, the others took place in the company offices. Interviews lasted about 1.5 hours, were recorded and then fully transcribed. The interviews provided a considerable amount of detailed information on the companies running the holidays and the philosophies behind their practices. The representatives were very thoughtful and highly interested in communicating their particular ‘messages’ in relation to fitness and self transformation. They were clearly advocates for the kinds of holidays they ran but were also very reflexive about what they saw to be the benefits of fitness holidays. Importantly, two interviewees had been

involved in the actual fitness training so knew a lot about the motivation, back ground and responses of the consumers.

The research also draws on secondary material in the form of newspaper and magazine articles and company websites in gathering material about fitness tourism and, specifically the two companies studied here. Of course it must be recognized that such material is highly selective, generally (although not exclusively) of a promotional nature. It does, however, provide important insights into the values of fitness tourism providers and the expectations and demands of consumers of fitness holidays. Material may paint a rather up beat and rosy picture but it does demonstrate prevailing attitudes in the industry as well as (perceived) aspirations of the customers. As part of this use of secondary data, I also undertook a systematic and thorough review of the consumer testimonials published by the two holiday companies (a total of 119 written testimonials and 5 videos) which helped in understanding the motivation of consumers to attend and also the kinds of fitness practices they engaged in. I was less interested in the consumers' overall 'scoring' of the holidays they participated in since these would clearly be highly censored by the companies. In addition to the testimonials I read blogs and customer surveys (37 reviews/consumer surveys). These I found to be more balanced, often providing measured accounts of the views of consumers and, importantly here, of the more lasting nature of the 'benefits' of transformational tourism.

Clearly, any attempt to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the holidays in terms of the impact on the fitness and well-being of consumers was beyond the scope of the methods used for the paper. The use of ethnographic, participant observation methods would be very valuable and allow a different perspective to be gained. However, for the purposes of this research and the broader direction and philosophies underpinning the kinds of transformative fitness holidays studied here, the methods used provided excellent insights, allowing useful findings as documented in the remainder of the paper. In the discussion of the research in the remainder of the paper I start by examining the appeal of

fitness holidays in terms of the kinds of wellbeing, health and body issues raised earlier. I then go on to consider how the practices employed on the fitness holidays inform ideas about the disciplining of the body. Finally I explore the role of nature and of the natural body in the fitness holidays in terms of both provision and consumption.

Fitness holidays and their appeal

A web search soon reveals a large and varied market in ‘fitness holidays’. My interest here is in those holidays that offer a significant element of exercise and fitness training (as opposed to the activity and spa holidays) in combination with health and wellbeing programmes (including relaxation, nutrition, massage, yoga etc). While not necessarily an entirely distinct and defined group, such holidays are characterised by being (or at least claiming to be) concerned not simply with providing an enjoyable and healthy break but with generating some kind of lasting and *transformative* fitness. As one company put it in their marketing literature:

“Your new life is waiting for the new you”

While another claimed:

“Although you may only be with us for a week we aim to help you make permanent lifestyle changes so that the health benefits you realise during the course can be enjoyed for many years to come.”

(<http://www.prestigebootcamp.com> accessed 5.3.14)ⁱⁱ

The rapid expansion of provision over the past 10 years suggests a buoyant market and, indeed, the companies I studied in the research reported high demand with courses fully booked and the range of provision expanding. The cliental for F&W, the more up market of the two companies, were described by the company representative as ‘driven’ and

‘high achievers’. They were ‘lapsed fit people’ who cared about themselves and their bodies but had put all their energies into jobs and families. For such people the transformational nature of the fitness holidays was central. As the interviewee explained

“At the end of the course some people become evangelical. We totally transform the way they eat, the way they exercise. It’s incredible and changes their lives” (F&W).

Reflecting on the growth in popularity and buoyant sales, both respondents identified their transformational niche as having the capacity to break bad habits and establish healthy and sustainable fitness regimes. And as one consumer summed up:

The holiday was “an incredible life changing experience, phenomenal coaches & training who helped me realize a far better way of training, got me fit in two weeks & created a complete paradigm change in my mind on health & fitness” (client testimonial, F&W).

As well as acquiring greater bodily fitness, consumers commonly mention ‘stress’ as a motivation for going on a fitness holiday. The importance of ‘time away’ or ‘me time’ was clearly apparent in comments from the trainers and on web sites. Many mentioned the ‘investment in themselves’ and the need to ‘escape’. According to the interviewees clients justify the holidays as:

“an investment - a treat for me - no, not a treat. I *need* to spend this money on myself” (F&W)

Such comments reinforce the points made earlier about the shift in ideas of health to incorporate a wider attention to the wellbeing of the body and to the relationship between the body and the mind. As work on pampering has shown, spending time relaxing

away from routine activities is particularly important for women and has come to represent a very valuable part of health routines for some (Little 2012).

Another special feature of the fitness holidays I studied was their emphasis on personal attention in their programmes and on the ways in which these were tailored to the specific needs of each client. This again relates to the health issues referred to earlier in the paper and the stress on an individual and holistic approach to body management. The companies I spoke to and others advertising their fitness holidays stressed the time spent assessing each client and devising programmes specially adapted to meet their particular exercise and nutrition needs. This process of individualisation was claimed to offer greatest health benefits and provided clients with a programme that could continue beyond the holiday. It was also used as a way of reassuring customers that they would not be forced to undertake exercise that wasn't 'right' for them or which they found very difficult and unenjoyable. So as one company claimed:

“This fitness break is designed to give you the personal training and assistance you need and to get you to a new level of health and fitness... providing you with renewed motivation with which to attack your newly transformed fitness regime”

They go on:

“Through careful consideration of each guest's personal health and fitness goals, a bespoke programme is created that improves overall fitness and performance and simultaneously increases happiness”

(<http://www.healthandfitnesstravel.com/destinations> accessed 10.3.14)

Considerable emphasis is placed on knowledge and understanding both in terms of the skills of the professionals designing and running the fitness programmes and the development of the clients' understanding of their own bodies. Used as a selling point

this emphasis on the expertise of trainers and the importance of educating clients presented the fitness practices as informed by medical knowledge and dietary understanding. It imbued the holidays with a form of technical and scientific credibility, allowing clients to feel that their hopes and expectations would be met. This echoes the ways in which technical knowledge has been used with the body industry to emphasise the authenticity of products and practices as well as their likelihood of ‘success’ and as recognised earlier, such body knowledge can be interpreted as both empowering or oppressive. Certainly in the testimonials I read, the clients placed a high value on the skills of the trainers as the following quote illustrates:

“I would like to say how utterly impressed I am with the team and the course in general..... I have now got the skills I need to continue at home and will never forget how I have pushed past so many of my own barriers. I love the way you sit down one to one with everyone on the course and plan their exercise and nutrition programmes to take home. Very detailed and very professional. Thank you you’ve changed the way I think about exercise and food.”

(<http://www.fitfarms.co.uk/testimonials> accessed 6.3.14)

Trainers were invariably referred to positively and as ‘fantastic’, ‘knowledgeable’, ‘experts’, ‘amazing’ and ‘athletes in their own right’.

Disciplining bodies and the management of the self

The carefully planned and managed exercise practices and eating regimes employed on the fitness holidays were clearly experienced as restorative and therapeutic in the ‘care’ of the body. They demonstrate the ways in which fitness, as discussed in section X above, becomes a project of the body where bodily maintenance involves transformative

practices that are attentive to the health of the whole body and to the relationship between physical, mental and emotional well-being. As noted, however, such practices can also be conceptualized as disciplinary strategies reflecting Foucaudian ideas on regulation and control of the body. They were designed and consumed with very strong messages about the appropriate form of the healthy body, and despite the emphasis on the individual, seemed to reproduce common ideas about weight-loss and body shape. In the stress on exercise and fitness there was a higher regard for strength and ‘toning’ but still a strong sense that the healthy body needed to thin(ner) and light(er).

The fitness holidays disciplined bodies in a variety of ways from the daily management of the exercise programmes, the provision of food and dietary advice (including strong ‘rules’ about what could and couldn’t be consumed) and the ‘instruction’ in body management. Many of the testimonials expressed initial concern and pre-holiday worries about the kinds of practices clients would encounter but then a sense of gratitude that they had been encouraged to participate. Resulting weight loss and body toning were attributed to the encouragement and support that accompanied the strict diet and exercise regimes.

“I thoroughly enjoyed my week ...The exercise was a bit tougher than I expected but .. actually at the end of the week I was really starting to enjoy the early morning exercises. Your greatest asset is the team. Being friendly but firm is a hard balance to get right. Exercise workshops were outstanding and all the handouts are invaluable. I've now seen the results not only in weight loss but in my attitude to exercise and fitness will now take a part in my life.”

(<http://www.fitfarms.co.uk/testimonials.html#sthash.2x13LM2c.dpuf>

accessed

10.3.14)

“I have been pushed to my absolute limits this week and am really delighted in what I have achieved. I want to thank you for all your efforts and showing me that with a bit of effort I can achieve amazing things.”

(<http://www.fitfarms.co.uk/testimonials.html#sthash.2x13LM2c.dpuf> accessed 10.3.14)

Interestingly, while the company reps interviewed made reference in a broad sense to the multiple ways in which the body can be managed and disciplined, the amount of ‘traffic’ on the websites reporting ‘success’ stories suggested clients were mainly motivated by and interested in weight reduction. Their stories were mainly about the levels of weight loss achieved and the change in body measurements and dress size and included reference to conventional language of dieting including goals, targets and rewards. These comments seem to suggest that the phenomenon of fitness tourism is strongly embedded in wider discourses linking together health, beauty and bodily fitness as noted earlier:

“By day 7 I’m fitter and thinner and very pleased with myself”

and

“I’m looking slimmer than I have in years with lovely toned arms with bits of muscle that pop and down like Madonna’s”

(www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-1148614/Kenya-Pumping-paradise.htm accessed 10.3.14)

Achieving and maintaining weight loss were described as ‘being good’ while any deviation from diet and exercise programmes was seen as ‘failing’ in ways that reflected clear

messages about both the kinds of bodies valued and sought and the power of social norms around body weight and shape.

Bodily discipline did not end with the holiday and there was a clear emphasis in the interviews on the need for clients to maintain the kinds of exercise and nutrition programmes delivered on the holidays once they departed. The transformation of their bodies gained from 're-educating' and 're-programming' clients' attitudes to food and exercise were promoted as sustainable but only if 'done properly'. To this end, both companies offered 'after care' and the continued support through web sites, Facebook and email with trainers and other 'experts' also highlights the long term aspirations of fitness and well-being that result from lifestyle change.

Spaces and practices of nature

As noted above, central to both the practices employed on the fitness holidays and to the kinds of bodies that are valorized is nature. This next section of the paper briefly explores the ways in which reference to nature is seen to enhance the exercises used and render their effects more sustainable and genuine. The assumption running through the fitness programmes I researched was that nature, left to its own devices, would produce bodies that were fitter, healthier and more appropriately sized. Indeed, as discussed, it was the lack of connection with nature that was seen as responsible for people's lack of fitness and wellbeing.

Nature is clearly highly significant in the simple location of the fitness holidays. The interviewees made reference to the natural beauty of the environments in which they were situated, seeing this as key to the enjoyment of the clients and to the exercise practices themselves. Nature was seen to have some clear agentive capacity that came to be unleashed in the chosen spaces of the holidays. Locations were described as 'magical',

‘stunning’, ‘breath-taking’ by promotional material and guests. Importantly, for both interviewees, the benefits of the locations were not simply about the enjoyment of the beauty but also provided access to environments that actually contributed to the exercise programmes and to the clients’ sense of acquiring bodily skills that could not be gained in other spaces. Exercising in the outdoors was about taking clients away from their familiar, everyday places and providing access to an environment that was strange and unfamiliar yet, critically, central to their wider, natural, health and well-being.

“We believe people need to touch nature and feel it again. They come from London all pale and you see them shed their layers of stress. Some are so divorced from nature they are a bit scared” (F&W)

“They are not used to wild nature – they don’t make use of it and don’t realize its enjoyable. We get them outside, in the fresh air and it builds up their energy and makes them feel good” (FfF).

For F&W, this re-engagement with nature held particular significance within their company ethos. Moreover, it was a particular form of nature and as one that was ‘wild’ and ‘untouched’ given a higher status in terms of its contribution to health and fitness. The representative talked of disconnection from nature as a fundamental ‘problem’ in terms of health and fitness. People thus needed to be re-integrated with nature for the sake of both their physical and mental fitness and once this happened then the kinds of exercises and eating regimes that were taught on the holidays would become natural and obvious. The re-emersion in nature took people back to their past, their tribal behaviour and their skills as hunters - in such times people were not stressed and overweight. Their bodies were stronger, more flexible and more competent.

This was reinforced by the interviewee who talked of modern life removing people from their natural practices -

“We are not eating the food we evolved to eat, we’re not moving in the way we were evolved to move, we’re not sleeping... we’ve not got the views”

She went on to claim that people need instruction to return to the tribal patterns of eating and physical activity. She used the example of Aboriginal people in Australia who, when taken out of nature, became unfit, fat and unhappy.

“Put them back in their natural environment and they eat naturally, move naturally. They heal. There’s all this medical research and science but nature is the best guide”.

As both interviewees stressed, the fitness programmes followed by the clients were carefully constructed to pay attention, to not only appropriate exercise but also the body’s need for rest and relaxation. Restorative practices were seen as essential to the fitness regimes and all holidays built in periods of sleep and recuperation and also activities such as massage and saunas. While stressing their distance from the conventional spa, interviewees saw the need for clients to combine vigorous exercise with ‘play’ and rest and that enjoyment was a crucial part of the reduction of stress and the feeling of well-being. Paying attention to the rhythms of the body was seen as obvious and simple and again about exceeding to the superiority of nature. At the same time as being led or shown by nature how to exercise and eat effectively, clients on the fitness holidays were also encouraged to gain mastery *over* nature. The programmes, it was stressed, empowered clients to conquer fear of remote and wild spaces in a way that indicated their ability to manage their bodies.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the literature on well-being through the study of fitness holidays. It has conceptualized fitness tourism within a theoretical framework which seeks to go beyond existing work on the 'benefits' of therapeutic encounters to include a critical analysis of the motivations surrounding the pursuit of fitness. Using Foucauldian notions of the care of the self and the discipline of the body, the paper shows how contemporary pressures surrounding the maintenance of a fit and healthy body are partly driven by (and difficult to separate from) notions of the appropriately sized and shaped body. Such notions are supported by the growing presence of a body industry in which the ability to transform the body through technology only serves to heighten the pressures to conform. Within this context, it is argued, the desire to engage in therapeutic well-being in the form of fitness holiday must be seen as more than search for hedonism and fun but as part of a strategy for the maintenance of the self and the care of the body. The paper has attributed a central role to nature in the discussion of the practices of exercise and nutrition designed to achieve transformational fitness and well-being. Nature is not only present, it argues, in the spaces and practices of fitness tourism but in the bodies it produces.

The paper has introduced a number of directions that could to be developed in future research. As noted in the methodology, an in depth understanding of consumer motivations, achieved through a more participatory approach would allow the tensions between fitness and well-being and the disciplining of the body to be developed. The analysis demonstrated the importance of weight loss to the experience of fitness holidays and yet the promise of rapid and significant weight reduction is avoided by the fitness trainers who prefer to talk in terms of weight loss as the *natural* outcome of appropriate fitness practices. This raises questions about the different interpretations of and aspirations of well-being that are currently not well understood. It would also be interesting to set the research within a more direct examination of the body industry and

see how consumers evaluated the choices available to them - whether, for example, the quest for fitness and an acceptably sized and toned body was something that they would consider achievable through cosmetic surgery or other forms of beauty therapy. Both the body industry and the desire for more 'natural' forms of fitness also raise issues of technology and how different forms of technology are becoming both relied on and rejected in the maintenance of the body. Such questions clearly require further engagement with theoretical debates around what is meant by the natural body and the power relations surrounding its control.

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ⁱ The meaning of well-being has been the subject of some discussion in the literature (see Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007 for a review). It is noted here that the term is used interchangeably with wellness with no attempt to draw meaningful distinction between the terms.

ⁱⁱ None of the websites accessed for the customer testimonials or publicity material and identified in the quotes relate to the companies used in the interviews.