Understanding consumption experiences: A discourse analysis of travel blogs

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Abstract

Blogging has captured the attention of the public as a platform for self-presentation and self expression; social interaction (Guadagno, Okdie and Eno, 2007; Schmidt, 2007), and as a source of information (Schmidt, 2007). Blogs provided self-reflexive consumers with a platform to describe their own action in their own words (Caru and Cova, 2006); hence offer new spaces for the study of unleashed consumers' narratives (Schau and Gilly, 2003; Kozinets et al 2010 and Pace, 2008). This presents opportunities for addressing research gaps in the literature of consumption and tourist experiences. Travel blogs as rich narratives of travel experiences can provide an emic perspective of what constitutes the bloggers' experience and provides in-depth insights on measuring the outcome of this subjective and personal experience. The discourse analysis of travel blogs is a novel approach to understanding tourist experiences through their reconstruction of their stories to their readers. The analysis of travel blogs reveals elements that constitute core experiences that have, to date, proved to be elusive to marketers. The thesis also contributes to the understanding of this new blogging phenomenon among travellers that has become part of their tourist experiences. Marketing and managerial implications of the key findings of the discourse analysis of travel blogs and the survey on travel bloggers are provided in the thesis. The thesis responds to the urgency of understanding the concept of experience, as intensified by the emergence of the experience economy where "experience" is seen as having a higher economic value compared to goods and services.

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Bosangit, C. (2010). Understanding how consumers remember and relive their experiences and their marketing implications. In: *Academy of Marketing Conference 2010: Transformational Marketing*, July 6-8, 2010, Coventry, United Kingdom

Bosangit, C. (2009). The joys and challenges of conducting a survey among travel bloggers. In: *3rd PhD Networking Conference: Exploring Tourism III: Issues in PhD Research*, July 2-4, 2009, Nottingham, United Kingdom

Bosangit, C. and Mena, M. (2009). Meanings, Motivations and Behaviour of Filipino-American First Time Visitors to the Philippines. In: *The International Conference on Tourist Experiences: Meanings Motivations and Behaviour*, April 1-4, 2009, Preston, United Kingdom

Bosangit, C., McCabe, S. and Hibbert, S. (2009). What is told in travel blogs? Exploring travel blogs for consumer narrative analysis. In: *W. Hopken and R. Law (ed.) Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2009*: *Proceedings of ENTER 2009 Conference*. Amsterdam, Springer-Verlag, Wien, ISBN: 9783211939703

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.0 Background of the Research

Blogging has captured the attention of the public as a platform for self-presentation and self expression; social interaction (Guadagno, Oknie and Eno, 2007; Schmidt, 2007) and as a source of information (Schmidt, 2007). Hookway (2008) described blogs as "new guardians of democracy, a revolutionary form of bottom-up news production and a new way of constructing self and doing community in late modern times". The 2008 Technocrati Report, "State of the Blogosphere", confirmed that blogging has become a global phenomenon with their reports of 184 million people worldwide who have written blogs and 346 million people who have read blogs based on Universal McCann statistics as of March 2008 (www.technocrati.com, October 10, 2008).

This blogging phenomenon has also been observed to have penetrated tourism activities. Among the top 18 topics monitored by Technocrati.com, travel is ranked ninth, which is equivalent to 28% of the total number of blogs monitored by the website. This has not gone unnoticed by scholars or the tourism industry. The *Journal of Vacation Marketing (*2008, volume 14, No. 2) Special issue on travel blogs indicates a growing interest in this phenomenon particularly on its practical uses. In the ENTER 2009 – 16th International Conference on Information Communication Technology for Travel and Tourism, travel blogs were referred to as one of the effective social media which is now emerging as a marketing tool for destinationmarketing/management organisations (DMOs). According to

Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008), DMOS have started incorporating these blogs as a feature on their websites and they have been considered as word-of-mouth communication.

Travel blogs are used by tourists as a form of communication to keep in touch with their family and friends and to record their travels. In addition, travel blogs carry other functions such as identity construction, social networking and information exchange. Most importantly, travel blogs are primarily records of travel experiences which can be considered as expressions of their experiences. Travel blogs are rich narratives that contain details of experiences; thus they can provide insights on what tourists remember most about his trip that they consider to be worth sharing with their audience, and stored as memories of their travels. Hence, blogging presents great potential for understanding tourist experiences.

The study of the tourist experience has been an ongoing effort over the last four decades from the academe and tourism industry to describe what an experience really is for tourists. The urgency and significance of understanding the concept of experience has been intensified by the emergence of the experience economy where "experience" is seen as having a higher economic value compared to goods and services. Experiences are also becoming important in the area of marketing as evidence in concepts of experience marketing and experiential consumption; and in tourism there is an increased emphasis on tourist experiences (Jenning et al, 2008; Volo, 2011).

The question of what constitutes an experience had remained unaddressed, even by Pine and Gilmore (1999) who had introduced the concept of experience economy as pointed out by Poulsson and Kale (2004). Even tourism which is in the business of selling experiences and considered to be the pioneer example of experience economy is also challenged by the same fundamental issue of what constitutes an experience (Quan and Wang, 2006). For example, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) traced the evolution of the tourist experience studies, and currently at the top of this timeline are "memorable" experiences to be offered to tourists; however "what is a memorable experience for a tourist" remains another challenging question to tourism scholars and tourism practitioners.

The experiential perspective of consumption which is ascribed to the seminal work of Holbrook and Hirshcman (1982) had also resulted in the focus on emotions in consumption experiences and tourist experiences. Emotions were considered markers, mediators and moderators of experiences (Bagozzi et al, 1999). Hence, experience has become even more personal and subjective. With the focus on emotion, the debate now includes how to elicit emotions from consumers and create emotional attachment (McCole, 2007) as an indicator of customer loyalty and satisfaction. This has resulted also in the difficulty of evaluating the outcome of the experience. This focus on emotion has also penetrated tourism studies (Hossany and Gilbert, 2010) as evidenced by the growing number of studies on the effect of role of emotions in decision making and tourist intentions and behaviour, to name a few. Caru and Cova (2006) caution researchers against focussing too much on emotions, while Cutler and Carmichael (2010) have argued that the satisfaction of the tourist experience has unique characteristics to those of the general consumption experience context. Emotion is merely one of the elements that influence a satisfactory experience; and there are equally important elements such as identity, knowledge, perception and memory.

The literature review of the concept of consumption experience has stressed that recent definitions of consumption experience are greatly influenced by the focus on emotions; and that other functions of consumption such as identity and symbolic meaning have been set aside. The tourist experience literature however established that these functions of consumption, particularly identity construction, remain important to tourists (Desforges, 2000; McCabe and Foster, 2006; Noy, 2004). The tourist experience provides a reminder to experience marketers that emotions are complemented by other elements that constitute an experience. The thesis demonstrates that the use of travel blogs will provide an emic perspective of experiences that can reveal core experiences that has to date proved so elusive to the market researchers. Rubin (2008) described employing emic perspective as the researcher subjectively trying to adopt the perspective of the people being observed while etic perspective is when researcher tries to maintain the ability to step outside of the emic perspective and think critically and objectively as an outsider about the phenomena being observed and experienced. The emergence of blogs provided an opportunity to use an emic perspective as self-reflexive consumers were provided with a platform to describe their own actions in their own words (Caru and Cova, 2006). These are new spaces for the study of unleashed consumers' narratives (Schau and Gilly, 2003; Kozinets et al, 2010 and Pace, 2008). This presents opportunities for addressing research gaps of what constitutes an experience and to provide insights on how to measure the personal and subjective tourist experiences. Most importantly, addressing these gaps will have marketing and managerial implications for marketers.

The potential of blogs for contributing insights that are relevant to destination/place branding is based on their comprehensive and holistic view of a destination offered by most bloggers to the readers. Most importantly, destination attributes are related to the experiences which they considered worthy of sharing with their readers. Hence, these blogs offer valuable information that can help destination marketing organisations in identifying their destination brand based on experiences, as recommended by King (2010). However, fundamental to using travel blogs for such marketing strategy is also an in-depth understanding of the blogging practices. There are still questions that need to be addressed such as what it is about, what it does, who blogs and why; and what it achieves as well as what it represents about experiences. These questions are also addressed in this thesis as they acquire relevance as blogging practices become a part of tourist experiences.

1.1 Research Objective and Research Questions

Based on the discussion in the first section, this thesis is motivated by the emergence of the blogging phenomenon and its potential to contribute to addressing the fundamental research gaps in the broader concept of consumption experience and the more specific context of tourism consumption. The examination of travel blogs also makes contributions to destination/place marketing and experience marketing. Hence, the thesis research objective is ***to contribute to the understanding of consumption and tourist experiences through the discourse analysis of travel blogs.***

To achieve this research objective, the thesis addressed the following research questions:

a. How are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs?

b. How are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process?

c. What are the implications of using travel blogs as research data for destination/place marketing and experience marketing?

The first question is envisioned to explore consumers' perspective of their consumption/tourist experiences as it is constituted in and through discourses from their travel blogs. The second question, on the other hand, shows how consumer responses are not limited within the core tourist/consumption stage but continue after the experience, showing how they make meaning out of their experiences as well as how they derive further value from their experiences. This can also provide insights on to how to evaluate the outcome of an experience. The third question provides practical implications of using travel blogs as research data for experience marketing and destination/place marketing.

1.2 Research Methodology

This thesis utilised two research methods; a) the survey to get an overview of who the travel bloggers are, their blogging motivations and practices, and b) discourse analysis for the examination of travel blogs to understand what aspects of their tourist experiences they blog about; and how and why they reconstruct their experiences for their readers.

Despite the popularity of blogging among tourists observed in the past few years and the growing literature on its potential for understanding tourist behaviour in destinations, and marketing and managerial implications, there was an absence of published work on travel bloggers, on what type of trips they blog about and who these bloggers are (Carson, 2008, Volo, 2011). The socio-demographic profile of travel bloggers and their blogging motivations and practices were identified as a fundamental research gap in understanding the blogging phenomenon among tourists. A survey was conducted to address these gaps. The survey results have provided crucial information for the selection of the research context of the discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis was used for the examination of travel blogs to address the first two research questions. The thesis adopted the discursive psychology (DP) approach as it was appropriate for examining how accounts are constructed (Burr, 2003; Potter, 1996); and how these texts are locally organised to achieve local actions such as identity management (Augustinos and Every, 2007). Examining how accounts are constructed assist in addressing the research questions of, what constitutes an experience and why do tourists share their travel experiences with their readers as part of their experiences? With DP, language is examined for its social interaction where meanings are created and changed (Augustinos and Every, 2007). The thesis recognises that DP treats discourse as having three key characteristics that are also evident among blogs (Potter and Hepburn, 2007:161):

a. Discourse is action-oriented, so blogs can then be recognised as a practical and primary medium for constructing travel experiences;

b. Discourse is situated; such as blogs are situated in the consumption experience and therefore constitutive of travel experiences;

c. Discourse is both constructed and constructive. Discourse is put together from different elements such as words, categories, common places, interpretative repertoires and other elements, and constructive in the sense that versions of worlds are put together. Indeed, blogs are made up of different elements constructing their versions of consumption/travel experiences.

The aim of DP is not to discern an individual's attitude towards a certain activity, but instead to look at the way in which people talk about that particular activity, i.e. what they are doing with their talk and how they construct their version of what that activity is (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Hence, this is particularly useful for understanding how consumers reconstruct their version of their travel experiences and what they are doing with it, which would bring more insights as to the value and meaning of the consumption experience beyond the core consumption stage. For this thesis, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 10 stages of discourse analysis was followed with certain modifications required due to the use of blogs. These stages comprised; 1) research questions, 2) sample selection, 3) collection of records and documents, 4) interviews, 5) transcription, 6) coding, 7) analysis, 8) validation, 9) the report, and 10) application (Willig, 2008). Stages 4 and 5 were replaced with downloading the travel blogs from the website.

Discourse analysis in tourism is a rarely used method for understanding tourist experiences. According to Jaworski and Pritchard (2005), there has been little dialogue between scholars who primarily study discourse (language in particular) and communication and those whose primary focus is tourism. They emphasised that discourse and communication is at the centre of studying tourism; for instance theorising the elation of the traveller, representation of the tourist experience, and mobility-related identities or ways of enacting the tourist experience. Accordingly, discourse shapes tourism and the tourist experience in the same manner that tourism shapes and has shaped discourses about people and places over time. Travel blogs as a discourse will have similar effects. Hence, there is a need to examine travel blogs and understand how tourists use them to reconstruct their experiences; and discourse analysis is the most appropriate method for achieving this objective.

1.3 Research Context

This thesis is focused on the potential of travel blogs to contribute to the understanding of tourist and consumption experiences. It is motivated by the increasing attention being paid to experience, and hence the need for deeper understanding of this concept both at the broader context of consumption experiences and the specific context of tourist experiences. Hence, based on the research gaps identified in the review of literature, this thesis aims to demonstrate how travel blogs of long-term and multiple destination travellers can reveal core experiences, as well as provide an understanding of the blogging practices of tourists in terms of what constitute their experiences and why they reconstruct their travel experiences for their readers. The potential of travel blogs extends to their valuable insights they offer to experience marketing, destination/place marketing, and more particularly destination branding.

The long-term and multiple destination travellers' blogs are used for this thesis because they provide meaningful cases for the necessary knowledge and experience in performing the action of interest, in this case, blogging and travelling (Flick, 2009). Enoch and Grossman (2010) observed that backpackers and long-term travellers' journals were the most comprehensive and detailed ones where their writers sometimes add entries on a daily basis. Moreover, features of travelling such as communication and identity construction may be somewhat more intense among backpackers and more evident among researchers, providing a more lucid showcase for a phenomenon that might otherwise be overlooked among tourists in general (Murphy, 2001). The survey results have also indicated that majority of the bloggers blog about longer trips of more than three weeks, indicating they are long-term travellers and they blog while on their travels.

1.4 Contributions of the Study

The theoretical and methodological contributions of this study add up to the understanding of the consumption experience, particularly of tourist experiences. The focus of the thesis is on the core consumption and post-consumption stages. The thesis addressed two main research gaps identified in the literature review of tourist experiences and consumption experiences; namely, a) what constitutes an experience, and b) how to evaluate the outcomes of the experience.

The thesis provided empirical evidence that focuses on understanding that tourist experiences should not only be based on emotions only; but should also include the meanings and values that tourists attach to their experiences. The thesis supports Caru and Cova’s (2006) warning against overemphasis on emotions in consumption experiences. It also put forward the importance of stories which provided cues on what are memorable aspects of experiences that are worth sharing by bloggers with their readers.

The thesis methodological contribution is the use of discourse analysis which is a rarely used method in tourism. As mentioned earlier, Jaworski and Pritchard (2005) had noted how discourse and communication scholars historically have little dialogue with scholars in tourism. According to McCabe and Foster (2006: 195), in the context of tourism language, the work of Dann (1996) remains the cornerstone for researchers interested in socio-linguistic interpretation of discourses of tourism. This thesis shows how DA can be used to explore texts about experiences. Compared to other popular methods for analysing travel blog such as content analysis and narrative analysis (Banyai and Glover, 2012), DA can provide deeper understanding of travel blogs beyond a mere listing of destination attributes. The focus of the DA was on how the various experiences were reconstructed for their readers and what their motivations for doing so were. This also led to another theoretical contribution of knowledge on the popular trend of travel blogging.

The literature review has established the limited research on bloggers due to the bias towards the use of travel blogs as a source of information for marketing and managerial implications. This thesis, however, also includes a focus on travel bloggers and how and why they wrote the blogs. This thesis has also established travel blogging as part of the tourist experience and reflects activities in the remembered and nostalgia experience consumption stage framework of Arnould, Price and |Zinkhan's (2002) that revealed core experiences to include emotions, personal value and meaning of the experience and stories that are dominant in their experiences. These also provide insights as to how to evaluate the outcome of the experiences, as within those stories are emotional responses, self-presentation strategies and linguistic styles which offer cues as to what their actions behind travel blogging are.

In terms of the managerial and marketing perspective, experience marketers and destination marketing organisations are provided with empirical evidence of the potentials of travel blogs in understanding experiences as narrated by tourists. Experience marketers can then explore consumption-oriented blogs and use them for understanding consumption experiences in terms of the emotions elicited and value and meaning of experience; which could provide insights to their marketing communication strategies. In terms of destination/place marketing, the empirical results have shown how it is possible to shift the destination branding from destination-based to experience-based as called for by King (2002) and Larsen (2007). As seen from the blogs, most of the experiences that are memorable are not attached to a specific sector or company but are based on how the experiences made the bloggers feel, think and reflect on what they are experiencing. Destination branding requires extensive research prior to identifying the brand; blogs will be a good starting point on how tourists perceived their destination (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). The stories that would be identified in blogs could also provide them with marketing strategies that highlight what the bloggers identified as exciting incidents, representing unique associations and emotional highpoints.

1.5 Researcher's background

A researcher is a critical instrument in collecting and analysing data (Patton, 2002) and her/his position and any biases or assumptions may impact the inquiry in a qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context and prior understandings (Creswell, 2007: 39). Hence, this section provides an overview of my academic and professional background which might help in understanding the position and viewpoints of the researcher.

I acknowledge that 10 years of being a University Research Associate at the University of the Philippines Asian Institute of Tourism would be a source of subjectivity in my interpretation of the data. This job involved conducting more quantitative research than qualitative research. Market research for the clients such as the Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT) and local governments are biased towards generating statistics that are used to support formulation of marketing strategies. Qualitative researches conducted were limited to focus group discussions, interviews and questionnaires in understanding complex issues within the industry.

In 2006, the country experienced recession, and the PDOT and local governments which were the major clients for research and training programs were forced to reduce their research budget. Hence, there was a challenge for the researcher's team to conceptualize projects that require less funding. Fortunately, social media as a market research tool were emerging then. The researcher first used social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn for the project on curriculum revision where graduates of the Institute were contacted for their inputs. The success of this project pointed the researcher to the potential of travel blog as a means of communicating with tourists and later on as a richer source of data on tourist behaviour and perception of destinations. This provided the inspiration for using travel blogs as research data for the PhD proposal submitted to the Nottingham University Business School. Being awarded the Nottingham University Business School Scholarship was an exciting and challenging opportunity to pursue a relatively new topic then as well as shift from a quantitative to a qualitative researcher. Doing discourse analysis was one of the major challenges of the research journey, acquiring the skills and knowledge for doing discourse analysis – a method which is very much different from other qualitative research methods previously used in her career. The researcher's cultural background and second official language as American English has presented some challenge. However, having two British supervisors and living with a British for most of the PhD journey allowed the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the British language and culture. It is clear that the researcher's interpretation of the data are influenced by these factors and as Willig (2008) has pointed in discourse analysis the research should be presented as a reading of data that is not the only possible reading.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This chapter has provided an overview of the background of the study; the research objectives and questions, research methodology, research context, the researcher's background and the contributions of the study.

Chapter 2 (Consumption and tourist experiences in the Experience Economy) reviews the key concepts of consumption experience, tourist experience, experience marketing and destination/place marketing which this thesis will be contributing to. The research gaps for each concept were highlighted and research objective and questions were identified. This chapter started with an overview of the concept of experience economy, followed by a review of the consumption and tourist experience literatures. The review of these two concepts covered the following: 1) what constitutes experience and types of experience to be offered to the consumer; 2) role of emotion in consumption/tourist experiences, (3) stages of consumption/tourist experiences, and (4) outcomes of the consumption/tourist experiences.

The chapter also covered experience marketing and destination/place marketing literature. The discussion on experience marketing included Schmitt's experiential marketing, issues surrounding the concept and suggested solutions. On the other hand, destination/place marketing section provided an overview of tourism marketing; then focussed on destination branding which is a dominant theme in destination/place marketing.

Chapter 3 (The potentials of blogs in understanding consumption and tourist experiences) provides an in-depth discussion of blogs to demonstrate their potential in understanding the broad context of consumption experiences and the specific tourist consumption context. The potentials are justified from the established use of consumer narratives in the field of marketing. The section on blogging phenomenon gives an overview in terms of blogging behaviour, blogging motivations and their use for consumer research. The research objectives and questions are revisited here and the theoretical framework of the study was presented.

Chapter 4 (Methodology: The Survey and Discourse Analysis) provides a rationale for having two phases for research: survey of travel bloggers and discourse analysis of travel blogs. Due to the lack of research focussing on travel bloggers, an exploratory study on travel blogging among tourists was deemed necessary to be conducted. The survey provided context to the sample bloggers chosen for the discourse analysis. Hence, the thesis is based on the post-positivist and interpretivism foundations. The chapter provided in-depth discussion of these two phases of research. The survey section covered sampling issues, contacting travel blog websites, development and design of the survey, administering the survey and data analysis. This is followed by the discourse analysis section which has an in-depth discussion on theoretical foundations as it is the major research method of the study. This section includes discussion on discourse analysis and discursive psychology that explained the suitability or appropriateness of this methodology to achieving the research objectives. The analytic process which is based on Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 10 stages was also explained. This chapter ended with the focus and limitation of discourse analysis.

Chapter 5 (The travel bloggers and their blogging motivations and practices) presents the results of the preliminary survey on travel bloggers which was conducted prior to the discourse analysis of blogs. This survey was deemed necessary due to the unknown population of travel bloggers and absence of published work on who the travel bloggers are and what type of trips they blog about (Carson, 2008; Volo, 2011), their practices and their motivations. The survey results were crucial for the selection of the research context of the discourse analysis of travel blogs. The survey, based on 1,214 respondents from travelblog.org, provided a socio-demographic profile, blogging practices and motivations.

Chapter 6 (Discourses in travel experiences) presents five discourses in travel identified in the discourse analysis of travel blogs of long-term and multiple destination bloggers. The discourses identified in the travel blogs include: a) stories of risk and challenges; b) accounts of learning and reflections; c) accounts of novelty and differences; d) accounts of self-expansion, and e) stories of escape. These stories mark memorable experiences in their travel experiences. Each theme identified is discussed in terms of how the bloggers reconstructed their experience and why they are sharing their experiences with their readers. The use of emotional language of bloggers revealed the importance of emotions in the core experience and later on in the post-consumption stage as a narrative resource. Self-presentation strategies and linguistic techniques provided cues on the action behind the blogging. This also indicated an important element of an experience, as well as the meaning and value of that experience. The chapter ends with a summary of key findings from the five stories and their practical implications.

Chapter 7 (Discussion and Conclusion) provides a more in-depth discussion of the key findings across the five themes identified in the discourse analysis of blogs. It also provides the general conclusion of the thesis. It starts off with a summary of the thesis, followed by the key findings of the thesis, and the contributions of the research; followed by the limitations of the study and suggested future directions for research.

Chapter 2. Consumption and Tourist Experiences in the Experience Economy

2.0 Overview of the Chapter

The previous chapter has established the potential of travel blogs for contributing to a more in-depth understanding of tourist experiences and consumption experiences and their insights to destination/place marketing and experience marketing. Hence, this chapter will review these key concepts focusing on research gaps within the existing literature that could be addressed with the use of travel blogs as a research data source.

The chapter starts with a section on the experience economy and sets the backdrop for the study, highlighting how the concept has evolved over the years and issues that still surround the concept despite its acceptance among businesses. This is followed by the section on tourist experience and consumption experience demonstrating similarities and differences in these two concepts in terms of how they have evolved over the years and the efforts of scholars to measure them. It also discusses how the thesis can contribute to addressing research gaps in this literature. The section on experience marketing and destination/place marketing examines how the increased focus on consumption experiences and tourist experiences has influenced marketing in general and more particularly in the tourism industry. The chapter ends with a summary of research gaps in these key concepts, and the research objectives of the thesis are reiterated.

2.1 The Experience Economy

This section recognises that concept of experience economy proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) is surrounded by other works that similarly emphasised the importance of experience to individuals and society. It also highlights that this concept is evolving and dynamic, reflecting the changing roles of consumers and businesses over the years which should be considered in understanding various consumption experience contexts including tourism. The section ends with an outline of challenges and issues of the experience economy and directs the study to a comprehensive review of the concepts of consumption and tourism experiences.

2.1.1 Key developments in theorising the experience economy

The experience economy has been a buzzword for more than a decade now and has certainly caught the attention of the academe and the industry in recent years. This concept has been mostly associated with Pine and Gilmore (1998) who emphasised experience as the new source of value creation and the fourth economic offering following commodities, goods and services. According to the authors, "experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods" (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:97). They rationalised that they can identify this fourth economic offering because "consumers unquestionably desire experiences and more and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them" (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

Similar concepts have been put forward already by different authors as early as the 1970s, although under different labels (Boswijk et al, 2005). For example, Toffler (1970) had posited that individuals are experience makers and material needs had changed to intangible needs, and Schulze (1992) talked of new communities formed on the basis of meaningful experiences that are produced on demand. In fact, Boswijk et al (2005) argued that this concept is not new and described it as the world's oldest profession, citing Greeks and Romans who made money out of producing consumption experiences. Because of Toffler's and Schulze's works adopt socio-economic and cultural-sociological perspectives, Pine and Gilmore's work was perceived as pioneering in the field of business/management and marketing (Boswijk et al 2005). This It can also be argued, however, that there are already works that had emphasised the importance of experience to the individual; most cited is the work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). Even Holbrook (2000, 2006) had admitted that there were other works before his that have used this concept. He referred to Pine and Gilmore as *arrivistes* rather than pioneers in this direction. Nonetheless, Pine and Gilmore's (1998) "experience economy" has been the most cited work as practitioners and some academics refer to the emergence of an economy that sells and markets experiences.

Most of the works that followed Pine and Gilmore's have marketing, business or management perspectives with the exception of Rifkin and (2000) and Ter Borg (2003) whose works has socio-cultural and general social and philosophical approaches. Table 2.1 summarises the different key concepts of the experience economy from several authors. Boswijk et al (2005) observed that the experience economy concept grew in popularity rapidly in the field of organisational (and management) dynamics and has also reached the core of marketing. Kotler (2003) had proposed how orchestrating several services and goods can indeed create, stage and market experiences. He used the term "lifestyle segment of *experiencers*" referring to young, energetic, enthusiastic, impulsive, rebellious customers spending a relatively large share of their income on clothing, fast food, music, films and videos.

Table 2.1 Key developments in theorising the Experience Economy

Source	Key concepts	Perspective
Toffler, 1970 The Future Shock	Dematerialisation, the *psychologising* of the economy. The experience makers. From material needs to intangible needs. Change, transcendence, novelty, diversity.	Socio-economic perspective
Schulze, 1992 Die Erlebnis-gesellschaft, Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart	New communities form on the basis of meaningful experiences. People want a good life and to have fun. They focus more on their own experiences. They think of meaningful experiences as something that can be produced on demand.	Cultural-sociological approach
Pine and Gilmore, 1999 The experience economy	The progression of value from commodities to products, services and experiences. According to Pine, experience is a new distinguishing economic offering that differs from goods and services. Business is a stage and customers and employees are the actors.	Marketing commercial management
Wolf, 1999 Entertainment economy	Entertainment is the key differentiator.	Marketing, commercial management
Kotler, 2003 Marketing Management	By orchestrating several services and goods one can create, stage and market experiences.	Marketing
Jensen, 1999 The Dream Society	The story behind the product is what counts. Jensen distinguishes markets for: (1) Adventure; (2) Love and friendship; (3) Care; (4) Self-identity; (5) Peace of mind; (6) Belief and convictions.	Intangible aspect Business orientation
Rifkin, 2000 The Age of Access	A possession is no longer important, but access to experience is. At first, culture determined the economy, but now the economy practically determines culture. There is a danger of everything becoming commercialised.	Socio-cultural

Table 2.1 Key developments in theorising the Experience Economy (cont.)

Source	Key concepts	Perspective
Nijs and Peters, 2002 Imagineering	Creating worlds of perception. The American answer is not reproducible. The creation of authentic experience concepts of meaning is an art of management: the art of touching heart (Imagineering is Disney terminology).	Marketing
Ter Borg, 2003 The Economy of Sense	The process of creating meaning. This used to be merely an incidental product of the economy. People are increasingly turning to the economy in their quest for creating meaning.	General social, philosophical
Piet, 2004 De emotiemarkt	We discover that meaningful experiences do not make us happy. The unbridled fun industry is only for an immediate “experience of happiness”. After the “meaningful experience” economy there are five new markets for security, romance, identity, meaning and authenticity. We are on the way towards finding other ways of attaining happiness.	Socio-cultural marketing
Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004 The Future of Competition	The use of interaction as a basis for co-creation is at the crux of our emerging reality. Individual consumer. Personalised co-creating experience.	Economic, management

Summarised from Boswijk et al (2005)

Kotler’s segment of experiencers was criticised by Boswijk et al (2005) as limiting the scope of the experience economy within psychological characteristics with behaviour that is typical of one part of a consumer population instead of it being inherent in every form of consumption and behaviour. Nijs and Peters (2002) closely follow Pine and Gilmore’s work as they highlighted the importance of creating a fantasy world; hence the term *Imagineering* (a Disney terminology). They posited that the creation of memorable experiences which continuously trigger the imagination should touch the heart. Hence, imagination and emotions are important to experience creation.

Pralahad and Ramaswamy (2004), on the other hand, have argued that consumers should be considered as actors in the experience creation. They pointed out several changes among consumers such as: a) through the internet, where they are well-informed and are networking and forming consumer communities independent from firms and developing and sharing products (digital ones); b) have learned how to better discriminate when making choices, and c) have increasingly provided unsolicited feedback to companies and to each other. Accordingly, companies no longer act autonomously, designing products, developing production processes, crafting marketing messages and controlling sales channels with little or no interference from consumers (Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004). They concluded that consumers are now co-creating their experiences with the firms.

From the socio-cultural perspectives, experience has been acknowledged by Ter Borg (2003), Piet (2004) and Boswijk et al (2005) to have become a quest for meaning for individuals. Hence, "meaningful experiences" has been put forward. Boswijk et al (2005) had argued how crucial these meaningful experiences are:

> To be able to play a role as an organization and commercial manager in the experience economy, one needs to know the way in which people have meaningful experiences and how they give meaning to their lives. We also have to know what motivates people: when a meaningful experience touches them and transforms them, bringing about a turning point (p.27).

Piet (2004) however posited that meaningful experiences are not adequate for making consumers happy and that the "fun industry" only provides immediate experience of happiness. She proposed that for a meaningful experience economy to exist, there are five new markets; security, romance, identity, meaning and authenticity. These markets are similar to Jensen's (1999) emotional markets of self definition, togetherness and security. Piet (2004) had put forward an emotion market which thrives on the fact that people are so preoccupied with themselves and that the goal of personal happiness is the norm. Nevertheless, Piet's work supports Pralahad and Ramaswamy's (2004) emphasis on co-creation of experiences and consumers wanting to be co-producers, involved in designing and rediscovering their own identity.

The European Centre of Economy Experience (2007) highlighted how consumers have played a more significant role in their experience creation and categorised them to be characteristic of the second and third generations of the experience economy. Table 2.2 summarises the different generations of the experience economy.

Table 2.2 Three Generations of the Experience Economy

First generation	The so-called experience is 100% staged; business supplier views count; called building an experience. Example: Heineken Experience
Second generation	The locus of value creation takes place through and in the individual; called experience co-creation. Example: Lego
Third generation	People are completely self-directed; self-expressive and in the control seat and organisations and commercial companies only play a facilitating role. Example: music industry, open innovations, *backpacking*

Source: European Centre of Experience Economy website (2007)

These three generations of the experience economy are an indication that the concept is evolving and affected by the changes in the consumers' behaviour and needs and most importantly, that companies are adjusting to it. The different works on the experience economy (as shown in Table 2.1), despite having different labels, had tried to capture the nature of experiences from Pine and Gilmore's (1998) unique and memorable experiences; to co-created experiences (Piet, 2004; Pralahad and

Ramaswamy, 2004); to meaningful experiences (Ter Borg, 2003; Boswijk et al 2005).

It can be concluded that emotions, memory and the meaning of experience to an individual have emerged as important components of the experience economy as suggested by different authors. However, as mentioned earlier, Pine and Gilmore (1999) remain the most cited authors for the experience economy, including in the tourism studies. Hence, the next section presents a detailed discussion of Pine and Gilmore's work.

2.1.2 Pine and Gilmore's Experience Economy

Among the most important features of the Pine and Gilmore's (1998) work are the characteristics of experiences (four realms of an experience) and the design principles of pioneering experience stagers which according to them would give companies competitive advantage. These were mostly utilised in empirical works that validated the experience economy in a specific sector. Caru and Cova (2003:272) call these experience realms a "very operational view of experiential marketing".

The four realms of experience can be thought of across two dimensions: customer participation (where at one end of the spectrum lies passive participation and customers do not affect the performance at all and at the other end lies active participation where customers play key role in creating the performance of event that yields the experience); and connection or environmental relationship that unites customers with the event or performance (where at one end of the spectrum lies absorption and at the other end, immersion). They suggested that experiences can be categorised along the spectra of the two dimensions creating four realms of experiences (Figure 2.1). It is suggested that the coupling of these two dimensions and four realms of experience are mutually compatible domains that co-mingle to form uniquely personal encounters. The four realms of experiences are entertainment, educational, aesthetic and escapist. Table 2.3 describes the characteristics of these realms as described by Pine and Gilmore (1998).

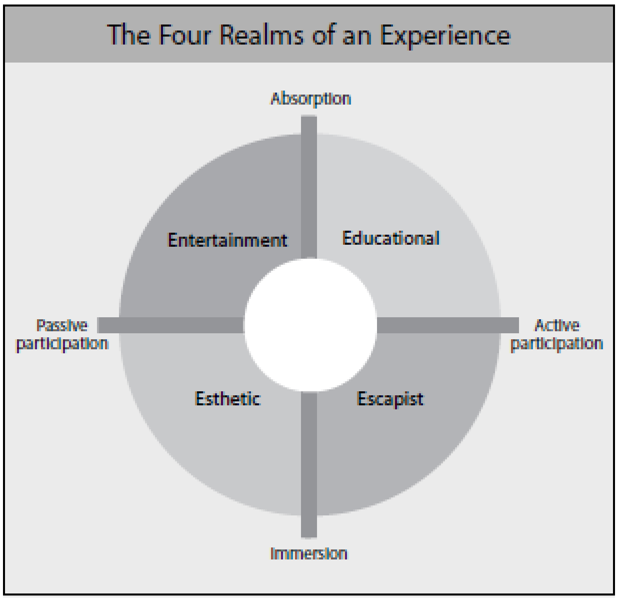

Figure 2.1 The Four Realms of an Experience
Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998)

Table 2.3 The four realms of experiences

Entertainment experiences	Experiences in which customers participate more passively than actively, their connection with the event is more likely one of absorption than immersion. Examples: watching television, attending a concert
Educational experiences	Experience that involves more active participation but customers are still more outside the event than immersed in the action. Examples: attending a class, taking a ski lesson
Escapist experiences	These experiences can teach as well as educational events can, or amuse just as well as entertainment but they involve greater customer immersion. Examples: acting in a play, playing in an orchestra or descending the Grand Canyon
Esthetic experience	Customers or participants are immersed in an activity or environment but they themselves have little or no effect on it. Example: tourist viewing the Grand Canyon; visiting an art gallery

Summarised from Pine and Gilmore (1998:98)

The authors posited that an experience that encompasses aspects of all four realms, forming a "sweet spot" around the area where the spectra meet (white small circle in the centre in Figure 2.1) can provide the richest experiences. They gave examples of this as going to Disney World or gambling in a Las Vegas Casino. They warned that experiences like goods and services have to meet a customer’s needs; they have to work, and have to be deliverable. These experiences need an iterative process of research, design and development. Experiences are derived from a process of exploration, scripting and staging - capabilities that aspiring experience merchants need to master (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:102). Table 2.4 below shows that experience, as an economic offering, has distinct characteristics from commodities, goods and services which should be considered in selling and marketing to consumers.

Table 2.4 Economic Distinctions

Economic Offering	**Commodities**	**Goods**	**Services**	**Experiences**
Economy	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience
Economic Function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key attribute	Natural	Standardised	Customised	Personal
Method of Supply	Stored in bulk	Inventoried after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration
Seller	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	Market	User	Client	Guest
Factors of Demand	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998:98)

Experience which they described as unique, memorable and personal is a challenging economic offering as this is more subjective and based on customers' evaluation of the experience. Hence, they have suggested five key experience design principles that would assist companies in creating such experiences which are enumerated below (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:102-104):

1. **Theme the experience.** An effective theme is concise and compelling. The theme must drive all the design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified story line that wholly captivates the customer. The theme forms the foundation of the experience.

2. **Harmonise impressions with positive cues**. "Impressions" refer to the takeaways of the experience and they fulfil the theme. To create the desired impressions, cues must be introduced to affirm the nature of the experience to the guest and each cue must support the theme, and none should be inconsistent with it. Cues make the impressions that create the experience in the customer's mind.

3. **Eliminate negative cues.** Experience stages also must eliminate anything that diminishes contradicts or distracts from the theme.

4. **Mix in memorabilia.** Memorabilia are physical reminders of an experience; some goods along with the experience can be sold for the memories they convey.

5. **Engage all five senses.** The sensory stimulants that accompany an experience should support and enhance its theme. The more senses an experience engages the more effective and memorable it can be.

These principles were supported by examples of popular brands such as Disney World, Nike, and Barista Cafe, to name a few. These were later criticised by several authors (Morgan et al, 2009; Patterson, et al 2008; Poulsson and Kale, 2004) who pointed out that use of such examples has made this experience staging to be perceived as more suitable for world-famous brands such as Starbucks, Pret-A-Manger and Disney World, requiring heavy investments on staging the thematised experience from memorabilia, the environment and the trained staff who have roles to play in these staged experiences. These key principles are more in line with the first generation of the experience economy as described in Table 2.2 where the company is in charge of building experiences. It is clear that these key principles of Pine and Gilmore are outdated for an experience economy with consumers who are co-producers or co-creators of their experiences. For example, in the tourism consumption context, there are tourists such as backpackers who prefer unstructured and multi-destination experiences, and they are mostly independent of the tourism industry. They create their own experiences through their own flexible itinerary. The absence of pre-arranged experiences is part of the most important feature of such travel experiences. Hence, applying the above key principles are challenging indeed. There are other issues that were noted by several authors which are discussed in the next section.

2.1.3 Issues on the experience economy concept

Pine and Gilmore (1998) however may be given credit for the plethora of studies dedicated to the understanding of consumer experiences that has been spawned from the emergence of the experience economy (Hosany and Witham: 351). Patterson et al (2008) had described Pine and Gilmore's work to have "deliberately or not, amounted to a prescient re-articulation and substantial development of an ancient milestone of interpretive consumer behaviour, Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) "fun, fantasy and feeling" thesis. For some authors, Pine and Gilmore's work had provided a practical, conceptual framework for understanding the nature of customers in general (Oh et al 2007). However, this has been criticised as not addressing the difficulty of creating and managing unique experiences (Patterson et al 2008; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Instead, different commentators offer several distinct, if overlapping, blueprints (Patterson et al 2008). This is inevitable due to the various ways in which experience economy is described as presented in Table 2.1. Patterson et al (2008) had enumerated various recommendations of what experiences should be, such as extraordinary experiences (Arnould and Price, 1993; Arnould, Price and Zinkman, 2002; Ladwein, 2007); enchanting (Badot and Filser, 2007; Ritzer, 1999), and having a theme (Kozinets et al, 2010), to name a few.

Another criticism which was raised earlier is how "writers on the experience economy frequently use high profile examples" (Morgan et al, 2007) and unassailable world class companies (Patterson et al, 2008, Poulsson and Kale, 2004) like Starbucks, Legoland and Pret-A-Manger. This gives the impression that delivering memorable experiences necessarily involves heavy investment in theme-park-style technology or mass communications brand-building campaigns (Morgan et al, 2007:212). According to Patterson (2008), some companies remain intimidated, alienated and disengaged by the machinations of those examples.

Oh et al (2007) pointed out that that Pine and Gilmore's work provided framework to understand and evaluate experiential consumptions across various industries and products. However, authors (Morgan et al, 2007; Oh et al, 2007) had argued that its measurements are lacking and this limited its applicability. A few attempts to measure it had included efforts of Danzinger (2006) and Shaw (2007) with both of them emphasising the significance of emotion in the experience. Danzinger's (2006) work has not been empirically tested but seems to be a "winner" in situating emotion (Patterson et al, 2008), and Shaw (2007) has proposed to have decoded the "DNA of customer experience", referring to four clusters of emotion (attention, recommendation, advocacy and destroying) that could either increase or decrease customer loyalty.

In the context of tourism consumption, there is a handful of literature that empirically tested the experience realms and design principles of Pine and Gilmore (Hayes and MacLeod, 2009; Morgan et al, 2007; Oh et al, 2007). Tourism which is at the forefront of staging experiences and creating touristic experience (Stenberg, 1997) is closely related to the concept of the experience economy (Morgan et al, 2009). Oh et al (2007) developed an initial measurement scale of tourist destination lodging experiences by operationalising and testing the experience concepts of Pine and Gilmore along with variables such as arousal, memories, quality and customer satisfaction. An application of Pine and Gilmore's (1998) principles of experience design was explored by Hayes and MacLeod (2009) in a heritage trail. They also identified ways of incorporating the experience economy in heritage attractions, namely enrolment, personalisation and engagement, which is similar to Pine and Gilmore's design.

Oh et al (2009) had also posed a few questions around the experience realms; suggesting these can be further elaborated into meaningful sub-dimensions, particularly the escapist realm, and they called for future studies to develop richer measurement tools. Another suggestion was to link the four experience realms to tourist experience outcome and motivation. There were also concerns about integrating the four experience measurement scales with other performance evaluation models and producing clear strategies for marketers. Jurowski (2009) had also validated the four realms of experience in categorising tourist activities. This study showed an overlapping of realms for some tourist activities. Based on this, it becomes evident that the two main features of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy (experience realms and design principles) are problematic.

The shift from the first generation of the experience economy where the firm has total control to creating experience to the third generation of experience economy where consumers are now self-directed and in control of their experience creation presents another challenge to businesses. These offer opportunities for co-creation; as Tynan and McKechnie (2009) posited, this brings with it the necessity of sharing sensitive information and that of engaging in joint problem solving which may involve some risks. It also requires a lot of interaction with the consumers at several points in their experience creation.

Most of the issues mentioned above could be traced back to a more fundamental issue, and that is, experience is an ill-defined concept as argued by Caru and Cova (2003). Indeed, Poulsson and Kale (2004) had pointed out that extant literature has not systematically defined what exactly constitutes an experience. They added that the area of experience creation still suffers from poor conceptualisation and fuzzy directions. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) posited that the disagreement and lack of clarity lies in the different ways in which the term "experience" can be understood; pointing out that "it is both a noun and a verb and used variously to convey the process itself, participating in the activity, the affect or way in which an object, thought or emotion is felt through the senses or the mind, and even the outcome of an experience by way of a skill or learning for example" (p.503). They concluded that it brings confusion as to whether experience is active or passive for the participant, whether it must result in particular outcomes like learning or skill development or whether it requires interaction or not. This confusion is encountered in the definition of consumption experiences. Indeed, it poses a major challenge to companies if they are using it as the source of value creation and their competitive edge.

To conclude this section, it is clear that despite the acceptance that society is in the experience economy era, the concept of experience remains ill-defined. This has raised issues relevant to creating experiences, what constitutes it and how to measure it. Hence, the next section provides an in-depth discussion on the concept of consumption and tourism experiences with the intention of highlighting possible solutions to some of these issues raised related to experience economy.

2.2 The concepts of consumption experience and tourist experience

This section brings together these two concepts of experience that this thesis will be contributing to in the literature. An in-depth understanding of these two concepts is crucial to identifying research gaps that could be addressed with the use of blogs/travel blogs as research data. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) concept of the experience economy refers to the broad concept of consumption experiences, i.e. they implied that their key design principles and the four realms of experiences are applicable to various consumption contexts. However, tourism consumption is surely one of the pioneer examples of the experience economy. Hence, it can provide insights of the broader concept of consumption experiences. The review of these two concepts examines the following: a) definitions of the concept; b) theoretical developments; c) types of experiences/typologies and its elements, d) stages of experiences; e) role of emotions, and f) outcomes of experience.

2.2.1 Consumption Experience

Johnston and Kong (2011) observed there are three main areas covered in the current literature: (1) why is the customer experience important? (2) what is a customer experience? and (3) how do organisations go about designing a better customer experience? The review of literature for this thesis confirms that these comprise some of the main areas covered in the literature. However, the review also showed that a substantial body of recent works had also covered the following areas: (1) what constitutes experience and type or kind of experience to be offered to the consumer? (2) importance of emotion in experience creation, and (3) measuring the outcome of the experience. The literature reviewed focused on works that aims to contribute to understanding how to use consumption experiences for a company's competitive advantage and retaining loyal customers.

2.2.1.1 Definition

The Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary defined *experience* in three ways as a noun: (1) the knowledge and skill that you have gained through doing something for a period of time; the process of gaining this; (2) the things that have happened to you that influence the way you think and behave; (3) an event or activity that affects you in some way; and (4) events or knowledge shared by all the members of a particular group in society that influences the way they think and behave. These are the definitions that an individual may draw upon when asked about their experiences.

Experience plays a crucial part in an individual's development; therefore it has been studied in various disciplines. Caru and Cova (2003) outlined definitions of experience in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Definitions of experience

Discipline	Definition
Science	An experience is similar to an experiment based on objective facts and data that can be generalised. A common experience provides the individual with particular knowledge; a scientific experience provides universal knowledge valid for all.
Philosophy	An experience is a personal trial which generally transforms the individual: "experiencing something ("I tried...") usually leads to the accumulation of "experience" ("I have experience in...") and thus of knowledge. Experience is gained when what happens is translated into knowledge (common sense), not only when it remains a simple lived occurrence.
Anthropology and ethnology	Experience is the way in which individuals live their own culture and more precisely "how events are received by consciousness" (Bruner, 1986:4).
Sociology and Psychology	An experience is a subjective and cognitive activity which allows the individual to develop. The notion of experience is generally defined (Dubet, 1994:93) as a "cognitive activity", "a test", "a means to construct reality and above all, to verify it".
Consumer Behaviour	An experience is above all a personal occurrence, often with important emotional significance, founded on the interaction with stimuli which are the products or services consumed (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).
Marketing And Economy	An experience is mainly a type of offering to be added to merchandise (or commodities) products and services, to give a fourth type of offering which is particularly suited to the needs of the postmodern consumer. (Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Hetzel, 2002; Pine and Gilmore 1999; and Schmitt, 1999)

Summarised from Caru and Cova (2003: 269-270)

The authors noted that consumer behaviour research adopts a conceptualisation relatively close to that used in the social sciences and philosophy while the marketing and economic definition gives a more objective meaning to the concept. These varying definitions of experience are carried over to the task of defining experience at the context of consumption, or mostly referred to as consumption experience.

The concept of consumption experience itself has different labels, such as brand experience, commercial experience and customer experience; however it generally refers to the consumption experience of consumers. Table 2.6 presents consumption experience definitions found in the review of the literature.

Table 2.6 Definitions of consumption experience

Authors	Definitions of consumption experience
Hirschman and Holbrook (1986)	The consumption experience is an emergent property that results from a complex system of overlapping interrelationships in constant reciprocal interaction with personal, environmental and situation inputs.
La Salle and Britton (2005) and Shaw and Ivens (2003)	A customer's experience stems from a set of personal interactions between a consumer and an organisation; these interactions can provoke a reaction at various psychological and physiological levels.
Poulsson and Kale (2004)	Commercial experience as an engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of the encounter.
Meyer and Schwager (2007)	Customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company.

Table 2.6 Definitions of consumption experience (cont.)

Authors	Definitions of consumption experience
Gentile et al (2007)	The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organisation, which provoke a reaction (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2005). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual) (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Schmitt, 1999). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence to the different moments of contact or touch-points (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2005).
Verhoef et al (2009)	Customer experience encompasses "the total experience" including the search, purchase, consumption and after-sale phases of the experience. It originates from a set of interactions between a customer and product, a company or part of its organisation, which provokes a reaction.
Grewal et al (2009)	Experience includes every point of contact at which the customer interacts with the business, product or service.
Lemke et al (2010)	Customer experience as the customer's subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, including but not necessarily limited to the communication encounter, the service encounter and the consumption encounter.
Lilja and Eriksson (2010)	Commercial experience is a memorable event that the customer is willing to pay for.
Johnston and Kong (2011)	The customer's experience is their personal interpretation of the service process and their interaction and involvement with it during their journey or flow though a series of touch points and how those things make the customers feel.

Developed for the dissertation

Comparing definitions from La Salle and Britton (2005); Shaw and Ivens (2005), Gentile et al (2007), Grewal et al (2009) and Verhoef et al (2009), Kim et al (2011) noted there are three common threads that run along these definitions which they found helpful in developing their index for identifying and measuring the dimensions of the consumer experience. These threads comprised (1) the experience a customer has with an organisation is holistic in nature and therefore multi-dimensional; (2) any consumer experience involves a person at various levels, both psychological and physiological, and (3) the experience a customer has with a brand is personal and individual (Kim et al, 2011:13). The authors stated that that this concept has not been explored in depth from a theoretical perspective and that it has been integrated into service quality and satisfaction studies. Likewise, Verhoef et al (2009) argued also that the marketing, retailing and service management historically has not considered customer experience as a separate construct; instead researchers have focused on measuring customer satisfaction and service quality.

The definitions indeed remain diverse; however the recognition of the experiential aspect of consumption experience has drawn the attention of scholars from this definitional issue to another major question, i.e. what constitutes an experience. This question is a key concern in selling and marketing experiences to consumers with the aim of retaining customers and creating emotional attachment with them. The next section discusses the emergence of experiential aspects of consumption experience.

2.2.1.2 Theoretical developments: Focus on the experiential aspect of consumption

Research in consumer behaviour reached a turning point through the seminal work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) as they put forward that the experiential aspect of consumption was neglected in the prevailing information-processing model. The "information-processing model" which developed as one of the logical flow models has viewed the consumer as a logical thinker who solves problems to make purchasing decisions (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). However, by the late 1970s, researchers like Oslshavsky and Granbois (1979) and Steth (1979) questioned the hegemony of the information-processing perspective on the grounds that it may neglect important consumption phenomena such as playful leisure activities, sensory pleasures, daydreams, aesthetic enjoyment and emotional responses (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumption has begun to be seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun (which they later on referred to as the Three Fs) encompassed by "experiential view". They posited that this perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria. This seminal work of Holbrook and Hirschman has become a key element in understanding consumer behaviour 20 years later and in some views it is a foundation for the economy, and marketing of the future (Caru and Cova, 2003). Table 2.7 and Figure 2.2 summarise the features of the experiential view in terms of environmental inputs, consumer inputs, and intervening responses and the output consequences criteria and learning effects.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p.139) emphasised that their aim has been neither to advocate a "new theory of consumer behaviour" nor to reject the "old" approach but rather to argue for an enlarged views that avoids any adherence to the "isms" or "ologies" that so often constrict scientific inquiry". According to Addis and Holbrook (2001), since the mid-80s, consumer researchers have increasingly pursued the extension of the mainstream approach in consumer behaviour - the experiential view. They talked of a newer experiential view which they claimed offers a revised look at the world of consumers. They stated that the experiential perspective recognises the importance of the roles of emotions in behaviour, the fact that consumers are feelers as well as thinkers and doers, the significance of symbolism in consumption, the consumer's need for fun and pleasure, the roles of consumers beyond the act of purchase in product usage, as well as brand choice and so forth.

Table 2.7 The experiential view distinctions from the information-processing model

Environmental Inputs	
Products	Explore the symbolic meaning of products or activities such as art, entertainment and leisure that encompass symbolic aspects of consumption behaviour.
Stimulus Properties	Supporting more research on nonverbal cues that are seen, heard, tasted, felt or smelled to be appreciated properly; or the multi-sensory psychophysical relationships in consumer behaviour.
Communication Content	Shift toward the study of consumer responses to the semantic aspects of communication content; focus on effects attributable to the syntactic aspects of message content –structure and style.
Consumer inputs	
Resources	Households both produce and consume "commodities" that combine inputs of goods and time to maximise overall utility, subject to resource constraints. Subjective time resources are investigated which might help unravel the mysteries of the psycho-temporal expenditures involved in experiential consumption.
Task definition	Emphasises the importance of primary process-thinking in accord with the pleasure principle which involves a task definition oriented toward hedonic response. This type of consumption seeks fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, and enjoyment.
Type of involvement	Focus on the type of involvement instead of the degree; attention, interest, excitement and so forth bear more directly on the experiential view by emphasising degree of activation or arousal.
Search activity	Draw heavily from the work of psychologists on exploratory behaviour (Beriyne, 1960); more diverse exploration such as that involved in exposure to entertainment.

Table 2.7 The experiential view distinctions from the information-processing model (cont.)

Consumer inputs	
Individual differences	Investigation appears to offer considerable scope for the revival of personality and allied variables (ex. Subculture); personality constructs that are experientially relevant: sensation seeking; creativity; religious world views; Type A versus Type B personalities.
Intervening response system	
Cognition	Focus on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private in nature.
Affect	Emotions form an important substrate of consumption and that their systematic investigation is a key requirement for the successful application of the experiential perspective. Full gamut of relevant emotions should be paid attention to: love, hate, fear, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, disgust, etc.
Behaviour	Increased attention to the mental events surrounding the act of consumption; dealing with the purely subjective aspects of consciousness; extending investigation to all aspects of the consumption experience.
Output consequences, criteria and learning	
Output consequences and criteria	Consequences of consumption appear in the fun that a consumer derives from a product - the enjoyment that it offers and the resulting feeling of pleasure that it evokes (Klinger, 1971:18).
Learning	Although satisfaction certainly constitutes one important experiential component; the stream of associations that occur during consumption (imagery, daydreams, and emotions) may be equally important experiential aspects of consumer behaviour.

Summarised from Holbrook and Hirschman (1982: 134-138)

By 1995, Belk (1991) was referring to a "new consumer behaviour" as opposed to "old consumer behaviour" which he described as different both methodologically and substantively. He described the new consumer behaviour rejecting positivist tenets in favour of a broader array of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. He attributed it to a number of anthropologists, sociologists and literary critics joining the marketing department and broadening the department internally. He made a distinction between old and new consumer behaviour studies outlining differences between the two perspectives as depicted in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8 Old versus new perspectives in consumer behaviour research

Old Perspective	New Perspective
Positivist Experiments/surveys Quantitative A priori theory	Non-positivist Ethnographies Qualitative Emergent theory
Economic/psychological	Sociological/anthropological
Micro/managerial Focus on buying Emphasis on cognitions American	Macro/Cultural Focus on consuming Emphasis on emotions Multicultural

Source: Belk (1995)

Belk (1995: 57) had described the then "new consumer behaviour" as acknowledging "consumers as not mere automatons who receive information inputs and produce brand choice outputs that maximises satisfaction, rather they are socially connected human beings participating in multiple interacting cultures". Consumption symbolism (consumption conveying age, gender, ethnicity, personality, mood and other symbolic information), property and possessions (conveys "you are what you possess", possessions are extensions of self), consumption festivals and rituals (consumption gives consumer a sense of community through shared brand choices and loyalties), and cultural studies (consumption studies look into subcultures and across cultures) are among the different strands of consumption studies which Belk stated were included in this "new consumer behaviour". He observed that with marketing and consumption becoming dominant parts of the human landscape, the "new consumer behaviour" attempts to understand how consumption relates to the rest of human existence. He concluded that "this new consumer behaviour

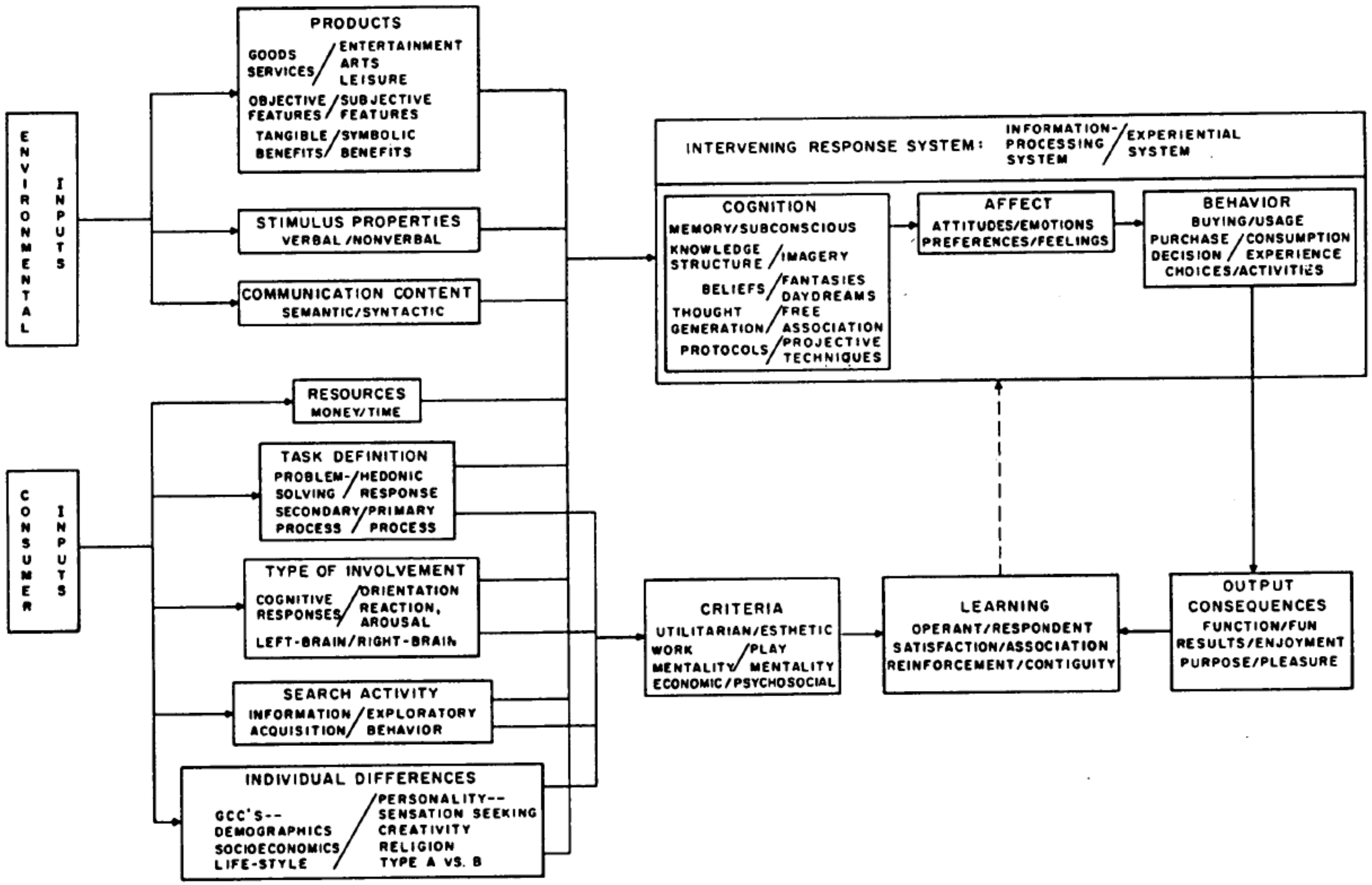

Figure 2.2 Contrasts between the information-processing and experiential views of consumer behaviour

Note: The slash marks indicate a comparison between the information-processing view (left side) and the experiential view (right side).

Source: Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)

research is creating a very different model of the consumer than the information processing rational consumer who is at the core of more traditional consumer research" (Belk, 1995: 67).

This shift from the old to new perspectives in consumer behaviour research carries the same argument of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). The integration of other disciplines into marketing had definitely deepened the understanding of consumption for individuals. Even the perspective of postmodernism had been acknowledged for its influence in understanding consumption, as Firat and Dholakia (1998, p.96) had observed:

> for the post-modern consumer, consumption is not a mere act of devouring, destroying or using things. It is also not the end of the (central) economic cycle, but an act of production of experiences and selves or images... The way to enhance and enchant life is to allow multiple experiences, to be sensed emotionally as well as through reason, utilizing all the aspects of being human... Life is to be produced and created, in effect, constructed through the multiple experiences in which the consumer immerses.

Firat and Venkatesh (1995) assert that as postmodernism is also called the age of the symbol and spectacle; consumers have become consumers of symbol/spectacle; consumers look for meanings and experiences while marketers produce the spectacles. It is not brands that consumers will be loyal but to images and symbols, especially to images and symbols that they produce while they consume (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995: 251).

Returning to the consumption experiences definitions presented in Table 2.6, it is clear that experiential view put forward by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) has been adopted by most scholars in their recent works. Terms such as "memory/memorable" (Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Lilja and Eriksson 2010), "emotions" (feel) (Johnson and Kong, 2011); "subjective responses" (Lemke et al, 2010), "reaction at various psychological and physiological levels" (La Salle and Britton, 2005; Shaw and Ivens, 2003; Verhoef et al, 2009); and "personal inputs" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) may be considered as reflecting an experiential view. It does not include some characteristics of consumers such as those of the postmodern consumers (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995); co-creating and co-producing consumers (Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004), or the self-directed and self-expressive consumers in the third generation of the experience economy (Boswijk et al, 2005). There is a lack of emphasis on Firat and Dholakia's (1998) claim that consumption is an act of production of experiences and selves or images.

2.2.1.3 Types of experiences and its elements

What constitutes an experience or a commercial experience has been highlighted by Poulsson and Kale (2004) as one of the questions not answered by Pine and Gilmore. Most of the works that attempted to address this question proposed various elements that should constitute a commercial/consumption experience that promises results such as customer loyalty, competitive advantage and satisfactory experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) mentioned that experiences should be memorable, unique and personal but did not identify clearly the "ingredients" of the experience. Hence, there are a few recent works that have addressed this point, for instance Poulsson and Kale (2004) suggested that experience should be personally relevant, and include elements of novelty, surprise, learning and engagement; Caru and Cova (2003) cited Hetzel's (2002) conceptualisation of five levers on action to provide consumer experiences included surprising the consumer; proposing the extraordinary and stimulating the five senses; Lilja and Eriksson (2010) suggest strong engagement, highly emotional and memorable experiences; while Lofman (1991) identified six primary elements of an experiential consumption, namely setting, sensation; thought; feeling, activity and evaluation. The attempt to address the question of what constitutes an experience has resulted in various types of experience being proposed by different authors as shown in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9 Types of Experiences

Types of experience	**Authors**
Memorable experiences	Pine and Gilmore (1999); Poulsson and Kale (2004); Lilja and Eriksson (2010)
Extraordinary experiences	Arnould and Price (1993); Firat and Shultz (1997); La Salle and Britton (2005)
Experience exploiting the senses	Schmitt (1999); Hetzel (2002)
Emotional experiences	Morrisson and Crane (2007); Johnston and Kong (2011);
Transformational/ Transcendent experience	Hackley and Tiwasakul 2006; Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig (2007)

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These types of experience definitely draw upon existing experience typology, within or outside consumption research. Extraordinary experience (Abrahams, 1986) and transformational and transcendent experience (Hackley and Tiwasakul, 2006 and Schouten et al, 2007) are similar to Denzin's (1992) epiphanic experiences. According to Schouten et al (2007), a transcendent experience has aspects of flow and peak experiences. Table 2.10 presents the different experience typology that some authors draw upon in defining what should be the type of experience to sell to their consumers.

Table 2.10 Experience typology

Authors	**Typology**
Csikzentmihalyi (1997)	Flow experience with two main dimensions (skills and challenge) that differentiate type of experience.
Abrahams (1986)	Ordinary experience (everyday life, routine, the past and the passive acceptance of events) versus extraordinary experience (more intense, framed and stylised practices).
Dilthey (1976)	Mere experience (passive endurance and acceptance of events) and an experience (stands out from the evenness of passing hours and years and forms the structure of experience).
Denzin (1992)	Epiphanic experiences: major upheaval (which changes a life forever, b. cumulative(refers the final build up of a crisis in a person's life; c. illuminative moment (underlying existential structures of a relationship or situation are revealed) and the relived moment (where after an event occurs, the individual bears the consequences)

Summarised from Caru and Cova (2003)

Caru and Cova (2003) noted that there is an obsession with extraordinary experience proposed by marketers. Notice also how these types of experiences are very subjective and personal. This emphasises more the need to approach this issue by understanding consumption experience from the perspective of the consumers. There is a need to ask the consumers the question of "what is an extraordinary or memorable experience for them?" instead of marketers providing them with experiences that they thought will be extraordinary or memorable for them, using their goods and services.

The review of literature has revealed that as a result of the nature of experience being subjective and personal and with the experiential view of consumption, the academia and practitioners in the field have shifted their focus on emotion as an indicator of customer response.

2.2.1.4 Role of emotions in consumption experiences

Consumption emotion refers to the set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences, as described either by the distinctive categories of emotional experiences and expressions (e.g. joy, anger and fear) or by the structural dimensions underlying emotional categories such as pleasantness/unpleasantness, relaxation/action or calmness/excitement (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Russell 1979). They are "markers, mediators and moderators of consumer responses" (Bagozzi et al, 1999); hence it is crucial in the study of consumption experiences.

Emotions elicited during consumption experiences are believed to leave strong affective traces or "markers" in episodic memory; hence, when an evaluation of the relevant consumption experience is required, the affective traces are readily retrieved and their valences integrated into the evaluative judgment along with other pertinent semantic memories, such as prior expectancies, disconfirmation beliefs, and so on (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). Lilja and Eriksson (2010) confirm that the creation of a powerful emotional response appears to be a key for something to be memorable, and that strong engagement or arousal is a critical driver of strong emotions; therefore a strong driver of commercial experiences. Furthermore, consumers' emotional experience with the service brand is seen to create brand differentiation as more and more services become commoditised (Morrison and Crane, 2007). There are however difficulties in using emotions to evaluate a customer experience or as a guide for creating experience. Emotion is a complex construct for the following reasons: a) there is a range of different emotion types and dimensions, and patterns and combinations (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986); b) it has a dynamic nature (Dube and Morgan, 1996; Ramanathan and McGill, 2007); c) it may have a social aspect (Ramnathan and McGill, 2007), and d) it influences decision making (Kidwell et al, 2008; Pollai et al, 2010).

Citing various works, Richins (1997) noted how importance of emotions in the sphere of consumer behaviour has been established by works of scholars examining the emotions that were generated by use of specific products (Holbrook et al, 1984; Mehrabian and Wixen, 1986); by services (Oliver, 1994); by one's favourite possessions (Schultz et al, 1989), or more generally in a variety of consumption situations (Derbaix and Pham, 1991; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Richins, et al, 1992). Nevertheless, Richins (1997) has acknowledged that consumer behaviour theory at that time had scant information about the nature of emotions in the consumption environment or how best to measure them. Hence, after these studies established the importance of emotions in consumption, research on how to measure emotions followed.

Consumer research draws on psychological literature in understanding this construct of emotion and is examined for its appropriateness for application in consumer behaviour (Richins, 1997). Extant measurement tools that have been used by consumer behaviour researchers included: a) Plutchik and Kellerman' Emotions Profile Index; b) Izard's Differential Emotions scale, and c) Mehrabian and Russell's PAD (pleasure-arousal-dominance) scale. Plutchik (1980) used an evolutionary perspective to identify eight "primary" emotions consisting of fear, anger, joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, expectancy and surprise. Izard (1977) identified 10 fundamental emotions which are interest, enjoyment, surprise, distress (sadness), anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame/shyness and guilt. However, these two indices were criticised for their reliance on the basic emotions (Ortony and Turner, 1990). The PAD scale has been used by marketing scholars to assess emotional responses to some marketing stimuli; unlike the other scales; it assessed the perceived pleasure, arousal and dominance elicited by a set of environmental stimuli (Richins, 1996). The PAD paradigm and the Plutchik scheme have the widest usage in consumer research (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986).

Richins (1996) pointed out a number of general problems with these scales including: (1) the scales ignore some of the emotions that are particularly central in people's lives; pointing out that none of these measures grounded in emotions theory assesses feelings of love; (2) most of the measures contain some terms not familiar to many consumers (such as melancholy, contemptuous, sheepish, revulsion, and brooding) and are not part of the everyday vocabulary, and (3) appropriateness of using existing measures to assess emotions elicited in consumption situations is unknown; emotions are context-specific and likely to differ in intensity and quality. Motivated by these weaknesses, Richins (1996) identified an appropriate set of consumption emotion descriptors (CES) that could cover a wide range of consumption situations, and that could be used in surveys or field studies and in anticipatory consumption, product acquisition, post-purchase possession and use of the product. The consumption emotion set comprises:

1. Anger (frustrated, angry, irritated)
2. Discontent (unfulfilled, discontented)
3. Worry (nervous, worried, tense)
4. Sadness (depressed, sad, miserable)
5. Fear (scared, afraid, panicky)
6. Shame (embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated)
7. Envy (envious, jealous)
8. Loneliness (lonely, homesick)
9. Romantic love (sexy, romantic, passionate)
10. Love (loving, sentimental, warm hearted)
11. Peacefulness (calm, peaceful)
12. Contentment (contented, fulfilled)
13. Optimism (optimistic, encouraged, hopeful)
14. Joy (happy, pleased, joyful)
15. Excitement (excited, thrilled, enthusiastic)
16. Surprise (surprised, amazed, astonished)
17. Other items: guilty, proud, eager, relieved)

According to Richins (1996), this is a set of descriptors that represents the range of emotions consumers most frequently experienced in consumption situations. Nevertheless, she admits that this CES is not intended to be a definitive assessment tool, but rather a starting point in determining the proper assessment of consumption-related emotions. Indeed, it was a vital contribution to understanding emotions in the consumption context; her work is one of the most cited in studies exploring the effect of emotion on customer satisfaction/evaluation (Dube and Menon, 2000; Giese and Cote, 2000; Zins, 2002; McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006; Ladhari, 2009), loyalty behaviours (Pullman and Gross, 2004; Jiang, 2005; DeWitt, Nguyen and Marshall, 2008; Söderlund and Rosengren, 2008), and purchase intentions or consumer decision-making (Babin, 2001; Torben, 2005).

This plethora of studies on emotions is evidence of the importance of emotions to consumption. Literature on emotions in consumer research is dominated by measurements of emotions; with many different scales being developed, replicated and validated among the scholars. Laros and Steenkamp (2005) provide an overview of consumer research using emotions as a main variable and this is seen in Table 2.11 below. According to these authors, progress on the use of emotions in the consumer behaviour has been hampered by ambiguity concerning two interrelated issues – the structure and content of emotions (Bagozzi et al, 1999).

As seen from the significant amount of research in this area, this construct has been explored well and is still an ongoing research interest. The review has also shown a dominance of quantitative research over qualitative research in examining emotions and their influence on behaviour. Recent works focusedon exploring the influence of emotions on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and decision making and service quality during and after consumption. These are mostly in the context of service provision or encounters and rarely on consumption experience, such as the work of Morrison and Crane (2007) on emotional brand experience, and Johnston and Kong (2010) on emotional experiences. This confirms what Kim et al (2010) had observed; that consumption experience has been integrated into service quality and satisfaction studies.

Table 2.11 Consumer research on emotions and its measurement

Reference	Emotions measure used
Edell and Burke (1987)	Edell and Burke (1987)
Holbrook and Batra (1987)	Holbrook and Batra (1987)
Westbrook (1987)	Izard (1977)
Olney et al (1991)	Mehrabian and Russell (1974)
Holbrook and Gardner (1993)	Russell et al (1989)
Mano and Oliver (1993)	Watson et al (1988):Mano (1991)
Oliver (1993)	Izard (1977)
Derbaix (1995)	Derbaix (1995)
Steenkamp et al (1996)	Mehrabian and Russell (1974)
Nyer (1997)	Shaver et al (1987)
Richins (1997)	Richins (1997)
Dube and Morgan (1998)	Watson et al (1988)
Phillips and Baumgartner (2002)	Edell and Burke (1987)
Ruth et al (2002)	Shaver et al (1987)
Smith and Bolton (2002)	Smith and Bolton (2002)

Adopted from Laros and Steenkamp (2005:1438)

The complexities of measuring this construct hinder its use for understanding consumption experience. With the survey as the most commonly used method in the field, this limits the understanding of consumers' emotions within the categories of emotions of the measurement scale used for the study. Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) reminded researchers that accessing the subjective experience of consumers requires research methods that are typical of the experiential consumer research field as advised by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Hirschman (1986) which include ethnography, phenomenological interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, auto-ethnography and narrative analysis, and projective techniques. This is a significant research gap in the understanding of emotions in the consumption experience. There is a need to explore an alternative approach that may provide researchers with a deeper understanding of emotions outside their scale measurements. The consumer narratives and blogging phenomena are among those methods that can be explored to facilitate a closer look at emotions elicited in consumption experience which will be discussed later.

2.2.1.5 Stages of consumption experience

The review of literature has reflected a significant amount of work focused on the different stages of consumption experience or touch points where consumers have encounters with the company, and this could again be associated with the focus on the experiential view of consumption. Cova and Dalli (2009) posited that from the experiential perspective, the consumption experience is no longer limited to pre-purchase activities or to post-purchase activities but includes a series of other activities that influence consumers' decisions and future actions.

The importance of stages of consumption experience is also reflected in the various definitions such as in the works of Poulsson and Kale (2004), Grewal et al (2009), Verhoef et al (2009), Lemke et al (2010) and Johnston and Kong (2011). Vezina (1999) stated that consumption experience is no longer limited to some pre-purchase or post-purchase activity (Caru and Cova, 2003). Likewise, Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2002) mentioned that consumption experience is spread over a period of time and divided into four major stages:

1) The pre-consumption experience –involves searching for, planning, day dreaming about, foreseeing or imagining the experience

2) The purchase experience – derives from choice, payment, packaging the encounter with the service and the environment

3) Core consumption experience – including the sensation, the satiety, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the irritation/flow, and the transformation

4) The remembered consumption experience and the nostalgia experience - activates photographs to relive a past experience, which is based on accounts of stories and on arguments with friends about the past and which moves towards the classification of memories.

Kahneman (1999) argued that an individual's true measure of an experience can be derived only from a moment-to-moment sampling of the thoughts and feelings throughout the experience (Ramanathan and McGill, 2004. Furthermore, as Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) had outlined in Figure 2.2 and Table 2.7, the logical flow models of consumer behaviour which is embedded within the stages of consumption have to be viewed for their experiential aspect. Hence, consumer researchers should also examine the subjective elements of the following; environmental inputs, consumer inputs, intervening response system and output consequences, criteria and learning. This again requires research methods outlined earlier by Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006). It is not surprising then that the extant literature on different stages of consumption from the experiential view is again linked to emotions or affective responses. This included research on pre-purchase (Han et al, 2007, Soderlund and Rosengren, 2007), during consumption (Bigne, Mattila and

Andreu, 2008; Gelbrich, 2009) and post-consumption (Grace and O'Cass, 2004; McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006; Muller, Tse and Venkatasubramaniam, 1991; Sirakaya, Petrick and Choi, 2004). There are few studies that have examined the evolving nature of emotions over the consumption stages (Pollai, Hoelzl and Possas, 2010; Ramanathan and McGiil, 2004).

2.2.1.6 Outcomes of consumption experience

The review of literature also revealed several recent models of consumption experience that emphasised that consumers assess their journey with the firm holistically. Specifically, consumers assess holistically what shapes their consumer experiences, which Verhoef et al (2009) refer to as determinants of consumer experiences. Lemke et al (2010) identified four of these models presented in Table 2.12 to be from Voss et al (2008); Payne et al (2008), Verhoef et al (2009), and Grewal et al (2009). It is worth mentioning that the works of Grewal et al (2009) and Verhoef et al (2009) are conceptual models while those of Payne et al (2008) and Voss et al (2008) have been empirically derived. Focusing on the outcomes of these models, the work of Payne et al (2008), as shown in Figure 2.3, represents the more challenging outcomes of the consumer experience to challenge as it involves customer learning which involves proportioning; reflecting on their own processes, how value proposition relates to their lives, and objectives and aspirations.

Table 2.12 Models of Consumption Experiences

Authors	Determinants of consumer experiences	Outcomes
Payne et al (2008)	customer value-creating processes: a series of activities performed by the customer to achieve a particular goal supplier value-creating processes: processes that assist co-creation through the design and delivery of relevant customer experiences and the facilitation of organisational learning encounter processes: series of two way interactions and transactions occurring between the customer and the supplier.	customer learning or proportioning: reflecting on their own processes; how value proposition relates to their lives, objectives and aspirations
Voss et al (2008)	Onstage design Off stage design	customer purchasing loyalty engagement behaviour
Grewal et al (2009)	promotion experience price experience merchandise experience supply chain experience location experience	Retention cross-buying word-of-mouth
Verhoef et al (2009)	social environment service interface retail atmosphere assortment price and promotions (including loyalty programmes) past customer experiences	cognitive affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer

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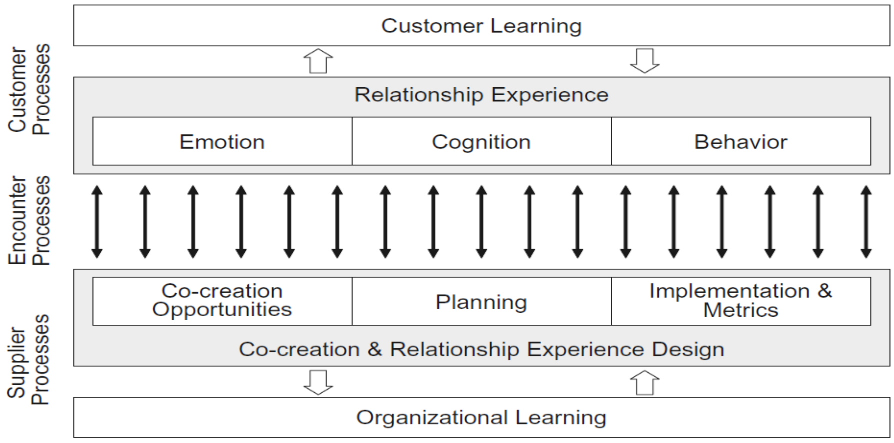

Figure 2.3. A conceptual framework for value-co-creation
Source: Payne et al (2008: 86)

Another holistic conceptual model that was not mentioned by Lemke et al (2010) is the model proposed by Tynan and McKechnie (2009) which is somewhat similar to the outcome suggested by Payne et al (2008). Outcomes from this model as seen below include enjoyment, entertainment, learning, skills, nostalgia, fantasising and evangelising. The model proposes the use of Service-Dominant Logic (S-D), a perspective which places importance on the change in the role of producers and consumers where they are both producing and consuming, which requires a long term strategy that includes a shared vision, mutually negotiated experiences and constant collaboration (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The customer—uniquely and phenomenologically (Vargo and Lusch, 2008:7) determines the value during the whole life of the offering, which may be an extended period of time (Tynan and Mckechnie, 2009:507).

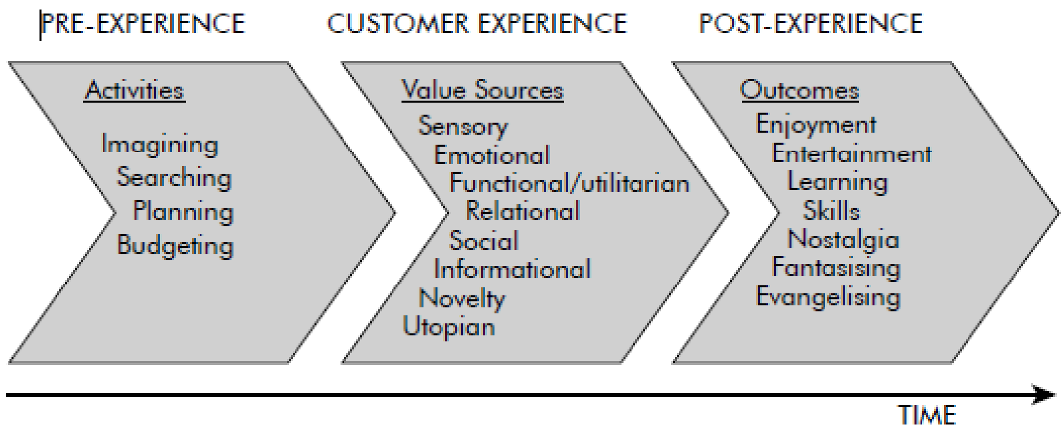

Figure 2.4 Customers' experience: activities, value sources and outcomes

Source: Tynan and McKechnie (2009:509)

These models of Payne et al (2008) and Tynan and McKechnie (2009) reflect more the experiential view of the consumption experience. The outcome goes beyond the traditional evaluation of a product or services in terms of customer satisfaction. These outcomes are more personal and subjective. Therefore, this calls for an alternative approach to examining these outcomes. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) posited that the conventional approach to consumer research addresses only a small fraction of the phenomenological data that comprise the entire experience of consumption. The authors put forward introspection as data and the use of personal narratives: a protocol in which a consumer tells the story of how the product is consumed can be examined for how the consumer interprets the consumption experience. Almost two decades later, Tynan and McKechnie (2009) are also calling for ethnographic approaches and naturalistic enquiry to achieve better understanding of experiences. Blogs/travel blogs as naturally occurring data and records of thoughts, feelings and reflections can be an alternative method for understanding the outcomes of a consumer experience.

To summarise, this section has provided an overview of the extant literature on consumption experience. It confirmed that despite the fact that consumption experience has been defined in various ways, it still remains an ill-defined concept. However, the concern had shifted to the question of what constitutes an experience which resulted in different types of experiences (memorable, extraordinary, emotional, experiences exploiting the senses and transformation and transcendent experiences) as well as various elements that these experiences should have, as seen from the works of Arnould and Price (1993), Poulsson and Kale (2004), La Salle and Britton (2005), Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006), Lilja and Eriksson (2010), and Johnston and Kong (2011), to list a few. These experiences present a challenge as they are subjective and personal in nature. However, the question remains; what are the ingredients of these types of experiences?

The focus on the experiential view of consumption had also put forward the emotional aspect of consumption and its holistic nature (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). It is not surprising that a significant amount of research on consumption experiences had focused on understanding emotions and measuring them. It is noted however that established symbolic meaning and identity construction functions that were evident in consumption of products and services are less explored in this literature. There is a lack of studies that examined the connection of emotions to self-concept or identity. Solomon et al (2002) asserted that self-concept is an important feature of experiential consumption since it reflects our subjective beliefs about our own attributes which are formed from and played out in our experiential reality (Hackley and Tiwasakul, 2006). Indeed, there are few works that looked at experience beyond being emotional, memorable, extraordinary experiences; except for that of Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) and Schouten et al (2007), which advocates transcendent experience or transformational experience. The latter forms of experiences include emphasis on the identity construction of consumption as an outcome of an experience.

Finally, based on some recent models of consumption experience such as those of Payne et al (2008) and Tynan and McKechnie (2008), measuring the outcomes of consumption experience has become more challenging as it is both subjective and personal in nature. Hence, alternative ways of researching these outcomes were suggested by some researchers (Hackley and Tiwasakul, 2006; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Tynan and McKechnie, 2008) to include use of personal narratives, introspection as data and approaches such as ethnographic and naturalistic enquiry for better understanding of these experiences.

Given the developments in consumption experiences as well as the issues mentioned above, the thesis argues that using blogs as research data could shed light on these issues. Blogs as records of experiences can give an *emic* view of what constitutes an experience and what are the outcomes of the experiences of the consumers. Blogs include thoughts, feelings, and reflections, and embedded in them are the identity constructions of the author. This allows a broader examination of the outcome of an experience beyond the emotional responses.

The next section provides a review of the extant literature on tourist experiences and highlights specifically what research gaps can also be addressed through the examination of travel blogs.

2.2.2 Tourist experience

The tourism industry, as mentioned earlier, is in the business of selling experience (Kim, 2010) and its essence is the development of travel and visitation experiences (Ritchie, 2011). Since the 1960s, the tourist experience has been extensively investigated and remains the focus of much tourism research due in large part to the nature of the tourism product itself (Volo, 2010:298). Unlike any other consumption contexts, however, the tourist experience includes everything a tourist goes through at a destination as experience, be it behaviour, or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, or expressed or implied (Oh et al, 2007). Tourism is unique from other consumption contexts because: (1) it is arguably different from everyday experiences (Cohen, 1979; 2004; Graburn, 2001; Vogt, 1976); (2) it offers complex, experiences, memories and emotions related to places, and (3) it is arguably the experience of place or self in place that the individual seeks (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010).

This section provides an overview of the extant literature on tourist experience and follows the same review on the consumption experience. Hence, it also examines the following: a) definitions of the concept; b) theoretical developments; c) types of experiences/typologies and their elements, d) role of emotions; e) stages of experiences, and f) measurement of experience outcomes. It is intended that the broader concept of consumption experience will be compared to the more specific context of tourist experience and demonstrate similar research gaps within them that the thesis could address.

2.2.2.1 Definitions

Despite the depth and breadth of theoretical work on tourist experiences, Larsen and Mossberg (2007) have pointed out how different perspectives onkey works on tourist experiences (McCannell, 1976; Ryan, 2002; Urry 1990 and Wearing and Wearing, 1996) have made research on tourist experiences a highly problematic endeavour. The authors also attribute such problems to the "multitude of various connotations and meanings of the concept of experience that resulted in certain confusion concerning the concept of experience in general and maybe in particular concerning the concept of tourist experience" (Larsen and Mossberg, 2007:3). In fact, the tourist experience, like the consumption experience, has been defined from various disciplines as shown in Table 2.13.

Compared to definitions of consumption experience, tourist experience is more diverse, which can be explained by treating it as a phenomenon that can be studied from a variety of scientific disciplines as seen above (Larsen and Mossberg, 2007), whereas the consumption experience definitions presented in the previous section (Table 2.6) are dominated by consumer behaviour and marketing perspective or in combination with other perspectives such as psychology. This suggests that the tourism academe adopts a broader range of perspective in the study of tourist experience.

Table 2.13 Definitions of the tourist experience

Discipline /Authors	Definition
Social Anthropology Selstad (2007)	Tourist experience as a novelty/familiarity combination involving the pursuit of identity and self-realisation.
Economic Andersson (2007)	Tourist experience is the moment when tourism consumption and production meet, when value is created, and resources are consumed.
Economic Clawson and Knetsch (1966)	Experience of tourism event begins before the trip in the planning and preparation phases and continues after the tourist returns through the recollection and communication of the events which took place.
Marketing Mossberg (2007)	Tourist experience takes places in a place referred to as *experiencescape* and where some important aspects of tourist consumption are seen.
Psychology Larsen (2007)	Tourist experience is a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory.
Discipline /Authors	Definition
Consumer Behaviour Williams and Soutar (2002)	Tourist experience can be examined in terms of customer values which influence consumer behaviour choice: functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and conditional value.
Tourism Stamboulis and Skyannis (2003)	Tourist experience is an interaction between tourists and destinations, with destinations being the site of the experience and tourists being the actors of the experience.

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Extant literature has explored this concept in terms of its elements and dimension which Cutler and Carmichael enumerated in Table 2.14. The definitional focus reflected how complex and broad the tourist experience scholarship is. A tourist experience is not merely an experience of a good or a service; rather it holds various meanings for an individual. For example, it is already distinguished as an "extraordinary" experience different from their everyday/daily experience which makes it stands out among otherconsumption experiences. Self-identity, social relationships, skill formation and learning demonstrates that the tourist experience has both symbolic meaning and identity formation functions of consumption.

Table 2.14 Overview of the definitional approach in tourism research

Definitional focus	Example of representative academic articles
Phases of experience	Botterill and Crompton (1996)
Modes of experience	Cohen (2004)
Role of authenticity	McIntosh and Prentice (1999); Wang(1999); Ryan (2003); Pearce (2005); Hayllar and Griffin (2005)
Relationships with self-identity	Desforges (2000); Galani-Moutafi (2000); McCabe and Stokoe(2004); Noy (2004); White and White (2004); Palmer (2005)
Dimensions of specific tourist experiences	Wilderness (Patterson et al 1998); Long-haul travel (Uriely et al, 2002; Noy, 2004; White and White, 2004)
Role of narrative	Cary (2004); Noy (2004, 2007)
Sacredness and spirituality	Graburn (2001); Cohen (2004)
Skill formation and learning	Hunt (2000); Pearce (2005); Pearce and Foster (2007)
Place and mobility	Larsen (2001); Li, (2000); Hayllar and Griffin (2005)
Social relationships	Trauer and Ryan (2005)
Role of imagery	Tuohino and Pitkanen (2003)
Influential elements of experience	Nickerson (2006); Larsen (2007)
Overview of tourist experience research areas	Quan & Wang (2004); Uriely (2005); Jennings and Nickerson (2006); O'Dell (2007)

Source: Cutler and Carmichael (2010:5)

The next section provides a snapshot of the five decades of theoretical development of the tourist experience scholarship which will further demonstrate the value of a tourist experience to the individual and society.

2.2.2.2 Theoretical developments

The tourist experience has four to five decades of theoretical developments which Uriely (2005) had tracked and evaluated as having four shifts. These four shifts are:

Table 2.15 Four shifts of theoretical development

De-differentiating the experience
the question of the uniqueness of the tourist experience was in focus. This theoretical development captured work on tourist experiences being viewed as distinct from everyday life and then shifted to being viewed as similar to other experiential process.
Pluralising the experience
from viewing the tourist experience as a unitary concept to a shift towards acknowledging that there are various types of tourists and tourist experiences. Cohen's (1979) work was one of the key works in this area with his proposition of different types of tourists.
The role of subjectivity
concerns shifted away from the tourists being passive recipients of objects presented to them, to become tourists who negotiate for meaning of these objects. The research focus was shifted to tourists' subjective perceptions; interpretation of various artefacts and their perception of what is authentic.
Toward relative interpretations
the view of the tourist experience reflected different perspectives which accepted that they can co-exist and that there was no "absolute truth" about tourist experience/tourists but instead "relative truths. For example, external stimuli (tourist attractions), the processing of influencing tourists (communication, marketing, and storytelling) and responses of tourists (memories and preferences) are all considered to be aspects of the tourist experience. It was also called a shift from modernity to post modernity.

Summarised from Uriely (2005)

Quan and Wang (2006), on the other hand, succinctly outlined how the concept of the tourist experience was studied over the years by dividing it into the following approaches:

a. Phenomenological approach which included the work of Cohen (1979), Neuwmann (1992) and Ryan (1997) where tourist experience is studied by focusing on the subjective experience of the common standpoint of the naive tourist.

b. Durkheimian approach where the tourist experience is associated with a quasi-religious, pilgrimage-like and sacred journey (such as the works of Graburn, 1989; Hennig, 2002; MacCannel, 1976 and Vukonic, 1996 and Mergen, 1973); Dann (1977), on the other hand, referred to the tourist experience as opportunities of escape from daily drudgery, constraints, anomies and profane responsibilities. The tourist experience is also experiencing (Gottlieb, 1982; Ryan, 1997b), authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Mergen, 1973; MacCannell, 1976; Redfoot, 1984; Wang, 1999), novelty and change (Cohen, 1974), the exotic (Wang, 2000), playful childishness (Dann, 1989; Mergen, 1986), “flow” (Mitchell, 1983), meanings (Cohen, 1979), identity (Lanfant et al, 1995) and myth-making (Hennig, 2002; Selwyn, 1996), and so on.

c. Subjective psychological process approach where the tourist experience is treated as the object that can be studied in positivist method by experiments and other quantitative methods such as the works of Pearce (1982) and Lee and Crompton (1992).

d. Critical approach where the tourist experience is perceived as an institutional pleasure-seeking activity, unconsciously contributing to the maintenance of the status quo.

e. Urry’s (1990) tourist gaze where the tourist experience is treated as a particular type of gaze incorporating the power of the institutions of tourism industry and mass media which is trained and shaped by cultures, values and dominant discourses such as romanticism.

Similarly, Jenning et al (2009) described the study of tourist experience to be done using a variety of focal “lenses” or frames associated with authenticity, phenomenological interpretations, motivations, host-guest interactions, gazes, normalisation, gender, identity, impacts, embodiment and cultural differences. Quan and Wang (2006) also mentioned two major approaches to the tourist experience: *social science and marketing management*. From the marketing/management perspective, the tourist experience is seen with the tourists as consumers with economic and marketing significance to tourist activity due to their consumption and spending; and thus tourist experiences are seen as consumer experiences. For the social science approach, the tourist experience is regarded as peak experience relating to how tourist experiences are seen as experiences that are in sharp contrast to daily experiences (Quan and Wang 2006: 297).

Ritchie and Hudson (2009) claim to have made the most comprehensive and extensive effort to review the literature on tourist experience to date. They were able to categorise the extant literature into six streams of theoretical thinking and empirical research as shown in Table 2.16. It is clear that the tourist experience is a well-research construct and has been studied from various disciplines. Developments in the general marketing literature and consumer behaviour have penetrated literature on the tourist experience, and one of those is the experiential view put forward by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy. Several authors (Jenning et al 2009, Volo, 2010) have noted that there is increased emphasis on experience or the experiential nature of the tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors which they associated with Pine and Gilmore's (1998) work. Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) pointed out that the distinction of experience as a separate, valuable commodity offers new perspectives for analysing and strategising in selling the tourist experience. Along the lines of the experiential view of consumption, the research interest in the construction of the tourist experience has shifted from the objects provided by tourism businesses to the tourists' subjective negotiation of meanings (Uriely, 2005, cited in Kim 2010). For example, Larsen (2007) supports the notion of subjective experience wherein experiences are psychological phenomena that are based in and originate from individual tourists.

Table 2.16 Six streams of theoretical thinking and empirical research on the tourist experience

Stream 1	The fundamental stream involves conceptual work and/or research that sought to define and understand the essence of "the tourism experience"; this includes a sub-stream in which researchers use specific theoretical frameworks as their point of departure
Stream 2	A stream of thinking/research that sought to understand the tourist's experience research
Stream 3	Material/research related to the specific methodologies used in tourism experience research
Stream 4	Those studies that sought to explore and understand the nature of specific kinds of tourism/attraction experiences
Stream 5	Involves the managerial concerns related to designing and developing the tourism supply systems required to manage the delivery of a basic satisfactory/quality/extraordinary/memorable experience
Stream 6	Focused on efforts to distinguish among the various levels/types of experiences that conceptually seemed to form an evolutionary trail of experience thinking. This trail involves the basic experience, the satisfactory experience, the quality experience, the extraordinary experience and the memorable experience

Summarised from Ritchie and Hudson (2009)

The review of tourist experience literature also revealed that this scholarship faces similar issues that were encountered in the broader concept of consumption experience. For example, Quan and Wang (2004) had pointed out that a fundamental issue in particular remains puzzling despite the growth of literature on the tourist experience: What are the components that constitute the tourist experience per se? As in the literature of consumption experience, this particular question results in a discussion on the types of experiences to be offered to tourists. The next section demonstrates similarities in the types of tourist experiences proposed by researchers to those of consumption experiences.

2.2.2.3 Types of tourist experiences

In tourism studies, types of tourist experiences are related to tourists' behaviour and motivations. As early as the 1970s, Cohen (1972) identified a fourfold typology of tourist experiences: the organised mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter, based on the degree of familiarity/strangeness sought or experienced by people in a continuum of types of tourist experiences (McCabe, 2005). This was later on followed by a fivefold phenomenological typology of tourist experiences rooted in the concept of the "centre". The "centre" need not be a geographical heart of the life-space of the spiritual community; it refers to a spiritual centre of the individual in their society (McCabe, 2005). The modes of tourism include the following; recreational, diversionary, experiential and existential. The range of types of experiences was further conceptualised in relation to notions of authenticity-seeking; where Wang (1999) proposed that rather than the nature of the activities and the type of experience being the defining characteristics of *tourist-ness,* it is the act of being a tourist that defines the experience as such in a self-referential and indivisible way (McCabe, 2005: 33-34). These are only few of the early tourist typologies describing the differences between tourists' and backpackers' behavior (Pearce, 2005). This review does not aim to identify the significant number of types of tourist experiences identified in the literature, but to demonstrate that types of tourist experiences are very much connected to the tourists' purpose or motivation of visiting and their behaviour.

Wearing et al (2010) observed that a profusion of tourist experiences have been identified and categorised for the purposes of theorising, analysing and marketing the products and experiences of tourism. They added that many authors have proposed typologies based on the nature of the tourist activity and/or the characteristics, motivations and behaviour of tourists. McCabe (2009) posited that tourist experiences have often been characterised in relation to the expectations and behaviours of different groups such as Pearce's (2005) travel career ladder. Wearing and colleagues also argued that with the critical approaches to tourism in the late (or post-) modernity have promoted increasing recognition of the individualised and subjective nature of the tourist experience. Hence, as in consumption experiences, the questions of what should constitute the experience, or what kind of experiences should the tourism providers offer their tourists, remain.

The evolution of extraordinary/memorable/travel tourism (Figure 2.5) shows the efforts of the scholars to distinguish among the various levels/types of experiences that conceptually seemed to form an evolutionary trail of experience thinking (Ritchie and Hudson, 200:112). This comprised the basic experience, the satisfactory experience, the quality experience, the extraordinary experience and the memorable experience.

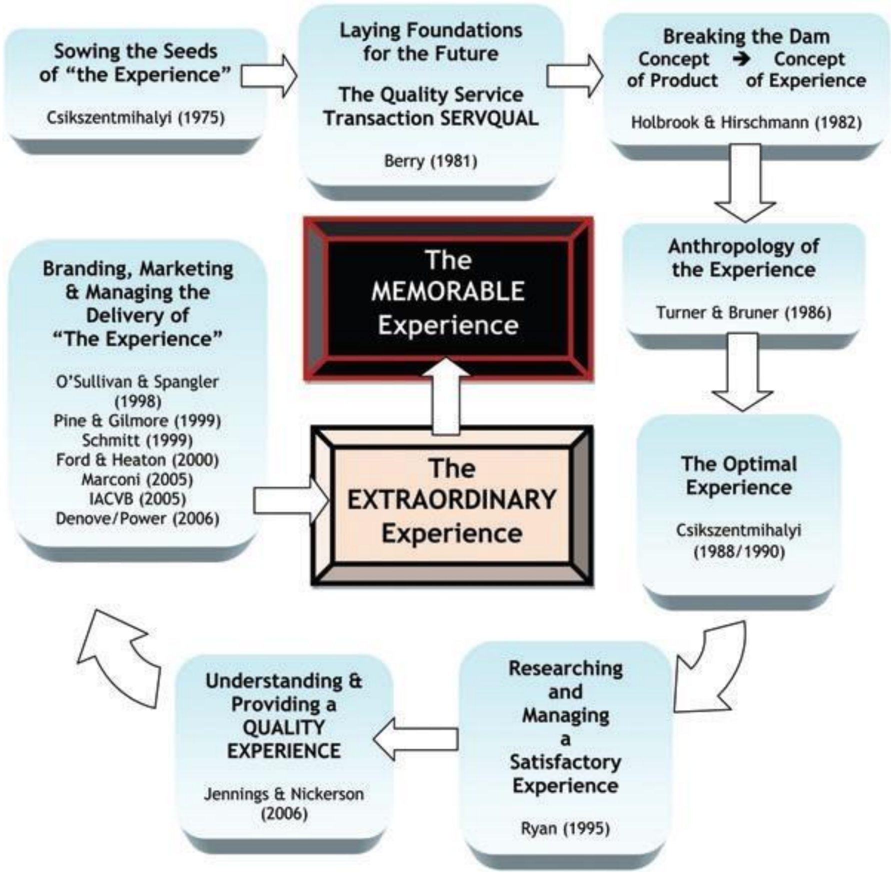


Figure 2.5 The evolution of the extraordinary/memorable travel/tourism

Source: Ritchie and Hudson (2009:120)

Ritchie and Hudson (2009) argued that the evolution of the tourist experience is "foggy still discernible". These types of experiences, particularly the extraordinary experience and the memorable experience, have been used in the marketing literature as mentioned in the previous section. Memorable experiences had been researched in recent literature. For example, Tung and Ritchie (2011) identified four key dimensions of memorable experiences as affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection. Kim (2010) also noted that affective feelings are better remembered; and that familiar and meaningful stimuli are processed to a deeper level more rapidly and retained better than less important stimuli. However, two types of experiences not mentioned by

Ritchie and Hudson (2009) in the previous section are emotional and transformational/transcendent experiences. Self-changes or transformation have been mentioned in the works of Desforges (2001) and Noy (2004). Emotional experiences, on the other hand, are starting to emerge and be explored in the context of tourism as seen in some literature, as discussed in the next section.

2.2.2.4 Role of emotions in tourist experiences

In the previous section, the role of emotions in consumption experiences has been established. There are several empirical papers that have explored the use of emotions in tourism such as those of Vitterso, et al (2000); Bigne and Andreu (2004); Farber, and Hall (2007); del Bosque and San Martin (2008); de Rojas and Camarero (2008); Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009); and Hosany, and Gilbert (2010b), to name a few. These papers examined customer satisfaction; loyalty and behaviour. Hosany and Gilbert (2010b) have studied emotions related to post-consumption evaluations and concluded that emotional experiences have a direct association with satisfaction and intention to recommend. This is confirmed by De Rojas and Camamero (2008) who stated that along with perceived quality of experience, emotions are direct determinants of satisfaction; and Faber and Hall (2007) argued that positive emotions are crucial to overall experience. Emotional feelings such as social, pleasant, happy, irritated, guilty, sad and worried make up an individual's memorable experiences (Kim, 2010). Hence, Hosany and Gilbert (2010) emphasised that future research needs to monitor tourists' emotional experiences as various episodes or encounters during the vacation;

rationalising that understanding how, when combined, these in-process emotions can form a global evaluation. Tourist destinations are rich in terms of experiential attributes and potential to evoke an even greater emotional response (Otto and Ritchie, 1996). Prebensen and Foss (2011) also put forward the roles of host and service providers in “emotional work” - activities that improve emotional well-being and provide emotional support. Accordingly, they suggested the importance of allowing the tourists to cope with situations, co-create and participate in the production of the experience. They reckon that tourists need to learn and to be active participants. Hosany and Gilbert (2010) thus encourage providers to strive to engineer positive emotions to create enjoyable and memorable experiences.

In terms of methodology, most of these empirical papers are not surprisingly quantitative in nature; using surveys and the different emotions measurement scales mentioned in the previous section; as a result, they encounter the same limitations mentioned in the previous section of the measurement scale categorising emotions. Therefore, it is again emphasised here the need for research that can access the subjective experiences of tourists as Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggested in the previous section. The tourism industries have used qualitative research approaches over the years and this should also penetrate this topic. The thesis proposes the opportunity to use travel blogs in understanding experiences through the emotional language that the tourists may use in their accounts of their travel experiences.

2.2.2.5 Stages of tourist experiences

The tourist experience like the consumption experience has also been defined through its different stages. According to Botterill and Crompton (1966), most analyses of tourist experience appearing in the literature are based upon Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) model of the recreation experience. The model has the following phases: (1) an anticipation phase, (2) travel to the site, (3) on-site activity, (4) return travel, and (5) a recollection phase. Killion (1992) modified this model and made it a circular model instead of a linear model with specific beginning and end points; arguing that various phases may replicate the entire travel experiences, especially when multi-destination travel is undertaken by tourists (Jennings, 2006). Craig-Smith and French (1994) offered a simpler model consisting of three phases: anticipatory, experiential and reflective.

Three models of tourist experiences (Aho, 2001; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010 and Larsen, 2007), however, have a more detailed process of those stages and clearly stressed that the post-consumption stage of a tourist experience extends beyond evaluating the experience as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Aho's (2001) model has these stages: (1) orientation (awakening interest to some degree), (2) attachment (strengthening interest resulting in the go-decision), (3) visiting (the actual visit consisting of the travel and destination), (4) evaluation (comparisons with earlier experiences and alternatives and conclusion for future actions), (5) storing (physical – photos, films, souvenirs; social- people and social situations to remember), (6) reflection [repeated presentations- (spontaneous and staged) of the experience], and (7) enrichment (presentation of films, souvenirs, etc.., and arrangement of meetings and networks to cherish memories, and new practices created during the trip) (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). The last four stages (4 to 7) can be considered as the post-consumption stage of a tourist's experience.

Larsen (2007) defined the tourist experience as concerning at least three stages: the planning process (the individuals' foreseeing of tourist events through expectancies), the actual undertaking of the trip (events during the trip) and finally the individual's remembering of these tourist events. He criticised how there is little focus on the psychological process when in fact when tourists are asked about holidays they often refer to experiences which are memories that are created in a constructive process within the individual and are not about destinations. Accordingly, it is necessary to acknowledge there are two kinds of memories; explicit (general facts and knowledge) and episodic (personally experienced events; store of factual memories concerning personal experiences). Questions regarding tourist experiences, such as: a) what are tourists likely to remember? and b) how much factual material is there actually in episodic memories? emphasised that what people remember about the trip predicts their desire to repeat a trip or make a similar trip.

Cutler and Carmichael (2010) proposed a model shown in Figure 2.5 which combined the different phases, influences and outcomes found in the literature review of tourist experience into a single model. This model recognises the chronological process of the tourist experience as well as the expected outcomes of the experience - knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity - that affect satisfaction, which is also very much related to motivations of the tourists.

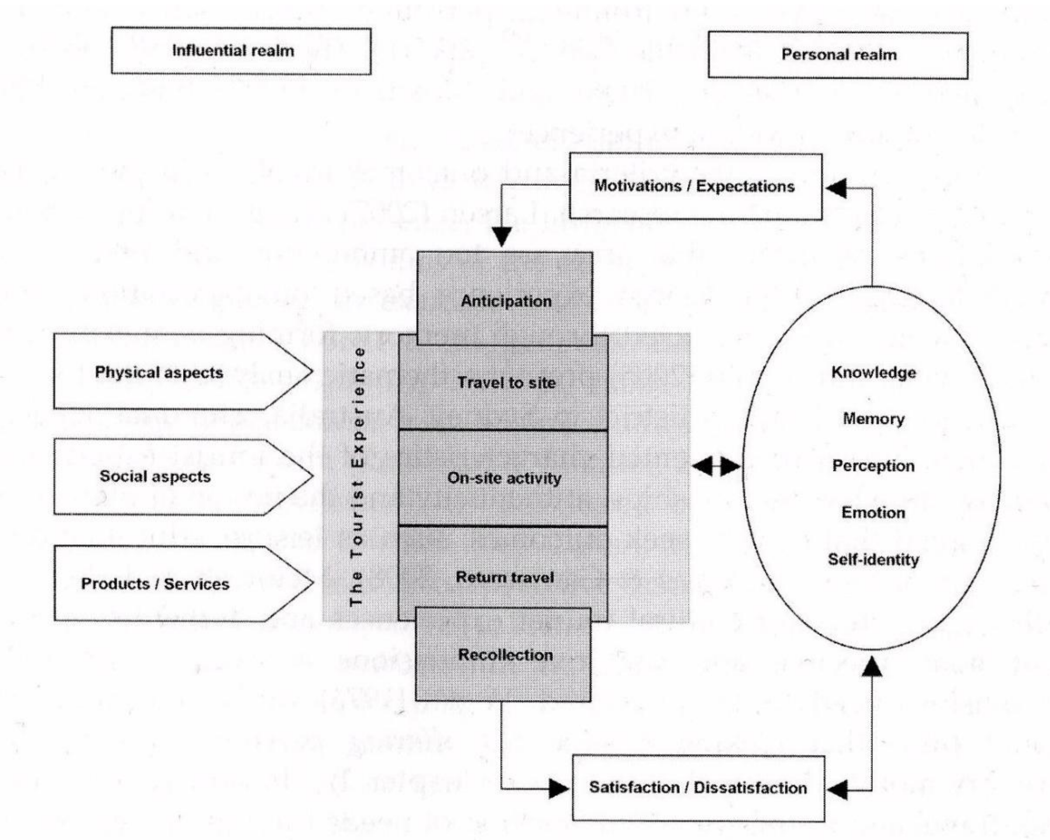


Figure 2.6 The tourist experience conceptual model of influences and outcomes
Source: Cutler and Carmichael (2010:8)

This model is more detailed in terms of tourist experience outcome compared to those of Larsen (2007) and Aho (2001). It is also similar yet more detailed than the other holistic models presented in the previous chapter (Payne, 2008; and Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The model also demonstrates how tourist experience is a particularly good context for building an understanding of memorable experiences and transformational/transcendental experiences. The outcomes of knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity present a challenge of evaluating tourist experiences, as these elements are all subjective and personal. This work has yet to be empirically tested; and would also need an appropriate method for examining these outcomes. The thesis has identified this as one of the opportunities to show how the examination of tourists' travel blogs can contribute to understanding these outcomes. The next section is a discussion of how tourist experience outcomes are evaluated.

2.2.2.6 Outcomes of the Tourist Experience

Satisfaction is commonly examined as the outcome of tourism experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011:4). Ryan (1997) posited that a satisfactory experience can be perceived as the congruence of need and performance, while dissatisfaction may be expressed as the gap between expectation and experience. Some authors (Arnould and Price, 1993; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Ryan, 2002) have argued that satisfaction is based more on rich and personal evaluation of experiences that are reflected in emotions, relationships and self-identity (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010).

Pearce (2005) argued that satisfaction is not the end goal but rather a post-experience attitude. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) assert that tourist motivation or the achievement of tourist motivation replaces satisfaction: "tourists are not motivated to travel to achieve satisfaction; but rather to escape, learn, relax, etc". In the consumption experience literature discussed in the previous section, only the holistic framework of Payne et al (2008) has mentioned the goal and objectives of the consumers as part of the consumption experience. As mentioned earlier, Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) model has highlighted that post-consumption experience is not limited to the evaluation of whether an experience is satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The model then implies that the outcome of the experience involves three major elements: the motivation for their travel, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and the elements that affect their satisfaction (perception, self-identity, emotions, memory and knowledge).

The literature on tourism motivation is diverse and generally overlapping. Ryan (1997) argued that motivations can be generally categorised into the intellectual component (learning, exploring, discovering, thought or imagining), the social component (need for friendship, interpersonal relationships, need for the esteem of others), competence mastery (to achieve, master, challenge and compete), and stimulus avoidance (escape and get away from over-stimulating life situations). Key works on tourist motivations included those of Dann (1977), Crompton (1979) and Pearce and Caltabiano (1983), to name a few. Ryan (1997) pointed out that tourist behaviour is multi-motivational but also that the motives are essentially few in number. Hence, it will not be covered in depth in this section. The thesis supports Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) claim that motivation influences the satisfaction of a tourist experience and focuses on exploring the links between motivation and the five elements that also affect satisfaction (memory, perception, emotion, knowledge, and self-identity).

The five elements that affect satisfaction have been researched separately in the tourism literature; however links between these elements have not yet been widely explored. Memory, according to Selstad (2007), is actively involved in the interpretation of transformation of experience through narration. Memories are representations of experiences in narratives and, as argued by Cary (2004), are different from actual experiences and are also seen to *change* experiences. Perception, on the other hand, is defined by Resinger and Turner (2004) as a process where meaning is attributed to an environment, event or object and is influenced by emotions, motivations, values, opinions and worldviews, and characteristics of the environment (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Knowledge refers to the cognitive aspect of the tourist experience which involves learning and education (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Cutler and Carmichael (2010) observed that this concept is less researched due to lack of commercial interest as to what tourists learn, as learning and reorganising individual world views were not applicable to consumer purchases. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the previous section, Payne et al's (2008) holistic framework has included learning or proportioning which allow consumers to relate to their lives, objectives and aspirations.

Self-identity in the tourist experience is a well-researched topic. Researchers are in agreement over how travelling is a transitional experience allowing individuals to understand their own identity (Desforges, 2000; McCabe and Stoke, 2004; Noy, 2004; Palmer, 2005; Selstad, 2007; White and White, 2004). According to Cutler and Carmichael (2010), the relationship between identity and travel has been empirically researched in long-haul tourist groups. Key works in this area include those of Desforges (2000) on narrating and representing identity; Noy (2004) on the tourists as transforming themselves, and White and White (2004) on tourism as a rite of passage for these tourists.

Self-identity is an established function of consumption which Belk (1995) referred to as consumption symbolism and where property and possessions are considered extensions of self. Self-identity as one of the outcomes of tourist experiences should remind scholars studying what constitutes a consumption experience of its established function in consumption. The shift in focus in creating emotional bonds between consumers and company should not disregard this outcome. Self-identity is a feature of the experiential view as explained by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). As mentioned earlier this model has not yet been empirically tested. The thesis therefore can contribute to exploring further the presence of these elements in the accounts of travel experiences of the tourists in their blogs. The link between motivation, satisfaction and these elements may be validated in their stories.

To summarise, this section has provided an overview on the tourist experience literature in the aspects which consumption experience has been reviewed in the previous section. The intention of the review was to demonstrate that although tourism has been a good pioneer of the experience economy it has been faced with the same issues as the broader concept of consumption experiences. The issues included variation in definitions; attempting to address the question of what constitutes an experience to be offered to their consumers/tourists, and how to measure the outcome of the experience that is subjective and personal. The tourist experience with its distinct characteristics is also a good context to remind researchers on consumption experiences that emotions, although an important element of an experience, should also be linked to the identity construction and symbolic meaning as well as possible transformational functions in consumption experiences.

The thesis therefore put forward the use of travel blogs in contributing to these two specific research gaps identified in the concepts of tourist experience and consumption experience:

a. what constitutes the experience through the analysis of the stories in their blogs provides researchers with a reconstruction of their travel experiences

b. understanding the outcome of the experience by examining how they constructed their stories, which can reveal some of the elements in the model of Cutler and Carmichael (2010).

The thesis proposes that travel blogging as an activity that can be considered as one form of an outcome of tourists' experience. It is an action that allows them to express their subjective responses (their feelings, thoughts and reflections) on their travel experiences. Most importantly, travel blogging can provide researchers with the reconstruction of their experiences. The use of blogs/travel blogs can be considered as one of the suggested research method mentioned by Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) and Tynan and Mckechnie (2009) in achieving better understanding of consumption experiences.

The next section presents the literature review of two more concepts that the thesis will be contributing to: experience marketing and destination/place marketing.

2.3 Experience marketing and destination/place marketing

This section examines two more concepts that the thesis will be contributing to with the use of blogs/travel blogs as research data. The thesis aims to contribute beyond understanding what constitutes an experience and how to evaluate outcomes of experiences, hence the concepts of experience marketing and destination/place marketing are covered in this literature review. The theory and practice of experience marketing, despite its popularity among academe and practitioners, are surrounded by issues that arise from the fundamental research gap of what constitutes an experience. Destination/place marketing has been mostly based on features of the destination and several authors have argued that there is a need to shift to experience-based marketing. Hence, these two literatures will benefit from a greater understanding of consumption and tourist experiences. This section emphasises that this thesis further contributes to theory, methods and practice of concepts which are anchored on the concept of experience.

The section investigates how, despite this fundamental issue remaining unresolved, the practice of experience marketing has become popular in the field. It also aims to outline different issues that have hindered the development of this concept in theory and practice. Despite this fundamental issue in the concept of experience, its importance and the businesses' acceptance of it as a fourth economic offering as Pine and Gilmore suggested has been concretised more with the concept of experiential marketing developed by Schmitt (1999). According to Patterson et al (2009), the experience economy would have been overlooked had not Schmitt (1999) developed the term ‘experiential marketing’. The following section provides an overview of this term also known as experience marketing.

2.3.1 Experience Marketing

Following closely Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) work, Schmitt published his seminal work Experiential Marketing in the *Journal of Marketing Management* (1999, volume 15) which he also expanded into a book: *Experiential Marketing: How to get your customers to sense, feel, think, act and relate to your company and brands.*

Experiential marketing was referred to by Schmitt as revolutionary as he wrote in the first part of his book:

> We are in the middle of a revolution. A revolution that will render the principles and models of traditional marketing obsolete. A revolution that will change the face of marketing forever. A revolution that will replace traditional feature-and-benefit marketing with experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999b:3).

Experience marketing is a growing trend worldwide, applied in many areas such as retailing, branding and event marketing (Atwal and Williams, 2009), and is becoming an increasingly popular method of building loyalty and driving purchases (Experiential Marketing Forum, 2009). Tynan and McKechnie (2010), based on different works, suggested that the rise and continued interest in this concept can be due to the current challenges faced by marketing practitioners which included; a) the increasing difficulties of differentiating goods and services in the marketplace, b) recognition of the importance of customer experiences in the development of customer advocacy; c) the drive to achieve competitive advantage while simultaneously achieving a reduction in the costs of production interactions, and d) the current economic recession (p. 503).

Holbrook (2000) pointed out that this experiential marketing of Schmitt (1999) merely extends the traditional features-and–benefits paradigm to build a conceptual model for designing, managing and integrating consumption-based experiences. Nevertheless, Patterson et al (2008) had suggested that Schmitt's work was a turning point for "customer experience": "The customer experience bandwagon was thus, up and running" (p.30). They emphasised how, since then, it has quickly been emboldened by complementary and confirmative conceptualisations in consumer research (citing works such as those of Arnould and Thompson, 2005, and Caru and Cova, 2007) and embraced by the marketing academic firmament (citing Vargo and Lusch 2006), as well as pointing out the "cavalcade of increasingly tooled-up business leaders (such as and LaSalle and Britton, 2002; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Tate and Stroup, 2003).

2.3.1.1 Schmitt's experiential marketing

At the time, there was no clear definition of experiential marketing. Schmitt's description of experiential marketing was anchored on his comparison with traditional marketing and its goal of creating holistic experiences. He vaguely refers to it as "a new approach" to marketing and described experiential marketers as viewing consumers as rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences (Schmitt, 1999a:53). He argued that traditional marketing and business concepts at the time offered very limited guidance on how to capitalise on the emerging experiential economy. Three phenomena were also considered to have played a role in stimulating the need for a new marketing approach; these are omnipresence of information technology, supremacy of the brand, and ubiquity of integrated communications and entertainment. Table 2.17 shows Schmitt's (1999) comparison between the two approaches in marketing in terms of their four key characteristics.

Table 2.17 Four Key Characteristics of Traditional Marketing and Experiential Marketing

Traditional marketing	Experiential marketing
Focus on functional features and benefits	A focus on customer experiences
Product category and competition are narrowly defined	A focus on consumption as a holistic experience
Customers are viewed as rational decision makers	Customers are rational and emotional animals
Methods and tools are analytical, quantitative and verbal	Methods and tools are eclectic

Source: Schmitt (1999)

Schmitt defined experiences without reference to any previous or existing literature on what an 'experience' is. He had referred to experience as "a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things; and it provides sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values". His "holistic experience" is described as moving from thinking about an isolated product along the socio-cultural consumption vector into the customer's broader space of meaning. Schmitt also argued that this broad view of the customer, that incorporates concepts and findings from psychology, cognitive science, sociology and evolutionary biology, has had little impact in the field of marketing. Although experience is at the core of this experiential marketing, Schmitt did not draw on the rich and diverse work on experiences; although he did Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) as he put forward experiential marketers' view of consumers being emotionally and rationally driven. This lack of clear definition of experiences according to Caru and Cova (2003) has been a fundamental issue in the implementation of experiential marketing.

Schmitt's work has included a strategic framework for managing experiences which he refers to as Strategic Experiential Modules (SEM) which can be used by managers to create different types of customer experiences for their customers. These modules comprised sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experience (THINK), physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (ACT) and social identity experiences resulting from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE). Table 2.18 briefly summarises these five strategic experience modules. The SEM has been used in empirical works to evaluate products/services (for example, accommodation, online gaming, in-store retail experiences and online shopping) due to its experiential nature (see the work of Blackstrom and Johnson, 2006; Chen et al, 2008; McIntosh and Siggs, 2005 and Shen et al, 2009).

Table 2.18 The Strategic Experiential Modules

Sense	Sensual and tangible aspects of product or experience that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, scent, taste and touch. Experiences such as these are useful to differentiate products or services, to motivate potential customers and create a sense of value in the mind of purchasers.
Feel	It is devoted to inducing affect (creation of moods and emotions) that adhere to the company and brand. Positive or negative feelings toward a product or service will influence the extent to which it is consumed.
Think	This marketing encourages customers to engage in elaborative and creative thinking that may result in re-evaluation of the company product.
Act	It is oriented towards creation of experience through behaviour on the part of the customer, privately or in the company of others. A change in long-term behaviour and habits that are in favour of the product or service is aimed for.
Relate	It expands beyond the individual's private sensations, feelings, cognitions and actions by relating the individual self to the broader social and cultural context reflected in a brand.

Source: Schmitt (1999)

2.3.1.2 Issues surrounding experience marketing

Over the years, experiential marketing has been implemented in practice with numerous success stories; however, McCole (2004) observed that it remains unaccounted for in various philosophies (concepts) of marketing. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) stated that there is a fairly extensive but fragmented body of literature on experience marketing. However, they also pointed out that there is a gulf between academics and practitioners on the topic; this is evidenced in the range of best-selling titles on experience marketing written by practitioners that are rich in examples and step-by-step guides to managerial success but which pay scant attention to the contributions of the academics in the area.

Self-help guides on experience marketing. In a review of 10 selected self-help books, Holbrook (2006a) observed that there is a general lack of conceptual foundations or empirical directions for these self-help literatures on experiential marketing. These works published by consultants, practitioners and self-help gurus is of limited growth; and it is suggested (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) that the books are published more to support the credibility of the author and to sell consultancy services rather than promote dissemination of any deeper understanding of experiential approaches. Gentile et al (2007) however argued that tools aimed at supporting marketing managers in devising the right stimuli to support an excellent experience remain scarce. Patterson et al (2009) had also posited that there is difficulty in addressing questions concerning how to create and manage unique experiences. This could have been the reason for the flourishing and overlapping self-help literature. It can be argued that maybe the step-by-step guide provided by the practitioners is easily more "digestible" by the readers than those studies which have theoretical themes. Hence, they had increased in popularity.

Holbrook's critique of key concepts and tools presented by these self-help books to their readerswas published in a four-part review of these books in the *Journal of Macromarketing* (Volumes 26 and 27) (Holbrook 2006; Holbrook, 2007a; 2007b; Holbrook 2007c). The review has been helpful generally in highlighting that these concepts put forward by these gurus are not new and that there is indeed a wide gap between the academe and practitioners; with most of the latter ignoring previous work and claiming ownership of some ideas. Nevertheless, these books are full of examples of companies that reflect practitioners' perceptions of successful experience marketing. An examination of the similarities and differences of these works can provide insight of how experience marketing is implemented. The following topics were covered by several authors in their books:

(1) Experience is used to create loyalty among customers (Smith and Wheeler, 2002; Arussy, 2002)

(2) Aims for creating brand experience (Milligan and Smith, 2002; Shaw and Ivens, 2002)

(3) Importance of emotions in the experience (Arussy, 2002; Carbone, 2004; La Salle and Britton, 2003; Samuel, 2003;Shaw and Ivens, 2002)

(4) Experience creation as a process composed of different steps/stages (Carbone, 2004; La Salle and Britton, 2003; Samuel, 2003; Schmitt, 2003; Schmitt, Rogers and Vrostos, 2004; Smith and Wheeler, 2002)

(5) Emphasis on different consumption experience stages; at all touch points mostly before and during the experience consumption (Carbone, 2004; La Salle and Britton, 2003; Schmitt, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2002)

(6) The role of the company's various departments and its employees in experience creation (Arussy, 2002; Carbone, 2004; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Schmitt, Rogers and Vrostros, 2003; Smith and Wheeler, 2002)

(7) Similar examples of companies that were successful in selling experiences (La Salle and Britton, 2003; Milligan and Smith, 2002; Schmitt, 2003).

These similarities as Holbrook had pointed out are indeed not new concepts or discoveries; with many of these ideas mentioned in much of the consumer behaviour and marketing literature. Despite lack of reference to previous works on experience, these books have contributed to the literature on experience marketing in two ways: (1) by providing real examples of companies they perceived to be successful in capitalising on experiences, and (2) proposing tools for businesses that can help them create experiences. However, Holbrook (2006) had questioned these companies as success stories as he presented the cases of Krispy Kreme, Virgin Express, PizzaExpress and Midwest Express which reported declines in stock prices at the end of 2005. These tools which generally follow a step-by-step process, and rules to follow, are also varied. For example, Schmitt (2004) proposed a process that should be continuously done; Schmitt et al (2003) complete the process with an assessment of the brand impact; and La Salle and Britton's (2003) last stage is developing an emotional bond with the customer to create loyalty. Despite this range of suggested tools, however, Gentile et al (2007), as mentioned earlier, had argued that tools aimed at supporting marketing managers in devising the right stimuli for an excellent experience are still scarce. This clearly indicates a significant disagreement between the academic community and the practitioners.

Co-creation of experiences. The European Centre of Experience Economys mentioned in the previous chapter, reported that the third generation of the experience economy has reported that customers have become self-directed and self-expressive and in control in creating their experiences. As Cova and Dali (2009) pointed out, there has been a great deal of criticism of the limited and planned nature of the marketing experiences, which are very manipulative and predetermined and therefore meet with resistance from some consumers, as this leaves them with very little scope to participate in their conception and construction. The authors suggest that some of the thematisation of the experience should be left unorganised for the consumers so that it becomes appropriable; however, these self-help books are advising otherwise. These works also are mainly concerned with building experiences for their customers with most of them aiming to give their customers an experience that will be uniquely associated with their brand. Several authors (Arussy, 2002; Milligan and Smith, 2002); Schmitt, Rogers and Vrostsos, 2004; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Smith, 2003) were clear that they are aiming for "branded experiences". This indicates that companies have a particular type of experience in mind to build for their customers.

Most of the guides in creating experiences presented in these works included a step in designing the experience for their customers; however, they are lacking in opportunities that will allow for customers to co-create or co-produce their experiences. La Salle and Britton (2003) mentioned the importance of any communication from customers as a "gift" as it would help them look at "what is and imagine what can be even where customers are unable to articulate their desire" (Holbrook, 2007a: 94) but this does not necessarily mean that customers help build their experiences. Samuel (2003), on the other hand had this commandment on declaring independence, capitalising on what he observed as Americans' affinity for freedom and consumers' "indie instincts" (Holbrook, 2007a: 61) allowing some opportunities for consumers to be independent; and giving examples of blogging, learning, independent filmmaking, record producing or retailing.

Some works have compounded their their focus on the customer experience by emphasising the importance of interaction with customers at all touch points, and the importance of consistency across these points (Carbone, 2004; La Salle and Britton, 2003; Schmitt, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2002). However, the customers are not co-creators or co-producers in these interactions; they just get a consistent service quality from the employees. This could be associated with what Tynan and McKechnie (2009) stated - that service marketing notions have informed experience marketing, which included the understanding of service delivery as drama with a performance that takes place at the point of consumption within a particular *servicescape*, as a result of a scripted interaction between customer and employee. In fact, although most of the works of the self-help books reviewed by Holbrook carry these service marketing characteristics; however interactions should also give way to more opportunities for customers to co-create or co-produce their experiences.

Various definitions of experiences. From the academic side, Patterson et al (2008) had also pointed out overlapping blueprints on experience creation. They have cited different works on how to create relevant customer experiences such as those of Baron et al (2001) and Harris et al (2003) for advocating dramaturgy; Arnould and Price (1993) and Ladwein, (2007) for their extraordinary experiences; Ritzer (1999) and Badot and Filser (2007) for enchanting experience; Kozinets et al (2002) for following a theme, and Kim and Mauborgne (2005) for blue ocean strategy, an unseen amalgamation of all alternative approaches. These works explored the type of experiences to be created as relevant to customers; while the self-help books mentioned above have dealt mostly with an experience that establishes their brands, as some have mentioned the term 'branded customer experience' (Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Smith and Wheeler, 2003). This may be traced to the various theorisings of the experience economy, and with experience loosely defined by Pine and Gilmore (1998) to be unique, memorable and personal to customers as an economic offering. As mentioned earlier, Caru and Cova (2006) argued that one of the fundamental weaknesses of experience marketing is the definition of experience.

Backstorm and Johansson (2006) also observed that knowledge on inducing experiences is rare; and what kind of experience for a particular context, product or service lacks definition of central concepts and empirical support. The studies mentioned above reflect the fuzziness of the experience to be created while the practitioners are clearer on the brand experience they want to offer to their customers, which is based on their perspectives rather than those of the customers. In their review and assessment of experience marketing, Tynan and McKechnie (2009) acknowledged the lack of clarity in the marketing literature with regard to what exactly constitutes an experience and the conflation of terms associated with experience marketing.

Focus on emotions. Central to the practice of experience marketing is the importance of emotion in consumption which has been elaborated both by practitioners and the academics alike. Hence, debate has turned to the “how” of eliciting emotions from consumers that would result in emotional bonds between customers and companies with the purpose of establishing customer loyalty. McCole (2004) argued that emotional attachment is the key to experiential marketing and that the challenge is finding ways to accomplish it. He added that empirical validations of the Strategic Experiential Modules (SEM) of Schmitt (1999) showed that products have both functional and emotional essence; however, it is the always the latter that demands most efforts from marketers, whereby they are seeking to understand how their customers feel about their products. However, emotions elicited are also dependent on the kind of experiences. In the literature, categorisation, realms and layers and dimensions of experience (see the work of Abrahams, 1986; Csikszenthmihalyi, 1979; Denzin 1992 and Dilthey, 1976) provided insights of emotions that might be felt in certain types of experience; however they were all criticised for being fluid, having no boundaries, overlapping and limited. On the other hand, some authors (Caru and Cova, 2006; and Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Poulsson and Kale, 2004) had posited that experience need not be extraordinary all the time to elicit some emotions or be considered memorable and unique. Meyer and Schwager (2007) stated that it should not be a “one hundred-things-to-do-before-you-die” obligation that businesses feel bound to create experience for their customers. It is well established that emotion is an important element in experience marketing and may be considered as an “experience outcome” that can measure the effect of a consumption experience.

Limits of experience marketing in practice. Experiential marketing as observed in empirical papers is perceived in two ways; a) as a method that can influence purchase decision of a consumer, and b) as components to be included in a staged/designed experience. For example, Heitzler et al (2008) defined experiential marketing as a live event or experience that gives the target audience the opportunity to see a product and experience it for themselves. The experiential tactics they have used included free product samples, offering free trial periods, organising events and tours that allow consumers to use the products or services being marketed, or the chance to interact with representatives of the company selling the product or service (Heitzler et al 2009). This is similar to the example from Experiential Marketing Forum (2009), that emphasised experiential marketing as activities in the form of marketing programmes that produce the "wow" factor such as the use of streamlined vehicles, kiosks, and pop-up stores to draw customers into their branded experience. Heitzler et al (2008) had claimed that experiential marketing is not a substitute for broadcast and print advertising as experiential marketing with certain marketing tactics typically reaches fewer people and often carries a higher cost per person ratio compared to traditional mass-media efforts. They however emphasised that the addition of experiential marketing tactics achieved what broadcast media could probably not achieve alone and helped the potential consumers to experience physical activity in a fun and rewarding way.

The outcome of the experience and post-consumption stage. According to Patterson et al (2008), internal responses that are elicited in consumption experiences are important and cannot be captured by the quantitative construct of customer satisfaction, which are merely the cumulative tally of total positive and negative customer experiences rather than an articulation of what they specifically are. This presents another challenge to measuring the effect of the consumption experience.

Experiential marketing is perceived to include the whole process of the consumption experience; with most of the companies limiting the application of experience marketing in the pre-consumption and core consumption experiences. The post-consumption phase in experiential marketing in the self-help books is less mentioned. Few works refer to post-consumption to include any communication from consumers (La Salle and Britton, 2003) and measurement of brand impact and alignment (Schmitt, Rogers and Vrotsos, 2003). Schmitt, Rogers and Vrotsos (2003) gave examples of tools for measuring brand impact used by their example companies; these included media impression, investor response, traffic to stores; face-to-face interactions, quantitative and qualitative survey, cost per sample measurement (Intel); purchase intent and behaviour; lead collection on suspect basis, correlate timing to closings (SAP); customer feedback, CRM registrations, direct marketing up-selling (Crayola); face-to-face interactions, event response, and film response (Vans), to name a few. These measurements are again based on the criteria of success from the company's perspective not on the consumption experience from the customer's perspective.

A more appropriate framework for capturing the consumers' outcome of the experience or the post-consumption stage would be Arnould et al's (2002) remembered and nostalgia experience which includes recalling the experience through the use of photos, movies and other memorabilia means to relive a past experience based on narratives and arguments with friends about the past; something that tends toward the classification of memories. This stage is not captured in the self-help books on experiential marketing nor in the empirical works from the academe reviewed as the focus is on the creation of experience. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) observed that practitioners' perspectives tend to focus on the experience itself and overemphasise physical aspects of the good, or more usually the service, that is being marketed. They added that marketing practitioners have been inclined to overlook other occasions beyond the experience itself which constitute opportunities to offer value; that is, at the pre-purchase and post-purchase stages.

2.3.1.3 Possible solutions to experience marketing issues

Immersion in experience. Caru and Cova (2006) claimed that a weakness of the experiential marketing theory is how "immersion" in a consumption experience is understood as an immediate process to access the experience that allows the customers to live a differed identity and/or intensify one of their fragmented identities. Customers, they advised, needed to undergo an immersion process which involved reducing the distance between the experience and the consumer through what Ladwein (2003) referred to as "operations of appropriation". These operations of appropriation are the mark of a fundamental psychological system of action on the context of experience in order to transform and personalise it (Caru and Cova, 2006: 6). This implies that consumers conjure up competencies in an effort to become the main builders and co-creators of the consumption experience.

Caru and Cova (2006) named three major operations of appropriation from previous studies (see Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Fischer 1992; Fischer and Akin-Etiene, 1997) which are present in any immersion process. Table 2.19 describes the three stages of operations of appropriations. The immersion process certainly provides a closer look at the process of customer experiences; however, it still does not address how to elicit emotion but rather focuses more on how customers personalise their experiences. They however suggested that that emotions elicited may be as important as the personal significance of an experience; however they admit this needs further examination. This is more related to how consumers find meaning in their experiences; which is another aspect of experiential marketing that one can explore.

In the previous section, experiences were proposed to have become the quest for meaning of customers. Ter Borg (2003), Piet (2004) and Boswijk et al (2005) put forward the importance of creating "meaningful experiences". In their search for their identity, customers are no longer prepared to leave the design of their identity in its entirety to the specialists (Piet, 2004). Hence, if these meaningful experiences are related to their consumption experiences, firms definitely face another challenge and then the immersion process is more relevant to experience marketing.

Table 2.19 Operations of Appropriation

Nesting: The individual feels at home because part of the experience being faced has been isolated, a part that is already familiar because of one's accumulated experience and existing foothold in it. Individuals often will find comfort in sticking to a single activity, product, group or place they will try to control by pushing aside anything else that that might crop up in the experiential framework.
Investigating: Starting from the nest that has been built up in the fashion the individual will try to explore and identify new products of activities so as to develop points of anchorage and control (signposts). This enhances the knowledge of the context of experience being faced and progressively extends one's territory.
Stamping: A person will attribute a specific meaning to an experience or to a part thereof. This meaning will not be the one that is commonly ascribed to it but instead will be a personal one, built on the basis of the individual's own referents, history, etc. Here the indivudal uses creativity to paly around with the expeirence's context subjectively and to imbue it with their own personal meaning (i.e. meaning making).

Summarised form Caru and Cova (2006:9-10)

Continuum of consuming experiences. As the experience economy has shifted to be characterised with people who are completely self-directed, self-expressive and in the control seat of experience creation, companies are then given a more facilitating role instead of them designing the experience based on the advice of the aforementioned gurus on experiential marketing in their best-selling books. However, not all experiences have opportunities for co-creation. In their 2007 book *Consuming Experiences*, Caru and Cova developed a "continuum of consuming experiences". These experiences ranged from experiences that are mainly constructed by the consumers, to experiences by companies (a kind of approach which is close to Pine and Gilmore's (1999) viewpoint), passing through experiences that are co-created by consumer and companies (as per Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Correspondingly, the role of the firm changes in each stage of the company: from the company pursuing a traditional product or service marketing approach to a company adopting a holistic and immersive experiential marketing approach, passing through a co-creation stage, in which a company provides a basic platform and raw materials for consumers to use, mould and thus obtain the experience (Gentile et al, 2007).

It is clear that this varied nature of consuming experiences is not highlighted by the works of practitioners and the academic community. The self-gurus of experiential marketing have used examples from different points of the continuum but did not clearly emphasise how one company may differ from other companies in designing experiences. From the academic side, empirical works are generally validations of experiential modules of Schmitt or the experience realms of Pine and Gilmore in a specific context such as tourism (Leighton, 2007), online gaming (Sheu et al, 2009), arts (Petkus, 2004) and public health campaigns (Heitzler, 2008). There was no literature yet that had examined this issue or undertaken a comparison of experiential marketing in different contexts.

Service-Dominant Logic approach. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) argued that practitioner-based understandings of experience marketing need to be considerably revised when incorporating the ideas from the academic literature. They proposed that the emergence of Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) offers an opportunity to merge practitioner and academic thinking on experience marketing. S-D Logic is a seminal contribution from Vargo and Lusch; a concept which offers "a marketing-grounded understanding of value and exchange through changing the focus of marketing from tangible goods and activities associated with their delivery to a focus on service as the process of doing something for someone" (Lusch and Vargo, 2006: 281-282).

The S-D logic could address some gaps in the interpretation of the practitioners of experience marketing. First, the S-D logic places importance on the change in the role of producers and consumers as they should be seen as both producing and consuming simultaneously, which requires a long-term strategy that includes a shared vision, mutually negotiated experiences and constant collaboration (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The role of customers in the co-creation of value is emphasised throughout the design, production, delivery and consumption process as they exchange knowledge, skills, processes and core competencies with suppliers and other partners (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Second, it requires a holistic view of the consumption experience from the customer's perspective (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The customer "uniquely and phenomenologically" (Vargo and Lusch, 2008:7) determines the value during the whole life of the offering, which may be an extended period of time (Tynan and Mckechnie, 2009:507).

The first characteristic of S-D logic supports Pralahad and Ramaswamy's (2004) claim that consumers are co-producers of their experiences, and is aligned with the third generation of the experience economy with consumers being self-directed and self-expressive and in control of their experience creation. The second characteristic, on the other hand, supports Cova and Dali's (2009) argument that consumption experience should be seen as extending beyond the three consumption stages. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) detailed the customer's experience (see Figure 2.4) and how it could be interpreted. Its post-consumption stage (outcomes) has similar characteristics to Arnould et al's (2002) last stage of consumption: remembered consumption experience and the nostalgia experience. Caru and Cova (2006) had also noted that consumers are self-reflexive and narrative agents; creating their own stories in their own words which include the consumption experience. This presents an important opportunity to understanding experience from the customer's perspective. Ultimately, it can provide insights of the fundamental issue of the definition of experience as pointed out by Caru and Cova (2006). Thus, the proposal of Tynan and McKechnie (2009) is indeed worth exploring.

Further research could test how the S-D logic can contribute to addressing the issues pointed out by Gentile et al (2007) for the slow adoption of the concept which included: a) lack in the extant literature of models, interpretation and conceptualisation offering a common terminology and a shared mind set; and b) a lack of structured managerial approaches and tools aimed at supporting marketing management in devising the right stimuli to support excellent customer service. Tynan and McKechnie (2010:512) also suggest the following:

(1) That marketing academics are encouraged to engage in knowledge transfer by talking to marketing practitioners about the new understandings of the importance of customer experiences from a processual view, and investigate problems encountered when creating experiences in practice.

(2) That the level of awareness of S-D logic within the academic and practitioner marketing communities be raised, particularly highlighting its key tenets and demonstrating how it can add value to managerial decision making.

(3) Finally, that empirical research into the holistic consumption experience, and value creation processes in the value producing networks, be conducted, adopting ethnographic approaches (Healy et al, 2007) and naturalistic enquiry (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf, 1988), to fully understand the complex interactions in the actual contexts in which they occur.

To summarise, this section provided a critical discussion of the existing literature from the academe and practitioners on experience marketing. Schmitt (1999) has been credited with the introduction of the term of experiential marketing or experience marketing and for assisting the flourishing of the concept of the experience economy. His work remains the most cited and applied framework for experience marketing in the literature. Many self-help guide books emerged that offered suggestions on how to create experience, yet they did not acknowledge that the concept is not a new one. However, these did not help very much in establishing the experience marketing as a concept in the marketing literature. In fact, there was a wide gap between the academe and practitioners in the understanding of this concept.

The review of the literature has highlighted several issues such as the emergence of self-help guide books on experience marketing; various definitions of experiences and what kind to offer; focus on emotions and how to elicit emotions; no co-creation in the production of experience; limits of experience marketing in practice; measuring of the outcome of the experience, and the post-consumption stage of the experience.

There were also three suggested possible solutions in addressing the above mentioned issues which included Caru and Cova's (2003) use of immersion of experience for better understanding of the experience of consumers; recognising that there is a continuum of consuming experiences and that not every experience can be co-created and that contexts of the consumption should be considered; and Tynan and McKechnie's (2009) suggestion of using the Service-Dominant Logic approach.

The thesis argues that the use of travel blogs will provide insights of some of these issues, particularly on understanding the various types of experiences of consumers from their perspectives and looking at blogging as a measure of the outcome of the experience and as a form of the post-consumption stage of the experience. Understanding how bloggers reconstruct their experiences and how they retell it to their readers will provide insights for experience marketing. The next section discusses destination/place marketing and provides an overview on how it markets tourist experiences.

2.3.2 Destination/Place Marketing

The review of extant literature on experience marketing revealed that there is little literature on this concept in tourism studies. Researchers who explored this concept have validated Schmitt's (1999) Strategic Experiential Module (SEM) or Pine and Gilmore's (1998) key experience design and realms of experiences. This literature included the works of Petkus (2004), Leighton (2007), Morgan et al (2007), Oh et al (2007), Hayes and MacLeod (2009), Jurowski (2009) and Sheu et al (2009). It is noted that most of these works have applied experience marketing in various sectors of tourism such as accommodation, heritage trails and parks and arts exhibits; however not at the destination level. To examine this lack of research on experience marketing in tourism, the tourism marketing literature was reviewed; this is presented in the next section.

2.3.2.1 Tourism Marketing

Tourism is a hybrid of tourism and marketing studies; characterised by tourism marketing researchers who actively absorbed knowledge from both fields in its initial growth (Li and Petrick, 2008). Xiao (2004) noted though that during the past decade it has been more of an "internal growth" where current tourism research is a replication of previous findings (Li and Petrick, 2008). This is evidenced by the small number of conceptual articles compared to a striking number of case studies and statistical analyses (Li and Petrick, 2008). Nonetheless, tourism studies have adopted the following marketing paradigms: relationship marketing, network approach and Service-Dominant Logic. Table 2.20 shows some of the practices adopted from each part of this paradigm as reviewed by Li and Petrick (2008). Examples of practices and challenges of adopting each paradigm are presented.

Li and Petrick (2008) noted that although tourism marketing scholars embraced the concept of relationship marketing (RM), most of the discussions were on the tactical and strategic levels. They observed that some researchers have simply interpreted RM as a synonym for "customer loyalty-building," or retaining existing tourists; and hence they call for more research to better understand relationship marketing theory and strategies, and its implications for the tourism industry. Among the three approaches, the authors concluded (citing works of Crotts, Aziz and Raschid, 1998 and Smith, 1988) that the network approach is particularly relevant to the context of tourism because a tourism suppliers' cluster can indeed work to provide an experience of value to tourists. They also noted that several works on destination networks came from various perspectives: economics (Smeral 1998, Tremblay, 1998); knowledge management (Beesley, 2005), and strategic management (Pavlovich, 2003). With regards to Service-Dominant Logic, Seaton and Bennett (1996) posited that since tourism is a service-driven industry, it is therefore logical to use this approach (Li and Petrick, 2008). Yet Lohr (2006,) pointed out that the service in discussion is much more knowledge-embedded, customer-oriented and technology-driven.

At that point, service marketing is still seen as grounded in a goods and manufacturing-based model (Li and Petrick, 2008). Vargo and Lusch (2004) argued that “standardized goods may be inferior to services as they are produced without consumer involvement and requiring physical distribution and inventory, not only add to marketing costs but also are often extremely perishable and non-responsive to changing consumer needs” (p.12). Vargo and Lusch’s (2004) new service paradigm shift, however, argued that customers are co-creators with whom the service process is executed; and in a more recent modification of the paradigm, the authors also emphasised the experiential (phenomenological) nature of value (Saranaiemi and Kylanen, 2011). Li and Petrick (2008) posited that S-D Logic is still almost non-existent in tourism literature and that research is needed on the tenets proposed by Vargo and Lusch in tourism settings.

Table 2.20 Adopting marketing approaches in tourism

Approach/Practices	Challenges
<u>Relationship Marketing</u> Relationship marketing practices: airline frequent flyer programmes; hotel frequent guest programmes; car rental company customer preference schemes (Fyall, Callodand Edwards 2003; Morais, Dorsch, and Backman 2004)	a. Best suited in situations where customers control the selection of suppliers, where brand switching is common and where word-of-mouth is a powerful form of communication (Gilbert et al, 1999) b. Can be adopted in destinations although the peculiarities of the destination product complicate the building of relationships with the tourist and diminish the suitability and value of such efforts (Fyall, Callod and Edwards, 2004) c. Building long-term relationships with selected customers might bring competitive advantage to a business in certain tourism sectors (Morais, Dorsch and Backman, 2004)
<u>Network Approach</u> Destinations as learning and knowledge creating organisations (learning regions) (Saxena, 2005) Traditional eMediaries to outsource several functions and services to external companies and establish partnerships with other suppliers to personalise their offerings (Buhalis and Licata, 2002)	More attention needs to be given to the changing role of marketers in a network and the strategic position of tourism marketing organisations in the network
<u>Service-Dominant Logic</u> Knowledge management for tourism organisations particularly National Tourism Organizations (You, O'Leary and Fesenmaier, 2000)	Because of the recency of the S-D slogic, Li and Petrick have not noted any explicit discussion on this issue.

Summarised from Li and Petrick (2008: 239-240)

Tourism marketing researchers have started to echo the new marketing thoughts; however, in-depth conceptual exploration is still lacking (Li and

Petrick, 2008). Li and Petrick (2008) also observed that the tourism marketing is still incorporating the view of marketing, and competition is rooted in a provider-based, goods-centred and transaction-oriented perspective. It is evident that experience marketing has not been considered as one of the approaches used in tourism marketing. However, the S-D logic emphasises the experiential nature of value, or experience and consumers as co-creators are features found in experience marketing.

It is clear though that the adoption of any of these paradigms was challenged by the nature and distinct characteristics of tourism. Tourism is about places and spaces that are embedded in cultures, economies and social lives of communities and the complex processes of tourism production and consumption depend on destinations, be they a single community and its surroundings, a region, or a country (Saranaiemi and Kylanen, 2011:133). Hence, the next section discusses destination branding which Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004) posited to be a significant development in the marketing of destinations and places.

2.3.2.2. Destination Branding

Branding is one of the many aspects borrowed and applied from the field of marketing by tourism (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Brand is defined by the American Marketing Association as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Tasci and Kozak, 2006:300; Pike, 2009:857). However, Tasci and Kozak (2006) stated, that like every new concept in tourism, confusion exists in the concept of “brand” in the tourist destination context. The authors added that this area has received little attention to date; yet they observed claims that branding is expanding into tourist destinations. Hankinson (2004: 109) has pointed out that the classical branding theory, with its roots in product marketing, is still in its infancy and the application of branding to the more specialists areas of marketing is even less developed. Furthermore, place branding has received considerable attention over the two decades in both the marketing press and academic literature but no general theoretical framework exists to underpin the development of place brands apart from the classical, product-based branding theory (Hankinson, 2004).

Branding emerged as a topic of inquiry in the late 1990s which included a special issue of the *Journal of Vacation Marketing* (1999, Volume 5, No. 3) dedicated to Destination Branding; a book on destination branding edited by Morgan et al (2002); two issues of the ECLIPSE, a periodic publication on destination marketing (Tasci and Kozak, 2006) and later on a special issue on place branding published in the *Journal of Brand Management* (2002, Volume 12, No. 4)(Pike, 2009). However, knowledge of destination branding remains poorly understood and is often misunderstood by practitioners (Blain et al, 2005). Dinnie (2004), however, observed that academics have been slow to follow what has been a practitioner-led domain. Pike (2009), based on his review of 74 publications from 1998 -2007 of destination branding literature, identified three research streams. These research streams (Figure 2.7) are: a) destination brand identity development (focus is on clarifying the desired image in the market); b) destination brand positioning (focus is on positioning the brand in the market to achieve the desired brand identity); and c) destination brand equity (related to measuring the performance of the brand). Pike (2009) confirmed that there has been a lack of consistency in defining what constitutes destination branding, both within industry and within academia. Prebensen (2007) defines destination branding as selecting a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building. . Branding a destination also includes bringing together two or more products or communities of similar natural or cultural compositions of attractions (Cai, 2002).

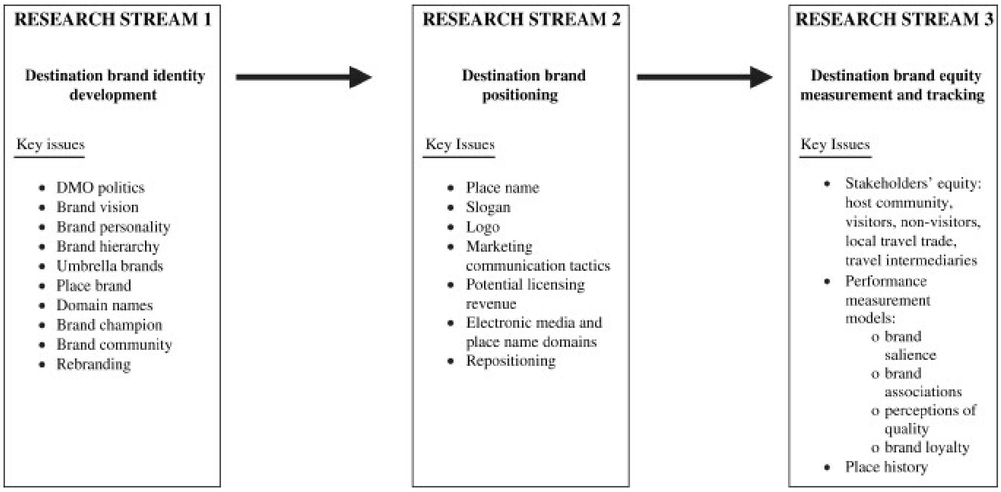


Figure 2.7 Destination branding research streams
Source: Pike (2009: 861)

Blain et al (2005:337) proposed the following definition of destination branding as:

> The set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily *identifies* and *differentiates* a destination; that (2) consistently convey the *expectation* of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to *consolidate* and *reinforce* the *emotional connection* between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer *search costs* and *perceived risk*. Collectively, these activities serve to create a *destination image* that positively influences consumer *destination choice*.

This definition is the most comprehensive, following Berthon et al's (1999) model of the functions of a brand from both the buyers' and sellers' perspectives (Pike, 2009). Blain et al (2005) claimed that their proposed definition based on inputs from DMO respondents have integrated the following themes in this definition: identification, differentiation, experience, expectations, image, consolidation, reinforcement, recognition, consistency, brand messages and emotional response. However, Morgan et al (2011) state that despite the upsurge in books and academic papers and explosion of consultancy firms specialising in place/destination branding, the academe and practitioners are still far from a clear appreciation of what this actually means. They argue that many commentators and some consultants and academics still interpret "place branding" as simply the application of product, promotion, public relations and corporate identity activities to countries, cities or regions as though they are mere commodities. As many academics questioned whether places can ever be brand because in a marketing sense they cannot be, some commentators talk of place reputation management or competitive identity rather than place branding (Morgan et al, 2011).

A significant body of literature has also contributed to the understanding of the concept in terms of its importance to marketing destinations. For example, Morgan et al (2002) identified that branding is the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers due to "increasing product parity, substitutability and competition" (p. 335). Accordingly, strong destination brands have rich emotional meaning, great conversation value and offer high anticipation for their potentialtourists. Destination branding is considered by Williams et al (2004) as key to acquiring and enhancing a strategic and competitive market position. Furthermore, the authors also posited that destination branding is supposed to be the manifestation of a memorable bond or an emotional link between the target markets and the destination (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Pike (2009) stressed that both the destination marketing organisations and travellers benefit from destination branding. As mentioned earlier, Berthon et al's (1999) model as illustrated in Figure 2.7 emphasises how a brand reduces search costs for the buyer and most importantly the last two functions: for assurance of quality that reduces perceived risk and for status and prestige which reduces psychological risk, are more relevant for tourist experiences because of its intangible nature. From the sellers' point of view, brand is put forward as a marketing strategy that combines various marketing goals such as market segmentation, encouraging repeat purchase, differentiating product, creating loyalty, product innovations and facilitating promotional efforts.

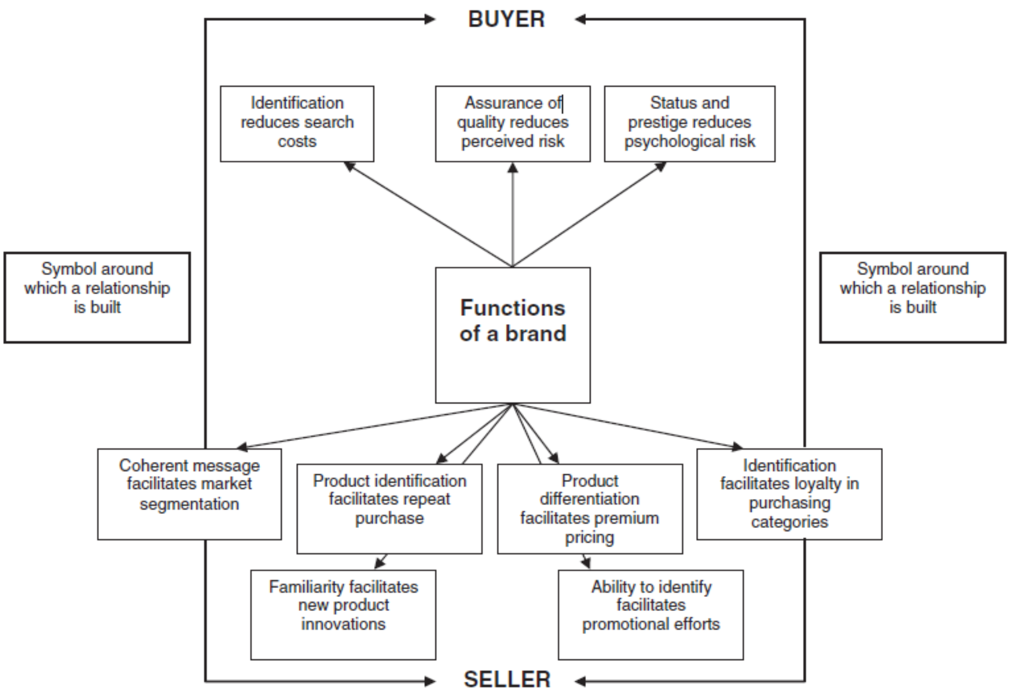


Figure 2.8 Functions of a Brand for the Buyer and Seller
Source: Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt (1999)

Destination branding can provide DMOs with the following: a) potential to differentiate against places offering similar benefits; b) increased destination loyalty and c) increased yield for stakeholder. On the other hand, travellers benefits through ease of decision making through reduced search costs, reduced risk and possibly enhanced brag value as suggested by (Pike 2009). In the same line, Bigne et al (2001) identified salient points on branding that are particularly relevant in tourism:

(1) Branding assists in countering the effects of intangibility.
(2) Branding conveys consistency in a sector vulnerable to extreme variability of tourist experience. It assures consistency across multiple outlets and through time.
(3) Branding is a risk-reducing mechanism.
(4) Branding facilitates precise segmentation.
(5) Brands provide a focus for integration of producer effort, helping people to work towards the same outcomes.

According to Blain et al (2005), DMOs are practicing destination branding; however only to a certain extent. This can be attributed to the challenges associated with practicing it. These challenges include (Tasci and Kozak, 2006):

a. amorphous nature of the destination product; the politics involved in destination marketing, and limited resources allocation for destination marketing (Morgan et al, 2002);
b. name of a destination brand is relatively fixed by the actual geographical name of the place; complexity of the decision process on the part of tourists due to the intangible and risky nature of tourist

products (Cai, 2002);

c. destination branding involves distilling a wide range of tangible and intangible attributes of the destination while keeping the values of stakeholders involved (Buhalis, 2000).

Morgan et al (2011) had categorised the challenges in destination/place branding into ethical, leadership, partnership, authenticity, aesthetics, tone of voice, digital and measurement challenges. The first three challenges refers to the DMOs' role in supporting and facilitating place brand management which involves speaking to their customers and destination; stakeholders; establishing, nurturing and servicing partnerships; and providing ethical leadership (Morgan et al, 2011). The authors refer to the DMOS as brand steward responsible for: a) leading, guiding and coordinating the destination's online and offline "tone of voice"; b) stewarding the authenticity and aesthetics of the destination in a culturally sensitive and ethical way at the same time empowering local communities, involving relevant stakeholders, avoiding exploitative branding campaigns that stereotype certain communities and ensuring that the destination brand is set on a sustainable development trajectory; and c) providing research and evaluation of the destination branding.

The changing nature of destination brands, according to Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2011), presents future challenges to destination branding. Brand remains to be a guarantor of quality hence destination has to be strong on quality assurance and deliver what they promise to the consumer. Likewise, tourist also uses brands for short cuts on search cost; hence the authors also warn that brands should convey a clear, congruent image as any contradictions in brand images will confuse tourists of what is being offered. The importance of cultural capital of conversation is highlighted as they observed tourists of today tick off countries/places they have visited and to a certain extent boast about it with friends who are identified to be the number one influence on destination choice. Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2011) noted that we are living in a celebrity culture and modern society consumes a bottomless amount of celebrity news and celebrity endorsement can work phenomenally well. Lastly, the authors remind DMOs of the need to gain the trust of the consumers to compete with other destinations; brands should appear simple, transparent and no contradictions.

Destination branding is already a complex matter to apply and manage with different levels of destination accentuating this complexity even further (Tasci, 2011). Pike's (2009) summary of 28 research publications indeed featured studies at the following levels: national tourism organisation (NTO), state tourism organisation (STO), regional tourism organisation (RTO) and convention and visitor bureau (CVB). These are presented in Table 2.21. Tasci (2011) had also emphasised that destinations are composed of multiple layers of geographical entities which will have its own brand. Hence; maintaining consistency among these different layers is one of the challenges of destination branding. Figure 2.9 illustrates the various destination layers and their brands. When the branding of individual layers is consistent and integrated, the result is assumed t o be a synergy, with the whole being greater than the sum of its parts (Tasci, 2011:116)

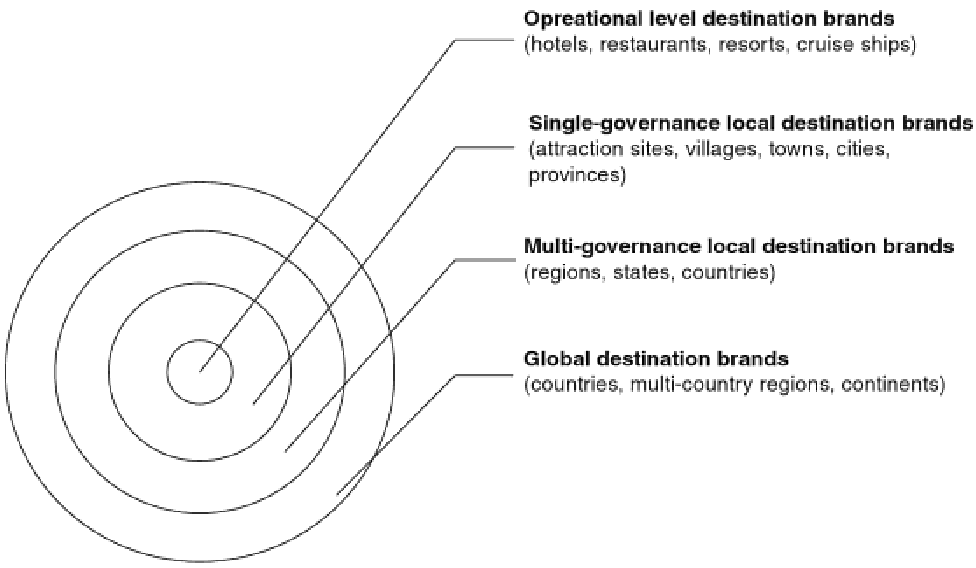


Figure 2.9 Destinations defined at multiple layers of geographical entities
Source: Tasci (2011:116)

Table 2.21. Research on destination branding at various levels

Author/Year	Focus	Country	Level	Participants
Dosen et al (1998)	Brand image analysis	Croatia	NTO	Visitors, students
Nickerson and Moisey (1999)	Identifying positioning attributes	USA	STO	Visitors
Shanka (2001)	Positioning slogans	Bostwana, Burikina, Faso, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Maawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Zambia	NTO	Tourism practitioners
Brown, et al (2002)	Contribution of event branding	Australia	STO	DMO and event practitioners
Cai (2002)	Conceptualising destination branding	USA	RTO	Consumers
Konecnik (2004)	Brand image analysis	Slovenia	NTO	Consumers

Table 2.21. Research on destination branding at various levels (cont.)

Author/Year	Focus	Country	Level	Participants
Konecknik, (2006a) and Konecknick (2006b)	Brand equity	Slovenia	NTO	Consumers
Hanlan and Kelly (2005)	Image formation	Australia	RTA	Visitors
Blaine, et al, (2005)	Definition, logos	International	CVB	DMO practitioners
Ekinci and Hosany (2006)	Brand personality	International	NTO	Travellers
Tasci and Kozak (2006)	Definitions	International	N/a	Practitioners, academics
Park and Petrick (2006)	Definitions	International	NTO, STO	DMO practitioners
Woodland and Acott, (2007)	Stakeholder consultation	England	RTO	Tourism practitioners
Murphy et al (2007) and Murphy et al (2007)	Brand personality	Australia	RTO	Visitors
Woodside et al (2007)	Brand netnography	Italy	RTO	Visitors
Nuttavusthisit, (2007)	Negative imagery	Thailand	NTO	Consumers
Pechlaner, et al (2007)	Umbrella brands	Italy, Austria	RTO	Tourism practitioners
Phillips and Schofield (2007)	Host communit y image	England	RTO	Residents
Merrilees et al (2007)	Host communit y image	Australia	RTO	Residents
Ekinci et al (2007)	Brand personality	Turkey	NTO	Visitors
Cai et al (2007)	Brand image analysis	China	STO	Visitors
Kendall and Gursoy (2007)	Brand positioning	Italy, Egypt, Morocco, Spain, Greece,	NTO	Secondary data

Table 2.21. Research on destination branding at various levels (cont.)

Author/Year	Focus	Country	Level	Participants
Tasci et al (2007)	Image bias	Turkey	NTO	Students
Donald and Gammack (2007)	Film imagery	Australia, China Hong Kong	NTO, RTO	Consumers, practitioners
Konecknik and Gartner (2007)	Brand equity	Slovenia	NTO	Consumers
Pike (2007)	Brand equity	Australia	RTO	Consumers

Source: Pike (2009:859)

Tasci (2011) proposed a framework of place branding which include holistic approaches of nation branding and country branding which according to Anholt (2005) creates a competitive vision for the future of the nation and country which are difficult and complex due to abstract and uncontrollable nature of the subject matter. In fact, Anholt (2010) argued that nation branding is not the solution to marketing countries but instead the problem as it is subjected to the public opinion. He pointed out public opinion when branding countries reduces them to the weak, simplistic, outdated; unfair stereotypes that so damage their prospects in a globalised world. Governments need to help to world understand the real, complex, rich, diverse nature of their people and landscapes, their history, and heritage, their products and their resources, to prevent them from becoming mere brands (Anholt, 2010:3). The framework (Figure 2.10) shows the complexity of place branding as indicated by the numbers of concepts that are inter-related and contributes to place branding. It is clear that destination branding is a complex marketing effort for destinations at various levels. Building a brand or re-branding is a labour-intensive and time-consuming process for any destination. To effectively build a brand, Tasci and Kozak (2006) highlighted that destination managers need to conduct extensive research before initiating any branding programmes to avoid a brand becoming stigmatised by the wrong decision for a long period of time.

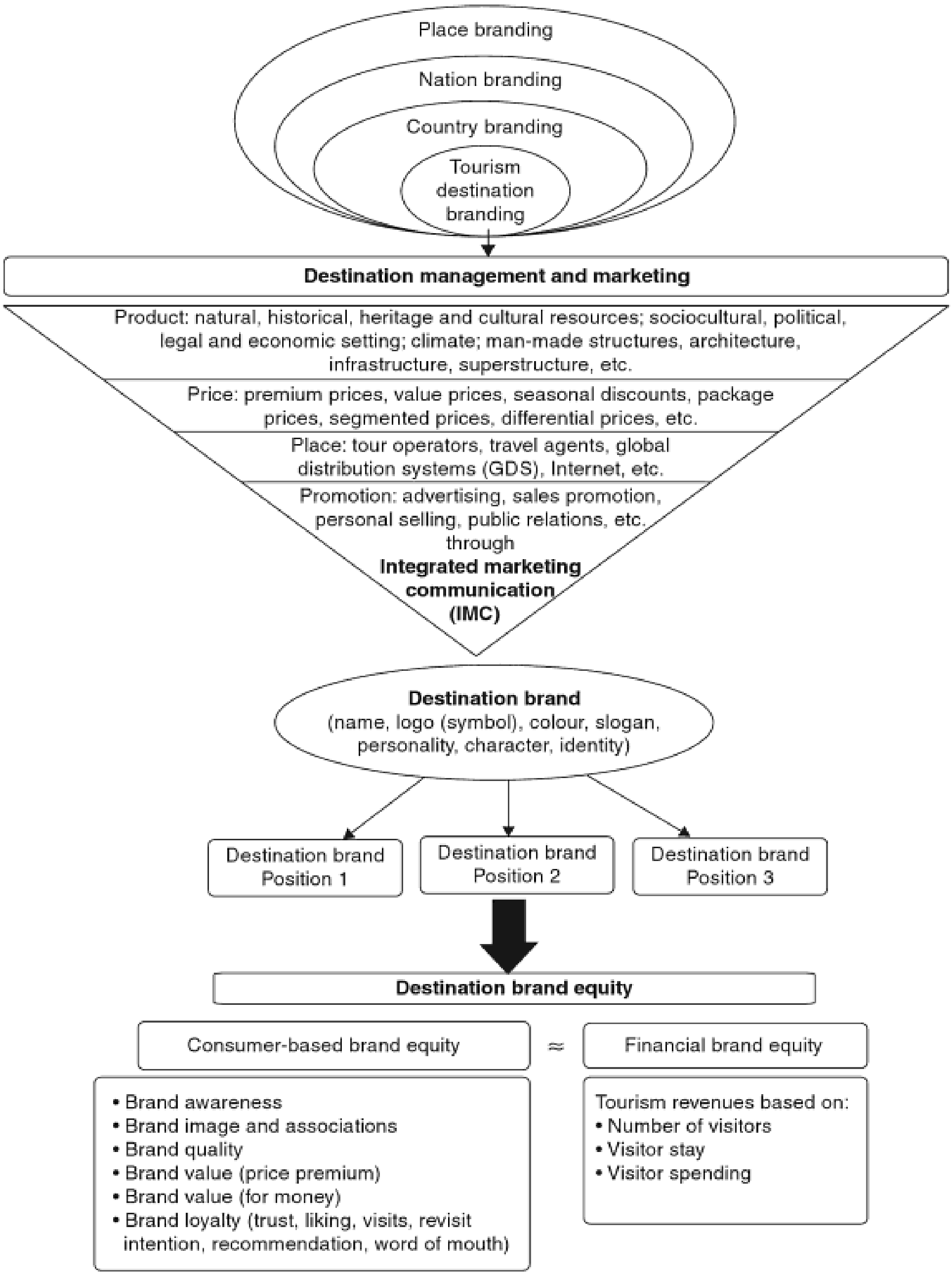


Figure 2.10 A framework of concepts relevant to place branding

Source: Tasci (2011:114)

Based on the extant literature reviewed, it is evident that destination branding is similarly aiming for the same experience marketing outcomes, i.e. emotional connection between the place (company) and delivering memorable experiences. The brand definitions above are more focused on goods and services and not on the experience except for Blain et al (2005) which integrated experience as one of the themes of destination branding.

Hankinson's (2004) four main streams of brand conceptualisation found in the tourism literature provide more insights that destination branding may have similar features to experience marketing. The four streams are (Hankinson, 2004: 113-114):

a. Destination brands as perceptual entities. This perspective dominates the literature which included studies on destination image identifying common attributes across a sample of destinations at various levels. It includes identifying components of destination image.

b. Destination brands as communicators. This is focused on brand strategy and it is seen as a management process that leads to a strategic plan to build a brand identity based on the destination's attributes, selected on the basis of competitiveness, uniqueness and desired identity.

c. Destination brands as relationships. This perspective is linked with the value enhancer perspective, and that the role of brands is to build a meaningful relationship with the consumer in order to secure higher profits through the formation of consumer brand bonds.

d. Destination brands as value enhancers. This relationship approach perspective has been more successful because of the following reasons: 1) it is more appropriate to service-oriented and service-related products such as places; 2) it is clearly linked to the experiential nature of the place product and emphasises the importance of the service encounter as a central activity in the development of place brand, 3) recognises the role of a range of stakeholders in the development of the brand and 4) utilises the network marketing approach.

Hanskinson (2004) had observed that there is dominance of the perceptual perspective which, he argued, seriously limited the development of place brands in general and destination brands in particular. The last two conceptualisations of brands carry some outcomes of experience marketing and that is meaningful relationship; and for the value enhancers, the experiential nature of the place is emphasised although again it is treated as services. It is clear that the focus is not on tourist experiences. Gnoth's (2002) tourism branding model, however, recognises that the tourism product is an experience, - the holiday experience. He stated that experiences occur at three levels; namely, functional (core experiences of a product or services), experiential or hedonic (sensual aspect of an experience) and symbolic (what it all means to the tourist, and how it is related to the state of mind and level of involvement of the tourists). This model recognises the experiential nature of the experience and the symbolic function of tourist experiences. However, these conceptualisations of brand and model are still associated with the supply side or the destination attributes. It is evident that experience marketing characteristics are present in some models and perspectives on destination branding.

There are several researchers though who argue that, from a theoretical perspective, destination-based studies seem insufficient and, on the contrary, non-destination based studies have the unique advantage of offering insights into the ways in which holidays relate to people's everyday lives (Blichfeldt, 2007). King (2002), on the other hand, advises also that DMOs need to get away from promoting the destination to a mass market; it should be the relevance of the experience they offer the customer rather than the destination they promote. Accordingly, experience is the key ingredient for success in the future. Surprisingly, Gretzel et al (2006) had confirmed that notions of the experience economy and experiential marketing have been widely adopted by destination marketing organisations and tourism research; however there is no clear understanding of the crucial components of meaningful experience and related expectations. It is evident that the issue of what constitutes a meaningful experience remains open to debate. In fact, the extant literature has not interrogated examples of experience marketing by DMOs.

At this point, the thesis put forwards again the potential of travel blogs/blogs for providing insights for developing a destination brand. An examination of a record of travel experiences can help in developing a brand as perceptual entities highlighting common attributes that tourists blog about, and a brand as a relationship where blogs can reveal whether a tourist had meaningful experiences of the place. In the same manner, the travel blogs can also be used to provide information on the different levels of experiences that occur mentioned by Gnoth (2002) for a deeper understanding of the place brand from a country to a specific destination. McKee (2003) suggested that research on naturally occurring stories provides destination strategies with information about exciting incidents that represent unique associations and emotional highpoints that visitors are likely to retrieve and report automatically (Woodside et al, 2007) when reliving their experiences. The stories can provide clues for positioning a destination uniquely and meaningfully in the minds of their readers or potential future visitors (Woodside et al, 2007). Woodside et al (2007) added that:

> The stories on destination visitor tell often include their own explanations of their own photographs that capture what these informants find especially worthwhile to report to others… such visualizations and emic interpretations serve to inform the strategies how well a destination's planned positioning strategy matches with visitors' take away images and word-of-mouth reports. Making such comparison offers an early warning system for learning problems with a destination image as well as an early opportunity system for learning the images that excite visitors to advocate visiting the destination to friends and family members (p.173).

To summarise, this literature review on destination/place marketing has demonstrated how tourism studies have closely followed general marketing theories in order to progress research in tourism marketing. The review of tourism marketing has also shown how different paradigms were adopted in tourism studies and how these were challenged by the distinct characteristics of tourism. The extant literature also showed that experience marketing has not been examined at the level of DMOs. Tourism marketing was found to be focused on the destination and not on tourist experiences particularly with the marketing concept of destination branding. However, experience marketing desired outcomes (emotional attachment and memorable experiences) are also pursued in the current tourism marketing efforts. There is a need to inform tourism scholars that using experiences for destination branding would be helpful in identifying how the brands can be more beneficial in pursuing their goals of creating emotional bonds, and meaningful and memorable experiences. The challenges in developing a destination brand, particularly the need for extensive research to identify the brand could be addressed with the use of travel blogs, which it is posited will provide them with cues on what is unique with their destination. The thesis will consequently contribute to destination branding in terms of literature review, proposed methodology for researching destination branding with the use of travel blogs and lastly, in the practice of destination branding of DMOs at various levels.

2.4 Research gaps and research objectives

The literature review has provided an analysis of the extant literature on four important concepts upon which the study is grounded. Table 2.21 reiterates the research gaps identified in each concept, which have motivated this research:

Table 2.22 Research gaps identified

Research gaps
Consumption experience
1. Various definitions from different perspectives 2. What kind of experience to offer to consumers 3. Emotions are identified to be the markers, mediators and moderators of consumer responses have proved difficult to evaluate. 4. Most measurements are of a quantitative nature and emotions are limited to a set of categories, and also limited in terms of understanding the experience for its value or meaning to the individual 5. Focus on emotions has neglected to explore the concept within the context of self-identity or symbolic meaning functions of the consumption experience 6. Calls for naturalistic inquiry that are appropriate for experiential perspective that would look at experience from the customers' perspective

Table 2.22 Research gaps identified

Research gaps
Tourist experience
1. Various definitions of tourist experience 2. What kind of experience to offer to tourists 3. Role of emotions just emerging and exploring their effect on decision-making and customer loyalty 4. Measuring the outcome of tourist experience is complicated as it is associated with perception, knowledge, memory, emotions and self-identity 5. Satisfaction is related to motivation of travel 6. Calls for naturalistic inquiry to understand tourist satisfaction which will also provide insights of what is tourist experience based on the tourist's perspective
Experience marketing
1. Practitioners do not refer to existing academic literature 2. Various definitions and types of experience offered to consumers 3. Experience marketing creates emotional ties; however there are various interpretations of how to do it as well as how to elicit emotions. 4. It also neglects to link emotion to self-identity and symbolic meaning functions of the experience 5. Experiences to be created were from the companies' perspectives 6. Experience marketing does not replace, but rather supplements, traditional marketing methods
Destination/Place marketing
1. Tourism marketing faces challenges in incorporating general marketing paradigms: relationship marketing and service-dominant paradigm 2. Tourism marketing is destination-based 3. Destination branding is a significant development in tourism marketing; however thereis also confusion over this concept 4. Destination branding pursues the same experience outcome as experience marketing, i.e. creating emotional attachment and memorable experiences 5. Destination branding follows the classical theory of branding of products 6. There are calls from researchers to move away from destination-based marketing, to focus instead on tourist experiences as offering.

The literature review of these concepts has shown that despite the focus on experiences, the fundamental issue of the problematic definition of experience remains (Caru and Cova, 2003). This issue has also resulted in questions over what type/kind of experience to offer to the consumers which has various interpretations from both the academe and practitioners. With the placed importance on the experiential aspect of consumption, focus has shifted to the role of emotions in consumption. It is noted, however, that the identity and symbolic function of consumption has received less attention from the researchers. Experience marketing has also turned its attention to creating emotional ties with the consumers along with providing them with memorable, meaningful experiences. Again, this has resulted in various interpretations from practitioners and academe.

Tourist experiences as pioneer examples of the experience economy have already considered the experiential aspect of consumption. However, as the literature review revealed, most of the tourism researchers employ the view of traditional marketing of services transaction (Li and Petrick, 2008). The destination branding is a significant development in tourism marketing (Morgan et al, 2002); however it follows the classical theory of branding of products and hence experience is not the focus. It however pursues the same experience outcome as that of experiential marketing - of creating emotional ties with consumer and providing memorable experiences. One of the challenges of destination branding is to undertake an extensive research that would assist the destination marketing organisation to identify what the brand of their destination is.

The thesis argues that the use of blogs can contribute to better understanding of the fundamental issue of what constitutes a consumption/tourist experience and provide insights for experience marketing and destination/place marketing. Hence the main objective is:

To contribute to the understanding of consumption and tourist experiences through the discourse analysis of their travel blogs.

The following research questions will be addressed:

a. How are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs?

b. How are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process?

c. What are the implications of using travel blogs as research data for destination/place marketing and experience marketing?

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed four key concepts that the thesis will base its contribution to the literature of consumption experience, tourist experience, experience marketing and destination/place marketing. The reviews of the first two concepts have highlighted research gaps in understanding what constitutes these experiences and the researchers' effort to measure the outcome of experience. The potentials of the use of travel blogs in understanding these two concepts were enumerated. The concept of experience marketing and destination/place marketing were reviewed to investigate how experience as an offering has been marketed and sold in the general consumption context and tourism consumption context. Likewise, the potential use o f travel blogs for creating or re-branding destination brands has been highlighted. The last section has summarised all these research gaps that need to be addressed and identified the research objectives and research questions of the thesis.

Chapter 3. The Potentials of Blogs in Understanding Consumption and Tourist Experiences

3.0 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the potentials of blogs/travel blogs in understanding consumption and tourism experiences. Blogs can be considered as a form of consumer narrative; hence this chapter starts with a section on consumer narratives and travel narratives, highlighting their value in understanding consumption and tourist experiences. It is followed by an overview of the blogging phenomenon as a popular web technology that has various functions and easily accessible to the public and researchers. The section on travel blogs provides an overview of the extant literature outlining how tourism researchers have started exploring the potentials of travel blogging for providing insights of marketing and management. The chapter closes by revisiting the research objectives and research questions, and a theoretical framework that maps the contribution of the research.

3. 1 The narratives in consumption and tourism experiences

This section provides an overview of the extant literature on consumer narratives and travel narratives. It demonstrates the use of narratives in understanding consumption and tourism experiences. The consumer narratives section provides a brief overview of the use of narratives in marketing and consumer research while the travel narratives section is a more detailed discussion of the importance of travel narratives to tourists and researchers.

An in-depth understanding of narratives (both consumption and travel) will provide a better understanding of why tourists or consumers talk about their experiences.

3.1.1 Consumer narratives

Narratives have been introduced into consumer research because of the perceived important role of narratives to individuals. Narratives are the most important means by which experiences are made meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988; Shankar et al, 2001) and studies of narratives can assist management in formulating their strategies (Thomspson, 1997). According to Pace (2008), use of narratives in the field of marketing can be categorised into: marketing (in the broader sense), advertising, brand and consumer. For example, Fournier (1998) reported that consumers' stories about their consumption experiences of brands and products have been assigned roles to brands (Kretz and De Valck, 2010). With advertising, narratives are used to persuade consumers through a plot that shows how a problem can be solved by a hero (product or brand) (Pace, 2008). Table 3.1 summarises the relationship between narrative analysis and marketing/consumer behaviour.

Table 3.1 Narratives in Marketing

Marketing fields	Key concepts	References
Marketing (in the broader sense)	Novels might be regarded as marketing studies or a repository of marketing insights. Marketing is about writing. Literary criticism as a marketing tool.	Brown (2005a, b) and Patterson and Brown (2005)
Advertising	Ads use rhetorical tools to convey meanings. Ads can be studied through literary criticism.	Stern (1989, 1995), Scott (1994a, b), Escalas (2007)
Brand	Brands are told through stories. Brands are stories themselves. Brand literacy: the consumer is able to discern and understand those stories.	Shankar et al (2001), Twitchell (2004); Bengtsson and Fuat Firat (2006)
Consumer	Consumers write introspective narrative account of their own experiences and feelings.	Stern et al (1998), Patterson (2005), Caru and Cova (2006) and Hackley (2007)

Adapted from Pace (2008: 216)

Shankar et al (2001) identified that consumer researchers have used narrative ideas to aid the interpretation process of consumption texts; these included Hirschman (1988), Stern (1995), Brown and Reid (1997), Grayson (1997), Thompson, (1997), and Stern et al (1998). It is noted that these researchers have adopted various approaches in narratives as shown in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Narrative Typology

Approach	Focuses on	Examples
Reference and temporal order	The relationship between the succession of happenings and its textual representation. Assumes a correspondence between language and reality	Bush et al (1997) Brown and Reid (1997) Stern et al (1998)
Textual coherence and structure	How language is used to create meaning through the use of grammatical devices (metaphors)	Stern (1995)
Narrative functions	How narratives "work" to create: a sense of one's self or social processes or institutions or representations of cultures	Boje (1991) Stern (1995) Thompson (1997) Barry and Elmes (1997) Deuten and Rip (2000) Dunford and Jones (2000)

Adapted from Shankar et al (2001:441)

The textual coherence and structure and narrative functions approaches can provide insights of how consumers describe their consumption experiences in terms of what language can express their feelings in a consumption experience, and the narrative functions would signify how they use these narratives to contribute to their sense of identity or how they make meaning out of their experiences. Schriffin (1996) argued that the ability of narrative to verbalise and situate experience as text provides a resource for the display of self and identity. Escalas (2004) observed that narratives are able to create meaning via their structure with the relational structure and temporal dimension of stories as the enabling factors of meaning creation. Some researchers (Kliene et al, 1995; Thompson et al, 1990) theorised that consumers use narratives to understand their consumption experiences and to create their self-identities (Escala, 2004).

Consumers are readers of narratives and writers of introspective accounts of their own experiences and feelings; consumers are storytellers (Pace, 2008). Likewise, Caru and Cova (2006) emphasised that researchers should investigate the introspective narratives that the subject writes as it conveys deeper meaning of a consumption experience. Pace (2008) reminds that a story to be considered as an introspective account should be conceived and issued by the sender with the intent to convey a meaning to an undefined audience. This specific issue can be addressed with the emergence of personal websites and blogs which some researchers described as offering new space for the study of unleashed consumers' narratives (Schau and Gilly, 2003; Kozinets et al, 2010; Pace, 2008). This technology is also coupled with the observation of Caru and Cova (2008) on the rise of "self-reflexive" individuals who tell their stories and explain their actions using their own words. The authors consider this as extremely useful in understanding the hedonic and subjective dimension of experience; a way of understanding non-visible and rarely stated elements that are found in experiential marketing. Blogging technology provides another vehicle for self-reflexive individuals to talk about themselves and their experiences.

Caru and Cova (2008), however, warned that not all consumption experiences are easily described by consumers. They pointed out that consumers caught up in a gripping experience are incapable of directly verbalising everything that they sense whilst involved in an activity or concentrating on a task; in addition, it is impossible to directly verbalise one's emotions without disrupting the event (such as a classical music concert) which is also the same for non-verbal behaviour which is also extremely constrained in this kind of experience. Hence, they concluded that researchers still rely on a consumer's *posteriori* (from what comes after) verbalisation of their experiences. Furthermore, Bamberg (2006) advised marketers to recognise that there are "big stories" and "small stories" as they represent very different approaches to narrative inquiry (Caru and Cova, 2008). Figure 3.1 shows these two types of stories in consumption experiences.

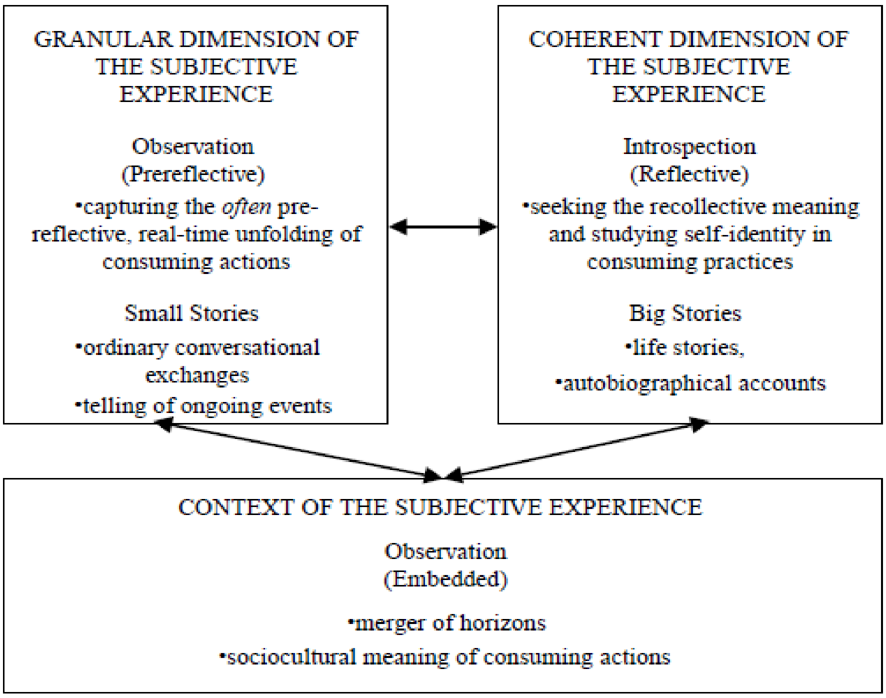


Figure 3.1 Complete ethnographic approach to consumption experiences

Source: Caru and Cova (2008:17)

Big stories which include life stories and autobiographical accounts are typically elicited for a range of purposes such as study of self-identity and memorable experiences; while the small stories tend to be identified in everyday talk partly because they were defined as a format for telling/talk-in-interaction during participant observation. The authors asserted that these two kinds of stories are complementary and not interchangeable. Freeman (2006) argued that big stories entail a problematic distance from everyday life and may be said to embody life "on a holiday" but these stories create opportunities for understanding what are largely unavailable in the immediacy of the moment (Caru and Cova, 2008). These stories are used for analysing moments that are different from daily routine and rituals. The travel blogs that will be used in this study can be classified into these stories; however; as the study focuses on long-haul and multiple destination travellers, their blogs can also be classified as small stories where everyday activities are part of their ongoing travel which is also part of their life stories. If that is the case, the use of travel blogs can be advantageous to researchers especially those who will approach it from the ethnography perspectives. As Martin and Woodside (2011) argued, trip memories are holistic stories of interconnected events.

The next section discusses the travel narratives in detail, while highlighting how it differs from the consumer narrative and how it can contribute to the life stories of an individual, as the narrative is memorable and reinforces self-identity

3.1.2. Travel narratives

Within the context of tourist consumption, narratives also played a significant role. According to McCabe and Foster (2006), narratives are fundamental in the construction of tourist experiences. Narratives have shaped and structured touristic experience, and in turn the narrated memories of travellers have stirred the desire for touristic exploits from one generation to another (Bendix, 2002). Tung and Ritchie (2011), referring to storytelling (a prominent type of narrative), identified several factors that contribute to the importance of storytelling in understanding tourist experiences:

a. Tourists create stories during their experiences and then present these stories to others as memories of their trip (Moscardo, 2010)

b. Stories told by others (locals, service staff they interact with) affect the overall destination's brand (Hollenbeck, Peters and Zinkhan, 2008)

c. Story telling shapes memories and impressions of events over time (McGregor and Holmes,1999)

d. Stories are stored in and retrieved from one's episodic memory and specific indices of stories such as the location and individuals involved in experience are not only the touch points of narratives (Woodside, 2010); but they are also the event-specific knowledge of episodic memories which are the basic elements of memory formation (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000).

Travel narratives are not just about travel experiences but about the self. Olney (1988) calls stories a second reading of experience; stories we tell about our lives and that they are self-reflective. "Telling about oneself is like making up a story about who we are and what we are, what's happened, and why we are doing it" (Bruner, 2002:64). Moreover, Woodside, et al (2007) emphasised that stories are what people bring back from travels and destination visits. In fact, Haldrup and Larsen (2003) argued that although touristic autobiographical narratives are constrained by spatial and temporal limitations of the tourism experience, they incorporate selective memories and experiences of our everyday live. These stories are reports to self and possibly to others, and can be considered an *emic* interpretation of how, why, when and where events unfold, with what immediate and long term-consequences (Woodside, Cruickshank and Dehuang, 2007). It is clear that travel narratives are not merely records of travel experiences; they can indeed be considered as “big stories” identified by Caru and Cova (2008) that are important for studies of self-identity and memorable experiences.

Noy (2002) also pointed out that the significant numbers of individuals producing travel narratives indicate, as Turner (1980) has suggested, a unique social phenomenon where personal stories are abundant and more importantly constitutive. He cited the narratives of Israeli trekkers which he observed as usually structured as pilgrimage experiences: this is indicative of a created and re-created community of adventurers, of tellers, listeners, leavers and returners, persuasioners and sharers; a collective and normative rite of passage which is inherently discursive (Noy, 2002: 266). It is clear that as individuals turn to blogging, these blogs could have created and re-created the same community with participants with various roles. Being a member of a particular travel blog website clearly automatically puts an individual in a certain community of bloggers.

Travel narratives are fundamental to self-identity and self-change. Tourist experiences have become narrative resources used to perform and (re)establish identity (Noy, 2007). McCabe and Foster (2006) argued that a person’s identity can be communicated through narratives. The authors have pointed out that an analysis of narrative structures contributes to understanding what tourists do when they talk about their experience and that it can include talk about their identities and their worlds. Moreover, experiences of travel or holidays achieve iconic status in everyday lives and are communicated through the stories of life into lived identities (McCabe and Foster, 2006:194). Desforges (2000) emphasised how touristic stories "are used to present new self-identities" (Noy, 2007). For example, Noy (2004) observed how the narratives of backpackers are more than description of their activities and achievements. They reflect the profound self-change that the narrators reported to have undergone as well as their identity construction. In travel narratives, backpackers re-create themselves as changed persons: "the journey supplies more than mere recreation and even more than a profound experience per se: rather, it is downright transformative" (Noy, 2007). Due to the nature of travel experiences, it is inevitable that travel narratives will better demonstrate transformation of self than consumer narratives would.

Travel narratives concretise the meaning of the trip to the narrators. As Bruner (1990) posited, a narrative is the natural mode through which human beings make sense of their lives (McAdams, 1996). Jaworksi and Pritchard (2005) similarly argued that narratives are crucial for exploration and understanding of how meanings have been constructed and used across the totality of human experience, including tourism experiences. Elliot (2004) even pointed out how these narratives have a clear sequential order that connects actions in a meaningful way for a specific audience, thereby offering insights about the world and/or about people's experiences thereof.

Lastly, an important form of travel narratives is travel which has converged very early in the history of travel writing (Bohls and Duncan, 2005). This can also provide some perspective in understanding the travel-blogging behaviour of tourists. Travel writing is more than reporting about places, people and culture; it is also about self and their world or how the authors see “others” (Blanton; 2002; Bohls and Duncan, 2005; Hogan and Holland, 2003: Schulz-Forberg, 2005). Travel writing strives to understand the self as much as the foreign (Schulz-Forberg, 2005). Roberson (2007) also asserted that travel writing involves the author making sense of his experience and negotiating “new identities”, and these are also evident in travel blogs. To consider blogs as a modern form of travel writing may also remind researchers that stories that would be included would carry more value than everyday life blogs and provide signals of what actions may be embedded within them, as mentioned above, such as talking about the foreign and the self.

The importance of narratives cannot be emphasised enough in the literature of tourism. A sound contribution from Moscardo et al (2010) further concretised the value of narratives in tourist experiences. Figure 3.2 presents this framework. She proposed that a framework for understanding where stories and themes might fit into the overall system surrounding a tourist experience can be helpful in integrating various approaches in understanding tourist research as well as suggesting further areas for research. It provides clear four areas for research and examination: a) role of stories in effective destination branding; b) the role of stories in destination choice; c) significance of stories told by others, and d) connection between tourist stories and sustainability.

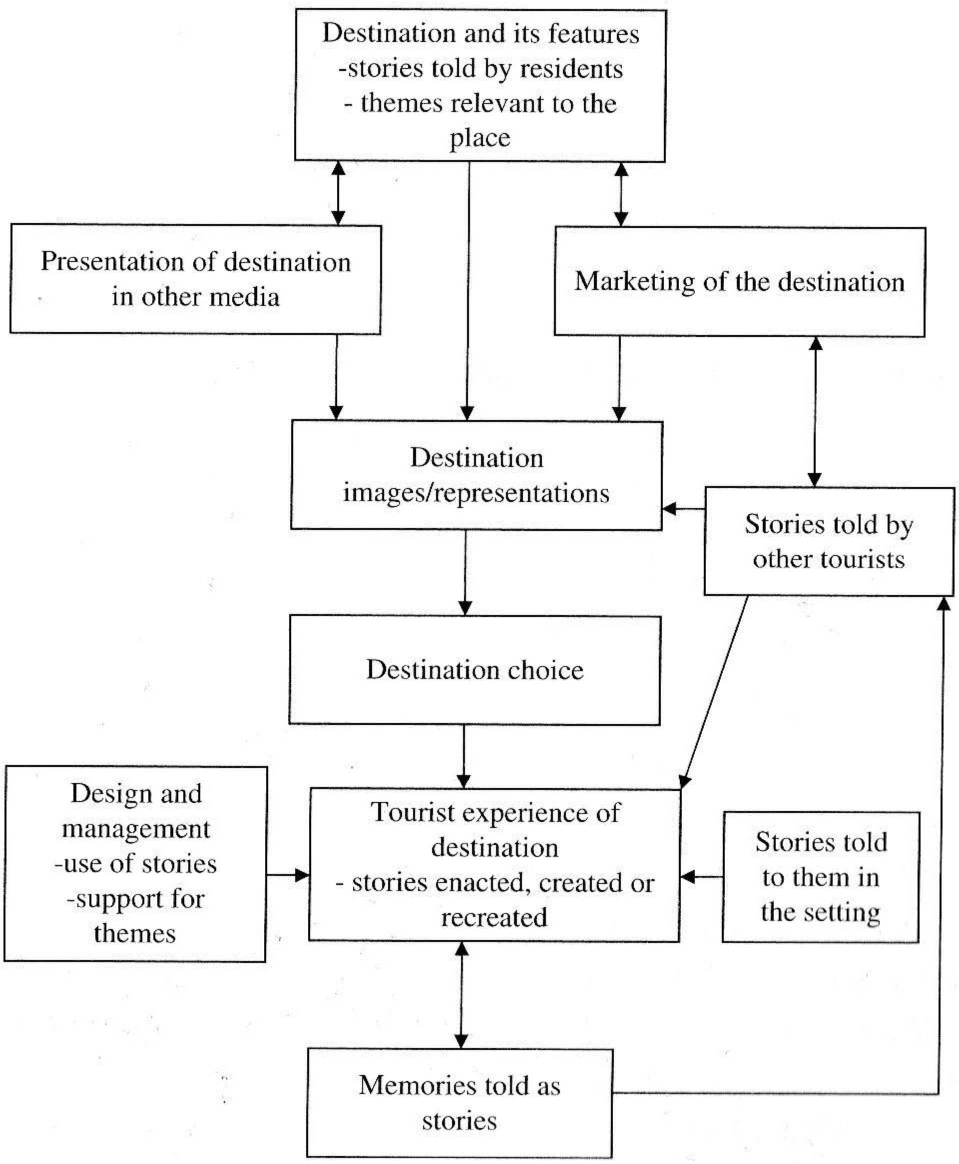


Figure 3.2 Framework for considering role of stories in tourist experiences

Source: Moscardo (2010: 51)

The managerial implications of this framework outlined by Moscardo (2010) can also be considered in the use of travel blogs which also emerged in various parts of the tourist experience. A number of applied directions include (Moscardo, 2010:55):

a. The use of stories in the development of destination images is likely to produce higher levels of tourist awareness and intention to visit. Stories can be about the destination itself, its residents or from other visitors about their own experiences of the place visited.

b. Stories and themes can also be used to organise information for presentation to tourists when they arrive in the setting relating to both specific attractions and the overall destination.

c. It can be proposed that providing tourists with opportunities to participate in the re-enactment or creation of stories as part of their activities while in the destination is likely to support many of the factors that have been shown to enhance experience development and evaluation.

To summarise, the section on consumer narratives provided a brief overview of the different uses of consumer narratives in the field of marketing and consumer research. It has also established that there are various approaches and focuses in its use as seen in the different examples given. The travel narratives section has established how narratives signify (re)creation of self-identity and indicate transformation of self (Desforges, 2000; McCabe and Foster, 2006; Noy, 2002, 2007). Travel writing was acknowledged to be similar to travel blogging and hence it can provide another perspective for examining blogs. Moscardo's (2010) framework of the role of stories in tourist experiences further confirms the valuable contribution this thesis can bring to understanding tourist experiences.

The next section gives an overview of blogging as a phenomenon. It highlights various definitions of blogging, types, and blogging behaviour and motivations.

3.2 The blogging phenomenon

Blogs are the social media equivalent of personal web pages and can come in a multitude of different variations, from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area (Kretz and de Valck, 2010:314). This thesis drew on literature from various perspectives such as information science and management and computer-mediated communication to provide an overview of blogging motivations and practices that would influence how blogs will be used for consumer narrative analysis.

3.2.1 Definitions, anatomy and types of blogs

Weblogs also referred to as blogs are frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Herring et al, 2004). Blogs are "virtual diaries created by individuals and stored on the web for anyone to access" (Sharda and Ponnada, 2007: 2). Villoria, Anzuola and Diaz (2006) defined a blog as basically a sequence of posts that are arranged chronologically. Arnold et al (2007) quoted a dictionary definition of blogs from Merriam–Webster Online as a website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.

The anatomy of blog along with the size of the blogosphere has evolved over the years. Stefanac (2007) recounted that the earliest blog pages were simple and made of barely formatted entries presented in reverse chronological order and may or may not have included a date stamp. She claimed that over time, blogs have evolved to reflect the complexities of their authors. She said that a typical blog entry would generally include a headline, date and time stamps, and the author's name if it is not a group blog; links to reader comments; a permalink and a trackback URL with photos videos and audio elements as well. Search boxes, links to newsfeeds, collections of past posts in weekly or monthly archives, categorical archives, blogrolls, links to recent or featured discussions about a post, blog statistics, polls, a calendar, a shopping cart, ads, and links to static pages containing biographical or reference information are now found among many blogs in addition to its typical entry (Stefanac, 2007).

With regards to types, the literature review revealed various types of blogs in terms of their content, purpose, authors and intended audience. These are presented in Table 3.3. There is no set definition of blogs that is universally accepted. In the same manner, the classifications of blogs are different for every author. It is observed though that the anatomy of blogs is described similarly by several authors; however, one common observation that was put forward by researchers is that blogs are different from other internet developments such as emails, personal web pages and websites.

Table 3.3 Types of blogs

Authors	Types of blogs
Blood (2002)	1. Filter blogs (contents are external to the blogger such as world events, online happenings, etc) 2. Personal blogs (contents are internal such as blogger's thoughts and internal workings) 3. Notebook blogs (may contain external or internal content, distinguished by longer, focused essays)
Herring et al (2004)	1. Knowledge blogs or K-logs (created as environment for knowledge sharing) 2. Private individual blogs (created as a vehicle for self-expression and self-empowerment)
Krishnamurthy (2002)	1. Personal journals (such as Livejournal.com) 2. Collaborative content creation (blogging collaboratively about personal matters) 3. Filter blogs (blogs select and provide commentary on information from the web) 4. Community blog (like Metafilter)
Godin (2005)	1. Cat blogs (personal idiosyncratic blogs) 2. Boss blogs (blogs for people who work together; used as communication tools within the organisation) 3. Viral blogs (blogs that want to spread ideas)
Wood-Black and Pasquarelli (2007)	From the education area: 1. Professional blogs (providing specific examples and references that help readers understand particular risks of various actions. 2. Journal-type blog (particularly helpful in viewing particular situations and tracking the ups and downs of projects) 3. Reminisce-type blogs (for sharing lessons learned, pitfalls and successes in learning as well as the emotions that were experienced)

Developed for this thesis

Blogs are distinguished from other websites in their dynamism, reverse chronological presentation and dominant use of the first person (Tremayne, 2007, p.viii). Mortensen and Walker (2002) cited Evan Williams, one of the creators of the popular blogging tool Blogger, on his succinct definition of the blog concept as being about three things: frequency, brevity and personality. The definitions of a blog are not as important as its functions for its users. It can be defined in any other way in terms of its elements, technical features, but for the users, blogs would have subjective definitions based on how they use the blogs or their motivations to use them. Hence, it should not be much of an issue if people were to have different versions of definitions, anatomy or types.

3.2.2 Blogging motivations

Blogging is a multi-motivational activity (Nardi, 2004) and bloggers are likely to blog out of heterogenous motivations (Shen et al, 2007). Huang et al (2007) identified two types of behaviour in blogging: interaction-oriented and information-oriented. Hsu and Lin (2008), on the other hand, examined blogging as a knowledge-sharing behaviour and social activity. Table 3.4 presents blogging motivations enumerated by various authors.

Huang et al's (2007) model demonstrates that motivations and blogging behaviours are related. Self-expression, life-documenting and commenting on other blogs are seen as interaction-oriented behaviours (see Figure 3.3 for the model). According to the authors, this model was developed to contribute to a systematic analysis of the factors behind blogging activities, and requires more exploration from other researchers.

Table 3.4 Blogging Motivations

Authors	Blogging Motivations
Nardi et al (2004)	a. Updating others on activities and whereabouts b. Expressing opinions to influence others c. Seeking others' opinions and feedback d. "thinking by writing" e. Releasing emotional tension
Papacharisi (2005)	a. Making money b. Entertainment c. Professional advancement d. Supporting a cause e. Completing course works
Lenhart and Fox (2006)	a. Sharing practical knowledge or skills to others b. Motivating other people to action c. Networking and meeting new people d. Storing important resources and information
Huang et al (2007)	a. Self-expression b. Life-documenting c. Commenting d. Community forum participation e. Information seeking
Hsu and Lin (2008)	a. Altruism b. Expected/reciprocal benefit c. Reputation d. Trust e. Expected relationships.

Developed for this thesis

Miura and Yamashita (2007) equated blogging motivation to benefits and rewards those bloggers would gain by engaging in the activity, which is more similar to that identified by Hsu and Lin (2008). Self-expression and social networking are the most popular motivations of blogging examined by researchers (Fun and Wagner, 2008; Schmidt, 2007; Trammell, Tarkowski and Sapp, 2006). However, it is also observed that these authors vary in the way they measure these motivations which can be attributed to the varied motivations of blogging, diverse topics, and content of blogs.

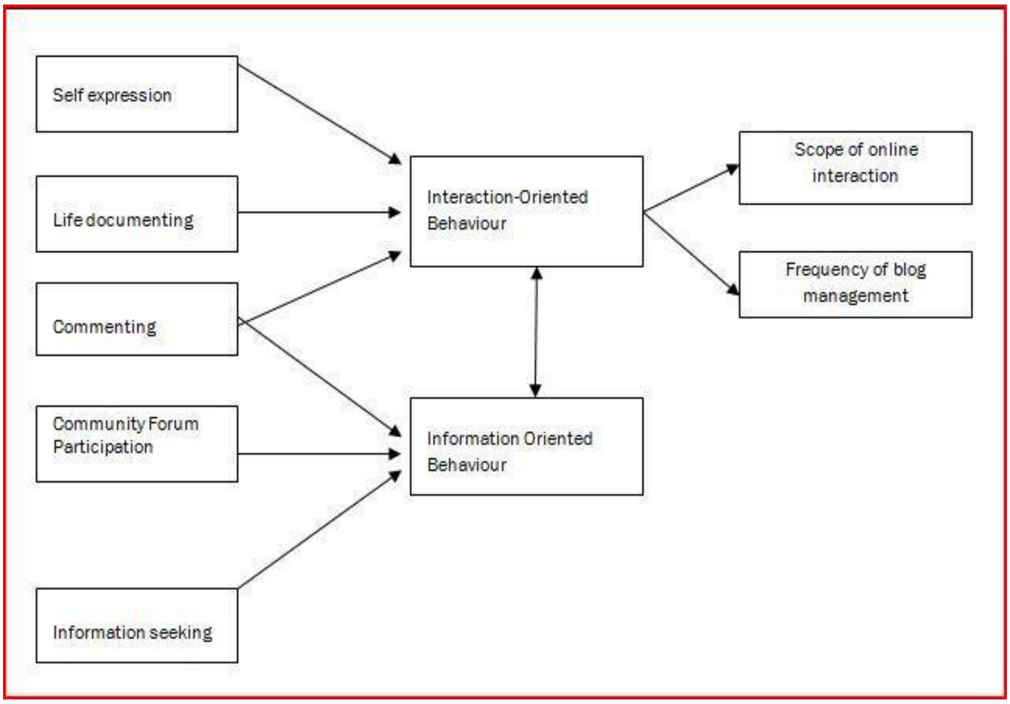


Figure 3.3 Model of blogging motivations and behaviour

Source: Huang et al (2007)

A close examination of these various motivations from the existing studies (Huang et al, 2007; Hsu and Lin, 2008: Liu et al, 2007; Miura and Yamashita, 2007; Stefanone and Jang, 2007) revealed that they can be classified into the different functions of blogs and integrate overlapping motivations identified by different authors. The functions of the blogs implying how bloggers use the blogs can also be another way of understanding their motivations. For instance, this list of functions presented in Table 3.5 provides a clearer picture of what may motivate travel bloggers in posting about their experiences.

Table 3.5. Functions and motivations for blogging

Functions	Motivations
Identity Construction	Self-representation, self-expression, reputation, self-concept
Life Documenting	Keeping diary, keeping record of events and experiences
Social Networking	Meeting new people and making friends, maintaining relationship
Information Sharing	Sharing knowledge, information, comments and opinions
Communication	Keeping updated with family and friends
Entertainment	Killing/passing time, entertaining self and others
Rewards	Monetary awards, profit
Improvement of Skills	Improvement of writing, photography and video-making skills as well as information-handling skills

Developed for this dissertation

Lu and Hsiao (2007) have emphasised that the continuous use of blogs should be monitored as, although blogs may be rising in number, it could be that they are neglected in that some of these blogs are no longer active. They have also identified that factors such as knowledge, self-efficacy and personal outcome expectations could affect continuous blogging. There is a need to monitor why bloggers continuously blog. As blogging has become part of the consumption experience of consumers, it is important to monitor whether they have shifted to another form of sharing their experiences such as other social networking sites like Facebook and micro-blogging facilities such as Twitter. As seen from the model above, there are other social influence factors that can affect blogging intentions of individuals, hence losing them as important source of information of their experiences. For example, twitter and Facebook which are more accessible to a wider audience could be an alternative media for what they can blog about.

3.2.3 Blogging behaviours

The behaviour of bloggers is another important aspect of the blogging phenomenon that may provide valuable insights to marketers and researchers. Bloggers were referred to as the creators, owners and managers who produce and consume the internet content (Huang et al, 2004). There is little literature understanding bloggers' behaviour beyond their socio-demographic profile. Hence, Koh and Kim (2003) had to ask these questions: "Who exactly are the bloggers and what do they do?" (Huang et al, 2004).

There are empirical works on bloggers' behaviours such as of those of Lenhart and Fox (2006) and they reported the following media and communication habits of bloggers in the USA (n=233) as summarised in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Sample Blogging Behaviour

- Majority of bloggers (79%) have a high-speed connection to the internet at home and more than half are between 18 and 29 years old.
- Eighty four percent of bloggers go online daily, while 64% say they go online several times a day from home.
- Bloggers are highly likely to read news online and gather news from diverse sources. They also pursue non-partisan news sources.
- Bloggers are amongst the most enthusiastic communicators of the modern age, taking advantage of nearly every opportunity to communicate.
- Bloggers also like to create and share what they make; 77% of bloggers have shared something online that they created themselves, like their own artwork, photos, stories or videos.
- A typical blogger spends five hours per week updating his or her main blog. Of these, 40% describe blogging as a hobby that they enjoy working on when they can, and 13% say that their blog is very important to them and describe it as a big part of their life.

Source: Lenhart and Fox (2006)

There are a few empirical works that observed the presence of groups within the blogging community based on different criteria (Fun and Wagner, 2008; Wang and Fessenmaier, 2004). Hence, the following groups were identified in some studies which could prove valuable information for companies as a basis for market segmentation. Table 3.7 shows examples of groups based on the level of use of blogs (Fun and Wagner (2008) and perceived benefits and incentives perceived by bloggers at an online travel blog website (Wang and Fessenmaier, 2004).

Table 3.7 Examples of Groups within Blogging Communities

Authors	Groups of bloggers
Fun and Wagner (2008)	Habitual or enthusiastic: highest intensity users, who had formed a strong habit of visiting their weblogs and others' weblogs; described as that they "have to access" the blogs several times a day; and write their own entries and check if there was feedback
	Active users: less intensive in their blogs use; observed to visit blogs regularly like once a day or once every two or three days during leisure time, reading their friends' blogs and posting comments as well as posting own journals; keep connected with friends but less addicted to blogging.
	Personal bloggers: use blogs as a truly personal diary, shared partially with friends and rarely with public; technology that enables privacy as well as easy publishing, archival and access are more important to this group.
	Blogging lurkers: those that kept a blog but rarely or never post on it as they had little interest in sharing their own stories but were eager to learn about their friends; have the least need for technology of blogs; maintain a blog mainly to be able to subscribe to others weblogs.
Wang and Fessenmaier (2004); adopted from Kozinets (1999)	Tourist: a member who lacks strong social ties to other members in the community and who seldom makes active contributions to the community
	Mingler: a member who maintains somewhat strong social ties with the community group, and sometimes make active contributions to the community
	Devotee: a member who has strong ties with the community group, is enthusiastic about community activities and contributes often to the community
	Insider: a member who maintains very strong social and personal ties with the community group and is very active in contributing to the community.

Developed for this thesis

Indeed blogging behaviour can allow researchers the opportunity to create a typology based on various criteria. These groupings of bloggers may be questioned for their simplicity; however they are an adequate example for grouping this huge number of bloggers beyond their socio-demographic profile. There are other features of blogs that may also be investigated in understanding the bloggers and grouping them such as their use of different technology within the blog and the content of their blogs. Huffaker and Calvert (2005) suggested that language, disclosure of personal information, and emotive features (emoticons) are common features of blogging. Trammell et al (2006), on the other hand, used hyperlinks connecting content on the internet, feedback mechanism and the content of blogs for understanding how bloggers express themselves. Nevertheless, the point that is being suggested here is that although bloggers and blogs seem to be an unstructured, groupless people, yet that is certainly not the case.

It is clear that blogging which was previously considered unstructured (Kumar et al, 2003) does in fact possess a coherent structure that may be used to understand the bloggers and blogs. Moreover, it can provide opportunities for companies to identify market segments and direct their communication campaigns towards them. These bloggers, as mentioned earlier, are creators, owners and managers and consumers of internet content (Huang et al, 2004); hence they may represent voices - opinions - of other consumers. They are not only putting out narratives for others to read but they are also building virtual online communities which rely on each other for information and trust each other based on their experiences of a certain company or brand. Their narratives are more powerful than ever; hence the need to pay them adequate attention. There are a number of questions that are important in understanding them and maximising opportunities they might present to companies; such as

a) what are the relationships among these bloggers? and b) are there opinion leaders among them? Blogs represent a more powerful form of the traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) communication.

3.2.4 Blogs and consumer research

Several researchers (Lee et al, 2008; Lin and Huang, 2006; Litvin et al, 2008; Thevenot, 2007) assert that the blog is becoming a more influential medium and a new marketing power (Huang et al, 2010). Blogs as consumer narratives have been explored already for their various characteristics; these include online communities formed out of blogging (Vrana and Zafiropolous, 2011; Watson et al, 2008); the content of blogs (Leung, Law and Lee, 2011; Martin and Woodside, 2011), and their impacts on businesses as an electronic word-of-mouth tool and how businesses may respond to it (Hills and Cairncross, 2011; Keng and Ting, 2009; Kozinets et al, 2010).

Huang et al (2007) emphasised the importance of monitoring the motivations in addition to the conventional demographic variables in market segmentation, target selection, positioning, and detailed message design and execution. They demonstrated how each blogging motivation can be considered as communication opportunities for brands as shown in Table 3.8:

Table 3.8 Managing Brand Communications via blogs by addressing various blogging motivations

Blogging motivations	Communication Opportunities for Brands
Self-expression	Provide platforms (e.g. events, competitions) to encourage brand-related self-expressions Explore opportunities to link such self-expressions with the brand's communication messages for conventional media
Life-documenting	Create brand-related experiences for bloggers to document Make bloggers' brand experiences a part of the brand's experiences (e.g., have a meta-blog run by the brand that emphatically documents brand-related personal anecdotes recorded by bloggers
Commenting	Locate the influential commentator blogs; subscribe to their RSS feeds so as to sense the pulses of the blogosphere Make quick and proactive responses to unfriendly comments Invite bloggers to join the brands' public relations activities
Forum-Participation	Encourage staff to participate in brand-related online communities Sponsor forums to discuss the brand Provide stimulating information for discussion to keep the dialogue ongoing
Information seeking	Pay attention to SEO (search engine optimisation) on blog-specific search engines Provide rich information and easy-to-find paths for eyeballs to converge Synthesise internal and external pro-brand blogging activities on the brand's main website.

Source: Huang et al (2007)

It is clear that the use of blogs for understanding consumption and travel experiences are more complex because of their many functions. Although blogs can be considered consumer narratives; blogging is first and foremost a social activity (Nardi et al, 2004). Hence, it allows two types of behaviour from the bloggers as identified by Huang et al (2007); interaction-oriented and information-oriented, which would definitely influence the way they reconstruct their experiences. Blogs although can be considered a consumer narrative are more powerful because of the opportunities they offer to both bloggers and researchers. Indeed, in-depth understanding of the blogging phenomenon and the research context (such as travel blogging) needs to be established before their potential for understanding experiences can be truly achieved.

The next section presents blogging among tourists. In 2008, travel was ranked among the top 18 topics monitored by Technocrati.com which is equivalent to 28% of the total numbers of blogs monitored by the website (Bosangit et al, 2009).

3.3 Travel blogging

This section presents the review of extant literature on travel blogging. It is divided into three parts: a) a discussion of the characteristics of travel blogs; b) an enumeration of the potentials of the travel blog as research data and research gaps, and c) a discussion of the challenges in using travel blogs for research and several suggested solutions to address these issues.

3.3.1 Travel blogs' characteristics

The blogs produced that are relevant to the tourism industry are called travel blogs. Puhringer and Taylor (2008) defined travels blogs as those forums and individual entries which relate to planned, current or past travel. They are the equivalent of personal online diaries and are made up from one or more individual entries strung together by a common theme (for example, a trip itinerary or the purchase of a round-the-world ticket) (Puhringer and Taylor, 2008:179).

Blogs are usually presented in reverse chronological order via a web page interface (Wenger, 2008). They have the following structure: header (with information about the author, title and date of entry); body of the blog (may contain texts, images and other media files); footer (tools for readers to comment and enter into a dialogue with the blog author and other readers), and links (connecting to other sources of information available in the web.

Some blogs are hosted on provider sites which will be referred to here as travel blog websites. Schmallegger and Carson (2008) also identified the following websites as the most prominent ones among public travel blog sites: travelblog.org, travelpod.com, blog.realtravel.com, yourtraveljournal.com and travelpost.com. Some travel blogs were also observed to be within virtual travel communities such as realtravel.com, igougo.com, travelpod.com and virtualtourist.com, Tripadvisor.com, holidaycheck.com and cosmotourist.de are popular as specialised customer review sites. Well-known travel guides like lonelyplanet.com, community.roughguides.com and frommers.com have also provided space for tourists to publish travel stories. This results to the difficulty in estimating the number of blogs on travel experiences. In a reviewof other blogs sites, it was also observed that blogs on travel experiences may be posted in diary-like websites such as livejournal.com or bloggerspot.com.

The most obvious form of blogs in tourism appears to be blogs from travellers who publish their personal stories and recommendations online in the form of travel stories and recommendations in the form of travel diaries or product reviews (Schmallegger and Carson 2008: 101). Descriptions of climate cuisine, transportation, attractions or region-specific stereotypes are the main stories in travel blogs (Carson, 2008; Pan et al, 2007; Wenger, 2008). Travel blogs found in travel communities, travel forums or on review sites mainly discuss specific items such as accommodation, restaurants or service quality (Waldhor, 2007).

Travel blogs are considered by tourists as records of their travel experiences. Blogs are rich narratives that contain details of experiences from multiple guests and provide a great deal of useful information to the blog reader (Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini, 2011). Jansson (2007) pointed out how blogs have provided opportunities to compose a personal script based on very specific sources of knowledge and, most importantly, have reduced the risk of cultural shock or alienation. Carson (2008), however, noted that blogs are not always rich in detail. He noted that destinations that are less familiar to the blogger may be written about more as these are opportunities to provide unique content and likewise, special interest trips may be more likely to generate blogs than general interest trips. He observed that blogs' content may also be relatively shallow, providing little detail about satisfaction, expectations or recommendations, with authors merely describing where theywent and what they did, and posting only the broadest comments about the impact that the experiences had on them.

An important feature of blogs are their functions that allow tourists to share their experiences with others easily by updating their blogs directly even from mobile phones (moblogging), or capture a moment or scenery and upload it directly to their blogs (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008). Tussayadiah and Fesenmaier (2008) emphasised that shared images help tourists at the post-visit stage in the recollection process and the remembrance of past experiences. In this case, blogs can also be considered something for the tourist when they get home; as Crang (1997) observed, tourist events are not so much experienced in themselves but rather for their future memory. Likewise, Jannson (2007) emphasised how through this new media including blogs, "the magic of a leisure trip can be reinforced and prolonged through the creation of ideal ensembles of representation and through the immediate sharing of extraordinary multi-sensory experiences". In a blog, narratives and images can be reworked, rearranged and idealised into a framework for a touristic memoryscape in a website, photo-sharing sites and weblogs that are consumed by a wider audience (Jansson, 2007).

The role of social media in tourist experiences is emphasised by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008) in a model showing the mediation of tourist experiences with technology-assisted mediators (see Figure 3.4). Mediators refer to images, videos and films that represent destinations. This model emphasises that mediation of experience covers the various stages of tourist experiences.

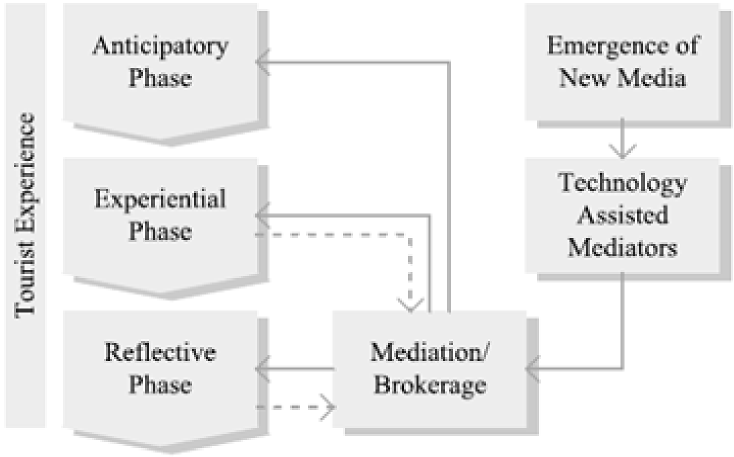


Figure 3.4 Mediation of Tourist Experience with Technology-assisted Mediators

Source: Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008: 26)

3.3.2 Potentials of travel blogs as research data

The use of blogs for marketing and management were highlighted by several authors (Lin and Huang, 2006; Pan et al, 2007; Akehurst, 2008; Schmallegger, and Carson 2008; Mack, et al, 2008, Puhringer and Taylor, 2008; Volo, 2010 and Xiang, 2010). Most of these studies provided empirical validation of the use of travel blogs as sources of information for the destination marketing organisation for understanding their tourists' perceptions, behaviours and activities within a destination as well as its effectiveness for its word-of-mouth communication. Table 3.6 details a few examples of some of the focus of research done on travel blogs.

Table 3.9 Diverse focus of research on travel blogs

Authors	Focus of research
Kurashima et al (2005, 2006)	Geographically mapped tourists' behaviour in urban settings at a specific time and location by extracting tourist experience from blogs
Douglas and Mills (2006)	Brand images communicated by bloggers who had visited the Middle East and North Africa
Pan et al (2007)	Visitor opinions posted on leading travel blog sites via semantic network analysis to gain an understanding of the destination experience
Carson (2008)	Different sources of consumer-generated web content about travel to Australia's Northern Territory; evaluated the authorship, readership and the nature of the content itself
Wenger (2008)	Insights into the use of blogs about travel to Austria for travel recommendations (consumer to consumer) and market research (by destinations and tourism operators)
Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008)	Understanding tourist experiences in their temporal and spatial dimensions
Keng and Ting (2009	Interactivity and perceived similarities between blogs readers and others, and incorporates the concept of customer experiential value of blog users
Volo (2010)	Looked at the space and time continuum and distinguishing experience essence and experience as offering.

Adapted from Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini (2011)

This is not a comprehensive list of the handful of extant literature on travel blogging; the table is presented to demonstrate how travel blogs are used to examine various areas of tourism marketing and management. In addition, and Glover (2012) have very recently pointed out the growing recognition that blogs can affect consumer decisions and destination images, and even reshape the communication networks previously dominated by traditional information suppliers. The power of a blog journal story can serve to influence a substantial number of future visitors and position the destination in the minds of potential future visitors (Woodside et al, 2007). Wegner (2008) asserted that travel blogs are likely to have an increasing influence on word of mouth communication because weblogs in general have become among the more popular forms of online consumer-opinion platforms. Volo (2010), however, citing Pan et al (2007) reminds us that blogs may be regarded as a form of word of mouth but there are also other motivations for producing blogs than merely for communication of product information. More and more travel advertisements are also being posted in blogs and Huang et al (2010) attested that travel blogs carry many internet ads and attract a wide range of bloggers. These included target advertisements (built in by the blog service providers to lead bloggers to click through more information) and placement advertisements (which are posted inside the content of blogs by blog hosts or respondents). In this context, blogs were also suggested to play a positive role in the processing of ad messages which are an influential factor in the purchase intention.

Puhringer and Taylor (2008) on the other hand have identified a range of possible applications for consumer-generated content found in travel blogs that would be useful for destination marketing organisations. These include: a) identifying and monitoring trends in travellers movement to and from the destination such as previous and future stopover locations; b) specific product evaluations and review of service standards; c) event evaluations; d) identifications of product or infrastructure gaps; e) performance reviews of associated products or collaborators, and e) competitor analysis. Akehurst (2008) confirmed that blogs have a value for marketing management, management and marketing research. Laboy and Torchio (2007) and Dellarocas (2003) identified that the use of blogs would include: a) customer profiling; b) customer acquisition; c) customer engagement; d) brand awareness; e) brand reinforcement; f) reputation management, and g) customer services (Akenhurst, 2008).

It is clear that travel blogs are mainly perceived by researchers for their insights to marketing. However, there is less emphasis on using blogs to gain a deeper understanding of tourists' experiences except for Volo (2010) who explored how bloggers write about the essence of experience. The blogs were basically seen as records of travel experiences that could provide information as to what are the strengths and weaknesses of the destination instead of really understanding tourist experiences from the perspectives of the tourists. It thus confirmed that tourism marketing is very much focussed on destination, as described in the previous chapter. Travel blogs as one form of evaluating experience outcomes that could provide travel organisations with the thoughts, feelings and reflections of tourists are not recognised by researchers for their value.

Very few researchers (e.g. Jansson, 2007 and Tussiyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008) have recognised travel blogging as one of the practices of tourists; thus travel blogging is another important behaviour of tourists that needs to be examined. The literature review revealed that compared to the studies on blogs as a phenomenon, there is an absence of studies on the travel bloggers themselves in terms of their blogging behaviour, practices and motivations. It is noted that most of the empirical works profiled the bloggers in the specific area they are studying (Carson 2008; Volo, 2010; Wenger, 2008); however there is no general information as to who those travel bloggers really are, or what are the trips they blog about, which should be fundamental issues for marketers to examine if they are to use blogs as sources of information. This has not gone unnoticed; as Volo (2010) stated, there is very little research carried out on travel and tourism bloggers compared to research on insights about user-generated contents and their potential power as a marketing tool. Akerhurst (2008) also pointed out what other researchers (Carson 2008; Li and Buhalis 2005; Weber and Roehl 1999) have observed already: there is no known published research on the type of tourist or traveller who writes blogs, or on what trip types and destination types are more likely to generate blog content.

The thesis considered this a fundamental issue to be addressed prior to the use of travel blogs for understanding tourist experiences of the bloggers. Hence, the next chapter has tackled this major research gap. The next section, however, outlines the challenges in using travel blogs for research as well as suggested solutions.

3.3.3 Challenges in using travel blogs for research

The value of the use of blogs for research is hindered by several weaknesses that were highlighted by a number of researchers: a) locating and analysing relevant content is time consuming and requires a lot of effort (Carson, 2008; Schmallager and Carson, 2008); b) blogs may have few insights in understanding destination image (Wenger, 2008); c) vastness and diversity of blogs and their idiosyncratic or unorganised style of writing (Bosangit, 2010), and d) issues and problems in blog sampling (Volo, 2010) which may be attributed to the lack of profile of the blogger. In addition to this, Volo, (2010) outlined that investigators have already acknowledged five weaknesses in using blogs which are: a) shortness of text in blogs; b) the difficulty to generalise findings due to the small sample size; c) the issues and problems encountered in blog "sampling"; d) little opportunity for destination marketing organisations to gather important insights from visitors narratives, and e) the need for further study to assess how potential visitors interpret these stories.

Despite these issues and challenges of using travel blogs for research, they remain valuable to researchers because they offer naturally occurring data and are easily accessible. Magnini et al (2011) claimed that the benefit of blog analysis appears to far outweigh the costs because blog narratives are readily available on the internet. Interest in blogs is evidenced by the increasing popularity of publications on travel blogs in the following journals: *Journal Vacation Marketing, Journal of Travel Research and Tourism Management.* Carson (2008) suggested that an alternative - and perhaps more successful - approach to using travel blogs would be to have a more specific set of questions to ask of the data. In addition, he also pointed out that strategies in reducing noise in locating blogs and analysing the profiles of the authors and the content will reduce the cost of blog analysis. Wegner (2008), on the other hand, suggested identifying important blog authors who may have more valuable insights of marketing; in other words, being selective of which blogs to use for research. Sharda and Ponnada (2008) have tackled the issue by proposing Blog Visualer, a system reducing the amount of searching and collating the user has to do to get the required destination information from relevant blogs. This system is capable of creating a virtual tour of the destination for the traveller based on the extracted information from current blogs. Magnini, Crotts and Zehrer (2011) have also pointed out that the amount of consumer research invested in blog analysis appears to fall short of what is invested in other consumer research initiatives such as comment cards, satisfaction surveys; they thus suggest that blogs can be considered as another utility for this traditional practice.

Banyai and Glover (2012) have also recently emphasised the need for investigating current research methods appropriate for analysing blog content. In fact, they have compared the two most popular methods used in extant studies (content analysis and narrative analysis) and highlighted their weaknesses and strengths. They encourage other alternative methods for analysing travel blogs, such as netnography, collaborative ethnography and technobiography, which can provide a deeper analysis than content analysis or narrative analysis. It is evident that the travel blog as a source of research data is in its infancy, and as a result there is much scope for exploring various methods for extracting desired information out of the naturally occurring, vast and diverse rich narratives of travel blogs.

To summarise, this section has provided an overview of the travel blog and its characteristics in terms of its definition, anatomy, and content, to name a few. The potentials of the travel blogs for research were clearly demonstrated with examples of empirical works and an enumeration of other potential uses of travel blogs from the authors. Research gaps in the existing literature have been outlined, and challenges were identified as well as their solutions.

Based on this overview of the extant literature on travel blogs and the previous chapter, this thesis has already identified three important contributions to the scholarship of travel blogs: first, to address the fundamental issue of understanding the travel bloggers and their blogging practices and motivations, which is discussed in Chapter 5; second, focus on what the travel blogs can contribute in understanding tourist experiences and how they reconstruct these experiences to their audience, and third, to use a novel approach of discourse analysis that recognises the discursive nature of travel blogs, and this is discussed in Chapter 4.

The next section revisits the research objectives based on the research gaps identified in the previous chapter and clearly illustrates the contribution of the research with the help of the theoretical framework.

3.4 Research objectives and theoretical framework

The previous chapter has established several research gaps in the bodies of literature on consumption experience and tourist experience and experience marketing and destination/place marketing. This thesis proposes that the use of travel blogs as research data can address some of the research gaps identified. This thesis aims ***to contribute to the understanding of consumption and tourist experiences through the discourse analysis of travel blogs***. It aims to address particularly these two research gaps: a).what constitutes a consumption and tourist experience, and b) how to evaluate the outcome of experiences because of their personal and subjective nature.

To address these research gaps, the thesis proposes that an examination of the travel blogs as records of experiences will provide answers as to what constitutes a tourist experience based on the stories that bloggers blogged about. Considering travel blogging as part of the tourist experience of bloggers allows the researcher to consider how and why the tourists reconstruct their stories to their audience as one of the outcomes of the experience. This is in recognition of the fact pointed out by Cutler and Carmichael (2010) and Pearce (2005) that with tourist experiences, outcomes of the experience goes beyond the evaluation of the experience in terms of satisfactory or unsatisfactory experiences. Lastly, the thesis suggests that the examination of travel blogs will provide cues on what can elicit emotions and create emotional ties and what kind of experience tourists found memorable and unique.

The previous sections have also established the characteristics of travel blogs as well as their potentials for understanding travel experiences. It has also been posited that there is a lack of research using blogs to understand tourist experiences from the perspectives of a particular tourist away from the destination-based approach, i.e. evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of features of destination as equivalent to tourist experience of the area. As Banyai and Glover (2012) call for an alternative research method to content analysis and narrative analysis, this thesis has used discourse analysis which can qualify as what Magnini, Crotts and Zehrer (2011) refer to as "drilling down" further into the analysis of travel blogs. The discourse analysis will allow the following research questions to be addressed:

a. How are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs?
b. How are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process?
c. What are the implications of using travel blogs as research data for destination/place marketing and experience marketing?

The literature review on experience economy has emphasised the importance of experiences to individuals and the society and how the main fundamental issue of what constitutes an experience remains. Inevitably, the definitions of experience, consumption experience and tourist experience vary. The review of the literatures on consumption experience and tourist experience have highlighted the variety of experience typologies suggested by scholars from memorable experiences, extraordinary experiences, emotional experiences and transformational and transcendent experience. The role of emotions in both literatures was also recognized to have captured the attention of scholars because of the experiential perspective in consumption experiences and experience marketing put forward by several authors. As a result, evaluating experiences has become more subjective and personal and several authors have proposed holistic evaluation of consumption and tourist experiences.

This thesis, however, argues that due to the emphasis on emotions in experiences, consumption as an act of production of experiences and selves or images as proposed by Firat and Dholakai's (1998) or consumption as extension of self (Belk, 1995) have been neglected in recent consumption experience definitions. However, the literature review on tourist experience reminds that this elements of consumptions remains and should be acknowledged. The literature review on consumer narrative and travel narratives also showed that consumption experiences and travel experiences add up to the life stories of individuals. Travel blogging as a form of travel narratives are proposed to provide researchers opportunities to further understand what constitute an experience based on the perspectives of the tourists. As travel blogging is naturally occurring data, it is suggested that this can also assist in providing a holistic opportunity of evaluating travel experiences.

Based on the literatures reviewed, the thesis proposes that consumption and travel experiences should not be viewed as a linear process but instead a cyclical one that continuously contributes to life stories of individuals. It is argued that life stories that include memories, self-identity and the evolved self presented to others are central to the consumption of experiences. The thesis acknowledges that life stories can shape the nature of experiences and vice versa; showing an interactive process between lifestories and consumption experience. The literatures on consumption and tourist experiences have neglected how both experiences are part of the life stories of individuals and at the same time they contribute to that life story. Hence, Figure 3.5, the theoretical framework, includes life stories at the centre of the whole consumption process.

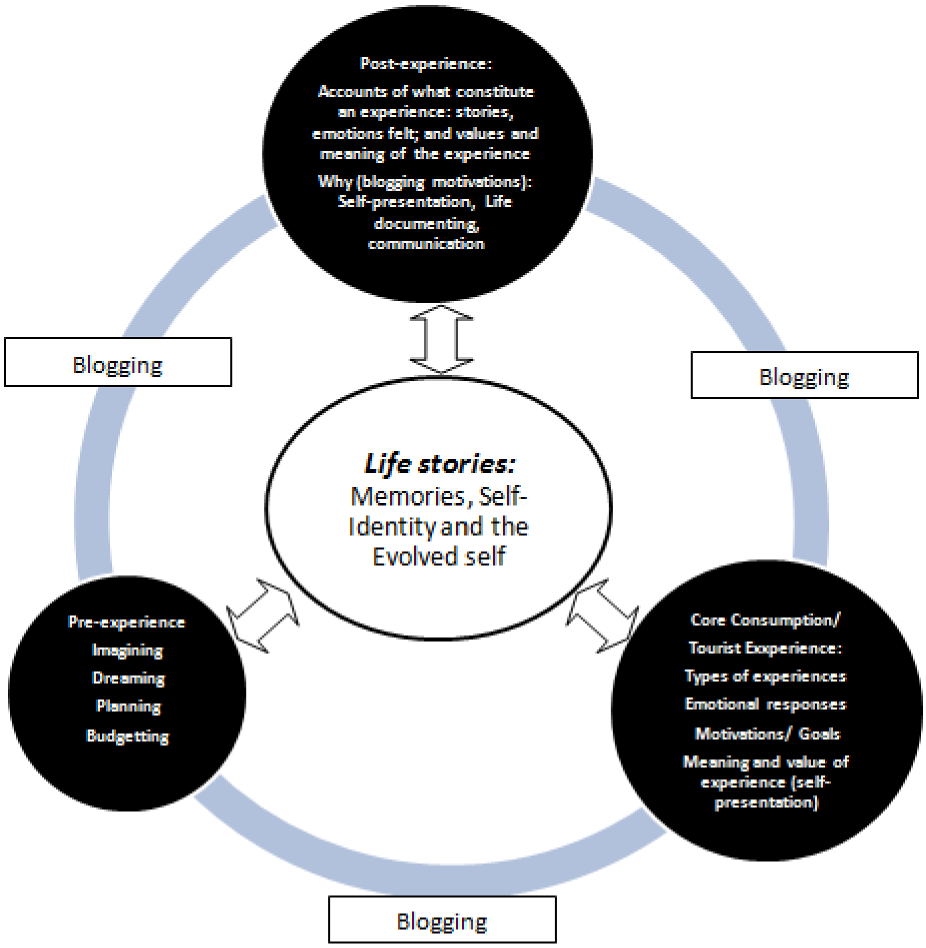


Figure 3. 5 Theoretical Framework

Three smaller circles represent the three stages of consumption experiences. The two bigger and black circles represent the core experience and post-experience stages which are the main focus of the thesis. The grey small circle represents the pre-consumption experience stage. The white arrows signify how life stories shapes the various stages of the consumption experience and in return those experiences are added to the life stories. These arrows indicate an interactive process between the life stories and the different stage of consumption experience.

The pre-consumption stage is suggested to be influenced by the life-stories and more specifically, it can be influenced by their goals of self-presentation and how a certain planned or imagined experience can contribute to an evolved self. The core consumption experience stage circle indicates what constitutes an experience based on the extant literature review and that would include various types of experiences, emotional responses, motivations/goals and the meaning and value of the experience. Likewise, life stories shape the consumption experience, their emotional responses, value and meaning of that specific experience and stories they share are affected by what is already in their life stories. The post- consumption experience, on the other hand, consists of the accounts of the experiences where types of experiences are turned into stories, emotional responses recounted to the audience and meaning and value of the experience emphasised also.

Blogging is seen to be used by bloggers at various points of their consumption stages. From the pre-consumption experience stage, blogs allowed bloggers to share their dreams, imagination, planning and budgeting activities to their readers; on core consumption stage, bloggers collect various experiences and responding to these experiences (emotionally, physically and intellectually) creating value and meaning of these experiences to be added to their life stories. At the post-consumption stage, travel blogging was a platform for bloggers to convert their experiences to stories and shared to their audience that will again contribute to their life stories which at this point with the help of an audience to further confirm their self-identity.

The thesis suggests that consumption experience is a cyclical process that continuously feed in to the life story of an individual. The framework shows two key points: a) consumption experiences are constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs and b) travel blogs are reflective of individual's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has clearly established the potentials of blogs for understanding tourist/consumption experiences. It has provided an in-depth overview of the popular blogging phenomenon and travel blogging among tourists. This chapter has revisited the research gaps identified in the following key concepts from the previous chapter; consumption experience, tourist experiences, experience marketing and destination marketing. Moreover, the research objectives are reiterated and the contribution of the thesis was clearly illustrated in the theoretical framework.

Chapter 4. Methodology: Survey and Discourse Analysis

4.0 Overview of the chapter

This chapter discusses the two research methods used to achieve the research objective and address the research questions for this thesis. The chapter starts off with the methodological journey that resulted to having two phases of research for the study. This is followed by a discussion on the survey conducted to address a fundamental issue on the travel bloggers and their blogging motivations and practices; and deemed necessary for the discourse analysis of travel blogs. The main methodology of this thesis is the discourse analysis; hence a section discussing the theoretical foundations of discourse analysis is provided. The chapter ends with the section on doing discursive psychology which outlines the complex process of the discourse analysis of travel blogs following Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 10 stages in the analysis of discourse.

4.1 Methodological journey

This section discusses the methodological journey for this PhD which is one of the major challenges of this thesis. As there was a dearth of literature on the phenomenon of travel blogging in 2007, the research gaps were countless and even the methodologies used are limited. The biggest challenges were on deciding on the focus of the research (travel blogs vs. travel bloggers) and research gaps to be addressed.

The first year of the PhD has been devoted to familiarisation with travel blogging and exploring various areas for research that can maximise the use of travel blogs as a research data and consequently contribute to theory and practice. By the end of the first year, it was clear that a fundamental research gap on this topic relates to travel bloggers' profile, blogging motivation and practices and most importantly it has been noted that it has become part of tourist experiences and practices.

The second year of the PhD involved the exploration of various research methodologies, namely: a) content analysis, b) narrative analysis and c) grounded theory as well as the development of the survey of travel bloggers. Several conference papers were written to gather external feedback on the research and these have helped in shaping the direction of the research and most importantly the research methodology. Banyai and Glover (2012) and Hookway, 2008) pointed out that using content analysis can result to: a) losing the blog's reflection of real life, of what happens in reality; b) loss of meaning because of extraction of words from phrases, or phrases from paragraphs; and c) these words and phrases are taken out of context and misinterpreted. This was evident in the conference paper presented by Bosangit and Mena (2009) where words and phrases were more useful in adapting the ASEB framework (Activities, Setting, Experiences and Benefits) and limited to those four components in understanding tourist experiences. This method certainly did not maximise travel blogs as naturally occurring data; their vast and diverse content and failed to reflect what is really happening in their tourist experiences. The narrative analysis was also tested as a research method for the ENTER 2009 Conference paper (Bosangit et al, 2009). This paper demonstrated that travel blogs were helpful in understanding how tourists create meanings and identities based on their travel experiences as suggested by Banyai and Glover (2012). However, feedback from the practitioners challenged the practical implications of using narrative analysis for the research. This, however, inspired the third research question on providing evidence of the practical implications of travel blogs as research data for experience marketing and destination/place marketing. Lastly, the grounded theory was explored and it would have been appropriate in maximising the vast, diverse and idiosyncratic content of the blogs; however, the researcher find it very challenging especially coming from a background of producing more quantitative than qualitative studies. Meanwhile, the literature review had clearly highlighted the research gap on what constitutes an experience as well as the potential of travel blogs to provide answers as to how tourist experiences are constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs.

As the research questions were finalised to focus on how travel blogger use travel blogs in reconstructing their experiences, this lead to the identification of discourse analysis as the main research methodology for the study. Due to the fundamental issue of lack of research on travel bloggers', it was deemed necessary to use another research method. Hence, the study has two phases and the details are summarised in Table 4.1. The two phases of the study required adopting two research paradigms (post- positivist and interpretivism) which guided the researcher to the kind of knowledge and how to interpret the evidence.

Table 4.1 Two phases of the research

	Phase 1: Survey	Phase 2: Discourse Analysis
Paradigm	Post-positivist	Interpretivism
Knowledge derived	Profile, blogging motivations and practices of travel bloggers	Discourses in travel experiences
Scope and contribution to the study	Provided the context for identifying sample blogs for the discourse analysis of blogs	Provided the appropriate method for addressing the research questions
Research focus	Travel bloggers	Sample travel blogs

Table 4.1 highlights the knowledge derived using a specific research as well as its scope and contribution to the study. Adopting a post-positivist paradigm for the first phase of the research allowed the acquisition of the objective knowledge on travel blogging; it is also empiricist and recognised the context of blogging among tourists. The data gathered was analysed through statistical analysis which provided an overview of who are the travel bloggers; their travel blogging practices and motivations. This was helpful in providing the context in choosing the sample blogs for the discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the major research method for the study as it addressed the research questions; however, the survey on travel bloggers was deemed crucial in understanding the travel bloggers which is greatly linked to the travel blogs that they produced. The survey was helpful in establishing the validity and reliability of the discourse analysis in terms of the sample blogs used for the analysis.

The next two sections present in greater detail the survey and the discourse analysis. The discourse analysis section provides an in-depth discussion on its theoretical foundation as it the main research method for the study.

4.2. The survey

This section presents the survey process for the exploratory study on travel blogging among tourists. The process started with addressing the sampling issues as part of the challenge of using blogs for the study; followed by contacting the travel blog websites, developing and designing the survey questionnaire, administering the survey, and lastly undertaking the data analysis.

4.2.1 Sampling Issues

Despite the potentials of blogs for research, the amorphous state of the blogosphere and the difficulty of measuring it have raised a line of methodological issues (Moe, 2011); and one of them is the problem with sampling of blogs which is relevant to this thesis. There are four problems with the sampling of blogs identified by Li and Walejko (2008); a) spam blogs or *splogs* (advertisement in the form of unconnected and repetitive content used to increase page ranking), b) blogs with access restrictions; showing up in a list but not available for analysis, c) abandoned blogs (created quickly and not updated), and d) blogs are increasingly embedded in new context such as social networking sites (Facebook) and micro-blogging services (Twitter). Hence, for this thesis, these similar issues are addressed by focusing the study on blog entries from travel blog websites to ensure that spam blogs are avoided and that blogs are open to the public or to other members of the travel blog website. Abandoned blogs are also easily traced from the blog entries of the members as observed from scanning through the different travel blog websites. Lastly, by limiting the survey on travel blog websites, social networking and micro-blogging entries on travel experiences will not be included.

In the context of travel blogs, there are sampling problems attributed to the following reasons based on observations made on travel blog websites: a) there is no complete list of travel blog websites; (b) bloggers do not exclusively blog about their travels on travel blog websites as they also use other blog sites (diary type blogs) such as wordpress.com and blog.com; to name a few, and (c) there are travel blog websites that are in different languages that cannot be accessed. Due to this complexity, it is clear that the survey will be dependent on the list of travel blog websites generated through the Google search engine and those mentioned in the extant literature, which have been named as popular travel blog websites. The extant literature (Carson, 2008; Carson and Schmalleger, 2007; Pan et al 2007) has identified the most popular travel blog websites to include travelblog.org, travelpod.com, blog.realtravel.com, yourtraveljournal.com and travelpost.com. This serves as the starting point for the survey process which is illustrated in Figure 4.1 and explained in the following paragraphs.

4.2.2 Contacting travel blog websites

In June 2009, these travel blog websites identified from the literature along with other travel blog websites that were generated from the Google search engine such as travellerspoint.com, travbuddy.com and travelblog.com, to name a few, were emailed regarding the research. These websites are similarly dominated by English language users as observed in the blogs posted. Also, blog posts by members in each website are easily accessible by other countries; hence, it is clear that blog entries cover a wide range of countries visited by bloggers. Wenger (2008) noted that travel blog websites (travelblog.org, yourtraveljournal.com, travelpod.com and travbuddy.com) have similar fundamental structures and functionality.

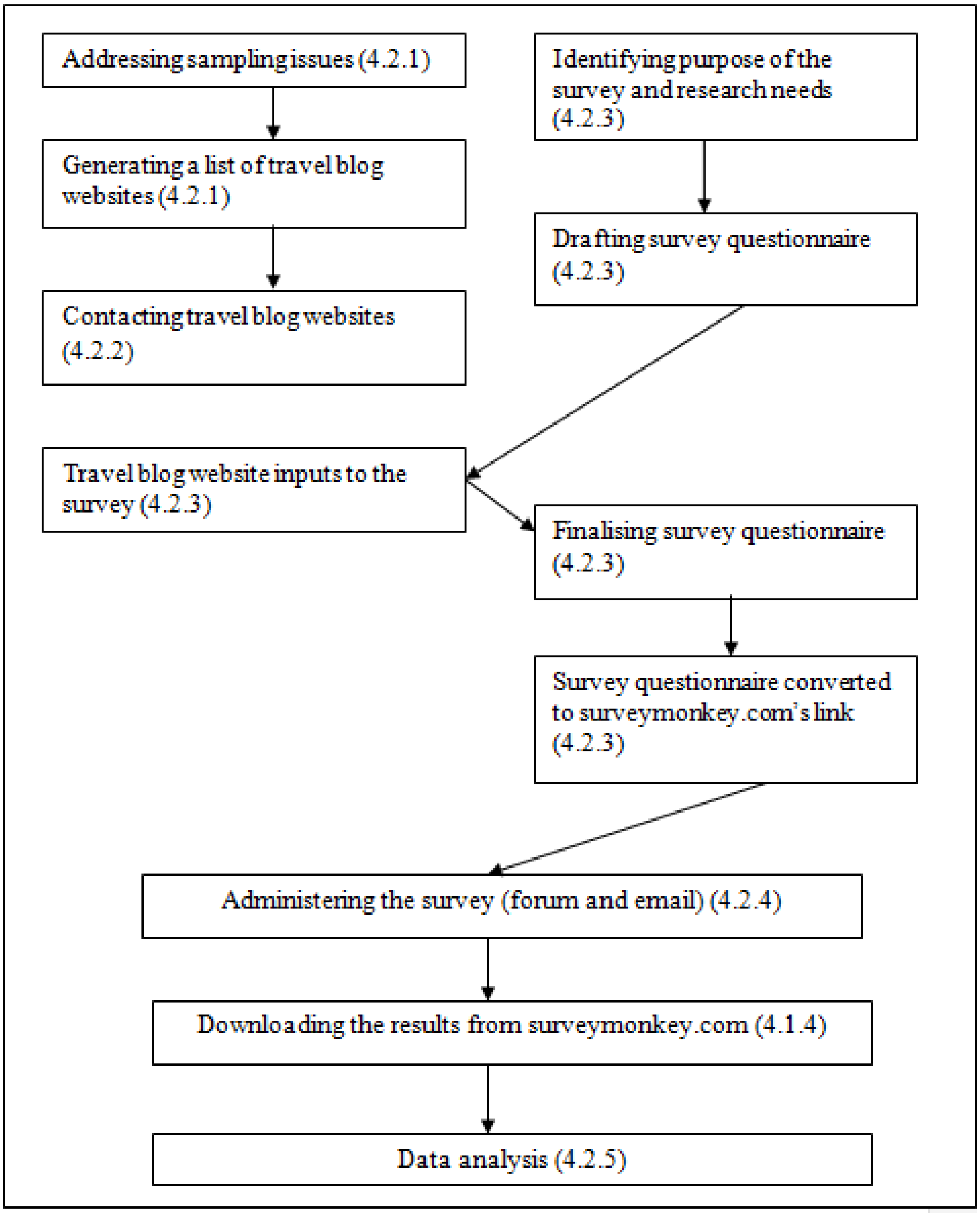


Figure 4.1 The Survey Process
Developed by author

Out of 10 travel blog websites emailed, three websites (travelblog.org, travbuddy.com and travellerspoint.com) responded to this correspondence. Travelblog.org and travbuddy.com stated that they do not maintain a record or statistics of the profile of their bloggers. Ali Watters, founder of travelblog.org, however, provided a link that monitored US residents' traffic to their website (www.quantcast.com) and basic information on age, gender, ethnic group and income while Peter Daams, administrator and founder of travellerspoint.com, provided some statistics on active blogs, total published entries, and blogs with five entries or more; he also provided information on socio-demographic profiles but warned these are not accurate as it was optional for bloggers to provide such information. These data are not appropriate for the purpose of this study, further emphasising the importance of conducting the survey among travel bloggers. These three websites have promised support to the research by endorsing it to their bloggers and posting it to their travel forum pages. Travelblog.org has even allowed members to be emailed individually as well as posted a sticky note of the survey in their forum to encourage more participation from members. Travbuddy.com and travellerspoint.com allowed the survey to be posted in their forums. These websites requested that the researcher also became a member of their websites and actively engaged with their members in their forum and create a page profile, posts about my travel, and pictures. The latter part was specifically advised by Ali Watters of travelblog.org and Eric Bjordahl, founder of Travbuddy.com to get a good response rate as they have pointed out that their members are more helpful when they feel they are helping out another blogger. In return for their support of the research, the three websites were given a report on the results of the survey.

4.2.3 Developing and designing the survey

The survey contributes to an exploratory study of blogging among tourists. It aims to address questions such as who the bloggers are, what type of trips they blog about and what their blogging practices and blogging motivations are. This information is also crucial to inform the sampling strategy for the discourse analysis of travel blogs.

The survey questionnaire developed consisted of two sections with a total of 18 questions. Section A is about respondents' usage of travel blog websites and their blogging habits (website used, travel blogs posted, types of trips blogged about, timing of blog, language used in blogging and motivations for blogging) and Section B asks about the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, occupational status and nationality).

Blogging motivations mentioned by some researchers include: sharing their experience with their family and friends (Bosangit et al, 2009; Sharda and Ponnada, 2008); report back to friends and families about activities and experiences during trips, (Puhringer and Taylor, 2008); communication; keep in touch with family and friends at home without spending a lot of money on phone calls and creating a diary which you do not have to carry around (Enoch and Grossman, 2010); communicate with an audience and construct their identities (Banyai and Glover, 2012). There is no statistical evidence for these motivations, and any such evidence is limited to a few blogging motivations that were earlier identified in the last chapter. Communication, creating a diary, sharing experiences and constructing identities seems to sum up the motivations mentioned in the extant literature on travel blogging.

Hence, other blogging motivations were included in the questionnaire based on the list generated from the literature of blogging. Table 4.2 below modified Table 3.5 (functions and motivations of blogging) from the previous chapter and translated it into the travel blogging context.

Table 4.2 Travel blogging motivations

Functions	Motivations	Travel blogging motivations
Identity Construction	Self-representation, self-expression, reputation, self-concept	to express myself by writing
Life documenting	Keeping diary, keeping record of events and experiences	to keep record of travels
Social networking	Meeting new people and making friends, maintaining relationship	to network or to meet new people
Information Sharing	Sharing knowledge, information, comments and opinions	to share experiences with other; to find information about places
Communication	Keeping updated with family and friends	to update family and friends about whereabouts; to keep in touch with friends who are also blogging
Entertainment	Killing/passing time, entertaining self and others	for entertainment; to pass time
Rewards	Monetary awards, profit	To earn money

Developed by the author

With regards to the travel blogging practices, extant literature and observations of the travel blog websites were useful in establishing key variables to be used in the survey. Table 4.3 summarises the key variables used in the survey and how they were measured.

Table 4.3 Key variables used to determine blogging practices and motivations

Variable	Definition/reference	Measured by
Travel blog membership	Travel blog website the blogger joined (Carson, 2008; Puhringer and Taylor, 2008Wegner, 2008)	Respondents choose from these categories: Realtravel.com Travbuddy.com Travelblog.org Travellerspoint.com Travelpod.com Others (specify)
Produced blog	If the blogger has produced at least one blog entry	Categories: Yes No
Numbers of blog posted	Total number of blogs posted in the website	Categories Less than 5 blogs 6 -10 blogs 11- 25 blogs 25 to 50 blogs More than 50 blogs
Most recent blogs	When was the latest blog posted; asked to confirm that blogger is active (Lu and Hsiao, 2007)	Categories Less than a month ago 1 -3 months 4 -6 months More than 6 months ago
Frequency of blogging on certain types of trip	Frequency of blogging on the following trips Day trips Short break (1-3 nights) Main annual holiday (over 4 nights to 20 nights) Longer trips (3 weeks and more) (Carson, 2008)	Respondents choose from: 7 to 0; where 7=very often (most days) and 0=never

Table 4.3 Key variables used to determine blogging practices and motivations (cont.)

Variable	Definition	Measured by
When blogs are posted	Whether blog entries are posted during or after the trip	Categories While I am travelling After the trip
Language use in blogging	Language used in writing their blog entry; asked to determine intended audience or desire to limit it to people who can understand the language (Enoch and Grossman, 2010)	Open ended question; respondents type in their answer
Frequency of audience reading blogs posted	Frequency of reading of blogs by the following group of people: family, friends, co-workers; asked to determine who are the target audience that might influence style of writing and content of blogs (Bosangit et al, 2009)	Respondents choose from: 7 to 0; where 7=very often (most days) and 0=never
Frequency of audience commenting on blogs posted	Frequency of commenting on blogs by the following group of people: family, friends, co-workers, other bloggers, and general public; asked to determine who interacts with the bloggers (Bosangit et al, 2009; Wenger, 2008)	Respondents choose from: 7 to 0; where 7=very often (most days) and 0=never
Blogging motivations	Reason for creating a travel blog account and their level of importance (based on the translated blogging motivations to travel blogging context)	Respondents choose from: 7 to 0; where 7=very often (most days) and 0=never

Please see ***Appendix 1*** for the survey questionnaire. After the survey questionnaire was finalised, it was pilot tested with the help of 10 travel bloggers from travelblog.org and travellerspoint.com and then submitted to the three travel blog websites for feedback and permission for it to be administered in their website.With the approval of these websites, the survey was administered through an online survey website, surveymonkey.com. This website provided the link below to be included in emails to members and the posts in the forum.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=jWPRJJwS_2bHkizm0p6s0Bdg_3d_3d

This online survey website automatically coded the responses to the survey and the results were easily downloaded to be used in the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for the data analysis.

4.2.4 Administering the survey

The survey was administered from December 5, 2008 to February 5, 2009. The administrators of travbuddy.com and travelblog.org posted the survey questionnaire on their travel forums on December 5, 2008; while travellerspoint.com posted it on their travel forum on December 23, 2008. The three websites as promised had made this post "sticky", a feature in online forums that allows a specific post to remain on top of the travel forum topics for several weeks, to capture the attention of the bloggers. They also endorsed the survey to members that they had granted permission for the survey to be conducted.

As mentioned earlier in, travelblog.org was the only website which gave permission to email or send private messages to bloggers individually through their web page. The list of bloggers sorted alphabetically in the website was used as the master list for emailing bloggers. The active bloggers (indicated in the master list) were specifically chosen for the survey as, according to Ali Waters (personal communication, 2008), as dormant bloggers are those bloggers who have not logged into their accounts for three months. Due to the large volume of bloggers in travelblog.org, not all members were emailed. To avoid bias, 13 letters were chosen from the beginning of the alphabet (a-f) and at the end (t-u). The list also includes screen names starting with numbers, and since they contain few members they were all emailed.

To increase the response rate, bloggers were emailed individually. This, however, involved sending emails through their web pages, constant monitoring of blogger's questions and feedback, and providing technical support to respondents as they accessed the surveymonkey.com survey link. Due to time constraints and the large number of emailed respondents (3,464) bloggers were emailed only once due to their sheer volume.

The travel forum posts in the three websites required monitoring as people were also providing their answers via the websites, asking questions and giving feedback. Hence, the researcher had to log in daily at these forums to address any questions and to thank them for their feedback and presentations. The researcher gained new friends in these forums for actively participating and exchanging information with bloggers about travel experiences. This form of netnography has helped in generating a good response rate for the surveys, particularly with the travelblog.org members who are active forum participants (Bosangit, 2009).

The response rates are influenced in terms of how respondents accessed the survey questionnaire. As only travbuddy.com and travellerspoint.com allowed the survey to be posted on their forums, the responses from these two websites only totalled 117; compared to those from travelblog.org which totalled 1,306. Table 4.4 summarises the response rates for the three websites.

Table 4.4 Survey Response Rate

Travel blog websites	Views on Forum	Response rate (number of valid questionnaires/ number of views or emailed*100)	Percentage of the total respondents
travbuddy.com	481 views	Response rate: 14.3% Out of 79 surveys filled out, 69 were valid	5.3%
travellerspoint.com	149 views	Response rate: 20% Out of 38 surveys filled out, 30 were valid	2.3%
travelblog.org	Views cannot be monitored but had 22 replies from members Emailed 3,464 out of 7,861 active bloggers (40.82%)	Response rate: 35% Out of 1,306 surveys filled out, 1,214 were valid	92.4%

**Valid surveys are completely filled- out questionnaires.*

A limitation of the use of forums for posting the survey is that not all members visit the forums for these two websites, so were not informed of the survey. The number of views on the forums only indicates how many bloggers read the invitation to participate in the survey. However, it did not increase the response rate despite the “sticky” on the forum thread for the whole period of the survey. Furthermore, the travelblog.org forum has more active participants as observed throughout the survey period. This significant difference in the response rate from these travel blog websites has been noted and is addresses in the next section.

4.2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis starts with downloading the results from surveymonkey.com for use in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and cleaning the data, by removing invalid questionnaires. Travelblog.org has the highest response rate among the three travel blog websites which accounts for 92.4% of the total respondents to the survey. Descriptive analyses were run separately with the results of the three travel blog websites and the results showed no significant differences. Hence, due to the significant bias of responses between the three travel blog websites, the responses from the other two blog websites were excluded for the use of the study in determining the sample frame. The 1,214 respondents from travelblog.org, one of the top travel blog websites identified in several studies (Bosangit et al, 2009; Carson, 2008, Wegner, 2008) are considered adequate for this study. The results of the survey for the two other travel websites were provided to the administrators.

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis to describe the characteristics of the respondents and to address the specific research questions (Pallant, 2005). Mean scores that are indicative of most common blogging practices and blogging motivations were generated. Cross tabulation analyses were used to explore blogging practices and motivations in different socio-demographic groups.

The results of the survey are presented in the next chapter. The next section discusses the discourse analysis phase of the study.

4.3 The discourse analysis

This section discusses the theoretical foundation of discourse analysis; followed by a discussion on discourse analysis and discursive analysis. An in-depth discussion of doing discursive psychology outlines the complex process of discourse analysis. This section ends with the section on the focus and limitation of discourse analysis.

4.3.1 Theoretical foundation of discourse analysis

Choosing blogs as a research data source for this thesis has been a very challenging decision. Blogs are naturally occurring data about people's experiences and, as mentioned in Chapter 2, they are vast, diverse and unstructured but very rich in information content. Crotts et al (2009:142) identified two unique challenges that blogs present for researchers; a) the sheer volume of data can be likened to "drinking from a fire hose" when treated with typical qualitative analysis methods as bloggers post thoughts and feelings in an unreserved manner and frequently using informal language or jargon; and b) the data are rich in sentiments that require unique skills in subjectivity analysis to be recognised and interpreted. Hence, researchers have to deal with choosing the focus of their research despite the richness of the data, and more specifically, addressing the question of what kind of knowledge is desired to be generated from these travel blogs.

For this thesis, the research paradigm was helpful in guiding what kind of knowledge to seek and how to interpret the evidence (Morgan, 2007), i.e. the travel blogs as evidence of tourist experiences. A paradigm is a cluster of beliefs that influence scientists in a particular discipline on what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted and so on (Bryman, 1988:4). This study adopts the interpretivist research paradigm. The following sections briefly explain the other three main paradigms in social research, and highlights why interpretivism was deemed appropriate for this study.

The research paradigm is constituted by and incorporates different ontological and epistemological assumptions defined as "assumptions made about the nature of social reality and the way in which we can come to know this reality" (Blakie, 2010:9). Somekh and Lewin (2005) defined a paradigm as an approach to research which provides a unifying framework of understandings of knowledge, truth values and the nature of being. Della Porta and Keating (2008) identified four broad approaches: Positivist, Post-positivist, Interpretivist and Humanistic. They warned these categories should not be taken as hard categories or fixed labels but instead as positions in a spectrum from the most positivist to the most humanistic. According to Corbetta (2003), these competing approaches in social sciences are contrasted according to the following criteria: a) their ontological base, related to the existence of a real and objective world; (b) their epistemological base, related to the possibility of knowing this world and the forms this knowledge would take, and (c) their methodological base, referring to the technical instruments that are used in order to acquire that knowledge (della Porta and Keating, 2008). Table 4.5 summarises the four paradigms based on these ontological, epistemological and methodological issues. Healy and Perry (2000: 1195) simply describe them thus: "ontology as the reality that researchers investigate; epistemology as the relationship between the reality and the researcher and methodology is the technique used by the researcher to investigate that reality".

The ***positivism paradigm*** advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality (Barron, 2006: 213). For this paradigm, the world exists as an objective entity, outside of the mind of the observer, and in principle it is knowable in its entirety (della Porta and Keating, 2008). This approach emphasises the principles of measurement, causality, generation and replication and uses methods such as surveys, questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments, quasi-experiments and official statistics, and content analysis of documents (Barron, 2006). The researcher can be separated from the object of his/her research, observing it in a neutral way without affecting the object (della Porta and Keating, 2008); hence scientific study is undertaken in a manner that is value free (Barron, 2006). Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) observed that this paradigm is the most widely used paradigm for business school research (Perry and Rao, 2007). Arndt (1985) argued that the dominant positivist paradigm for research, adopted without modification from the natural science, has "tyrannised" the consumer research community (Buttle, 1998). Positivistic scientific methods

Table 4.5 Ontologies and epistemologies in the social science

	Positivist	Post-positivist	Interpretivist	Humanistic
Ontological issues				
Does social reality exist?	Objective; realism	Objective; critical realism	Objective and subjective as intrinsically linked	Subjective: science of the spirit
Is reality knowable?	Yes, and easy to capture	Yes, but not easy to capture	Somewhat but not as separate from human subjectivity	No: focus on human subjectivity
Epistemological issues				
Relationship between the scholar and his/her object	Dualism, scholar and object are three separate things; inductive procedure	Knowledge is influenced by the scholar; deductive procedures	Aims at understanding subjective knowledge	No objective knowledge is possible
Forms of knowledge	Natural laws (causal)	Probabilistic law	Contextual Knowledge	Emphatic Knowledge
Methodological Issues				
Which methodology?	Empiricist, aiming at knowing the reality	Mainly empiricist, recognising context	Relative focus on meanings, context	Focus on values, meanings and purposes
Which method/s?	Imitating the natural method (experiments, mathematical models, statistical analysis)	Based upon approximations to the natural method (experiments, statistical analysis, quantitative interviews)	Seeking meaning (textual analysis, discourse analysis)	Emphatic interactions between researchers and object of research

Source: Della Porta and Keating, 2008: 23 and 31 has been particularly unsatisfactory at explaining human behaviour (Buttle, 1998) and found to be inappropriate when approaching a complex social science phenomenon which involves reflective humans (Perry and Rao, 2007).

Most importantly, Healy and Perry (2000) pointed out that this paradigm is not appropriate when approaching a social science phenomenon like marketing networks which involve humans and their real-life experiences, for treating respondents as independent, non-reflective objects and, according to Robson (1993), ignoring their ability to reflect on problem situations and act on these in an interdependent way. Travel blogs are about real-life experiences and travel bloggers do not qualify as non-reflective objects of research. Hence, this paradigm is not appropriate for this study.

The ***post-positivism paradigm*** emerged due to the criticisms on positivism but maintains the same set of basic beliefs as positivism (Blaxter et al, 2006). The reality is still considered to be objective but it is only imperfectably knowable and there is an admission that some phenomena are not governed by causal laws, but at best by probabilistic ones (della Porta and Keating, 2006). In studying social reality, this paradigm recognises that researchers cannot be absolutely positive about their knowledge claims (Creswell, 2003). Social reality is still seen as independent of the researcher and the research project (Hesse-Biber and Leavey, 2011).

Mick (1997) explained that post-positivist researchers aim for understanding and the knowledge gained from research is time-bound and context-dependent. Researchers rely on deductive logic and hypothesis testing with the aim of creating evidence that will confirm or refute a theory, although not in absolute terms (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). According to Creswell (2007:21), "post positivist researchers will likely view inquiry as a series of logically related steps, believe in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality and espouse rigorous methods of qualitative data collection and analysis". They use quantitative deductive methods practices in their research such as statistics within a qualitative or multi-method project (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), this paradigm assumes that there is an objective reality "out there" constituted by testable cause-and-effect relationships. This paradigm is also found inappropriate for this study as it has the same basic beliefs of positivism except for a focus on generating more evidence to confirm or refute theory.

The ***humanistic paradigm*** is characterised by the belief that what distinguishes human science from natural sciences is that human behaviour is always filtered by the subjective understandings of external reality on the part of the people being studied and the researcher him/herself (della Porta and Keating, 2006). Knowing reality is therefore impossible, and scholars should focus on meaning through emphatic knowledge (della Porta and Keating, 2006:25). Hirschman (1986) described humanism as an inquiry approach that differs markedly from the methods used in the physical sciences because it advocates in-dwelling of the researcher within the phenomenon under investigation. Researchers immerse themselves "within", and the understanding of the phenomenon comes from the direct personal experience (Hirschman, 1986). The researcher then becomes part of the group he or she is studying and engages in "investigator immersion" (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). Throughout the immersion process, the humanistic researcher maintains two diaries or logs; a) theory-constructed diary documenting in detail the thoughts, premises, hypothesis and revisions in thinking developed by the researcher, and (b) a methodological log to keep detailed and time-sequenced notes on the investigative techniques used during the inquiry, with special attention paid to biases or distortions that a given technique may have introduced (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). This process relies on the judgment of the outside auditor to assure logical and unprejudiced interpretations. This paradigm is also not applicable to this study as the researcher has focussed on the travel blogs as the unit of research and not the blogging phenomenon itself. Although the researcher has been required to be a travel blogger for the survey as outlined in the previous chapter, participation was minimal particularly as there were no long-haul and multiple destination trips taken during that period; and no contact with bloggers themselves.

After establishing that these three paradigms are inappropriate for the nature of the study, interpretivism and constructivism are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The ***interpretivism paradigm***, commonly called constructivism (Blaikie, 2000) and also referred to as anti-naturalist or anti-positivist, has a central tenet that there is a fundamental difference between the subject matters of the natural and the social sciences (Blaikie, 2007). According to della Porta and Keating (2006:26), following Weber, this type of social science aims at understanding (*verstehen*) the motivations that lie behind human behaviour, a matter that cannot be reduced to any predefined element but must be placed within a cultural perspective, where culture denotes a web of shared meanings and values. This paradigm considers research participants not as individual entities who exist in a vacuum, but within the whole context of their lives (Holloway, 1997). Compared to other paradigms, interpretivism does not ignore the meanings, interpretations, the motives and intentions that people use in their everyday lives and that direct their behaviour (Blaikie, 2000). The social world is the world interpreted and experienced by its members from the inside; and the task of a researcher is to discover and describe this insider view, not to impose an “outsider view” on it (Blaikie, 2000:115). Theory is important but not always established prior to the research as in the deductive empirical approach; context is most important since research on human activity must consider an individual’s self-interpretation of a situation (Flyvbjerg, 2001); while predictability is impossible since human beings change in time and space, and because, in the words of Bourdieu (1977) “practice has a logic which is not that of logic” (della Porta and Keating, 2006: 27). Research approaches for this paradigm include narrative inquiry, autobiography, discourse analysis, ethnography and action research (Collins, 2008; della Porta and Keating, 2006). The presentation of data is usually in the form of thick narratives with excerpts from texts (interviews, documents and ethnographic notes) as illustration of the reality (della Porta and Keating, 2006: 30).

As the aim of the study is to understand consumption experiences of consumers as well as their motives for blogging about their consumption experiences, this paradigm is considered appropriate in guiding the research process to achieve those goals. Blogs are the documents/text that the researcher immerses herself in to understand the "reality" of consumption experiences. The context of the study was clearly identified to be that of tourism consumption; it does not aim for generalisation or prediction and the experiences of the bloggers who participated were recognised to be part of their whole lives.

This thesis will be located within social constructionism where the emphasis is on the use of discourse as a vehicle through which self and the world are articulated, as well as the way in which they function within social relationships (Smith and Anderson, 2007). The core idea is that language, rather than being a reflection of the "truth" or the "reality" of some aspect of the world, is rather an action in itself, a kind of performance that is carried out with others, that helps to create a shared meaning or common understanding of how things are (Orford, 2008). Gergen (1994) has formulated the following assumptions for social constructionism (Flick, 2004:90):

> The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts... . The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people ... . The degree to which a given account of the world of self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social processes... . Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship... . To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves (Gergen, 1994:94)

The importance of language to social constructionism cannot be over emphasised. Language is seen as a set of discourses, and social discourse is seen as creating a reality rather than reflecting the reality (Hepburn, 2003). A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events (Burr, 2003:64). Therefore, travel blogs can be considered a discourse; a discourse of the consumption experiences of individuals. In this perspective, blogs will be examined for the language use of the individuals which will reflect the reality of their consumption experience; and blogging indeed is an act, a performance that individuals share with others. The focus on language also shifts the issue away from the vastness, diversity and idiosyncratic structure of the blog which is usually seen as a hindrance for its use as a marketing tool as mentioned in Chapter 3. Flick (2004) illustrates how construction and interpretation are a means of access to the world of experience, and this can be adopted to explain the importance of blogs in understanding the consumption experience.

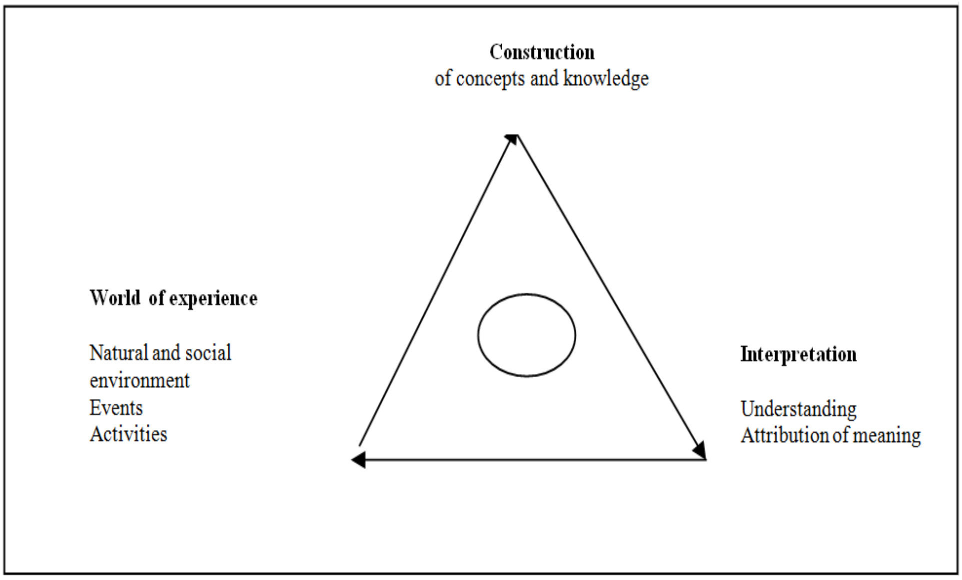


Figure 4.2 Construction and interpretation as means of access to the world of experience

Source: Flick (2004:90).

Flick (2004) asserted that "knowledge is constructed in processes of social interchange, based on the role of language in such relationship and it has above all social function" (p.90). The concept of mimesis was also used by Flick to explain the processes involved in accessing the world of experience. Mimesis is concerned with the representation of worlds – and and in Aristotle's writings, this originally meant natural worlds – in symbolic words (Flick, 2004:91). This concept can be used to

> demonstrate the understanding of the world and text: the individual assimilates himself or herself to the world via mimetic processes...making it possible to step out of themselves, to draw the outer world into their inner world, and to lend expression to their interiority (Flick, 2004:92).

In this perspective, text is crucial to the construction of knowledge; Flick (2004) pointed out how text is already partially used as a metaphor or a concept. However, it was also pointed out that understanding text (and by extension the reality) becomes an active process of producing reality for readers for whom these texts are produced; and that who reads or understands them is also involved.

(Ricoeur, 1984) refers to three forms of mimesis which is shown in the process of mimesis in Figure 5.2:

(1) mimesis 1: the process where texts in modes of understanding by transformation takes place in processes of the everyday understanding of narratives, documents, books, newspapers –is referred to as the mimesis; marking the intersection of the world of the text and the hearer or reader;

(2) mimesis 2: from the world of experiences into textual constructs (concepts knowledge or everyday stories to others or particular types of documents during the production of texts for research purposes – called the process of construction;

(3) mimesis 3: the reflux of such everyday and/or scientific interpretations into modes of action via prior understanding of human action and social or natural phenomena, mimesis here plays a significant role of testifying to a pre-understanding that action is human to the extent that it characterises a life story that deserves to be told (Flick, 2004).

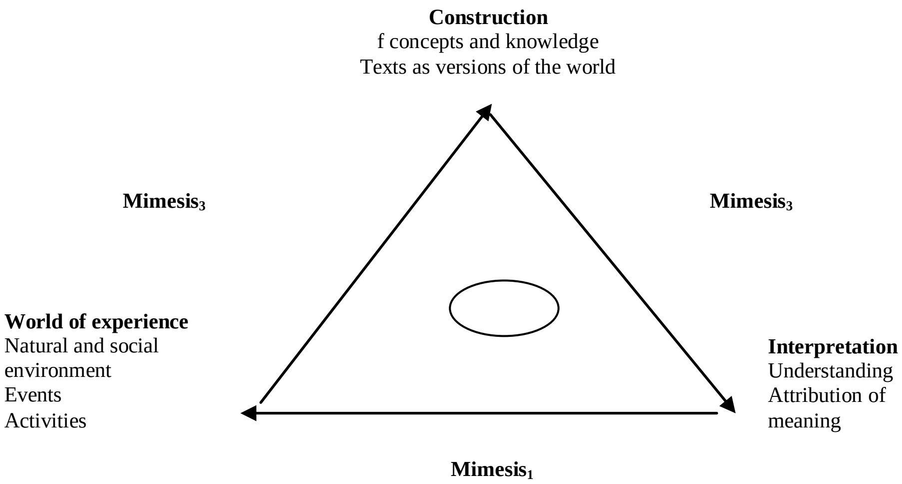


Figure 4.3 Process of mimesis

Source: Flick (2004:93)

The concept of mimesis can explain the process of blogging. In this study, travel experiences are constructed into versions of the world through blogs, and understanding of these versions of the world are interpreted by blog readers, and thus contribute to developing the understanding of travel experiences for both parties. The act of blogging can be considered as a process of construction; at the same time it also marks the intersection of the world of the text and its readers in the second form of mimesis; and the final form may see blogging as the pre-understanding of the travel experience as part of a life story. Using this social constructivism perspective is indeed suitable for working towards the goal of this study. Blogging is seen as a process in the production and reception of the texts which plays a significant role in representing the world of experience.

The next section discusses discourse analysis (DA) as the appropriate methodology for this thesis. Gergen (1999) described discourse analysis as a methodology that embodies a strong social constructivist view of the social world (Orford, 2008).

4.3.2 Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology

> Discourse analysis is not only about method; it is also a perspective on the nature of language and its relationship to the central issues of the social sciences. More specifically, we see discourse analysis as a related collection of approaches to discourse, approaches that entail not only practices of data collection and analysis, but also a set of meta theoretical and theoretical assumptions and a body of research claims and studies (Wood and Kroger, 2000).

According to Billig (1997), DA is more than a methodology as it involves a theoretical way of understanding the nature of discourse and the nature of psychological phenomena (Willig, 2008). It was considered to offer opportunities to researchers to explore the empirical ramifications of the linguistic turn that has worked its way through the social sciences and humanities in the last 20 years (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). This linguistic turn includes works of linguistic philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1967) and Winch (1958) whose writings made the idea of language much more than a simple reflection of reality – that in fact it is constitutive of social reality – commonly accepted (Philipps and Hardy, 2002: 1). Philipps and Hardy (2002:6) argued that "discourse analysis shares the concern of all qualitative approaches with the meaningfulness of social life however it attempts to provide a more profound interrogation of the precarious status of meaning". The authors claim DA is more about the production of reality than understanding or interpreting reality as it exists. Discourse analysis studies the way texts are constructed, the functions they serve in different contexts and the contractions that run through them (Parker, 2004:308).

There are several different approaches to social constructionist discourse analysis such as the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (also known as discourse theory), Foucauldian, Gramscian, Althusseian, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology (DP). Jorgensen and Philipps (2002) have enumerated three differences among these approaches based on a) the role of discourse in the constitution of the world, analytical focus and the role of the analyst. For the role of discourse on the constitution of the world, the authors plotted the various approaches of discourse analysis along a continuum (Figure 4.4). At the far left, discourse is constitutive and on the far right discourse is constituted. For the approaches of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology, the functioning of discourse is of discursive practice. Discourse is seen as a social practice that shapes the social world. At the far right end of the continuum discourse is seen as just a mechanical reproduction of other social practices; it is fully determined by something else such as the conomy (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). At the far left, where discourse theory is, discourse itself is fully constitutive of our world. Discursive analysis, according to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), is hard to place despite being placed somewhat to the left of the continuum because it claims that "discourse is fully constitutive and that is embedded in historical and social practices which are not fully discursive (p.19).

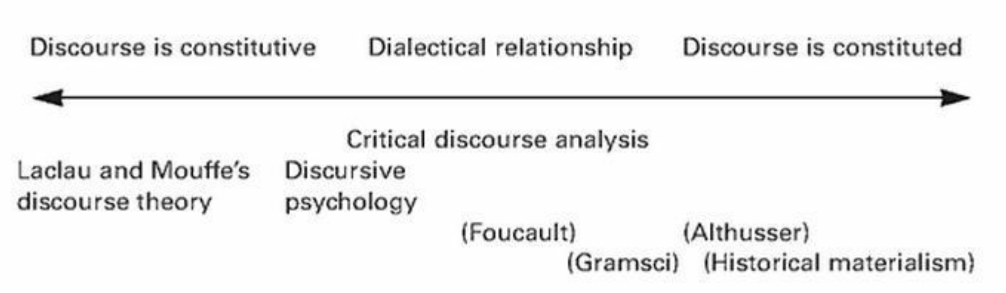


Figure 4.4 The role of discourse in the constitution of the world
Source: Jorgensen and Phillips (2002:20)

Foucauldian perspective, on the other hand, is seen under dialectical relationship. Focault is worth a mention here as he has played a central role in the development of discourse analysis through both theoretical work and empirical research (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002:12). His perspective examines how discursive practices, power and ideology combine to perpetuate and maintain systems of domination and oppression (Cunliffe, 2008). It allows analyses to explore how discursive practices constitute both objectivities (social institutions, knowledge) and subjectivities (identities and actions). Foucault developed a theory of power/knowledge, where he focuses on power. Accordingly, power is responsible both for creating our social world and for the particular ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, largely follows Foucault, viewing the individual as determined by structures, whereas discourse analysis and discursive psychology to a greater extent are in line with Roland Barthes’ slogan that people are both “masters and slaves of language” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002:19). Indeed CDA and DA have theoretical foundation and specific methods for analysis of the dynamic discursive practices through which language users act as both discursive products and producers in the reproduction and transformation of discourses and thereby in social and cultural change (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2009). This thesis moves away from Foucauldian perspective because the phenomena of travel blogging and consumption/tourist experiences do not involve power and ideology at a great level. The thesis however acknowledges that bloggers are masters and slaves of language in their reconstruction of their travel experiences.

With regards to the analytical focus, the difference among the approaches is represented in a continuum with everyday discourse at the far left and abstract discourse at the far right as shown in Figure 4.5. For discursive analysis, discourses are created and changed in everyday discursive practices hence the need for systematic empirical analyses of people’s talk and written language. While approaches like discourse theory, on the other hand, are more concerned with general, overarching patterns and aim at a more abstract mapping of the discourses that circulate in society at a particular moment in time or within a special social domain (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). In this thesis, discourses explored are on travel experiences and these are part of everyday practices, a conversation/ writing that can occur within everyday routine.

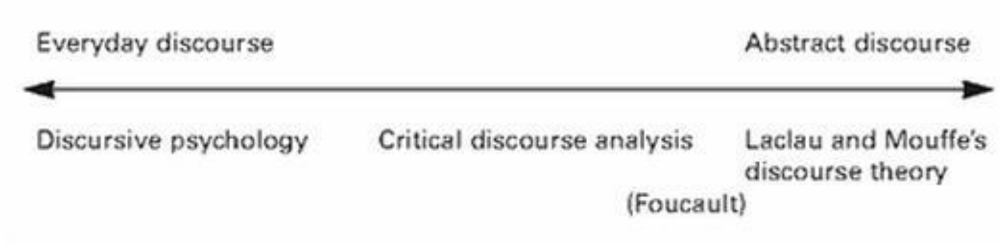


Figure 4.5 Analytical focus

Source: Jorgensen and Phillips (2002:20)

The role of the analyst in the discursive psychology approach takes account of the analyst's reflexivity while for Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, the researcher ought to be able to produce non-ideological discourses and Discourse theory present their theory and analysis as if they were objective descriptions of the world and its mechanisms. As travel blogs are analysed based on the bloggers' use of language, it is acknowledged that the researcher's interpretation and reflexivity are accounted for.

This study will adopt the discursive psychology (DP) approach. Discursive approach is considered appropriate for the study as it will allow examination of how accounts (blogs) are constructed (Potter,1996; Burr, 2003) ; and how these texts are socially organised to achieve local actions such as identity management ~~(~~Augustinous and Every, 2007). Examining how accounts are constructed will answer the research questions of what do bloggers write about their experiences; and why do bloggers talk about their experiences?

Wittgenstein (1953) and Austin's (1962) speech act theory were considered to be the roots of discursive psychology (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). DP argues that language itself should be the object of study rather than used as a conduit to other things; language in social interaction is the site where meanings are created and changed and it is also the primary way of performing actions (Augustinos and Every, 2007). This approach is associated with the ideas of Potter and Wetherell (1987) where they elaborated the application of discourse analysis to social psychological topics (Augustinos and Every, 2007; Willig, 2008). This label of DP was provided by Edwards and Potter in 1992 (Willig, 2008). Rapley (2004) observed that DP has matured into a substantial alternative approach to mainstream psychology, reconfiguring psychology as a post-cognitivist discipline as Potter (2000) described it. DP was seen as a theoretical and methodological inversion of contemporarily dominant forms of psychological thought (Rapley, 2004:9):

> In psychology's dominant cognitivist paradigm, individuals build mental representations of the world on the basis of innate mental structures and perceptual experience and talk on that basis. The categories and content of discourse are considered to be a reflection, refracted through various kinds of error and distortion of how the world is perceived to be. In contrast, DP begins with discourse (talk and text), both theoretically and empirically. Discourse is approached, not as the outcome of mental states and cognitive processes, but as a domain of action in its own right. (Edwards and Potter, 2001:12).

This approach treats discourse as having three key characteristics which are evident among blogs as a discourse (Potter and Hepburn, 2007:161):

(a) Discourse is action-oriented. Blogs can then be recognised as a practical medium and a primary medium for constructing experiences action, in particular, travel experiences of tourists.

(b) Discourse is situated. It is embedded in and often constitutive of practices, just as blogs are situated in the consumption experience and therefore constitutive of travel practices.

(c) Discourse is both constructed and constructive.; constructed because discourse is put together from different elements, such as words, categories, commonplaces, interpretative repertoires and other elements, and constructive in the sense that versions of the world, of actions and events of mental life and furniture are put together and stabilised in talk. These are the main characteristics of blogs, made up of different elements and constructing their versions of consumption and travel experiences.

Discursive psychology favours the analysis of records of natural interaction, or textual materials produced as part of life's activities (newspaper reports, medical records, written testimony, etc) rather than using experiments, surveys and interviews to generate research data because of its emphasis on how both "reality" and "mind" are constructed by people conceptually, in language, in the course of their performance of practical tasks. Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson (2009) emphasised that with DP, when investigating attitudes towards a certain activity, the aim is not to discern an individual's attitude but instead to look at the way in which people talk about that particular activity – that is, what they are doing with their talk and how they construct their version of what that activity is. The authors also emphasised the importance of the argumentative nature of talk which, according to Billig (1991), was an important way of highlighting the way in which people construct versions of the world which are designed to counter alternative versions. Potter and Wetherell (1995) posited the notion of stake and accountability; where discursive psychologists argued that people treat each other as agents who have a stake (or vested interest) in the activities they are engaged in (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). There is also the notion of ideological dilemma (coined by Billig and colleagues in 1988) which acknowledges the fact that discourses are used as flexible rhetorical resources in argumentation and consistency should therefore not be expected (Langdidge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009).

For this thesis, DP will then concentrate on how bloggers constructed their versions of consumption/travel experiences and what they were doing when they blogged about their experiences. This emphasis on construction and content and stake and accountability and ideological dilemma will be kept in mind during the analysis of the discourse.

Having clarified the appropriateness of DP for achieving the research goals, the next section explains the process of discourse analysis for this study.

4.3.3 Doing discursive psychology

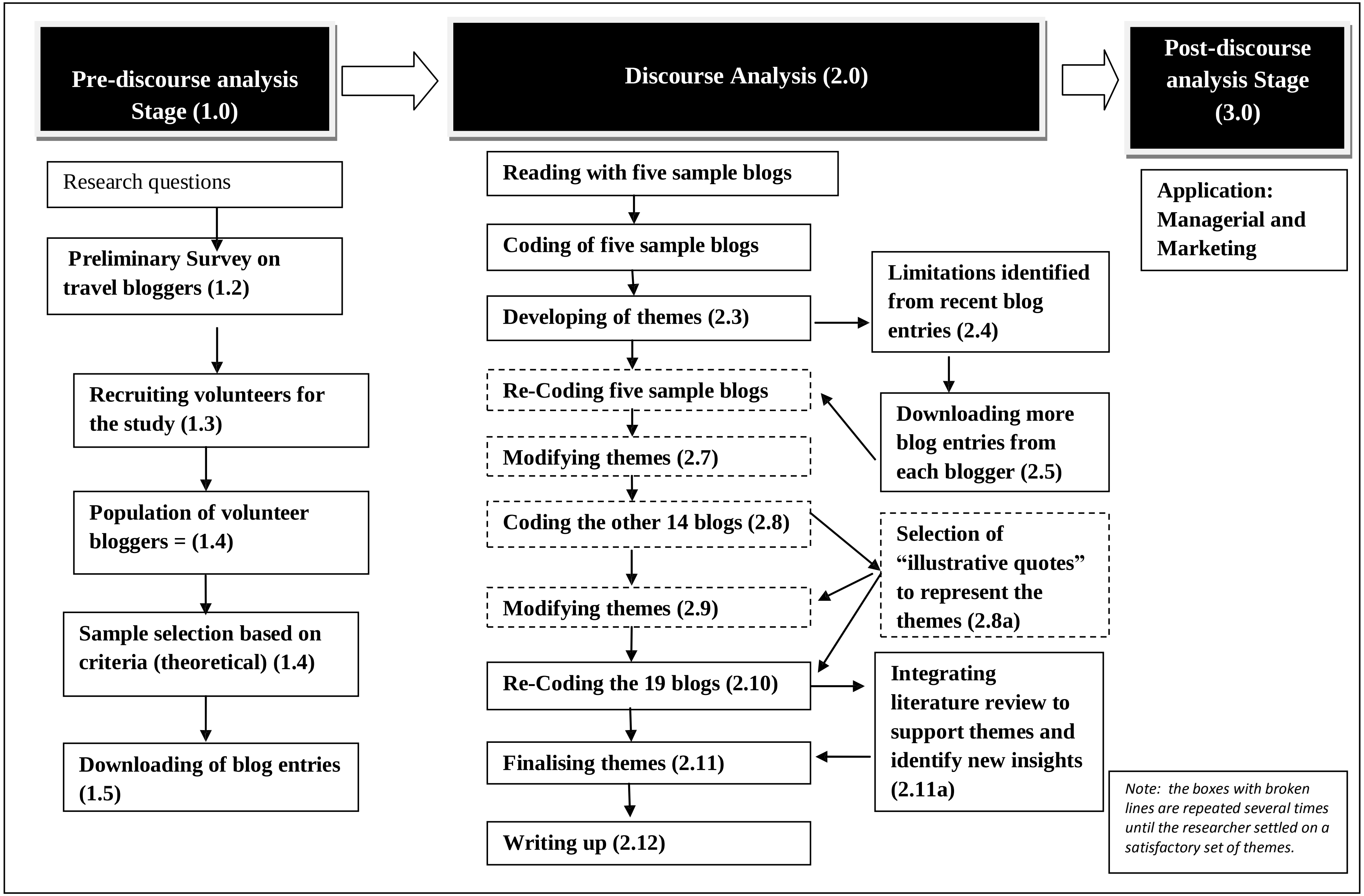
"It is much easier to explicate the central tenets of discourse analysis than it is to explain how actually to go about analyzing discourse" (Gill, 1996:143). Potter and Wetherell (1987) confirmed that there is no mechanical procedure for producing findings from an archive of transcript (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Gill (1996:143) further stated that "somewhere between transcription and writing up; the essence of doing discourse analysis seems to slip away; ever elusive, it is never quite captured by descriptions of coding schemes, hypothesis and analytical schemas". This is indeed experienced by the researcher for this thesis; that coding schemes are not enough, especially in the first few stages of analysing the data, when themes are created, modified, merged, deleted, and maybe recreated again and given a new label with richer and more solid conceptualisation. The process can be compared to numerous endless cycles of reading but it can be learned by doing; it only requires more reading and greater care (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). It is not mysterious and can be developed through practice and example (Widdicombe, 1993:97). Willig (2008) described DA as a particular way of reading – reading for action orientation (what is the text doing?) rather than simply reading for meaning (what is this text saying); and hence it cannot be learned from one day to the next and it cannot be followed like a recipe.

Despite all these warnings of the difficulties of doing DA or DP, several discourse analysts have suggested guidelines for doing DA: Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 10 stages in the analysis of discourse; Billig's (1997) procedural guide for DA; Wiggins and Potter's (2008) detailed and comprehensive guidance on the practicalities of DP research, and Antaki et al's (2003) evaluating DP research. Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 10 stages for a discursive psychological analysis comprise: 1) research questions; 2) sample selection 3) collection of records and documents; 4) interviews; 5) transcription; 6) coding; 7) analysis; 8) validation, 9) the report and 10) application (Willig, 2008). There are then three major stages of doing DP, as shown in Figure 4.6, namely: pre-discourse analysis, discourse analysis and post-discourse analysis.

4.3.3.1 Research Context

Enoch and Grossman (2010) observed that backpackers' and long-term travellers' journals such as those of the Israeli and Danish bloggers they studied were the most comprehensive and detailed ones, where their writers sometimes added entries on a daily basis. Murphy (2001) stated how some features of travelling such as communication and identity construction may be somewhat more intense among backpackers and more evident among researchers, thus providing a more lucid showcase for a phenomenon that might otherwise be overlooked among tourists in general (Noy, 2004). Hence, this thesis focuses on the blogs of long-haul and multiple destination bloggers.

Figure 4.6 Detailed Stages of DA for this thesis



These travellers are considered to provide rich narratives of their travels across different places with varying cultures and places that might have influenced their motivation to document these places and share their experiences with their readers. It is assumed that the further the distance between home and the destination the more differences these travellers are exposed to, over a longer period of time; hence the value of experiences can be emphasised compared to other types of travellers. Therefore, they can contribute more to understanding consumption/tourist experiences. Carson (2008) mentioned earlier that bloggers tend to write more about places they have visited as these are opportunities to provide unique content. Also, as this thesis is focused on understanding how bloggers reconstruct their experiences for their audience, these types of travellers provided a substantial number of blog entries documenting their travels over long periods. These series of blog entries allowed the researcher to identify patterns in how an individual blogger reconstructs experiences. Carson (2008) has stated that in some cases, it may have been possible to learn more about the author in a qualitative sense by analysing the entire blog for evidence of interests, background, nature of the travel party, and so on.

Long-haul and multi-destination travellers are also stereotyped into backpackers or budget travellers. There are arguments that this group should not be considered as homogenous (Loker-Murphy 1996; Murphy 2001; Ross 1997; Scheyvens 2002; Sørensen 1999; Uriely, Yonay and Simchai, 2002). Nevertheless, Sorensen (2003) pointed out that despite varying degrees and intensity of association of individuals to backpackers, these individuals connect to a shared frame of reference, whether this is a matter of identity, philosophy, sense of belonging or sentiments of shared value, and their partitioned and fractioned interaction that produces meaning, which in turn influences norms, values, conduct and other elements of the social being. O'Reilley (2006) observed that there are enough commonalities to suggest the formation of at least a nascent imagined community. In fact, he argued that there are commonly expressed views that appear over and over again in backpacker discourse which include orientalist/colonial tropes; the sense of having more in common with fellow travellers of different nationalities than with many fellow nationals; a sense of freedom gained during travel from home responsibilities, but also from constraints on personal behaviour; the development of a feeling of common humanity, often expressed in stories about the ''kindness of strangers'' or the similarities between people all over the world; the urge to see the world ''because it's there''; the belief that travel can lead to self-development and self-knowledge; and finally, the realisation for many that the ''big trip'' has not helped to get it out of their system, but has rather planted a seed of desire for more (O'Reilley, 2006) . Keeping this in mind, these are then expected to be encountered in their construction of their travel experiences. In fact, some of the discourses that may be identified could reflect their characteristics as travellers.

These specific travellers have attracted the attention of literature which has examined their behaviour which Larsen et al (2011) considered related to a range of issues highly relevant to tourism research. Their examples of this literature included works on the "tourist role'' (Cohen, 1972, 1979), the tracing of concepts of experiences (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai, 2002), narratives of self-change (Noy, 2004), risk (Uriely, Maoz and Reichel, 2007) and drugs (Uriely and Belhassen, 2006), negative health effects of backpacking (Bellis, et al 2007), subjective risk creation through narratives (Elsrud, 2001), and identity construction and motivations to undertake such trips (Maoz, 2007). This body of literature provides a background to the context of this consumption experience being explored, and will be utilised in the discussion of different discourses identified.

4.4.3.2 Sample selection

This thesis used the purposive sampling method which is primarily used in qualitative studies and involves selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Patton (2002) emphasised that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth where one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry (Merriam, 2009). This sampling starts with identification of selection criteria that would guide that would guide the choice of groups or sites to be studied, and this can be considered a list of the attributes essential to find or locate a unit that fits this list (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993; Merriam, 2009). Figure 4.7 illustrates those criteria which led to the selection of sample bloggers whose blogs were used in the DA.

As blogs are copyrighted materials, during the survey the respondents were asked whether they were interested in participating in the next stage of the research, where their blogs will be examined. At the end of the survey, out of the 1,313 respondents, there were 454 emails which indicated their willingness to be contacted for the next stage. These volunteers were screened further based on the following criteria: a) membership in travelblog.org for consistency with the profile of bloggers presented in Chapter 3; b) language, as this is the main feature of blogging that will be examined to address the research questions; c) number of blogs produced to indicate their experience in blogging, and d) type of trips mostly blogged about to indicate type of tourists. Hence, the original number of 454 bloggers was reduced to 285 bloggers who are members of the travelblog.org website. Due to the language criterion, British bloggers were chosen over American bloggers due to researcher's and supervisors' familiarity with the language (such as their slang expression, words use), further lowering the number to 105.

Out of these 105 bloggers, the most experienced bloggers (those who indicated they have more than 26 blogs) were chosen, resulting in 46 bloggers. The final criterion screened bloggers who very frequently and quite frequently blogged about their longer trips (three weeks and more) which brought down the sample bloggers to 40. This group of bloggers are considered to be meaningful cases which have the necessary knowledge and experience of performing the action of interest, which is blogging and travelling in this case (Flick, 2009). The length of trip criterion separated the group of long-haul and multiple destination travellers (mostly stereotyped as backpackers) from other respondents. The sample selection also reflected the results of the survey, particularly the following characteristics of bloggers in terms of their experience in blogging represented by the fact that more than one third of the bloggers have produced 11 to 25 travel blogs; the types of trip blogged about are the longer trips of more than three weeks.

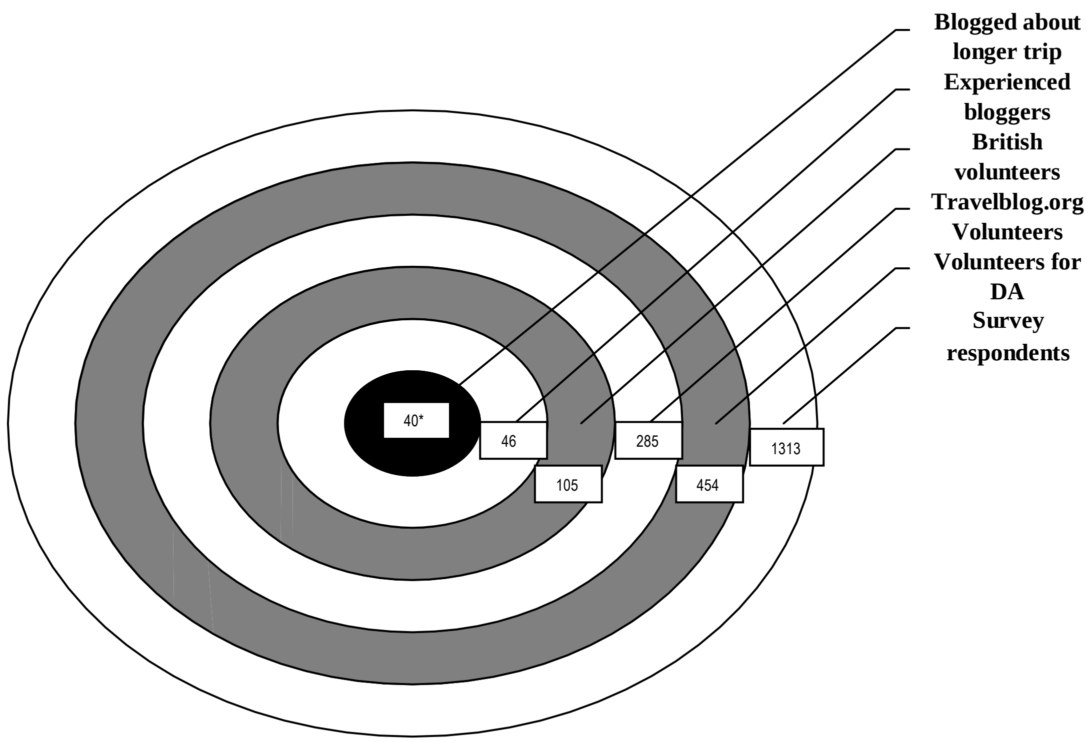


Figure 4.7 Identification of Sample Bloggers

As blogs are the unit of research, it was necessary to validate that these sample bloggers indeed have the blogs that are available and contain information needed for the DA. Hence, blogs of these 40 bloggers were examined for the number and content of their blogs as well as the trips blogged about. After this process, 21 bloggers were dropped from the list due to the following reasons: blog web pages cannot be traced online anymore; no blog entries;

blogs contain mostly pictures; some have less than 1000 words per blog; and some have blogs that are mostly about trips in the UK. Hence, only 19 bloggers with good blogs qualified as sample bloggers. Their blogs were extracted for the discourse analysis.

4.3.3.3 The research process: Organising and selecting data

This stage replaces Potter and Wetherell's (1987) three stages in undertaking discourse analysis, specifically the collection of records and documents, interviews and transcriptions. Blogs as published diaries online required extracting the blogs from the web pages of the bloggers, which were also chronologically arranged. A systematic procedure was designed to handle the lager amount of data. The blogs were copied as texts to a word document file and the file labelled accordingly. However, this method also required cleaning of data which involved removing pictures that were automatically copied along with the text; organising layout and formatting to indicate blog entry titles, dates and places per each blog entry, as they were used as references for quotes in the analysis.

Table 4.6 Sample Blogs used for the Discourse Analysis

Blog No.	Name	Screen Name	Solo (S)/Joint (J) blog	Countries visited (based on blog entries used for analysis)	Number of words for all blog entries used	Number of blog entries analysed	Date of First blog entry	Date of Last blog entry	Duration of travel
1	Astrid	Fletclough	J	Laos, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand	9,344	38	September 16, 2008	January 27, 2009	4 months
2	Meltem	Turkishdelight	S	Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia	10,831	12	May 23, 2009	September 21, 2009	4 months
3	Dylan	Dyl	S	Spain, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Tokyo, Thailand	51,568	53	October 29, 2008	April 14, 2009	5.5 months
4	Derek	Delek Delek	S	USA, France, Italy, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia,	60,363	24	June 23, 2007	September 25, 2007	3 months
5	Sally	The Mosquito Magnet	S	South Africa, Tanzania, Bostwana, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya	24,396	33	November 9. 2008	December 12, 2008	1 month
6	Nick and Sally	Muno	J	India, Nepal	9,271	7	April 7, 2007	June 20, 2007	2.5 months
7	Tim	Mingalaba	S	Thailand, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Tibet,	59,135	22	May 7, 2006	March 11, 207	11 months

Table 4.6 Sample Blogs used for the Discourse Analysis (cont.)

Blog No.	Name	Screen Name	Solo (S)/Joint (J) blog	Countries visited (based on blog entries used for analysis)	Number of words for all blog entries used	Number of blog entries analysed	Date of First blog entry	Date of Last blog entry	Duration of travel
8	Michael	Michaeln Faye	S	Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam	56,064	25	April 30, 2007	February 21, 2008	11 months
9	Dawn	Spidermiss	S	Argentina, England	5,689	10	January 23, 2010	March 28, 2010	2 months
10	Geoff	Bencat	S	USA (multiple cities)	25,656	5	June 28, 2009	July 29, 2009	1 month
11	Gary and Emma	Stewart	J	Hongkong, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia , Singapore, China	38,149	41	August 28, 2007	November 28, 2007	3 months
12	Luke	Chlaa	S	Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina Uruguay, USA	22,420	31	May 9, 2006	August 11, 2006	3 months
13	Nicchi	The Cannons	J	Singapore, Australia, New Zealand	16,539	20	May 31, 2006	November 12, 2006	5.5 months
14	Dave	Dave Cathy	J	Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand	60,967	53	November 28, 2006	July 12, 2007	7.5 months
15	Leanne	Wansan		Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina	9,686	18	September 22, 2008	August 20, 2009	11 months
16	Chrissie	Mark and Chrissie	J	Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador	71,713	90	October 21, 2008	May 13, 2009	Almost 7 months

Table 4.6 Sample Blogs used for the Discourse Analysis (cont.)

Blog No.	Name	Screen Name	Solo (S)/Joint (J) blog	Countries visited (based on blog entries used for analysis)	Number of words for all blog entries used	Number of blog entries analysed	Date of First blog entry	Date of Last blog entry	Duration of travel
17	Claire	The Soul Cultivator	S	Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia,	56,029	35	January 15, 2008	May 4, 2008	4 months
18	Barry	barrygahan	S	Chile, Argentina, Peru Bolivia Colombia	54,988	36	January 2, 2008	April 26, 2008	3 months
19	Gareth	ASBO Holidays	S	India, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Indonesia, Cambodia	31,200	42	June 27, 2006	December 24, 2007	18 months

Files of blog entries were labelled accordingly with a blog number and the name of the blogger for easy retrieval. Initially, five bloggers were chosen and their most recent entry on a visited country was chosen for initial reading and open coding which will be discussed in the next section. However after coding these five blogs, the content of the blogs were found to be limited in developing themes; hence it was decided to download a specific segment of the trip which was usually a bloggers' travel on a certain continent. This is step 2.5 in Figure 4.6 in the discourse analysis process. In cases when the blogs are significantly long (comprehensive and detailed entries), once a clear pattern of the blogs' content and writing style was identified, the collection of blog entries was stopped despite not covering all travels within one continent. This explains the varying volume of blog entries analysed from the 19 bloggers.

Table 4.6 provides details on the 19 sample blogs in terms of the following; ownership of blog, countries visited, number of words, number of entry, first and last entry used for the analysis, and duration of travel. The data collected totalled 674,008 words, which would be equivalent to 1,348 pages (500 words per page). There is a remarkable difference between number of blogs and words within each blog; however, as mentioned earlier they are judged according to the content of the blog entries. All blog entries are put in one document labelled accordingly per blogger. The extraction of all these blogs took approximately one month including cleaning the data for reading and coding. The URL addresses of the first blog entry for each blogger are included in the document for easy retrieval of these web pages if necessary during the analysis stage. Nevertheless, practical tips from discourse analysts guided the first stages, such as noting general impressions, subjects and objects by using key words that seem to identify chunks of data (sentence, paragraph or argument) (Wiggins and Ripley, 2010) that helped in moving towards an initial coding. ***Appendix 2*** presents the socio-demographic profile, travel blogging practices and motivation of the 19 sample bloggers as well as a brief profile for each blogger based on the information they have disclosed on their profile page, travel companions, places visited, purpose of their travel blogs and distinct blogging styles,

4.3.3.4 Data Analysis

Reading. As recommended by several authors (Coyle, 2007; Gill, 1986; Willig, 2009), it is crucial that the researcher takes the time to read the documents carefully. Willig (2009) advised it is necessary for the researcher to read the document at least once without any attempt at analysis; this allows the reader to experience the discursive effects of the text, i.e. making the researcher aware of "what a text is doing". She emphasised that the analysis that would follow lets the researcher identify "how the text manages to accomplish this". This is step 2.1 in Figure 4.6, where the reading of the text initially involved the first five sample blogs due to the huge amount of data. As Gill (1996) pointed out, there is a need to immerse oneself in the material; to become familiar with it as it is necessary to coding. Hence it was deemed feasible to achieve immersion in five blogs rather than the initial 19 blogs. It is necessary to acknowledge also that the idiosyncratic, unorganised structure and vast content matter of blogs present more challenges than structured interview transcripts which are also used in DA.

Coding. Potter and Wetherell (1987) referred to this as the stage where the analytic process begins (Coyle, 2010). Coding is the process of defining what the data are all about (Charmaz, 1995:37). Wiggins and Ripley (2010) described coding for discursive psychology as involving sifting through the data, collecting instances of a particular phenomenon. They advised that this process requires coding, analysing, going back to the data and then re-coding or searching for further extracts. This is reflected in Figure 4.6 in steps 2.2; 2.5, 2.8 and 2.10. Some stages required reiterative coding as indicated by broken lines. The coding process of blogs started around June of 2009. Coding was loosely considered by categorising the content of the travel blogs in terms of what bloggers talk about in their travel experiences in guiding the development of themes. During the coding, attention was given to similarities and differences in what bloggers talk about concerning their travel experiences. One means of elucidating the functions of discourse is through the study of variability in any discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1997). Coyle (2010) emphasised that DA actively seeks out variation as it provide cues to the functions of discourses. The process of discourse analysis therefore involves the search for both consistency (in the identification of discourses) and variability (in the analysis of discursive functions). Indeed, these variations are found among the content of blogs; “what they were talking about” and “how they are talking about”. This serves as the first layer of the discourse analysis across the different rounds of coding. These coding processes led to the developing of themes which were also modified several times as seen in Figure 4.6.

During the initial stages of coding five blogs (steps 2.2 and 2.5), important extracts were put into a matrix against each blogger to clearly show variability and consistency among these bloggers. However, as coding reached steps 2.8 and 2.10 NVivo, qualitative software, was used to deal with the huge amount of data. NVivo was used with the aim of categorising big chunks of data into four established themes and avoiding a very large matrix which would not be convenient for analysis. After coding the data into four categories, another round of coding produced a better selection of illustrative quotes which best represent a theme from each blogger. Wiggins and Ripley (2010) have advised the collection of instances that produce a series of extracts that contribute towards a theme but would also show different ways of talking about the theme. This has been done in this study through identification of "great quotes" among the large chunk of data.

This thesis has used two different layers of analysis over the numerous rounds of coding. These two layers aimed to address these two questions: 1) what do bloggers talk about in their blogs about their travel experiences and how they talk about them, and (2) why are they blogging about their travel experiences? Initially, the coding process for the first question looked for various stories/accounts of travel experiences and how bloggers used various linguistic techniques in constructing these stories. These techniques include use of language, content of text, claims, justifications and judgments, and subjective positioning and self-presentation have signified wider patterns of language use and helped in creating the larger picture of what are they doing with these stories, and why. Both questions aim to identify discourses in travel experiences as well as the discursive functions of these discourses. This was a very long process done over several months; coding determined the themes and the recoding in most cases, modified the themes also. Identifying the underlying patterns and functions of discourse is often difficult and time consuming (Gill, 1996:146). Several themes - or what Potter and Wetherell (1995) call interpretative repertoires (or discourses) - were identified during this analytical process, and will be discussed in the next section.

Developing, modifying and finalising discourses on travel experiences. Interpretative repertoire is used particularly in discursive psychology and is similar to discourses according to Potter and Wetherell (1995). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) noted that "central to Potter and Wetherell's model is the view of discourses as "interpretative repertories" that are used as flexible resources in social interaction with the purpose of gaining insight into questions about communication, social action and the construction of the self, the Other and the World" (p. 106). Discourses are; a) all types of verbal interactions and written texts, and b) meanings, conversations, narratives, explanations, accounts and anecdotes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). They define interpretative repertoires as "broadly discernable clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images... They are available resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:89). These repertoires are resources that people use to construct versions of reality (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

For this study, the discourse analysis of blogs seeks discourses in travel experience; in particular, how do tourists construct their experiences? Hence, the discourses that were initially produced relate to what aspects of their travel experiences they write about. After about a year of exploring various discourses which involved repetitive coding and modifying of themes, the discourses identified at step 2.7 were now found acceptable, and Table 4.7 illustrates the revisions and merging of discourses as the researcher became more immersed in the data and patterns and variations became clearer with every reiterative process of coding and modifying themes. Every step has formed a set of discourses and each of these discourses identified had led to more solid, newly formed or merged discourses. As the analysis is data-led, it can also be observed that the literature review at step 11a was necessary in modifying and finalising the discourses identified. This allowed the researcher to confirm data that support existing theories and identify new insights that the data bring to the study. In the same manner, the literature review helped in providing clear boundaries between the discourses. This whole process has taken almost two years, confirming Gill's description of doing discourse analysis: difficult, time-consuming and a frustrating process; and Dyer (2006) also noted that, unlike quantitative analysis, there is very little in the way of rules or formal procedures to be followed in conducting the analysis, and relatively little guidance has been published.

Discourses are seen as common stories arising from travel experiences; however the analyses have also shown variations in these stories as expected when versions of stories are described by different people. Most importantly the functions of discourses were also revealed. Great quotes or the best quotes that represent these discourses were used as evidence for these variations and functions.

Table 4.7 Revisions in identified discourses in travel experiences

Steps as indicated in Figure 4.6	Discourses identified/modified
Step 2.7 (based on 5 sample blogs)	Discourses of escape, discourses of relaxation and recuperation, discourses of fun, discourses of learning
Step 2. 8 (based on additional 14 sample blogs)	Discourses of escape (including discourse of relaxation and recuperation); Discourses of self-development (revised discourses of fun but highlight stories of challenges, risks and hardships); Discourses of learning and reflections (an expanded theme to include reflections of bloggers about home and the Other)
Step 2.9 (another round of coding for the 19 blogs)	Discourses of self-development: Accounts of learning and reflections; Stories of hardships, challenges and achievements, Stories of risk danger and courage; Accounts of novelty; and Accounts of self expansion; and Discourses of Escape: escape to a fantasy; escape from travel and hardships
Step 2.10, 2.11 and 2.11a (reading through the write up of the discourses from Step 2.9)	Stories of Risks and Challenges, Accounts of learning and reflections, Accounts of novelty and differences, accounts of self-expansion and stories of escape

Determining Validity of Discursive Psychology. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) enumerated coherence and fruitfulness of the analysis as two ways of determining the validity of discourse analysis. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), analytical claims should form a coherent discourse as the presence of aspects of the analysis that are not in line with the discourse analytical account reduces the likelihood that readers will accept the analysis (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Fruitfulness of the analysis, on the other hand, refers to the explanatory potential of the analytical framework including its ability to provide new explanations on the phenomenon being studied again as suggested by Potter and Wetherell (1987). Jorgensen and Philips (2002) suggested the following rules of thumb regarding data analysis (p.173):

(1) The analysis should be solid. It is best if interpretation is based on a range of different textual features rather than just one feature.

(2) The analysis should be comprehensive. This does not mean that all aspects of text have to be analysed in all the ways one could - which would be impossible in many cases – but that the questions posed to the text should be answered fully and any textual features that conflict with the analysis should be accounted for.

(3) Analysis should be presented in a transparent way, allowing the reader, as far as possible, to “test” the claims made. This can be achieved by documenting the interpretations made and by giving the reader access to the empirical material or at least by reproducing longer extracts in the presentation of the analysis.

These rules were considered in the presentation of the results of the analysis in the next chapter. Finally, the last section concludes this chapter with a reminder of the focus and the limitations of using DP for this study.

4.3.3.5 The focus and limitations of using discursive psychology

The focus of DP is on discourse and discourse only, and as Potter and Wetherell (1987) stated, exclusively on discourse itself: how it is constructed; and its functions and consequences which arise from the different discursive organisation (Willig, 2008). Willig (2008) warns that DP will not address questions about subjectivity – (sense of self, intentionality, self-awareness and autobiographical memories). Langdridge (2004) pointed out the "lack of person" in DP because of the focus on discourse only (Willig, 2008). Another limitation pointed out by Willig (2008) is how DP places heavy emphasis on the action orientation of talk and text; however it is unable to account for why particular individuals or groups of individuals pursue particular discursive objectives. Most importantly, Willig (2008) discussed what kind of knowledge DP aims to produce, the assumption it makes about the world it studies, and the way in which it conceptualises the role of the researcher in the process of knowledge production. She enumerated these three main points:

(1) DP is concerned with HOW particular versions of reality are manufactured, negotiated and deployed in conversation (or text). DP does not seek to produce knowledge of things but an understanding of the processes by which they are "talked (or written) into being".

(2) DP psychologists are interested in ways in which language is constructive and functional. Hence, variability and fluidity of discourses are emphasised as it serves people in their performance of social actions. They see the world as a shifting and negotiable place that cannot be understood or read except through language and no one reading can be said to be right or valid.

(3) The role of the researcher is of necessity that of an author of the research due to the emphasis on the constructive and functional nature of language. Researchers are not seen as a witness or a discoverer but instead have active roles in the construction of the research findings. Their research should be presented as a reading of data that is not the only possible reading.

Having established the rationale of using DP for this research and the research process, the next chapter presents the results of the discourse analysis.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the thesis as having two phases: survey and discourse analysis. The survey was conducted to provide the context for the selection of the sample bloggers for the discourse analysis of travel blogs. Both methods have its own scope and contribution to the study. It is clear that the thesis adopts a post-positivistic and interpretivism research paradigm to produce the knowledge required to achieve the research objective and address research questions. Discourse analysis as mentioned earlier is the main research method for this thesis; hence there was an in-depth discussion on its theoretical foundation; justification for the discourse analysis approach and the process of discursive psychology. The next chapter presents the result of the survey of travel bloggers.

Chapter 5. Travel bloggers, their blogging practices and motivations

5.0 Overview of the chapter

This chapter presents the survey results based on the 1,214 respondents from www.travelblog.org. This provided the context for selecting the sample travel bloggers whose blogs are used for the discourse analysis of travel blogs. It also addresses the fundamental research gap on who are the travel bloggers, what types of experiences do they blog about and their blogging motivations. This chapter is structured as follows; a) profile of travel bloggers, b) blogging practices, and c) blogging motivations.

5.1 Profile of travel bloggers

The profile of travel bloggers is similar to those of global bloggers reported by Technocrati.com in their report, *State of the Blogosphere 2008*: young (mostly between 25-44 years old), educated (completed college) and employed, with the exemption of having more male bloggers than female. Table 5.1 below summarises the profile of travel bloggers.

Gender and age. There are more female (53%) respondents than male (47%) respondents. Although some blogs are jointly owned by married couples, partners or boyfriend and girlfriend teams, it is assumed that the main account owner is the email addressee where the private messages for survey participation are automatically sent, and who filled out the survey. The biggest group of bloggers (43%) are between the ages of 25 to 34; followed by the age group of 18 to 24 years (25%) and then the age group of 35 to 44 years (15%). The smallest groups are those of below 18 years old (1%) and those aged above 65 years old (2%).

Table 5.1 Socio-demographics of travel bloggers (N=1,214)

Gender	**%**
Male	47
Female	53
Age	
Below 18 years old	1
18 to 24 years old	25
25 to 34 years old	43
35 to 44 years old	15
45 to 55 years old	9
56 to 65 years old	5
Above 65 years old	2
Level of education	
Some high school or less	1
Completed high school	12
Trade/technical school	8
Completed college	52
Postgraduate	27
Occupational Status	
Student	16
On break further education	3
On break before looking for job	3
Employed full-time	44
Employed part-time	5
Self-employed	8
Homemaker	1
On career break	15
Retired	5

Educational level and occupational status. Most bloggers are well educated. The majority of them have completed college (52%) and have postgraduate degrees (27%). The top three groups of bloggers in terms of education attained are comprised of full-time employed individuals, students, and those on career breaks; they make up 75% of the total of bloggers. Nearly half of the bloggers (44%) are full-time employed. It is interesting to note also that those individuals on breaks before further education and before looking for jobs and on career breaks makes up for 21% of the bloggers. This significant number of individuals on break (from further education, before looking for job and on career break) might be associated with the emergence of adult gap travel in recent years (Mintel Report, July 2008). Lipsett (2008) reported that there are around 90,000 25 to 35 year old “gappers” and 200,000 55 to 65 year olds taking time out in addition to 230,000 young Britons taking a year to travel and work around the world. Griffith (2008) stated that the gap year is no longer the sole domain of the young as the fastest growing market is those approaching the age of 30 who want to take time out to find themselves (Lipsett, 2008).

Country of residence. The top five countries of residence of bloggers are: a) the USA (29.7%), b) the United Kingdom (23.5%), c) Australia (9.2%), d) Canada (8.8%) and e) Germany (2.9%). More than half of the bloggers (53.2%) are from the United Kingdom and the US. Notice how these countries except for Germany are English-speaking countries.

Figure 5.1 shows the top 10 countries where bloggers are, accounting for 81.4% of the total bloggers from 74 countries. China and South Korea were included among the top 10 country of origin of bloggers because of the many native English speakers who are residing and working in these countries as English teachers. Fifteen out of the 20 bloggers from China have indicated that their native language is English. Similarly, bloggers from South Korea are also native English speakers except for one (13 out of 14). This reflects the trend among Westerners who took posts or volunteer to teach English in Asian countries which provided them opportunities of travel within the region.

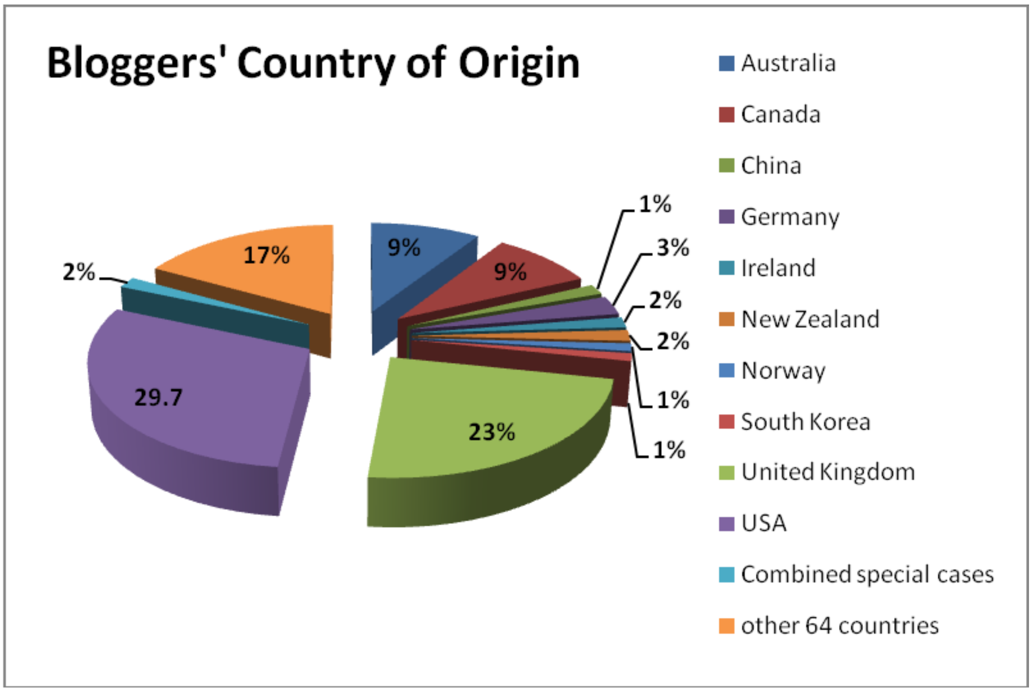


Figure 5.1 Bloggers' Country of Origin

The category of "combined special cases" includes all responses of bloggers indicating their country of residence as "worldwide", "nomadic", "none yet", "on the way to (certain country)", and those who are travelling for long trips. However, 19 out of 21 of these respondents in this category have English as their native language. This is another indication of how many Western travellers are travelling for longer period of times and to long-haul and multiple destinations, and that they cannot state that they are residing in a country for a year; hence those answers were given. It is important to note also that as the survey used the English language this might have discouraged some nationalities that use English less. In fact, in the next section, the language used by these bloggers in blogging is not limited to English.

Socio-demographic profile of the top bloggers. A comparison of the socio-demographic profile of bloggers from the top five countries revealed similarities with each other, and among the total number of respondents (see Table 5.2). Gender of bloggers across the five countries is more or less equally divided between male and female; except for the USA which shows 40% male bloggers and 60% female bloggers. The age group also reflects similar composition with the biggest number of bloggers coming from the age group of 25 to 34 years old. There are no below 18 years old bloggers from the UK and Germany, and no blogger is aged above 65 from the US and Germany. It is also to be noted that there are no German bloggers beyond 55 years old.

With regards to education, the bloggers across the five countries mainly hold completed and postgraduate qualifications. Germany has no bloggers that have attained high school or lower education, reflecting the absence of bloggers who are below 18 years old. Likewise, in terms of occupational level, all four top countries have at least 40% of the bloggers who worked full time except for German bloggers, where only 29% are working full time. This can be explained by the significant numbers of student bloggers which makes up 31% of the German bloggers. There are also no retired and homemaker bloggers from Germany.

Table 5.2 Socio-demographic profile of bloggers from the top five countries

	Total	USA	UK	Australia	Canada	Germany
N	**1214**	**361**	**285**	**112**	**107**	**35**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Male	47	40	48	54	44	57
Female	53	60	52	46	56	43
Age						
Below 18 years old	1	0.8	0	0.9	0.9	0
18 to 24 years old	25	33	25	11	30	23
25 to 34 years old	43	34	48	43	33	54
35 to 44 years old	15	14	15	18	17	17
45 to 55 years old	9	9	7	19	9	6
56 to 65 years old	5	7	5	5	8	0
Above 65 years old	2	0	0.4	4	2	0
Level of education						
Some high school or less	1	0.8	2	3	2	0
Completed high school	12	13	12	13	14	14
Trade/technical school	8	5	10	12	9	6
Completed college	52	51	50	45	61	51
Postgraduate	27	30	26	28	14	29
Occupational status						
Student	16	22	14	7	17	31
On break further education	3	4	1	2	5	3
On break before looking for job	3	3	6	2	2	0
Employed full time	44	40	42	40	40	29
Employed part time	5	5	3	8	8	9
Self-employed	8	9	7	8	9	14
Homemaker	1	1	1	3	0	0
On career break	15	8	23	23	13	14
Retired	5	8	2	7	6	0

It is clear that the socio-demographics of bloggers are similar across the countries, with a few exceptions among the German bloggers. Although Germany is only represented by 35 bloggers, it nonetheless reflects that travelling and travel blogging are more common trends among student bloggers, and the absence of German retirees and bloggers aged above 55 may indicate that this age group has not picked up on travel blogging practices.

The next section discusses the blogging practices of travel bloggers.

5.2 Blogging practices of travel bloggers

Extant literature on blogging refers to blogging practices in various ways. Schmidt (2007) described blogging practices in terms of how bloggers use blogs for identity management (frequency of updating blogs, blog content and disclosure of personal information), relationship management (posting comments, blog rolls) and information management (reading blogs and RSS), while Lenhart and Fox (2006) reported on practices of US bloggers in terms of frequency of posts, hours spent on blogging, location of blogging and top blogging sites. However, this study is focused on understanding how tourists use travel blogs as a post-consumption activity where they share their travel experiences with their readers. Hence, there is a need to understand their blogging practices in terms of year of joining the website, number of blogs produced, what type of trips are blogged about, recentness of travel blogs, and frequency of audience reading and posting comments on their blogs because this influences their blogging style and content. These blogging practices can indicate experience in blogging, active blogging, their travels mostly blogged about and their engagement with their audience.

5.2.1 Membership in blogging websites

Forty five per cent of the bloggers joined the blog site in 2008. The great majority (71%) of the bloggers joined the blog site within the period of 2007-

2008. A very small percentage (4%) of the bloggers joined the website prior to 2005.

Table 5.3 Year of Membership

Year of Membership	Percentage
Prior to 2005	4
2005	7
2006	18
2007	26
2008	45

Membership of male bloggers is higher than female bloggers prior to 2005 until 2006. By 2008, female bloggers account for nearly 60%. Bloggers aged 25 to 34 years old account for the biggest group of bloggers who joined the blogs prior to 2005 until 2008. This age group also accounted for more than half of the bloggers in 2005. There is a significant increase of 18 to 24 years old bloggers from 22% of the total bloggers who joined prior to 2005 to 32% of the total number of bloggers in 2008. Bloggers who have completed college consistently account for the biggest group of bloggers who joined the travel blog website prior to 2005 to 2008.

Bloggers who are employed full time have likewise maintained the biggest group of bloggers across the years. The group has however decreased to 33% of the bloggers in 2008 while significant increases among students (20%) and bloggers on career breaks (20%) were noted. This may be associated to the emergence of adult gap travel over recent years (Mintel Report, 2008), as mentioned earlier.

Table 5.4 Year of Membership by various socio-demographic groups

	Prior to 2005	2005	2006	2007	2008
N =1214					
Male	68	51	52	49	42
Female	32	49	48	51	58
Age					
Below 18 years old	0	0	0	.6	1.1
18 to 24 years old	22	15	16	23	32
25 to 34 years old	29	56	48	45	40
35 to 44 years old	22	16	20	17	12
45 to 55 years old	17	8	7	8	9
56 to 65 years old	7	4	6	4	5
Above 65 years old	2	1	2	3	1
Level of education					
Some high school or less	.0	1	.9	2	1
Completed high school	15	6	7	11	15
Trade/technical school	10	3	6	11	8
Completed college	46	51	57	51	50
Postgraduate	29	39	29	25	26
Occupational status					
Student	12	8	10	17	20
On break further education	2	1	1	2	6
On break before looking for job	0	2	3	.6	6
Employed full time	54	65	53	48	33
Employed part time	2	6	6	6	4
Self-employed	20	8	10	10	6
Homemaker	2	2	2	1	.4
On career break	2	6	10	11	21
Retired	5	2	5	5	5

By country of residence, the majority of the Americans, British and Australians started their membership with the blog site between 2007 and 2008. For the Canadians and Germans, at least 20% started their membership in 2006.

Table 5.5 Year of membership by top five country of residence of bloggers

		Prior to 2005	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total (%)
	N						
USA	361	3	9	15	22	51	100
United Kingdom	285	2	7	18	29	44	100
Australia	112	4	9	16	23	48	100
Canada	107	4	10	24	22	40	100
Germany	35	3	0	26	51	20	100

5.2.2 Membership in other blog sites

Schmallegger and Carson (2008) mentioned that there are bloggers who use other blog sites for their travel experiences. This was confirmed by the participants of this study when asked if they have used or joined other blog sites. Forty eight respondents stated that they have blogs with other websites, and out of these, 11 indicated that they have other blog sites in addition to travelblog.org. Blogspot.com, blogger.com and getjealous.com are among the most popular blogging websites used by respondents.

5.2.3 Travel blog entries produced

As Lu and Hsiao (2007) have warned, some accounts are created easily but may not have blog entries, or have long since been updated. Hence, it was necessary to ask respondents whether they have posted any blog entry in their travel blog account. Out of the 1,214 respondents, only 1,032 indicated that they have produced a travel blog entry; this accounts for 85% of the total respondents. Therefore, for the rest of the discussion of blogging practices, 82 bloggers are excluded because they have not produced any blog. This can be explained by a few bloggers indicating they have recently joined the blog site and have just set up an account ready for posting blogs upon travel, or that they posted their blogs of travel on other websites. It is clear that bloggers indeed may maintain various websites and choose where to post their travel experiences.

An examination of the bloggers who have not produced any blogs revealed the following:

a. More than fifty percent (61%) of them joined the travel blog website in 2008
b. Fifty-nine percent of these bloggers are female.
c. Nearly 40% of those bloggers are from the age group of 25 to 34 years old, followed by 18 to 24 years old with 23.6% and 35 to 44 years old with 19.2%.
d. Bloggers in full-time employment (40.1%), on career break (23.1%) and students (12.6%) account for 75% of those bloggers who have not produced any blog.
e. Slightly more than 40% of these bloggers are from the USA, 13.7% from the UK and 9.3% from Canada.

Out of the 1032 bloggers who indicated they have produced blog entries, 33% have produced 11 to 25 blogs already, while 40% have more than 26 blogs.

Table 5.6 Number of blogs produced by bloggers (N=1032)

Number of blogs produced	Percentage
Less than 5 blogs	13
6 to 10 blogs	14
11 to 25 blogs	33
26 to 50 blogs	25
More than 50 blogs	15

Table 5.7 below shows the number of blogs produced by each socio-demographic group. It is clear that for most groups, around one third of the members have produced 11 to 25 blogs already with the exception of the

below 18 years old bloggers, with the majority having produced only 6 to 10 blogs. About 30% of the bloggers aged 56 to 65 years old have produced more than 50 blogs. Based on occupational status, slightly half of the bloggers who are on break before looking for a job have indicated that they have produced 11 to 25 blogs. Lastly, at least 30% of the bloggers from each of the top five countries have indicated they have already produced 11 to 25 blog entries.

The number of blogs produced is also related to the year of membership of the travel blog website. Around 30% of those who joined the travel blog website prior to 2005, and in 2005, have more than 50 blogs. Those who joined the blogs between 2007 and 2008 have indicated that more than 30% of them have 11 to 25 blogs.

Table 5.7 Number of blogs produced by socio-demographic groups

	Less than 5 blogs	6 to 10 blogs	11 to 25 blogs	26 to 50 blogs	More than 50 blogs	Total
N=1032						**%**
Male	13	15	32	24	16	100
Female	12	14	34	27	13	100
Age						
Below 18 years old	0	71	14	14	1	100
18 to 24 years old	13	20	36	22	9	100
25 to 34 years old	11	11	33	31	14	100
35 to 44 years old	10	14	28	25	23	100
45 to 55 years old	25	9	34	16	16	100
56 to 65 years old	21	14	22	14	29	100
Above 65 years old	7	29	50	7	7	100
Level of education						
Some high school or less	7	31	23	31	8	100
Completed high school	14	22	34	20	10	100
Trade/technical school	15	17	34	20	14	100
Completed college	11	13	35	27	14	100
Postgraduate	15	11	28	28	18	100

Table 5.7 Number of blogs produced by socio-demographic groups (cont.)

		Less than 5 blogs	6 to 10 blogs	11 to 25 blogs	26 to 50 blogs	More than 50 blogs	Total
N=1032							%
Occupational status							
Student		15	23	36	16	10	100
On break further education		8	24	38	27	3	100
On break before looking for job		3	21	52	24	0	100
Employed full-time		13	11	31	30	15	100
Employed part-time		11	11	35	28	15	100
Self-employed		17	12	34	21	16	100
Homemaker		0	10	40	20	30	100
On career break		12	12	29	29	18	100
Retired		13	20	29	11	27	100
Country of residence							
	N						
USA	288	15	17	33	23	12	100
UK	260	13	12	35	28	12	100
Australia	102	14	15	32	22	17	100
Canada	90	7	10	38	28	17	100
Germany	30	20	13	33	23	10	100

5.2.4 Recentness of blog posted

The recentness of blog posted may also indicate activeness in blogging as well as the last trip taken or blogged about. Slightly more than 35% have posted their blogs less than a month ago (i.e. a month before participating in the survey which was undertaken between December 2008 and February 2009). Only 16.2 % of the total bloggers have produced their blog more than six months ago.

Table 5.8 Most recent blog posted

Most recent blogs posted	Percentage
Less than a month ago	35.2
1 to 3 months ago	23.7
4 to 6 months ago	16.2
More than 6 months ago	24.2

For both males and females, the largest group have blogged less than a month ago. At least more than one-third of the bloggers between the age group of 18 to 44 years old have posted their most recent blogs less than a month ago. Likewise, one-third of the bloggers by various level of education has posted latest blog entry a month ago. In terms of occupational status, bloggers on breaks before looking for a job and on career breaks, stood out as the highest percentage (60%) who had posted an entry less than a month ago. At least 30% of the bloggers from the US, the UK and Australia had indicated that their most recent blog was posted less than a month before the survey was conducted, and 40% of the German bloggers have posted their most recent entry more than six months ago.

Table 5.9 Recent blog entry by socio-demographic groups

		Less than a month ago	1 to 3 months ago	4 to 6 months ago	More than 6 months ago	Total
N=1032						**%**
Gender						
Male		34	23	16	27	100
Female		36	25	16	23	100
Age						
Below 18 years old		57	29	0	14	100
18 to 24 years old		34	24	20	22	100
25 to 34 years old		36	23	14	27	100
35 to 44 years old		35	22	18	25	100
45 to 55 years old		28	27	24	21	100
56 to 65 years old		47	29	8	16	100
Above 65 years old		29	29	7	35	100
Level of education						
Some high school or less		39	15	23	23	100
Completed high school		36	19	22	23	100
Trade/technical school		36	19	14	31	100
Completed college		33	25	16	26	100
Postgraduate		38	25	14	23	100
Occupational status						
Student		27	22	25	26	100
On break further education		48	22	14	16	100
On break before looking for job		58	24	3	15	100
Employed full time		30	24	16	30	100
Employed part time		33	28	15	24	100
Self-employed		21	26	22	30	100
Homemaker		40	0	40	20	100
On career break		62	22	7	9	100
Retired		44	29	9	18	100
Country of residence						
USA	288	33	24	20	23	100
UK	260	38	19	14	29	100
Australia	102	32	22	22	24	100
Canada	90	29	22	17	32	100
Germany	30	17	30	13	40	100

5.2.5 Types of trips blogged about

The bloggers were asked how frequently they blogged about different types of trip; a) day trip, b) short break (one to three nights), c) main annual holiday (over four nights to 20 nights), and d) longer trip (three weeks and more). They were asked to rate the frequency using the Likert-type scale of 0 to 7; with 0 = never and 7 = very frequently.

Longer trips got the highest score while day trips got the lowest score as seen in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10 Mean Scores of Type of Trips Blogged about

Types of Trip Blogged on	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Day trip	1032	1.15	1.95
Short break	1032	1.57	2.25
Main annual holiday	1032	2.66	2.66
Longer trip	1032	5.25	2.17

5.2.6 When bloggers post their blog entries

The respondents were also asked when they post their blog. They were asked to rate their frequency when they blog while on travel and after the trip by using a similar Likert-type scale.

Blogging while on travel got a higher mean score of 4.93 compared to blogging after the trip with a mean score of 3.30. This can indicate how bloggers have immediately shared their experiences with their readers. This may influence the details and content of their blogs which is based on their memory.

Table 5.11 Mean Scores of when bloggers post their entries

When bloggers post	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Blogging while on travel	1032	4.93	2.32
Blogging after trip	1032	3.30	2.48

5.2.7 Languages used in blogging

Technocrati (2008) reported that English blogs are now outnumbered by blogs written in other languages (Chinese, Japanese). However, as mentioned earlier for this website, most bloggers come from English-speaking countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia. Hence, English is the most widely used language by the bloggers in their blog entries. There are 1,030 bloggers (84.8% of the total respondents) who indicated using English for blogging. Ninety-eight (98) bloggers indicated using other language in addition to English for their blogs. German, Norwegian and Spanish are the top three other languages used by bloggers. Seven bloggers stated they only use their native language for blogging. Chinese was used by five bloggers, and four bloggers used Japanese.

5.2.8 The audience of the bloggers

As blogging has a social aspect, the bloggers were also asked about their audience and their engagement with them. Extant literature on blogging has emphasised the use of blogs for identity management, relationship management and information management (Herring et al, 2007; Huang et al, 2007; Schmidt, 2007). It has been established in the literature that identity formation requires the confirmation or rejection of this identity with the help of others. Bosangit et al (2009) suggested that these blogs are prepared by bloggers to be read by the public or at least a specific audience. Hence, this question verifies the bloggers' awareness of their audience and how their audience are helping them with their comments.

Using the same scale, the bloggers were asked to rate how frequently the following groups of people read their blogs; a) family, b) friends, and c) co-workers. Family and friends got the highest mean score in terms of frequency in reading blogs with mean scores of 5.78 and 5.51, respectively. Table 5.12 below shows the mean scores of the audience frequency of reading their blogs.

Table 5.12 Mean scores of audience who read their blogs

Audience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family	1032	5.78	1.73
Friends	1032	5.51	1.50
Co-workers	1032	3.74	2.20

In terms of getting comments from their readers, two groups were added - other bloggers and the general public who were not included in the question above because, based on the design of the blog website, bloggers cannot trace who read their blogs which are open to the public access; however comments can easily be traced. Family and friends have the highest mean scores, 4.35 and 4.44 respectively, for posting comments while the general public has the lowest mean score, of 1.93.

Table 5.13 Mean Scores of Audience commenting on their blogs

Audience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family	1032	4.35	2.11
Friends	1032	4.44	1.84
Co-workers	1032	2.61	2.10
Other bloggers	1032	2.29	1.78
General public	1032	1.93	1.83

5.3 Blogging Motivations

Based on the extant literature on blogging (Herring et al, 2007; Hsu and Lin , 2008; Huang et alm 2007; Nardi et al, 2004), eight functions of blogging and motivations for using it were identified and these were rephrased into the following reasons for travel blogging: to update family and friends about whereabouts; to share experiences with other; to find information about places; to keep record of travels; to keep in touch with friends who are also blogging; to network or to meet new people; to express myself by writing; for entertainment; to pass time, and to earn money.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of these motivations for blogging using Likert-type scale of 1 to 7 where 1=very unimportant and 7=very important. Table 4.16 below shows the mean scores of the bloggers for their motivations for blogging (ranked from the highest mean score to the lowest).

The top three motivations that were rated most important are to update family and friends about whereabouts, to keep record of travels, and to share experiences with others, with mean scores of 6.09, 6.03 and 5.72, respectively.

The top least important motivation on the other hand is to earn money (1.41), to pass time (2.23) and to network or to meet new people (2.56) . Table 5.14 shows the mean scores of the motivation for travel blogging of these respondents.

Table 5.14 Mean Scores of Motivation for travel blogging

Motivations for travel blogging	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
to update family and friends about whereabouts	1214	6.09	1.52
to keep record of travels	1214	6.03	1.42
to share experiences with other	1214	5.72	1.46
to express myself by writing	1214	4.43	2.02
for entertainment	1214	4.06	1.96
to find information about places	1214	3.79	1.99
to keep in touch with friends who are also blogging	1214	2.95	1.85
to network or to meet new people	1214	2.56	1.69
to pass time	1214	2.23	1.72
to earn money	1214	1.41	0.94

In Chapter 3, the extant literature on blogging indicated that self-expression is among the top reasons identified for travel blogging (Herring et al, 2007; Lenhart and Fox, 2006; Nardi et al, 2004); although this motivation for travel blogging is ranked fourth. Most of these studies are quantitative in nature except for that of Nardi et al (2004) who interviewed bloggers. However, this may require further exploration in a qualitative study or through the analysis of their blogs which may reveal that they are using blogs to express themselves more than they were prepared to admit.

These top blogging motivations can be explained by the fact that majority of the bloggers blog about their longer trips (more than three weeks), hence the need to update family and friends about whereabouts and keep a record of travels. It is also consistent with the bloggers indicating that they blog while travelling.

Earning money got the lowest mean score as a travel blogging motivation. In Chapter 2, Papacharisi (2005) had mentioned this reason for blogging but this was not referred to by other researchers; and not even included in the model of blogging motivations and behaviour of Huang et al (2007).

4.4 Summary and Discussion

The key findings of the survey have shown that the socio-demographic profiles of travel bloggers are very similar to those of the global bloggers reported by Technocrati.com. Measuring the population of travel bloggers has always challenged researchers; hence, most extant literature has no framework in identifying samples for their study. Researchers have resorted to either using the Google search engine to get their sample travel blogs or specifically identify which travel blog websites they will get their sample from (Carson, 2008; Pan et al, 2007; Wegner, 2008). These findings have indicated a general view of travel bloggers at a global scale. However, this should be treated with caution if researchers are interested in having a more accurate profile of their bloggers on a specific destination. They would require investment of time and effort in extracting blogs per destination and trying to get information from what is disclosed in the profile page, or conducting a similar survey for those tourists who have blogged on their destination. This thesis has presented one of the many ways that can be used in gathering information about travel bloggers. As Carson (2008) and Wenger (2008) have stated, issues of time invested in using travel blogs as research data can be addressed by identifying specific research requirements at the very beginning, and these include the destination of inquiry or specific groups of bloggers. Another caution over the use of these findings is the use of English language for the survey. Nonetheless, the survey also showed that some travel blog sites do have a mix of nationalities and are not only limited to English speakers. For example, the respondents of the survey came from 74 countries. There are reports already that there are bigger groups of bloggers using non-English blog sites. Nevertheless, this is a substantial and significant amount of data already on travel bloggers. As mentioned earlier, travel bloggers have not been the focus of the research; instead it is the content of their travel blogs that was of interest here, in relation marketing implications as seen in the extant literature on travel blogs (Volo, 2010).

In terms of blogging practices, this study has focused on the experience of the bloggers in terms of their year of membership and number of blogs produced. However, this does not of course reflect the content of their blogs, the richness of the blogs, or the diverse writing styles. It does show, however, when the activity of travel blogging first caught the attention of the bloggers and it was indicated that majority joined in 2007 and 2008. The type of trips blogged about has also been crucial to understanding which type of experiences the travelers blog about. The survey showed that longer trips tend to be the most frequently blogged about. This is however limited by the duration their trip instead of the categories of tourism that are based on purpose or interests. When they blog, their post is indicative of the immediate sharing of memories and recentness of blogs indicates that the blog account is active. The audience, in terms of who reads and who comments, is particularly helpful in indicating who they are writing their blogs for. This is an exploratory study of travel blogging practices; hence the survey was guided by a handful of studies that have attempted to describe travel blogging among tourists without an in-depth examination of travel bloggers. These blogging practices can provide insights to marketers on what type of experiences the blogger blogs about. For example, a destination which is known mostly as a daytrip location, or for short breaks, is likely to have fewer blogs written about it; or it may be referred to in a blog on a wider region. This indicates the importance of collaboration among neighbouring destinations and attractions in terms of promoting and packaging their destinations.

The survey has confirmed that travel bloggers used blogs to communicate, document their life/travel and share information and/or experiences. This is different from the top blogging motivation identified by Lenhart and Fox (2006) and Nardi et al (2004) which is self-expression. The top least important travel blogging motivations are earning money, passing time, and networking or meeting people. Several studies on blogs have mentioned the virtual online community as one of the features of the travel blog website but the survey showed that this has not been the main motivation of the bloggers for joining the travel blog websites. Earning money being the least important motivation also indicates that these bloggers are blogging about their experiences, not intending to be paid to talk about their experiences. Links to a specific service or a company’s website that may be included in their blogs is unlikely to be a commissioned advertisement, but more of a recommendation, i.e. word-of mouth communication. Passing of time as the second-to -last least important may indicate how travel bloggers perceive blogging as an important activity of their travel experiences, in that they do not blog about their travel just to pass time. In fact, backpackers have been observed to frequently use internet cafes to upload photos and blogs, and send emails (Jansson, 2007). It has become part of the practice of backpacking. These blogging motivations provide valuable insights as to how marketers can capture their bloggers through this practice. There are a few studies that have examined travel blogs as a marketing channel (Huang, Yung and Yang, 2011). Blogging motivations reflect a certain need of tourists that needs to be addressed by marketers as well as understood properly to maximise their opportunities to communicate with their consumers.

This survey of travel bloggers is the only work so far that has focussed on travel bloggers. Hence, there is still great scope for an in-depth examination of the travel bloggers. It is hoped though that this section has provided some insights on the importance of understanding the travel bloggers and their blogging motivations and practices. As mentioned earlier, travel blogging has become part of tourist experiences and hence demands the attention of marketers.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter had addressed a fundamental research gap on the literature on travel blogging, i.e. providing information on who the travel bloggers are, types of trips they blog about, practices in blogging and their motivations. The survey results show that there is much room for exploration of the blogging practices and motivations beyond socio-demographic profiles. The chapter has also emphasised in the last section possible marketing and managerial implciations of understanding who bloggers are, and what type of trips they blog about and why. This survey to date is the only work that has focused on the travel bloggers and their blogging practices and motivations. For this thesis, the survey has provided crucial information for the selection of the research context for the discourse analysis of blogs which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Discourses in Travel Experiences

6.0 Overview of the Chapter

Chapters 2 and 3 had established the knowledge to be generated in the examination of travel blogs would address the questions: a) how are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs and b) how are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process.Chapter 4 has rationalised and described how discourse analysis assisted in addressing those questions. This chapter presents the discourses found in blogs of travel experiences of long-haul and multiple destination travellers.

The chapter put forward five key themes found dominant in the travel blogs that represents the tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs. Each theme demonstrates how travel bloggers re-tell their stories to their readers and why they are telling these stories is embedded in those stories. Self-presentation strategies were revealed in the analysis; these provide insights of how bloggers use their blogs to reconstruct their stories and at the same time maintain and enhance self-identity with their readers. Some of the self-presentation strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982) observed to be used by the bloggers included self-promotions, exemplifications and supplication, and tactics such as self-handicapping, sand bagging and blasting (Lewis and Neighbors, 1995). Linguistic techniques also provided cues in understanding the bloggers' use of language. These include use of descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs), use of pronoun, questions, capitalization, metaphor, comparisons and giving examples, to name a few. This provides insights of how outcomes of the experience may include identity construction or enhancement. This chapter demonstrates how travel blogging can provide deeper understanding of the tourist experience.

The chapter is structured with the theme in order of importance first, as follows: a) stories of risk and challenges; b) accounts of learning and reflections; c) accounts of novelty and differences; d) accounts of self-expansion, and e) stories of escape. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings of the discourse analysis and its managerial and marketing implications.

6.1. Stories of Risk and Challenges

The discourse analysis revealed that stories of risks and challenges are reconstructed by bloggers using strong emotional words; detailed and longer narration to their readers indicat ing its importance in their travel experiences. These stories of risks and challenges were discussed separately to emphasise that these stories are retold differently as influenced by elements (fear, hardship, testing one's limit) associated with the nature of experience which in turn affects how they use these stories to construct their identity to their readers.

6.1.1 Stories of Risk

These stories are mostly associated with, but not limited to, a range of activities. Stories constructed as risky situations are activities such as skydiving (Dyl and MichaelnFaye), rafting (Turkishdelight, Dyl, and MichaelnFaye), bungee jumping (MichaelnFaye), motorbike riding (Mark and Chrissie), and trekking, hiking and mountain climbing (Barry, Luke, Michael, Dyl, Nick and Sally). These activities can be considered as voluntary risk-taking which Lupton and Tulloch (2002:114) defined as a behaviour that involves an individual's participation in activities that they perceive to be in some sense dangerous but which are undertaken deliberately and from choice.

There are also situations that were constructed by bloggers as risky such as long, dangerous bus rides (Gareth), being scammed (Gareth), and being attacked by an animal (MichaelnFaye, Turkishdelight,) or being close to a dangerous animal (Sally). Some researchers (e.g. Lepp and Gibson, 2003: Poon and Adams, 2000; Roehl and Fesenmaeir, 1992 and Sonmez and Graefe, 1998) refer to these situations as risks that should be avoided or might constrain tourist activities. Tsaur et al (1997) also referred to "tourist risk" as the possibility of various misfortunes that might befall travellers in the process of travelling or at their destination. These two types of risks are evident in the stories of bloggers and they are reconstructed with the same strong emotions and pride in overcoming the risk, be it a voluntary risk-taking activity or a misfortune befalling them.

Risk-taking behaviour can be expected of tourists because, according to Wickens (1997:151), tourists perceive their holiday as a "license for thrill". For example, Dylan upon reaching New Zealand had booked into different activities such as bungee jumping, sky diving, and glacier walking because they are cheaper there and are some of the must-do activities in the country. In the same manner, unexpected risks were constructed as something acceptable. As the British Medical Association (BMA) suggested, risks encountered on holidays are more accepted than in everyday life:

> Nobody sincerely believes that all recreational activities can be made free of risk. Indeed, some degree of risk is manifestly one of the attractions of many kinds of recreation, and it is clear that people in general are prepared to accept far higher levels of risk in recreation than they would be at work, say, or as the result of the operation of a nearby industrial facility (BMA, 1990, p. 146).

Stories of voluntary or unexpected risks are part of long-haul and multiple destination travel or backpacking. According to Desforges (2000), Elsrud (2001) and Noy (2004), these stories are part of their narrative identity and reflect self-development or self-change. The discourse analysis revealed that these travellers have various ways of reconstructing their stories; some use more emotional language than others, while others use their stories more for self-presentation, with less use of emotions. This section presents five extracts to demonstrate how bloggers constructed their stories of risk in various ways to their readers. The first three extracts show stories that use strong emotions, particularly of fear; while the two extracts present stories that do not use emotional language, but reflect self-presentation and a memorable experience.

The emotion of fear in voluntary risk-taking activity. Cater (2006) and Carnicelli-Filho et al (2010) posited that behind the risk, fear is the core attraction. Morris et al (2005) also suggested that fear plays a role throughout the activity: in the moments long before the activity begins, immediately, during the activities and even following the activity. The extract below shows how Dylan reconstructed his experience of the skydiving, emphasising more the fear he felt than the risk he is taking. This blog entry is divided into three extracts to emphasise how he constructed the before, during and after of the sky-diving experiences to his readers.

Extract 1 is Dylan's blog entry on his skydiving in New Zealand. Dylan, with girlfriend Lou, has travelled through South America, North America, Australia and New Zealand. In most of these continents, they have visited places that are popular such as Machu Picchu, Galapagos Island, Cococabana Beach in South America and Mexico City, New York and LA in North America and Sydney in Australia. They joined some tour packages when it was more convenient and do not project themselves as hard-core backpackers compared to other bloggers. Their activities are composed mostly of "must do" activities in every place they have visited, and skydiving in New Zealand is one of them. His blog on skydiving was aptly titled: *Skydiving-fear and exhilaration over Paradise,* as shown below (Dyl, February 20, 2009).

Extract 1a: (Before the skydiving)

We pack quickly and quietly in a nervous silence that was only briefly broken by a lame comment about fatality and fear that was followed by a nervous laugh. It was early and I had slept surprisingly well forcing the fear to the back of my mind with the help of a few beers and spirits, something that my aching head now regretted. We drove through quiet streets into town passing a few joggers who were oblivious to our fear. I parked in the underground car park and we walked into town in search of breakfast. We both felt unable to sit still at a cafe table and wait for service so with time ticking on relentlessly we settled for a couple on banana energy boost smoothies. The young man behind the counter was obviously hung over and moved like a wounded tortoise around the kitchen wincing and then grinning to his colleagues. I paced up and down the street outside as Lou sat staring into the middle distance deep in thought. The wait was excruciating but at last the smoothies were ready. The young man took great care in wiping the

1.16 overspill from the side of the cup, slowly moving the cloth around the
1.17 rim the smoothie juice ridding the crest of the cloth in a futile
1.18 attempt to avoid obliteration. Eventually we were given the smoothies
1.19 and we walked up the street towards the meeting point just as the van
1.20 sent to pick us up passed us and parked. 'There is still time to run' I
1.21 quipped but we both knew that we would not, we were going down this
1.22 road that we had chosen now whatever the consequences. The driver of
1.23 the van was a cheerful chap from the midlands in the UK and chatted
1.24 to us enthusiastically about 'back home' and the time he was spending
1.25 in New Zealand. We picked up a blond woman who ashen faced and
1.26 trembling got into the van. We exchanged plesantries then I started
1.27 rambling about anything and everything to fill the silence and distract
1.28 us all from what lay ahead. It was a forty five minute journey and I
1.29 ran out of things to say after twenty so we sat in silence looking at the
1.30 beauty of the world around us, the clear cold blue of the lake, the soft
1.31 bow of a tree branch and the dependable ground that we were meant to
1.32 walk on. Good old dependable Terra Firma. The van turned off the
1.33 road onto a dirt track which we bounced along for about a mile before
1.34 it ended at the airfield. The grass was green and the sky clear and blue
1.35 the weather was not going to stop this, I could with just a word but I
1.36 did not.

1.37 We were welcomed into a little hut with friendly confident and easy
1.38 smiles where they sat us on a sofa to watch an orientation video whilst
1.39 we signed our lives away on a waver form that informed us that in the
1.40 unlikely event of anything going wrong there was little point in us
1.41 suing as they were well protected by New Zealand law. The risk was
1.42 ours. I handed over my valuables which were placed into a blue mug
1.44 Breckon on the Welsh border. He was about half my size, I could have
1.45 carried him on my back had my legs not felt like jelly. Taff seemed
1.46 well experienced and talked me through what was going to happen
1.47 and what I should do. His instructions were clear and I was going to
1.48 follow them as precisely as was possible. Time seemed to now be
1.49 speeding up thrusting us forward and I was thankful that there was no
1.50 pause for thought as after our brief instructions we were put in jump
1.51 suits, harnesses, given a life jacket, helmet and gloves. Lou was
1.52 partnered with a tall aging hippy with long curly blond hair and light
1.53 milky blue eyes. He wore flares and had an easy way about him when
1.54 he joked about impending doom. The other woman was jumping with a
1.55 crazy eyed Eastern European chap who joked that his star
1.56 spangled super trainers would save them should both the primary and
1.57 emergency parachutes fail.

1.58 We were led over to the Cessna aircraft and loaded into the tiny plane
1.59 four of us on the bench and five on the floor. The guy facing me closed
1.60 his eyes lost deep somewhere in prayer or meditation. The jump
1.61 masters grinned as the rest of us exchanged nervous looks and weak
1.62 smiles. It was shadowy and dark inside the aircraft everything muted in
1.63 grey and blue. The area that we were jumping over was called Paradise
1.64 which seemed poignant. Taff chatted to me about the landscape that
1.65 was getting further and further away below us. I fained interest and
1.66 looked across at Lou who at ten thousand feet look as scared as I had
1.67 ever seen her. I took her hand and smiled. I seemed unable to stop
1.68 smiling at everyone now perhaps I though that if I was a nice bloke
1.69 they would not throw me out the plane. At eleven thousand feet I asked
1.70 Taff if it was time to start screaming. He said no that not to worry, he
1.71 was jumping and as I was attached to him I would be going with him.
1.72 'Ah good' I lied. At twelve thousand feet the door to the Cessna was
1.73 senselessly thrown open and the two guys doing solo jumps leaped out
1.74 without thinking too much leaving a gap through which I could see the
1.75 earth far, far below. Next went the camera man followed by the
1.76 blond woman attached to the crazy eyed, magic trainer jump master.
1.77 There was now only the pilot Lou and I and our jump masters in left
1.78 in the plane. 'I am actually going to have to do this' I thought. Lou and
1.79 I exchanged a last look and struggling for something more profound
1.80 and reassuring to say I wished her good luck. Her jump master shuffled
1.81 her over to the gapping doorway and moments later she was gone.

Lines 1.1 to 1.36 show how Dylan constructed fear he felt moments before the activity; just as they were packing for the day, waiting for their ride and the ride towards the skydiving site. Dylan relayed his fears to his audience using different linguistic techniques such as descriptive words and shifting the use of pronoun from “we” and “I”; justification for his actions, and metaphors. For example, in Lines 1.1 to 1.3 “nervous silence” and “nervous laugh” are phrases that are indicative of the fear felt even before they were picked up. The detailed description of their breakfast and waiting for the smoothies has been used to demonstrate some feeling of impatience, as if time is too slow, and describing the wait as “excruciating” (Line 1.14). Dylan’s usual descriptions of events in other blogs are not as detailed as this; however the mundane things going around him were recalled in detail as if fear has made him alert to the things around him, as seen in this narrative.

Emotions as argued by Ramanathan and McGill (2007) have a social aspect. The use of the pronoun "we" especially in Lines 1.1 to 1.3 and 1.20 to 1.22, indicates how fear is a shared feeling between Lou and Dylan; while the use of "I", on the other hand, refers to his own feelings. This signifies that although fear is felt by both of them, it is something that is personal; and he can only describe Lou's fear by her silence and being deep in thought (Lines 1.1 and 1.12 to 1.14). His mention of the few joggers oblivious to their fears (Line 1.5 to 1.6) can be an implied need for somebody to recognize/acknowledge the fear. He had not clearly said "I am afraid" or "I have never been so scared in my life", as some of the bloggers (Meltem, Gareth) have used these phrases in moments of fear in a very different situation but the same level of fear.

Handling the emotion of fear requires admitting to it and fighting by drawing on the pre-set goals of engaging in the activity with his companion Lou. He had not clearly mentioned what he fears most; but in Lines 1.1 to 1.5 it shows he is trying to handle the fear by forcing it to the back of his mind with the help of a drink and describing a comment of fatality and fear as lame. This can be considered as a form of supplication, a self-presentation strategy, when an individual presents their weaknesses or deficiencies to receive compassion and assistance from others (Lewis and Neighbors, 1995). He made it clear to his readers that he fears the skydive and even resorted to drinking to forget about it. Alternately with expressing fear, courage is also shown. In Lines 1.20 to 1.22, he wrote "there is still time to run"; but immediately justified he knew they would not “run” because they have decided to do it whatever the outcome. It is like an internal dialogue within the self; a reminder of the goals they have set. Lines 1.35 and 1.36 again emphasised that they have a choice of not going for the skydive; by just saying the word, they would not. These conversations about doing and not doing enhance the fear they are feeling; while at the same time presenting a courageous self.

Despite his fear, he positioned himself in a role to help others forget about what is ahead by “rambling about anything and filling up the silences” (Lines 1.27 to 1.32), but also admitting failure when he ran out of anything to say. On the plane, fear is probably much stronger, but Dylan’s feigning interest, smiling at everyone and even reassuring Lou who looked “as scared as I had ever seen her” (Lines 1.65 to 1.69) can be considered another self-presentation strategy called exemplification as he goes above and beyond what is necessary or expected from him; that is coming over as courageous and fearless (Lewis and Neighbors, 1995). The people with him would probably consider it normal that he shows some fear. These actions and thoughts are various ways Dylan tried to cope with the fear. It is clear that in this narrative Dylan played well with his fear to create a clearer picture of the experience and the self to the readers. Cater (2006) stated that fear is part of who we are and in the quest for the sublime and the search of fear, tourists in this type of experience end up coming face-to-face with fear as if it is part of self and its development.

Risk, on the other hand, was only emphasised in Lines 1.37 to 1.42 when Dylan talked about what the activity involved and dramatically put it as “signing their lives away on a waiver form... the risk was ours”. Even the assigned partners for them have to be scrutinised as they are putting their lives in their hands. Literature on risk has emphasised the role of these service providers for this kind of experience who are perceived to lessen the risk (Bentley, Page and Macky, 2007; Buckley, 2007; Cater, 2006).

The extract below provides a shorter account of the dive itself despite it being the most important part of the skydiving activity.

Extract 1b (the Skydive)

Taff asked me to move towards the door he mentioned that I would have to let go of the bench that I was gripping with white knuckles. We moved across to the doorway and I swung my legs out of the plane looking down once more to the earth a terrifying distance away. I have never been so scared in all my life. We rock backwards then forwards like a lamb to the slaughter I was obedient and completely compliant with this stranger in who's hands my life I had placed. A moment later we were out of the plane and falling. I screamed for a good few seconds then shouted a few expletives. The message slowly reached my brain that I was not dead, things had changed and I was still in peril but actually, all things considered, I was OK. We were falling at about two hundred kilometres an hour. The rush of air was incredibly powerful, there was a loud roaring turbulence that seemed to be holding us up as we pushed against it. I looked out across the mountains and into the far off distance I fancied I could see the curvature of the earth. The intensity of colours were heightened in fact every sense seemed to tingle, heightened and more alert than ever, I felt like I was flying. With arms out at ninety degrees bent again at the elbow to ninety degrees I had a go at steering. The slightest movement of the little finger altered our direction and angle of descent. Everything was perceived in fine detail amidst a massive adrenaline rush. My brain was scrambling to make sense of what was happening unable to process the experience but at the same time I was ecstatic in the pure and clear moment. The experience entirely the unclutered by any past or future. I was free of everything, falling and flying, screaming through the sky enjoying the greatest thrill of my life. It lasted only forty five seconds but seemed like a mini eternity. Taff tapped me on the shoulder to indicate that he was about to pull the cord that would hopefully open the parachute. 'Oh shit' my brain was once more flooded with doubt and fear that it would fail. It did not

1.111 and as the shoot opened out our decent slowed so that we seemed to be
1.112 shooting back up. This sensation levelled out and we drifted down
1.113 towards the ground. There was some slackening off to be done and as
1.114 Taff loosened the straps I dropped about a quarter of an inch, not a
1.115 pleasant sensation.I involuntarily let out a 'Woe' as if it would help.
1.116 'It's OK I've got you' Taff said. I looked down at the others drifting
1.117 below us. Taff asked me how I felt about experience. I think 'The most
1.118 fucking amazing and exhilarating thing that I have ever done' was as
1.119 eloquent as I could manage. Quite honestly the feeling is almost
1.120 impossible to describe. Taff handed me the secondary steering lines to
1.121 the parachute and as I pulled one way we turned to the left and pulling
1.122 the other turned us to the right. I felt quiet safe drifting down towards
1.123 the ground it all seemed quiet simple and matter of fact now. Lou
1.124 drifted beneath us and I waved. Moments later Taff asked me to lift my
1.125 legs and we glided down to land on a bums and skid along the grass for
1.126 about fifty meters before coming to a halt.

At the point of jumping off the plane, finally Dylan had written “I have never been so scared in all my life. Everything signals this fear: *gripping white knuckles; terrifying distance away like a lamb to the slaughter; completely compliant to a stranger whose hands hold his life”* (Lines 1.84 to 1.87). What follows after jumping can be considered as consisting some of the characteristics which Czikszenthmihalyi (1993) calls the flow experience; irrelevant stimuli disappear from consciousness, worries and concerns are temporarily suspended and there is an altered sense of time, which usually seems to go faster, as seen in Lines 1.105 to 1.107. This skydiving produced a strong and positive emotional intensity which can be associated to Maslow’s peak experience (Lines 1.92 to 1.104). Flow experience is especially relevant in the tourism context. The fear was replaced with various emotions of being “ecstatic in the pure and clear moment”; “free of everything, flying, falling... enjoying the greatest thrill of my life” (Lines 1.104 to 1.106). Even Dylan had trouble expressing what he felt to his jump master and to his readers and described it as: “the most f*****g amazing and exhilarating thing that I have ever done” (Lines 1.117 to 1.118) and claimed as eloquently as he could manage at that time. It is clear that in this particular activity, there are various emotions elicited from Dylan; although fear is the core attraction to risk as Cater (2006) argued. The outcome of this activity is another kind of emotion that turns the negative emotion to a positive one.

The extract below shows how Dylan moved from this flow/peak experience to a sense-making and reflective activity.

Extract 1c (After the skydive)

1.127 Taff unattached himself from me as I sat there wild eyed trying to I
1.128 assimilate what had just happened. He helped me up and I started to
1.129 thank him shaking his hand the grabbing him and hugging him like a
1.130 long lost brother. I thanked him again I felt like he had shown me
1.131 something so special, he had taken my body and brain places they had
1.132 never been before and for that I will be eternally great full to him. I
1.133 walked over and gave Lou a hug her eyes were still running from the
1.134 rush of air, she smiled back at me as understated as always.

1.135 We walked back across to the cabin and got out of our gear. My hands
1.136 were shaking and my brain was still racing. I had a huge grin slapped
1.137 on my face which did not subside for a couple of hours. I think the fear
1.138 that was almost terror before the jump, the rush of the free fall and then
1.139 the relief at the end was the perfect mix and I would like to start every
1.140 day with the same feeling. I asked the hippy jump master with blond
1.141 hair if he still got a buzz from jumping. 'Are you kidding?' he said 'best
1.142 thing in the world!'

1.143 'Does anyone ever change their mind when they are up there' I ask. 'I
1.144 wouldn't know because 'No' just sounds like 'Go' up there' he smiles. I
1.145 look at him and in his eyes I can see that he exists in a slightly different
1.146 reality to mine. He is so calm, his brain regularly flushed free of stress
1.147 with huge quantities of adrenaline. He does up to fifteen jumps a day,
1.148 what a way to live your life!

1.149 I thank Taff again before we set off on our long drive down to Milford
1.150 Sounds. My mind free of it's usual noise and clutter I relax back and
1.151 enjoy the world.

In Lines 1.126 to 1.132, gratitude is another emotion expressed by Dylan towards Taff. Dylan referred to Taff earlier on as a stranger in Line.1.87; Tall has now been compared to a long lost brother (Lines 1.130); the jump master who was supposed to provide safety and lessen the risks of the activity was perceived by Dylan in a different way. Taff has shown him something special and different and the gratitude is lasting (Lines 1.132). This may be considered an emotional bond created between the consumer and the service provider or at the very least a positive emotion from that experience that is shared with the readers.

Another important feature of this extract is how despite the "great terror" felt, Dylan said it the feeling was something he would like to start his day with (Lines 1.139 to 1.142). However, he also pointed out that the value of the jump is not only the adrenalin rush but the calmness and regular flushing of stress which according to him put somebody in a slightly different reality as he saw in the eyes of the jump master (Lines 1.145 to 1.148). The expression "what a way to live your life" may be an indication of admiration for the jump master being able to do 15 jumps a day. Lines 1.149 to 1.150 show how Dylan at least may have undergone a change following the jump (a mind free of its usual noise and clutter) and become able to relax and enjoy the world. This can be a way of integrating this experience to his everyday life and life history.

Using fear for self-presentation in voluntary risk-taking activities. There are also extracts that use fear to reconstruct stories of risk such as Extract

2. Compared to the first extract, this extract has a stronger sense of self-presentation or identity construction within the story. The fear is less emphasised, although it can be as intense as Dylan's fear, as a blogger may reconstruct the story in order to show an identity capable of overcoming fear.

Meltem, who travelled with about 20 people in the Ozbus from the UK to Australia, has been exposed to fewer risks than other backpackers as their trip are pre-arranged, i.e. they follow a fixed itinerary and their trip includes pre-booked transportation, accommodation, tours and activities. A few unexpected risks that she encountered were a couple of riots in Tehran and Estafan, Iran (Turkishdelight, June 16, 2009). Her stories of risks are more associated with activities such as abseiling in Goreme, Turkey (Turkishdelight, June 4, 2009) and the rafting in Kathmandu, Nepal (Turkishdelight, July 12, 2009) as shown in the extracts below. These activities are arranged for them when they stop over at various places across the 17 countries from the UK to Australia.

Extract 2a:

2.1 Throughout our few days stay we were given the option to do several
2.2 activities, one of which was a hot air balloon ride but as I had recently
2.3 done one back in England I opted out and decided to go abseiling
2.4 instead. Ok, so why didn't anyone tell me it was 50 metres high and
2.5 why didn't anyone stop me from going first!! Well, the theory of going
2.6 first was get it over and done with… but 50 metres is just pure
2.7 madness… Everyone was so nervous but the idiot I was volunteered to
2.8 go first and had to put on a brave face in order to keep the moral up.
2.9 Under my glasses were eyes of fear… I was clueless to the route down,
2.10 couldn't get any help from the instructor who was at the top…no good
2.11 when you're half way down!! So once I managed to get to the bottom
2.12 safe and sound I made sure I was at the bottom of the rock cliff to
2.13 instruct everyone else down. No lie this was one of the scariest things I
2.14 have done in my life definitely more so then a bungee. I am proud of

2.15 myself for doing it and even more proud to be telling the story.

Extract 2b:

2.16 As celebration of the half way mark of the trip we decided to go white
2.17 water rafting on route to Kathmandu. We had two rafts of 7 and 8, and
2.18 we were given brief safety training before entering the deadly waters.
2.19 It was very physically challenging especially on the arms, there were
2.20 times I thought my arms were going to fall off but from the fear of
2.21 dying I kept on paddling… It was unnerving that you weren't attached
2.22 to the boat in any way. You just had to sit at a certain angle with your
2.23 feet tucked under the rubber padding of the raft and hope you don't fall
2.24 in… wishful thinking as we ended up capsizing at the first rapid and
2.25 I truly thought I was going to die for a split second. I managed to keep
2.26 hold of my paddle and grab hold of the raft, I then got pulled
2.27 onto safety. After that for a good 20 mins I was totally freaked out and
2.28 didn't enjoy it at all. There were sections of the river that were calm
2.29 enough for us to have a swim in, even though they were pretty strong
2.30 currents. It was then that I thought that if I was going to die I should at
2.31 least be having fun. So back I went on the raft and rode those waves
2.32 through the second and third and fourth rapids. I was totally exhausted
2.33 by the end of it but so pleased I stuck with it and actually managed to
2.34 enjoy it. Another achievement to add to the list :)

Extracts 2a and 2b both show fear in these stories of abseiling and river rafting from Meltem's blogs. Meltem's extracts had admitted fear as she used descriptive words and phrases and compared these activities to other risk-taking activities: "eyes of fear" (Line 2.13); "no lie, this was one of the scariest things I have done in my life, definitely more so than a bungee (Lines 2.13 to 2.14); "fear of dying" (Line 2.20) and "totally freaked out" (Line 2.27). In Lines 2.4 to 2.8, Meltem positioned herself to be the "brave one" volunteering to be the first to keep morale up, adding to her identity work in these passages. This can be considered a form of self-presentation strategies called self-promotion, where the bloggers call attention to their accomplishments in order to be perceived as capable by observers; or the readers in this case (Lewis and Neighbors, 1995). These particular activities also allowed Meltem to show she has learned several skills and knowledge that can be added to her life story. The skills learned or mastered in rafting become part of one's repertoire of abilities which Csikszentmihalyi (1993) refers to as the process of integration. This is an aspect of a voluntary risk- taking activity that has not been explored by researchers. However, in their stories, they are integrated with their past experiences and life stories as evidenced by the "list". She pointed out to the readers at the end of each story how overcoming those fears are achievements. It was something to be added to her "list" and something to be proud of (Lines 2.14 to 2.15 and 2.34). Referring to achievement to add to a list is her effort to integrate this experience to her life story (Line 2.29). In her blog in Australia (Turkisdelight, September 21, 2009) she writes: "*You are reviewing your CV and list all the jobs you have done: village job-tick; town job-tick, city job- tick. But how many of you can say you've worked in the outback!!!!! Me! Me! Me!"* In fact, there are few bloggers such as Dave and Cathy and Dylan who had referred to certain "lists" that represented a set of goals, and some items in their lists were checked off during their travels. Stories of risk can be an important item in the list that also enhances their identity. An item on the intangible list of life goals can be another outcome of the experience.

Fear and self-presentation in unexpected tourist risks. As mentioned earlier, stories of risk also emerge from risks encountered unexpectedly and can be related to their audience in the same manner as those stories of voluntary risk-taking behaviour or activities. For backpackers, misfortunes encountered become part of their travellers' identity (see work of Elsrud, 2001, Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, 1998b; and Lepp and Gibson, 2003). Blogs about crossing the streets in Vietnam (Gary and Emma) being robbed, dangerous boat rides/ferry (Garry and Emma, Sally); being sick (Dyl, soul cultivator, chlaa, and MichaelnFaye); sea plane through the storms and bridge climb (Fletchclough); being attacked by animals (MichaelnFaye and Tukishdelight) and confrontations with local drivers (ASBO Holidays) are examples of these unexpected risk or misfortunes that have been shared by bloggers with their readers.

Some of these stories can be as full of emotions and have also been used for self-presentation and identity construction like the two extracts above. The extract below is from Gareth who has travelled with a group of friends to Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. They usually stay in backpacker enclaves, hire scooters, travel by bus, and enjoy the beach and meeting new people. This is one of those trips that Gareth decided to do alone to be able to see Mt. Bromo in Java (ASBO Holidays, November 26, 2006):

Extract 3:

3.1 So I arrange to head on to Mt Bromo, a full 12 hours away by bus, boat
3.2 and small van all to myself - which ends up much more expensive than
3.3 it was worth. For the first time during my trip I was properly scared for
3.4 my life. Most of you know I'm not a religious person but I've never
3.5 prayed so hard ever. I arrived in Probolingo at 3am expecting to be
3.6 picked up. The bus driver leaves me at a tourist info place and the guy
3.7 is showing me all sorts of maps, places to stay and walks that can be
3.8 done. He's all friendly until he asks me to check in to a hotel and he'll
3.9 take me the final 2 hour journey in the morning. I tell him I have an

onward ticket and someone is to collect me. No sooner than he sees the ticket there is rage in his face and his maps are put away. After 30 secs of being stared at he says "I can't help you, go." At the same time someone comes through the door and shouts "lets go, quickly!" This is the first danger I think I'm in, worse to come. My driver kind of bundles me and my bags into the back and he screeches off doing a 180 and off up the road. The two in the front are talking very fast in Bahasa and I've no clue what’s happening. My brain tells me I'm getting kidnapped or something!! He races off in the direction of the bus doing a conservative 150-170km/h weaving in and out of lorries, into oncoming traffic, horn honking all the way. At least 3 times we almost ended up in the back of a lorry or having a head on. If either of these had happened I'm in no doubt I'd be getting flown home in a body bag!! 10 minutes of this, while my head is in my hands trying not to look and praying to god, we pull into a petrol station where my bus is. The two guys jump out and argue with the driver for another 10 minutes almost coming to blows. My heart is racing and I'm happy to be in one piece, definitely not what the nerves need at 3am!! I see the driver hand the guys 30,000rp (less than 2 quid). It turns out the first tourist dude gives the driver the commission for leaving me there and he is extremely unhappy when he realises he won't get a penny from me!! The two guys who pick me up are not happy with the driver of the bus and the bus driver isn't happy with me because he didn't know I had an onward ticket. The relief is unreal when we leave the gas station and slowly drive onto Cemoro Lewang, the small town by Mt Bromo.

I finally arrive at the edge of the volcanoes around 5am and get checked in. Straight to bed for me to rest my nerves. There is absolutely nothing to do here except climb bromo so I’ll do that the next morning for dawn and get on to Surabaya. I’m lying in bed watchin a bit of Indonesian news and it seems there's riots in Surabaya, great choice for my escape from Indonesia. I get speaking to a Dutch guy but he isn’t staying so I’m literally the only foriegner in the whole town!!

Gareth had also used several linguistic techniques to relay this experience to his audience. Notice how he captured his readers’ attention in Lined 3.3 to 3.5 with this statement: *“first time during my trip I was properly scared for my life”*; and then engages with his readers, drawing on their knowledge of him as a non-religious person. It was useful for Gareth to establish that aspect of his identity to clearly relay the fear he felt. The act of praying for somebody who is not religious implies the intensity of fear. Lacking in emotional language, the detailed story of what happened, and its fast-paced style had also helped maintain that fear throughout the story (Lines 3.5 to 3.34). The imaginary fear or thoughts of being kidnapped were justified by the language barrier; he cannot understand what was happening, there were angry people; being bundled up and driven off fast and even death has crossed his mind as he used the metaphor of being brought home in a body bag (Lines 3.20 to 3.23). Like Dylan and Meltem, he had also narrated how he handled the situation: standing his ground that everything has been paid for; despite being "properly scared".

Lines 3.38 to 3.42 show Gareth connecting his experience to what is happening in the area; and sarcastically calling it the great escape from Indonesia, and the next lines (Lines 3.40 to 3.42) about being literally the only foreigner in the whole town reminds the reader about what he went through the previous night. Nonetheless, this incident has given him an interesting story to tell his readers as well as the opportunity to present self or confirm his identity as a non-religious person, and being able to handle a scary situation.

Absence of fear from voluntary risk-taking activity. There are also stories of risk that do not reflect a blogger's fear. According to Higbee, (1969)), fear is associated with self-esteem, coping style and the feeling of vulnerability to danger; and this might explain how Chrissie and Mark wrote about their blog on motor biking, emphasising more the risk of the activity and not their fear. They use words such as *death*, and superlatives - *most dangerous road* - among other descriptive words. Mark and Chrissie, a married couple who went on a career break, are on their dream trip around the world and were in South America for about seven months, going through Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador. They have many accounts of trying out different activities in different places such as sand boarding and cycling in San Pedro de Atacama in Chile; surfing in Arica, and trekking in Cusco (Mark and Chrissie, October 28, 30 and November 7, 2008), just to name a few. They have shown through their blogs that they are experienced, well-organised, prepared, skilled and active travellers. This could explain why fear was not a dominant feeling or at least not expressed in their blogs. There was no experience that stands out where they have really shown fear at any point. The following extract shows that, despite the lack of expression of fear, they do clearly emphasise the risks they take in their travels such as this motor biking activity in one of the most dangerous road in the world in La Paz, Bolivia; the blog was titled, “Surviving the most dangerous road in the world!” (Mark and Chrissie, December 2, 2008).

Extract 4:

4.1 Well, today we were risking life and limb on what has been dubbed
4.2 (for the tourists) 'the most dangerous road in the world'. ....Climbing
4.3 up from La Paz further we eventually reached La Cumbre, a pass at
4.4 4700m from which we were to start our defying death journey. As we
4.5 prepared we had a bit of a talk from one of the guides about what to
4.6 expect and what lay in store for the rest of the trip. ....This section of
4.7 the road is extremely narrow, unsealed and clings to the edge of a cliff
4.8 offering sheer drops of up to 600m. It used to be the main
4.9 thoroughfare for traffic coming into La Paz and with numerous trucks,
4.10 buses, cars etc. going both ways there were many accidents and deaths
4.11 giving it its dark title. However in response to the numbers of cars,
4.12 trucks, buses and tourists (allegedly over 9000 people died) that
4.13 toppled off the side of the road, they have built an alternative
4.14 tarmacked route which has greatlly reduced the amount of traffic on
4.15 the road and therefore made it much safer. Starting off down the track

4.16 it took a bit of time to get used to the rough and loose terrain but after a
4.17 while we began to get more and more comfortable as we hurtled on
4.18 down trying to take in some of the views.

4.19 It was highly exhilarating and great fun and with the ability to go as
4.20 fast or as slow as you wanted, it meant that you could squeeze as much
4.21 or as little adrenaline out of you as you wished. One or two of our
4.22 group came off their bikes gathering some flesh wounds to add to
4.23 their travelling tales but most came off unscathed.

4.24 The road continued to descend winding us around the hillside, under
4.25 waterfalls, through streams and over bumpy dusty and stony ground all
4.26 the way to the small town of Yolosa. Over the last few hours we had
4.27 travelled about 60km and descended by over 3000m in altitude, with
4.28 the climate change distinctly noticeable from the chill crisp air at the
4.29 top to the hot humid atmosphere we reached in Yolosa. Of course we
4.30 had also cheated death on the World's most dangerous road, something
4.31 to be proud (and relieved) about! What an excellent experience!

This account is structured to give a clear picture of risk to its reader as seen in Lines 4.6 to 4.15 and Lines 4.24 to 4.29. There are minimal descriptions about their feelings and the self. Lines 4.19 summarised the experience as highly exhilarating and great fun. Despite the risk and danger told to their readers, unlike the previous extracts, they show a level of control given to them over this experience: *"you can go as fast or as slow as you wanted it meant that you could squeeze as much as little adrenaline out of you as you wished"* (Lines 4.19 to 4.21). This refers to their ability to control the speed of the bike and hence control the rush of adrenalin, which may explain the lack of fear felt. Unlike the three previous extracts, Mark and Chrissie's activity allows them some control over the experience.

In Lines 4.1 to 4.2, they have pointed out that this world's most dangerous road in the world was dubbed as such "for the tourists" closed in parenthesis.

This emphasis could reflect how they recognise that the title can be more for the benefit of the tourists. As they travel across South America, Mark and Chrissie are very much aware of themselves being treated as tourists in terms of paying three times more than the locals at the Iguazu Falls in Argentina (mark and chrissie, February 9, 2009), or having access to a lagoon exclusive to tourists in Potosi, Bolivia (mark and chrissie, December 18, 2008). Throughout their blogs, they have labelled themselves as travellers against tourists and tend to build relationship with other travellers particularly when they engage in similar activities such as this one. However, within that small group they also compared themselves to other travellers by mentioning how one or two of their companions suffered some flesh wounds and they are among those who came off unscathed (Lines 4.22 to 4.23).

Mark and Chrissie have used the phrase *"cheated death";* however, with the lack of emotions conveyed to their readers. The story does not carry as much impact as those of the previous extracts. There was also no particular misfortune or what they can really describe as a 'close to death' situation that would have been an interesting read for their readers. Lines 4.29 to 4.31 can then be considered a form of self-presentation tactics called enhancement, which is when individuals persuade others that the outcome of their behaviours are better than they might have originally believed (Schnelneker, 1980). In this case, "cheating death" was not clearly relayed to the readers; and sounds like an exaggeration. They might however have conveyed an impression of an adrenalin junkie who feels more "exhilarated" with the activity instead of afraid. In addition, this activity is put forward to the reader as something to be proud of, an achievement for "cheating death" emphasised more by the phrase the word “of course”. Like Meltem (Extract 2), the story ended with how their story adds up to their life story.

Unexpected risky situation without fear. The extract below is another situation of risk where fear is not felt by the individual despite the real danger that the blogger is faced with. This extract was used to emphasise that there could be lack of emotional language in the story and less self-presentation strategies used in a reconstruction of a story of risk. However, this story can be labelled memorable by the blogger. This is from the story of Michael when he was attacked by an orang-utan in Sumatra, Indonesia. Michael was travelling with his wife and visited the following places - Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Their travel was motivated after Michael was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2006; hence they took a career break to travel for some months. This is the extract from the travel blog he titled, Ape Attack! (MichaelNFaye, November 24, 2007).

Extract 5:

5.1 All of a sudden a loud crashing came out of the forest by the side of us,
5.2 and a huge female orangutan marched onto the trail about 10m in
5.3 front. Our assistant guides recognised her immediately, telling us her
5.4 name was Meena, she’s known to be quite aggressive and we should
5.5 slowly work our way back down the path away from her. Of course she
5.6 had other ideas and quickly bounded along the trail and grabbed my
5.7 backpack. I tried to keep walking hoping she would let go but she just
5.8 stood still stopping me in my tracks. Faye worked her way round and
5.9 tried to gently pry her fingers off but then she bared her teeth, so Faye
5.10 moved further up the trail to safety. Then I felt the full power of these
5.11 animals as she literally pulled me off my feet and slammed me

down on my butt, clambering further onto my back and shoulders. At this point I just thought it was funny, like this was some kind of game they play on tourists, it was only when I felt my arm get pulled behind and felt her jaw clamp not right. As soon as our guides saw how bad this could get they gave up trying to coax her away with fruit, Indrah started trying to wrestle her off me, and got swiped across the face with a big fist, grazing his cheek. Eru came up behind her trying to make himself look big (as big as a small Asian guy can make himself look), and screamed at the top of his lungs while throwing bananas at her, this seemed to really surprise her because she let go, allowing me to quickly slip out from under her and dash off down the trail. I didn't look back and Indrah and I ran a hundred meters or so down the trail, around in a loop so we could meet back up with Faye and Eru, who had bolted in the other direction.

We got together, checked my arm over and I was very lucky indeed as there was no broken skin, Eru then explained that there has been a lot of problems with that particular Orangutan, as it has attacked several villagers, him included. He even showed me the scars from the bite and told me in graphic detail about the rabies injections he had to have in the stomach. Hmmm now I'm thinking I should have run a bit faster. The funny thing is, at the time, I really wasn't all that bothered, it's only now when I look back, that I think "jeez, that could have been really bad" especially as I've been told before that if really wanted to, a fully grown Orangutan is strong enough to tear your arm off. Still no harm was actually done and it's one of those experiences that I'm sure I'll remember forever and boring the grandkids with many, many years from now.

This extract is similar to Gareth's unexpected encounter with risk and danger; however Michael only understands the risk and danger afterwards (Lines 5.23 to 28). Hence, this could have explained the absence of fear. After the incident the real danger was explained to him; he understood the danger and was able to imagine what the consequences may have been (Lines 5.20 to 5.31). He reflected he could have behaved otherwise, "run faster" but justified he wasn't bothered. Hence, he ends his story lightly, saying "still no harm done" (Lines 5.35 to 5.3) and most importantly, indicated the value of the incident to the reader. The incident will be remembered for a long time and shared with his grandkids. This shows that "memorable experiences" are marked by bloggers by referring to its use in the future; it signals how they plan to integrate it in their life story. This extract is different from those stories of risk, not only because fear is absent, but how Michael will add it to his memories is more evident. Notice that there are not many emotional words in the extract, but the extract was a recall of what happened and an imagination of what could have happened if he had not been able to escape from the orang-utan. It is clear that risk is also dependent on the realisation of an individual; risk is concretised with an imagination of what could have gone wrong, and this somehow enhances the story for the readers. This incident showed that memorable experiences arew not necessarily emotional and do not always involve self- presentation.

To summarise, these five extracts have shown how stories of risk were constructed by bloggers for their readers by drawing on different linguistic styles such as use of descriptive words; positioning themselves; words of emotions and pronouns; and of self-presentation strategies such as self-promotion, enhancement and justification. The extracts have shown key findings about emotions in tourist experiences. First, an individual plays with their fear to concretely reconstruct their risk- taking experience for their readers. According to Cater (2006), individuals play with their fear in risky situations, confirming how fear is the core attraction in this kind of activity. In some extracts, fear is emphasised more than risk; and fear allowed them to present and/or enhance their identity. Second, emotions generated by an experience are not static but are changing across various points in the experience; the experience can swing from negative to positive emotions during the course of the experience. The first extract showed the full blog entry of Dylan about the skydiving, and dividing it into three stages emphasised the different emotions he felt and how he used them in his reconstruction of the story. Third, emotions as argued by Caru and Cova (2006) have limitations as the measurement of an outcome of the experience. These extracts, particularly those of Mark and Chrissie and Michael, have used little or no emotional language, yet their experiences were memorable and something they can be proud of. A less emotional experience does not equate to a forgettable experience. Fourth, emotions that indicate flow or peak experience can be well expressed in the stories of bloggers.

An important key finding from these stories of risks is that they provide tourists with opportunities to present their identity and enhance it by the way they face these risky situations. Overcoming those risky situations is considered an achievement by some bloggers. That achievement is also seen to be added to their life story; some have an intangible list to add, or tick off, these achievements. Even the absence of fear or reacting lightly to risk reflects the identity of the bloggers. For example, the fourth extract (Mark and Chrissy) has shown how Mark and Chrissie used the story of motorbiking to present an adrenalin junkie who is not afraid of the danger, but rather feels exhilarated. On the other hand, stories of risk are woven into the bloggers' life stories, as seen in the last extract. Therefore it can be concluded that stories of risk represent an aspect of an experience that may elicit strong emotions and allow identity work. These stories being retold to the readers can also be considered as an outcome of the experience as well as a post-consumption activity. As mentioned earlier, stories such as these become part of the travellers' narrative identity and reflect self-development or self-change particularly among the backpackers or travellers (Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004).

Stories such as these can help in destination branding which aims for emotional connection and delivering memorable experiences. However, a destination marketing organisation (DMO) is faced with a challenge. For example some of the memorable experiences (Gareth and Michael) reflect a negative aspect of the destination. The DMOs however can look for more stories and clearly identify experiences that provide memorable and emotional connection of their place to their readers, and thus plan a strategy around those that they can control. With regards to negative experiences, the DMO can also consider these as inputs for government policies and regulations.

The next section discusses another type of story that is also considered a highlight of travel experiences in their blogs and produces similar strong emotions and detailed narratives from bloggers.

6.1.2 Stories of Challenges

This section focuses on stories that have strong emotional language and detailed narratives of hardships and challenges. The element of risk is missing from these stories; however fears may still be present. These stories further confirm that risk is not always necessary for strong emotions to be produced. In these blogs, the term "challenge" is used loosely. The challenge can be from something as simple as being challenged by a childhood food nemesis of seafood, mushrooms, coconut and tofu (Dave); to something more difficult and scary such as snorkelling (soul cultivator), or climbing popular trekking trails for backpackers such as the Inca trail (MichaelnFaye) or something much harder as breaking one's record of the height of their previous climb (Barry).

The construct of challenge is not explored well in the tourism literature on its own; it is associated mostly with risk, adventure and frontier travel (Laing and Crouch, 2005). The discourse analysis revealed that challenges are not limited to those particular types of experiences. Challenge is present in any type of travel. It comes in various forms of physical and mental challenges or in any form of activity or situation that tests someone's capability of dealing with them during their travels. For these long-term and multiple destination travellers, the duration of the travel alone and arranging every aspect of their trips in every destination is a challenge by itself already. However, in addition to that, the analysis of blogs showed that several challenges are self-imposed with people setting goals to achieve, or something that is thrown at them unexpectedly as part of their travel.

Some bloggers have set goals in their trips; some of these are of a physical nature, like trekking or mountain climbing (MichaelnFaye, barrygahan), or visiting a remote place (Mingalaba); while some are as easy as trying every drink in each place visited, such as Luke's "drink of the day" and Dave and Cathy's "beer of the day"; or it could be something as apparently simple as driving a van in Australia, as Michael has not driven for two months while in South America (MichaelnFaye). The discourse analysis of these blogs showed how challenge is a personal and subjective concept in experiences of travel.

This section presents four extracts of different kinds of challenges. Two extracts show physical challenges, one extract is about conquering fear and the other one is about being a long-term and multiple destination traveller. This section is supplemented by a full entry blog (Appendix 3) to provide a clear picture of the challenges and hardship that these long-term and multiple destination travellers endure to reach certain destinations. These extracts also show stories of overcoming and failing these challenges and how people reconstruct those victories and failures for their readers. Like the stories of risk, emotions produced from these experiences vary.

Experiences of physical challenges. The extracts below are from Barry‘s accounts of their numerous climbs in South America. Barry travelled with his girlfriend Ruth to South and Central America, and they both left their jobs for this trip. They stood out among other bloggers as they were climbing as many mountains and volcanoes as they can. Extract 6a is from their blog of their climb to the Cerro Toco in Chile (barrygahan, March 14, 2008) and Extract 6b from the blog of their climb to top of Cerro Chachani in Peru (barrygahan, April 15, 2008):

Extract 6a:

6.1 Reaching Toco's summit was the highlight of our time in San Pedro.
6.2 One of the aims of our trip has been to hike to higher altitudes than
6.3 we've reached before and by reaching the 5604 metre peak of Cerro
6.4 Toco, we beat our previous record (Jebel Toubkal in Morocco) by over
6.5 1400 metres. While Toco is seen as one of the easier 5000 peaks in
6.6 South America, it's certainly not easy to do anything at that height.
6.7 Even talking at rest tires you out! Going felt fine back at 2500 metres
6.8 in SP and I remember thinking, as we had a celebratory drink that

6.9 evening, that 6000 metres was our next goal!

Extract 6b:

6.10 When we reached the top of the pass at 5600 metres, we all just threw
6.11 off bags, lay down and tried to breathe. The guides made us some coca
6.12 tea which helped a little but I didn't feel good. I had lost my appetite,
6.13 plus I felt nauseous; two definite signs of altitude sickness. We needed
6.14 crampons for the next section, the traverse of Angel Falls, a long,
6.15 flattish crossing of a very steep snow field. The sun was up by now and
6.16 we could see Chachani's summit; though it appeared tantalisingly
6.17 close, we still had a long way to go. After crossing the Falls, I was
6.18 shattered and needed a long break. We had a quick breakfast/ brunch
6.19 but I couldn't eat anything, again a bad sign. I made it another 50
6.20 metres to a final height of 5650 metres before giving up. Stephanie
6.21 gave up soon after; Ruth went on to 5850, while Pepo climbed a 5950
6.22 summit, Cerro Fatima. So none of us made the top of Cerro Chachani.
6.23 It was very disappointing to give up like that but it would have been
6.24 even more foolish to go on given how bad I felt. The others had left me
6.25 at a pass while they continued and soon after they left I was vomiting
6.26 badly. There was little consolation in beating my previous climbing
6.27 record by 10 metres!

Like most of Barry's accounts about their climbs, this extract provides readers with the detailed painful process of the climbs and uses the height of the mountain they climbed as markers. Extract 6a showed that one of the aims of this trip (Lines 6.1 to 6.4) is to break their own record of the highest climb they have done before. This climb gave them that satisfaction; hence the celebration at the end of the climb (Lines 6.8 to 6.9). He mentioned in less detail and rather vaguely the hardship of climbing that height (Lines 6.5 to 6.7).

Extract 6b is a different story; despite managing to break his previous climbing record by 10 metres, Barry still expressed disappointment (Lines 6.23 to 6.27). Challenge here was constructed with a detailed description of the hardship they encountered such as altitude, sickness, and breathing problems; and the achievement is marked by the heights covered. It is constructed in remorseless, tiny details, sharing every difficulty with their readers. Through these hardships, Barry was using a self-presentation technique called self-handicapping which Berglas and Jones (1987) described as when an individual produces obstacles to success with the purpose of preventing observers from making dispositional references about one's failure. In this case the main obstacle is clearly the altitude sickness. In an effort to emphasise the altitude sickness and the difficulty of the climb, he pointed out that nobody made it to the top of Cerro Chachani and mentioned how much height the others managed as he was left at 5650 metres. The decision to give up was also justified in Lines 6.23 to 6.24 as a wise decision. Nevertheless, this extract showed how Barry has really tested his limits. Throughout his blogs, Barry has clearly established his identity as an experienced climber. This identity was reflected in his comparison of experiences of previous climbs, showing knowledge and skills in enduring long and steep climbs and being conscious of every altitude they climbed. Hence, for an experienced climber, beating a previous record by merely 10 metres had indeed been disappointing and hence justified also to his readers. According to Csiskzentmihalyi (1993), the outcome can either be positive or negative but what is important is to challenge your limits, as it is important for an evolving self. As Barry is maintaining a record of his climbs, both of these climbs, victorious and unsuccessful in terms of the set goal were integrated within his list.

Extract 7 provides an extract of a similar challenge. This extract reveals how

Sally reconstructed the failure of climbing to the summit while Nick, her companion, made it. Nick and Sally are the couple who were working fulltime in the UK and take a break of 25 days each year for travelling to long-haul destinations such as India and Nepal. Their trips are made up of sightseeing, and relaxing on the beach, except for their climb of Mt. Everest which is the highlight of their trip. The extract below is from their blog "At the bottom of the top of the world- Everest Base Camp Trek (Muno, May 23, 2007):

Extract 7:

7.1 The next day we started our ascent of Kala Pattar, a 5545m mountain
7.2 that gives great views of Everest and the surrounding horseshoe of
7.3 mountains. I was quite grizzly before the ascent, having had a couple
7.4 of hours sleep and a splitting headache so only made it 100m up the
7.5 mountain before I thought 'sod this for a game of soldiers I am going
7.6 back to bed'. Nick made it all the way to the top and said it was an
7.7 amazing view, I got to see the pictures so I was not overly concerned
7.8 that I was in fact a failure! Once the proper climbers had their
7.9 breakfast we headed down, I was so pleased at this point as had
7.10 enough of this high altitude malarkey

Stories of failure produce strong emotions from the bloggers and are worth sharing with their readers. In fact, there are a few bloggers who have included their stories of failed plans and failed goals in their blogs such as Dylan's trip arrangements, which encountered many problems and had to be rescheduled, and Astrid backing out of her diving lessons because she considered it too scary. Experiences are supposed to enhance the identity of individuals; however, remarkably in this extract, Sally had shown not a "stronger" character but called herself a failure (Line 7.8). There are justifications for this failure in Lines 7.3 to 7.6 to emphasise hardship of the challenge she tried to overcome; and hence it is also a way of presenting herself and confirming that her limits were beyond testing at this point. This indicates a contradiction in the messages she was relaying to the readers in her earlier blogs which showed how much effort she put into this climb. It is apparent that the summit symbolises success and reaching a goal. Note that in Line 7.8, she referred to the other travellers who reached the top as proper climbers, emphasising further that feeling of failure. During the climb, Sally has continuously detailed the hardship of the climb from one base to another in a less emotional construction of the experience. Hence, this extract stood out from her stories because of the strong emotions and attention to how she was finding the climb harder. It is evident that strong emotions are produced from situations where their limits were tested. Stories of failures produce interesting stories to be shared their readers.

The challenge to conquer a fear. As mentioned earlier, challenges can come in various forms. As mentioned earlier, challenges also include facing and conquering fear in situations that are not necessarily risky. Other examples of fear faced in some blogs include Nicchi's fear of heights and walking on a glass floor, and Cathy and Sally's fear of insects. Fear, as mentioned earlier, is very personal and subjective. Any fear when confronted and conquered is positively constructed, or at least remembered well. Here is an example from Claire, who was challenged by her boyfriend Stu to try snorkelling. Claire travelled with her boyfriend, Stu to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. She stood out among other bloggers because of her long and detailed narrations of her experiences and her reflections. Her main goal for the trip is to find a religion she can easily fit in with and to clear her body and mind. This is her blog titled, “Swimming with the fishes” (the soul cultivator, January 25, 2008):

Extract 8:

Stu asked me to give this snorkelling business a try, junior school kids and French pensioners were jumping from the decks straight into the water, I suddenly felt as if I was stood in front of the universal fear committee, but it was just Stu and I with my fear that looked back at me telling me it was evil and ill surly die if I do it. My ego also didn't want to look stupid sitting by myself on deck while everyone, and I mean everyone, was in the sea. So I assessed the environment scanning it for any health and safety excuses in order to bail out with some kind of grace, but there wasn't any. The sea was crystal clear, I could see to the bottom, the sun was out which lit up the darker bits around the rocks even more. With half my colon gone I wouldn't sink half as much as I would have maybe last week, Jaws 1, 2 and 3 all died by 1985, Spielberg only created talking extraterrestrial space beings and very extinct land mammals after this time. I had a life jacket securely on that gave me a slight wedgy but it was not coming off. The tour guide on the boat was a cutie and very sympathetic to my dilemma. Stu was by my side breathing for me like I was having a baby or something. I had no choice as step one of my sea, tsunami, rip tide and sea creature recovery programme was in full motion. I breathed in and out a bit too deeply then felt dizzy, I calmed myself to receive it in person at Buck Palace. It took ten minutes to climb over down by thinking of winning the Victoria Cross for bravery and still being alive the edge of the boat and lower myself in to the water. My heart was thumping outside the life jacket, which may have caused a mini tidal wave around the near by Cambodian coastline.

I was in deep water, my legs were cycling below me as the life jacket made me bob and tip sideways. I put the snorkel in my mouth and could hear myself breathing like I was on the moon. Stu waited by my side for 8 minutes, after another 6 minutes he suggested I should try get my hair wet and put my face under the water.....ohhhhhhhh.....this was it. I hovered above the surface too long so I went under. With my eyes firmly shut behind the plastic goggles I couldn't see the point of it all. I heard Stu shouted to me something that sounded like 'mwahh, mmmwhahh, mouwwhhh, mwhhh' which translated as 'Claire, you should try open your eyes and maybe breathe now'. It was fast becoming a patting head and rubbing tummy situation, open my eyes

8.37 and breath at the same time, how do people do it? I have technically
8.38 had 40 yearsof practice doing this manoeuvre every day. I started to
8.39 relax with the odd panic attack creeping up when salt water got into the
8.40 funnel and the life jacket popped me up the other way giving me a
8.41 bigger wedgy that needed serious alteration, then water got into my
8.42 mask which steamed up, panic....But I relaxed again and then floated
8.43 like a star fish, as I floated I saw bright fish, schools of them feeding
8.44 from the vibrant coral. It was like being on the moon, not that iv been
8.45 there yet. What an arse iv been thinking I couldn't do it. Easy stuff.

8.46 Back on the boat I was so happy and relieved it was over. We set sail
8.47 to the next rock there was no beach at all, I'd been had, blow me we
8.48 did it all over again, this was technically a proper snorkelling trip,
8.49 there was never going to be any beach time on lush white sandy
8.50 islands, everyone around me were snorkelling fanatics and keen to
8.51 jump right in at every location. The third mini island was the best, the
8.52 cutie captain grabbed my hand and took me around the coral, as I
8.53 cleared my mask and blew out my snorkel like a big white whale he
8.54 divined down to the bottom and picked up various sea creatures for me
8.55 to look at and hold. He poked the underwater flowers that snapped
8.56 shut when we swam past them. I felt like the reverse of Daryl Hannah
8.57 in Splash, when she was on land and living in the city looking lost and
8.58 confused when she saw an electrical appliance. This was my
8.59 Barnys. We did four snorkels and man it was good. I was on such a
8.60 high when we got back and now cant wait to do it again. I left my sea
8.61 fear, half my bloated colon and that bloody heavy *Booky Wook* at the
8.62 hotel where it only took 12 minutes before some cool chick picked it
8.63 up and was laughing by the pool with it, thankfully for her there were
8.64 no Arabs around. My work here is done.

Claire's story of this challenge provides readers with many details drawing from what she was feeling and thinking in those moments when she is faced with the challenge. Her narrative of this experience stood out among other challenging stories because of the details in which she processed her feelings and thoughts and what was happening around her. It is as if she opened her mind to the reader. She has narrated what motivated her to conquer her fear, i.e. ego (Lines 8.5 to 8.6), her attempts to avoid the challenge and why she had that fear (Lines 8.7 to 8.14) and how she handled it by relying on various things, Stu's presence and the life jacket (Lines 8.14 to 8.18).

The way she narrated her story is very similar to how Dylan (Extract 1) narrated the skydiving experience. The fear is expressed in various ways; their actions, their feelings and their thoughts combine together to react to that specific situation. And like Dylan's story, fear has turned to happiness and relief after she conquered it. Lines 8.46 to 8.64 demonstrate how that particular activity has instantly turned into something enjoyable for her. The feeling has been described as feeling high and 'cannot wait' to snorkel again (Lines 8.58 to 8.60).

This particular experience is integrated into her life story. As seen from the way she narrates she draws on past experiences and knowledge and comparing this particular experience. She evaluated the experience as part of her goals of the trip as she mentioned it in Lines 8.61 to 8.64: sea fear, bloated colon and the book *Booky Wook* which she started her trip with. The line "My work here is done" implies she has achieved another achievement. This extract discloses information about her and her thought processes; it has shown an aspect of her identity to the reader as well as self-development or self-change acquired from conquering that fear.

Challenging practices and norms of a long-haul and multiple destination traveller. Challenges are part of the travelling; facing most of them requires experiencing a lot of hardship, testing one's physical and mental capability ranging from enduring long bus rides (ranging from 15 hours to as long as 24 hours) (Dyl, Mark and Chrissie, Claire, MichaelnFaye; Mingalaba,), long walks and long trek (Barry, Derek, MichaelnFaye,; Mark and Chrissie), making wise decisions on their travel arrangements (MichaelnFaye, Dave and Cathy, Mark and Chrissie, Gareth, Nicchi), making the budget last for the whole trip (Dave and Cathy, Nicchi, Dyl,; Mark and Chrissie),and dealing with language barriers and with different local vendors and taxi and bus drivers (Tim and Claire, MichaelnFaye).

Challenging situations form part of their good memories of their travel experiences. Even a day full of different challenges is constructed positively such as this story of Mark and Chrissie as they enter Peru. This time they were travelling with some people they met along the way. This blog is a lengthy and detailed account of their memorable trip to Peru. It shows how they deal with different situations (being swamped by a mob of collective drivers eager to fleece the tourists with no other options, mob-handed riot blockading the road, encounter with angry locals, another struggle with taxi drivers and securing seats in the bus followed by a long and bumpy bus ride with no toilet) as well as how they evaluated it at the end of the day. Please see ***Appendix 3*** for this blog titled “Our arrival in Peru makes the news, (Mark and Chrissie, October 30, 2008).

There are similar accounts of these challenges, highlighting hardships; how they let their body and mind endure some situations such as long bus rides, long flights, and long walks to name a few. Nevertheless, these hardships and challenges are part of backpackers’ practices. It is common among backpackers to have tales of long bus rides squeezed in with the locals that they can share with other travellers. Like any hardship, it enhances the tourist experiences itself and its opportunities of identity construction and self-presentations. They can therefore come up with stories of them having a strong character (Elsrud, 2001). The strong character is seen as an adventure identity. Scheibe (1986) claimed that stories of strong character are effective for creating life stories as they are full of events (which make a good story).

Among long-haul and multiple destination travellers, there are also norms that developed as part of the experience, such as fixing travel arrangements at the destination and looking for the best deals in accommodation and transportation and other services they require. The ability to manage finances has been a common story among travel bloggers, shared with their readers and their fellow travellers. This is one of the challenges they face and would talk about in their blogs and for some in particular it has left a lasting impact on their daily lives or has contributed to making the experience memorable.

The extract below is from Nicchi who was travelling with her husband Rik and daughter Kiera, across Asia and Australia and New Zealand. This is her blog written just about 12 days into their journey when they were in Perth, Australia (The Cannons, June 11, 2006).

Extract 9:

9.1 We are finding it quite a challenge to live within our budget,
9.2 accustomed as we are to just buying what we want when we want, but
9.3 it is good to do and teaching us the value of money!! You will be
9.4 amused to know our organic eating has had to go out of the window!!!

As shown above they have changed their eating styles (Lines 9.3 to 9.4) and most importantly this challenge had taught them a lesson they can integrate in their everyday life such as the value of money. These small changes are part of an outcome of an experience that they may carry with them even after the trip. For Michael and Faye they have devoted one blog titled, "The true cost of buying a car and driving across Australia", about how they have achieved a more economic way of driving around Australia based on their decision of buying a caravan van instead of hiring a car (MichaelnFaye, October 28, 2007). At the end of the blog, after giving some details on some disadvantages of 62 nights in the van, he still considered it as a memorable experience as he writes, *"Would I do it again? Without a doubt... It was an incredible adventure, one I'll remember for life!!!"* Their decisions on financial matters had allowed them that incredible adventure and something in the future. Michael, like in Extract 5, had again emphasised the value of an experience – the memory they can remember in the future.

It is clear that following these challenging norms which requires changes from the tourists have allowed them to achieve their goals in terms of destinations and activities to be enjoyed. For a period of time, people change their ways of life (from spending to their eating lifestyle). For example, Derek worked out that he would have a specific budget of 50 euro to spend in a day, while Dave and Cathy would put limits on their shopping money. The outcome of this experience provided them with stories where they present themselves to their readers as capable of adapting to a certain lifestyle, and in particular managing resources to let them achieve their set goals for the trip.

To summarise, bloggers reconstructed these stories of challenges in various ways. It ranges from physical and mental challenges to conquering fears and accepting changes required by the tourist experiences. These stories reflected how challenges are very subjective and personal. These stories of challenges proved that challenges are central to any type of tourist experience and not only present with risk where it is mostly associated to frontier and adventure experiences. What is a challenge is not universal, as risk and danger are commonly associated to death, fear of injury and loss. Challenge is defined by the bloggers.

Some stories use emotional language, but what stood out also are their efforts to overcome certain challenges and test their limits which is necessary for an evolving self as Csikszenthimalyi (1993) emphasised. These stories of challenges elicit emotions from their experiences, but are also linked to their pre-set goals and their perceptions of how they have achieved those goals. Stories of failed goals and unsuccessful challenges are common among bloggers' stories particularly if it elicits stronger emotions such as fear and disappointment. Nonetheless it is shared with their readers. These stories are still integrated in the life story of the blogger, and contribute to their identity work. The goals set reflect an aspect of an identity of the individual. For example, in Extract 6, having established himself as an experienced climber, Barry is more particular in how many metres he has broken his previous records by.

It is apparent also that emotions in this kind of stories changes over the whole experience like those in the stories of risks. But these stories present challenging tasks to DMOS particularly as they are not based on what he services can provide; such as the climb of Barry and Sally, where the "failure" of the experience was primarily their own creation. Even Claire's fear of snorkelling is not service-dependent or based on a destination's attributes. However, understanding the norms that the travellers adapt could provide some insights on how the DMOs can position themselves to facilitate an experience.

To conclude, these stories of risks and challenges represent stories of bloggers that stood out from their vast collection of their long-haul and multiple destination trips. The emotions elicited, both positive and negative, are useful in creating their experiences into "being" for their readers. Detailed narrative, use of descriptive words and style of writing has also been helpful in reconstructing these experiences. Also embedded within these stories are self-presentation strategies and tactics that address the question of why bloggers are sharing their experiences.

This section by itself would not address what constitutes an experience; they may have provided the highlights of these whole experiences but they represent only one aspect of the whole travel experience. The examination of travel blogs showed that travellers' experiences are varied and their combinations make up that experience. Hence, four more dominant themes that come out of these travel blogs are discussed.

The next section looks at the second most dominant theme in these travel blogs which also represent a large proportion of the stories of bloggers.

6.2 Accounts of Learning and Reflections

These stories of learning and reflections are vast and diverse and indicate what they learn in their travels. The analysis of blogs showed what bloggers learn during their travels and how it is presented to their readers. Generally, these stories cover things that they have learned about in the destination and can be categorised into places (its history; important events; myths and stories about them, attractions; any interesting information worth sharing with their readers); and people and their lifestyle, characteristics and culture (traditional and contemporary).

The discourse analysis of blogs also revealed that in sharing what they learn about the places, people and culture, bloggers have also personalised them as they integrate their reflections on what they have seen within their personal, previous experience or even existing knowledge prior to the visit. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), learning experiences are more enjoyable when they can take their own personal meaning; understanding what is in front of the bloggers in the context of their own experience. These are seen mostly in several accounts of learning from some bloggers (for instance, Dylan, Tim, Claire, Leanne).

This section presents six extracts and two appendices (Appendices 4 and 5) to show the various ways these bloggers shared their accounts of learning and reflections using different linguistic techniques, style of writing, use of emotional words, integrating their comments and opinions with facts and stories about the places and emotional language use. The first three extracts and ***Appendix 4*** are blogs on the Khmer regime and the Killing Fields in Cambodia. Using the same place blogged about was helpful in the comparison of what and how these bloggers talk about what they learned about the place.

Extract 11 shows how bloggers confirm their existing knowledge of the place and Extract 14 demonstrates how some bloggers have exerted lesser effort than others to highlight things they have learned. ***Appendix 5*** is an extract from Geoff's blogs on the Golden Gate Bridge that is the complete opposite of Extract 14 and provides comprehensive and detailed information to the readers.

Understanding history in the context of their own experience. The first extract shows an example of how, upon learning about a specific event in this instance, an individual can include in their accounts their reflections and thoughts triggered by this stimulus. The extract below is from Claire's account of their visit to the Angkor Wat Temples in Cambodia. Claire as mentioned earlier has travelled with her boyfriend, Stu to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. Claire stood out among other bloggers because of her search for a religion she can easily fit in with, joining meditation classes to take care of her mind and undergoing a detoxification process for the cleansing of her body as well as creating close relationships, particularly with an orphanage in Cambodia. Below is an extract from her blogs on the Angkor Wat Temples (the soul cultivator, February 25, 2008):

Extract 10:

10.1 Sadly, when the Khmer rouge (meaning communist red Cambodia)
10.2 took control back in 1975 and were busy killing over 1.2 two million
10.3 of its citizens in cold blooded murder, purposely causing its people to
10.4 suffer severe malnutrition which lead to wide spread disease and even
10.5 more death and devastation for years to come, I was already alive,
10.6 some would say 'fortunately' living in the north of England (I
10.7 disagree). At the time I was only eight years old, ignorant and truly
10.8 helpless to this heart breaking Cambodian cause. I now realise that my
10.9 junior school had declined to teach me all about Cambodian politics
10.10 and the evil ways of one Mr. Pol Pot, I believe this was because

10.11 absorbing our own 1st and 2nd world war horrors of fifty years ago
10.12 was far more important and maybe less shocking to our tiny systems
10.13 and the spongy minds of an eight year old modern day child to take in,
10.14 than something currently happening around the world right there and
10.15 then, here and now, I wonder if this happens now in schools, are the
10.16 kids being taught about the evil Mr. Bush and the Alkieda terrors of
10.17 today? or are they STILL dragging up stories of Mr Hitler? My parents
10.18 were not interested in a lot of things either, especially foreign affairs,
10.19 that is of course beyond watching a Jackson Five video or weekly
10.20 episodes of 'Mind Your Language' on Saturday tea time TV or by
10.21 taking a keen interest at what was new on the menu at the local
10.22 Chinese restaurant. In reflection, as I was obliviously reading my 'Judy
10.23 for Girls' and 'The Wombles at Work' annuals and learning Donny
10.24 Osmond songs verbatim in Englandshire, while the Khmer rouge were
10.25 depriving their own children of such luxuries and systematically
10.26 removing all forms of educational, musical, religious, artistic and
10.27 personal expression altogether from Cambodian society. The
10.28 thought that Great Uncle Bulgaria could not give those poor
10.29 Cambodians from that time his great wisdoms of what to do next or
10.30 versions of 'Puppy Love' songs not being sung from peoples hearts in
10.31 1975 Cambodia, really, how did they ever cope?

The extract is a good example of what Falk and Dierking (2000) stated about understanding what is in front of the individual in the context of his/her own experience. Talking about the Khmer has made Claire think back to the past, recalling how old she was during those times which led to a reflection of how, as an eight year old girl, she had been ignorant to what was happening to Cambodia at that time, and by doing so attempting to justify her “ignorance”. It made her think more of what the girls had to endure then while she was comfortably reading about things such as Judy for Girls, and Wombles at Work (Lines 10.23 to 10.27). This comparison emphasises the big difference between an eight year old British girl’s life to Cambodian girls; and a big question of how did they ever cope as if to signal disbelief or amazement (Line 10.31).

She mentioned how some would say she was “fortunately” living in England but immediately disagreed with it as in she Lines 10.6 to 10.7 implied how she saw herself as out of touch with what was happening in the world and blamed her parents’ lack of interest in such affairs as well as how the school had contributed to this (Lines 10.17 to 10.22). Lines 10.15 to 10.17 show mindfulness in Claire’s reflection on whether it is still the same for the young people. Mindfulness, according to Moscardo (1996), refers to the active processing of information and questioning what is going. Pearce, Filep and Ross (20011) suggested that there are linkages between mindfulness and the creation of meaning. This account extends beyond learning what happened to the Khmer regime but is more focused on the self - an awareness of the self - and integrating this story to understanding her life even to her childhood.

Learning is confirming and building on existing knowledge. The second extract is from Tim. In his blogs about the Khmer, Tim has shown he had previous knowledge on the Khmer regime. His blog reflected his interest in its history and how it affected the lives of the Cambodians. Tim was travelling around Southeast Asia and China with his wife Kylie; he identified himself as different from the backpackers who stay in backpacker enclaves and highlights of his trips are interactions with the locals. He wrote a long blog about the Khmer (See Appendix 2). The highlight of his blog is meeting locals who have experienced the Khmer Rouge Rule, who lost some family members as a result and how they survived it. Hearing it personally from someone who experienced it brings a level of authenticity to the story. Tim's interest in the Khmer Rouge goes beyond knowing what happened to wanting to understand more of the Khmer through its history as seen in the following extract from his blog (Mingalaba, December 12, 2006):

Extract 11:

11.1 Until his death in 1998 Pol Pol lived in Choam Sa Ngan near here &
11.2 until he was finally arrested a few years back Ta Mok lived in Anlong
11.3 Veng itself. You may wonder why we would want to visit such place
11.4 with such grim connections, in fact Kylie asked me a few times why I
11.5 was dragging her there too. The fact that to get there we had to survive
11.6 one of the worst roads in the country didn't help my cause either (but
11.7 we'll get back to that later). I guess I wanted to come to Anglong Veng
11.8 to try & help understand the other side of the Khmer Rouge & why
11.9 some still support it today. To me it also seemed to be an important
11.10 part of the historical picture, just as the popular Killing Fields & S21
11.11 Torture Centre are in Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge was still
11.12 engaged in a civil war in Cambodia until 1998 & hard as it is to
11.13 believe, they did so with support not just from a few Cambodians, but
11.14 also with funds & support from the USA, UK & Thailand. They were
11.15 even able to have a seat at the UN thanks to the great politicians in
11.16 Washington & London.

His interest in the Khmer Rouge is emphasised more by the hardship of travelling—“survive” is the word he used as he subjected himself and his wife to one of the worst roads in the country to get an understanding of why people had supported the Khmer despite the tragedy it bought to the Cambodians. This is another good example of mindfulness, questioning what is happening (Lines 11.9 to 11.16). What he found in Anlong Veng is also in the blog in Appendix 2. This effort to write a long blog is more like undertaking research to understand the Khmer Rouge and he has written it down for his audience, sharing critical thoughts; which makes his readers aware of how the Khmer continues to attract support from the USA, the UK and Thailand. This extract unlike the previous one is in pursuit of getting a deeper understanding of the Khmer region. It is not about the self, but about looking for answers to his questions. Curiosity or interest is one of the things that Csikszentmihalyi (1993) said is needed for self development.

The identity that comes across in this blog is of someone who is interested in learning about the past and the present. Most of Tim’s blogs on history and the people he came across in his travels are very long and detailed, sharing a lot of information with his readers. His blog entries are combinations of what he learned happened; his comments and some versions based on what people he has met told him. Indirectly this account reflects something about his identity, his interest in how historical events construct the present as seen in the extract above.

Emotional response as part of learning. For Emma and Gary, learning about the Khmer Rouge had triggered various negative feelings. The visit to the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng Museum like any dark tourism attraction provided them an educational and emotional tourism experience, conveying an important message about the past. (Kang et al, 2012). Gary and Emma call their trip ‘the around the world adventure’. They have travelled from Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore and China following the backpacker routes and travelling mostly independently. The extract below is from their blogs titled Phnom Penh and the Killing Fields (Emma and Gary, October 6, 2007).

Extract 12:

12.1 We did however look to visit the Tuol Sleng Museum and The Killing
12.2 Fields, which showed the darker side of Cambodia and focused on the
12.3 Khmer Rouge and their genocidal regime of 1975-78. We decided to
12.4 visit the Tuol Sleng first of all, where around 12,000 "political
12.5 prisoners" were taken during the regime. It was converted from a

12.6 school into a prison to hold these dissidents but it basically ended up
12.7 as a place of torture from which only 7 were said to have eventually
12.8 survived. As you can imagine, it was a very harrowing place and we
12.9 visited a lot of the different cells, some of which still had blood on the
12.10 floor. The most disturbing part of the museum was on one of the floors
12.11 which had been dedicated to showing all of the pictures the Khmer
12.12 Rouge had taken of the prisoners upon detainment. They ranged from
12.13 babies to old men and women coming from many different
12.14 backgrounds. Upon capture, the person was tortured and forced to
12.15 "confess" to around 60 "co-conspirator" names who would then be
12.16 arrested as well as anyone who was related to them. The prisoner were
12.17 forced to say whatever name came to their head basically so ending up
12.18 there was a complete lottery. It was completely uncensored in its
12.19 depictions of the regime and there were display cabinets holding the
12.20 bludgeoned or shot skulls from some of the prisoners. Leaving the
12.21 place, we both felt pretty depressed.

12.22 The following day was our visit to The Killing Fields, which was a
12.23 place of execution and mass burial for the Khmer Rouge. The prisoners
12.24 from Tuol Sleng were taken here after about 4 months imprisonment to
12.25 be shot and thrown in mass graves. Again, it had a huge tower full of
12.26 the skulls that had been excavated, although many more still lay under
12.27 the ground. The place itself gave a lot of information on the events
12.28 during the regime and highlighted some of the several key places in
12.29 the fields. Although thousands of people had lost their lives here, it
12.30 didn't have as strong an impact as the prison. Maybe it was just the
12.31 initial shock in regards to the extent of the genocide that made the
12.32 prison worse, but I think it was more to do with the endless pictures of
12.33 victims. Despite that, we still felt very deflated upon leaving the fields.

Their account is based on what they have seen in the two sites and how they reacted. There is no reflection or comments on what had happened like Tim and Claire have provided in their blogs, but the emotions which are put into two sentences are quite clear. According to Krakover (2005) and Miles (2002), such sites evoke negative emotions, including fear, horror, sadness, depression, empathy, sympathy and feelings of vengeance. They used the following words that indicated their feelings: “most disturbing” (Line 12.8);

"pretty depressed" (Line 12.17); and "very deflated" (Line 12.27). Sadness and depression, and horror felt were expressed by Emma and Gary; but because they do not have close associations with Cambodians, vengeance and fear might have not been felt. Similarly, Michael also described the different sites in and around Phnom Penh as "quite depressing" and "a real chilling experience" and repeated it twice that it was definitely well worth seeing; he explains why: *"because it was well worth seeing what mankind is capable of at its lowest, and maybe it could help to ensure it doesn't happen again… but "we're leaving with some lasting memories especially from the people who are always smiling, despite the tragedy that happened both to them and their country*" (MichaelnFaye, January 22, 2008). Notice how despite the negative feelings, the experience has been described as leaving some lasting memories; something memorable.

The four bloggers who visited the sites connected to the Khmer regime had reconstructed their experiences of the place into accounts of learning and reflection. They however have used their visit to the place in various ways. Claire's account (Extract 10) is more of a reflection and about an awareness of the self and her past; Tim's blogs (Extract 11) have an objective and critical approach to what he learned about the Khmer and he comes with a previous knowledge of the past and seeks answers; Emma and Gary's blogs (Extract 12) used emotional language to describe what they have seen (their blogs were also descriptive as if to explain the emotions they have felt) and last, Michael's comment evaluates the value of such an event to mankind; seeing the positive side of it despite the tragedy and acknowledging how the people rise above it. Indeed, they have reacted differently and how they reacted, with feelings, thoughts or reflections and evaluations are considered outcomes of their experiences and they are shared with their readers. These accounts can provide useful insights to the DMO of these sites as they give information as to how tourists feel and react in seeing these places. It would allow them to evaluate whether existing interpretation is enough to continuously elicit emotions or help visitors like Tim searching for answers.

Moving on to other accounts of learning, three more extracts are presented to show other ways of sharing their learning about the places visited.

Confirming myths and stories as part of learning. The analysis of blogs has shown how most bloggers have shown interest in the myths and stories of the places they have visited. These are important resources used by bloggers to show they have additional learning or at least confirmed an existing knowledge about the place. This extract below is from Michael's blog on the Nazca Lines. Michael was travelling with his wife with the aim of seeing places such as this as they wrote in their 'must see places' in their profile page. The extract below is from their blog on the Nazca lines, titled "Dirty White Lines..." (MichaelnFay, May 7, 2007):

Extract 13:

13.1 We jumped on a bus in Ica for the 2 hour journey south to our next
13.2 destination, Nazca. The town of Nazca is surrounded by dry arid flats
13.3 which from the ground seem pretty uninteresting, the excitement only
13.4 occurs once you take to the air. Stretched across 500 sq km of the
13.5 plains are the spectacular Nazca lines, these lines form a remarkable
13.6 network consisting of over 800 lines, 300 figures and approximately 70
13.7 animal and plant drawings. These lines were mostly made by removing
13.8 the top layer of stones, which have been darkened by the intense sun

13.9 revealing lighter stones below.

13.10 There are a whole host of theories as to why these lines in the desert
13.11 were created approximately 2000 years ago, especially as they can
13.12 `only be appreciated from the air. A German mathematician has spent
13.13 her life dedicated to the cause and theorised that the lines are an
13.14 astronomical calendar mapped out by complex mathematics, another
13.15 theory is that they map the routes to water, which in the harsh desert is
13.16 a valuable commodity. There are of course the usual extraterrestrial
13.17 landing site theories but the most widely accepted is that they're
13.18 connected to ritual walkways from a religious based cult. I have my
13.19 own theory of course… I believe there is someone in the afterlife
13.20 looking down and laughing at us. "Look at all those crazy Gringos's
13.21 paying good money to ogle something some friends and I scratched in
13.22 the dirt when we were bored". Whatever reasons the lines came to be,
13.23 I was sure they'd be pretty spectacular.

This extract shows how Michael experienced previous challenges concerning the Nazca lines. The trip had made him consider different theories and stories about this tourist attraction which he summarised for his readers (Lines 13.10 to 13.17). The role of stories and myths about the destination was established by Moscardo (2010) as mentioned in Chapter 3. These stories are used as resources that they have prior to the visit and they again reuse after the visit. Moscardo (2010) has pointed out how the experience of the tourist destination involved how stories are enacted, created or recreated. In this case, the stories of the Nazca lines are re-created by Michael as he summarised other theories for the readers and added his own theories. The stories have been a resource that signifies that they have learned additional knowledge. Retelling the theories to the readers is also an opportunity to show off their knowledge on the area. In Lines 13.18 to 13.22, Michael shows his sense of humour and how he personalises this experience by putting forward his own theory to the readers.

These accounts of learning in this style have been seen in some bloggers like Barry and Dylan on their visit to the Macchu Picchu; and Dylan's stories on the social problems in Iguazu. Bloggers summarised the stories of the places they visited and integrated other things they have noticed by observation or with the stories they get from the guides and locals. These kinds of stories can provide authenticity to the narration of the story to the reader from a blogger they personally know or who can present them with evidence that they have indeed been there. However, it does bring to attention how the bloggers could reshape the story. This is something that a DMO needs to pay attention to.

Filtered, brief and concise accounts of learning vs. long, comprehensive and detailed accounts of learning. The analysis revealed that accounts of learning come in various lengths; however, they still represent a blogger's learning and reflection and signify an added value to their experience. It reflects how bloggers have various ways of sharing information with their readers. Most importantly, what they share with their readers also reflects their personal interests, which consequently shows an aspect of their identity to the readers. Three blogs are presented here to demonstrate the varying lengths.

It has been observed that bloggers who are motivated by relaxation for their travels such as Dave and Cathy, Nick and Sally, Meltem, and Astrid did not exert a lot of time and effort writing about things they have learned in their trip; nevertheless they also mentioned new knowledge they gained in their trip in a more concise manner in their blogs. The extract below is an example from Nick and Sally, who were on their breaks from their jobs and as mentioned earlier are doing mostly relaxation and sightseeing, with only the climbing of Mt. Everest as the most challenging part of their travel. Here is a brief extract on what they learned in one of their sightseeing trips which they considered worth mentioning to their readers in their blogs which are mostly updates on their activities. This extract is from their blog entry titled: *"And then we were three – Bangalor o Mumbia (sic) (via Hampi and Goa) (Muno, April 23, 2007):*

Extract 14:

14.1 In the midst of the midday heat (mad dogs...) we walked the 2km to
14.2 Vittala temple, a World Heritage Monument built in the 1500s, where
14.3 we afforded ourselves a guide who demonstrated the musical stone
14.4 pillars and showed us the Kama Sutra stone carvings that Indians used
14.5 for sex education, apparently they came to the temple and just copied
14.6 the drawings - most enlightening!

The words "most enlightening" (Line 14.6) indicate how they find such information as providing a "greater understanding" of the Kama Sutra. It implies that what they found is an additional knowledge that is worth sharing with their readers; especially when they do not exert much effort in writing about the different places they went to in their travels. The style it was delivered in was also light hearted, not in the serious, formal and informative style of some of the other bloggers. This light-hearted approach could be associated with the topic at hand. Nonetheless, these kinds of statements do stand out from their stories of their activities of relaxation at the beach, having fun and sightseeing of temples. Learning new things as benefits of travelling, despite it not being their main motivation for travelling, are shared by the bloggers with their readers in this way.

Luke's blogs which are mostly chronological details of their activities in South America are devoted to their volunteer projects, but contain a few descriptions of the things they learn from their guides. This style of including information about the places they visited is seen in some blogs such as those of Emma and Gary, Dawn and Barry. Luke's travelled with Sam is an around the world trip; they have travelled to South America and joined a volunteer project at Cusco, Peru for a month. Their time there included teaching English, hiking and getting involved with the locals. Extract 14 is an extract from a long blog entry from Luke, titled: Pikillacta (chlaa, May 20, 2006); these are one of the trips organised for them as part of their volunteer projects.

Extract 15:

15.1 There was a newly built museum which currently only holds the
15.2 skeletal remains of an armadillo type dinosaur called a glynteradon
15.3 which was presumably unearthed at the site. Pilkillacta itself is a vast
15.5 area where the remains of a pre-Inca towns built by the Wari people in
15.6 about AD 1100. Pikillacta means *The Place of The Flea* & there are
15.7 two tales of its origin, the first being that the Wari whilst living in such
15.8 close proximity often had fleas, the second that they very small &
15.9 compared to fleas. Most of Pikillacta has been covered by rubble from
15.10 the surrounding mountains during seismic activity & UNESCO have
15.11 been clearing the overlying earth & restoring the site.

Lines 15.1 to 15.5 are examples of information that bloggers tell their readers that makes these places unique from other places: an armadillo-type dinosaur. Lines 15.4 to 15.11 is a common style of description from bloggers; that is, describing the importance of the places such as Pilikillacta in terms of what it represents about the past, the changes it has been through, and how it is now. They filter for their readers the highlights of these places.

Lastly, the discourse analysis of blogs also revealed that bloggers' interests greatly influence what kind of learning they do or what they like to learn about. Learning, it seems, is specific to individual tastes, interests and motivations. Following the bloggers in their multiple destination trips, it is easy to identify a pattern to what they blog about, what information they pay particular attention to and what and how they share with the readers. The pattern can easily be identified based on what things they blog about; and what information they pay particular attention to and share with their readers. It varies from one individual to another. Here are a few examples: Sally is interested in the different wildlife in South Africa and produced detailed description of the animals she had seen; Derek wrote about night life, local food and girls in every US and European city he visited; Tim is interested in interaction with locals, so there are many accounts on his close relationship with locals; and Geoff was interested in different landmarks wrote lengthy accounts about them.

Geoff's blogs on the other hand, stood out because his accounts of the different places are very comprehensive and detailed; however lacking in emotions and comments. There is no use of *I o*r other emotional words, instead it is similar to a guidebook or an encyclopaedia description of the place, full of information. (See Appendix 4 for Geoff's blog on the Golden Gate Bridge.) It was clearly divided into these sub-topics; conception, finance, design, construction, opening activities and suicides. A five page blog extract (2,648 words) shows his effort at sharing this information in his blogs. Certainly the blog is an effort of producing stories/factual information about the place. The content of the blogs reflects the important aspects of the destination for Geoff that are worth sharing with his readers.

Comprehensive and narrative details shared by bloggers with their readers who are potential visitors to the destination could influence the destination image. As bloggers self-published their stories about different places, the sources of these stories are not named and they can contain inaccurate or false information. It does challenge the DMO to understand how the bloggers construct their stories and their information sources. For the case of Geoff, it is a good question to ask where and how did he source the huge amount of information to put in his blog, - from a guide book, from a guide, information handed out in the attraction, from a tourist centre or online? Or is it a combination of various sources plus his personal observations and comments?

To summarise, these extracts represent the second most dominant theme of the stories. Pearce (2005) posited that what tourists learn is seen to have limited commercial interest. However, the analysis of travel blogs has shown how bloggers value this aspect of their experiences. These stories represent learning which Marsick and Volpe (1999) described as informal learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential and non-institutional. Nonetheless, they can be considered outcomes of their experiences. As stories, they are used as narrative resources for reconstructing their travel experiences to their readers.

The way the bloggers constructed thie new learning provides insights that they are not merely stories to tell their readers. As they relay these stories they found opportunities to present themselves to their readers (Claire's childhood), and Tim's pursuit of deeper understanding of the Khmer regime shows an aspect of his identity that continuously seeks knowledge on this political regime, connecting the past to the present. On the other hand, emotions of sadness are elicited from Gary and Emma with visits to the site related to the regime.

The analysis of blogs also revealed how stories and myths about the places had been crucial part of the accounts of learning and reflections. These stories and myths about places are shared with their readers and sometimes to even educate the readers. Laing and Grouch (2005) posited that frontier travel experiences allow travellers to be seen as if they "discovered" the place before their readers and gave them some authority to talk about it because they have been there. Accounts about remote places provide benefits of travel for social status with the hope of getting recognition from their readers for such endeavours. Lastly, these stories about the places are shared by bloggers in various ways in terms of the length and type of information. There are bloggers who filter information for their readers and merely highlight what they think is the most interesting part of what they have seen. On the other end, there are also bloggers who provide a detailed and comprehensive description of various aspects of the destination. Travel blogging clearly has marketing implications. Examining the accounts of learning and reflections of bloggers should stimulate inquiry as to how these blogs can change/reshape the image or narratives of a place to their audience.

These accounts of learning and reflections compared to stories of risks and challenges elicited emotions from the bloggers; however, these accounts confirm Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) suggestion that knowledge is one of the elements that influences satisfaction of the tourist experience. The importance of knowledge in tourist experiences is manifested in how accounts of learning and reflections are the second most dominant themes in the travel blogs.

The next section is closely associated to accounts of learning and reflections; however, this section highlights new things that they find "interesting" and "exciting" and emphasises the differences they found in these places, the people and cultures they have seen. It covers another motivation of travelling which is the pursuit of novelty.

6.3 Accounts of novelty and differences

As the blogs used for the discourse analysis are written by long-haul and multiple destination travellers who are exposed to places, people and cultures very different from those of their British home culture and environment, it is not surprising how accounts of novelty and differences are a crucial part of their travel experiences.

Words such as "first time", "new", "surreal", "weird", "strange" and "interesting" provided cues that there are objects/events, places, people and culture that they find worthy of being shared with their audience as something "novel". The use of such cues unsurprisingly brought out a vast and diverse volume of texts; however, the context within which these words were used was helpful in understanding them for describing something novel or unique for the blogger. According to Cohen (1972, cited in Tse and Crotts, 2005), novelty and strangeness are essential elements in the tourism experience and vary from one individual to another. The discourse analysis confirms that the concept of novelty is based on the perception of what the individual knows or is familiar with. Indeed, those stories of experiencing new and unique things are varied and very personal.

Empirical studies have suggested that novelty has four components: thrill, change from routine, boredom alleviation and surprise. Keeping these in mind, the analysis of blogs also looked for these components in the accounts of the bloggers. It revealed that bloggers' thrills and surprises are expressed in various ways by bloggers. Change from routine and boredom alleviation are not appropriate for long-haul and multiple destination travellers who are not escaping from boredom as they are exposed to various destinations and cultures for weeks and months and the continuous travelling would have not allowed them to have a fixed routine for weeks.

This section presents six extracts and an appendix (Appendix 6) to show how bloggers reconstruct experiences for their readers their experiences that they consider to be novel and different. The first three extracts showed three bloggers describing activities engaged in as different, bizarre and surreal to name a few of the words used. Cultural differences were evaluated in the fourth extract and in ***Appendix 6.*** The fifth extract compares a local livelihood to a job in the UK and the last extract shows one of the many examples of several bloggers' focus on local food.

Novelty in activities. The next three extracts shows novelty in activities engaged in; they are activities that can be engaged in anywhere but the location within which they were undertaken and with whom makes them “novel” and different. The feelings elicited from the bloggers are another marker of that novel experience. The first extract is from Mark and Chrissie, the married couple travelling around South America. This is their blog on their therapeutic dip in the mud pools at the Volcan de Lodo El Totumo (mark and chirssie, March 8, 2009); the blog is aptly titled, “Mud, Mud Glorious Mud!”

Extract 16:

16.1 One thing we never thought we'd do would be to climb into the crater
16.2 of a volcano for a bath but that's exactly what we were planning for
16.3 today's main activity. Just 50km from Catragena is the Volcan de
16.4 Lodo El Totumo a 15m mound which is actually a volcano but which,
16.5 instead of spewing lava, erupts with thick liquid mud. When it's not
16.6 erupting you can climb to the top of the mound and have a
16.7 therapeutic dip in the mud pools and we thought it sounded like a
16.8 unique experience.

16.9 After smashing some early morning greasy street food for brekkie we
16.10 were off to the mud volcano for a soak. As well as sounding like a
16.11 spa experience it is one of the few places in the world where you can
16.12 have the feeling of being weightless ... so it's really a bit of a spacey
16.13 spa! As we arrived we saw a bizarre looking cone of mud in what
16.14 looked like the middle of a car park with clean people walking up
16.15 steps on one side and mud monsters walking down the other.

16.16 Leaving our shoes with a lass at the bottom of the steps we waited in
16.17 line, where there was the small obligatory mud fight, before slipping
16.18 into the muddy crater at the top. It felt a little strange at first and you
16.19 quickly found you had little to no control in moving anywhere. With
16.20 a little rub down massages from a local chap and some time floating
16.21 around in the mud soup we wallowed like content pigs! It was a very
16.22 strange feeling to "stand" in a bottomless mud pit and not be able to
16.23 sink yourself below about chest heights. Covered from head to toe in
16.24 mud we took the walk down the other, mud monster, side of the mud
16.25 cone to the river for a scrub down. Local ladies armed with water
16.26 scoops subject you to their own form of water torture to remove all
16.27 traces on mud from your skin. It had been a touristy but fun
16.28 experiences marred only slightly by the vehemence with which the
16.29 masseurs, photographers and washing ladies pursued us for their
16.30 "tips".

This extract shows an experience described by the blogger as a unique experience; and this is emphasisd by different statements in Lines 16.8, 16.13, and 16.18 with the use of words such as "bizarre" and "strange". In addition to describing this dip in the mud pool, they have described the environmental setting and location (Lines 16.3 to 16.8) as well as what was being done to them (Lines 16.16 to 16.18 and 16.25 to 16.27) to create a clear picture for their readers of this unique experience. The accounts clearly guide the readers to the whole experience. The emotions felt and what the body sensed at this experience were narrated as well and there are even comparisons used so the reader can imagined their feeling: such as a feeling of being weightless (Lines 16.12); and wallowing like 'content pigs' (Lines 16.21). The description of the location itself has enhanced the novelty of the activity which was emphasised in Line 16.12, pointing out that it is one of the few places in the earth where one can feel weightless; indeed how rare an experience is that. There are no self-presentation strategies in these extracts but the phrase "touristy experience but fun" indicates it is different from their mostly active activities as seen in their blogs. In using the phrase "touristy but fun", they somehow implied that anything "touristy" is not supposed to be fun. Throughout their blogs they have implied that they see themselves as backpackers and that the use of a spa is associated with tourists.

This next two extracts, the uniqueness of an activity emerges from the persons involved in the activity, like Dave playing pool with a lady boy in a Vietnamese bar in Nha Trang (Extract 17; Dave Cathy, February 3, 2007) and Dylan playing football with the "Indians in the Andes" in Cusco, Peru

(Extract 18; Dyl, November 10, 2008). Dave is travelling with his wife Cathy around Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand and they stay mostly in backpackers’ areas to meet new friends. while Dylan is travelling with girlfriend Lou around South America, North America, Australia and New Zealand and tried some dangerous activities such as skydiving, rafting, glacier walking and trekking.

Extract 17:

17.1 A very surreal moment or two in the bar. After a couple of games of
17.2 killer, I got challenged to a game of pool..... by a local ladyboy.
17.3 Thankfully she/e was terrible and I didn't suffer the embarassment
17.4 of losing. One of those things that only happens to you once I think.

Extract 18:

18.1 The porters are generally small and compact and wirey. All muscle
18.2 with thick legs built from carrying huge backpacks up mountains all
18.3 season. The tackles are a bit tastey. They blast the ball from one
18.4 end to the other. Dust flys as the crash together and battle for
18.5 possesion. It´s not the ´beautiful game´ it´s a gritty and passionate
18.6 scramble. I fear a little for my ankles and wonder if playing is a
18.7 good idea considering that we still have three long days walk ahead
18.8 of us.

18.9 We´re up! I take up a midfield position with Ben in Goal, Julio at the
18.10 back, Max on the wing and Jenny (super striker) up front. We´re off
18.11 and I´m surprised at how much energy I have. At first we try and
18.12 keep the ball on the ground and link together a few passes the ball
18.13 bounces unpredictably across the uneven surface and I change
18.14 direction with a skid kicking up dust. Ben looks like he´s playing
18.15 aussie rules in goal relishing the opportunity to leap into the air
18.16 somehow taking man and ball at the samentime. We win the first
18.17 game two - nil thanks to a brace by super striker Jenny. I hit the post
18.18 and head against the cross bar. We stay on and play another team it´s
18.19 one all in the last minute Max has swapped with Ben in goal. Ben has
18.20 the Ball in the left back position and I´m shouting for it in space on
18.21 the left wing when for some reson he opts to pass back to Max in
18.22 goal. The ball rolls gentally towards Max but as he stoops to pick it
18.23 up it hits a rock, changes direction and bobbles comedically passed

18.24 him into the goal much to the great amusment of the other team and
18.25 small crowd.

18.26 I had a great time and got to play football with Indians in the Andes
18.27 which is definitely a tick in a newly created box of things I wanted to
18.28 do before I die. The international unifying language of football is
18.29 great stuff.

Both extracts involved interactions with the locals which produces that element of "novelty". Dave playing with a local lady boy is somethingdifferent as he used the word "surreal" (Lines 17.1 to 17.2); while for Dylan, the phrase "playing with Indians in the Andes as a "tick in a newly created box of things I wanted to do before I die" (Lines 18.26 to 18.29) implies the value of such experience for him. Both of them had implied these are once in a life time opportunities. Dylan mentioned this newly created box of things to do, and this must be equivalent to the "list of goals or things to do before I die" which were mentioned earlier in the stories of risks and challenges. The list is symbolic of self-development and this specific incident qualifies for that list.

These two experiences did not clearly express thrill or surprise emotions. The extracts have allowed them opportunities for self-presentation, emphasising how they did better than the locals. For Gareth particularly, losing to a lady boy would be an embarrassment (Lines 17.3 to 17.4) while for Dylan, a description of the Indians physique and how they play football was provided at the beginning of the story and it implies to the reader what they are up against in this football game (Lines 18.1 to 18.8). These games had made them more aware of them as travellers and they as the locals.

Local lifestyles, cultural differences and emotional responses. The ways the locals live, or lifestyles, are also constructed as unique, different or strange by some bloggers. For example, Astrid who was travelling with her boyfriend Chris in Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, has very concise blogs; mostly updates of their activities but there was this one statement that stood out in her blog of their rip to the North of Thailand: *"Mastercard moment: Chris' face when the woman he is sitting next on the train starts breast feeding!!!!!"* (Fletchclough, October 23, 2008). This reaction signifies an element of novelty, i.e. surprise, in a simple normal routine among Asian mothers. Meltem's blog on the Ganges River also showed her reaction on witnessing cremation which she concisely described as: "*I was saddened to witness several cremations as well as babies' body being thrown directly in the river. Such intimate rituals of life and death take place in public which is a shock to me but merely the crossing between the physical and spiritual world in the Hindu culture"* (Turkishdelight, July 1, 2009). Nevertheless, she concluded it was an "eye opening experience". These statements are based on what they know to be acceptable or unacceptable practices from their home culture. There was that element of surprise/shock in these statements which is a construct of novelty as suggested by Lee and Crompton (1992).

Another example for such stories on the locals is Tim's blog on the "cultural differences" he observed among Chinese people. He had a blog titled: "computer says noooo (an introduction to Chinese manners and etiquette), where he included a long list about what he found different among Chinese people. Tim was travelling in China and other Southeast Asian countries with his wife who is of Chinese descent. Their blogs stood out because of Tim's interest in the locals and their culture. He wrote the extract below as an introduction to his list of cultural differences, as if to explain how he generally see these differences as well as how he feel about them (Mingalaba, August 6, 2006):

Extract 19:

19.1 Frustrating as it may seem, there's many many cultural differences
19.2 that are all so small in their own right. However put them together &
19.3 you realise that the Chinese people are not really the most infuriating
19.4 people on the planet, rather they are the most tolerant on the planet.
19.5 What seems like complete total & utter selfishness is actually
19.6 complete total & utter tolerance. These people will tolerate just about
19.7 anything from each other. Here's a few of the things that drive us
19.8 mad that may seem perfectly normal to a billion other people....

The extract shows Tim's feelings towards these cultural differences; yet there was a sarcastic statement (Lines 19.3 to 19.5) looking at the positive side of it; turning infuriating people into the most tolerant on the planet and selfishness into tolerance. Lines 19.6 to 19.7 is an attempt to show they do understand that these differences are normal to these people which is obviously not to them as it stretches their limits of its acceptance (madness). Tim has projected himself to have an understanding of the locals in his other blogs; however; this list is somehow contradicting such an understanding or tolerance towards Chinese culture. Please read ***Appendix 6*** to see how Tim has described the things that drove them mad; spitting, staring, traffic lights, beeping horns, toilets, Pushing, shoving and queues, noise, sleeper bus, pillow fight, jingle bells and Scarborough eating a pear; and being ignored.

Tim entitling this blog as "an introduction to Chinese manners and etiquette" indicates to the readers that the blog provides an overview of Chinese manners and etiquette. The title implies the author of the blog has adequate knowledge on the topic. The style of the writing uses humour, sarcasm and exaggeration, and has detailed descriptions of the "behaviour" of the Chinese. The blog is a mixture of observation and complaints, and advises how to deal with the Chinese behaviour. To get his message across he gives specific examples of situations to give the readers a clear picture of what he has to "endure". It is also written in the first person that tells the reader how he feels, what he seesaw and heard, and what his reactions are. There are some situations where he expressed his surprise and shock over some behaviour such as pushing and shoving in the queues. This blog was full of complaints and his frustrations with the cultural differences he had to tolerate; however, it was written to entertain the readers. The experience has elicited that high emotion from him and has urged him to write about it.

There are other bloggers who also pay attention on how the locals live differently and highlight it in their blogs (Dylan, Barry, Mark and Chrissie, to name a few). Bloggers have used comparisons between their home culture and other cultures or people to provide a clearer picture for their readers. Below is an extract from Leanne on the locals in Mt. Bromo in Indonesia (wansan, January 1, 2009). Leanne travelled with her boyfriend Nick to Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina.

Extract 20:

20.1 so tomorrow we leave big nick and travel over night to mount Bromo
20.2 in Java, which is still indonisia Jakarta is the capital. Bromo is a live
20.3 volcano and you can climb sort of around it or get a jeep upto the view
20.4 point and look into the crator, think we will opt for the 2nd option! we

20.5 met 2 swedes that have been and they tell us that men walk into the
20.6 volcano twice a day and collect a big bag of sulphur and get paid only
20.7 600 rupiah per bag! to put that into context, 16,000 rupiah = 1 pound
20.8 so they are getting about 10pence for risking their lifes! makes you
20.9 think about when we moan about our jobs. most hotel workers out here
20.10 earn 20,000 rp a day working 6am til 11ish thats not even a quid 50!
20.11 anyway now ive made you all appreciate england im off.

Leanne's other blogs are mostly like this extract; very concise sharing of information about the places they have been to but she highlights a lot of differences she saw. Her blogs are written in an email or letter style, implying she knows who are reading her blogs; hence it is not surprising that she took care to "put into context" that the 16,0000 rupiah is only one pound (Line 20.7). Indeed, she is right; it is not only her who now appreciates working in England but also the readers. Lines 20.8 to 20.10 is a reflection of her past behaviour, complaining about jobs and although not clearly stated here, it can be concluded that she would have think more carefully before complaining about her job when she comes home. Comparisons have been commonly used by bloggers to highlight the differences between two cultures and places. The wide gap of differences between places such as in developing countries can be a source of novelty for tourists.

According to Lee and Crompton (1992), people travel because they want to experience something new and different; and all these extracts are evidence of these experiences. Most importantly, the comparison also facilitated better understanding to their readers, and triggered appreciation of the home and life (career, daily routine) they have left behind. Some bloggers have also shown how these differences have created an understanding of self, in terms of how they are in a better position. Examples of these accounts are those of the miners in Potosi (Mark and Chrissie Barry) and the salt miners in Uyuni

(MichaelnFaye, June 9, 2007 and Mark and Chrissie).

The novelty of local food and drink. Stories about the local food and drinks are also abundant in the travel blogs. There are few bloggers who had obliged themselves to try local foods in every place they visited such as Derek, Mark and Chrissie, Tim, Sally and Claire, while Dave and Cathy, Derek and Luke have tried every beer and drink they can on their trip. These add up to the experience and reflect that indeed they are out of their home and eating and drinking authentic food and drinks.

Gastronomy over the last decades had increasingly become a part of the tourist experience which contributes to the authenticity of the place. The authentic food seems to add up to their travel experience and life story. A few specific examples are those of Luke's list of drinks which is put in his drink of the day section of his blogs and trying guinea pig; Derek trying local food around Europe such as Portuguese dumpling and Croatian local food and Tim's barbecued dogs in China. This is a short extract from Sally's blog in Tanzania (The Mosquito Magnet, December, 10, 2008). Sally has travelled to Africa for five weeks with a group.

Extract 21:

21.1 We had nyama choma for dinner, which is spit roasted goat, which
21.2 potatoes, salad veg and garlic bread. The meat was like lamb but it was
21.3 tough to cut but strangely alright to chew. It was quite a small goat so
21.4 we didn't get very much each, but I can now say that I have eaten it!

Aside from tasting a new kind of meat and despite not eating much, what is important for her is that she could claim that she that she has tasted goat meat (Lines 21.3 to 21.4). It is an additional knowledge (taste) that she had acquired. She also compared it to other meat to make her readers have a better idea of what it tastes like. Bloggers are also known to using the local names of the food such as how Sally used “nyoma choma” instead of just saying a ‘goat meat dish’, as well providing a good description of the taste and the appearance/presentation of the food to their readers (Lines 21.1 to 21.3). The use of local names signifies the novelty of the food and the cultural context. Food and drink experiences have become a significant part of travel experiences because they are something different and new for the tourists. They may not produce emotional responses; however, as they accumulate these experiences, they show curiosity and this is part of an evolving self as posited by Csikszenthmihalyi (1993). These experiences contribute to their life story. The importance of these stories to experience marketers is reflected in the way these stories are woven throughout the travel experiences of these bloggers.

To summarise, these extracts and Appendix 5 have shown how bloggers reconstructed their accounts of novelty and differences for their readers. The analysis of blogs showed key findings to understanding what is novel to an individual and how they construct these stories to their readers. First, novelty can cover anything that a blogger writes about, and points out to their readers that something is strange, unique and bizarre, or interesting and has produced emotions of surprise, shock, amazement; although expressed in various ways. The first three extracts for example has shown how even common activities such as a mud dip, a football match and a pool can be considered novel or different because of other elements in that experience. Location of the place (volcano), services from local women and the environmental settings made a therapeutic mud pool dip strange and bizarre; while playing with a lady boy and native Indians have definitely been seen by bloggers as a once in a life time incident. Novelty also produces emotions as well as making sense of the experience and integrating it in their life story.

Cultural differences, lifestyle and livelihood of the locals are also topics worth sharing with their readers. A blog which is detailed, such as the fourth extract, included emotions felt and has created the experience into "being" for the readers using various linguistic styles. At the other extreme, it can be one sentence pointing out something that shocked them, such as how the Asian mother breastfed her baby on the bus. Such a small routine could be acceptable in the destination but not within the bloggers' home environment and culture, hence the reaction. As mentioned earlier, novelty is very subjective and personal, and in these extracts, elicited emotions from the experience serve as markers that something is different. The differences in culture and livelihood can also provide appreciation of the home culture of the traveller; for instance the extract on how much a worker earns for long hours is very much different from what the traveller earns in the UK. This certain knowledge shows some appreciation which is shared to the readers and invite them to also feel that appreciation that they are in England. Lastly, drinks and foods have recently received much attention from bloggers. There are even some bloggers who have taken Thai and Spanish cooking lessons for something to bring back home with them. Most bloggers has been observed consuming and trying out various local foods that are unique to the place, and share their experience of it with their readers as well as integrate it into their stock of experiences.

Returning to the components of novelty from the literature, it has been revealed that thrill and surprise are there, although these might be expressed differently. Boredom alleviation and change of routine has not been observed in the blogs which was explained earlier because of the type and nature of travellers who are faced with different trip adventures, and so cannot create a routine out of months and weeks of travelling.

The extracts confirm that the element of novelty is still crucial in creating memorable experiences as mentioned in Chapter 2 by some authors such as Poulsson and Kale (2004) and Tofler (1970). It is clear that stories of novelty and differences are interesting topics that bloggers share with the readers. They have elicited emotions from the bloggers and these stories are integrated within their stock of experiences. The whole process of accumulating stories of novelty and differences shows a curiosity among bloggers that they pursue, which in turn reflects an evolving self.

These accounts of novelty and differences again provide insights to DMOs of what are aspects of the destination that capture the attention of these travellers, and what experiences are considered novel and different and are valued by the bloggers to be shared to their readers.

The next section highlights the social aspects of travel experiences but focuses on the motivations of tourists in entering into and maintaining closerelationships with their fellow travellers and locals. The concept of self-expansion is explored in the next section.

6.4 Accounts of self-expansion

The analysis of travellers' blogs has shown accounts of social interactions with other tourists and locals. Social interaction with other fellow tourists is both an integral and functional aspect of backpacking (Murphy, 2001). However, the analysis also revealed that there is more to the social interaction of travellers; these interactions have helped the travellers with their self-expansion.

Self-expansion is achieved when an individual enters into a close relationship with another person, in which they include the other in their concept of self in the sense that they feel as if the other's perspectives, resources and identities are to some extent similar to their own (MacLaughlin-Volpe, 2008:218). The self-expansion model was developed to understand the motivation of people to enter into and maintain close relationships (MacLaughlin-Volpe, 2008). The model recognises the basic desire of people to explore, to expand the self and to enhance potential self-efficacy by gaining or increasing their access to material and social resources, perspectives, and identities (Aron and Mclaughlin-Vople, 2001). To put it simply, developing a relationship expands the self (Aron et al, 2004). It was emphasised by Aron et al (2002) that the relationship was created for attainment of resources to enable achievement of goals instead of the actual achievement of goals. Resources referred to by Aron et al (2004) include knowledge, social status and community, possessions and wealth and physical strength and health.

This section presents six extracts demonstrating how bloggers achieve self-expansion by establishing relationships with other travellers and even the locals. Specific resources that they gained from this relationship include knowledge, status and a sense of belonging to a community by particularly identifying themselves with these people

A sense of belonging to a group or community. The first extract here is from Derek, who stood out among other bloggers, because of his conscious efforts to make friends with other travellers which were also his reason for staying in hostels. He also likes to interact with the locals, particularly with those who are within his age group with the main purpose of learning about the "real" nightlife in the area; knowing more about the area and even to meet new girls. He has travelled around cities of USA and across European cities, engaging in the same activities, sightseeing, nightlife, partying and drinking and meeting new people. This extract on La Coruña is from his blog titled, "Wild Partying in Northern Spain (Delek Delek, August 11, 2007).

Extract 22:

22.1 It was too much for Davies, as he headed home just as I started
22.2 chatting to a couple of local students, Dani and Manuel, who
22.3 introduced me to their other friends, Pedro and Patricio. Their
22.4 English was good enough and my Spanish was just good enough so
22.5 that we could communicate in Spanglish. I found that the drunker I got,
22.3 the more my Spanish came back to me! They do actually
22.6 have their own dialect of Spanish here –Galician - but Spanish of
22.7 course is understood. Pedro was what Manuel called "an
22.8 independalist", someone who wanted Galicia to be independent from
22.9 Spain. I don't think his views were that extreme though - it seems the
22.10 Galicians aren't as "independalist" as the Basques. The guys were
22.11 also Deportivo fans - Manuel has a season ticket at the Riazor. They
22.12 couldn't believe how much I knew about Deportivo – when I
22.13 started rolling off every Deportivo player I knew, they were
22.14 gobsmacked ;-) We were actually able to have a fairly decent
22.15 conversation about football. Anyway, we a had great time as we
22.16 jumped up and down together to the tunes of Muse, The Smiths, Yeah

Yeah Yeahs and some local Spanish indie band of which I knew none of the words ;-) A great night out to conclude my time in Galicia. I got back to the hostel at 6am - again.

The extract showed how he fits in comfortably with these local students, talking about the Deportivo team and having a great time dancing. In fact, across his blogs, Dylan had shown himself to find striking up conversation, meeting new people and establishing friendships easy. This is a very brief encounter but this had allowed him to show some of his knowledge and probably he also gained some additional knowledge about the team from them. This extract shows him using self-promotion as a self-presentation strategy (Lewis and Neighbors, 1995) as he showed his capability to converse in Spanish with them. This whole extract predominantly talks about the self, how he did things and how he enjoyed being with the locals. The way he reconstructed this particular experience for his readers highlights that such social interaction with the locals also allows him a way of presenting himself to his readers, through his ability to strike up a conversation and enjoy the evening with them; hence self-expansion is achieved because of such encounters.

The relationship formed by backpackers in travelling is created and dissolved fast (Sorensen, 2003); although this does not mean they failed to attain some resources (knowledge, status, sense of belonging) even if their interactions are limited to a few days or even a conversation. In this instance, Derek had enjoyed the nightlife in Galicia with his new-found friends who must have given him a sense of belonging, particularly in the latter part of the night as indicated by the use of pronoun “we” in Lines 22.14 to 22.15; notice how the extracts started with uses of “I” and “they”. Derek is among those bloggers who stood out for these stories of meeting people, instantly creating relationships and dissolving them fast; but the way he constructed these experiences made it clear that he benefitted more than just from the friendship as it allow him to identify more with the group of backpackers. His identity with the backpackers is sought after by staying in backpacker enclaves and exchanging information and contact details with talks of meeting in the next few weeks. Indeed, these friendships were continued on as he referred to them in his blogs; evidence that he has also shared his blogs with these new-found friends.

Another example of how some bloggers construct their social interaction with their fellow travellers for their bloggers is the implied sense of belonging with them, as seen from this extract from Dawn’s blog titled: The Wonders of Patagonia (spidermiss, February 3, 2010). Dawn has travelled alone to South American countries and has arranged her travel independently but tends to travel with people she met in dorms/hostels she stayed in. This extract is during her stay at one of the hostels in El Calafate in Argentina:

Extract 23:

23.1 I spent time at the hostel relaxing and chilling out. I indulged in a
23.2 massage on the first day which was wonderful. I met some great like
23.3 minded travellers at the hostel over drinks and dinner in the evening
23.4 and in the dorm including Noelina, Soo Jeong, Tom, Bradley, Kirkland
23.5 and many others from all the globe! It is so great to be among like
23.6 minded people and sharing the same passion.

Lines 23.2 to 23.3 show how Dawn used this meeting of other travellers to indicate a sense of belonging with the others as she refers to them as “great like minded travellers” and “sharing the same passion” (travelling, not mentioned though) as the common denominator among them. In associating with them as indicated by the words “like minded” (Lines 23.2 and 23.5) it is emphasised how she wants this message to be conveyed to the readers to enhance her identity as a traveller; capable of making friends with people from all the globe. The value of social interaction extends beyond that experience but was used to enhance her identity to the readers with the style in which she reconstructed it with the use of linguistic techniques.

Identifying selves with other exceptional people. For some bloggers, travelling also allows them to meet exceptional people in their eyes; and their stories reflect how interactions with these people are positively valued and contribute to their identity and self-development particularly when they present themselves as similar to those people. Below is an extract showing such close relationships with individuals met in their travels. This extract is from Claire, who is travelling in Asia with her boyfriend Stu. She stood out among other bloggers because of her search for spirituality and soul, mind and body cleansing activities pursued. This extract is from her blog titled, “Stand Back – Soul Cultivation In Progress” in Hanoi (soul cultivator, May 1, 2008):

Extract 24:

24.1 I went in search of any kind of Angel, I meditated on this for a few
24.2 days and I found one. He came in the shape of a man with huge
24.3 visionary white wings of faith, this man is special too me for three
24.5 reasons.

24.6 While I was busy being born in 1967, he was here in Vietnam flying

24.7 helicopters and representing the good old United States of America as
24.8 best he could. Within his first six months in combat he got shot in the
24.9 leg by a machine gun that blew through the bottom of his helicopter
24.9 while in mid flight, with a through and through ballistic hole in this leg
24.10 he still made it safe to dry land and was shortly ordered home. He has
24.11 spent a huge amount of his time back in Vietnam and has helped local
24.12 people achieve the most extra ordinary things that they may never have
24.13 even dreamt of doing if they had not met him. Luckily for me he was
24.14 here, this time he was busy learning the Viet language.

24.15 He is a fellow travel blogger on this very same site and a damn fine
24.16 blogger he is too. I introduce you to the unique world of Mr. Kent
24.17 Converse (a super hero's name if ever there was one)
24.18 AKA Governor His knowledge on Vietnam is mind blowing, please
24.19 take a look.

24.20 Kent, Stu and I spent hours chatting, it was so good meeting someone
24.21 like him and I soon realised with our conversations that us travel
24.22 bloggers really experience and see within the more finer details of this
24.23 big wide world, what with all our endless questions, unique
24.24 experiences, trusty cameras and note books always at hand.

Claire's high regard for this man is seen in how she compared him to an "angel" and clearly stated he is special to her in Lines 24.1 to 24.5; and how she called him a super hero in Line 24.15 and even urged her readers to get to know more about Kent. Lines 24.8 to 24.14 were Claire's justification for why Kent is special, an angel and a superhero. Claire identified herself with Kent as she said "us travel bloggers" experiencing and seeing the more finer details of the big wide world, endless questioning, unique experiences, trusty cameras and notebooks always at hand (Lines 24.18 to 24.21). This had definitely created a picture of how she perceived the characteristics of travel bloggers where she associate herself with.

Her relationship with Kent allowed her to present an aspect of herself as a travel blogger and formalise her belonging to that group in that statement. Knowing about certain individuals who one looks up to is an addition to understanding of self and developing self. This association contributes to identity and inspires people to do the same thing. In fact, Claire has indeed been doing similar things, helping the Orphans and Disabled Arts Association (ODA) orphanage where she has also created a close relationship with its founder (soul cultivator, February, 14, 2008). Some of Claire's blogs are dedicated towards raising funds or any form of support for this orphanage and she had even used her relationship with other bloggers to do this. She had provided updates on the development in the ODA and gave thanks to those people who she calls honourable heroes for spending time and money on the orphanage. This relationship had enabled her to construct her identity as somebody who is a caring and soundly responsible person. Helping out the locals had become part of the identity of backpackers. There are other stories of bloggers doing volunteer work such as teaching English (Tim, Luke) or even donating blood. Some bloggers have established stronger relationship with some locals such as Tim who went back to see his friend, Hoa in Danang who he met seven years ago and Mark and Chrissie who joined volunteer projects in South America. According to Uriely et al (2003), volunteering is used as leverage for self-development; letting volunteers enhance their self-image and utilise these volunteer activities for self-presentation purposes.

This extract shows how travellers have associated themselves with other travellers to establish that desired identity. Among backpackers they have already institutionalised (Elsrud, 2001, Riley, 1988) routes that should be followed by people wishing to be part of their community. The extract below is one example from Dave, one of the backpackers travelling around Southeast Asia with his wife Cathy, who was “pressured” to go to Laos (Dave Cathy, February, 18, 2007).

Extract 25:

25.1 We're in Laos, the most relaxed country in the world. The reason we
25.2 are here is pure peer pressure. Every single traveller we met in
25.3 Cambodia and Vietnam had either been or was going and when we
25.4 mentioned we weren't planning on going we were looked at with a
25.5 mixture of anger and pity. So we succombed, bought a $2 photocopied
25.6 guidebook and got a flight to the capital, Vientiane.

In this extract, Dave used a self-presentation tactic called blasting which, according to Cialdini and Richardson (1980, cited in Lewis and Neighbors,1995) occurs when individuals associate themselves with another person or group who is seen positively by others, or individuals assert the worth of a group to which they are positively linked. Dave collectively referred to individuals as travellers (Line 25.2) who pressured them to go to Laos. It is apparent how they valued their opinion and think positively of these individuals in that they “succumbed” to the pressure. This was also an opportunity for them to establish their membership of these groups of travellers by visiting the place.

Knowledge as a resource. Knowledge is one of the resources referred to by Aron et al (2004) that motivated individuals to create relationships in order to achieve a goal. This is evident among the blogs; in fact the sharing of information among travellers is part of the practices and identity of backpackers. Knowledge or the sharing of information is the most common resource gained from other travellers which ranges from prices of accommodation, how to get to certain places, best accommodation, and additional tips.

These practices are common features of backpacking (Elsrud, 2001, Noy, 2004, Riley, 1988; Sorensen, 2003). Questions such as prices of accommodation or transportation have become normal rather than awkward as it can be in normal everyday situations. Sorensen (2003) also highlighted also the importance of road status among backpackers (citing the works of Errington and Gewertz, 1989, Pryer, 1997, Riley, 1988 and Teas, 1988). He stated that this is obtained in various ways: paying “local prices”, getting the best deal, travelling off the beaten track, long-term travel, diseases, dangerous experiences, and more. Moreover, he emphasised that it comprises hardship, experience, competence and cheap travel, along with the ability to communicate it properly. Indeed, establishing a friendship or interacting with others is needed by an individual to enjoy this road status as part of his identity as a traveller.

Below are two examples of both trivial and important information gained from their fellow travellers. Both extracts are from Emma and Gary, to show any kind of information is welcomed and used. Emma and Gary are travelling around the world and one of those bloggers who admit to being backpackers and following backpacker routes in Southeast Asia. Extract 26a is from their blog titled “Stop over in Hue” (Emma and Gary, October 26, 2007) while Extract 26b is from their blog “Farewell Bangkok” (Emma and Gary, November 1, 2007):

Extract 26a:

In the evening, the Full Moon Festival was on in the main town so it was shut off to vehicles. It was nothing like the full moon festivals of Ko Pha Ngan and mainly consisted of a lot of decorations, moody lighting and traditional dancing/music. It was pretty nice and we ended up speaking to Reneé, an American girl we had met in Nah Trang who recommended a reputable tailor after the subject inevitably steered around to the copious amounts of clothing shops. We headed round just for a look, but as fate would have it, both Emma and I ended up ordering suits to be tailored. It was ridiculously cheap (cheaper than Bangkok and less scam shops) and the quality was excellent so we were both pretty pleased, even if it hadn't exactly been what we had come travelling for. Certainly a very welcome distraction and we vowed to come back another time on holiday to pick up a new wardrobe.

Extract 26b:

What the hell are you doing here?!?" Tony had come into the internet cafe sporting some new ear piercings and a fresh tan. Tony, as well as his girlfriend Sue, were two friends we had made on our previous stay in Bangkok but were doing our excursion the other way around, which meant they should have been going to Cambodia right about now. It turns out they had changed their plans completely though and were now heading to New Zealand for a couple of weeks before moving back to Ireland. After exchanging stories, we ended up just heading to "Oh My Cod!", a British cafe across the road as we were running short of time. One disturbing story which came out was Tony & Sue's journey down to Koh Phangan from Bangkok, the exact same one we were about to embark on.

They had both fallen asleep on the bus and upon leaving to catch the boat, they noticed all their money had been stolen as well as their Visa cards, from which a fair debt had been amassed. Not only that, but half of their bus had been fleeced. We had read of similar scams in the Lonely Planet but we just thought it was all precautions. We started to become a bit concerned and adopted tight security measures. Getting on the bus, we were still apprehensive, but as time went on we relaxed a little as there wasn't the huge number of "staff" on that had been on Tony & Sue's bus, who they suspected of the thefts. The bus itself was luxurious, particularly in comparison to the Vietnam ones. The legroom was spacious, the head rests soft, the recline on the seats generous and most importantly, our travel pillows worked a charm. We slept a fair bit and it didn't seem long until we heard "LAST STOP!!" being shouted and left the bus with all our

26.41 possessions intact.

The first extract shows how an established relationship with Renee had been useful to them as they met her again and exchange information about one of the backpackers' practices, in particular getting a tailored suit in Vietnam. The extract showed how their social interaction with Renee extended beyond their conversation as they used the resources (knowledge) they got from her and got their own suits (Lines 26.8 to 26.9).

Getting some suits tailored in Vietnam has indeed been seen in the blogs of Tim and Dave and Cathy. With this practice evident in several travel blogs, it can be concluded that this is one of the backpackers' practices which adds up to the identity of a backpacker. Throughout their trip, the couple has been staying in backpackers' enclaves and meeting new friends, and most importantly gathering various souvenirs along the way which they post to the UK as reminder of their blogs across Asia. This account shows that a self-expansion was achieved by Gary and Emma, especially when they also gave their own comments on Bangkok tailors based on their experience. This was another way of saying they have been to Thailand and now have knowledge about the suits in Thailand so that they can compare them with those suits tailored in Vietnam (Lines 26.7 to 26.8). They however would not have this additional knowledge if they had not met Renee again.

The second extract is further knowledge shared with them by a couple they have met in Bangkok, Tony and Sue. Compared to the first extract, this information is more important and timely as they were going on that specific route, from Kho Pangan to Bangkok. The misfortune related to them by the couple in Lines 26.25 to 26.29 had confirmed their existing knowledge about this from the Lonely Planet; producing more concerns from them which resulted in “adopting tight security measures”. The information they got from Tony and Sue was used to attain a goal, i.e. reaching Bangkok safely and with their possessions intact (Line 26.34). These extracts shows how, like any bloggers, Gary and Emma established their identity as backpackers, and survive and avoid misfortunes in these long-haul and multiple destination trips by taking advantage of knowledge gained from various travellers they met during the course of their travels. This allowed them to achieve their goal of visiting as many destinations as they can with as few problems as possible.

Meeting new people who have other experiences and perspectives indeed are helpful and allow an individual to be exposed to other ideas or possibilities; it may be connected to travel or to more general circumstances such as work or travelling. Extract 27 is from Astrid’s blog, who is travelling with her boyfriend Chris, using backpackers’ routes and occasionally meeting people in pubs or cafes. This extract is from their blog on Vientiane, Laos (Fletchclough, October 20, 2008):

Extract 27:

27.1 We started chatting to a couple in the Full Moon Cafe and they are
27.2 from Manchester heading to Sydney - the girl has got a 4 year visa for
27.3 Oz and she works in recruitment! woop woop - she is going to be on
27.4 $68,000 basic! Something to think about anyway.

Hearing such stories from this couple had encouraged Astrid to think about exploring such experiences as something they can do in the future. She might not meet these kinds of people and get such ideas in her everyday life. Some people are inspired by stories of other people. In this extract, Astrid need not have expressed herself further on how she finds the idea of working in Australia a pleasant one (Lines 27.3 to 27.4). This extract shows that knowledge gained from fellow travellers is not limited to travel-related matters or backpacking but can include even big changes in life like a career change or immigrating. Meeting new people provides you a glimpse of different possibilities.

To summarise, these extracts have shown how self-expansion is achieved through relationships with fellow bloggers where they gained the following resources: sense of belonging, identifying selves with other exceptional people and gaining knowledge. The extracts have shown how these resources have allowed them to enhance their identities as travellers and travel bloggers, and helped them achieve goals, i.e. achieving their pre-set goals for the trip. In the tourism literature, this self-expansion model or self-other inclusion concept is not explored. In fact, Woosnam's (2010) work is the sole empirical study that used the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale that was proposed by Aron, Aron and Smollan (2002) to measure perceived emotional closeness between individuals within the tourism context (from the perspective of the residents in terms of their relation to the tourists). According to Woosnam (2010), the degree of emotional closeness between individuals had received minimal attention (as conceptual work) over the last two decades in the tourism literature, with the work of Reisinger (1994) and Trauer and Ryan (2005) being the most notable. This is one of the main contributions of this study to explore this concept of self-expansion as one of the benefits of travellers. As mentioned earlier, the relationship formed by backpackers in travelling is created and dissolved fast (Sorensen, 2003); it does not mean they failed to attain some resources (knowledge, status, sense of belonging) even if their interactions are limited to a few days or even a conversation. The resources they gained in this context shows how it helped them shaped their identity as backpackers or multiple destination travellers.

These accounts of self-expansion should also be considered by marketers and researchers for these are evidence of consumers establishing relationships with other consumers. It has been established that these websites have become a virtual community and within this community relationships are established, and even roles have informally emerged, such as opinion leaders and followers. This virtual community has penetrated tourism which Wang and Fessenmaier (2004) call an online travel community as mentioned in Chapter 3. Jansson (2007) noted among backpackers today a frequent use of internet cafés, which functions both as local meeting spots, and as nodes within a deterritorialised media space of travel weblogs, photo sharing (Flickr), and emailing. Community-oriented media like these clearly fit the expressive nature of backpacking. Furthermore, travel blogging as observed in these blogs have provided backpackers opportunities to meet up in internet cafes when they go online to post on their blogs. Hence, travel blogging is not only an opportunity for a virtual community but also offline/face-to-face interactions.

Travel blogging has provided these bloggers a platform to talk about the people they have met, and established relationships with, how it helped them in their travels, and eventually helped them attain the goal of being part of the community of backpackers and enhancing their identity as backpackers in the list. These stories of relationships add up not only to their backpacker narrative but are added up to their life history. This benefit of travelling of meeting new people and friends should be given more attention by looking at them through the self-expansion achieved by the bloggers.

The next section is the least dominant themes from these travel blogs; however they represent an important part of their consumption experiences. From the first four themes, self-presentation, self-identity, self development and integrating experiences to life story had emerged in those stories; but this last theme represents how the bloggers also have stories that simply allow them a break from activities of risk and challenges, learning, seeking novelty and differences and establishing relationships. The next section presents stories of escapes.

6.5 Stories of Escape

These stories of escape may be more uniquely evident among travel experiences than in any consumption context, as escape has been an established benefit of travelling. These stories, however, are dependent on the "reality" that, according to Cohen and Taylor (1992), individuals escape from. Hence, there is a need to establish that as our sample bloggers are long-term, long-haul and multiple destination bloggers, their reality might have changed. As their everyday life is filled with the work of travelling, the concept of escape might have also changed. Most of these travellers, although with some flexibility in schedule and itinerary, do have a fixed number of days or a specific return to their home; hence they tend to make the most of their time; covering as much places as they can and seeking new experiences. Thus, the reality for these long-term travellers had indeed changed; their daily timetable may be full of different activities, and their "occupational" career is travelling and domestic routines are gone but instead replaced with travel related routines. This reality also includes frustrations, plans going haywire and unsatisfactory tourist experiences. Although they have fixed schedules, they have flexibility in their plans, and they have freedom to escape from the daily grind of travelling if they want to and in whatever way they want. There are some bloggers who goes back to doing simple leisurely things such as watching TV and movies all day or sleeping.

This section presents four extracts to demonstrate how bloggers constructed their escape based on their reality of long-term and multiple destination travel. The analysis revealed that common themes of escape include being passive and relaxing, the beach paradise and sleep.

Escape by being passive and relaxing. Escape from travel can take the form of rest and relaxation or at least a less active day for some bloggers. It has been noticed that stories of escape are usually short, with some bloggers even saying there is not much to post in the blog because they "just chilled out for the day" (Astrid, Mark and Chrissie). Chill out, relax, and rest are common cues for these moments of escape from travel.

There are a few bloggers who escape from travelling by doing nothing, lying in or sleeping in late, or doing what is supposed to be part of an everyday life, a mundane activity such as emailing people, chatting or even doing the laundry. Meltem, who was doing an outback job as part of her travel to Australia, found herself admitting: "*the work was physically draining and the past 3 months of travelling was starting to catch up with me… so I would take time out relaxing in my room reading, watching tv and sleeping"* (Turkishdelight, September 21, 2009).

The two extracts below are both from Dylan; with the first extract (Extract 28a) showing how he coped with the previous day with plans going haywire and spending too much money on visiting a closed tourist attraction (Dyl, January 30, 2009), and the second extract (Extract 28b) showing how he dealt with the stress of dealing with the British Airways Customer Service by having a swim in Copacabana Beach, Brazil (Dyl, December 3, 2008)

Extract 28a:

28.1 The next day I get up and head to the laundry...I drop four quarters into
28.2 the machine, sit in a plastic chair and munch on my vegetarian
28.3 sandwich bought down from a cafe the road. I feel very calm in the
28.4 launderette, trapped by the time it takes for the wash cycle to complete.
28.5 I am unable to go anywhere or do anything and feel free from any
28.6 obligation. I am getting something done, the washing, whilst doing
28.7 nothing. It's great and I enjoy the simple pleasure of it all a welcome
28.8 tonic after the frustration of yesterday.

Extract 28b:

28.9 "The water is beautifully cool. Icy cold waves crash relentlessly into
28.10 my body, the water dragging me out in it´s cold clutches then smashing
28.11 me back towards the shore. The big waves come in. ..well waves
28.12 funnily enough. I am in water up to my chest and they tower six feet or
28.13 more above my head. Walls of power bearing down. A choice has to
28.14 be made depending on the state of the wave: float over it if it is not
28.15 breaking, dive under if it is about to break, catch it and body surf or
28.16 time it wrong and get pulverised, turned, flipped and thrown like a rag
28.17 doll in a throthy, white, bubbeling, ragging, white blindness. Kick and

pull for the surface and emerge spluttering knee deep, knees grazed to be hit again by the next one. Then swim out again and wait for the next wave. It´s very exhilarating and all thoughts of BA and their crappy customer service are gone. I dry off in the sun, re-apply suntan lotion (factor fifteen) and go back in again for more”.

Extract 28a reconstructs Dylan’s escape from travelling particularly after a bad day the day before where all their plans fell through and they had to spend more money. The laundry wash was reconstructed as something that provides him freedom from going anywhere, doing anything and any obligation, which in this case might be travelling (Lines 28.5 to 28.6). Remarkably he has to point out something is being done despite doing nothing and such a simple task had generated descriptive words such as “great” and “enjoying simple pleasure”; and as justified, it was needed after the previous day’s frustrations. This extract merely reflects that Dylan needed a break from all the travelling and this is clear from the language he used, such as “simple pleasure”, “unable to go anywhere” and “free from any obligation”. This is the reality of the long-term traveller that he wants to convey to his readers; that there is a need for a break from travelling to relax and to recuperate. The extract also signals to experience marketers that an experience might simply be something that addresses the needs of a consumer and need not necessarily be unique, memorable and personal.

For the second extract (28b), Dylan escaped from a stressful encounter with the British Airways Customer Service with a swim at the Copacabana Beach. This experience represents a flow experience where Dylan had forgotten about his frustration within the challenge of wrestling with the water which he described as “walls of power” (Line 28. 13). The extract was a detailed reconstruction of that struggle which gave a clear picture to the reader how such a swim had really relaxed him. The water which is more exhilarating than calming or soothing had made him forget about BA (Line 28.20 to 28.21). This extract confirms how flow experience as established in the literature provided escape from the realities of long-term travelling. However, it has to be pointed out that this experience did not require skills or knowledge, just physical strength from Dylan which allowed him to channel his frustrations. It is remarkable how this extract was not reconstructed to present self; merely a narration how it helped him forget about the stress. Aside from showing flow experience as important in a consumption experience, this extract has also demonstrated how such a simple activity can assist the consumer to attain a goal, in this case, merely to forget about the stress and relax after the encounter. Again, it emphasises that not every experience needs to be unique, extraordinary, memorable and personally relevant as proposed by some experience marketers in Chapter 2.

The beach paradise as an escape. Aside from getting away from travel, the beach has become a dominant feature in their escape stories. The consumption of beach and its elements (sun, sand and sea) as place of their relaxation and recuperation is abundant in their travel blogs. These travel bloggers are in different parts of the world, visiting different types of destinations and motivations for their travel, and yet the beach is one of the places they consumed. It is observed, though, that those references to their beach experience are made in various ways. Most beach experiences are also in between long and intensive travels except for one blogger, Tim, who started his travel with weeks in Thailand's beaches before going to China (Minglaba, May 29, 2006). The beach has been described with the following adjectives and nouns: “bliss” (Turkishdelight, July 24, 2009), “a haven to relax in” (Muno, April 7, 2007), “heaven” (Muno, April 23, 2007), and “perfect” (Minglaba, October 25, 2006). Descriptions also included different elements of the beach such as the water/sea, sand, sun and other things in the landscape. It is apparent that the combination of all these elements resulted in such description of bliss, perfection and haven/heaven. Overall, the beach is a positive place and seems to be of another world that is similar globally.

There are similarities as well as differences in how these bloggers described the beaches to their readers which represents different constructions of the beach. Let us start with how bloggers describe the beach and its elements. Here are almost similar descriptions of different beaches:

Extract 29:

(on Koh Samui, Thailand):
29.1 “I had a beach front bungalow looking out to turquoise waters with a
29.2 never ending horizon. It was bliss”. (Turkishdelight, July 24, 2009)

(on an unnamed beach in Hunter Valley, Australia):
29.3 “…with a visit the beach where we enjoy a dip in the wonderfully
29.4 cooling turquoise, blue and green sea just up from where the surfers,
29.5 kite boarders and canoeists weave in and out of each other”. (Dyl,
29.6 March 2, 2009)

(on Cat Ba Island, Vietnam):
29.7 “Lush clear blue water; endless sunshine; good food. Perfect.”
29.8 (Mingalaba, October 25, 2006)

These three descriptions had mentioned water as “turquoise”, “blue”, “blue and green”, “clear”, “lush” and “with never ending horizon”. Water (the sea) is one of the elements of the beach and a hedonistic element (Lofgren, 1999).

Water can be enjoyed aesthetically as well as being in it or feeling it against one's body. Lofgren (1999) claimed that looking at water made you mellow; the languid movements, the rhythm of the surf had a calming, soothing effect and the endless horizon proved to be a perfect medium for daydreaming. Hence, the sight of the sea has a relaxing effect on its viewer. The bloggers did not find it necessary to articulate that the sight of the water/sea helps them relax.

The body in the water provides another source of relaxation. Water is known for its cooling function and can give the body some recuperation from the hot weather: This is seen in Dylan's extract above: "*as we enjoy a dip in the wonderfully cooling turquoise blue and green sea*" (Lines 29.3 to 29.4). In the same manner, Derek, who took a five-hour, 12 kilometre hike under the Mediterranean heat in small villages of Italy, has written: "*The hot Mediterranean sun was scorching, and I was desperate for a swim now….I just had to have a swim now, and it was the most rewarding swim ever"*(Delek Delek, July 31, 2007).

Stories of bloggers enjoying the beach and its other elements do not produce long and detailed stories or emotional responses. However, they represent a crucial part of their travel experiences as they reconstructed it as a place of bliss or haven, and for most bloggers they reconstructed for their readers a picture of a typical beach paradise despite being on different beaches in South America, Australia or Southeast Asia. The role of the beach and its elements on consumption experience can be considered as the environmental set-up where these consumers can enjoy their escape. Hence, experience providers may find these extracts as evidence of how environment of the experience still plays a crucial role. They however have to be able to identify controllable parts of the environment, maybe the beach, or the quality of the sand in contrast with those they cannot control, such as the sun or the weather. These stories of beaches confirms how an old asset of a leisure and tourism remains to be in demand still even for travellers who are on a long-term break from their everyday life; they have use this in another context, a break from travelling.

Rojek (1993) and Cohen (2010) had suggested that actual escape is impossible. Some travel blogs confirm this; as they escape from hard work, despite the effort to construct a typical tropical paradise with their descriptions of the beach, there are instances where they are disrupted by local vendors. This is a contradictory claim for the backpackers' desire for interaction with the locals. It is apparent that this interaction has to have some limits at some time; something they escape from particularly if it is commercial in nature. They have been dealing with local vendors seeing them as sources of income as part of their travelling and hence they need to escape from them too. Here is an example from Claire's blog titled: "Bullshit Sweat & Teeth (the soul cultivator, March 25, 2008):

Extract 30:

30.1 The beach was beautiful BUT the people on the beach drove me
30.2 insane, the locals grab your body parts and insist that you need
30.3 threading, this is like waxing but not, only using cotton thread weaved
30.4 like cats cradle where faint white hairs get plucked by very nimble
30.5 fingers. I shaved my legs from navel to big toe every night just to
30.6 avoid the huddles of women and bitchy lady boys who without notice
30.7 or consent touch every single threadable follicle. My body language

30.8 gave off a Fort Knox vibe as I wore headphones, eyes were shut tight
30.9 behind sunglasses, but they still touch your legs, arms, toes, bikini
30.10 line, even between your thighs and higher up, tummy, eyebrow, top lip,
30.11 back (if your a man....actually that's rubbish even if your a woman
30.12 they find something). I was under attack and feeling shity anyway.

30.13 The other problem with beach life here are the begging kids who are
30.14 meant to be at school, school is free, organisations around this area
30.15 stress NOT to give them anything, if you want to help them to donate
30.16 to the many active charities who all have fantastic craft shops to
30.17 support the schools and orphanages in and around the area. Sadly its
30.18 the parents who encourage them to skip school and beg, if you are
30.19 seen to give money to one child then another child will have a tantrum
30.20 in front of every other tourist, poor or disabled person along the beach,
30.21 its a right old carry on. Fights brake out if you buy just one pineapple
30.22 from one fruit seller and not all the rest, who then insist you said you
30.23 would buy from them, when you didn't say any such thing. They
30.24 refuse to leave and beg even more, you tell them “I have no money”
30.25 they point to your bag and attempt to open it up for themselves. I only
30.26 took out $5 a day to avoid any nasty situations, but it happened
30.27 anyway. The other thing here is they plonk themselves down in
30.28 huddles on your sun lounger, start p eeling fruits and touching your
30.29 non existent microscopic white hairs that they can clearly see that is
30.30 apparently growing like some bind weed all over our bodies, while
30.31 they do this another kid goes through your stuff.

This extract is an example of what some of the bloggers endure as they try to enjoy the beach and get some rest and recuperation from their travelling. Lines 30.6 to 30.10 detail how Claire even exerted effort to avoid any interruptions from the locals; however it seems to have not worked as the locals still insist on offering her their services. Definitely, this situation demonstrates what Smith (1994) argued as giving tourists no freedom of choice between purchasing or not their services. Hence, it is not surprising that Claire equated this particular situation to being under attack and making her feeling more shitty! In the next paragraph, Claire reveals her effort to justify the locals' attitude (Lines 30.13 to 30.23) as if to justify to the readers why her efforts to escape from them fails. This is an example of self-handicapping, a self-presentation tactic, when an individual produces obstacles to success with the purpose of preventing observers from making dispositional inferences about one's failure (Berglas and Jones, 1978). This extract indicates to experience marketers that there are times when consumers may want to be left alone and not provided with any services or experience if they are selling moments at the beach as an experience. Experience providers may also control this kind of situation by controlling the locals despite Claire's justification of their action. Nevertheless, Claire has used this specific experience to show her understanding of the situation of the locals as well as her ability to deal with it; a negative experience yet it was used as a resource for storytelling.

Sleeping as an escape. The word "sleep" is one of the most mentioned words in travel accounts, albeit in varying contexts such as letting their bodies recuperate from any strain they subjected them to, in preparation for a strenuous activity or simply because they want a lazy morning and to get up late. Sleep, a mundane activity compared to extraordinary experiences that bloggers may have in their travels plays a significant role, as a respite from physically challenging activities. It is an everyday routine that they cannot escape from. Sleeps seems to be more needed as they subject their bodies outside their normal routine. In some cases, sleep also becomes an indulgence when they sleep longer than their usual wake up time.

Despite its importance to travellers, sleep in tourism literature has not been well explored. In fact, only the work of Valtonen and Veijola (2011) has emphasised the importance of sleep, recognising the theoretical and industry-related insights of the tourist experience of the embodied state and practice of sleeping. They argued that tourism studies have focused mainly on experiences gained with eyes wide open with the insights from works such as Urry's (1990) tourist gaze. They emphasised that sleep has always been seen as an indicator of development and success in tourism in terms of overnight stays; but sleep itself has been left untouched. The importance of sleep in travel experiences is confirmed in this study.

The discourse analysis of blogs has shown the importance and sleeping practices of bloggers in recuperating from their travel. For three of the bloggers, sleep has been very important for them to recuperate. Mel who has been travelling through different countries from Europe to Asian had used sleep to cope with hangovers and escape from heat stroke (Turkishdelight, May 27, 2009 and June 23, 2009); while Dylan who travelled from the UK to the South America and North America had frequently mentioned sleeping as rest from his long flights and long train rides (Dyl, October 30, 2008; February 5, 2009) and even to recover from stomach ache (Dyl, November 3, 2008). For Derek who likes partying, drinking and the nightlife in every place he visited, sleep is the way to get over a hangover and to let the body rest after coming in during the early hours of morning, and also from long train trips and flight (Delek Delek, June 23, 2007; July 31, 2007; August, 16, 2007; September 6, 2007; September 19, 2007). For Nick and Sally, and Tim and Astrid, sleep is not mentioned very much. In the case of Nick and Sally, their main motivation was to get away from their work life in the UK and their travels did not include very strenuous travelling except when they climb up Mt. Everest but their travel in India is more relaxed and sleep was not an issue. Tim, on the other hand, has started off his travel with weeks of relaxation in Bangkok and travels are also not that strenuous in terms of physical activities. Their attitude to travelling is very positive; they see every challenge of the trip as part of the fun of travelling such as long rides in crowded cars and along rough roads (Mingalaba, October 13, 2006).

How bloggers talk about their lack of sleep in their accounts is an indication also of the importance of sleep to them. Dylan and Derek had complained about not being able to sleep well during long flights. The extract below is how Dylan talked about his lack of sleep in the 12-hour flight from Madrid to Lima aboard the Air Iberia *(Dyl, October 31, 2008).*

Extract 31:

.

31.1 "There was a cute little French todler in the row infront of us
31.2 entertaining everyone but standing on his dads head and performing
31.3 some ranting, growling monster speech with a bit of singing at the
31.4 end… by hour seven the todlers antics were becoming less entertaining
31.5 and began to grate a little. By hour ten I felt it was only a matter of
31.6 time before he would be locked in one of the toilets and perhaps
31.7 even flushed away. Poor lad, the flight wasn´t pleasant for me it must
31.8 have been hell for him. I didn´t sleep so much as blink for ten
31.9 minutes at a time. BLINK a woman bumps past me on her way to the
31.10 toilet. BLINK man beats out a rhythm on the overhead storage.
31.11 BLINK a man trys to sell me things I do not want - that was a dream.
31.12 BLINK Yummy, yummy, yummy I got sun in my tummy. Orange
3 1.13 nectar from the trolly in the sky. A glass of orange juice sweet and
31.14 refreshing and just what I needed. BLINK arrrg will this flight ever
31.15 end.

One blog entry was dedicated to this 12-hour flight, giving details of how the airline did not have anything on the TV screen for hours except a view of their crossing the Atlantic Ocean and about the toddler who had definitely affected the whole experience of flying. After explaining this to his readers he then talked about his attempts to sleep, and what has been disturbing it. He did not even call it sleep but refer to it as “BLINK” in capital letters to emphasise it further. There was also an extract in the blog showing how the lack of sleep has affected the start of the journey: “*we were totally ripped off by the taxi from the airport but a little nervous and exhausted we didn’t have the energy to haggle or find an alternative.”* At the end of the blog entry, Dylan wrote “*Since then I have had a good nights sleep. I woke up at 6.45 this morning but it could have been twelvety and seventy four hundred hours as far as my body clock is concerned. I´m loving walking around Lima, trying out bits of Spanish and feeling like I´ve now started the ´good bit´ of the experience.*” It seems the lack of sleep is the “bad bit” of experience, and after a good sleep, he is now able to say he feels the start of the “good bit of the experience”.

For Derek, lack of sleep had sent things *“completely haywire”.* Without sleep on an overnight flight to Boston from Las Vegas, when he got to Boston at 9am, he took a nap and got up at 5pm and said; it was *“a day completely wasted”* (Delek Delek, June 27, 2007). Sleep has definitely affected their travel and the lack of it has been worth telling their readers about. Why do they tell others about these situations? Is it because it indicates the hardship of travelling, particularly of long-haul flights? Lack of sleep seems to symbolise their efforts to cover distances, an indicator of the remoteness of the place they are going to.

Sleep during travel is treated differently by individuals compared to their everyday life. During travel, late nights are enjoyed and lack of or undisturbed sleep is easily recovered by just sleeping on. Because they do not have work to go to the next day or no obligations or fixed itinerary, most of the bloggers can adjust their waking up time as they please although of course it means giving up time for other activities in the place visited. Most of the bloggers are not bound by routines and times where they have to wake up at certain times, except for Meltem who is travelling with a group of people on a bus and has fixed schedules. However, she easily catches sleep during the bus ride. Derek, who always has late nights, would have what he call “late starts” for the day. When he was in Copenhagen, after a late night he said: “*It was a late start again as we were catching up on sleep lost - one night out seriously takes you two nights to recover.”* (Delek Delek, September 19, 2007). The bloggers sometimes justified why they slept or woke up late as if they need to explain to their readers why they are not making the most of their time in the place they visited. It also relays to the readers how free they are in their schedule, that they can sleep late and wake up late as they please. Indeed, it is different from their everyday life. During travel, time is equivalent to freedom.

With lack and undisturbed sleep, bloggers expressed their need and appreciation for simple things such as a bed, linen, a comfortable and quiet room, etc. Here is an example of an extract from Derek’s blog, showing how he felt on seeing his room which he booked for his visit at Genoa: *My "room" however was not so affluent. Basically a tent with hard wooden base and 3 beds, it was absolutely boiling inside - not exactly what you want, when all you want to do is lie down after a 15 hour journey” (Delek Delek, July 31,2007).* Indeed, a cool and comfortable room would definitely be appreciated by Derek at this point particularly when he needed to sleep for his body to recuperate. Dylan, on the other hand, after a long journey from the

Copper Canyon to Mexico City is luckier to book into the Condessa Hotel, and has written Dyl, December 19, 2008):

Extract 32:

32.1 "It turns out to be possibly the most stylish, tranquil and pleasant hotel
32.2 have that I ever stayed in. Fresh modern clean lines, white walls and
32.3 oak panneling with white curtains and egyption cotten bedding make
32.4 for a cool, stylish, fresh and affluent environment. We felt like rock
32.5 stars in the candle lit resturaunt and cocktail bar. It was just what we
32.6 needed, We blow the budget dineing on fine food and get drunk on
32.7 cocktails in flickering light. All stress gone. Ahhhhhhhh......."

Although lack of sleep or undisturbed sleep were not mentioned in this context, it is clear how Dylan appreciated their room in the way that he described it to his readers, even mentioning the Egyptian cotton bedding. The room differs completely from that of Derek's, and as they said "that was just what they needed" --- a nice room to sleep in and good food and drinks (despite the price!). Hence, they were able to say "all stress gone." Stress here refers to their long travel as well as their stress with the British Airways Customer Service over the problem with their tickets. Products and services needed for sleep is indeed important for the tourists to relieve them of their tiredness and stress. These are not memorable or unique experiences yet worth mentioning to their readers again.

Sleep is another expression of tourists' need for relaxation and recuperation. As this group of tourists subjected their bodies to the stress of travelling long distances and multiple destinations for months, there is indeed some point where they have to let the bodies relax and recuperate; and sleeping is one of the most important ways of doing this. The change in time zone and long flights are times they lost sleep or suffered disturbed sleep and this sometimes sets the mood for their travel or activities for that place. Sleep during travel is different from everyday life. Tourists are free to sleep late and wake up late. Hence, sleep can be used also to express their temporary freedom from specific times of getting up or going to bed. With the importance of sleep, there are also specific needs of tourists for some products or services that are highlighted such as a good bed, a comfortable room and nice linen. Thisdiscussion of sleep hopefully has contributed to Valtonen and Veijola's (2011) work on sleep as an important aspect of the travel experience.

To summarise, these extracts have shown the lack of identity constructions and self-presentation strategies from the bloggers in reconstructing their stories of escape. This may represent a much needed escape from the self-development process; however, this works positively as it allows them to recuperate and recover to go back to their tasks of self-development and complete their journey. The importance of sleep or rest and recuperation cannot be over emphasised any more than from this extract from Merleau-Ponty (1962:165)

(P)recisely because my body can shut itself from the world, it is also what opens me out upon the world and places me in a situation there. The momentum of existence towards others, towards the future, towards the world can be restored as a river unfreezes.

For marketers, a daily routine as important as sleep still plays a crucial role in tourist experiences, especially if it provides them with a basic need of recuperating their bodies from long travels or consecutive days of travelling. Travel experiences should not be seen as always providing flow and peak experiences that may tire out consumers but also provide them opportunities to recuperate from them. The need for sleep is part of tourists' responses to these travel experiences and an experience provider can take advantage of such opportunity to provide for that need.

The analysis showed how stories of escape can be seen beyond the established literature on escape as motivation for travelling. Established reason for escaping from the pressures of one's home society and mundane environment (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977) may not be applicable for these long-term travellers. As these bloggers are long-term, long-haul and multiple destination travellers, their reality has changed to days of travelling instead of their daily normal routine. Hence, escaping from the stress of everyday life is no longer applicable in the context of the travel experience, and some forms of escape have changed such as sleeping late and doing daily routine tasks such as laundry, emailing and chatting. Stories of escapes reveal that tourists are not seeking risks and challenges and novelty and differences; or opportunities for learning and reflections and meeting new people and making friends all the time. In fact, they also need a break from these activities. As their everyday life turns into travelling, domestic routines are gone and replaced by travel-related routines and in turn they escape to their previous normal everyday routine.

The next section presents the key findings of the discourse analysis of travel blogs of long-term and multiple destination travellers and their marketing and managerial implications.

6.6 Summary and Conclusion: Application of Discourse Analysis

The different dominant themes to emerge from the accounts of travel bloggers is the answer to the first research question: What aspect of their tourist experiences do they choose to write about. This also provides insight to the research gaps identified in Chapter 2 in the literature of consumption experiences and tourist experiences of what constitutes an experience. Stories of risk and challenges, accounts of learning and reflections, accounts of novelty and differences, accounts of self-expansion and stories of escape are found in blogs of most of the 19 sample travel bloggers, reflecting important aspects of their tourist experiences which they shared with the readers. These stories reflected the wide variety of tourist activities in their long-term and multiple destination trips. A blogger's experience would have all these five stories in their blogs as observed in the analysis; however in varying levels. Nonetheless, these five stories made up their experiences. Within these stories are key findings that would have implications for the marketing of experiences, which is discussed later.

Self-presentation strategies and techniques, linguistic techniques and content of their blogs address the question of how they reconstruct their stories for their readers. Embedded in these ways of telling stories are the answers to the second research question, of why they reconstruct their experience to their readers as part of their post-consumption stage. Self-presentation and enhancement of identity are common themes in the blogs particularly in the stories of risks and challenges, self-expansion and accounts of learning and reflections. Sharing of information with their readers is stronger in the accounts of learning and reflections. An important key finding in the analysis of travel blogs in terms of how they reconstructed their stories showed that emotions felt in the core experience are used as a narrative resource. This presents an opportunity for further understanding the role of emotions in various touch points of the experiences.

These stories have key findings which have implications for marketing tourist experiences as a post-consumption activity. Stories produced by bloggers are rich in relevant insights on how the aim of both experience marketing and destination/place marketing, i.e. creating emotional ties and memorable experience, can be pursued. However, the analysis has also identified several challenges that DMOs need to work around. For example, not all experiences that were emotional and/or memorable are in connection with a service sector.

Table 6.1 enumerates the key findings from each story and its practical implications. These practical implementations presented here are mostly in the context of tourism consumption and should be adapted to other consumption contexts. This chapter has provided empirical evidence of the potentials of travel blogs for a deeper understanding of consumption and tourist experiences.

Table 6.1 Summary of key findings and their practical implications

Key findings	Practical implications
Stories of risk and challenges	
Both stories of risks and challenges produce strong emotional responses. Stories of challenges are subjective and defined by bloggers and whatever tests their limits; overcoming it is perceived as an achievement. There is a social aspect to these risk-taking and challenging situations. Reconstruction of stories allows self-presentation; enhancement of identity and self-development; integrating these experiences in their life story.	Marketing fear for risk experiences (Dolnicar, 2007) Marketing sense of achievement for challenging activities. Provide platform for these consumers to share their emotional experiences that also allow them self-presentation (examples: create social spaces before and after the event for sharing "fears" and "achievements").
Accounts of Learning and Reflections	
There is less self-presentation strategy used. Emotions are triggered as a reaction to what they are learning about places, people and culture. Sharing of knowledge is influenced by interest and is done in various lengths and styles. Reconstruction of these accounts of learning and reflections are motivated by sharing of information and knowledge gained from travel; reflections reflect an aspect of self (e.g. interest) and accumulated learning shows self-development.	Recognise the crucial role of what consumers learn in their experiences by providing them with more ways of learning and effective interpretation of places (interactive learning, guides, interpretation techniques)

Table 6.1 Summary of key findings and their practical implications (cont.)

Key findings	Practical implications
Accounts of novelty and differences	
The concept of what is novel and different or strange is subjective and personal; it is based on what is known to them. These stories enhance the authenticity of their experiences and emphasise they are away from their everyday routine and home environment. Reconstruction of these stories shows to their readers that they are accumulating novel and unique experiences which are integrated in their life story; it also triggers appreciation of home culture and environment; can create an understanding of self .	Marketers should monitor what is novel and different for their tourists and see it as an asset to their destination or company
Accounts of self-expansion	
Self expansion among the bloggers is achieved as they use resources (knowledge, identifying with exceptional people, sense of belonging or being part of a community) they get from other travellers. Reconstruction of these stories shows how they use their social interaction with travellers to enhance their identity by associating themselves to these people and the resources they gained and use to establish their backpacker or long-term identity.	Marketers should create spaces for their consumers to build relationships and assist them in the exchange of resources. Monitor social interaction and encourage close relationships (blogs, forum, virtual community).

Table 6.1 Summary of key findings and their practical implications (cont.)

Key findings	Practical implications
Stories of escape	
Escape is based on the consumers' reality that they are escaping from. Escape from pursuing risky and challenging situations and activities; seeking novelty and differences; opportunities for learning and meeting people and making friends are crucial to the consumption experience. Less self-presentation technique and emotions. To escape means being less active or doing an activity that will provide escape; escaping to the beach paradise and sleeping. Reconstruction of these stories shows their readers they have freedom to escape travelling obligations and to do as they please in these periods of long travel.	Experience providers should recognise what form of escape is needed by consumers and that they are not always looking for emotional and identity-enhancing experience at all times.

The next chapter provides a more in-depth discussion of the key findings, highlighting themes that run across these five stories, with a focus on the emotional responses in consumption and meaning and value of experiences. The discussion will address the third research question: what are the marketing and managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data? At the same time, the next chapter will provide the general conclusions of the chapter.

Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusion

7.0 Overview of the chapter

This chapter presents the general conclusions of the thesis. It summarises the study and the results, highlighting research gaps and research objectives. A section on the key findings of the thesis provides an in-depth discussion as to how the study has successfully fulfilled the research objectives. This is then followed by an outline of the theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions of the thesis. The chapter ends with the limitations, and directions for further research.

7.1 Summary of the thesis

The literature review in Chapter 2 has established the focus on "experience" in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour and even in tourism, where increased attention on tourist experiences has been noted by researchers (Jenning et al 2009, Volo, 2010). The concept of experience, however, remains problematic and this is carried over to the practice of marketing, particularly of experience marketing and destination/place marketing.

The debate has moved from the various definitions of consumption experiences and tourist experiences to what constitutes these experiences (Poulson and Kale, 2004; Quan and Wang, 2006). This resulted in a range of interpretations of what kind of experience should be marketed and sold to the consumers and tourists. Experiences such as memorable, unique, emotional and extraordinary are a few of those types of experiences that were proposed by various marketing and tourism scholars. With the emphasis on the experiential aspect of consumption, the role of emotions in both consumption and tourist experiences has drawn the attention of many in the field. Emotions were considered as mediators, markers and moderators of consumption experiences (Bagozzi et al, 1999). However, using emotions to evaluate a customer experience and as a guide for creating experience has its difficulties. Emotion is a complex construct characterised as having various types, dimensions, patterns and combination; a dynamic nature; and a social aspect, and as something that influences decision making. Moreover, it is personal and subjective in nature; hence measuring the outcome of the experiences poses challenges.

The literature review also revealed that with this focus on emotion, functions of consumption experience such as identity construction and its symbolic meaning has been put aside. There is a lack of studies linking emotions with identity construction, for example. Because of the focus on emotion, experiences offered to consumers has aimed for emotional ties and has downplayed what would be the meaning and value of the experience to what Csikszenthmihalyi (1993) called the never-ending process of development of self. However, with tourist experiences, these functions of consumption remained to be acknowledged by scholars despite the focus on emotions. Hence, tourist experience is a good context to remind researchers on consumption experiences that emotions, although an important element of an experience, should be linked to the identity construction and symbolic meaning as well as possible transformational functions in consumption experiences. Nonetheless, measuring the outcome of the experience remains a challenge. It is evident despite the focus on experiences for the past decades that two main research gaps remain: what constitutes the experience and how to measure the outcome of experience that is personal and subjective in nature.

These issues have been carried over to experience marketing, a concept developed by Schmitt (1999) following Pine and Gilmore's (1999) work. The literature review showed that there are several issues surrounding experience marketing and, as observed by McCole (2004), this has remained unaccounted for in various philosophies. This concept has also attracted very limited literature in tourism studies. A handful of literature has validated experience marketing in tourism; however, tourism marketing is dominated more by works on destination branding in the last decade. Tourism marketing has been destination-based; there are however calls for DMOs to move away from promoting the destination to a mass market and focus on the relevance of the experience that can be offered to the customer rather than on the destination (King, 2002, Larsen, 2007). Gretzel et al (2006) argued that notions of the experience economy and experiential marketing have been adopted by DMOs and tourism research; yet there was no clear understanding of meaningful experience and related expectations. It is clear that the issue of what constitutes an experience (meaningful) remains.

Researchers such as Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) and Tynan and McKechnie (2009), to name a few, emphasised the need for research methods that can access the subjective experience of consumers such as ethnography, phenomenological interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, auto-ethnography and narrative analysis, and projective techniques. These methods, according to Holbrook and Hirschman (1992) are typical of the experiential consumer research. Caru and Cova (2008) also noted the rise of self-reflexive individuals who tell their stories and explain their actions using their own words; and these have included consumption-oriented experiences. This presents opportunity for understanding the hedonic and subjective dimension of experience. Several researchers (e.g. Jensen, Schau and Gilly, 2003; Kozinets et al, 2010 and Pace, 2008) also pointed out that introspective accounts have become available with the emergence of personal websites and blogs, offering new space for the study of unleashed consumers' narratives. Hence, this thesis proposes the use of blogs, in particular travel blogs, to address the two main research gaps mentioned earlier.

The thesis proposes that travel blogs can reveal insights on core experiences which have proved to be so elusive to marketers as well as give insights of the outcomes of these subjective and personal experiences. Chapter 3 provided an in-depth discussion on the potentials of travel blogs in understanding tourist experiences. The literature review also revealed a fundamental research gap in using travel blogs as a research data. Despite the increasing body of research on the use of travel blogs, there is a lack of research focussed on the travel bloggers. Several researchers (Akerhurst, 2008; Carson, 2008; Li and Buhalis, 2005) pointed out that there is no known published research on the type of tourist or traveller who writes blogs and what trip types and destination types are more likely to generate blog content. This information can be fundamental to marketers if they use the blogs as a source of information.

There is very little research carried out on these bloggers compared to research on insights about user-generated content and its potential power as a marketing tool. Hence, Chapter 5 tackled this major research gap by conducting a survey to gain an understanding of the socio-demographic profiles of bloggers, their blogging practices (what trips do they blog about, who are their audiences, when do they blog) and blogging motivations. An in-depth understanding of the travel bloggers was crucial to the selection of an appropriate context of the sample bloggers and blogs to be used for the discourse analysis. This has become one of the main contributions of the thesis in using travel blogs as research data. To date, the survey of 1,214 bloggers from travelblog.org can be considered as the most comprehensive profiling done on bloggers and exploration of travel blogging practices and motivations so far.

The survey has also been helpful in identifying the appropriate research context for the discourse analysis. More than half of the travel bloggers have indicated they blog on long-term and multiple destination trips. This type of traveller provides the most comprehensive and detailed blog entries and adds entries on a daily basis (Enoch and Grossman, 2010). Hence, they can contribute more to an understanding of tourist experiences compared to other types of travellers.

This thesis recognises travel blogging as a post-consumption activity and the travel blogs are remembered and reconstructed versions of experiences. Hence, this thesis makes two major contributions to the understanding of consumption and tourist experiences; it a) provides insights of what constitutes the experience as retold by bloggers in their stories, and b) understands how and why these tourists are sharing their stories to their readers; in other words, what they are doing behind this storytelling. The thesis proposes that travel blogs are concrete evidence of the outcome of the tourist experience and the travel blogging shows how the experiences were manufactured, negotiated and deployed in the text (Willig, 2008). Hence, discourse analysis was most appropriate for this thesis. Chapter 4 has provided an in-depth discussion on the use of the discourse analysis for the thesis.

To conclude, based on identified gaps in the review of literature on consumption experience and tourist experiences, and experience marketing and destination/place marketing, the thesis has an overall aim ***to contribute to the understanding of tourist/consumption experiences through the discourse analysis of their travel blogs.***

The thesis uses these research questions which guided the examination of travel blogs using discourse analysis:

a. How are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs?

b. How are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process?

c. What are the implications of using travel blogs as research data for destination/place marketing and experience marketing?

The next section presents the key findings of the thesis to demonstrate how the research objective was successfully fulfilled and the research questions answered.

7.2 Key findings of the thesis

There are four main key findings of the thesis based on the research gaps identified in the previous section.

7.2.1 The travel bloggers: socio-demographic profile, blogging practices and motivations

The fundamental issue of who the bloggers are, what types of tourists they are, and what type of trips they blog about was addressed by the conducting of the survey among travel bloggers prior to the discourse analysis stage. The survey results based on 1,214 respondents from travelblog.org provided by far the most comprehensive report on travel bloggers.

The key findings of the survey can be summarised as follows:

- The profile of travel bloggers is similar to that of global bloggers reported by Technocrati.com (2008): young (mostly between 25 to 44 years old), educated (mostly completed college and some with postgraduate degrees), and employed, except that there are more female than male travel bloggers. The top five countries where travel bloggers came from are the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Germany. The total number of bloggers came from 74 countries.

- The majority of the bloggers joined the travelblog.org website within the period of 2007-2008. Several bloggers have confirmed that they use other blog sites for blogging about their travel experiences such as blogspot.com, blogger.com, and get jealous.com.

- In terms of blogging practices, a third of the total respondents who have posted blog entries have 11 to 25 blogs, while a quarter of the bloggers have 26 to 50 blogs. Thirty-five per cent of the bloggers have indicated that their recent blog was posted less than a month ago. Longer trips (three weeks or more) is the most frequently blogged about trip by the majority of the bloggers. Nearly 70% of the bloggers have indicated they frequently post blogs while on their travels rather than after the trip. More than 80% of the bloggers use English for their blog entries. German, Norwegian and Spanish are the top three other languages used by bloggers. The bloggers indicated that their family and friends are the most frequent readers of their blogs as well as commenting on their blogs. A very small percentage of bloggers has indicated that they get comments from other bloggers, but rarely get comments from the general public (non-blogger).

- In terms of blogging motivations, the top three most important motivations for the bloggers are; a) to update family and friends about their whereabouts, b) to keep a record of travels, and c) to share experiences with others. This indicated that travel blogs were used for their functions of communication, life documenting and information sharing. The top least important motivations, on the other hand, are to earn money, to pass time and to network or to meet new people.

The survey results have confirmed that a significant amount of travel bloggers are long-term and multiple destination travellers who frequently blog about their longer trips and blog while on travel who are blogging to keep their family and friends updated of their whereabouts, to keep a record of their travels and to share their experiences. This has been useful in the selection of the research context of the thesis.

7.2.2 How are tourist experiences constituted in and through discourses generated in travel blogs?

Travel blogs reconstruct tourist experiences and what is told by the tourists to their readers provides insights of what constituted their experiences. The discourse analysis of 19 travel blogs of long-term and multiple destination travellers has revealed five dominant themes in the blogs. The combination of these five themes reflects the wide variety of tourist experiences in the whole course of their trip. Within those stories are emotions felt during the core experiences which helped the bloggers reconstruct these stories for their readers. The personal value and meaning of the experiences are also both implicitly and explicitly expressed in their stories. It can be concluded that stories, emotions and personal meaning of the experiences are important elements of an experience.

Stories mark well-remembered aspects of tourist experiences. According to Moscardo (2010), tourists create stories during their experiences and then present these stories to others as memories of their trip. Indeed, the discourse analysis identified five types of stories common among the 19 travel bloggers.

The stories also represent what the blogger decides is worth sharing with their readers; hence they can provide insights of what are memorable and unforgettable experiences. Memorable experience is one of the types of experiences proposed to be offered to consumers/tourists (Lilja and Eriksson, 2010; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009).

The stories vary in length and in details but the language use has been helpful in identifying stories that are filled with emotions, thoughts and reflections; hence it can be concluded that these are well remembered aspects of their trips. In order of importance (or dominance) in the travel blogs, these five stories are: stories of risk and challenges, accounts of learning and reflections, accounts of novelty and differences, accounts of self-expansion and stories of escape. A blogger's experience has all these five types of stories in her/his blogs although in varying levels. When combined, these five stories revolved around the theme of self-development.

The first four discourses are similar to what Cziksenthnihalyi (1993) suggested as necessary to an evolving self: recognising challenge, knowing how to let go of the tried and true, opening to possibilities, seeking out novelty, being curious, be willing to take risks and being experimental. According to Schouten (1991), a transition of identity or to indicate an evolving self in this case, begins with separation from some role, relationship or other key component of the extended self. Accordingly, this separation may occur literally in time and space, triggered by some external force or event or it may be experienced subjectively, triggered by an internal force such as a psychological need for intimacy, security or control (Schouten,1991). Travel experiences can provide such separation. The stories of escape are seen to contribute indirectly to self-development as it allows an individual some break in this life-span process. These themes confirm McLean, Pasupathi and Pals' (2007) argument that stories help develop and maintain the self with reciprocal impacts on enduring aspects of self; specifically self-concept and the life story. According to them, storytelling is at the heart of both stability and change in the self. To put it simply, stories are used to develop and maintain the self and this is confirmed by the discourse analysis.

Emotional responses to an experience. The analysis confirms that emotions are indeed markers, mediators and moderators of experiences (Bagozzi et al, 1999). However, this is not true for all the five themes; to be more precise, they vary in each type of story. For example, stories of risks and challenges produce more emotions from a blogger, i.e. a variety of emotions can be felt over the whole experience of a specific activity such as seen in Dylan's skydiving experience, and Meltem's abseiling and rafting, and Claire's snorkelling. This indicates that emotions have a dynamic nature. Hence, this confirms Ramanathan and McGill's (2007) claim that emotions should be monitored over the whole duration of the experience. The extracts of Dylan and Claire are good examples of emotions changing from fear to happiness.

In accounts of learning and reflections, an emotional response indicates that a site can offer more than an educational value. An elicited emotion, if it be negative, marks that the tourist was able to understand, relate to or sympathise with what is in front of them, such as a dark tourism site. Emma and Gary's visit to the sites related to the Khmer regime is a good example of an extract expressing emotions of sadness and horror. It means that these sites are successful in evoking emotions. For the accounts of novelty and differences, emotions were not limited to surprise and thrill as components of novelty (Lee and Crompton, 1992). There are emotions related to frustration such as Tim's blog on Chinese behaviour and etiquette due to cultural differences. In the stories of escape, emotions are used by Dylan to mark his temporary escape from the frustrations of travel while Claire has used it to mark how she did not manage an escape from the locals. Lastly, accounts of self-expansion have lesser use of emotional language.

The analysis of travel blogs has revealed how emotions as felt by the blogger during the experience itself have also been useful in reconstructing their experiences for their readers. It has served as a narrative resource for their story telling to create these experiences into "being". This finding confirms the importance of eliciting emotions from an experience because they mark a memorable experience. The different extracts showing emotional responses could provide insights as to what kind of activities, tourist attractions and situations can be used by DMOs to elicit those kinds of emotions. However, as mentioned earlier, DMOs are faced with the challenge of understanding which experiences they can control; as pointed out earlier, some memorable experiences are negative experiences of a destination feature. These stories however, are a good starting point for understanding tourist experiences that were considered memorable by tourists and have evoked emotions within them.

As Caru and Cova (2003) have warned over the focus on emotions, there are other elements that constitute an experience. The next section discusses how the bloggers were also observed to make their experiences personal and imbue them with their own personal meaning.

The value and meaning of an experience to the individual. In the literature review, it was noted that there was a lack of emphasis on the other functions of consumption such as identity construction and its symbolic meaning. The value and meaning of the experience to self-development has been neglected in the broader consumption experience context; however, with the tourist experience, this remains part of what constitutes an experience. The tourist experience has been mobilised for maintaining and enhancing identity as seen in the works of Desforges (2000), Noy (2004) and McCabe and Foster (2006), to name a few.

The analysis of travel blogs has shown that within these reconstructions of experiences for their readers, the value and meaning of a specific experience is mentioned either implicitly or explicitly. They are also expressed in various ways. For example, the value of an experience could be an addition to the "list" of achievements or things to do that a blogger could be maintaining. There are a few bloggers who have mentioned how a specific experience is another achievement to add to the list. Dylan, Meltem, Dave and Cathy, Luke and Mark and Chrissie are some of those bloggers who maintain a list. Every type of story reveals that bloggers evaluate the experience in terms of how they benefitted from it as conveyed to the readers. The value of the tourist experience is also observed to be closely related to travel motivations. As argued by Cutler and Carmichael (2010), satisfaction of the tourist experience is related to travel motivations. Lastly, the meaning and the value of an experience is very much dependent on the individual, i.e. same activities do not produce the same value for bloggers. Caru and Cova's (2006) operations of appropriation has included that, in its last stage, *stamping*:

> a person will attribute a specific meaning to an experience or to a part thereof; this meaning will not be the one that is commonly ascribed to it but instead will be a personal one, built on the basis of the individual's referent, history, etc. The individual uses creativity to play around with the experience's context subjectively and imbue it with their own personal meaning (p. 9).

Table 7.1 gives a few examples of the value and meaning of experiences as explicitly and implicitly indicated in their blogs. The analysis also revealed that those bloggers whose travel motivations are relaxing and taking a break from everyday life, like Nick and Sally, do not find much value or meaning from experiences where they gain additional knowledge as seen from their short and concise statement in their blogs. This finding confirms that individuals talk about the value and meaning of their experiences, which could be implicitly or explicitly expressed to their readers. This value and meaning of an experience can be considered as one of the outcomes of the experiences. Most of these values and meaning of the experiences aim to convey to the readers that there is development of self, such as "another achievement"; "satisfying curiosity" and "stories to tell grandkids". This indicates that the meaning and value of experiences count towards the never-ending process of self-development (Csikzenthmihalyi, 1993).

Table 7.1 Examples of value and meaning observed and stated by bloggers in their experiences

Blogger	Tourist experience	Observed and stated value and meaning of the experience
Stories of Risks and Challenges		
Dylan	Skydiving	Escape from stress of everyday life, adrenalin rush and calmness
Meltem	Abseiling and rafting	Additional item on the list of achievement
Michael	Being attacked by orangutan	Stories to tell grandkids; memories for future use
Claire	Snorkelling	Overcoming fear of drowning
Barry	Mountain climbing	Breaking own climbing record
Accounts of learning and reflections		
Tim	Khmer regime sites	Satisfying curiosity on the Khmer regime
Claire	Khmer regime	Reflecting on a young self
Geoff	Golden Gate Bridge	In-depth understanding of the tourist attraction
Accounts of novelty and differences		
Astrid	Mother breastfeeding in public	Interesting story to tell
Dylan	Playing with the Indians in the Andes	Once-in –a lifetime opportunity
Meltem	Cremation in the Ganges river	Eye-opening experience
Accounts of self-expansion		
Derek	Partying with locals	Meeting new friends and belonging to a group
Dawn	Making new friends in hostels	Being identified with a group
Dave and Cathy	On traveling to Thailand from Vietnam	Getting relevant information (knowledge) for their travel
Stories of escape		
Dylan	Doing laundry	Escape from travel obligations
Meltem and Derek	On the beach	Relaxing and recuperation

To conclude, the different stories that are dominant in the blogs, the emotions evoked and the value and meaning of experiences contributes to an understanding of what constitutes an experience. The travel blogs are solid evidence of the outcome of the experience. The core experience had urged the reconstruction and remembering of certain aspects of the tourist experience (i.e. the five dominant themes). The emotions and value and meaning of experiences provide insight of the outcomes of the experiences. Most of those stories blogged about are described with emotions indicating that emotions are felt in the core experiences and then used in the post-consumption stage to create the experience into "being" for their readers. The value and meaning of travel experiences are related to travel motivations, and this has an overarching theme of contributing to the process of self-development or change in self. Hence, this thesis proposes that an experience ***is an event or a situation that can elicit responses (emotional, intellectual, physical) whose value and meaning to the individual adds to his/her life stories which is an accumulation of memories, self-identity and the evolved self***. Looking back at the key theories on experience economy, this thesis suggests another perspective for understanding consumption and tourist experience in the experience economy. Life story and consumption experiences shape and influence each other. Life story remains at the centre where individuals can add to it and draw from it as they go through the various consumption stages. Experience economy should acknowledge the importance of the evolving self as part of the motivations for experiences.

It is clear that travel blogs offer an alternative way of measuring the outcome of the experience. Using the stories of the travel bloggers, a) they can identify memorable aspects of experiences, b) they can understand the emotions elicited in specific experiences, and c) they can value their experiences as they relate them to their readers.

7.2.3 How are travel blogs reflective of tourist's personal goals and projects throughout the consumption process?

The thesis has proposed that travel blogging should be considered as part of their travel practices. Hence, there is the need to understand the motivation behind the travel blogging. More specifically, the question of what are they doing when they blog should be addressed as this will provide insights on how the bloggers talk about their experiences. Based on the survey responses of the 19 sample bloggers, the top three reasons for travel blogging, are: a) keeping a record of my travels; b) updating my family and friends of my whereabouts, and c) sharing my experience with others. However, the discourse analysis also revealed that self-presentation and identity construction is a dominant theme among those blogs as seen from their self-presentation techniques, linguistic techniques and the content in their blogs. Their actions behind travel blogging can also be considered as an outcome of an experience as they remember and reconstruct their stories to their readers; they further maximise the benefits from travelling.

Self-presentation and identity construction. The discourse analysis however has revealed that self-presentation and identity construction are common themes found across the five stories. According to Augustinous and Every (2007), a discourse analysis allows examination of how accounts are constructed, and how texts are socially organised to achieve local actions such as identity management.

The analysis reveals that embedded in the way travellers blog about their travel experiences are self-presentation strategies and tactics such as self- promotions, exemplifications and supplication, and tactics such as self-handicapping, sand bagging and blasting (Jones and Pittman, 1982). The linguistic techniques and the content of the blogs have also provided cues on their effort to maintain and enhance their identity for their readers. Table 7.2 he table below shows some example of self-presentation strategies used by travel bloggers.

Stories of risks and challenges showed several bloggers presenting the self, for example, as “the brave one” (Meltem on being the first to do the abseiling); as “adrenaline junkie (mark and chrissie); or “a smart decision maker” (Michael n Faye on buying a caravan to drive in Australia). These experiences have provided them with opportunities to show how they have overcome risky situations and tackled challenges. There are of course, some stories of failed attempts to overcome a challenge or reach a goal such as Sally and Barry in climbing to the summit; however they have also presented the self as having tested their limits and justified that they have done their best and yet they have not conquered the challenge. Nonetheless, these are still self-presentation opportunities; both of these climbers are experienced and throughout the blogs they were maintaining that identity.

Table 7.2 Examples of self-presentation strategies used by bloggers

Self-presentation strategies	Illustrative quotes
Self-promotion: They call attention to their accomplishments to be perceived as capable by observers	Ok, so why didn‘t anyone tell me it was 50 metres high and why didn‘t anyone stop me from going first!! Well, the theory of going first was get it over and done with… but 50 metres is just pure madness… Everyone was so nervous but the idiot I was volunteered to keep the moral up. (Turkishdelight, June 4, 2009)
Blasting: An individual associate with another person or group who is seen positively by others; or individuals assert the worth of a group to which they are positively linked	Kent, Stu and I spent hours chatting, it was so good meeting someone like him and I soon realised with our conversations that us travel bloggers really experience and see within the more finer details of this big wide world, what with all our endless questions, unique experiences, trusty cameras and note books always at hand. (soul cultivator, May 1, 2008)
Self-handicapping: An individual produces obstacles to success with the purpose of preventing observers from making dispositional references about one’s failure.	The guides made us some coca tea which helped a little but I didn't feel good. I had lost my appetite, plus I felt nauseous; two definite signs of altitude sickness. We needed crampons for the next section, the traverse of Angel Falls, a long, flattish crossing of a very steep snow field. The sun was up by now and we could see Chachani's summit; though it appeared tantalisingly close, we still had a long way to go.(barrygahan, April 15, 2008)
Enhancement: Individuals persuade others that the outcome of their behaviours are better than they might have originally believed; *in this case there was really no incident that has put them in danger*	Of course we had also cheated death on the World's most dangerous road, something to be proud (and relieved) about! What an excellent experience! (mark and chrissie, December 2, 2008)

Accounts of self-expansion also showed some bloggers associating themselves with exceptional people, like Claire who described herself as a travel blogger along with Kent and Stu who can see the finer details in life, or Gary and Emma who tried to follow a travellers' route in Southeast Asia to establish their identity. Stories of escape did not reveal self-presentation strategies from the bloggers. This could be associated with the need for a break from the continuous travelling; hence the escape referred to here is not from the pressure of everyday life, but from travelling, which involved taking advantage of engaging in experiences that would provide them with opportunities for self-development such as those activities covered in stories of risk and challenges and even learning.

Sharing information and educating their readers. Laing and Grouch (2005) posited that frontier travel experiences allow travellers to be seen as if they discovered the place before their readers, which gave them some authority to talk about it because they have been there. This is seen in some bloggers regardless of the places they have been to. The information they share and how they share it reflects an aspect of their identity, such as their personal interest and attitude in sharing information with the readers. For example, Geoff's interest in buildings and infrastructure is manifested in the comprehensive and detailed blog entry on the Golden Gate Bridge (Appendix 5).

This sharing of information and educating their readers is mostly seen in the accounts of learning and reflections as well as novelty and differences. According to Laing and Crouch (2005), accounts about remote places can provide benefits of social status with the hope of gaining recognition from their readers for such an endeavour. The information they provide their readers across their length of travel has developed specific patterns. Bloggers tend to educate their readers on a specific topic they are interested in. For example, Derek's have compared girls across different European cities; Tim's blog is about the different cultures and the locals; while Barry and Ruth have detailed blogs on their climbs and the mountains which they have climbed in South America. It is clear that even this sharing of information is closely related to their identity management.

Communicating with family and friends. Travel blogs have social functions. Blogs have become more attractive than email because they can be easily followed by family and friends. It is more convenient because there is no need to email everyone individually. Moreover, family and friends can track the trip of the blogger through his blogs. Blogs allow two-way communication; where the reader can also give comments. The survey results have indicated that bloggers know their readers and those who leave comments on their blogs.

The analysis of blogs revealed that some bloggers engage with their readers by using the pronoun "you", or sometimes the blogger would even mention the names of the friends who they think would be reading their blogs. The latter is a common thread through Derek's blog, particularly when he talks about the different girls and the nightlife and drinking across different cities in Europe. Astrid, on the other hand, writes in a letter or email style, where she greets somebody at the beginning of the blogging before proceeding to talk about their activities. She also closes her blog with a salutation. Most of the bloggers have written their blogs directed towards a small group.

To summarise, it is clear that with the discourse analysis, self-presentation and identity construction are the most dominant themes that runs across the five different stories to varying degrees. The stories of risks and challenges have more opportunities for self-presentation while stories of escape have the least opportunity to present self. Sharing information is another action behind those blogs. How one shares information which is more dominant in accounts of learning and reflection has also provided cues on certain aspects of the identity of the blogger such as their personal interest and motivation. Lastly, communicating with their family and friends are also seen in some bloggers as manifested in their style of writing.

The next section provides the answer to the question: What are the marketing and managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data?

7.2.4. What are the marketing and managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data?

Several possible marketing and managerial implications of the three key findings presented above are enumerated in the Table 7.3 below. These implications are divided into its possible insights of experience marketing and destination/place marketing. The table below provides suggestions on how the key findings of the study can stimulate use of travel blogs as research data for the broader concept of experience marketing and destination branding for marketing tourism. Travel blogs as a source of information for understanding tourist perceptions, behaviour and activities within destinations, and its effectiveness for its word-of-mouth communication has been established already (Akehrust, 2008; Huang, 2006; Mack and Blose, 2008; Pan et al, 2007; Puhringer and Taylor, 2008; Schmalleger and Carson, 2008; Volo, 2010; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The implications highlighted in the table below are based on what discourse analysis of travel blogs can provide as insight of experience marketing and destination/place marketing.

It is hoped that these suggested implications will stimulate interest particularly from among experience marketers on the potentials of consumption-oriented blogs for helping them understand what constitutes an experience, and how emotions are elicited; and include the value and meaning of experience as an important element to be considered along with emotions. With regards to destination branding, travel blogs can definitely help in identifying brand image that arises from the stories of the travel bloggers. It will also allow them to move beyond destination-based marketing, and instead follow the advice of King (2002); to pay attention to the relevance of experience to the tourists, and that of Blichtfeldt (2007); that the holiday experience can be related to the everyday life experiences of tourists.

Table 7.3 Marketing and Managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data

Key Findings	Experience Marketing	Destination/place marketing
Profile of travel bloggers, blogging practices and motivations	Experience marketers can determine whether they have a group of bloggers for their companies and create a profile of their socio-demographic profile, blogging practices and motivations.	This provides baseline information of their visitors who can serve as promoters of the destination. Destination branding needs exhaustive research on travellers and their perceptions of the destination. These bloggers can provide them with insights to how they perceive such destinations
Stories in travel blogs	The types of stories of bloggers of their experience in the company will reflect memorable aspects of the consumption experience.	From these stories, a consistent mix of brand elements can be identified to assist in defining a distinct destination image (Prebensen, 2007). Using Gnoth's tourism branding model (2002), the stories of travel bloggers can assist in identifying holiday experience in terms of the three levels; functional, experiential or hedonic, and symbolic.

Table 7.3 Marketing and Managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data

Key Findings	**Experience Marketing**	**Destination/place marketing**
Emotional responses to an experience	The stories can provide experience marketers insights on to what kind of experience can elicit emotions and achieve emotional attachment (McCole, 2004). An in-depth examination of emotional responses can be conducted to understand the range of emotions elicited across various points of the experience (Ramanathan and McGill, 2007).	The stories can provide insights for identifying which type of experiences has produced emotional responses which resulted inemotional connection between the place and its visitors (Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007). Destination marketers should be able to determine what aspect of a tourist experience has rich emotional meaning, great conversation value and provides high anticipation for their potential tourists (Morgan et al, 2002, Tasci and Kozak, 2006) by “drilling down further” into the analysis of travel blogs as suggested by Magnini, Crotts and Zehrer (2011).

Table 7.3 Marketing and Managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data

Key Findings	Experience Marketing	Destination/place marketing
Value and meaning of experience	The stories from the blog will allow an understanding of the third stage of operations of appropriations which Caru and Cova (2006) suggested to be crucial to experience marketing to determine how customers personalise their experience and find meaning in their experience or, in this case, express it in their stories.	The relevance of the experience they offer to the customer should be understood (King, 2002) from the stories; in particular, how the holidays are related to people's everyday lives (Blichfeldt, 2007), i.e having a great conversation value (Morgan et al, 2002, Tasci and Kozak, 2006).
Self-presentation and identity construction	This is not highlighted in experience marketing practice due to its focus on emotions. Experience marketers could use the stories to identify whether their experience has also been used by their consumer for self-presentation and identity construction. It can be considered as an experience outcome.	The self-presentation and identity construction can provide insights in terms of how it influences satisfactory experience (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010).

Table 7.3 Marketing and Managerial implications of using travel blogs as research data

Key Findings	Experience Marketing	Destination/place marketing
Sharing information and educating their readers	Blogs encourage self-publishing and they are easily accessible by bloggers. Information is shared and given to the readers but there is a need to monitor what information is given about the consumption experiences.	Blogs can reshape destination image; hence there is a need to constantly monitor the stories about tourist experiences in the destination.
Communicating with family and friends	Bloggers use their blogs to communicate with their family and friends and talk about their experiences. Hence, there is a need to monitor them in terms of how the consumers talk about their consumption experience to other potential consumers.	There is a need to monitor who reads the travel blogs as they are promoters of the destination; telling other people, family and friends, other bloggers and the general public about their experiences. Blogs can determine whether the destination has a great conversation value. Brand images communicated by bloggers should be monitored (Douglas and Mills, 2006).

This section has discussed the key findings of the discourse analysis of travel blogs. It has emphasised that the contribution of the research is towards a deeper understanding of consumption and tourist experiences. The three key findings have addressed main research gaps identified in the literature review; namely, what constitutes a tourist experience and how to measure the experience outcome by addressing the two research questions: a) what aspect of their experiences do tourist choose to write about; and b. why do tourists share their experiences with their readers. The research context for the study used long-term and multiple destination travellers as they are meaningful cases for the understanding of tourist consumption. However, the results can extend to other types of tourist experiences and provide insights to the broader concept of consumption experiences.

The next section discusses the contributions of the research.

7.3 Contributions of the Research

The contributions of the thesis can be classified into two categories: theoretical and methodological, and managerial contributions.

7.3.1 Theoretical and methodological contributions

The theoretical and methodological contributions of this study add up to the understanding of the consumption experience, particularly on the core consumption and post-consumption stages. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 has highlighted many issues on capturing the core experience stage, and most fundamental of all is the question of what constitutes an experience both for the broader context of consumption experience and the more specific context of tourist consumption (Poulson and Kale, 2004; Quan and Wang, 2004). The literature chapter also revealed that emotions have become the focus in consumption experience as well as tourist experience. Hence, companies were aiming for experiences that could create emotional ties between them and their customers to gain customer loyalty and customer satisfaction.

The thesis proposed that there is a need to re-think this focus on emotions as cautioned by Caru and Cova (2006). Experience is not only about emotional responses or creating emotional bonds between consumer and company; the thesis put forward those other functions of consumption, i.e. identity construction and symbolic meaning are as important as the emotions. Hence, this should be considered in the marketing and selling of tourist experiences. The consumption experiences, particularly tourist experiences, offer opportunities for transformation of self, which is a life-span process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993).

The second proposal made by the thesis is to take advantage of the rise of self-reflexive consumers (Caru and Cova, 2006) and the emergence of blogging technology that provides consumers and tourists with a platform to reconstruct and remember their experiences to their audience. This provides an alternative method for understanding the core experience, which scholars agree to be personal and subjective, and which has difficulty in measuring the outcome. The discourse analysis (DA) allowed an in-depth analysis of these records of travel experiences. It extends beyond using the blogs as a source of information for understanding tourist activities against destination attributes as most of the existing studies have explored (Carson, 2008; Kurashima, 2005, 2006; Pan et al, 2007; Wenger, 2008). Discourse analysis demonstrated that what people say about their experiences tangibly links to self-transformation as evident from the five stories which dominated their travel blogs; it also examined travel blogging as a post-consumption activity that not only provides revelations about the core experiences, but also on how benefits of the consumption experiences are further maximised to add up to their life-span of self-development as observed from the way they constructed their experiences to their readers.

The third proposal of the thesis is a framework depicting consumption experiences as constituted in and through travel blogs which reflect also the individual's life goals and projects throughout the whole consumption process. The framework also suggests that consumption is a cyclical process which represents continuous series of consumption experiences that feeds into the lifetime of experiences which becomes part of the individual's life story. These consumption experiences contribute to memories, self-identity and the evolved self which is a life span project. This framework reminds marketers and researchers how consumption is used by bloggers to for what Schouten (1991) calls as actualization and incorporation of possible self into a revised self-concept. This framework depicts the long-term traveller who made travel experiences as an everyday consumption and with trips close to each other. There is no sense of a real pos-consumption stage as they blog while on travel and write about where they are going next and this should be the prepost event. However, some of the bloggers as they make stories about their experience, in the next line is their travel experiences for the next day. This framework would be worth exploring using various consumption situations or

level.

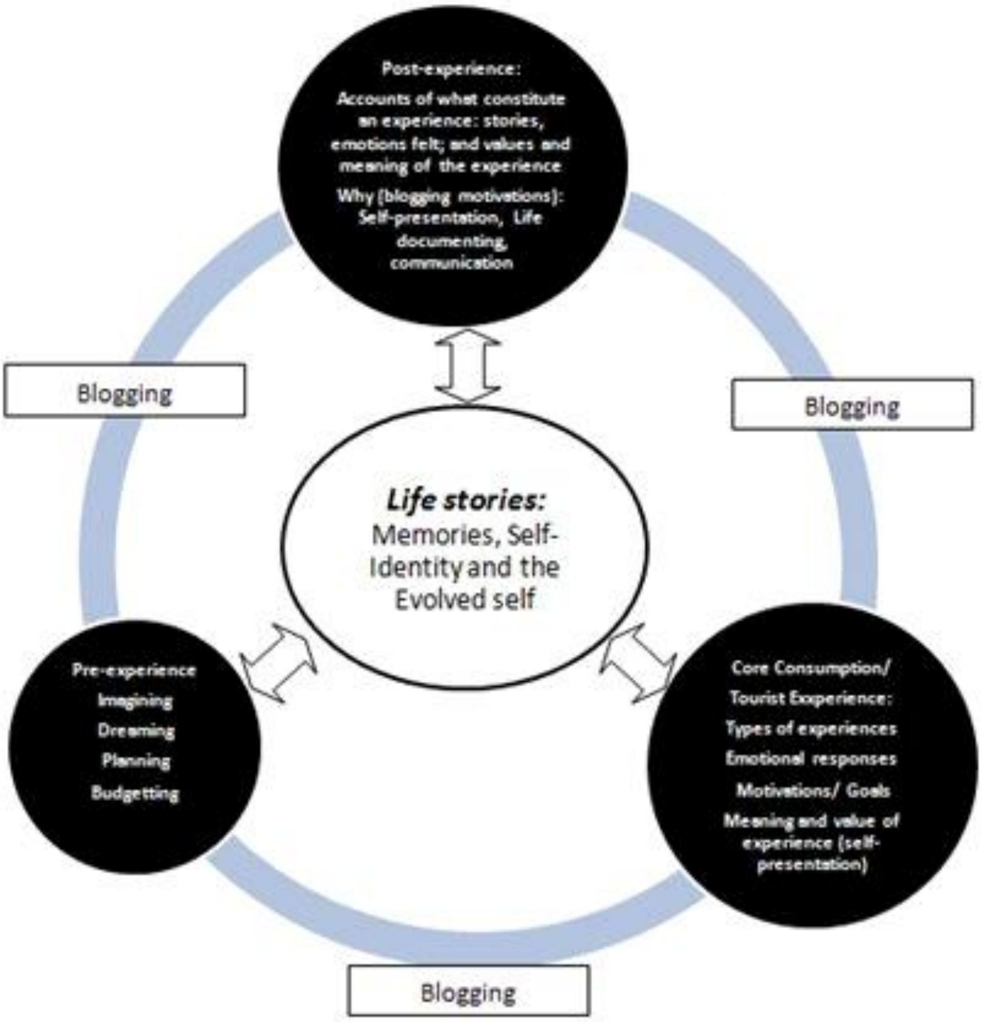


Figure 7.1 Consumption/Tourist experience as constituted in and through discourses in travel blogs

7.3.2 Managerial contributions

In terms of managerial contributions, the study adds up to the theory and practice of experience marketing and destination/place marketing. The thesishas provided empirical evidence on how blogs can reveal core consumption experiences as remembered and reconstructed by the consumers/tourists. These blogs provide the readers with access to their feelings, thought processes and reflections. In fact, some blogs provided a detailed and comprehensive narration of their emotional responses to their experiences. This confirms the importance of monitoring emotions in various points of the experience (Ramanathan and McGill, 2007); and its dynamic nature (Dube and Morgan, 1996; Ramanathan and McGill, 2007) and social aspect (Ramnathan and McGill, 2007).

The results most importantly showed that emotional attachment (McCole, 2007) is complemented by the personal value and meaning of experience shared by bloggers with their readers. This is an indication that the experiences are perceived to contribute to their life story or to the transformation of self. Experience marketers are now challenged to go beyond just creating emotional experiences, but to offer experiences that allow travellers to present the self, enhance and maintain their identity and allow them to make memories to tell their friends and families about. As seen from the blogs, experiences are not just being emotional during an experience; they also incorporate thought processes and reflections. The DA of travel blogs analysis has shown one alternative for using this kind of narrative for better understanding of that core consumption experience as suggested by Hackley and Tiwasakul (2006) and Tynan and McKechnie (2009).

In terms of tourism marketing, the thesis has provided empirical evidence as to how blogs can assist destination marketers in focusing on tourist experiences rather than on destination features as suggested by Larsen (2007) and King (2011). Destination branding has similar aims to experience marketing and that is to provide memorable experiences unique to the destination, and to serve to reinforce an emotional connection between the place and its visitors (Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007). The blogs have shown how not all tourist experiences are provided for by various sectors in the destination as companies are seldom mentioned in their blogs; but their stories are a combination of experiences of challenge, knowing how to let go of the tried and true, being open to possibilities, seeking out novelty, being curious, be willing to take risks and being experimental (Csikzenthnihalyi, 1993).

Tourism has been mobilised for identity construction (Desforges, 2000; McCabe and Foster, 2006; Noy, 2004) and this remains as seen in the travel blogs of the tourists. This should be included in the formulation of a destination brand; the place should be marketed based on what kind of experiences it can offer its customers. For example, from the travel blogs, most of the tourists who went to New Zealand had this image of the country for extreme activities such as skydiving, bungee jumping and glacier walking. In the same manner, Australia was seen by bloggers to be an experience of crossing various territories independently using their own caravan. Travel blogs rarely contain specific companies offering services, but rather describe the travellers' ability to arrange transportation and accommodation, and conquer all challenging activities. It is about hardship, risk, learning, and meeting people.

The thesis proposes that the travel blogs can be a good starting point for the conducting of extensive research before initiating any branding programmes to avoid a brand stigmatised for a long period of time by a wrong (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). This supports McKee's (2003) suggestion that research on naturally occurring visitor storytelling provides destination strategists with information about exciting incidents that represent unique associations and emotional highpoints that visitors are likely to retrieve and report automatically. The constraint-free feedback offered by tourists on their travel blogs provides DMOs with information about tourists' perceptions and impressions of the destination, thus shedding light on how tourists interpret the destination (Banyai and Glover, 2012:268).

Table 7.3 in Section in 7.2.4 has managerial and marketing implications for both experience marketing and destination/place marketing based on the key findings of the thesis. The next section presents the limitations of the research and future research opportunities.

7.4 Limitations of the Research and Future Research Opportunities

The limitations of the research can be divided into three key areas; a. research context, b) methodological limitations of the discourse analysis, and c) limited research focus. The discussion of these limitations informs possible future research directions. The suggested research directions are discussed as they emerged from the identified limitations of the study.

Research context. Using the long-term and multiple destination travellers has definitely greatly influenced the richness of the data. This experience differs greatly from an everyday consumption experience; hence this study needs to be replicated to other contexts of consumption and validate whether identity construction and symbolic meaning of consumption would be evident in consumption-oriented blogs of any goods and services. For example, Zhao and Belk (2007) talked of consumption-oriented blogs, which are online diaries dedicated to the blogger's everyday consumption activities such as trips to the mall, clothes purchases and dinner in a fancy restaurant, and which offer rich retrospective accounts of the blogger's everyday consumption. Similarly, other types of tourist experiences need to validate the findings in the study. Trips of shorter duration, such as day trips, weekend trips or shorter breaks are crucial types of experiences that are taken more frequently by maybe a larger portion of the population. Furthermore, a destination needs to recognise that different types of tourists visit its places. There is a need to understand how to capture the stories of the experiences of these other types of tourists.

This study has confirmed that travelblog.org is a community of long-term travelers. These bloggers had indicated that they rarely blog about their day trip. Hence, it is also a limitation of the research context. The survey also indicated a significant number of bloggers used other non-travel-related blog sites to talk about their travel experiences. Hence, there is a challenge to understand these blogging practices of tourists to maximise its potential for understanding their experiences as well as their behaviour.

The thesis focused on British travel bloggers; hence a cross-cultural study of travel bloggers and their blogs would be a good direction for future research. For example, an examination of blogs on a specific destination by various nationalities have been explored in extant studies (Bosangit, 2009; Mena and Bosangit, 2007; Volo, 2011; Wenger, 2008); however, they have used mostly content analysis and not discourse analysis. Using discourse analysis within this research context would be beneficial to formulating destination brand or image.

The methodological limitations of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is heavily dependent on the ability of the consumers to reconstruct consumption experience, which provides insights of reality of the consumption experience. The richness and vastness of the writing, as well as its idiosyncratic nature and sometimes poor quality of writing, proved to be time consuming for the researchers (Carson, 2008; Wenger, 2008). Carson (2008) suggested that a clear objective of what to extract from travel blogs would solve the issue concerning the labour-intensive and time-consuming analysis of travel blogs. However, the research questions identified for this thesis have also been very broad: What aspects of their stories do they choose to write about and why do they write about their experiences? This is expected; as explained in Chapter 5, discourse analysis is a complex process and, coupled with naturally occurring data, the challenge is doubled. Hence, DMOs might be discouraged by the complexity of the process of the DA. For example, a DMO whose approach to marketing is destination-based would find the content analysis more useful, as according to Banyai and Glover (2012), this method can gain access to "every aspect of a visitor's trip".

Langdrige (2004) also pointed on the focus of the research on the discourse analysis; hence pointing out the "lack of person" in the analysis. The thesis has minimised this limitation by providing a profile of the sample bloggers. However, as the focus is only on the blogs they have produced, an interview with the bloggers could have provided an in-depth understanding of *why* they are sharing their blogs, which could have been a confirmation or rejection of what was seen in their blogs. Future research could use another method such as focus group discussions or interviews to explore the second research question to link their travel blogs as the subject of research to the blogger himself or herself. It would provide a more in-depth understanding of the blogger and the blogs.

Lastly, Willig (2008:108) highlights one limitation related to the role of researchers:

> the role of the researcher is of necessity that of an author of the research due to the emphasis on the constructive and functional nature of language..and researchers are not seen as a witness or a discoverer but instead has active role in the construction of the research findings. Their research should be presented as a reading of data that is not the only possible reading.

In terms of the language, the researcher is non-British. Hence, she has faced some challenges in familiarising herself with some British "slang" expressions used by the bloggers. For example, there are also stories that reflected aspects of British culture such as for example, the blog of Tim titled, "the computer says nooooo", following the comedy show Little Britain, of a episode showing a travel agent saying 'no' to every customer, which aptly described their situation in China. The researcher was challenged to acquire a greater understanding of the British language and culture. Fortunately, the researcher has seen that particular episode and the interpretation of that particular blog was richer, however, there would probably be some parts of the stories which she would not been able to relate to such as Claire's reference to the Wombles at Work. The researcher has had to invest time and effort in understanding what lies behind these stories and how they link to the blogs. It is clear that the researcher has an active role in the construction of the reading and definitely her reading is not the only possible reading of those blogs. The researcher has analysed travel blogs written by fellow countrymen, which indeed have proven easier for her to analyse.

Limited research focus. The vastness and richness of the blogs has made the identification of the research focus most challenging and time-consuming. When the research was started in 2007, there were also many unexplored areas for investigation, such that identifying the focus of the research proved difficult. The vastness and richness of the data inspires researchers to maximize what they could extract from the dats. There was also a dilemma of where to focus the research - on the travel bloggers or the travel blogs. The literature review has highlighted the fundamental issue of the lack of published work on the profile of travel bloggers and this was addressed, but the potential use of this new practice among tourists lies in those rich narratives. After exploring many areas to investigate and reviewing the literature, tourists' reconstruction of their experiences was found lacking in the existing scholarship; and hence the research focus was finalised.

Future research using travel blogs could focus more on the blogging practices as suggested by Volo (2011). Travel blogging as an online community (Qu and Lee, 2011) would be useful to explore how travel bloggers communicate with each other. The photos and videos posted in the travel blogs are also rich sources of information on how tourists perceive the destination and re-present it to their audience, and are yet to be explored. This would support studies on tourist images (Larsen, 2005; Scarles, 2009; Prideaux and Coghlan, 2010). In a recent study, Huang, Yung and Yang (2011) have explored travel blog marketing, and more research on how travel blogs can be used for advertising and communicating with the tourists is advised. Definitely, there is a need to move beyond travel blogs as a source of information on tourists only; the industry also has to recognise its potential for reaching out to their tourists. Generally, researchers could explore and add to the following areas of investigation, which are of course not limited to this list:

a. Focus on travel blogs (the text, pictures and videos) as a source of information about their behaviour, destination images, evaluation of places, tourist mapping (most explored area to date), how it can inform destination brands and destination images. A semiotic analysis of the pictures and videos could provide more inputs to understanding tourist experiences that may hay not been captured from the text.
b. Focus on travel bloggers (the authors) as a group of people who have the potential to be promoters of the destination andas opinion leaders influencing destination image.

c. Focus on travel blog website – as a platform of communication among tourists; how do tourists use the various functions of the website; potential for advertising and marketing channel.

d. Focus on the readers of the blogs – there is a need to understand who follows these bloggers and how it influences them.

The use of travel blogs for tourism research has definitely improved over the last three years as seen from the many published works in the field, but the area remains open to greater exploration and more research. Hence, it is hoped that this thesis had stimulated more interest in this research area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey on Travel Blogging Questionnaire

Survey on Travel Blogging

Introduction

Dear Bloggers,

I am carrying out this survey as part of my doctoral research at Christel DeHaan Travel and Tourism Research Institute, Nottingham University Business School. The research aims to develop understanding of travel blogging motivations and practices. I would be very grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire which is a vital part of this research. Please be assured that all information provided will be treated as strictly confidential and any personal details you provide will be treated in accordance with the University of Nottingham's data protection policies. If you have any queries about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at lixcb12@nottingham.ac.uk.

Thank you very much in advance for your assistance with this project.

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Section A. About your travel blog website and blogging practices

1. Please indicate which travel blog website(s) you have membership and the year in which you joined the site(s).

	Prior to 2005	2005	2006	2007	2008
Realtravel.com	○	○	○	○	○
Travbuddy.com	○	○	○	○	○
Travelblog.org	○	○	○	○	○
Travellerspoint.com	○	○	○	○	○
Travelpod.com	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

2. Have you ever produced a travel blog?

○ yes

○ no

3. Please tell us the total number of blogs you have posted.

○ less than 5 blogs

○ 6 to 10 blogs

○ 11 to 25 blogs

○ 26 to 50 blogs

○ more than 50 blogs

4. Please tell us when you posted your most recent travel blog.

- ◯ less than a month ago
- ◯ 1 to 3 months ago
- ◯ 4 to 6 months ago
- ◯ more than 6 months ago

5. How frequently have you blogged about the following types of trip? Please indicate the frequency on a 7-point scale where, 0=never, 1= very rarely (hardly ever) 2=fairly infrequently, 3= occasionally, 4=sometimes, 5=more often than not, 6=quite frequently and 7=very often (most days).

	never	very rarely	fairly infrequently	occasionally	sometimes	more often than not	quite frequently	very frequently
daytrip	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
short break (1-3 nights)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
main annual holiday (over 4 nights to 20 nights)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
longer trips (3 weeks and more)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

6. When do you post your entries about your trips? Please indicate the frequency on a 7-point scale where, 0=never, 1= very rarely (hardly ever) 2=fairly infrequently, 3= occasionally, 4=sometimes, 5=more often than not, 6=quite frequently and 7=very often (most days).

	never	very rarely	fairly infrequently	occasionally	sometimes	more often than not	quite frequently	very frequently
while I am travelling	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
after the trip	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. What language do you use in blogging? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ English
- ☐ Japanese

Native language (please specify)

8. What would you say are your reasons for creating your travel blog? Please indicate their importance on a 7-point scale where, 1=very unimportant, 2=slightly unimportant, 3=unimportant, 4=average, 5=important, 6=-slightly important and 7=very important.

	very unimportant	slightly unimportant	unimportant	average	important	slightly important	very important
to update my family and friends of my whereabouts	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to share my experiences with others	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to find information about places	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to keep a record of my travels	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to keep in touch with friends who are also blogging	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to network or to meet new people	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to express myself by writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
for entertainment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to pass time	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
to earn money	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

9. How frequently do the following people read your blogs? Please indicate the frequency on a 7-point scale where, 0=never, 1= very rarely (hardly ever) 2=fairly infrequently, 3= occasionally, 4=sometimes, 5=more often than not, 6=quite frequently and 7=very often (most days).

	never	very rarely	fairly infrequently	occasionally	sometimes	more often than not	quite frequently	very frequently
family	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
friends	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
co-workers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. How frequently do you receive comments from the following people? Please indicate the frequency on a 7-point scale where, 0=never, 1= very rarely (hardly ever) 2=fairly infrequently, 3= occasionally, 4=sometimes, 5=more often than not, 6=quite frequently and 7=very often (most days).

	never	very rarely	fairly infrequently	occasionally	sometimes	more often than not	quite frequently	very frequently
family	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
friends	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
co-workers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
other bloggers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
general public	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Section B. About you

11. Please select your gender.

◯ male

◯ female

12. Please select your age.

- ◯ Below 18 years old
- ◯ 18 to 24 years old
- ◯ 25 to 34 years old
- ◯ 35 to 44 years old
- ◯ 45 to 55 years old
- ◯ 56 to 65 years old
- ◯ Above 65 years old

13. Please indicate the highest level of education you have attained.

- ◯ some high school or less (up to 16 years old)
- ◯ completed high school (up to 18 years old)
- ◯ trade/technical school (HND/Further education/vocational training)
- ◯ completed college (higher education, University degree)
- ◯ postgraduate

14. Please select your occupational status.

- ◯ I am a student.
- ◯ I just graduated and taking a break before continuing further education.
- ◯ I just graduated and taking a break before looking for a job.
- ◯ I am employed full-time.
- ◯ I am employed part-time.
- ◯ I am self-employed.
- ◯ I am a homemaker.
- ◯ I am taking a career break/break from work.
- ◯ I am retired.

15. Please indicate the country you reside in.

16. Please indicate your native language.

Thank you

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you are interested in participating in the next stage, please provide your email address so I can communicate with you about the next phase.

17. Please enter your email address.

Appendix 2. Sample blogger's profile, bloggping practices and blogging motivations

This appendix provides the socio-demographic profile, blogging practices and motivations of the 19 sample bloggers.

2.1 Socio-demographic profile of travel bloggers

The socio-demographic profile of these 19 bloggers is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Socio-demographics of travel bloggers (N=19)

Gender	**Count**
Male	11
Female	8
Age	
Below 18 years old	0
18 to 24 years old	2
25 to 34 years old	11
35 to 44 years old	5
45 to 55 years old	1
56 to 65 years old	0
Above 65 years old	0
Level of education	
Some high school or less	0
Completed high school	2
Trade/technical school	4
Completed college	10
Postgraduate	3
Occupational Status	
Student	0
On break further education	1
On break before looking for job	0
Employed full-time	11
Employed part-time	0
Self-employed	2
Homemaker	0
On career break	5
Retired	0

There are 11 males and eight female bloggers. However, there are some bloggers who share their bloggers co-own their blogs with a partner/husband/wife or family. Hence, this figure merely represents who filled out the survey. Eleven of the bloggers are between the ages of 25 and 34. Five bloggers are within the age range of 35 to 44 years, two from 18 to 24, and one from 45 to 55 years. In terms of level of education, 10 bloggers have completed college and three have reached postgraduate level. More than half of the bloggers (11) are employed full-time; five bloggers are on career break and one on a break from higher education, and two bloggers are self-employed. This profile of sample bloggers is similar to that of the 1,214 bloggers presented in Chapter 3; except for the gender of the bloggers who filled out the survey. This study does not aim for generalisation; however it is helpful that it reflects the population this sample was drawn from in terms of the age group, level of education and occupational status.

2.2. Blogging practices

This section confirms their experience and knowledge on blogging and travelling. Eleven bloggers have joined the website between 2005 and 2007; while six have recently joined in 2008 (the year the survey was conducted) and two bloggers have been blogging since 2005. All stated that they mainly used travelblog.org for posting their travel blogs, except for one blogger who stated that he uses getjealous.com. In terms of the most recent blogs posted, 10 of them indicated were posted less than a month ago when the survey was conducted (between December 2008 and February 2009); four of them said the last entry was one to three months ago; one blogger indicated four to six months ago, and finally four bloggers stated the last post was more than six months ago. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the recentness of the post checks that the blog is still active but it does not affect the nature of their blogs to be used for the DA. The time element does not play a role in the blogs to be analysed. The blogs that were downloaded were between the years of 2006 to 2008 as indicated in Table 4.6, the summary of blogs downloaded for the DA in Chapter 4.

All bloggers have either very or frequently about their longer trips; meaning three weeks or more travels. Although there was no question in the survey about where these trips are, during the selection of sample blogs in the last stage, it showed that most of these bloggers blogged about long-haul and multi-destinations outside of the UK. This is indicated in Table 4.2 (pp. 20-21). There was only one blogger who qualified as a sample at this stage, but was however removed as her blogs is within the UK only. The content of the blog was also checked and it was more of a religious reflection and not about the places and people she has met in her trips, which makes it very different from other blogs.

In terms of audience who read and comment on their blogs, these 19 bloggers indicated that family and friends are their most active followers. Table 5.2 shows the mean scores and standard deviation for the frequency of reading and commenting on blogs from these different groups of audiences.

Table 2 Audience commenting and reading their blogs

Audience	N	Reading their blogs		Commenting on their blogs	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family	19	6.5	.61	5.4	1.4
Friends	19	6.1	.81	5.0	1.3
Co-workers	19	4.9	1.6	3.6	1.7
Other bloggers	19			3.4	1.7
General public	19			3.0	2.2

Note that bloggers were not asked to rate how other bloggers and the general public frequently read their blogs. Other bloggers and general public's access to or reading of the blogs cannot be traced; this has been observed by the researcher during her membership in the website. Bloggers become aware only that their blogs have been read by other bloggers of the general public if they get some comments posted on their blogs. Bloggers' awareness of their audience is seen to influence their way of writing and this is seen in the sample blogs. As Bosangit, McCabe and Hibbert (2009) observed, the style of writing in most blogs implied that bloggers prepared their blogs to be read by the public or, at least, a select small group. Their use of language give cues that they are engaging with specific readers in several ways: a) mentioning their names; b) referring to a common knowledge between him and the reader, c) asking questions as if expecting them to answer, and d) using salutations and greetings intended for somebody they know. Comments are additional manifestations of the interactional context in blogs and can be considered reactions of their audiences to their blogs.

2.3 Blogging motivations

The top three blogging motivations of these 19 bloggers are; a) keeping record of travels, b) updating family and friends of whereabouts, and c) sharing experiences with others. These top three motivations were similar to those identified by other bloggers in the survey; except keeping records of their travels come first instead of updating family and friends of their whereabouts. Table 5.3 shows the mean scores of the importance of the following motivations to these bloggers:

Table 3 Mean Scores of Blogging Motivations

Motivations	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
To keep record of my travels	19	6.5	1.22
To update my family and friends of my whereabouts	19	6.4	.90
To share my experiences with others	19	6.2	1.2
To express myself by writing	19	5.1	1.8
To find information about places	19	5.0	1.6
For entertainment	19	4.9	1.6
To keep in touch with friends who are also blogging	19	3.6	1.6
To network or to meet new people	19	3.2	1.8
To pass time	19	2.8	1.8
To earn money	19	1.6	.70

These motivations can also influence their style of writing, particularly those who are updating their family and parents of their whereabouts. The sample blogs are indeed chronological records of tourist experiences and sharing of experiences as will be seen in the discussion of discourses in travels. These motivations of travel blogging as mentioned in Chapter 2 have not yet been widely explored in the literature. The examination of sample blogs will provide insights to why tourists are blogging about their experiences.

2.4. The bloggers' behind the blogs

This section introduces the bloggers behind those sample blogs to be used for the DA by providing information on each blogger on various things as made available on their blog home page and as observed in their travel blogs; from their blogging motivation; travel companions; places visited; purpose of their travels, and distinct blogging styles. First names are used, and enclosed in parenthesis is their username.

Blogger 1: Astrid (Fletchclough) is travelling with her boyfriend Chris. They started their trip in Thailand, then to Laos, then back to Thailand again, visiting different islands, to Malaysia, Singapore; then to Australia and New Zealand. Astrid's blogs are brief and concise updates of their activities in different places. They have posted numerous pictures to complement the short descriptions of their days. Their activities included mostly sightseeing, snorkelling, diving and bungee jumping (the last three undertaken by Chris) as Astrid was nervous about these activities.

Blogger 2: Meltem (turkishdelight), of Turkish origin, travelled from the UK to Austalia on OZbus with about 20 other people. In her first blog entry she described this bus trip as entailing a 24,140 kilometre, 84-day bus journey. She quit her job at a children's centre and sold her car. She is proud to have done work in the outback at the end of her journey. Her blogs are filled with concise updates of places they visited and activities they did in every country they passed through from the UK to Australia. In her profile page she put this quotes from a 2008 Louis Vuitton advert, which reflected her motivation for travelling.

> What is a journey??? A journey is not a trip- It's not a vacation= It's a process = A discovery
> It's a process of self discovery =A journey brings us face to face with ourselves
> A journey shows us not only the world but how we fit in.
> Does the person create the journey or does the journey create the person?
> The journey is life itself!! …………………….Where will life take you???

Blogger 3: Dylan (Dyl) travelled with his girlfriend, Lou from the UK to South America, North America, Australia and New Zealand. They combined independent travelling and joining guided tours in some places they visited such as in Peru, Ecuador. They also go for mostly established tourist attractions. They have also mostly booked their flights before leaving the UK, and hence follow a rather fixed schedule. Dylan's interest in history and the local people is seen in his blogs. The couple did mostly sightseeing in South America and North America but tried some dangerous activities in New Zealand such as skydiving, rafting and glacier walking. They ended their trip in Bangkok before returning to the UK.

Blogger 4: Derek (Delek Delek) is a Kiwi who is now a London resident. His travel started in the USA, and then it took him back to European cities. In his profile page he said that the blog is primarily for him: "…so I can remember the places I've been, the people I've met and the experiences I've had. But if you can take something from reading them, be it travel advice, inspiration to travel, enjoyment, or just a plain good read (haha) - then that's awesome". His blogs are filled with meeting people at the backpacker routes in Europe, lots of partying and nightlife. Derek is also very budget-conscious and has even allotted a certain amount of money per day to guide him in deciding which activities and places to go to. He travelled mostly independently and sometimes meets up with a buddy in some cities.

Blogger 5: Sally (The Mosquito Magnet) travelled to Africa for five weeks. She travelled mostly with a group. She started the trip in South Africa, then on to Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya. Her blogs is filled with accounts of the wildlife she encountered in her trips. She has detailed descriptions of things she has seen and activities she has done in her travel. Although the duration of travel is shorter than that of the other bloggers, her blogs are more detailed than others.

Blogger 6: Nick and Sally (Muno) travelled to India. In their profile page they have indicated that they are now back in the UK working full time and have 25 days holiday each year and try to manage a few trips here and there, and are dreaming of the next prolonged break. This trip to India and Nepal is one of those smaller breaks. Their activities in India consisted mostly of sightseeing and relaxation. The highlight of their trip is the Mount Everest climb.

Blogger 7: Tim (Mingalaba) is travelling with his wife Kylie who is of Chinese origin. They are British who have been based in New Zealand for quite a while and are now due to return to the UK, and they took this trip prior to going back to the UK. The trip brought them to Thailand, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma and Laos. Most of the places are repeat visits, particularly for Tim; hence his blogs is filled with comparison of the current trip to the previous one. Tim also considers himself a hard-core backpacker and sees himself different from the new backpackers who follow "official" backpacker routes and stay in backpacker enclaves. Highlights of his trips are interaction with the locals.

Blogger 8: Michael (MichaelnFaye) travelled with his wife Faye. Their trip was mainly motivated following Michael being diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2006. Due to this they have to delay the start of creating their perfect family at least for a year, which they also saw as an opportunity to travel. They ended their travel earlier than expected when Faye got pregnant. The blogs used for their analysis are those of their blogs on Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Blogger 9: Dawn (Spidermiss) travelled alone to the South American countries of Argentina and Chile. She mostly arranged her travel independently and travelled with people she met in dorms/hostels where she stayed. However, there are parts of the trip where she lets the hostel book her trips, when it is more convenient. She likes making observations on how tourists behave, or how tourism services are managed.

Blogger 10: Geoff (Bencat) has been travelling for 14 months. His blogs are very lengthy and detailed; hence, the latest part of his trip which is in different American cities was used for the analysis. His blogs are very descriptive and informative and barely contain emotional language. For example, for every place he visited he would write about its detailed history, interesting facts, how it was designed, how it was conceptualised; and what the challenges and issues encountered in the development of the place were. His blogs is a wealth of information for his readers and mostly written in a third person perspective.

Blogger 11: Gary and Emma (Emma and Gary). This is a joint blog so Gary and Emma take turns in posting their blog entries. On their profile page, they call this trip the 'around the world adventure' where they started out from Scotland on 27of August 2007. The blogs were meant to keep some sort of record for themselves. The blogs used for the analysis are those of their travel in Hongkong, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore and China. Their blogs are chronological accounts of their activities in different places. They also followed the "backpacker routes" in these places. They travel mostly independently.

Blogger 12: Luke and Sam (chlaa) called their blogs the 'round the world travel blog', implying their goals. The blogs used for the analysis are those of their trip to South America (Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Uruguay) and then to the USA. They have joined a volunteer project, Teaching and Projects abroad, at Cusco, Peru for a month which has allowed them more interaction with the locals. Teaching English, hiking, and getting involved in parades are just a few of the activities they have done as part of their volunteer work. They like trying out local food, local activities like tango, and had a "drink of the day" at the end of each blog entry. They stay where most backpackers stay.

Blogger 13: Nicchi (The Cannons) travelled with her husband Rik and daughter Kiera to Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. Their travel decisions, in terms of activities and places to go to are somewhat influenced by what is good for their daughter. Their blogs contained mostly details of what Kiera is enjoying, and learning new things. Nicchi is the one in charge of planning the itineraries while Rik is the driver particularly in their travel within Australia. They have bought a caravan for their travel within Australia which has provided them freedom to move around as they please.

Blogger 14: Dave (Dave Cathy) travelled with his wife Cathy to Asia. On their profile page, they have already planned their trip to include: Thailand for two weeks, Vietnam for three, Cambodia for two, Thailand again for three, Malaysian Borneo for one, Singapore for a couple of days, Australia for eight weeks, New Zealand for four weeks, Fiji for two, America for three and then England for a bit. They took turns in writing blogs which are mostly accounts of their activities for the day and people they have met. In writing the blog, one obligation is to provide a brief description of the beer they tried in the different places they have visited. At the end of the trip they have tried and described 156 beers.

Blogger 15: Leanne (wansan) travelled with her boyfriend Nick to Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina. Their blogs are detailed and chronological accounts of the places they visited and their activities. Their blogs are also written in a letter style to their readers with numerous references to specific people and asking them how things are with them.

Blogger 16: Chrissie (mark and chrissie) travelled with her husband Mark. Their blogs are numbered by the days, showing chronological accounts of their travel. In their profile page, they call their trip the mother of all honeymoons- "our dream trip around the world taking in as many countries and experiences as possible. Taking the bold step with a serious career break we have now covered a huge distance seeing some of the world's treasures and meeting interesting and likeminded people along the way". The blogs used for the analysis are their blogs from Day 571 to Day 771 which included their travel to Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador.

Blogger 17: Claire (The Soul Cultivator) travelled with her boyfriend, Stu. They travelled to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. Claire stood out from other bloggers because of her search for a religion she can easily fit in with, joining meditation classes to take care of her mind and undergoing detoxification processes for the cleansing of her body. She also has created close relationships, particularly with an orphanage in Cambodia.

Blogger 18: Claire (The Soul Cultivator) travelled with her boyfriend, Stu. They travelled to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. Claire stood out from other blogger because of her search for a religion she can easily fit in, joining meditation classes to take care of her mind and undergoing detoxification process for the cleansing of her body. She also has created close relationship, particularly with an orphanage in Cambodia.

Blogger 19: Gareth (ASBO Holidays) travelled with a group of friends to Asia. The blogs used for this analysis covered their trips in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. They stay in backpackers' enclaves and do what most backpackers do, doing the "official" backpacker routes, hiring scooters, travelling by bus, enjoying the beach, diving and meeting people. His blogs are chronological and contain detailed description of the places visited.

Appendix 3. Mark and Chrissie's blog: Our arrival in Peru makes the news

(mark and chrissie, October 30, 2008)

Today we were headed further north and into Peru. However, before we could set foot on Peruvian soil we had to negotiate the slightly confusing method of crossing the border. We heard the best way to cross is with a Collectivo, essentially a shared taxi. We thought we'd be able to catch this all the way through the Tacna the border town just inside Peruvian lines but when we got to the collectivo depot we found we could only get as far as the Chilean border and then would have to find a taxi once we got to no-mans-land. Getting a little confused we jumped into a car driven by a young chap with a F1 style steering wheel who was to take us to the border. We got through to no-mans-land whereupon we were swamped by a mob of collectivo drivers eager to fleece the tourists with no other option. By the time we had collected approximately 20 drivers we realised we had no bargaining power and paid the further fare to get us through into Peru and to Tacna the next big town. We gathered our thoughts realising in actual fact it had only cost about 4 quid each!

Our ride through to Tacna started well with a drive through the desert in a vintage looking American Ford clad head to toe with a stunning burgundy interior - nice! However our serene and pleasant drive was to be interrupted and our driver about to earn the extra tourist tax he'd charged us. As we entered the city on the main highway, our driver stopped in the outside lane. At first glance the road ahead looked pretty innocuous, however we quickly realised that it was a mob handed riot blockading the road. No way through, we had to go around. Back tracking 100m we turned off the main highway and our driver did some excellent off road driving and we bumped our way through to another arterial road into the town. Our encounter with the angry locals (our spanish was not good enough to identify exactly what the riot was about) was not to end there. As we progressed toward town we reached points where there were large rocks strewn over the road mixed in with a bit of car window glass and debris, it didn't take a genius to work out what had gone down, and by the looks of it, fairly recently. Weaving through the remnants of the feud, we were looking good until we again came to another screaching halt. There were a group of around 15 guys blocking the way. After a second for them to realise we were there, one of the angry scoundrels grabbed the nearest rock, aimed and fired. It was probably just a shot across the bow but we didnt hang around to find out and took off to find yet another route.

Turning a final corner we eventually arrived at the bus station, our driver having more than earnt his wage. As we arrived we were not yet out of the car before we were greeted by a barrage of taxi drivers who were all there shouting the same story, "you want Arequipa? NO bus for 2 days, you must take taxi" This line had us caught in a bit of limbo as the bus station looked closed and wth our recent experience coming through the city it was more than possible. As we pondered our options we had attracted a lot of attention from not only the persistent taxi drivers, but also the local media. Out of nowhere a TV camera and reporter from Peru TV had come over to chat with us. With Mark giving his best "no thank you" and Chrissie "i dont speak much spanish" in our most fluent spanish, the camera and reporter eventually melted into the crowd.

Even though the bus station looked closed, we wanted to get away form the pushy drivers and went to check out it out. On closer inspection there was one door open so walking through into the compund we discovered an imediate sense of calm and relaxation from the hassle outside. Asking around we found that there was in fact a bus and that we could be on our way out of the city by 3.30pm. Only 3 hours to wait.

With our plan in place, seats booked and tickets bought the ladies settled in at the bus station whilst Mark and Jason went out to find food. The first gold mine they found was a fruit market just up the road. Superb. Stocking up on a fruit lovers dream haul, we settled in for a healthy feast. Finishing off the first load, within which we'd stumbled upon the best mandarins .

we'd ever tasted, the chaps went out again in search of more fruit and a savoury snack. Whilst en route around the local area they passed some local coppers in riot gear before hitting the jackpot with a little lady selling BBQ'd meat and potatoes. During the wait for our meal the mood suddenly changed and the lady with her cart picked up her stuff and started to take off at a fast pace. It was enough of a cue for the boys to start heading toward the bus station compound before they shut the gate. Strangely everything settled down as quickly as it had started and they managed to get dinner and snacks for our onward journey.

The bus was pretty good apart from the fact that it didn't have a toilet, at first this wasn't an issue, but with a bumpy track and not the remotest glimmer of the bus driver intending to stop we started to get a little uncomfortable. It wasn't until it was pitch back and we reached a corner too tight even for our zealous bus driver that we all piled out and found our own private rock with a view. It took the bus 20 mins of inching around an impressive 81 point turn before we could all board again to continue on our bumpy way. It turned out that the bus had had to use an alternative route due to further rioting in another town.

Finally arriving in Arequipa we jumped into a taxi with one of the funniest taxi drivers we have had on the trip so far (even though he couldn't speak english) and after getting lost a few times and finding a full hostel we found some beds at a hostel and crashed out!

After an epic day throughout all the problems we encountered and unexpected issues we had taken it all in our stride and laughed even more than ever. From what could have been a nightmare, we looked back on it all with nothing but good memories.

Appendix 4. Tim's blog: Homemade Trains and Dead Butchers

(Mingalaba, December 12, 2006)

There's a new scam as you cross the border into Cambodia. It starts with a health declaration form, which is common in many countries. It asks things like 'do you have diarrhoea?' & 'have you had a cold lately?' Of course almost everyone lies, because otherwise you wouldn't be allowed in. I chose not to mention that I'd spent the first hour of the morning in the toilet & didn't mention that I'd blown my nose just minutes earlier. We handed over the forms & were then asked to hand over one dollar. I asked what on earth for & the guy said 'health certificate' Of course he could have asked for the certificate first, rather than the dollar first but that would be just too sensible. As it happens, we have health certificates so despite the immense hassle of actually finding them in our backpacks, we did so & handed them over. We walked on into Cambodia for free & he lost out on the $2 supplement to his salary.
Having managed to find no information about the border crossing we wanted to take (Ha Tien) other than 'don't bother' (thanks yet again Lonely Planet), we opted to change our route & take the most straightforward option which involves booking a bus ticket right through to Phnom Penh (where we hadn't really wanted to end up at all). I've done this route before, in 1999, but the border post couldn't be more different. I remember walking across a dusty no man's land with a couple of wooden huts serving as the immigration offices. Today there are grand buildings all around, a shopping mall & as soon as you enter Cambodia, casinos. With gambling being illegal in Vietnam it's an easy trip for Vietnamese to make to the border to lose a few dollars.

As we'd caught a 'tourist' bus we were dropped off at the owner's uncle's brother's cat's guest house, as is normally the way. We didn't really want to stay there, but couldn't face looking for a better place & stayed. These places survive by selling tours, tickets & generally ripping you off. They weren't at all impressed when I said this was my fourth time in the city & that we didn't need any tours at all thank you very much.

Phnom Penh has changed. It's still a dusty, crumbling mess of a city, but it's starting sprout shopping malls, neon lights, supermarkets & a lot of flash cars. All things that you just didn't see a few years back.

We left Phnom Penh the next morning on a bus to Pursat a few hours away. Pursat was just a stepping stone to nearby Kompong Luong a floating village on the edge of Tonle Sap - the lake that is the heart of Cambodia. Tonle Sap is a true giant that swells from 2500 square feet in the dry season to a collosal 13,000 square feet when the rains come. It is the world's second largest source of freshwater fish & for Cambodians is their lifeblood. A number of settlements lie around the lake, but what is unique about Kompong Luong is that it is always moving. The whole village lives on ther water, in boats & on rafts that have have been modernised into houses & shops. Homes vary in size, and are surrounded by hairdressers, mobile phone shops, gas stations &

even a karaoke bar. Although always moving, the village is layed out with canal like streets that you can explore in a local boat. It's a beautiful place & the people appear to live such an idyllic life. Whether they see it the same way is hard to tell. There's a couple of static buildings built on very high stilts, giving an indication of much the water has risen up their steps & gates.

From Pursat we travelled a few hours further north to Battambang. As with many towns in Cambodia, Battambang is built around a bustling central market & sits on a river. As with most other towns it's fairly small & it's fairly dusty, a mixture of old Khmer, French colonial & a few but not many modern buildings. Battambang reminds me of how I found Phnom Penh to have been seven years ago. You can tell how grand many of the buildings and parts of town were before years of civil war turned so much to ruin. Today it's a race between decay & rebirth, although it's often hard to tell which is winning. Although life around the markets carries on way after dark, you don't need to stray far to find yourself in utter darkness as most places have no street lights.

There's something special about the way so many towns are centred on the market - it's a real focal point for the community. From before sunrise to way after sunset, there's always a steady flow of shoppers buying everything from still crawling turtles to skin whitening deodorant (quite why you'd want white armpits is beyond me). There's always vast amounts of fresh produce, that's far more colourful than what you find at your local Sainsbury's or New World.

As is the way in many towns, we were greeted from our bus by a throng of motorbike drivers all wanting to take us to a hotel. Some people treat the drivers as if they are the lowest people on the planet, but although often the last thing you want to deal with after a bus ride, the 'in your face' drivers can turn out to be some of the finest people you'll meet. We've only had one bad experience in six months. Some will take you to a hotel for free, others for just a minimal fee. Most can recommend a decent place & if you don't like it, you don't have to stay there. Most will actually be driver/guides, although when you wearily get off of a bus you have no way of knowing who to really trust.

In Battambang we were picked up by a young local guy called Rich, who along with his friend Phi-lay became our driver guide. Although some people are cautious with who they trust when it comes to moto drivers, sometimes you just have to remember that these guys know the places a lot better than we do, and that the prices they charge are normally quite reasonable. It's easy to forget when you're debating a price, that what is peanuts to us may be the difference between having dinner or not that night to them.

We spent a day exploring the sights of the local area with Rich & Phi-lay, although what will perhaps be remembered most are the stories they told along the way. I haven't really covered much about history in former blogs, but I feel for Cambodia it's a bit more important as it's a place that is remembered mainly for war & for a temple, but in reality there's so much more to it. That said, we're still going to begin with war.

Most people have heard of the Khmer Rouge, and it's secretive leader Pol Pot. On 17th April 1975 they marched into the capital Phnom Penh & took power. At first they were welcomed, in fact hard as it now seems to believe, the Khmer Rouge enjoyed much support leading up to & in the early days of their regime. Part of the reason for this, being a reaction against the previous political climate & the fact that the US was secretly bombing Cambodia for the first five years of the 1970's as part of their war in Vietnam. I've actually seen video footage of Nixon saying 'We're helping the Cambodians to help themselves' when talking about dropping bombs on them.

The Khmer Rouge ruled for 3 years, 8 months & 21 days, and in that time perhaps millions died, no one knows for sure. Their simple but absurd philosophy was that the whole country would become an extreme communist utopia, where money was abolished, the country was entirely cut off from the outside world (bar one flight a week to China) & the populations of all the towns & cities were marched out to the coutryside to begin a new life in the fields. Professionals such as doctors & teachers were killed. As time went by almost anyone could end up being killed - people with glasses, women, children, even babies. Family members were split up & often turned against each other. Starvation & disease were rife.
The Khmer Rouge were ousted by a Vietnamerse invasion in 1979; civil war then continued way into the late 1990's, but we'll come back to that later.

Thirty years have passed since the Khmer Rouge began their reign, but there are still plenty of people with a story to tell. On our day out around Battambang, Rich took us first to Phnom Sampeau, a small hill around 40 minutes from town. As with many hills, there's a wat (temple) on the top. At this point we still had no idea how great our driver/guide would be. Some take you to a place, point at it & then go off for a sleep while you look around & try to make sense of it on your own. Rich took us to the top of the hill & we sat on the steps of the wat, surrounded by monks & kids, looking out at a never ending view of the plains. He began to tell us some traditional Cambodian stories & legends.

Although the wat is small, it's very colourful & quite unique. Sadly the hill (or phnom) is more famous for a more sinister reason. The Killing Fields in Phnom Penh are pretty well known - a large area where mass graves were found after the Khmer Rouge left. Similar places stretch right across the country. On Phnom Sampeau there are a handful of caves, places that the Khmer Rouge used to kill people. It's perhaps best that I don't go into too much detail, but at the same times it seems important to share a few of the stories that we were told along the way. One cave was used to kill the young, another the educated. The methods used were basic but brutal - they didn't want to 'waste' money on bullets.

One refreshingly cool cave is now home to a large reclining Buddha & numerous prayer flags. At one end a large opening to the sky is visible high above. Near the bottom is a cage, a memorial full of bones & skulls. As swarms of mosquitoes nibbled around our ankles, Rich told us in a matter of fact way that this was where the educated were killed by being dropped from the opening high above. This, he said, was where his grandfather was killed. His mother, a young girl then, had been forced to watch - if she'd cried she would have been killed too. He pointed to the pile of bones & said 'my grandfather is somewhere in there'

Aside from the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia is perhaps most well known these days for the temples of Angkor Wat. Angkor is just one of hundreds of temples, but despite being the most well known, it is neither the oldest nor the biggest. Near Battambang is Banan, a pre-Angkorian ruin. Sitting at the top of another hill, it's small but well maintained. The ancient Khmer empire was vast & there are amazing ruins like this scattered far & wide across the country.

Perhaps a highlight near Battambang is the 'norry' or Bamboo Train. I'm sure at some point I'll come to talk about the roads in Cambodia, but for now I'll just mention that they are a lot better than they used to be. The advent of some decent roads has sadly spelt the end for passenger trains, although as they travelled at around 20km per hour they weren't really the most efficient way to travel anyway. Even before the trains had stopped, locals here had invented their own bamboo version. Using the same tracks as the normal train, this train is a simple cart built from bamboo with an engine attached to the back. They are used up & down the stretch of track near Battambang for local journeys between villages. There's only one set of tracks, so if two bamboo trains find themselves head to head then the one with the lighter load has to be disembarked, taken apart & removed from the track so the other can pass. It's an exhilarating way to travel, they claim that you hit speeds of over 40km per hour (30mph) & it certainly feels like it. The tracks are in a terrible state - they're warped & buckled, making for a bumpy ride. It's hard to imagine how the freight train that still runs manages to negotiate the tracks without flying off.

Over lunch Phi-lay told us a bit about his life. While Rich is young, born in a refugee camp after Khmer Rouge rule, Phi-lay is an older man, a father with children. He was a child in the seventies & remembers it well. He told us the story of his survival. His family was a moderately wealthy one, from Phnom Penh. They were forcibly moved to the countryside where despite his young age he was to work in the fields. They worked 15 hour days & at full moon had to work at night too. He watched his sister grow sick & die. He kept telling us how much his daughter looks like her & how much he feels the need to protect her. Back in the fields, Phi-lay became skinny & ill, but rather than die like his sister he was taken to a hospital. Luckily someone took pity on him, a rare thing at the time. He was secretly given extra food & he managed to survive. His family had no idea & it wasn't until years later that he was reunited with those members who were still left. His parents had been killed, but some siblings who had for years thought he was dead were alive too.

For years in Cambodia, boat was one of the main forms of transport. Withmost towns built on rivers & roads that were barely passable, boat was a very viable alternative. With more & more roads now paved, boats are sadly becoming a thing of the past. There are a few that still remain, and we took one for the stunning trip from Battambang to Siem Reap. The journey leads into the northern tip of the Tonle Sap before arrival in Siem Reap. Being just after the end of the rainy season, the river & lake are at their highest level. The day begins by snaking through jungle & villages, with a never ending echo of 'hello hello' from kids on the riverbank You're constantly surrounded by people on the river, fishing, washing or playing. It's normal for foreigners to travel these routes on the roof of the boat, locals wouldn't be as stupid to sit in the intense heat on a boat in the middle of an expanse of water. As the river leads to the lake it becomes obvious just how much the water level has risen. Tips of submerged trees cling to life as they emerge from the water. In places, houses built high on stilts now sit at the water lever rather than high above as they would in dry season. The lake strecthes for an eternity, but it's a beautiful sight, an area full of life from birds & fish, to locals coming & going.

Arriving in Siem Reap is a rude awakening. From the serenity of the journey & the echoes of a peaceful Battambang, it's a sudden change to a sea of tuk tuk drivers & moto men all desperate for your business. Once in Siem Reap itself you are in the real centre of tourism in Cambodia, this being the base from which to explore the temples around Angkor. Siem Reap used to be another dusty town on a river with a market. Today it's a building site - hotel after hotel after hotel. And not just any hotel, giant international monoliths are gradually replacing any soul that Siem Reap used to have. Going back to so many places on this trip that I've been once, twice or more times before has meant the opportunity not just to see some favourite sights again, but also to eat in some favourite places again. Sadly many have disappeared over the years. I don't know if we'll ever get over the sadness of our favourite Cambodian curry place in Siem Reap having not closed, but instead having entirely changed it's menu & severely hiked up its prices. They don't even serve a decent curry anymore. Tragic. (Fortunately another cheapish & decent curry place turned up a few days later).

As it happens this was just to be a passing visit, after one night we set off further north, almost to the Thai border, to a very small town called Anlong Veng. Far from the standard or even the not so standard tourist routes, Anglong Veng is most well known for its connections with former dictators & their chums.

Until his death in 1998 Pol Pol lived in Choam Sa Ngan near here & until he was finally arrested a few years back Ta Mok lived in Anlong Veng itself. You may wonder why we would want to visit such place with such grim connections, in fact Kylie asked me a few times why I was dragging her there too. The fact that to get there we had to survive one of the worst roads in the country didn't help my cause either (but we'll get back to that later). I guess I wanted to come to Anglong Veng to try & help understand the other side of the Khmer Rouge & why some still support it today. To me it also seemed to be an important part of the historical picture, just as the popular Killing Fields & S21 Torture Centre are in Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge was still engaged in a civil war in Cambodia until 1998 & hard as it is to believe, they did so with support not just from a few Cambodians, but also with funds & support from the USA, UK & Thailand. They were even able to have a seat at the UN thanks to the great politicians in Washington & London.

From Pol Pot's home in the small village right on the Thai border, it was easy for him to flee to Thailand if required, where he was provided with a safe haven for nearly 20 years. The village isn't one of the nicest I've ever seen. Most huts are built from a mix of wood & plastic sacks. As we walked through the market, it easily felt like one of the least friendly places I've been here. One can only assume that if he lived here without ever being knocked off by a disgruntled local, he must have enjoyed some degree of support. However when he finally died in 1998, he was given the type of sending off that would no doubt have pleased many across the nation. He was hastily cremated in a plain wooden coffin that was placed upon a pile of old tyres in a cutting beside the village. Video & photos of the event show that any old rubbish that would easily burn was thrown onto the pyre. Today there is a small memorial where he was cremated. There's a sign which says 'Pol Pot's was cremated here' The method of cremation & the grammatical error on the sign seem very apt.

While Pol Pot was known as Brother Number One, the one legged Ta Mok was Brother Number Five. Although many simply referred to him as The Butcher - I'm sure you can imagine why.

Every so often you may catch a story on the news about the (twenty five years too late) genocide trials in Cambodia. The news story a few weeks ago was about food. The Europeans involved in the trial had chosen a fancy expensive ex-pat restaurant to provide lunches - a ridiculous mix of high class food that even you or I wouldn't expect to regularly eat. At lunchtime the locals were all disappearing off to the local food stalls to buy rice & noodles - something they could stomach instead. To me this sums up the whole debacle quite nicely. Thirty years after the event, and still no one has been tried. Court proceedings are slowly taking place, but it's most likely that all the remaining leaders will be dead by the time anything happens. Ta Mok was in jail awaiting trial, but died a few months ago. Almost everyone was connected to the Khmer Rouge in some way. Many had no choice but to be a soldier. If the trials will ever really happen remains to be seen, but when you consider that even the current Prime Minster was a Khmer Rouge soldier, it's hard to imagine how they could ever really bring everyone to justice.

Hated though he was by many, those in Anglong Veng see Ta Mok as a bit of a hero. We visited his house, a large open plan stilt house sitting on the banks of a beautiful yet eerie lake. His possesions are long gone, but the walls haven't changed, they are all painted - from magnificent Angkorian Temples to a lush river & jungle seen, abundant with wildlife. I couldn't help but think of other paintings I'd seen of Khmer Rouge soldiers torturing people in the very same temples depicted here. Dead trees are scattered across the lake he once overlooked. Beautiful as it is, it's like looking out at a graveyard.

The body of Brother Number 5 was taken back to Anlong Veng after his death. The crowds came out to see him off, there were monks offering blessings, even though The Butcher had seen to it that monks were brutally murdered 25 years ago. I was keen to talk to some locals to try to understand ho they could support this evil man, but sadly in Anlong Veng almost no one speaks English. We met one teenager who is a fan, & although he lives hundreds of miles away he often visits to meet like minded locals. We asked him why, but he couldn't explain it to us.

The only person who really spoke English was Dara, the wonderful cousin of our guest house owner. She was as bemused as we were. Apparently Ta Mok did do some good for the local community, although apparently most people there have strange ideas about what's good for them. Many refuse to send their kids to school & many can't read or write at all - this being despite the fact that the opportunity to be educated is there. The Khmer Rouge killed Dara's parents & her sister. They will have killed the parents & siblings of many other people from Anlong Veng too.

The road to Anlong Veng is in a sorry state, but being dry season we were lucky. During the rains it's even worse. To add to the discomfort the journey was taken in a very overcrowded Toyota Camry. What we didn't realise then is that this is the new way to travel in Cambodia.

But our next 'bad road Toyota Camry experience' wouldn't come for awhile. From the surreal experience of Anlong Veng we ventured back to Siem Reap for another trip to Angkor Wat.

Appendix 5. Geoff's blog: I left my heart in San Francisco, well maybe not my heart but at least a load of memories

(Bencat, June 28, 2009)

The Golden Gate Bridge, another of this cities great icon

We took the Muni to the last stop on N line to Ocean. Once on the Pacific Ocean we walked along the sandy beach, watching as life went by as children and adults played Football, Baseball and kites. Even surfing on the waves of the Pacific was great to watch on this rather windy and overcast day. We soon, well after a few hours of walking finally saw our first sight of the Golden Gate Bridge. so with still a good few miles to go we boarded a bus to the main stop before the bridge.

The Golden Gate Bridge is a suspension bridge spanning the Golden Gate, the opening of the San Francisco Bay onto the Pacific Ocean. As part of both U.S. Route 101 and California State Route 1, it connects the city of San Francisco on the northern tip of the San Francisco Peninsula to Marin County. The Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge span in the world when it was completed during the year 1937, and has become an internationally recognized symbol of San Francisco and California. Since its completion, the span length has been surpassed by eight other bridges. It still has the second longest suspension bridge main span in the United States, after the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in New York City. In 2007, it was ranked fifth on the List of America's Favorite Architecture by the American Institute of Architects.

Before the bridge was built, the only practical short route between San Francisco and what is now Marin County was by boat across a section of San Francisco Bay. Ferry service began as early as 1820, with regularly scheduled service beginning in the 1840s for purposes of transporting water to San Francisco. The Sausalito Land and Ferry Company service, launched in 1867, eventually became the Golden Gate Ferry Company, a Southern Pacific Railroad subsidiary, the largest ferry operation in the world by the late 1920s. Once for railroad passengers and customers only, Southern Pacific's automobile ferries became very profitable and important to the regional economy. The ferry crossing between the Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco and Sausalito in Marin County took approximately 20 minutes and cost US$1.00 per vehicle, a price later reduced to compete with the new bridge. The trip from the San Francisco Ferry Building took 27 minutes.

Many wanted to build a bridge to connect San Francisco to Marin County. San Francisco was the largest American city still served primarily by ferry boats. Because it did not have a permanent link with communities around the bay, the city's growth rate was below the national average. Many experts said that a bridge couldn't be built across the 6,700 ft (2,042 m) strait. It had strong, swirling tides and currents, with water 500 ft (150 m) in depth at the center of the channel, and frequent strong winds. Experts said that ferocious winds and blinding fogs would prevent construction and operation.

Conception

Although the idea of a bridge spanning the Golden Gate was not new, the proposal that eventually took place was made in a 1916 San Francisco Bulletin article by former engineering student James Wilkins. San Francisco's City Engineer estimated the cost at $100 million, impractical for the time, and fielded the question to bridge engineers of whether it could be built for less. One who responded, Joseph Strauss, was an ambitious but dreamy engineer and poet who had, for his graduate thesis, designed a 55-mile (89 km) long railroad bridge across the Bering Strait. At the time, Strauss had completed some 400 drawbridges—most of which were inland—and nothing on the scale of the new project. Strauss's initial drawings were for a massive cantilever on each side of the strait, connected by a central suspension segment, which Strauss promised could be built for $17 million.

Local authorities agreed to proceed only on the assurance that Strauss alter the design and accept input from several consulting project experts. A suspension-bridge design was considered the most practical, because of recent advances in metallurgy.

Strauss spent more than a decade drumming up support in Northern California. The bridge faced opposition, including litigation, from many sources. The Department of War was concerned that the bridge would interfere with ship traffic; the navy feared that a ship collision or sabotage to the bridge could block the entrance to one of its main harbors. Unions demanded guarantees that local workers would be favored for construction jobs. Southern Pacific Railroad, one of the most powerful business interests in California, opposed the bridge as competition to its ferry fleet and filed a lawsuit against the project, leading to a mass boycott of the ferry service. In May 1924, Colonel Herbert Deakyne held the second hearing on the Bridge on behalf of the Secretary of War in a request to use Federal land for construction. Deakyne, on behalf of the Secretary of War, approved the transfer of land needed for the bridge structure and leading roads to the "Bridging the Golden Gate Association" and both San Francisco County and Marin County, pending further bridge plans by Strauss. Another ally was the fledgling automobile industry, which supported the development of roads and bridges to increase demand for automobiles.

The bridge's name was first used when the project was initially discussed in 1917 by M.H. O'Shaughnessy, city engineer of San Francisco, and Strauss. The name became official with the passage of the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District Act by the state legislature in 1923.

Design

Strauss was chief engineer in charge of overall design and construction of the bridge project.[9] However, because he had little understanding or experience with cable-suspension designs, responsibility for much of the engineering and architecture fell on other experts.

Irving Morrow, a relatively unknown residential architect, designed the overall shape of the bridge towers, the lighting scheme, and Art Deco elements such as the streetlights, railing, and walkways. The famous International Orange color was originally used as a sealant for the bridge. Many locals persuaded Morrow to paint the bridge in the vibrant orange color instead of the standard silver or gray, and the color has been kept ever since.

Senior engineer Charles Alton Ellis, collaborating remotely with famed bridge designer Leon Moisseiff, was the principal engineer of the project. Moisseiff produced the basic structural design, introducing his "deflection theory" by which a thin, flexible roadway would flex in the wind, greatly reducing stress by transmitting forces via suspension cables to the bridge towers. Although the Golden Gate Bridge design has proved sound, a later Moisseiff design, the original Tacoma Narrows Bridge, collapsed in a strong windstorm soon after it was completed, because of an unexpected aeroelastic flutter.

Ellis was a Greek scholar and mathematician who at one time was a University of Illinois professor of engineering despite having no engineering degree (he eventually earned a degree in civil engineering from University of Illinois prior to designing the Golden Gate Bridge and spent the last twelve years of his career as a professor at Purdue University). He became an expert in structural design, writing the standard textbook of the time. Ellis did much of the technical and theoretical work that built the bridge, but he received none of the credit in his lifetime. In November 1931, Strauss fired Ellis and replaced him with a former subordinate, Clifford Paine, ostensibly for wasting too much money sending telegrams back and forth to Moisseiff. Ellis, obsessed with the project and unable to find work elsewhere during the Depression, continued working 70 hours per week on an unpaid basis, eventually turning in ten volumes of hand calculations.

With an eye toward self-promotion and posterity, Strauss downplayed the contributions of his collaborators who, despite receiving little recognition or compensation, are largely responsible for the final form of the bridge. He succeeded in having himself credited as the person most responsible for the design and vision of the bridge. Only much later were the contributions of the others on the design team properly appreciated. In May 2007, the Golden Gate Bridge district issued a formal report on 70 years of stewardship of the famous bridge and decided to right an old wrong by giving Ellis major credit for the design of the bridge.

Finance

The Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District, authorized by an act of the California Legislature, was incorporated in 1928 as the official entity to design, construct, and finance the Golden Gate Bridge. However, after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the District was unable to raise the construction funds, so it lobbied for a $35 million bond measure. The bonds were approved in November 1930, by votes in the counties affected by the bridge. The construction budget at the time of approval was $30.1 million. However, the District was unable to sell the bonds until 1932, when Amadeo Giannini, the founder of San Francisco-based Bank of America, agreed on behalf of his bank to buy the entire issue in order to help the local economy.

Construction

Construction began on January 5, 1933. The project cost more than $35 million. Strauss remained head of the project, overseeing day-to-day construction and making some groundbreaking contributions. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati, he had placed a brick from his alma mater's demolished McMicken Hall in the south anchorage before the concrete was poured. He innovated the use of movable safety netting beneath the construction site, which saved the lives of many otherwise-unprotected steelworkers. Of eleven men killed from falls during construction, ten were killed (when the bridge was near completion) when the net failed under the stress of a scaffold that had fallen. Nineteen others who were saved by the net over the course of construction became proud members of the (informal) Halfway to Hell Club. The project was finished by April 1937, $1.3 million under budget.

Opening festivities

The bridge-opening celebration began on 27 May 1937 and lasted for one week. The day before vehicle traffic was allowed, 200,000 people crossed by foot and roller skate. On opening day, Mayor Angelo Rossi and other officials rode the ferry to Marin, then crossed the bridge in a motorcade past three ceremonial "barriers," the last a blockade of beauty queens who required Joseph Strauss to present the bridge to the Highway District before allowing him to pass. An official song, "There's a Silver Moon on the Golden Gate," was chosen to commemorate the event. Strauss wrote a poem that is now on the Golden Gate Bridge entitled "The Mighty Task is Done." The next day, President Roosevelt pushed a button in Washington, DC signaling the official start of vehicle traffic over the Bridge at noon. When the celebration got out of hand, the SFPD had a small riot in the uptown Polk Gulch area. Weeks of civil and cultural activities called "the Fiesta" followed. A statue of Strauss was moved in 1955 to a site near the bridge.

Suicides

The Golden Gate Bridge is the most popular place to commit suicide in the United States and is one of the most popular in the world. The deck is approximately 245 feet (75 m) above the water. After a fall of approximately four seconds, jumpers hit the water at some 86 miles per hour (138 km/h), which is often fatal in and by itself. Some of those who survive the initial impact drown or die of hypothermia in the cold water.

There is no accurate figure on the number of suicides or successful jumps since 1937, because many were not witnessed. People have been known to travel to San Francisco specifically to jump off the bridge, and may take a bus or cab to the site; police sometimes find abandoned rental cars in the parking lot. Currents beneath the bridge are very strong, and some jumpers have undoubtedly been washed out to sea without ever being seen. The water may be as cold as 47 °F (8 °C).

An official suicide count was kept, sorted according to which of the bridge's 128 lamp posts the jumper was nearest when he or she jumped. The count exceeded 1,200 in 2005, and new suicides were averaging one every two weeks. For comparison, the reported second-most-popular place to commit suicide in the world, Aokigahara Forest in Japan, has a record of 78 bodies, found within the forest in 2002, with an average of 30 a year. There were 34 bridge-jump suicides in 2006 whose bodies were recovered, in addition to four jumps that were witnessed but whose bodies were never recovered, and several bodies recovered suspected to be from bridge jumps. The California Highway Patrol removed 70 apparently suicidal people from the bridge that year.

The fatality rate of jumping is roughly 98%. As of 2006, only 26 people are known to have survived the jump. Those who do survive strike the water feet-first and at a slight angle, although individuals may still sustain broken bones or internal injuries. One young man survived a jump in 1979, swam to shore, and drove himself to a hospital. The impact cracked several of his vertebrae.

Engineering professor Natalie Jeremijenko, as part of her Bureau of Inverse Technology art collective, created a "Despondency Index" by correlating the Dow Jones Industrial Average with the number of jumpers detected by "Suicide Boxes" containing motion-detecting cameras, which she claimed to have set up under the bridge. The boxes purportedly recorded 17 jumps in three months, far greater than the official count. The Whitney Museum, although questioning whether Jeremijenko's suicide-detection technology actually existed, nevertheless included her project in its prestigious Whitney Biennial.

As a suicide prevention initiative, this sign promotes a special telephone available on the bridge that connects to a crisis hotline. Various methods have been proposed and implemented to reduce the number of suicides. The bridge is fitted with suicide hotline telephones, and staff patrol the bridge in carts, looking for people who appear to be planning to jump. Iron workers on the bridge also volunteer their time to prevent suicides by talking or wrestling down suicidal people. The bridge is now closed to pedestrians at night. Cyclists are still permitted across at night, but must be buzzed in and out through the remotely controlled security gates. Attempts to introduce a suicide barrier had been thwarted by engineering difficulties, high costs, and public opposition. One recurring proposal had been to build a barrier to replace or augment the low railing, a component of the bridge's original architectural design. New barriers have eliminated suicides at other landmarks around the world, but were opposed for the Golden Gate Bridge for reasons of cost, aesthetics, and safety (the load from a poorly designed barrier could significantly affect the bridge's structural integrity during a strong windstorm).

Strong appeals for a suicide barrier, fence, or other preventive measures were raised once again by a well-organized vocal minority of psychiatry professionals, suicide barrier consultants, and families of jumpers after the release of the controversial 2006 documentary film The Bridge, in which filmmaker Eric Steel and his production crew spent one year (2004) filming the bridge from several vantage points, capturing a number of suicide jumps as well as a handful of thwarted attempts. The film also contained interviews with surviving family members of those who jumped; interviews with witnesses; and, in one segment, an interview with Kevin Hines who, as a 19-year-old in 2000, survived a suicide plunge from the span and is now a vocal advocate for some type of bridge barrier or net to prevent such incidents from occurring.

On October 10, 2008, the Golden Gate Bridge Board of Directors voted 14 to 1 to install a plastic-covered stainless-steel net below the bridge as a suicide deterrent. The net will extend 18 feet (six meters) on either side of the bridge and is expected to cost $40-50 million to complete.

Appendix 6. Tim's blog: Computer says noooo(an introduction to Chinese manners and etiquette)

(Mingalaba, August 6, 006).

Frustrating as it may seem, there's many many cultural differences that are all so small in their own right. However put them together & you realise that the Chinese people are not really the most infuriating people on the planet, rather they are the most tolerant on the planet. What seems like complete total & utter selfishness is actually complete total & utter tolerance. These people will tolerate just about anything from each other. Here's a few of the things that drive us mad that may seem perfectly normal to a billion other people....

Spitting

You may have heard about spitting in China - it's almost like an olympic sport. Perhaps not the Olympics, more the Grammys because it's the sound not the distance that count. Maybe later tonight, perhaps when cleaning your teeth you could try to spit for me. As you do, listen to the sound. You'll probably find there's not much to it. However these people have managed to develop the most incredibly vile chhhhhhrrrsssssssshhhppptttttttttit sound that lets everyone in a good 100m radius know that it's coming. Spit on roads I can handle. Spit in bins is okay. But they will spit anywhere - indoors or outdoors. In fact people sat next to us here & now have been happily spitting while I write about it. Put your bag down without checking & you'll most likely pick it up & find spit on it.

Staring

I'm not that bothered by the staring - you do get used to it. It just seems odd - a few years back you didn't see many white faces in China (except a few Russians) so staring seemed more appropriate but now there's not just white faces here, but also all over the tv & magazines. Sadly the stare is just that - a gormless & sometimes accusing stare. Rarely is it a friendly or smiling one. The easiest way to deal with an unwanted stare is to stare right back or shout Ni Hao Ni Hao! It normally stops the stare or breaks the ice.

Traffic lights

Okay, I know that people across Asia & (many other places) ignore traffic lights. But here it seems to have gone to an extreme. Red lights & pedestrian crossings are just for show, not literal use. We have been known to gently shove a few motorbikes that have crossed our paths at crossings - perhaps they'll think twice next time. There is one great place - Nanjing Road in Shanghai, which is supposed to be the central shopping area in the city. It's been turned into a pedestrianised walkway - however they forgot to close off the side streets. Hence thousands of people walk up & down the street thinking it is safe from the insane cars, bikes & busses, when in fact there's traffic crossing every few hundred metres. There are of course pedestrian crossings but the people don't expect them as it's pedestrianised & the cars of course ignore them.

Beeping Horns

Again, common across Asia, but again a new extreme - in fact I would bet money that some of these horns have been modified to record breaking levels. As no one looks where they are going when walking or driving it is perhaps essential to constantly toot on your horn. The other day we were waiting for a bus so I thought I'd count the number of beeps I heard. They averaged around one every other second. Imagine hearing a horn every other second. And these are not just your average toot. This is toot toot toot, or TOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOT or both. When a bus passes through a sleepy village in the middle of the night it tends to hold the horn down for the whole journey through, just to let them know it's there. No wonder people are all leaving the villages.

Toilets

I won't dwell on this as some people may be offended. Needless to say that toilet habits leave a lot to be desired. Perhaps my favourite is the guys that couldn't wait for the 'queue' so rather than nip out to the bushes went there & then on the toilet floor.

Pushing, shoving & queues

Got a train ticket with an allocated seat? Then surely whenever you board the seat will still be there? Best you still push & shove with all of your force as soon as the gate opens. Want to get on the underground? Best push & shove with all of your might against those disembarking rather than let them get off first. Need help at the bank? No need to wait in line, just push in front of the person already being served. What's more bizarre is that the teller will stop serving the intitial person serve the intruder! I really am surprised by the sheer force people will use against you. Fortunately, although our backpacks are heavy & bulky, they make excellent weapons in crowds & 'queues' People will ALWAYS push in front of you if they can - wherever it may be.

Noise

You could cross reference this with all of the above (yes, including toilets). Here's perhaps my favourite episodes so far:

Sleeper Bus - as you may expect, this is a bus that you sleep on. They travel overnight & can be surprisingly comfortable. On our most recent journey the driver kindly turned off the tv soon after dark came. For the next 10 or so hours he shouted at his handful of buddies that were sat next to him at the front. I see no reason at all why they couldn't talk, they were side by side. But no, they shouted & while we tried to sleep. Of course he was tooting on that horn the whole way too.

Pillow Fight - another overnight journey, this time on a train. We were in bunks, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by half a dozen teenagers. Lights go out, people go to bed. The teenagers play music, giggle a lot & at around
2am start a pillow fight. Apart from the noise I also repeatedly get hit on the head.

Jingle Bells & Scarborough Fair - every so often a random piece of music will make it's way into your subconcious. It normally takes a few hours to realise that reason you are still humming it is because a rubbish truck or ice cream van outside your window has been playing that same piece of music over & over again for the past few hours.

Other sounds that we'll never forget are that of a lady eating a pear as if she were slurping an ice cream as big as she was, a woman being sick on a bus & of course the cellphones. Why talk when you can shout!? Especially when people are trying to sleep.

Being ignored - shops, ticket booths, you name it, we've probably been ignored there. Perhaps sometimes because they are intimidated by us, but often because they are busy sleeping, texting or gossiping.