

**School of Media, Creative Arts, and Social Inquiry
Department of Internet Studies**

Connected Tourists: From Sightseeing to Sitesharing

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature: *Michelangelo Magasic*

Date: *31.10.2018*

Abstract

This thesis contributes to a burgeoning literature on ICT-mediated tourism by exploring the influence of ICTs upon tourist experience through an interdisciplinary perspective linking tourism and internet studies in a real-world context. The argument is shaped around three thematic parts: connectivity, performance, and place, which interconnect in explicating the mediatory role of internet technologies within the journey. It is posited that the increasing integration of ICTs into the experiential sphere of tourism creates its own mode of “connected tourism” in which devices, platforms, and connectivity are a normalised (if still unsettled) part of travel. Attending to a gap in practice-based tourism studies, the thesis proffers an innovative conceptual framework for the continuing study of connected tourists. The experience of connected tourists is framed in terms of the collective material, structural, emotional, and performative negotiations that accompany digitisation. In order to investigate these tensions, the project employs a hybrid autoethnographic approach spanning different ethnographic methods (auto-, multi-sited, sensory, visual, digital) and online/offline contexts. Data was collected during extended multicountry fieldwork and involved a close attention to the personal practices through which ICTs were utilised as part of travel. Here, the researcher’s experiences serve as a medium through which to critically investigate themes such as the gaze, self-presentation, self-transformation, and authenticity within the era of connected tourism. As its conclusion, the thesis proposes a mode of tourism consumption referred to as “sitiesharing” that conceptualises the sharing of events as an integral facet of modern tourism and foregrounds the role of the online audience in shaping how touristic events are perceived and remembered.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Now you're less than 10 clicks away from seeing an image on Instagram to purchasing a ticket to go there. (@chrisburkard cited in Miller, 2017)

In 2014, the British telecommunications company Three, working with the advertising firms Wieden + Kennedy and Mindshare, created an expansive multimedia campaign entitled #holidayspam featuring advertising on television, in public locations, in print media, and within social media (see Wieden + Kennedy London, 2015, for an overview of this campaign; Figure 1.1). In the centrepiece of the campaign, a video advertisement screened during prime-time television, a stone-faced newsreader delivers a bizarre statement on behalf of the company. The message, ostensibly a corporate apology, relates to Three's "Feel at Home" plan that allows customers to use their mobile phones in certain overseas destinations without additional roaming charges. In the message, the newsreader expresses feigned regret at the way Three's campaign has influenced traveller behaviour:

We thought allowing our customers to use their phones in 16 destinations worldwide like they would at home was a good thing. No extra cost for calling and texting back home. No extra cost for data. But, we failed to consider the consequences: The 'holiday spam'. (Three UK, 2014b)

On a monitor behind the man, full-screen photos depicting popular holiday scenes from the era of social media are displayed one after another: a group of three middle-aged men jumping into a resort pool à la *Charlie's Angels*, a sunset, a brightly coloured cocktail foregrounding a crowded beach scene, a plane's wing outside its window, bronzed thighs poking up above an electric blue ocean, and many more. The newsreader eventually concludes with a weak apology: "We deeply regret the frustration this has caused and we urge all Three customers, when abroad please brag responsibly". It is not hard to read between the lines of this corporate message. Three wants you to communicate with your social network while travelling and they want to be the company that you pay to facilitate this. The company's tongue-in-cheek message struck a chord with the British public. Taking advantage of this consumer engagement, Three built on their original message by producing typologies of different kinds of holiday spam (sunsets, little lizards, hot dog legs, plane wings, etc.), creating a temporary "crisis centre" located at www.stopholidayspam.com, situating the practice of holiday

spam within the life stories of travellers in the “Prepare for #holidayspam” video advertisements (Figure 1.2), and even tracked holiday spam in real life using ambient advertising on the French beach of La Garrope in August 2014 (Figure 1.3).

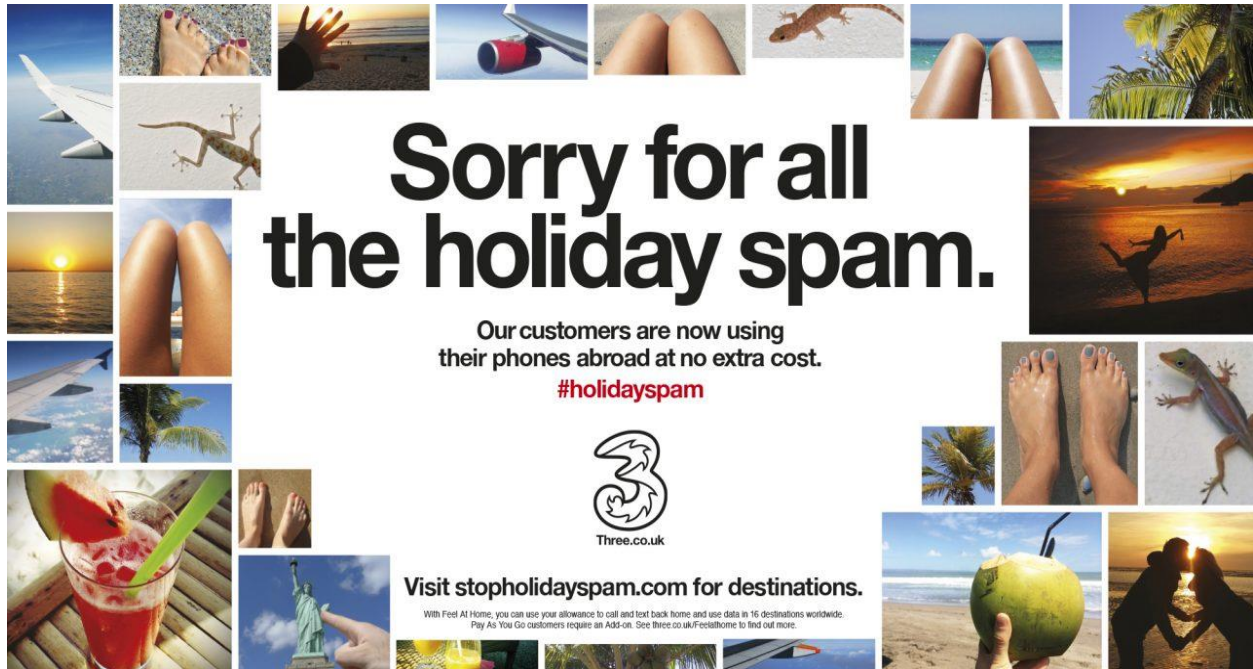


Figure 1.1. Sorry for all the Holiday Spam (Wieden + Kennedy London, n.d.).



Figure 1.2. A screenshot from the “Prepare for #holidayspam” campaign (Three UK, 2015).



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Over the course of three years between 2014 to 2016, the #holidayspam campaign found great success for the telecommunications company. As the smallest of the UK's four main providers, #holidayspam helped put Three on the map as an innovative, customer-centric company and translated to record highs in market share as well as receiving Effie and Institute of Practitioners in Advertising awards (Effie, 2016; IPA, 2016). We may consider that it was the topicality of Three's content that took the campaign to such heights and helped deliver its message. Not only are roaming costs a significant impediment to travel internet use (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2015), but the meaning-laden term popularised by the company catches on the seemingly compulsive need of modern travellers to share their experiences. The #holidayspam message riffed on the social tension that there are limits regarding how much and what subject matter should be posted on the internet during travel. By comparing the ubiquitous holiday posts on social media to unwanted spam email, the campaign brought attention to this practice in a way which was both critical and lighthearted. At the same time as decrying the gratuitous sharing of holiday moments, Three also encouraged this practice by removing the significant barrier of international roaming costs and framing travel sharing in a fun, frivolous light.

It is not only the content of Three's message but also the form that is significant. Three utilised both traditional and social media marketing. By creating advertising components such as

spoof citations for holiday braggers issued on Twitter and the hashtags #holidayspam and #tagabragger, Three invited the general public to participate in the discourse of #holidayspam whilst leading the conversation with their continued campaigning. The complicity of the audience in shaping the message disseminated by a company is related to “participatory culture”, a media model which includes not only professional outlets and companies but also amateur users in the production and circulation of media (Jenkins, 2006, 2007; Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2016). Adding to its social impact, Three’s campaign was extended by other companies such as Virgin Holidays who adapted its message for their own ends (Figure 1.4) and tabloid media such as the *Daily Mail* who covered Three’s promotional stunts (Silver, 2014). More significantly, however, the resonance of #holidayspam was enriched by the actions of the public who appropriated this phrase and added to its meaning through their own usage. An example can be seen in a Twitter post by the Surrey Police that added the safety-focussed hashtag #bragwhenback! to their travel-themed post (Figure 1.4). Jenkins (2006) refers to this process of media adaptation and recontextualisation as “convergence” and highlights it as a key way through which messages become interwoven with the fabric of modern society. Illustrating Jenkins’ tenets of convergence and participatory culture, Three’s concept of holiday spam has become embedded in the traveller lexicon. In September 2018, the Instagram hashtag #holidayspam contained more than 180,000 pieces of content forming a locus for conversation and imagination for travellers from around the world.

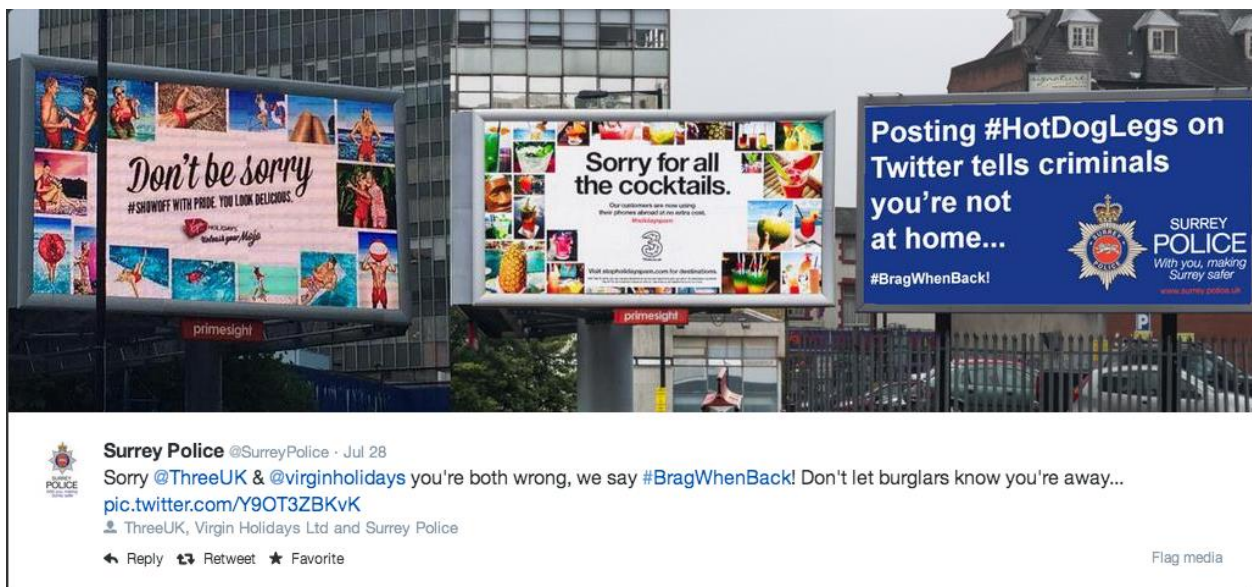


Figure 1.4. Three and Virgin billboards with a third photoshopped billboard by the Surrey Police (Long, 2014).

What started out as a marketing catchword is now a part of the tourist vocabulary. Indeed, the neologism *holiday spam* is a productive mechanism for negotiating a nascent tension in modern holidaymaking: How to balance the engrossing connectivity of information communications technologies (ICTs) within the liminal experience of travel. However, in its campaigning, Three does not approach this tension at the experiential level of actually using devices, which may problematise their own role within the process, but rather concentrates on the effect that sharing has upon the audience. In keeping this distance, Three is able to successfully play devil's advocate, humorously decrying over-sharing while tacitly encouraging the sharing of travel messages. In another more sober advertisement released in the same period but outside of the #holidayspam series, Three conducts on-the-street interviews with its customers in order to highlight the social benefits involved in sharing with friends and family during travel. The response of one traveller, Caroline, positions digital connectivity as an integral act of modern travel: "That enthusiasm to send a selfie or send a Snapchat, send a WhatsApp message, or call home, be like, 'I'm at the Sydney Opera House', it's yeah, I probably use my phone more [during travel]" (Three UK, 2014a). Ultimately, the boundary between sharing and over-sharing, contact and nuisance, communicating and spamming, is left deliberately hazy by Three. By situating their campaign on social media they invite the public to participate in the meaning of #holidayspam at the same time as they shape the overall message and protect their own position in travel communications using humour.¹ By playing both sides of the field, comically lamenting travel sharing and encouraging it as a method of increasing the enjoyment of the experience, Three is able to normalise the idea of sharing travel and support their own role as a (paid) facilitator in this process.

Here we see the role that telecommunications companies, and more broadly, ICTs, have in shaping and sharing the travel experience. The #holidayspam campaign suggests that travel is a special moment of change and self-fulfilment that deserves to be shared with others—but why do we feel the need to share so? While communication is undoubtedly related to social imperatives human beings experience as a species, digital disclosure and connectivity are also encouraged by companies who make serious gains on the back of the flows of personal information channelled within digital networks. While research has examined the online content produced by tourists, motivations for sharing, and the various affordances of ICTs within the journey; studies have tended to focus on the data produced rather than the practices through which ICTs are involved within, and shape, the journey including the political influence that IT

¹ See Ge and Gretzel (2018) for a discussion of the use of humour within tourism-related promotional campaigns on social media.

companies and their products exert on the activity of tourism (see Chapter 2). The effect of technology is frequently downplayed espousing a view in which “The medium itself is viewed as a neutral delivery system” (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 15). The adoption of holiday spam into the tourist argot highlights the influence of but a single successful promotion on touristic culture. To expand to other examples, issues like roaming and the *digital divide* present in varying standards of internet access on a global scale have significant impacts on how tourists use ICTs, and experience tourism, yet are generally ignored by studies focussing on the nascent development of ubiquitous connectivity (Chapter 4).

A viewpoint that acknowledges the structuring influence of digital technologies is a necessary (if often overlooked) component of exploring changes occurring in contemporary tourism. In order to incorporate this perspective as part of its investigation, this thesis is structured around tourists’ interactions with ICTs at the level of personal interaction using the theoretical background of performance. Employing a focus on the key practice of “online travel storytelling”, the thesis will answer the research question: How does the use of ICTs influence travel experience? The answer to this question will be achieved by addressing three research objectives that map thematically to the three parts of the thesis: connectivity (investigate how connectivity creates new routines, opportunities, and obligations within travel), performance (identify the practices through which travel experiences are transformed into online content), and place (analyse the factors that shape online self-presentation in the context of travel). These research objectives will be further contextualised within a summary of the contents of this thesis in Section 1.3. Firstly, however, the next section will discuss the research gap to which this project attends.

1.1 Research Gap

Extensive research has commented upon the powerful transformative influence that ICTs effect on travel. Travel, which was formerly conceived in terms of liminal experience, is transformed into an activity replete with ongoing social contact in which information is plentiful and pervasive. Theory argues that tourism should be seen as a socio-technical practice with issues like copresence, cocreation, information availability, and digital placemaking becoming important aspects of the tourist experience (Germann Molz, 2012; Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014; Munar, Gyimóthy, & Cai, 2013a; Neuhofer, 2014). In regard to the theorising of these effects, the methodology chapter will demonstrate that tourism studies has employed a predominantly representation rather than practice-focussed research agenda. Consequently, research has tended to focus on the data produced by travellers rather than their interactions

with ICTs and the wider social structures in which these exist.

This is not to say that theory has not investigated the involvement of ICTs within tourism at an experiential level. This is demonstrated by substantive works such as Germann Molz's (2012) in-depth study of tourists' mobile sociality as well as Munar et al.'s (2013a) interdisciplinary edited collection. There is, however, significant space for the study of tourists' use of ICTs in practice. A rising groundswell of research articles has called for further study in a number of areas where this is possible including the storytelling practices through which travellers create online travel content (Munar, 2011; Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Lee, & Tussyadiah, 2011; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Yoo & Gretzel, 2012); how varying experiences of internet connectivity affect the overall quality of travel experience (Germann Molz & Paris, 2015); the effect of audience interaction on travel behaviours and itineraries (Choe, Kim, & Fesenmaier, 2017; MacKay & Vogt, 2012); how ICTs are managed by tourists as a component of the experience (Jansson, 2018; Tribe & Mkono, 2017); and, how travellers' narratives are utilised within online self-presentation (Bosangit, Hibbert, & McCabe, 2015; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Gretzel, 2017a; McWha, Frost, & Laing, 2018; Mkono & Tribe, 2017). In particular, it is this final call connecting tourists' use of ICTs with self-presentation that is of interest to this project. Such a perspective recognises tourists' online narratives as specialised media artefacts utilised in the construction of identity. By investigating how self-creation is performed within tourism, this thesis, as per Dinhopl and Gretzel's (2016, p. 137) contention, considers tourists' use of ICTs as not simply changing tourist behaviour at the micro level of personal practice but rather as influencing broader shifts in tourism consumption as a social practice.

Within travel, ICTs are used for a variety of reasons including information search, communication, entertainment, and service transactions (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2014, pp. 16-18). The concept of storytelling provides a lens that is able to encompass the heterogenous totality of these different functions as online media is recorded pervasively within one's personal profiles. Here, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by ICTs and storytelling. ICTs are defined as technologies that allow communication at a distance. ICTs include personal devices and technological infrastructure as well as software and social media platforms (Tribe & Mkono, 2017, p. 106). As social media forms the stage through which ICT-mediated communications are manifest, this technology has tended to act as the focus for researcher attention and may be considered the principal frame for tourists' ICT use. Tourists' storytelling is conceptualised through the practice of creating "online travel narratives"—the multimedia records of travel shared online. The digital environment changes the format that tourists' stories take. In social media, information is collated within personal profiles that make it long-lasting

and retrievable (boyd, 2010). In this environment, practices that were not previously considered as storytelling such as information searches and service transactions may be read as narratives as they are held in profiles or search histories over time and come to represent the traveller (Germann Molz, 2011, p. 99).

Using the perspective of the “networked self” (Papacharissi, 2010, 2018), in which one’s identity is composed of the different online profiles held by an individual, it is possible to see online acts such as creating, searching for, or consuming media as performative behaviours representing the identity of the actor. Through the window of the networked self, the varied data records created by the traveller may be conceptualised as online travel narratives. This includes both the individual emails, blog posts, Instagram uploads, Tumblr reblogs, TripAdvisor reviews, YouTube videos, and other media records; and their collected sum. Online travel narratives are then complex (formed of many interconnected parts), distributed (occurring within a network of sites simultaneously), dynamic (in the sense that they may be edited or receive comments from other users), and performative (influenced by the perceived audience). They are at once public (in tagged blog posts) and private (in the case of email messages), collaborative (can be replied to) and singular (in formats where comments are turned off).

Storytelling is an activity with significant historical roots within the activity of travel. Rather, however, than explore this practice from a discourse or narrative perspective, as has so far been prominent in analyses of tourists’ online communication (Banyai & Glover, 2011), this project intends to produce an interpretative, ground-up portrait of tourists’ ICT use. For this reason, this thesis is rooted in the study of the personal experience of the researcher using a hybrid autoethnographic approach. This is an innovative and effective method as it closely follows the personal practices of ICT usage within and between a variety of realistic online and offline settings. Data collection is based on two separate periods of fieldwork during which the author studied his own experiences as an ICT-using tourist as a way to identify salient issues and connect these with wider theory. The data is analysed from the interdisciplinary perspective of tourism and internet studies, including relevant material from the wider field of sociology. Such an approach fits well with Munar and Gyimóthy’s (2013, pp. 260-261) suggestion that research on ICT-mediated tourism take inspiration from the digital humanities (see also Werthner et al., 2015; Jansson, 2007).

Tourists’ online narratives are conceptualised as specialised media artefacts utilised within the construction of identity that draw on the context of travel in order to deliver particular statements or meanings. Literature from internet studies embeds internet users’ presentation strategies within the political economies of the internet helping to highlight the ways in which

these technological structures influence performance. The overlap between the experiential sphere of travel and online self-presentation suggests a renegotiation of the activity of travel including questions such as why tourists go to certain places, what they choose to see and do, and how touristic locations are consumed; as well as broader implications for the construction of touristic place and culture. While this introduction has so far concentrated on the benefits to tourism studies, investigating social media use during tourism will help to develop the theoretical models developed within the field of internet studies by applying them in context. Here, looking at user practices within the experiential sphere of tourism helps to counter the broadness of context experienced in messy, everyday internet usage and may provide more acute observations on social media performance.

1.2. Literature Review

From here this introduction will go on to briefly review the two fields of literature contained within its investigation: tourism and internet studies.

1.2.1 Tourism Studies

Tourism studies is an interdisciplinary academic field exploring the economic, social, and cultural implications of travel. Graburn and Jafari (1991, pp. 4-5) trace the origins of this discipline to the 1970s and the rise of scholarly journals and gatherings addressing the topic of tourism at this time. While the corpus of tourism studies demonstrates significant epistemological diversity (Darbellay & Stock, 2012; Lew, Hall, & Williams, 2014), a workable organising principle is the division of studies into two main tenets, either exploring tourism as an economic event or a cultural practice (Robinson & Jamal, 2009; Rojek & Urry, 1997; Tribe, 1997). Owing to this interdisciplinary background, studies of tourism frequently draw from wider theoretical fields such as geography, commerce, psychology, transportation, and consumer studies. The current study represents a similar trajectory through its application of theory from internet studies to the world of connected tourism. While literature has commented on the dominance of the business paradigm within tourism studies (see Chapter 2), Tribe has recently argued that rather than being governed by a specific research paradigm, the most significant influence on tourism research is the social paradigm of neoliberalism (Tribe, Dann, & Jamal, 2015).

1.2.2 Tourism History

Travel is a practice that necessitates leaving one's home space in order to venture out into the wider world. Historically, this movement has been associated with physical necessity, particularly, commerce, as leaving one's home region meant exposing oneself to risks and uncertainty. It is then no surprise to find that many of the first travellers chronicled in Western history were explorers or merchants acting on behalf of a government or patron such as Marco Polo or Captain James Cook. These travellers frequently recorded their journeys thereby both producing cultural knowledge and making it possible for others to follow in their footsteps (Youngs, 2013, Chapter 2). Highlighting an example of this, the British author and historian H.G. Wells notes the effects of Marco Polo's travel stories upon European society, and, in particular, the navigator Christopher Columbus:

The publication of Marco Polo's travels produced a profound effect upon the European imagination. The European literature, and especially the European romance of the fifteenth century, echoes with the names of Marco Polo's story, with Cathay (North China) and Cambulac (Pekin) and the like. Two centuries later, among the readers of the *Travels of Marco Polo* was a certain Genoese mariner, Christopher Columbus, who conceived the brilliant idea of sailing westward round the world to China. In Seville there is a copy of *Travels* with marginal notes by Columbus. (Wells, 1992, p. 207)

Through technological and cartographical improvements and increased intercultural understanding spurred by trade and foreign diplomacy, the risks involved in travel began to decrease. Travel began to be viewed as a suitable avenue for garnering the knowledge needed to be a productive member of society, as evidenced through the activity of the Grand Tour that was popular between the 17th and 19th centuries (Adler, 1989a; Brodsky-Porges, 1981). The Grand Tour was an educational rite of passage where well-to-do young men of the elite classes travelled through continental Europe in order to garner social contacts, foreign language skills, and knowledge of the world. From this point, with the gradual popularisation of travel, it is possible to discern a shift in the reasons for and purpose of the journey, from travelling for financial or national interests to travelling for personal interest and self-fulfilment (Blanton, 2002).

In the mid-19th century, technological advances in the fields of communications and transportations helped support the democratisation of travel (Urry & Larsen 2011; Brodsky-

Porges, 1981). At this time the English businessman, Thomas Cook is credited with planting the first seedlings of contemporary mass tourism by organising short outings for English travellers to continental Europe (Graburn & Jafari, 1991). Following on the heels of Cook's increasing business, the Baedeker and Michelin guides compiled geographical information and noteworthy sites in order to map continental Europe and North Africa for European leisure tourists (Olson, 2010). Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, travel for leisure developed into a common part of modern Western lifestyles (Boorstin, 1964). As many of the former colonial countries in the developing world proved to be the fair-weather holiday grounds of Western tourists, theorists would come to criticise the postcolonial underpinnings of modern tourism particularly as observable within travel writing (Clifford, 1997; Holland & Huggan, 2000; Pratt, 1992; Spurr, 1993).

Increasingly, the activity of tourism may be viewed as bound within wider practices of movement and contact that underpin the form of contemporary social life. Mobilities theory posits that with the constant movement of people, products, ideas, capital, and culture on a global scale, touristic movement is becoming an increasingly normalised activity (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2004). Such a shift brings with it the blurring of previously more sharply delineated binaries in the tourist experience such as exotic/mundane, home/away, and work/leisure (Larsen, 2008a; Hannam et al., 2014). Because of the globalised, interconnected nature of contemporary society, Huggan (2009) theorises that travellers increasingly seek different kinds of leisure experiences such as niche or extreme activities, or more politically charged iterations of modern tourism like dark tourism, sex tourism, and disaster tourism. While modern tourism has been framed through the discourse of "the West to the rest" (Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001, p. 151), the development of touring classes within emerging economies such as China provides new lenses through which to view tourist movement (Zhang & Hitchcock, 2014). Finally, ICTs are playing an ever-expanding role in contemporary tourism with the rise of internet-based sharing services such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015; Germann Molz, 2014), the use of devices for the coproduction of experience (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2013), and the development of data assisted *smart tourism* (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015) characterising some of the main currents within the contemporary experience of travel.

As the era of mass commercial tourism brought the experience of travel to the masses, the distinction between the related terms of *tourist* and *traveller* has become a concern. Numerous scholarly works have considered the difference between tourists and travellers. Generally, tourists are seen as passive, complacent, risk averse, and interested in relaxation;

while travellers are seen as adventurous, active, and interested in foreign cultures and experience (Azariah, 2017; Boorstin, 1964; Dann, 1996). In this thesis a division is not invoked between tourists and travellers. The two concepts, while representing a workable typology for conceptualising different types of journey or narratives, are viewed as interrelated in creating the heterogenous totality of travel experience. As such the two terms are used interchangeably to refer to somebody who undertakes a journey.

1.2.3 Theories for understanding tourism

Perhaps the first significant overview of tourists' lifeworlds and social structure is by the American historian Boorstin (1964) who describes the changes in the travel experience from a frontier activity through which knowledge was gained by individuals to a risk-free group activity facilitated by businesses and marketed along the principles of spectacle and exoticism. The resultant transformation of travel from activity to industry, Boorstin postulates, is responsible for the development of travel into a "pseudo-event", an activity designed around simulation and consumption. Extending, though in some ways at odds with Boorstin's theories, MacCannell's *The Tourist* (1976) outlines a theory of tourist motivation that posits the search for authenticity as the driving force behind touristic activity, arguing, "All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel" (p. 10). In this way, MacCannell posits tourism as an antidote to inauthentic modern Western lifestyles as tourists consume *other* places and peoples through the socially organised practice of sightseeing.

In another noteworthy development, Cohen (1979) theorises five different frames through which the activity of tourism may be experienced depending on the tourist's motivations and the interplay between the frontiers of centre and periphery. By providing a typology of different tourist frames, Cohen allows for the possibility that tourist experiences differ according to the choices and motivations of the individual. Of great importance within recent theorisation, Urry (1990) developed the idea of the "tourist gaze" in order to explain tourist behaviour as socially structured enactments, and, characterised the tourist industry as staging the visual performances through which tourism is experienced. In Urry's view tourism is seen as a cyclic process as tourists seek to reproduce promotional images within the "hermeneutic circle" of travel representation (p. 142; see also Albers & James, 1988; Jenkins, 2003).

Taking its lead from media studies and other scholarly fields that argued for the agency of consumers, tourism research of the late millennium began to explore tourist agency. This theoretical movement has been referred to as the *performance turn* and is characterised by

attention toward the body and senses, the application of performance theory and metaphors, and the recognition of the agency of tourists, hosts, and social structures in shaping the meanings of tourism (Larsen & Urry, 2011; Larsen, 2012; Rickly-Boyd, Knudsen, Braverman, & Metro-Roland, 2016, Chapter 5). Here, Veijola and Jokinen (1994) call for more research looking at the body within tourism; Edensor (1998) completed an extended analysis of tourist interactions in and around the Taj Mahal; Haldrup and Larsen (2003) looked at placemaking through touristic photography; Maoz (2006) explained the “local gaze”; and Wilson and Little (2008) explored solo women’s travel. Such research, by bringing a variety of different perspectives into tourism, has helped disrupt dominant visual, masculine, and Western colonial paradigms in tourism research. The result is that we see the reformulation of tourist theories addressing these criticisms such as the two renewed editions of *The Tourist Gaze* (2002; 2011 with Larsen); as well as the arrival of edited collections exploring tourism from critical (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2007) and interdisciplinary perspectives such as with media studies (Crouch, Jackson, & Thompson, 2005) or the broader humanities (Munar et al., 2013a). Lastly, we might also consider the increasingly fluid signification of travel within theories of modern society such as works by Bauman (2000) and Urry (2007) and their influence on the way touristic movement is viewed in the digital era.

1.2.4 Tourism and ICTs

In its early days, research on ICT-mediated tourism speculated on visions such as “cybertourism” (Prideaux & Singer, 2005; Rojek, 1998). We see these speculations take on a more concrete form as researchers analysed tourists’ experiences contained within the form of online blog narratives (Akehurst, 2009; Puhlinger & Taylor, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). While initial analyses of travellers’ blog narratives took a particular focus on traveller-created content as a form of electronic word of mouth or eWOM from which consumer preferences could be extracted (Banyai & Glover, 2011; Banyai & Havitz, 2013), alternative accounts also considered the effect of ICTs in the experience of liminality (White & White, 2007) and the potential for online surveillance (Germann Molz, 2006). From this point, we see a broadening of research and theory away from the predominant container of blogs to the wider experiential, economic, social, and cultural dimensions contained within tourists’ use of ICTs and, in particular, social media (Munar et al., 2013a). This includes views into the broader integration of digital technology into tourism through themes such as connectivity, social support, collaboration, and the use of new media. Nonetheless, it is possible to argue that a trend toward data-focussed research as espoused through research methods such as content analysis and

netnography has temporarily disrupted the momentum of the performance turn in tourism research (see Chapter 2). Presently, there exists a number of divergent research terms and theories for understanding tourists' use of ICTs, which are located in and around the inchoate area of e-tourism (Werthner et al., 2015). Therefore, a critical review of these terms will be included within Chapter 3 with the purpose of setting a research agenda aligning tourism and internet studies.

From here, the chapter will go on to look at the field of internet studies, and, in particular, the technology of social media.

1.2.4 Internet Studies

Internet studies is a multifaceted discipline with the purpose of investigating the role of the internet and related technologies such as the web and ICTs in contemporary society (Dutton, 2013; Ess & Consalvo, 2011). The sociologist Barry Wellman (2011) explains that internet studies started in the late twentieth century and charts three distinct phases during its existence: the first paralleling the dotcom boom of the late 90s speculated on the form of the internet and the liberative/dystopian possibilities for society; the second occurring across the turn of the millennium provided empirical research on adoption and usage; while the third looks at the internet as an embedded technology within contemporary life. As internet usage has spread and diversified, internet studies has worked to produce theoretical models which explain the politics, sociality, economy, and cultures of internet environments and their diffusion into everyday life. In its present-day form, the examination of the social and political structures of the internet brings with it a particular focus on exploring sharing as a rhetorical term framing the practices and cultures of the internet (Aigrain, 2012; John, 2017). Finally, given the portentous nature of the internet as a social technology including the nascent concerns raised by big data and online surveillance, an important dimension of internet studies is the employment of critical perspectives on the development and usage of the internet within global society (Bakardjieva, 2011; Fuchs, 2009, 2017).

1.2.5 Social Media

Social media has been defined by Lang and Benbunan-Fich (2010) in relatively simple terms as “web applications that process, store, and retrieve user-generated content” (p. 16). Kaplan and Haenli (2010) go a little further in describing the technical and sociological footings of social media explaining, “Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation

and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61). While social media are a relatively new phenomena, the speed and scale of their adoption can be clearly seen in usage statistics. In their 2018 study of digital media, the internet marketing agency, We Are Social (2018, p. 7) reports the total number of active social media users worldwide as 3.2 billion, up 13% from the previous year (p.8). Just as significant as the adoption of social media as an end-user consumer technology, however, is the integration of social media-based initiatives within social, governmental, business, and entertainment spheres (Hartley, Burgess, & Bruns, 2013).

In terms of categorisation, van Dijck (2013a, pp. 8-9) has proposed four different forms of social media: Social Networking Services, User Generated Content, Trading and Marketing Sites, and Play and Game Sites (see also Kaplan & Haenli, 2010). However, owing to the tendency for sites to iterate and try different features, van Dijck also highlights the permeable boundaries between different categories of social media and the evolving nature of the landscape in general. Within the past two decades of social media adoption, platforms have come (Instagram and Snapchat to cite two recent examples) and gone (Vine, Myspace, Friendster) and the way users behave on social media has also developed. As the consequences of data, privacy, and surveillance have become apparent both platforms and user practices have changed shape (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014; Raynes-Goldie, 2010; van Dijck, 2013b). In tandem with developments at software level, new hardware developments such as smartphones, drones, and action sports capture devices spur emergent social media trends and behaviours. As an example, Dinhopf and Gretzel (2016, p. 130) point out how the introduction of a front-facing camera on the Apple iPhone 4 helped to popularise selfie culture. Another important aspect of social media is its simultaneous global and regional dimensions as highlighted by platforms with userships located predominantly in a particular national context such as Chinese platforms like WeChat and Weibo (Kent, Ellis, & Xu, 2017). Finally, the rapid growth of social media also necessitates exploring gaps in adoption. The presence of a multilayered *digital divide* suggests that factors such as cost, knowledge, and network availability inhibit the adoption of social media by certain demographics leading to a skewed usage pattern (Pearce & Rice, 2013).

1.2.6 Social media environment and economy

Regarding their impact on sociality, Baym and boyd write that, “social media blur boundaries between presence and absence, time and space, control and freedom, personal and mass communication, private and public, and virtual and real” (2012, p. 320), allowing for new social dynamics and necessitating new social skills. Seeking to explain the factors shaping

social media discourse as a whole, boyd (2010) has outlined four basic structural affordances that are common to social interaction across all virtual communities i.e., “networked publics”: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. Together, these conditions influence the patterns of user behaviour and communication within online social spaces (see also Belk, 2013; Papacharissi & Yuan, 2011; van Dijck & Poell, 2013, for related sets of conditions). The structural affordances of networked publics mean that published content may flow far beyond one’s social network to friends of friends, peripheral networks, or complete strangers; depending on factors such as the user’s privacy settings, the distribution algorithms used by the platform, and whether the material is interacted with or shared by other users.² Drawing upon Meyrowitz’s (1986) seminal text *No Sense of Place*, Marwick and boyd (2011a) refer to the particular dynamic of the coalesced social media audience as “context collapse” explaining, “social media technologies collapse multiple audiences into single contexts, making it difficult for people to use the same techniques online that they do to handle multiplicity in face-to-face conversation” (p. 114; see also Hogan, 2010). The phenomena of social media virality demonstrates the way in which content may easily move between users entering new social and audience contexts. Indeed, it is the very capacity for information to easily travel through online networks that forms the mechanism for creating value in this environment.

The economy of social media has been described using references to late capitalism and also through new theoretical models of transaction (Quiggin, 2013; Papacharissi, 2010; van Dijck, 2013a). One widespread method used to describe the value system of online interactions is that of the “attention economy” (Goldhaber, 1997). Goldhaber proposes that because the internet has created an environment where information is extremely available, the scarce resource and proportionately valuable commodity becomes users’ attention. Drawing on the rise of “social buttons” that gauge the popularity of a given piece of online content, Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) extend the basic principles of the attention economy using the idea of the “like economy”. As an example, within online space if a user finds a piece of content interesting they will likely interact with this item using *like* or *follow* buttons. These interactions provide a metric for social success as they are tallied by the platform and become markers of popularity or value (Marwick & boyd, 2011). At a technological level, the item to which these markers are attached may in turn benefit from increased exposure via the distribution algorithms inbuilt within social media platforms (van Dijck 2013a, Chapter 2). As social media platforms represent social environments where users are able to gain different forms of capital (Pearce & Rice, 2017), the

² This extends to online travel stories. It is the fluidity, and consequently, seemingly ubiquitous presence, of tourists’ online holiday narratives that forms the basis for Three’s #holidayspam campaign.

attention economy creates a structure through which capital is distributed between users. The ability of users who are able to garner large amounts of attention to transfer this skill into a paid position as a blogger or *influencer* highlights the value inherent in being able to command attention online.

Finally, it is necessary to look at the idea of sharing within online contexts and the rise of sharing as rhetoric and social practice within contemporary society (John, 2017). Social media platforms are businesses. While generally free to use, they exist within an evolving business model of collecting, processing, and selling information about the people who use them. Drawing on earlier studies on the functionality of social media platforms, van Dijck (2013b) identifies a “connective turn” within the structuring of social media in which, rather than acting as mere containers for the accumulation of user data, platforms actively steer users toward the sharing of personal information using features such as news feeds and social suggestions that encourage connectivity, interaction, and disclosure (see also Papacharissi & Easton, 2013). Here, Lampinen (2015) explains how user interactions benefit platforms:

Social media companies, especially social network sites such as Facebook, are incentivized to encourage peer-to-peer sharing, in part because the more we share, the more data they can amass about everyday activities that used to be difficult to track. (p. 2)

In such an environment, users’ behaviours are shaped by embedded structures that stimulate the sharing of personal information by rewarding public behaviours. The idea of sharing also extends beyond information into the realms of goods and experiences such as within the popular travel-related platforms Airbnb, Couchsurfing, or Uber, which also aim to collect user data as a key business strategy (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015). While another earlier stream of investigation tracks the discourse of sharing in relation to the practice of filesharing (Aigrain, 2012). In this light, sharing, in its many forms, may be considered as the paradigmatic practice of social media. However, the multifaceted term *sharing* should be considered as containing multiple, often conflicting, meanings and motivations (Belk, 2013; Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015; John, 2017; Lampinen, 2015). This study will extend the way sharing is understood by investigating this practice within the context of connected tourism.

1.2.7 Social Media Identity and Performance

Given that networked publics present a frontier for socialisation that is effectively separated from embodied social life by removing many of the cues used in physical social interactions such as gestures, facial expressions, and dress, and replacing these with textual description, emoticons, or standard profiles (Marwick, 2013), there have been numerous studies into how identity is configured online. While early literature considered cyberspace as a postmodern realm where identity constructions that diverged from one's physical reality were possible (Turkle, 1995, 1999), as knowledge of the social and economic imperatives of the internet has improved, the idea of online identity as distinct from offline identity has lost cache (Lovink, 2011; van Dijck, 2013b). In an overview of extant theory regarding identity and the internet, Marwick (2013) presents two reasons for why the gulf between online and offline identities is narrowing, the first being the use of social media to connect with existing contacts rather than strangers, and the second being the spread of wireless devices that increasingly integrate internet use with everyday life.

The treatment of identity within the social arena of online platforms draws from debates about selfhood that have been occurring within modern scholarship. Summarising theory from medieval Europe until current day, Cohen (2010) charts the shift from thinking of an "essentialist" or pre-determined self in favour of the idea of self-as-project, something that is contingently produced by an individual over time (see also Danziger, 1997). This shift toward self as performance is supported by scholarship such as Goffman's (1956) symbolic interactionist understanding of the self as actor, Giddens' (1991) theory of identity as a lifelong project managed by the individual within the conditions of neo-liberalism, and Butler's (1993) idea of identity as negotiated within and against hegemonic socio-political discourse. In its understanding of self and identity, this thesis follows Goffman's theory of the multiplicitous self enacted in relation to the social situations and environments encountered (see Chapter 6 for further discussion regarding the application of Goffman in this thesis). However, while Goffman's theory puts emphasis on the audience in determining the effect or consequences of an individual's performance, more recent discussions have afforded more agency to the individual in shaping the meanings of performance in terms of a larger personal history and narrative. This can be seen in Giddens' (1991, Chapter 7) idea of "life politics" in which the individual is charged with fluidly constructing and reconstructing their life story as an ongoing, individual-centred project. Thus, this thesis understands the connected tourist's self as being produced through choreographed physical/online enactions performed in concert with an audience at the same time as being subjectively defined and representing inner logic and

aspirations.

The performative production of identity may be clearly seen on social media where individuals have the ability to create, personalise, redact, and delete, different personal profiles existing within an interwoven web from which a cumulative impression of the self is created. Correspondingly, much scholarship has drawn upon performance theory when explaining how identity is expressed within virtual environments. Marwick and boyd (2011a) have used Goffmanian theory to analyse the strategies through which Twitter users negotiate the imagined audience, while Papacharissi (2012) notes that “play” i.e., the creative use of language, and “affect” such as conversation and rhetorical improvisation, are two tools in the user’s performative palette. Hogan (2010) contends that alongside synchronous interactions like chatting, the affordances of social media also support asynchronous communications such as posts or comments. As such, Hogan divides self-presentation into “situations” in which performance is practiced in real time for a live audience and “exhibitions” in which artefacts are specifically presented in order to produce an impression for time-separated users. In accord with developments in the structure of social media and online performance, recent literature on identity has engaged with the frame of digital self-portraits or *selfies*.

While much popular media has pictured selfies through the lens of narcissism, scholarly literature has explored selfies as a form of self-presentation (Rettberg, 2014; Senft & Baym, 2015; Tiidenberg, 2018). For Rettberg (2014), the appeal of selfies comes from the fact that the subject has complete control over the process of self-presentation, from choosing the angle, to selecting photos, to editing, to deciding where, when, and who to share with. In this way, research on selfies has helped to highlight the constructive, responsive, and redactive behaviours through which the self is presented and managed in online space. Theorists have described the collective practices that internet users employ to negotiate online performance as “microcelebrity” (Senft, 2008, 2013; Marwick, 2015). Microcelebrity involves packaging representations of self within a consistent discursive frame and strategically interacting with the online audience in order to manage flows of attention.

Prominent users with large followings who are recognised for their ability to command the attention of other users are known as influencers. Hearn and Shoenhoff (2016) state that influencers “work to generate a form of ‘celebrity’ capital by cultivating as much attention as possible and crafting an authentic ‘personal brand’ via social networks, which can subsequently be used by companies and advertisers for consumer outreach” (p. 194). Providing a case study of influencers at work, Duffy and Hund (2015) analysed the content published by prominent fashion/beauty bloggers in order to explore the strategies through which these users translate,

“the self into a consistent yet distinct visual aesthetic, written voice, and potential partner for commercial brands” (p. 6; see also Abidin, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Here, it is possible to view the figure of the influencer as fluid, sometimes covert, embodiments of corporate logic within the field of social media. Finally, recent work by Abidin (2018) has outlined the figure of the “internet celebrity” to show how contemporary celebrity is strategically woven across both online spaces and traditional media through a variety of related online/offline practices.

1.2.8 Critiques of Social Media and Further Developments

In addition to the emergent economic paradigms (such as the attention economy) and vocational positions (such as the professional blogger or influencer) that have been created or enhanced via the capital on offer within social media worlds, it is also worthwhile exploring criticisms of social media. Fuchs’ (2014a, 2015) Marxist criticism argues that the internet and social media platforms enhance the liquification of labour terms and conditions as technological affordances blur distinctions between concepts like leisure/play, public/private, and fixed/mobile. Within the emergent labour environment of social media, Scholz (2013) highlights how platforms gather data from users that they offer as a commodity to advertising clients and may enact ownership of media products produced by users. In terms of inter-user relationships, investigating the social dynamic of the follower/followee relationship, Abidin (2016b) explores how practices such as liking, sharing, and commenting comprise forms of labour that assist in increasing the visibility, and value, of media products. Through such examinations of user practices within social media, theory has come to understand this environment as fraught with political and economic dimensions. Such concerns are brought into stark relief in the era of big data, pervasive connectivity, and the internet of things as emergent theory looks at the power wielded by the large GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple) platforms in the form of knowledge (data) and social influence (proprietary structures such as algorithms) (Srneciek, 2017; van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018). These criticisms can be useful tools for analysis as the relationship between identity, performance, and capital within social media continues to evolve.

1.3 Connectivity, Performance, Place

This thesis will undertake its examination by looking at three key themes related to the three research objectives utilised by this thesis. These are: (1) connectivity; (2) performance; and, (3) place.

Part	I	II	III
Theme	Connectivity	Performance	Place
Research objective	Investigate how connectivity creates new routines, opportunities, and obligations within tourism.	Identify the practices through which travel experiences are transformed into online content.	Analyse the factors that shape online self-presentation in the context of travel.
Chapters	3-5	6-7	8-9

Table 1.1. The three constituent parts of this thesis and related research objectives.

Connectivity is the ability to interact with other entities over a network. ICTs propose a fundamentally different experience of connectivity that contrasts with prior conceptualisations of travel and invites the retheorisation of the travel experience. Chapter 3 begins by critically reviewing literature on ICT-mediated tourism. It proposes a research agenda based on the figure of the “connected tourist” using the concepts of Web 2.0 and Jenkins’ (2006, 2007) “participatory culture” as the contextual background for contemporary travel. By highlighting the mediatory influence that devices and social media platforms have on the experience of travel, the chapter calls for increased research into the materiality and embedded political structures of ICTs. This viewpoint supports the employment of theory from internet studies within tourism. Chapter 4 explores the nature of internet connectivity during travel using fieldwork data. Arguing against a predominant binary connected/disconnected view in current literature, it outlines a heterogenous spectrum of travel connectivity. The chapter discusses how different experiences of travel connectivity influence the experience and telling of connected tourism. Finally, Chapter 5 explores how social connectivity is integrated within the contemporary experience of travel. It does so by looking at the routines, opportunities, and obligations of internet use as identified within fieldwork and literature. Arguing that there is no standardised process through which tourists negotiate ICT use, this chapter proposes the concept of the “dual journey” in which tourists encounter simultaneous physical and digital sensory inputs. Collectively, Part I investigates the complex layering effect which digital connectivity brings to the journey highlighting connected tourists’ negotiation with techno-political structures as implicit within the extrasensory dual journey. As the connectivity afforded by ICTs is negotiated on a personal basis, Part I leads toward the metaphor of performance which underpins the investigation within

Part II.

The theoretical concept of performance may be used as a lens for looking at social events as structured happenings that express particular meanings. Performance has been a significant theme of recent tourism study exploring the agency of tourist consumers. What makes performance especially relevant as a lens for studying connected tourists is that it is also used within internet studies as a frame for social interactions within online environments. The work of Erving Goffman (1956) provides a base for exploring how tourists' perception of, and interactions with, the online audience influences tourist experience and behaviour. Synthesising interdisciplinary applications of Goffmanian theory, Chapter 6 looks at the connected tourists' gaze. This is tracked through the practice of selfies and theory regarding online self-presentation. The tourist's "selfie gaze" is mediated by the structuring factors of the attention economy and the presentation strategy of microcelebrity. The idea of a self that is selectively choreographed across interactive platforms highlights the agency of not only the tourist but also the online audience in shaping how tourism is portrayed and experienced. Building on the perceptive mode of the selfie gaze, Chapter 7 looks at how tourists record their experiences for social media by outlining a nonlinear model that builds on scholarship by Lo and McKercher (2015). As online space makes information permanent and subject to the conditions of the network, we see that the strategic management of self becomes an important characteristic of recording travel. Travellers' devices form a complex mediatory interface between physical/digital space through which performance is captured, edited, shared, and feedback received. The propinquity of the online audience within connected tourism complicates negotiations of front and backstage suggesting a socialised mode of tourism experience. The implications of this mediated form of touristic consumption are explored in Part III through an investigation of the newly-popularised tourist destination of Trolltunga, Norway.

The focus of Part III is place. Place is conceptualised as the sociocultural meanings that resonate in a given location. Places give life to the performances of tourists by acting as the background for their stories and providing the furniture through which meanings, identities, and relationships are defined to self and others. Chapter 8 provides a case study of the touristic destination of Trolltunga in order to look at how place is constructed in the era of connected tourism. With the internet we see the concept of online place—the agglomerated online representations of a given location—that is constructed by both tourists and institutional entities. By producing and critically interpreting a chronological history of Trolltunga examining key events in the site's history alongside fieldwork data, this chapter highlights the increasing role of tourist narratives in placemaking. Touristic meanings such as self-transformation are written

onto the landscape through tourists' online storytelling. Chapter 9 goes on to explore how personal value is created within connected tourism using the concept of capital. By investigating the emerging socio-technical discourse of *instagenic*, this chapter considers how certain places facilitate the gathering of attention, and thus capital, within social media. Such locations demonstrate the interpolation of the logic of the digital economy within tourism pointing toward new modes of experience and consumption. The sharing of tourist narratives is used not only for social connectivity but creates a data record of authentic experience that is used to further both self-creation and industry. Drawing on the integral importance of online storytelling within connected tourism at personal, social, and industry levels, this final chapter proposes a revised conception of touristic consumption as "sitesharing" within which sharing experience online is the defining practice of touristic consumption.

1.4 Discussion and Conclusions

There are many parallels between travel and networked communications, particularly as seen through the frame of connectivity. Travel movement enables connections, whilst at the same time it also breaks them. The internet emphasises this first characteristic while reducing the second. What emerges might be thought of as constituting connected travel. Internet connectivity presupposes a radically new conceptualisation of touristic movement as a socio-technical activity in which ICTs are insinuated within and shape travel experience. This thesis contributes to a burgeoning literature exploring the contours of the connected travel experience by providing an extended study based within the interdisciplinary background of tourism and internet studies. Drawing its inspiration from the call for more attention towards the way tourists' experiences are interwoven within identity construction, this study pays particular attention to traveller storytelling as this occurs on social media. This focus bridges existing theories for understanding tourism such as the tourist gaze (Chapter 6) and sight sacralisation (Chapter 8) with ideas about the sociology of the internet. The purpose is to highlight the impact of the virtual sphere on the practice of travel using an understanding of the structural dimensions of internet space and sociality. The mobilisation of experiential fieldwork data within the research text serves to foreground the ways ICTs are made sense of and inserted into experience at the level of practice.

To go back to the example of Three's #holidayspam campaign, the convergent properties of digital media invite reformulations of tourist practice. These are not only positive. As seen through the Surrey Police's reaction to the #holidayspam campaign and warning about travel sharing, ICTs open up a new world of interconnection in which we share with known and

unknown others through systems that are both visible (the networked self) and invisible (data mining, algorithmic channelling). Aside from the negotiation of positive and negative contexts in relation to personal privacy, the affordances of digital technology also support new experiential possibilities. The technologies of multifunction smart devices, high-speed internet connectivity, and sharing services challenge binary understandings of travel such as authentic/inauthentic, home/away, and local/host, as these have been known throughout the last century and a half of modern tourism. Here, the data flows which potentially assist with tourists' needs and wants also produce what collectively amount to massive negotiations of context (such as work calls, audience feedback, special offers, connection dropouts, device maintenance, editing decisions, and information saturation) which occur in an ongoing manner throughout travel and are managed by the tourist as part of the experience.

Rather than focussing on tourist experience using an analysis centred around the destination and the consumption of place, this project focusses on the travelling self and how this is produced through the practice of sharing travel stories. What emerges is a portrait of the importance of online narratives not only as a means of self-presentation and definition but also as a means of touristic consumption in and of itself. At its endpoint, this investigation will discuss a conceptual framework referred to as "sitesharing" within which touristic consumption is achieved through the sharing of experience online and the self-presentation, social recognition, and audience interaction this act permits. The theoretical concept of sitesharing provides a framework through which to understand the interweaving of the physical and technological processes of tourism. Its sociological significance is to demonstrate and explain the repercussions of digital technologies such as devices and social media on the experience of tourism (and the meanings, cultures, and knowledge flows this act entails). In this way, the thesis may be also used as a case study to consider the myriad facets of daily life outside of tourism that are being affected by the processes of digitisation and the rise of social media. The original contribution of this thesis to knowledge will be to unfold this unique interdisciplinary conceptual framework, sitesharing, through which to understand how ICTs are integrated within and affect the journey at the level of experience. From here, the next chapter will go on to explain the methodology utilised within this investigation.

Chapter 2. Methodology



Figure 2.1. A roadside sign graffitied to show the availability of wi-fi at a nearby business, Mexico. (Author)

Literature has commented on the predominance of a business research agenda within tourism studies (Franklin & Crang, 2001; Franklin, 2014; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Munar, Gyimóthy, & Cai, 2013b) that is manifest in a tendency toward positivistic methodologies and an underrepresentation of critical perspectives (Hannam & Knox, 2005; Jennings, 2009; Lean, Staiff, & Waterton, 2014; Rojek & Urry, 1997; Tribe, 2008; Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). The result of this prevailing trend can be seen in a preponderance of scholarship exploring tourism through representations such as photographs, brochures, blog posts, or other tourist texts rather than the practices such as photography and sightseeing through which it is conducted (Crang, 1997, 1999; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010; Larsen, 2008a; Scarles, 2009). Larsen (2013, p. 28) has referred to this as a “representational paradigm” in tourism research. However, using the

context of the performance turn at the end of the millennium, Larsen goes on to highlight increasing research into tourist practice. Despite which, this thesis argues that the integration of ICTs into tourism has at least partly disrupted the performance turn as research has focussed on analysing traveller data available in blogs or other locations like online review sites using methods that address the end-product data rather than the processes through which it came to be.

This trend can be clearly seen within the literature. Banyai and Glover's (2011) review of the research methodologies used within travel blog research explains that content analysis and narrative analysis are the two most popular methods used by researchers (see also Banyai & Havitz, 2013). While Bosangit, Dulnuan, and Mena (2012) contend that,

Extant studies on travel blogging have mostly focused on travel blogs as a type of research data that can inform marketing and management strategies. The travel-blogging phenomenon itself has not been examined by researchers, despite having become a part of tourists' travel practices. (p. 208)

Supporting the argument put forward by this thesis, Munar et al. (2013b) contend that research on tourists' use of ICTs remains in an early "advocacy phase" (p. 3) that has tended to avoid critical and/or interdisciplinary perspectives.

In light of which, this thesis seeks to address this gap in practice-based studies of connected tourism by utilising an interpretative, interdisciplinary study exploring how ICTs are integrated within and shape the experience of tourism. This is achieved through a study of the researcher's personal experience using a hybrid autoethnographic methodology. Here, *hybrid* means, (1) combining different types of ethnographic method (auto-, multi-sited, sensory, visual, digital) around the central tenet of studying subjective experience; (2) a subject position that considers online and offline contexts as interrelated in producing the lived reality of connected tourists (Germann Molz, 2012, Chapter 2; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, Chapter 3); and (3) the use of a theoretical background uniting tourism and internet studies in the interpretation of data. This choice of research methodology addresses calls for more interdisciplinary research in tourism in general (Darbellay & Stock, 2012; McCabe & Foster, 2006) and practice-focussed research into connected tourism in particular (Ek, 2013; Munar, 2013).

The implementation of an emic method builds upon the author's personal experience as a connected tourist, as well as an earlier research project in this area (Magasic, 2014). The focus on subjective experience in the research design was chosen in order to reduce variability

and uncertainty in data and produce a deep understanding of connected tourism; albeit one that is potentially narrow in scope. Such a method runs the risk of indulgence in subjective experience, producing results that may not be broadly applicable to the wider totality of connected tourists. For this reason, attention is dedicated to making the fieldwork process transparent through the inclusion of photographs and personal reflection both within the thesis text itself and as an online appendix cited at appropriate locations in the argument (Appendix 1).

Given this focus on personal experience, it is pertinent to introduce the author in order to consider how his personal situation shapes the observations introduced by this thesis. The author is a 33-year-old Australian male who has resided in Japan for the last few years. Given this fact, he is undertaking his doctoral program at Curtin University as an (online) external student. He is an experienced traveller, having undertaken several extended overseas journeys, and, like many people in contemporary society, he uses social media and digital devices as part of his day to day work and personal life. This is the personal history he brings into the thesis investigation that informed the collection and interpretation of data.

	Period 1	Period 2
Where	Japan, China, USA, Mexico	Trolltunga, Norway
Timeframe	3 months April-July 2016	10 days (3 on site) August 2017
Focus	Connectivity, performance	Place

Table 2.1. Fieldwork periods and foci.

Data collection occurred through the observation of self and others in touristic contexts, taking fieldnotes, completing a daily log of online storytelling, and critically reflecting on experience. Data was collected during fieldwork as well as within supplementary travel undertaken for leisure or business between 2015-2018. Two primary fieldwork journeys were conducted as per their relevance to specific flashpoints within connected tourism (Table 2.1).

The rationale for the selection of these particular locations is discussed in Section 2.2. During the fieldwork periods, the hybrid autoethnographic methodology supported attention to personal experience and the routines of tourism in practice. This is intended to illuminate the ongoing negotiations through which tourists engage with ICTs during travel including the physical reality of devices as portentous material objects, the practices whereby connectivity is utilised to share travel moments, and the hybridised performances whereby travellers represent the self within their travel stories.

Following the fieldwork periods, data was interpreted using an interdisciplinary standpoint linking tourism and internet studies, as well as relevant literature from related fields. This perspective was implemented in order to utilise the theoretical models from internet studies to explicate the hybridised personal processes of connected tourism. This is an innovative approach that has been employed only to a limited extent within the study of tourism. The linking of these fields within the investigation has directly shaped the writing and tone of this thesis. Given the naissance of the field of e-tourism, this study cannot start from an established theoretical standpoint nor rely on a canon of existing literature outlining the field. Rather, one of the key tasks of the current investigation is drawing together a body of literature from across tourism and internet studies in order to describe the phenomena of connected tourism. Thus, this is an interperative ethnographic study with an important component of theoretical analysis. Given this task, while utilising an ethnographic methodology, this study does not necessarily read like a traditional (auto)ethnography as much of the personal observations that would usually be found within the text have been indirectly referenced in the form of an online appendix. This is a deliberate choice that was realised so as to create room for the theoretical analysis of literature detailing the field of connected tourism. This approach has allowed the author space to introduce a variety of unique theoretical concepts within the thesis argument.

While not in its traditional form, the study represents a committed autoethnographic investigation taking into account the volume and diversity of personal data generated and its foregrounding of the author's subjective insight and experience in terms of fieldwork, case studies, development of theoretical models, and inclusion of personal anecdotes and images within the thesis text. The study then takes an innovative if theory-heavy approach to (auto)ethnography that is justified by the extensive scope of literature surveyed within the thesis. The employment of personal experience within the research process is effective as a connective medium to forge linkages between compatible theory. Fittingly, Wall (2016) explains, "autoethnography has tremendous potential for building sociological knowledge by tapping into unique personal experiences to illuminate those small spaces where understanding has not yet

reached” (p. 7). In summary, the goal of the research method outlined within this chapter is to build up an understanding of the physical, material, emotional, and performative intricacies of ICT usage within tourism in order to explain their effect on the practice of tourism overall.

2.1 Research Methods

This chapter will explain the methods that have influenced the design of this study: ethnography, autoethnography, multi-sited ethnography, sensory ethnography, visual ethnography, and digital ethnography.

2.1.1 Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of social groups via participation within that group. It applies the systemised study of interpersonal encounters and observations to discern knowledge such as behavioural patterns or group relationships that are used to theorise on broader social phenomena. Ethnography is based in the tenets of situated fieldwork in which the researcher is in close contact with the object of study. Typically, ethnography uses both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques such as interviews, fieldnotes, sketches, photography, and censusing. In the period of transition and postmodernist intervention that characterised academia in the late 20th century, critical and reflexive approaches to ethnographic fieldwork were taken in order to reduce the researcher’s biases and presumptions on the research text. Geertz’s idea of “thick description” (1973) developed in conjunction with fieldwork in Indonesia, critiqued the authority attached to simply being present within the field and challenged researchers to record descriptions in a way that preserved cultural detail. Similarly, Clifford and Marcus’ seminal edited collection of essays *Writing Culture* (1986) questioned the self/other relationship implicit in ethnographic research while advocating for the use of interdisciplinary theory in the interpretation of ethnographic data. Increasingly, ethnographers interpret reality as a subjective rather than universal context and realise that their work is a representation of a social phenomenon or event which is shaped by their own background and worldviews (Pink, 2007, p. 147).

Participant observation is a commonly used technique within an ethnographic approach. This is the process of observing and recording social phenomena through overt or covert participation in the field. It occurs via the practice of watching spaces, actors, activities, or objects related to the area of study over time. The field, or research environment, is anywhere that relevant sociocultural interactions take place and may be broad or narrow depending on the aims and scope of a particular project. As contemporary social life moves online, the field may

be spread across physical and digital environments presupposing a familiarity with the way these environments are negotiated by research subjects (boyd, 2009). Participant observation is supported by the creation of fieldnotes; textual or visual representations that assist the researcher in remembering details and in analysing these at a later date. Fieldnotes are archived in field-diaries that may contain various forms of information such as prose, poetry, sketches, flowcharts, images, news cuttings, and records of ambient information such as overheard conversations or the text featured in signs, advertisements, or graffiti.

The creation of fieldnotes may be aided by the use of technology such as photographic and audiovisual equipment or computers, however, depending on the extent and purpose of usage, such tools may also lead into other separate forms of research such as visual or digital ethnography (see Sections 2.1.5, 2.1.6). Computer-based tools for recording, archiving, and analysing information are increasingly used and produce research artefacts like screenshots, bookmarks, digital graphics, blog posts, and notes in programs like EndNote and Zotero (see Postill & Pink, 2012). Taussig (2011) writes that ethnographers' field-diaries are not "inert records" but rather "alive" with the power of the observations recorded within (p. xii). The researcher shares this view of fieldnotes as emotional objects infused with the cumulative insights of field *work*; the product of countless hours spent immersed in the field of study. It is for this reason that relevant excerpts from the researcher's reflective blog (in both textual and visual form) are included within the thesis text itself wherever possible in order to mobilise this thick description within the argument.

2.1.2 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is the use of an ethnographic method to study the experience of the researcher (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chung, 2010). Within autoethnography, it is the researcher who becomes the research subject and the lens used to study a particular social group or phenomena. Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 740) have described the basic elements of doing autoethnography via an etymological analysis of the term that outlines its three constituent concepts of "auto" (self), "ethos" (culture), and "graphy" (the research process). Building on this classification, Ngunjiri et al. (2010) provide a graphical representation that fluidly situates autoethnography in relation to ethnography and autobiography using the aforementioned concepts (Figure 2.2). This spectrum highlights the possibility for different styles of autoethnography that present the elements of self, culture, and research in varying arrangements. However, there remains a focus on personal, lived experience that unites all autoethnographic texts. Given its focus on subjective experience, autoethnography frequently

draws upon a personal connection between the author and the research subject that is used to enrich the depth of findings presented (Anderson, 2006; Ngunjiri et al., 2010; Wall, 2016). In addition to the traditional tools of ethnography such as fieldwork and participant observation, the defining feature of autoethnography is the employment of critical reflection as a method whereby the lived experiences of the researcher are made compatible with academic theory. Here, Duncan (2004) advocates for the use of multiple data collection methods within a single investigation as a way of increasing the reliability of autoethnographic research.

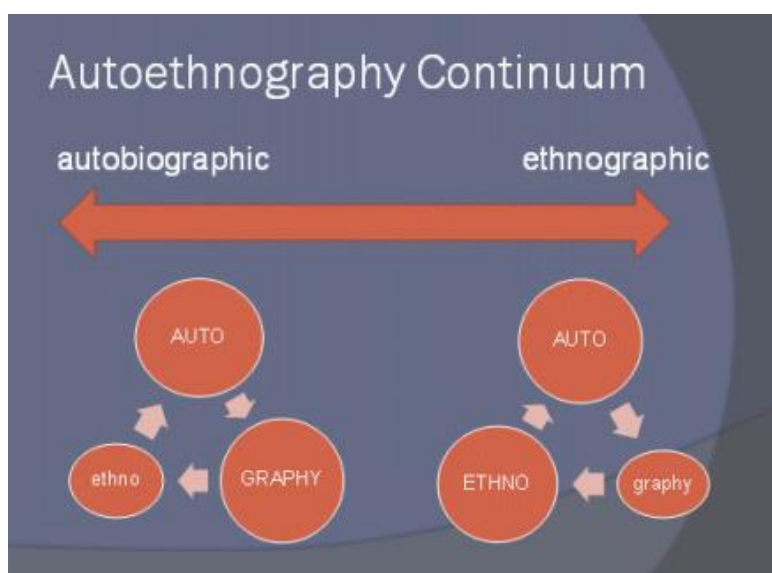


Figure 2.2. Ngunjiri et al.'s (2010) "autoethnography continuum" adapted from Ellis and Bochner (2000).

Autoethnography has grown steadily since its rise in the late twentieth century. Whereas at its inception, the method found a particular niche in the exploration of emotional and/or stigmatised topics that may have been difficult to approach using traditional research methods, over time autoethnography has found increasing acceptance as an authoritative research method (Gannon, 2017). Despite its novel perspective on social phenomena, autoethnography has, however, attracted criticism for what is perceived as an overreliance on subjective narrative. Summarising critical literature, Wall (2016) explains that autoethnography has been denounced as "self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualized" (p. 1). In order to productively explore the basis of such criticisms, Wall returns to a two-stream typology of autoethnography first proposed by Anderson (2006): "evocative" and "analytical" autoethnography. Evocative autoethnography relates to emotional, narrative-driven research

that, while connecting with wider theorisation, presents personal experience as its principal contribution to theory (examples can be found in Ellis and Bochner's, 1996, edited collection). Analytical autoethnography draws on a more traditional template in which the researcher's voice is used to supplement ethnographic inquiry (see Larsen, 2014a, for an example of a self-categorised analytical autoethnography). From this overview, Wall advocates for a third middle-ground category, "moderate autoethnography". This is not overly reliant on personal narrative yet foregrounds subjective experience within the argument as a way of connecting with and advancing theory. It is this template of moderate autoethnography that is applied in this project.

To contextualise the use of autoethnography by the author, it is useful to summarise its application in the fields of tourism and internet studies. Autoethnographic research principles have been applied as a way of analysing online sociality from a situated perspective in which the researcher reflects on their experiences online. The positionality of researchers as internet users themselves meant that many early studies of online communities, such as those by Rheingold (1993) and Turkle (1995), included an autoethnographic component in the form of critical personal reflections featured within the research text. This tradition has likewise extended into later studies of internet cultures such as Senft's (2008) investigation of webcam models. Recently, the application of autoethnography within online environments has been termed "auto-netnography" by Kozinets and colleagues (Kozinets, 2015, Chapter 10; Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009). Regarding the use of autoethnography within tourism, the tradition of international ethnographic fieldwork, wherein knowledge is gleaned from extended contact with foreign cultures, means that studies of tourists frequently draw on situated research in which tourists' practices are examined *in situ* (Galani-Moutafi, 2000). In an article advocating greater involvement of qualitative methods in tourism research, Wilson and Hollinshead (2015) have provided a brief overview of autoethnography in tourism, encouraging its usage as a way to increase the depth of understanding of tourism topics. Particularly in recent times, a number of autoethnographies have espoused a practice-based investigation of subjects such as hunting tourism (Komppula & Gartner, 2013), tourists' affective perceptions of the journey (Noy, 2007), and tourist photography (Noy, 2014; Scarles, 2009).

2.1.3 Multi-Sited Ethnography

Multi-sited ethnography is the collection of research data from a number of different field-sites (Marcus, 1995; Hannerz, 2003). Within multi-sited ethnography, field-sites are connected by the particular focus of the researcher's study and are approached as interrelated components of a given ecosystem. Rather than an analysis of disparate sites, which are

compared or contrasted on the basis of distinct ideals or values, within multi-sited ethnography locations are chosen because of their relatedness to one another and discussed in terms of connectivity. In rejecting a fixed or unitary approach, multi-sited ethnography allows researchers to follow research subjects across and between locations. Such a perspective accommodates the mobilities turn in ethnographic research in which research subjects are considered as mobile entities for whom movement is a significant component of being in the world (Büscher & Urry 2009; Büscher, Urry, & Witchger, 2011). The mobility of connected tourists is a relevant area of study as it involves the interweaving of physical and technical forms of mobility that may be tracked using a multi-sited perspective (Germann Molz, 2011).

Multi-sitedness was an important feature of this investigation that tracked connected tourists across a variety of physical environments within the two fieldwork periods. While the fieldwork is framed in terms of the physical journey, this practice involved both physical and virtual experiences. This latter component involved visiting and participating within online travel services in the pre, during, and post phases of tourism as well as the peripheral processes through which connectivity was accessed such as searching for and connecting to the internet. The focus of this project was to look at how these services and practices are interwoven within the travel experience, rather than to analyse the content present there. While introducing topical examples of travel texts that were accessed online as part of the investigation (both those created by professional entities and those by tourists), this research project did not engage in the systematic collection and analysis of online travel texts. Rather, the examples introduced within the thesis are intended to highlight the interconnectivity between virtual platforms and tourist experience; and to consider the opinions/experiences of tourists in areas where limited theorisation exists.

In a more abstract way, the multi-sitedness of this project also involved bridging the academic disciplines of tourism and internet studies in order to theorise on the nature of connected tourism. This is an endeavour that has been performed to only a limited extent and that provides room for significant expansion. The thematic link of metaphors such as *movement*, *networks*, and *connectivity* applied within both disciplines highlights the suitability of this crossover and the productive results that can be obtained from this union. As many studies have called for a closer view into how online narratives are used in the project of identity formation, theoretical models from internet studies considering the sociality of internet spaces are able to find fruitful application within the context of connected tourism.

2.1.4 Sensory Ethnography

Attention towards the physical characteristics of the body and its engagement with social worlds is an emergent tangent of ethnographic research referred to as “sensory ethnography” (Pink, 2009, 2011). Sensory ethnography involves observing the role of bodies and senses within the fieldwork site and how corporeal and sensory inputs and outputs are involved in the creation of social meanings. A focus on the embodied experience of tourists has been a notable research tangent within tourism studies under the performance turn in tourism research (Veijola & Jokinen, 1994; Crouch & Desforges, 2003). Exploring the corporeal experience of tourists has assisted researchers in conceptualising tourist experience as individualised interpretations that may diverge from the social and cultural scripting of the tourism process. In one recent example, Bødker and Browning (2013) analysed footage from head-mounted cameras worn by tourists to explore the oft-hidden kinaesthetic experience of tourist place. A sensory perspective may also be extended to tourists’ interactions with technology and the performative possibilities these allow. Haldrup and Larsen (2010) explain that “objects and technologies are crucial in tourism performances, primarily because they have a *use-value* that enhances the physicality of the body” (p. 7). One emergent dynamic the authors witness here is that of “screen-ness” in which a digital camera’s screen becomes a haptic focal point that is used for the review and rehearsal of embodied performances (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, Chapter 7; see Section 7.6).

In terms of the internet and digital technologies, corporeal and sensory experiences are sometimes underplayed given a focus on the immersive experience provided by the technology itself. This is not, however, to say that the body and senses play no part in ICT-mediated communications. Pink, Sinanan, Hjorth, and Horst (2016) have outlined “tactile digital ethnography” as a way to pay attention to the sensory practices through which people engage with digital media. Using a focus on the hand, they explored the materiality of the smartphone as a communicative tool and the way in which usage practices both extend from and add to corporeal experience. In the current project, the focus on the researcher’s body as “emplaced” (Pink, 2009) within the field allows for attention to the specific forms of movement and interaction within connected tourism, helping to unveil the practices through which these occur.

2.1.5 Visual Ethnography

Visual ethnography is an approach that uses images produced within the field (such as photos, videos, or sketches) in the research text. In contrast to traditional ethnography that has privileged words as the instrumental medium through which a study is reported, visual ethnography supports the use of images as an “equally meaningful element of ethnographic

work” (Pink, 2007, p. 6). Such an approach is often utilised in work that critically examines social practice. A pertinent example is Larsen’s (2005) ethnographic study of tourists’ photographic practices at the Hammershus castle in Denmark. Using images of tourists in action, Larsen provides new interpretations of tourist photography that foreground creative agency and lead toward the questioning of existing theoretical frameworks such as the tourist gaze. Another example is from Jaworski and Thurlow (2011) who use thematic arrangements of photographs to consider the centrality of different forms of media (promotion, tourist photography, digital media) in the design and consumption of tourist place. This use of visual texts to illuminate social practice is furthered by recent work conceptualising photographs as mobile artefacts that are deeply connected within social relationships (Pink, 2011; Hjorth & Pink, 2014). The thesis text utilises photographs produced by the author during fieldwork, as well as images sourced from relevant online portals. The included images illustrate tourist practice, the landscape, and subsidiary information aimed toward tourists, which are used to support meaning-making.

2.1.6 Digital Ethnography

Digital ethnography is the application of an ethnographic method to online data, social interactions, or structures. Explaining the different terminology used for this approach such as “virtual ethnography” (Hine, 2000), “netnography” (Kozinets, 2015), and “internet-related ethnography” (Postill & Pink, 2012), Varis (2016) contends that, “the common denominator for these studies is that they all include some kind of online data, and they all employ (a particular version or understanding of) ethnography in the research process” (p. 55). The term *digital ethnography* is employed by this thesis as a way of highlighting the interconnectivity between online/offline and physical/digital spheres of interaction as mediated by digital devices. Owing to the ascension of mobile technologies such as smartphones, the researcher argues that everyday life increasingly blurs online and offline contexts and involves forms of interwoven physical and digital social contact (Horst, Hjorth, & Tacchi, 2012; Ohashi, Kato, & Hjorth, 2017; Postill & Pink, 2012). Digital ethnography assists in illuminating these intersections and explaining how online interactions are integrated within social life. To advance an informed perspective on the use of ICTs, digital ethnography also involves recognising the power imbalances that may prevent or reduce internet use (Murthy, 2008) and going beyond “easy-to-collect data” using innovative research methods (Gómez Cruz, 2016, p. 305).

Within the field of tourism, research has investigated online travel texts and sociality under the predominant label of netnography (see Mkono & Markwell, 2014, for an overview). This study employs digital ethnography through the analysis of the author’s experiences using

online platforms during tourism. This involved attention to the way ICTs are deployed within tourist experience, including a focus on backgrounded routines such as charging and maintenance. Tracking and reporting on these processes, the researcher is able to consider how online information and interactions are emplaced within the practice of travel. In addition, the investigation utilised digital tools such as the Google Translate application to access foreign-language content; as well as monitoring content contained within online localities such as the hashtags: #holidayspam, #trolltunga, and #instagenic.

2.2 Data Collection

The previously discussed research methods are combined within a hybrid autoethnography that tracks the author's experiences as a connected tourist. Data collection comprised of mixed qualitative techniques which broadly followed the tenets of autoethnographic research. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) describe the autoethnographic method as a negotiation between subjective experiences in the field and the representing of these experiences in a way that is able to produce wider meaning by engaging with theory and/or supporting an argument.³ This process relies upon the researcher's ability to discern significant happenings from within experience—what Ellis et al. (2010) refer to as “epiphanies”—and, jointly, the ability to record, define, and describe these in a way that connects to wider theory.

In this thesis, the researcher observed his practice through the dual experiential frame of tourist/researcher (Scarles, 2009). Principle data collection was conducted during two fieldwork periods. The selection of fieldwork locations where relevant tensions within connected tourism could be explored was an important feature of research design. The first period of fieldwork was chosen based on its extended timeframe, which permitted significant immersion into the lifeworld of connected tourists and exposure to a variety of different geopolitical environments. The second period of fieldwork was briefer and more localised focussing on Trolltunga, Norway as a topical location through which to analyse the construction of online tourist place and its influence on tourism.

Data collection utilised three qualitative practices:

- Participant observation of connected tourists and extant connectivity services in the field.
- Daily logging of personal internet usage and the standard of connection encountered.

³ Spry's (2016) tripartite body/paper/stage technique presents another way of doing autoethnography which focusses on the performative power of the body.

- The creation of a critical blog narrative which reflected on internet usage and its intersections with travel experience.

Participant observation was performed by watching the interactions between the different human and nonhuman agents involved in connected tourism. This included attention not only to the author's own experience but also that of other tourists in the field as these normative behaviours set the social context for the researcher and his own usage. The practice of observation involved attentiveness toward tourists' relationships with others, the environment, as well as with their devices. As an important component, it also involved observing nonhuman elements such as the availability of connectivity infrastructure through the presence of advertising and signage (Figure 2.3), environmental information such as the presence of satellite dishes or cables, and monitoring connectivity status on personal devices. Participant observation was supported by the practices of note-taking, photographing, sketching (Figure 2.4), bookmarking pages on the internet, and taking screenshots of relevant online content as well as archiving these materials in field-diaries.



Figure 2.3. A poster advertising satellite internet in rural Mexico (Author).

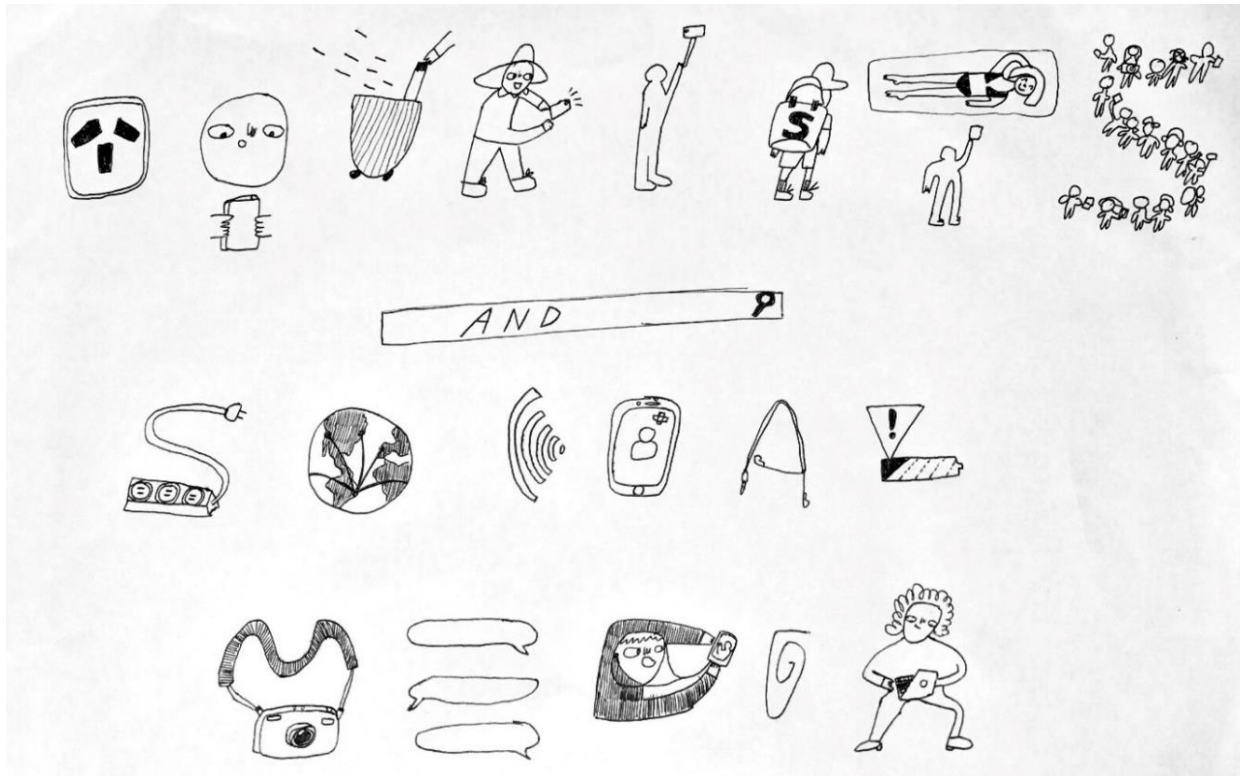


Figure 2.4. A conceptual sketch of observed tourist practices from the author's field diary.

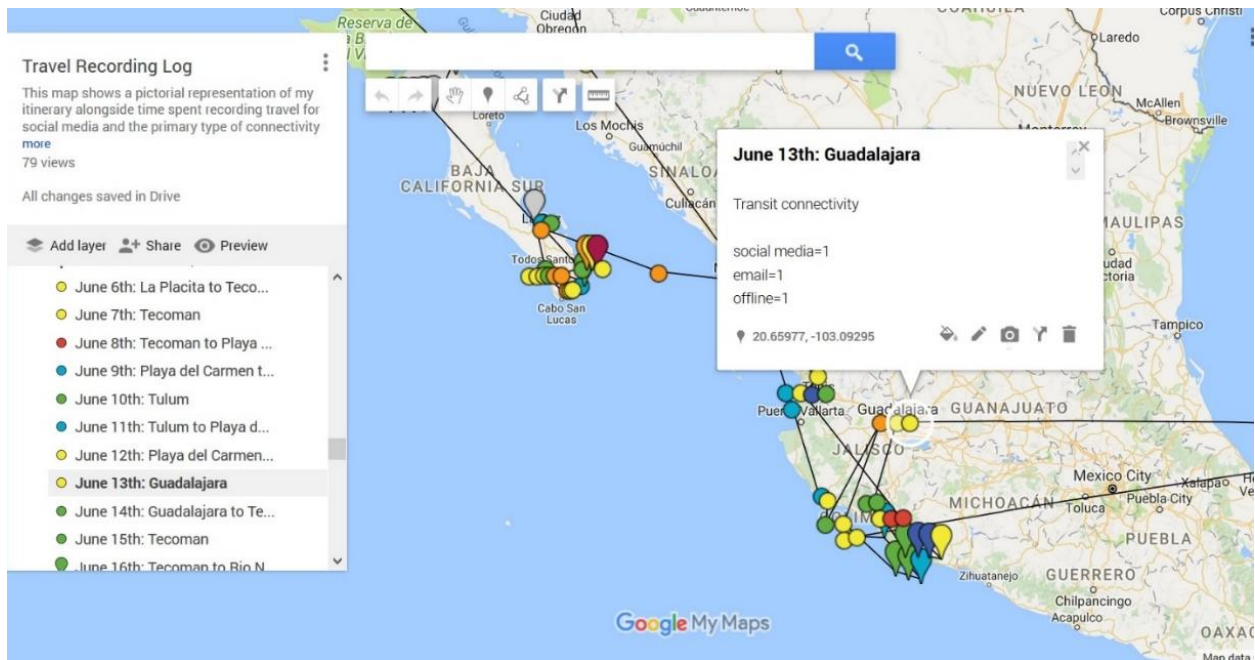


Figure 2.5. A screenshot of a Google map featuring log data (Google & INEGI, 2018).

Secondly, the practice of logging focussed on the author's experience searching for, connecting to, and using the internet for travel storytelling in different locations (see Appendix 2). Specifically, the daily log documented the time spent recording travel to social media, the practices such as photography, writing, and editing through which this occurred, and the quality of connectivity (if any) accessed. This logging was later tabulated within a Google map that overlaid internet usage data onto the travel route (Figure 2.5). Rather than producing an exact record of online storytelling behaviours, logging was a heuristic process designed to encourage reflexivity on the author's part toward internet use and connectivity, as well as the processes through which travel experiences became online content.

The observation and logging processes were reflected upon in the author's blog (<https://destinationunknowntravel.wordpress.com>). The reflections recorded here comprise a form of fieldnote. The purpose of the blog was to elaborate upon the epiphanies from data collection in order to make these useful to academic discourse. The author's reflective blog posts assessed personal experience and log data frequently drawing on photographs, sketches, tables, or hyperlinks to assist the discussion. At times the blog posts connected to popular or academic sources in order to provide additional context on a given issue. These were linkages that emerged during the process of reflecting upon and representing experience rather than references that were sought out in order to support the researcher's narrative. Structuring this narrative online further aided in understanding connected travellers as the internet was adopted both as a context and tool for research (Germann Molz, 2012, p.22). As an example, the blog narrative attracted comments adding to the meaning and interpretation of travel experience.

The fieldnotes for this thesis are included as an online appendix in the form of blog posts (See Appendix 1). The fieldnotes are utilised in the thesis text both as direct quotations (or images) and indirectly as in-text references. The in-text references i.e., (Magasic, 2016a) link to a single blog post supporting the argument being made in the thesis text. The decision was made to use a majority of indirect references to fieldnotes in order to create space for interdisciplinary analysis in the thesis text. This allows for a sharp, theoretically-framed discussion where the reader has the option to continue off-site for extended reading if interested. To discuss the form of the fieldnotes themselves, these have been written in a mixed observational and narrative diction. While perhaps unusual for an autoethnography, this is less formal than the thesis text and lends itself to the expression of personal meanings at the same time as seeking connections with relevant theory. The tone may be thought of as that of a travel research blog. The reader may use the blog posts to gain extra contextual information about the anecdotes and arguments presented in the thesis text by reading the blog post in full and

observing included images, hyperlinks, and comments. As is typical, the blog is arranged in reverse-chronological order meaning that the reader may also peruse between posts in order to gain a deeper sense of the travel movement undertaken by the author and how this shaped the arguments presented in the thesis.

Finally, as this study utilises an innovative and multipartite methodology, the author clarifies how different facets of ethnography were utilised in the data collection process within Table 2.2. Here it is worth re-stating that the six modes of ethnography utilised are not discrete practices but rather interrelated, with each particular mode of ethnography supplying a particular focus or inflection that informed data collection overall.

Method	Data collection practice(s)
Ethnography	Observation of connected tourists and tourist sites
Autoethnography	Written and visual fieldnotes regarding the author's experiences as a connected tourist
Multi-sited ethnography	Logging of connectivity data from a variety of geographical locations; attention to touristic places and representations of place
Sensory ethnography	Attention to the processes and artefacts utilised within tourism and how these shape experience and culture
Visual ethnography	Attention to and presentation of visual elements (personal photographs, sketches, screenshots, professional material)
Digital ethnography	Attention to and analysis of digital materials (websites, photographs, online videos)

Table 2.2. The different ethnographic modes utilised by this thesis and the respective data collection practices.

2.3 Data Interpretation

The data collected during fieldwork was interpreted from the interdisciplinary perspective of tourism and internet studies. Such a choice is responsive to the research methodology employed. Following the logic of multi-sited ethnography, it is argued that the experience of connected tourists is constructed across the heterogenous totality of encounters within both physical and virtual spheres. As previously stated, tourism research has so far considered online environments as a rich source of traveller data, yet most research has neglected to consider the involvement of such virtual locations in the overall formation of tourist experiences.

As an example, Kim and Tussyadiah (2013) state, “As these processes occur while traveling, self-presentational performances on SNS can be considered inseparable from tourism experience” (p. 79). Yet, in a recent research paper Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) explain, “little is known (or understood) about how (i.e., the underlying processes) social media shapes the touristic experience” (p. 28). As can be seen, so far tourism research has struggled to present a method for understanding how online interactions may be situated as a constituent part of tourist interaction. That is to say that research is still at a loss as for how to conceptualise tourist experience as occurring within physical and virtual planes simultaneously as is theorised in fields such as mobile media (de Souza e Silva & Sheller, 2015; Varnelis & Friedberg, 2008).⁴ A solution is presented here in the form of theoretical concepts from internet studies literature that address the economy (Marwick, 2015), social models i.e., “microcelebrity” (Senft, 2008, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2011b), and vocational models such as the influencer (Abidin, 2016a, 2016b, 2017), that explain social practices in online space. As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, using internet studies literature allows researchers to conceptualise connected tourists’ behaviours as hybridised performance simultaneously addressing interwoven virtual and physical layers based within the experiential mode of the dual journey (Chapter 5).

Finally, it is necessary to discuss the form of the argument presented in the thesis. Fitting with the template of “moderate autoethnography” (Wall, 2016) utilised within this study, the interpretation of data relies on a balance between presenting personal experience and explicating theoretical perspectives using knowledge garnered within the fieldwork periods. This form of argument is supported by presenting fieldwork data within the text in the form of direct quotations, images, tables, or references. Multiple sources of data are presented in order to faithfully exteriorise the author’s experience (Duncan, 2004). Similarly, as connected tourism is an inchoate area of study, material sourced from popular texts such as newspapers, magazines, and websites, as well as that created by travellers, is also utilised to provide topical examples in the cases where theory has yet to reach or provided only a limited discussion of a particular topic. Finally, the researcher’s blog narrative is available in full as an online appendix in order to support transparency and the development of alternative interpretations of the fieldwork data.

2.4 Discussion and Conclusions

Connected tourism is a recent and inchoate phenomenon. Given the rapid pace of development of ICTs on all levels from consumer electronics and personal devices, to social media platforms,

⁴ A notable exception here is Germann Molz’s (2012, pp. 42-46) discussion of “blended geography”.

to connectivity infrastructure, tourists' uses of ICTs do indeed resemble a hothouse environment in which the development of usage practices and their effect on the experience of travel have to some degree outpaced researchers' attempts to keep track of them. As an example, take the short-form video platform Vine that was acquired by Twitter in 2012, reached 200 million users in 2015 (including many travellers), and was discontinued in late 2016; that has come and gone leaving barely a trace within tourism literature. As previously discussed, within tourism the focus of research has been largely on the data produced by travellers rather than on the communities, practices, and socio-technical relationships that frame the creation of such media artefacts. The result is a lack of studies on the specific practices through which travellers interact with ICTs and their influence upon the journey.

Responding to this research gap, this thesis sees a hybrid autoethnographic methodology as the best way to address the moving target of connected tourism. The research design provides a ground-up focus on travellers' practices of social media use that is able to track these as they occur within different locations and gives attention to the sensory dimensions of ICT usage including the material realities of the devices and connectivity infrastructure. This focus on tourism in motion allows the researcher sensitivity to elements of in-betweenness and creative negotiation that are crucial in producing a holistic understanding of tourist practices. In this study, autoethnography's deep investigation is used to produce a portrait of tourism as a hybrid process occurring across both physical and virtual sites. The advantage of this singular focus on personal experience is a clear and evocative account of the practices of social media use and a greater attention to detail than might be achieved with a wider sample group. This focus does, however, mean eschewing the popular and theoretically robust data collection technique of interviewing. While interviewing provides deep insight into a subject area, it is time-consuming and often once data has been collected and analysed it is difficult to add to this. Research on subjective experience is considerably more flexible and adaptive to change. Complementing the emergent area of study, the focus on subjective experience allowed the researcher to keep abreast of and faithfully represent the shifting contours of connected tourism. Thus, this choice provides significant utility to the wider research community at this initial stage of investigation into connected tourism.

The interdisciplinary interpretation of data forges connections in theory and allows the development of new conceptual frames that may assist the progression of study on connected tourism. To ensure ethical standards have been realised, fieldwork photographs featuring tourists have been anonymised in order to respect the privacy of these individuals. There are also ethical questions about the positionality of the researcher within the research process and

text (such as the emotional and/or professional effects of the disclosure of personal information) that deserve further attention in the development of autoethnography (Wall, 2016). Given the positionality of the author, it need also be considered that the observations of connected tourism recorded, and the critical analysis and conceptual theorising presented, might be perceived differently by other researchers (and tourists). Future research featuring different subject positions may then interpret connected tourism in a different light to how it was described by this thesis. Thus, one of the limitations of this thesis' methodology is its commitment to the subjective experience of the author, rather than engaging a wider spectrum of research subjects using intersubjective techniques such as interviewing. Another limitation is its theoretically-heavy discussion at the expense of the more frequent usage of direct personal narratives in the thesis text. Despite these limitations, the multi-layered hybrid autoethnographic approach provides a novel and effective interpretation of the autoethnographic method for considering the influence of digital technologies on social subjects that may be applied and refined in future research.

Chapter 3. Connected Tourists: An Interdisciplinary Research Agenda for ICT-Mediated Tourism



Figure 3.1. Connected tourists on Waikiki Beach, Hawaii. (Author)

Over the last two decades, scholarly work has increasingly addressed the integration of ICTs and internet connectivity within the pre, during, and post stages of travel. Within recent scholarship ICT-mediated tourism and ICT-using tourists have been studied under many different labels such as: “Travellers 2.0” (Parra-López, Guitérrez-Taño, Díaz Armas, & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2012), “flashpackers” (Paris, 2012), “interactive travel” (Germann Molz, 2012), “turistus digitalis” (Munar & Gyimóthy, 2013), “travel 2.0” (Minazzi, 2014), “technology enhanced tourist experience” (Neuhofer, 2014), “technologically-savvy travellers” (Paris, Burger, Rubin, & Casson, 2015), “smart tourists” (Gretzel et al., 2015), and “ICTT” (Tribe & Mkono, 2017). As a commonality, these labels share an overarching interest into tourists’ use of ICTs. At the same time, however, these studies have approached ICT-mediated tourism from a range of different backgrounds and research foci. While providing crucial insight regarding the movement of ICTs into the field of tourism, such fragmented literature has also meant that in

effect scholarship into how tourists use ICTs has been largely ad hoc rather than centralised within a particular research agenda.⁵

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the term “connected tourists” and highlight the role of devices and platforms in tourist experience using the theoretical background of participatory culture, and, more broadly, internet studies. It is worthwhile noting that the phrase *connected tourists* exists in literature and has been used in different contexts to refer to tourists who engage in the practice of communicating with home using ICTs (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010) and to describe ICT-mediated touristic experiences i.e., “connected tourist experiences” (Neuhofer, 2016). While these existing works have used the phrase to apply to individual tourists or a type of experience, in this thesis the term *connected tourists* is used to reference an entire class, or generation, of tourists: Those for whom the use of ICTs is a normal part of travel. The reference to connectivity here is similar to that of Germann Molz (2012) as it draws on the premise of connectivity as a theoretical wedge through which to open up understandings of ICT-mediated tourism. Whereas Germann Molz’s investigation was oriented from the standpoint of mobilities theory and growing social connectedness, this thesis uses the background of internet studies in order to emphasise the interpolation of digital logic within the travel experience. As such, the term *connected tourism* is used to connote a functional shift in the experience of travelling based in the technological affordances provided by ICTs generally, and social media more specifically. In a broader sense, it is intended to support a research agenda linking tourism and internet studies and exists within, and brings relevant knowledge to, the broader research area of e-tourism (Werthner et al., 2015).

ICTs have been widely approached as representing a fundamental change to the travel experience both at the level of practice and industry. The majority of literature has shown ICTs to be a positive effect on tourism that enriches, enhances, or improves the tourist experience, echoing a dominant business perspective (Ayeh, 2018; Dickinson, Hibbert, & Filimonau, 2016; Munar et al., 2013b; Tribe & Mkono, 2017). While this is in some ways true, travellers have unparalleled access to information, new creative tools, and social connectivity; such affordances may rely on an ideal state of connectivity, or, may be subject to the politics of technology companies as the providers of these services. Generally speaking, those studies that have paid attention to the larger totality of tourists’ use of ICTs by bringing in ideas from wider fields such as mobilities and social theory have been able to provide a more balanced perspective of tourists’ interactions with ICTs as composed of both beneficial and detrimental aspects.

⁵ This is not, however, to say that these do not exist (see Munar et al., 2013b; Werthner et al., 2015).

In many ways, the discussion of ICTs hinges on social media as these are the personal portals where travel experiences are shared and feedback received. One way of increasing holistic knowledge of tourists' use of ICTs is the application of theory that closely explores the theoretical underpinnings and cultural significance of social media as can be found in the field of internet studies. Within this chapter, such an approach is deployed using a discussion of the interrelated Web 2.0 and participatory culture concepts as a contextual background for travellers' use of social media. Another approach to holistically studying tourists' use of ICTs is to investigate social media at the level of praxis. This is achieved through an analysis of the data regarding the two key ICTs employed during fieldwork: devices and platforms. This experiential focus takes inspiration from the performance turn and is intended to reveal details about how and why ICTs are deployed within travel. Born from personal logic, such strategies may ignore the dominant signification of a technology and allow greater insight into how these elements are put into play within the journey and the roles they fulfil.

The structure of this chapter will be as follows. First, it will provide an overview of relevant terminology concerning connected tourists. Next, it will discuss Web 2.0 and the participatory culture as the theoretical background for tourists' use of ICTs. Following which, fieldwork data will be analysed in order to illustrate how devices and platforms mediate the travel experience at the level of the individual and the travel community. Finally, the discussion will define connected tourists and identify important issues in future research.

3.1 Tourists and ICTs

Scholarly work has addressed the integration of ICTs and internet connectivity within travel from both consumer and industry perspectives. As the popularity of ICTs has grown and their usage has become more common, so too the amount and variety of research exploring the role of ICTs within tourism. This rapid penetration of ICTs into tourism has itself been the subject of a number of academic literature reviews that have sought to evaluate the research being produced in different areas such as the use of smartphones (Kim & Law, 2015) and social media during travel (Leung, Law, van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Sotriadis, 2017), or to provide an overview of the field of ICT-mediated tourism as a whole (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Two common themes among these reviews are, first, that the rise of ICTs fundamentally alters the practice of tourism at both industry and personal levels, and second, that research into ICT-mediated tourism, while in a rapid growth phase, is still in its infancy and requires

further attention.⁶ From such it can be seen that research into how tourists use ICTs is needed and important.

A number of studies have attempted to make sense of the integration of ICTs into the travel experience through the use of theoretical terminology describing the ICT-mediated travel experience either at the level of tourists or experience or both (Table 3.1).

Source	Quotation
Travellers 2.0 (Parra-López, Guitérrez-Taño, Díaz Armas, & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2012)	“Travellers 2.0 look to the web to obtain information on holiday travel, share experiences, buy travel-related services etc, purposes for which they use a variety of devices (PCs, smartphones, tablets, etc.)” (p. 171)
Flashpackers (Paris, 2012)	“In addition to being generally older, having more disposable income, and traveling as a ‘backpacker’ by choice rather than budgetary necessity, flashpackers’ tourist experience is mediated by communications technology often through mobile devices” (p. 1095)
Interactive travel (Germann Molz, 2012)	“the way travellers integrate portable computers and the Internet, and more recently mobile phones and social media, into their travel and tourism practices” (p. 2)
Turistus digitalis (Munar & Gyimóthy, 2013)	“The concept of <i>turistus digitalis</i> recognizes the complexity and hybrid nature of embedded cognition and that tourists’ perception, evaluation, and relation to their social and material worlds are transformed, thanks to the possibilities embedded in new technological tools” (p. 248)
Travel 2.0 (Minazzi, 2014)	“The application of Web 2.0 to the tourism business is named Travel 2.0” (p. 3)
Technology Enhanced Tourist Experience (Neuhofer, 2014)	“The Technology Enhanced Tourist Experience reforms escapism, as tourists seek to stay in touch with people, interact, co-create and share experiences online, and

⁶ The most recent review by Sotriadis (2017) disagrees with this point arguing that research has matured.

	seek social connectedness with everyday life as an integral part of their tourist experience” (p. 373)
Technologically-savvy travellers (Paris, Burger, Rubin, & Casson, 2015)	“defined by their self-identified high level of social media and mobile smart device use” (p. 804)
Smart tourists (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015)	“The smart tourists and their digital selves (or data bodies) use smartphones to tap into information infrastructures provided at the destination or virtually in order to add value to their experiences” (p. 181)
ICTT (ICT in tourism) (Tribe & Mkono, 2017)	“These include first, access to the internet. Second, the use of devices such as smart phones, watches, PCs and third activities such as communicating with others (e.g. social media including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, WeChat as well as email and text messaging); taking pictures and selfies; and planning Apps such as TripAdvisor, Foursquare, TripExpert etc.” (p. 106)

Table 3.1. An overview of terminology relating to ICT-mediated travel experience.

From these conceptual frames, the most obvious commonality is the use of online communications technologies, most particularly, social media, within travel. There are, however, common investigative perspectives that can be tracked through the use of similar discursive and/or research strategies. Those works that coopt terms applied to the technology itself such as “travel/lers 2.0”, “smart tourists”, and “ICTT” are useful in highlighting that travellers have access to a multitude of new digital tools and services, as well as suggesting the likely impacts upon travel experience based on the capabilities of these technologies. However, the danger here is of buying into the hype or buzz surrounding these terms and transferring the rhetoric from marketing or institutions directly to tourists. Such a viewpoint may neglect to address the personal significance of technology at the level of the individual. As another strategy, there are some studies looking at outlying or especially mobile tourists such as “flashpackers” and “tech-savvy tourists”. These models largely refer to a technological elite with high levels of social, cultural, and/or economic capital who represent the first adopters of a particular technology. Such an investigative focus is useful in looking at the appropriation of technology within such groups and extrapolating broader trends that may occur within tourism in the future. At the same

time, it may be less effective in revealing what is actually experienced by tourists in a similar way to those studies that apply marketing terms to tourists. An example of this is the tendency to conceptualise both the use of ICTs and connectivity through blanket terms such as *ubiquitous* and *everpresent*. While such an experience of connectivity may indeed be possible for a select segment of the tourist population with access to advanced connectivity devices and services, such phrasing at the same time illustrates a certain level of detachment from the lived realities of tourists and concepts like the digital divide that highlight unequal access to technology and internet connectivity infrastructure on a global scale (Chapter 4).

Rather than looking at tourists as emblems or signifiers of mobility who reflect the forms of movement afforded by communication and transportation technologies, this thesis concentrates on viewing how ICTs are brought into the journey by tourists themselves and used in personally meaningful ways that may differ from their dominant significations. The most useful frames for informing this investigation are those which consider the broader social and experiential repercussions of ICTs within tourism such as “interactive travel”, “technology enhanced tourist experience”, and “turistus digitalis”. These theories have analysed travel experience using literature from wider fields such as marketing (Neuhofer, 2014), mobilities (Germann Molz, 2012), and social theory (Munar & Gyimóthy, 2013). From these observations, this thesis contends that scholarship into ICT-mediated tourism can benefit from moving out of tourism into wider fields in order to give greater attention to tourists’ usage practices. This thesis suggests that the extensive theorising on social media practices occurring within internet studies provides a body of literature that has so far been underutilised in tourism studies and may be fruitfully applied to tourists.

Adding to the research pathways represented by the terminology discussed, this chapter would like to propose its own term, “connected tourists” for the purpose of bringing tourist study together with theory from the field of internet studies. This term references tourists’ connection to both the everyday and their social networks; and also to one another. As social media is identified within the table above as a significant focus in tourists’ use of ICTs, this chapter will go on to provide an outline of the Web 2.0 and participatory culture concepts that underpin the development of social media and explore their implications within tourism.

3.2 Web 2.0 and Participatory Culture

Web 2.0 is a term used to describe the second-generation participatory internet in which social media came of age. The term was coined by Tim O’Reilly in response to broad shifts in the architecture and functionality of internet pages that permitted greater user input and more

flexible methods of sharing information (O'Reilly, 2005). Rather than referring to an actual technological upgrade of the internet or its constituent components, the term refers to changes in the way the internet is shaped and the functions it fulfils for users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 p. 61). In order to define the characteristics of Web 2.0, media scholar Lev Manovich (2009) explains two salient changes in the user experience relative to earlier internet technologies. Firstly, a shift from users accessing online content produced by professionals to users both accessing and producing content i.e., the read/write web. Secondly, rather than a predominantly informational medium, the web increasingly becomes a space of interpersonal relationships and communication through and about media. It is in this Web 2.0 environment that we see the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter as well as associated user practices such as commenting, tweeting, photosharing, and status updates. It is for this reason that Web 2.0 can be used as a synonym for social media and vice versa.

Following these changes, the internet has blossomed as a forum for social, civic, and commercial interaction; not only in terms of the affordances available to individual users but also in terms of the ability for larger entities such as business, government, and other organisations to offer online services. Owing to its open, read/write structure Web 2.0 has been lauded as having revolutionary social implications. Events and platforms such as the Arab Spring (Mejias, 2012), the Occupy movement (Fuchs, 2014b; Papacharissi, 2016), and Wikileaks (Lovink, 2011, Chapter 11) have been used as case studies to argue (and scrutinise) the democratic potential of Web 2.0. While neoliberal perspectives often champion online participation as empowerment, critical perspectives assert that platforms also harness users as drivers of business by collecting data and may shape and restrict connectivity and collaboration in ways that benefit the platform (Scholz, 2008, 2013; Langlois & Elmer, 2013; Fuchs, 2017). In terms of a theoretical understanding of Web 2.0, a number of key concepts like "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2016), "prosumer" (Toffler cited in Lüders, 2008), and "produser" (Bruns, 2008) have helped to shed light on the multidimensional politics implicit in online platforms and the way these provide a structure that informs the actions of users. The thesis will present further discussion on participatory culture in order to contextualise tourists' usage of online platforms.

Participatory culture is a widely adopted theoretical concept developed by Henry Jenkins and refined across two decades of the study of both offline and virtual communities. The concept is rooted in the study of offline fan groups; communities of practice that gathered around a particular television show, band, movie, or media franchise and used homemade media as part of social interactivity and community (Jenkins, 1992). Jenkins' ideas about

participatory culture found new steam as Web 2.0 enabled users to easily create and transfer media within online forums. Saliiently, Jenkins refrains from attributing the participatory culture as a function of any particular media itself, but rather conceptualises it in terms of user involvement and the social inclusivity and interpersonal connections that may arise following media exchange. Media exchange is easily achieved in digital environments where individuals are free to communicate across space (physically dispersed members use the same online platforms) and time (platforms commonly allow both asynchronous and live interactions). In this way, ongoing scholarship on participatory culture by Jenkins and other scholars has tended to focus on social media and the “new media technologies that make it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 8).

Jenkins (2007) explains participatory culture in a two-part definition. The first part explains the low entry barriers to contributing as well as the sharing of expertise between users:

A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. (p. 3)

While this first part of the definition stresses inclusivity in terms of knowledge sharing, the second goes on to outline the emotional bonds that contributing creates between users in terms of personal fulfillment through peer recognition, and how these bonds serve to connect users to a shared cause or sentiment: “A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created)” (p.3).⁷

Even as the communities that form online are physically dispersed, and heterogenous in terms of user make up, they are bonded by common interests i.e., homophily (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 309). In terms of power relationships, it is possible to see participatory culture culminating in active media subjects who both consume and produce media (Jenkins, 2007; Manovich, 2009). The media created does not need to be fan related but can include various

⁷ Fuchs (2017, p. 65) provides a more straightforward definition: “Participatory culture is a term that is often used for designating the involvement of users, audiences, consumers and fans in the creation of culture and content. Examples are the joint editing of an article on Wikipedia, the uploading of images to Flickr or Facebook, the uploading of videos to YouTube and the creation of short messages on Twitter or Weibo”.

forms of information and communication. In a later work, Jenkins and colleagues discuss selfies and other casual forms of online communication as a facet of participatory culture, noting, however, the condition of community participation, stating “these activities have to involve meaningful connections to some larger community (even if only the cohort of class mates at the local school)” (Jenkins et al., 2016, p. 10). This point reiterates that participatory culture brings with it an implicit sense of community. The audience does not need to be known personally, as per the example of schoolmates above, but can involve a wider online forum composed of familiar and unfamiliar members with whom the user has meaningful interactions via a variety of online affordances including uploading content, commenting, liking, reposting, following, messaging, and more. In sum, participatory culture references an architecture of inclusivity at both a technical and social level that facilitates the sharing of personal media and community involvement.

Another important facet of participatory culture is its incorporation of numerous critical perspectives exploring the perceived exploitative aspects of Web 2.0 and social media. These include the harvesting of user data for commercial purposes (Goldberg, 2010) and the potential for platforms to influence social interaction via the manipulation of in-platform connectivity protocols or algorithms (Langlois & Elmer, 2013; van Dijck, 2013a). The corporate entities present within social media i.e., the platforms, benefit not only from the data produced by users but also the connections that form between individuals by having ready access to communities of like-minded users. For this reason, Fuchs (2017, Chapter 3) criticises Jenkins’ work on participatory culture for putting too much emphasis on the empowerment provided through fan cultures and not enough impetus on the commercial agendas being served within social media. Returning to the focus of this thesis, this critical body of work forms a valuable component in balancing positive and negative outcomes of travellers’ social media use.

Given the aforementioned representation-based research agenda within tourism (Chapter 2), most studies have been more concerned with the content of blogs, photographs, or reviews than the implications of this material being created by and circulating between tourists. There are few studies looking critically at how travellers engage with ICTs and this dimension needs to be further unpacked (Munar, 2013; Ek, 2013). This thesis situates its investigation within the framework of participatory culture in order to understand travellers’ use of social media as constitutive of community and individual empowerment, yet also as related to the imperatives of social media platforms and other IT-related companies. From here, the chapter will go on to explore the technological elements through which travellers participate in social media via an analysis of the author’s fieldnotes. Travel connectivity is achieved via a triad of

interrelated ICTs: devices, connectivity, and platforms. The following section will explore devices and platforms while the concept of travel connectivity will be explored in Chapter 4.

3.3 Mediatories in the Tourist Experience

This section will explore fieldnotes describing the use of ICT devices and social media platforms during fieldwork. The reason for doing which is to analyse the various meanings attributed to these entities by the author as well as to consider the influence they exert on travel experience through their form and structural underpinnings. Research has investigated the predilection for tourists to bring devices or use particular platforms during travel (Paris, 2012), the potential for these entities to mediate between tourist and experience (Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012), motivations for social media usage (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), and, at a binary level of connected/disconnected travel experiences (see Chapter 4). Less explored are the various personal practices through which ICTs are temporarily foregrounded within the journey at certain times as they are utilised by or attract the attention of the traveller; and the mediatory effect such entities have in shaping particular experiences of travel.

While differentiated in terms of form—devices are material objects, platforms are virtual entities—the two are linked through usage patterns i.e., the material created on devices is published on social media platforms; as well as the common purpose of networked communication. It is thus argued that devices and platforms may be analysed collectively as forms that interpose between an individual and the embodied experiences of travel. This statement is indeed true of any item used during travel, Cresswell and Merriman (2011) noting that:

Even walking and running - practices associated with the physical capacities of animate bodies - have become embroiled with a range of more-or-less complex technologies, from the shoe, running trainer and walking boot, to the asphalt running track, digital stopwatch, personal stereo, rucksack and map. (p. 5)

However, in the case of ICTs, it is the ability of these entities to enable pervasive social connectivity that ascends them as especial factors when considering the way travel is experienced. This salience is further emphasised in some key points: ICTs are commonly used in home life and usage routines may accompany travellers on the journey forming a key bridge between the contexts of travel and the everyday; they are multipurpose, personalised, and valuable entities that function as hubs for information and personal relationships giving them a

high emotional valence; they are smart and informationally active and tell stories about travellers by transferring information in forms like time stamps, GPS locations, and other metadata that accompanies usage; and, finally, as complex technological entities they are embedded with particular ideologies both at a structural and usage level that shape how they are used and the affordances they provide. Next, the chapter will analyse the particular array of devices and platforms utilised by the author during the initial fieldwork period.

3.4 Devices

The term device is commonly used to refer to electronics that are able to send and receive information. Increasingly, the adjective “smart” is used to describe multifunction devices such as tablets, watches, or phones that provide a variety of different services within a single unit and which update users based on ambient data flows (Gretzel et al. 2015, p. 179). Such smart devices increasingly accompany day to day life and are an integral part of shifts in communication, culture, and society rooted in flows of information that have been collectively referred to as “network society” (Castells, 2010). Based on subscriber numbers, the internet marketing agency We Are Social (2018) reports that 68% of the world’s total population (i.e., regardless of age) own and use a mobile handset (p.91), with more than half of these being smartphones (p.99). The data presented in this report shows a strong tendency toward mobile use in high-income countries, with some countries such as South Korea showing rates as high as 84% penetration (p. 92). Such figures suggest that especially in the context of high-income countries, but increasingly in a global context also, devices are an inseparable part of modern society and lifestyles including travel.

Studies show that travellers take an array of devices with them that fulfil various purposes within the trip (Germann Molz, 2012; Mackay & Vogt, 2012; Minazzi, 2014; Paris, 2012). The increasing integration of charging facilities and usage spaces into airports and hotels serves as testimony to the popular nature of these items as traveller accompaniments (see Magasic, 2016p; Section 5.2). Despite this, an understanding of how tourists carry and use devices is still developing. Perhaps owing to their portentous nature as dynamic, powerful, and commonly used tools within the travel experience, research has so far tended to focus on the beneficial aspects of devices rather than the items themselves and the exigencies they create within the journey. As Ek (2013) puts it, “Something that is not very visible in the tourism social media account is the materiality of the information technology that makes social media possible in the first place” (p. 30). Meanwhile, recent research has shown that travellers’ luggage contents and the routines through which it is packed, retrieved, and stowed away again, taken

as objects of analysis, do themselves form an underappreciated lens for understanding traveller experiences and desires (Barry, 2017). In light of this research avenue, fieldwork data is presented and analysed in order to consider the purpose and significance of the devices carried by the author (see Magasic 2016).



Figure 3.2. Devices and accessories carried by the author during fieldwork (Author).

Figure 3.2 presents 12 types of device or accessory carried during fieldwork. In order to gain a better understanding of the roles fulfilled by each device and their interrelated nature, these have been classified into six groups according to functionality: chargers, memory, recorders/editors, facilitators, protectors, and connectivity (see Table 3.2). Within these categories, a brief description of the purpose of each type of device has been provided.

Category	Items	Purpose
Chargers	1) Laptop, phone, and camera chargers 2) Rechargeable battery 3) Two power adapters	1) Charge from a socket. 2) Charge phone when a power socket is unavailable. 3) Charge from foreign sockets.
Memory	4) 5x USB flash drive (PC) 5) 4x SD card (PC, camera)	4, 5) Store data produced by R/E devices as well as transfer data between devices.
Recorders/Editors	6) PC 7) Camera 8) Phone	6) Write electronic text and publish to the internet. Edit photos and video. 7) Record digital images and video. 8) Record text, photos, and video. Publish to the internet. Edit photos and video.
Facilitators	9) Head torch 10) Headphones	9) Type in low light. 10) Listen to audio tracks during video editing.
Protectors	11) PC case 12) Camera bag	11) Protect PC from impact. Store USB memory sticks. 12) Protect camera from impact. Store SD cards.
Connectivity	13) Portable modem ⁸	13) Connect to mobile internet.

Table 3.2. Categorisation and purpose of devices and accessories carried by the author in relation to storytelling.

⁸ This was purchased at a later stage of the journey and is not present in Figure 3.2.

As with many modern travellers, devices and their accessories were a salient part of the author's luggage. These were estimated to weigh between two and three kilograms and comprised approximately one fifth of the author's total baggage. A small number of main devices (Recording/Editing category) fulfil the role of capturing travel moments, editing, and publishing. These devices are the nucleus through which travellers tell stories and maintain connectivity throughout the journey. In addition to recording and editing functions, these devices act as storage for material created or recorded during the trip. The remaining groups form a large number of accessories with the explicit purpose of supporting the main devices. The presence of Protectors like cases highlight the "extreme fragility" of ICT devices in the context of travel movement (Larsen, 2013, p. 42). Owing to this fragility, the author notes time spent carefully packing devices within luggage, as well as regularly checking their safe passage at different points during the journey. While not utilised by the author, there are some categories of devices such as GoPro action sports cameras marketed around their durability.

Memory devices store media produced within the trip and/or other media such as entertainment. These also allow travellers to conveniently exchange media with others. Chargers represent fundamental items required to enable main devices to function. Facilitators, while perhaps nonessential items, assisted the author in conveniently recording travel and may be thought of as a method for offsetting the unpredictable environmental stresses of travel. The author's connectivity device, a portable modem, was acquired during the journey. It was purchased upon entering Mexico where due to the structures of telecommunications providers the author's connectivity situation changed. Apart from highlighting the importance of connectivity to travellers, this last example also emphasises the dynamic, contingent nature of personal luggage, including devices. Another important insight is that the array of devices and peripherals utilised by the author is interrelated and works together like a team with a problem in one potentially affecting others. For this reason, the author carried spares of some small items such as USBs, earphones, and adapters to be used in the case of damage or loss.

From the analysis of the author's fieldnotes, we see the many material items needed to maintain connectivity throughout the journey. While travellers could remain connected with less gear (a smartphone/charger/adapter combination would be suitable), it is also true that some travellers would take more, including bulky and/or expensive items like SLR cameras, drones, and tripods. Lamentably, in much existing literature, devices are automatically and unproblematically utilised by tourists. Such accounts have offered a poor understanding of the exigencies created by devices themselves (such as charging and software updates), and device-related problems (such as malfunctions or loss) that may affect travel movement. Apart

from their symbolic status as enablers of connectivity, devices are also extraordinary material items within the context of connected travellers' luggage. Devices are usually thought of as personalised, a notion reflected in the fact that they are often protected by passwords, configured around the specific preferences of a particular user (language/available applications/layout), and contain personal material (photos/mail/contact lists).⁹ A device that is lost or damaged during travel amounts both to a financial setback and a loss on an emotional level i.e., stored personal material and/or the loss of connectivity (see Magasic, 2016i, for a personal account of device loss from the author). Devices also require routines of maintenance such as charging, updating, and backup, which may take time and require special circumstances such as high-speed internet to be completed.

Apart from being *needy* items in that they require care and attention from the owner, devices are also *needed* by the traveller in the sense that they are frequently used items that are often carried on one's person. These high-value and high-needs characteristics mean that devices take a special status within the trip even before they are used to share travel online which can influence or problematise travel plans. Travellers may spend extra time packing to protect a device, or make sure to carry it with them, they could take time out to charge, may need to go looking for wi-fi, or avoid visiting an area that is perceived as dangerous fearing for the safety of their devices. A final though significant point is that the array of devices carried by the researcher during fieldwork is relatively similar to that carried during day to day work life in both type and quantity. Here, personal devices can be seen to form a link between travel and the everyday. Usage may be adapted or modified for new surroundings yet at the same time likely extends from, and connects with, quotidian life (Germann Molz, 2012; Lean, 2012). In this sense, the connected tourist is an extension of the connected individual. From here, the array of social media platforms utilised by the author during fieldwork will be discussed in the next section.

3.5 Social Media Platforms

This section considers the variety of interrelated social media platforms used by the author during fieldwork, their affordances, and effects within the journey (see Magasic, 2016j, 2016o).

⁹ However, devices may also be shared among intimate groups or pairs.

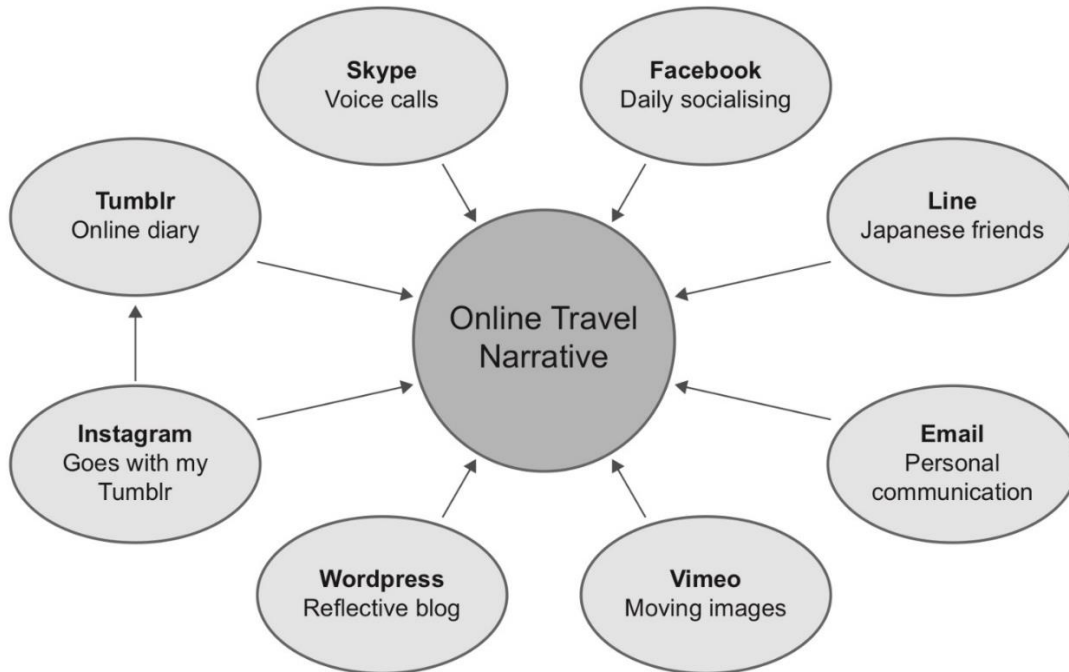


Figure 3.3. The author’s online travel narrative and platform foci (Magasic, 2016o).

The process of travel requires planning about which platforms one will use (Germann Molz & Paris, 2015; White & White, 2007). This might also include joining a new platform through which to record travel or maintain communications during the journey as was the case of the author who began a new blog before starting fieldwork. In the author’s experience joining the WordPress blogging platform, the textual guidelines and images provided on the platform discursively situated the blogger’s narrative as an outwardly focussed text to share with “friends and fans” (WordPress cited in Magasic, 2016b). A background image on the site showed a crowded concert scene positioning the blogger as an artist and the blog as the ideal platform to “share your ideas on the web”. Moreover, as this process is simple and quick, taking less than 30 minutes in the author’s experience, it follows that the traveller may participate in a number of different social media platforms given their particular preferences. The practice of representing the self online through a variety of different and interlocking online platforms has been referred to as the “networked self” (Papacharissi, 2010, 2018; see also Azariah, 2017, Chapter 5; Paris, 2011, for more on the networked self of travel bloggers). In the author’s case, the constellation of these platforms and their respective foci can be seen in Figure 3.3. Collectively, the agglomerated output from these different personal profiles can be thought of as forming the author’s online travel narrative.

Platform	Tagging	Public/ Private	Real name	News feed	Phone/ Computer	Statistics
Facebook	Y	Both	Y	Y	Both	Y
Email	N	Private	Y	N	Both	N
Tumblr	Y	Public	N	Y	Both	Y
WordPress	Y	Public	Y	Y	Both	Y
Instagram	Y	Public	N	Y	Phone	Y
Line	N	Private	N	N	Phone	N
Skype	N	Private	Y	N	Both	N
Vimeo	Y	Both	N	Y	Computer	Y

Table 3.3. Platforms and affordances as pertains to the author’s usage (Magasic, 2016o).

The different foci of the platforms means that each offers different services to users. The author has produced a table showing the platforms he used during fieldwork as well as the particular affordances pertaining to his usage (Table 3.3). The affordances presented are: tagging i.e., the ability to connect one’s post to other users or add key terms so that it may be retrieved by other users; whether communication is shared with a specific audience (private) or one that is wide and potentially unknown (public); whether the author uses his real name or a pseudonym; whether the platform has a news feed i.e., an updated collection of information from other users; whether the author accessed through phone or computer; and, whether statistics relating to audience engagement are available. This table demonstrates that, in the case of the author, while there are overlapping commonalities between platforms (e.g., those used for public communication have a news feed and audience statistics), no two platforms are exactly alike in terms of the affordances they provided the author. These different affordances contribute to different routines or “habitués” of usage (Bourdieu cited in Papacharissi & Easton, 2013). This means that travellers likely engage in a variety of specific, yet overlapping, usage practices as they participate in social media.

The material shared on platforms can be seen to be constitutive of different forms of traveller community following the tenets of the participatory culture. In the context of travel, the participatory culture does not necessarily mean a strong, localised community like the fan communities Jenkins studied, but does, this thesis argues, precipitate a variety of different forms of community. These might be temporary groupings of travellers interacting around a media item; more stable spaces of online sociality such as Lonely Planet’s Thorn Tree forum; review

sites which provide a space to speak back to tourism services; and ad hoc interpersonal connectivity via flows of personal media. The social bonds that arise between connected travellers can be understood as being both initiated by travellers and a function of the platforms they use (van Dijck, 2013b). As travellers share media, the profile-based nature of online platforms means that connections arise between users through actions such as liking, sharing, commenting, following, tagging, and messaging; and also through algorithmic connectivity via features like news feeds. These forms of digital connectivity may serve to promulgate a sense of shared experience and identity within the community of connected tourists with the wider effect being to generate collective understandings of travel and traveller sociality. As such, online forums support a shift in traveller sociality and power, from atomised to interconnected travellers who actively participate in the shaping of touristic culture by writing about, ranking, and reacting to tourist experiences in collective repositories (see Section 5.3.1).

To go back to the start of this section and the share-friendly rhetoric expressed in the WordPress guidelines, what might be questioned is why do platforms invite users to share? Platforms are commercial entities with a business interest in gathering user data (Langlois & Elmer, 2013; Fuchs, 2017). The more information a user shares, the better it is for the platform. Consequently, there are a variety of political structures built into the functionality of a platform that shape connections between users and how the sharing of information takes place. The affordances offered by a particular platform may then be seen to occur in correspondence with the political motivation of that platform. If the photosharing platform Snapchat deletes photos after a certain amount of time this is not to save storage or protect the user from “context collapse” (Marwick & boyd, 2011a) but rather because this functionality is what sets it apart from its closest business rival Instagram. In this way, we see the communicative spaces and affordances of platforms rationalised as political choices relating primarily to the commercial imperatives of the platform.¹⁰ The point of this section is then less to catalogue the diversity of devices or platforms available to travellers than to explain, as a commonality, their embedded formal and political characteristics and the potential for these to influence travel. Such a view helps us appreciate the intermediary role both devices and platforms play in shaping the community, practice, and experience of connected tourists.

¹⁰ Another example is Facebook’s Beacon feature implemented in 2007 (van Dijck, 2012, p. 153).

3.6 Discussion and Conclusions

The “ambivalent potential” (Habermas cited in Munar, 2013) of ICTs for travellers is shown through a discussion of the devices and platforms used by the author during travel. The analysis of fieldwork data highlighted both the affordances offered by these entities as well as the imperatives created by the formal qualities of devices as material objects and the political nature of platforms as venues constructed for social interaction. Such a view problematises the predominant sentiment of ICTs as empowerment within tourism literature. Platforms allow a communalised experience of travel achieved via online interactions and sociality. Such spaces bring together and support connected tourists but are also shaped by the commercial imperatives of the platforms themselves. In a similar way, devices also pass on political agendas through their affordances and software.¹¹ Understanding devices and platforms in this way, research need not only conceptualise tourism as a “sociotechnical practice” (Germann Molz, 2012; Munar et al., 2013b) but also attend to the techno-politics that are brought into tourism through devices, connectivity, and platforms. Another important point is that devices and platforms represent a significant link with travellers’ everyday sociality. This effect has been shown in discussions of the “spillover effect” as digital technology introduces home concerns or routines into the tourist experience (McKay & Vogt, 2012; Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016). Such a realisation points back to the everyday context of contemporary travel but also the fact that the connected traveller is an extension of the connected individual i.e., that travel and everyday life are “special cases of each other” (Wang et.al., 2016, p. 52).

From this investigation, we are better able to understand what are defined by this thesis as connected tourists and to create a conceptual model for future research. Connected tourists are defined as those travelling in the period since the start of Web 2.0 in which personal device and social media use have become increasingly commonplace. As the internet represents a technology that has been adopted on a broad scale globally, connected tourists are not limited to a particular group, purpose, or region of tourism such as business travel, backpacking, or visiting friends and relatives but rather encompass all types of tourism and tourist. Consequently, connected tourism should be thought of as a broad structural change in the tourist experience as a whole rather than a purpose, destination, or motivation related change in the actions of particular groups. Here, it is important to remember that disconnected tourists or locations exist (those that have lost connection) as well as unconnected ones (who by choice or

¹¹ Lawrence Lessig (2001) has highlighted how Apple computers and software are coded so as not to allow the user to reproduce copyrighted material.

circumstance have not connected) but that these are situated within the context of a tourism landscape that is increasingly connected.

The term *connected* is leveraged in order to reference not only the increasing infiltration of the everyday into tourist experience and the propinquity of travellers with their social networks but also the connectedness between travellers. From a theoretical perspective, this phraseology also references what van Dijck (2013a) refers to as the “culture of connectivity” as social media platforms are increasingly involved with, and reshape, human social activities. This thesis proposes that a fruitful way to study connected tourists at this time is to combine tourism theory and internet studies as this chapter has sought to do through its discussion of the participatory culture. Following this direction, the behaviours of connected tourists will be explored further within this thesis using theoretical models like “microcelebrity” (Senft, 2013), which explains the structuring principles through which media is shared online and its value in the “attention economy” (Goldhaber, 1997; Marwick, 2015).

In establishing this linkage between internet and tourism studies this study presents suggestions for future research on connected travellers. The first suggestion pertains to the breadth of the research field regarding tourists’ online activities and community. So far tourists’ online narratives and storytelling behaviours have been considered through a predominant framing of “virtual travel communities” (Buhalis & Law, 2008). This has focussed on explicitly tourist-related platforms such as travel blogs, TripAdvisor, Couchsurfing, or Airbnb; or those that correlate easily with tourism like Yelp. There has been comparatively less attention toward more generalised social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or Instagram. These platforms are, however, more popular than travel specific platforms by user numbers and are widely used during travel. Two likely reasons for the attention given to travel-focussed platforms are that this content is publicly available (whereas, Facebook, for example, is a closed platform; see Highfield & Leaver, 2014), and, second, that it is catalogued in ways that are easy for tourism researchers to approach such as around a particular destination or service provider. The result is that research has tended to take a superficial view of tourists’ online activities concentrating on behaviours like reviewing, which favours a focus on the analysis of tourist data rather than practice (Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

This thesis argues that a myopic attention toward travel-related platforms is counterproductive when it comes to understanding the totality of tourists’ ICT use and that research should aim to incorporate a more holistic view of tourists’ social media use. As shown through the concept of the networked self (Papacharissi, 2010), tourists’ online identities are created from a variety of different portals and avatars. Research should thus pay attention to the

wider array of platforms and tools travellers engage with during the journey including the roles fulfilled by specific platforms, the interrelationships between them, and at what points particular elements are foregrounded within the journey. While the profusion and messiness of social media may be a challenge to researchers, such research promises a closer understanding of the ways in which ICT use takes place and the meanings it carries. Here, researchers suggest ways of analysing social media use as it occurs across everyday life (Pink et al., 2016), or within specific arenas, like nightclubs (Carah & Dobson, 2016), that can be adapted to a travel context. As a final point, owing to the increasing prominence of ICTs within the journey, there is space for exploring social media not only as an accompaniment to, but as the purpose or focus of travel in itself.

Travel is increasingly technologised. The devices used in everyday life are carried during the journey and utilised in a way which is at once familiar and exotic. Travellers access the applications and online services from home in new environments and also use new services or make new contacts that may be brought home after the journey. Each year fresh devices and online platforms emerge and are adopted by travellers. These technologies are interpolated within the experiential field of travel and through the practices of tourists become normalised as part of the tourist experience. Normalised should not, however, be confused with standardised. By providing a portrait of personal device and platform usage, this chapter has sought to address a dearth of research on the personal practices through which travellers bring ICTs into the journey. Responding to the fledgling corpus of literature examining ICT-mediated tourism, this chapter has outlined the conceptual figure of the connected tourist in order to unite the fields of tourism and internet studies. Travellers are connected to home, each other, and the wider internet. This connection is achieved through devices and managed through the interface of social media platforms. Analysis of the author's fieldwork indicates that connected travellers may utilise a variety of devices and platforms. These mediators (along with connectivity) comprise the border between the technical and physical layers of the connected tourist's journey.

This thesis argues that the field of internet studies is a fruitful place through which to deepen understanding of tourists' use of ICTs. Such a view paves the way for the use of conceptual models like the "attention economy" (Goldhaber, 1997) and "microcelebrity" (Senft, 2013) that describe the economies of value in social media and the ways in which users strategically manage attention. Such ideas position travel as a hybridised practice wherein the economies present within social media platforms may influence the shape of tourists' storytelling, and, by extension, their interactions with the physical landscape. These ideas will

be discussed in Parts II and III of this thesis respectively. Another useful component of employing internet theory within tourism is the critical viewpoints toward ICTs discussed throughout this chapter. Tourism study has, as of yet, largely ignored the techno-political consequences of the integration of ICTs within the tourism experience; yet connected tourists are, in a functional sense, beholden to the embedded ideologies within digital technologies, which to some degree shape tourists' behaviour, the language of tourism, the landscape of tourist sites, and the form of tourism as a whole. The concept of connected tourism highlights the integral nature of ICTs within tourist experience. In this light, social media use and storytelling may be researched as a form of tourism in itself in which "the use of the social media while traveling is the core and major purpose of having a tourism experience" (Sigala, 2016, p. 109). Such a perspective helps to frame the often vital role of social media within connected tourism and may help attract new modes of analysis from wider fields through which to understand connected tourists. Finally, while internet studies can benefit tourism studies by allowing more balanced modes of analysis, the application of internet-native theories to tourists can help to examine and personify the models used within studies of online sociality within the specific real-world context of tourism.

This chapter discussed two intermediaries—devices and platforms—within the practice of connected tourism. These are inextricably linked by the transmission of information using electromagnetic waves i.e., internet connectivity. The next chapter will go on to discuss internet connectivity and its different forms during the journey.

Chapter 4. Four Modes of Internet Connectivity During Travel

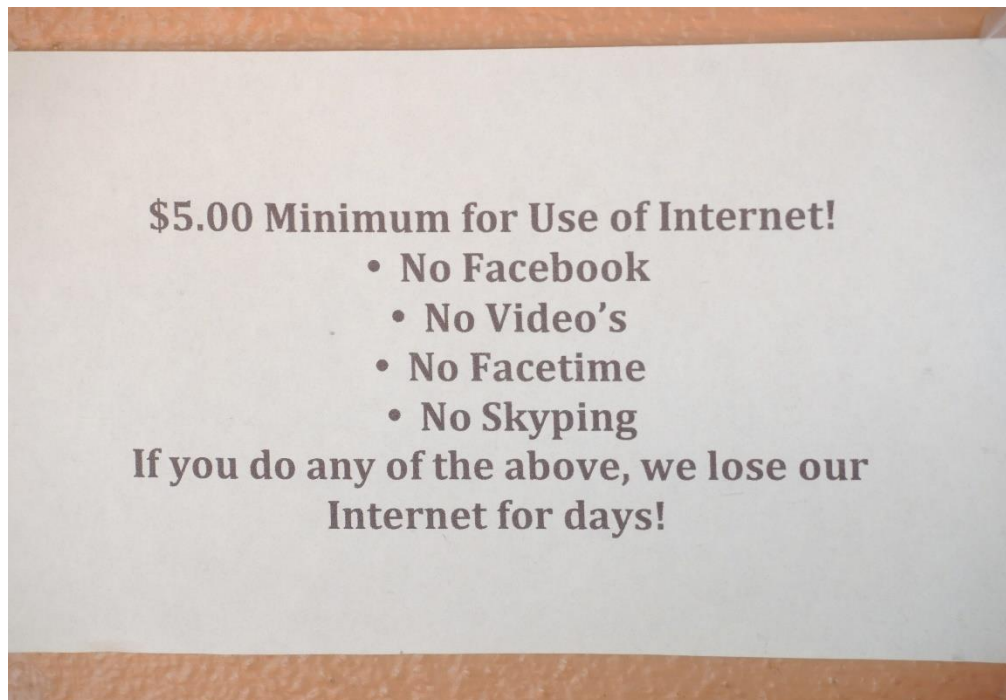


Figure 4.1. Conditions for internet usage at a café in Baja California Sur, Mexico.
(Author)

In general terms, connectivity is the ability of an entity to interact with other entities over a network. Connectivity is, however, a multimodal concept with different interpretations across a wide range of fields, such as social connectivity or hardware connectivity (van Dijck, 2013a). Within contemporary travel, the concept of connectivity most aptly relates to the ability to access social and informational networks over the internet. Thus, travel connectivity shall be defined as the ability to connect to mobile, fixed, or satellite telecommunications networks that allow access to the internet while moving to/through or spending time in places outside of one's usual environment.

So far, studies have tended to consider travel connectivity as something that is either present or absent, however, as Angelopulo (2014) explains, while connectivity is initially a binary entity, the state of being connected is distinctly heterogenous:

Connectivity is a Boolean construct. It follows a yes/no, binary, on/off logic. Either you are connected, or you are not. If you are 'yes', 'on', 'connected', then connectivity has qualitative and quantitative dimensions. You could have a lot or a

little connectivity; the quality of that connectivity could be really good or quite poor.
(p. 210)

In extant tourism literature, the predominant use of phrases such as, *constant, always on, everpresent, seamless, or ubiquitous* to describe connectivity, employed in tandem with their inverse, *unplugged, dead zone, and black hole*, has portrayed travel connectivity in a binary manner eliding the significant experiential breadth that exists within the state of being connected. Indeed, this research gap has been noted in a recent paper by Tanti and Buhalis (2017), who state, “researchers often ignored the fact that travellers have to commonly adjust between the two states of connections during their travels rather than be completely connected or disconnected” (p. 138). Similarly, Germann Molz and Paris (2015) have called for more research exploring how “uneven [internet] access” (p. 189) can shape the experience of contemporary travellers. As its goal, this chapter shall examine different modes of connectivity encountered by travellers and consider how these affect the consumption of travel experiences.

The chapter proffers and explains two primary reasons why travellers may need to negotiate different modes of connectivity during the journey: (1) the primarily domestic/local nature of mobile communications networks and high costs accorded to roaming; and, (2) the varying standards of connectivity infrastructure i.e., the digital divide. These factors have significant influence on the type of connectivity accessed by travellers. As any internet user will know, the bandwidth, or, data transfer speed, of an internet connection, is crucially important in determining the different affordances that may be possible online. As technological advancements have allowed data transfer speeds to increase, the internet as a whole has evolved to support greater user participation via the ability to download, upload, and stream digital content i.e., Web 2.0 (O’Reilly, 2005). Moreover, faster data transfer allows websites and social media platforms to assist users through algorithmic and location-based service functions. Simply put, the personalised, immersive, multimedia experience to which many internet users are accustomed would not be available without a comprehensive telecommunications infrastructure to back it up. Video-chatting with family members on Skype, sending pictures to a friend on SnapChat, or browsing through one’s news feed on Facebook require certain bandwidth standards in order to be realised, and, without which, these services may be impaired or inaccessible.

The aforementioned activities are all common habits of connected tourists who use digital devices and internet connectivity whilst on the road. Germann Molz and Paris (2015) explain that “new technologies have become an ordinary aspect of most travelers’ journeys.

Logging onto Facebook, emailing home, uploading photos, or texting friends are now routine aspects of a mobile lifestyle” (p. 189). However, despite the fact that ICT use is increasingly embedded within travel experience, the way tourists interact with social media is by no means universal (Choe et al., 2017); with connectivity providing a key juncture at which tourists’ approaches to, and use of, social media is likely to vary. Knowledge of the conditions determining travel internet connectivity is then a critical dimension in the overall understanding of tourists’ technologically-mediated experiences. As this chapter will highlight, affordable, stable, high-speed internet connectivity may not be universally accessible throughout the journey and thus tourists may negotiate different modes of connectivity that correspondingly affect how they consume and share travel experiences.

Scholarly work has addressed the integration of ICTs and internet connectivity within the pre, during, and post stages of travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Leung et al., 2013). However, as previously discussed, studies have in general been dominated by applied business perspectives (Munar et al., 2013b), which have tended to seek generalizable findings at the expense of specific knowledge on how tourists use ICTs as part of their experience. An example of this is the way in which studies have largely neglected to consider internet connectivity as a dynamic entity that exists in a variety of states. This implies space for a critical agenda on the intersection between ICTs and tourism and greater attention toward the personal dimensions of usage (Tribe & Mkono, 2017). This chapter seeks to focus on the practices through which connectivity is accessed, utilised, and negotiated throughout the lifespan of the journey. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it defines travel connectivity and presents a travel connectivity typology featuring four principal modes based on network quality and range. Secondly, implications of each mode of connectivity for travel experience are discussed.

4.1 (Dis)Connecting Within the Journey

Over the past two decades, many travellers have adopted digital devices as travel tools. These include items like laptops, smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, and peripherals like portable wi-fi modems (MacKay & Vogt, 2012; Paris, 2012). As these tools are brought into the journey they allow new modes of perception and experience. Germann Molz (2012) describes ICT-mediated travel as a “socio-technical” (pp. 8-9) practice dependent upon devices and internet connectivity that occurs within “blended space” (p. 45)—physical landscapes overlaid with digital information. With devices becoming an integrated part of travel, research has investigated their effect upon tourist experience. Pearce (2011; see also Pearce & Gretzel, 2012) has outlined the concept of “digital elasticity” in order to describe the way in which,

“tourists remain electronically linked to their home worlds as they stretch and explore their identity and the worlds of others” (2011, p. 41). Such ongoing connection may mean that tourists share events online in close proximity to the experience allowing a sense of propinquity between the traveller and online audience. The effects of such connection may improve the quality of experience as Neuhofer and Buhalis (2013) have considered through the frame of “technology enhanced experience” (see also Neuhofer, 2014; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014a). However, despite what is shown within these accounts as an increase in travellers’ social connectivity, research has also noted less favourable connectivity outcomes within the context of connected tourism.

Recent research has explored tourists’ experiences with disconnectivity. Pearce and Gretzel (2012) contend that the state of total disconnection may occur in “technological dead zones” and has both positive and negative connotations for travellers. Most notable among these is the state of “technology induced tension” produced when travellers are unable to access informational and social networks over the internet. This is heightened when disconnectivity occurs involuntarily and unexpectedly. Paris, Burger, Rubin and Cason (2015) go on to look at how disconnectivity tension is manifest in different ways in different situations including within the case of technology addiction.

Researchers have also looked at tourists’ preference for disconnectivity within the journey as a means of escape, wellness, exoticism, or otherwise. Based on their study of camping tourists in the UK, Dickinson et al. (2016) contend that as much as half of the tourists’ surveyed had some desire for digital disconnectivity during their vacation period. Exploring experiences of disconnectivity as set within the context of work-life balance, Neuhofer and Ladkin (2017) note that tourists may even elect for organised experiences of disconnectivity as exemplified in the growing trend of “digital detox” holidays. Finally, Tanti and Buhalis (2017) identify three approaches to connectivity: selective unplugging, actively connected, and self-imposed total disconnection, through which tourists manage the complex personal and technological negotiations related to internet usage within the journey.

Despite a predominant binary viewpoint in exploring tourists’ experience with dis/connectivity, literature has also noted the potential for differing experiences of connectivity with the journey. Using the theoretical background of the digital divide, Minghetti and Buhalis (2010) consider connectivity differences in tourist destinations both within and between countries based on the three factors of environment, supply, and demand. While from an experiential perspective, Masri, Anuar, and Yuli (2017) looked at the effect of wi-fi quality on tourist satisfaction in the Malaysian city of Kuala Lumpur. Such studies demonstrate the variable

nature of travel connectivity and its ability to influence tourist experience. However, most existing literature largely fails to acknowledge the dependence of connected travellers on not only the availability but also the quality of connectivity. Thus, this chapter will go on to investigate the specific reasons for different levels of connectivity from a technological perspective.

4.2 Telecommunications Networks and Infrastructure

There are three types of telecommunications networks: mobile, fixed, and satellite, which provide connectivity to travellers. From these, fixed and mobile networks are the most commonly accessed (Buhalis & Law, 2008). As a general rule, telecommunications networks are owned by private or national telecommunications companies and accessed via a paid subscription. Mobile networks are composed of radio towers that broadcast a coverage signal over a given area. Mobile coverage is measured in terms of generation such as 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G with each generation comprising of a variety of protocols offering different data transfer properties (Smith & Collins, 2014). Regarding bandwidth speeds, 2G mobile networks allow theoretical peak data transfer speeds of up to 144Kbps, 3G offers up to 2Mbps, and 4G up to 300Mbps (Miller, 2013).¹² Fixed networks, on the other hand, are composed of point to point wire cables with different technological specifications such as fibre, cable, and DSL. Fixed internet connectivity is accessed via a wire connection using a modem and router. Internet connectivity may be broadcast within a limited radius using wi-fi or accessed via cable (i.e., ethernet). Akamai (2016) reports the global average connection speed of fixed networks as 6.3 Mbps and the global average peak connection speed as 37.2 Mbps. Satellite connectivity is most common in remote areas where infrastructure development is not cost effective. While useful in these circumstances, present capacity for more widespread usage is hampered by satellite connectivity's "fairly limited capacity at high ongoing connectivity costs" (Internet.org, 2016, p. 13).

The bandwidth of all telecommunications networks may be affected by a variety of factors such as the aggregate of users accessing the network at a particular time (i.e., network congestion), the activity of other users on a shared connection (in the case of a connection accessed via wi-fi, ethernet, or tethering), interference caused by natural forces such as mountains or weather (in the case of mobile or satellite networks), and other causes such as physical movement and hardware standards. As a result of such factors, actual connection

¹² The next generation of mobile data network, 5G is expected to be deployed in 2020 (Ericsson, 2016).

speeds may, in effect, be much lower than potential or advertised peak speeds. In terms of the connectivity affordances of different ICT devices; smartphones and tablets are able to access mobile networks and fixed networks (via wi-fi), while laptops usually only access fixed networks on their own. However, pairing laptops with a smartphone (via *tethering*)¹³ or portable modem allows access to mobile networks.

The physical infrastructure of internet connectivity means that connection sources are sometimes plentiful, such as in urban areas, and other times less common, typically in rural and wilderness areas (Internet.org, 2016; Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010). The quality and type of connection accessed has concrete repercussions for the online actions travellers are able to complete. A low-speed connection may not allow a full experience of the internet in terms of being able to load images and videos or upload content. Meanwhile, a fixed connection via ethernet or wi-fi will only allow internet access within a limited physical location thus preventing interactions like ongoing real-time sharing and feedback over a broad area. Because of the different characteristics and affordances of varying types of connectivity, planning and choices about connectivity including actions like searching for connectivity standards online or renting a portable wi-fi at the destination are becoming an increasingly important part of connected tourism. The consequences of different modes of connectivity will be explored later in the chapter. From here, the chapter will move on to look at the issues of roaming and the digital divide and how these shape tourists' experience of connectivity.

4.3. Roaming and the Digital Divide

This study proffers two infrastructural reasons why travellers will encounter different modes of connectivity during the journey: roaming costs and the digital divide. Roaming is the ability to use one's mobile phone connection outside of the provider's service area. The reason for roaming is that telephone networks are primarily offered on a domestic/local basis and cannot provide blanket coverage. Thus, when using their mobile phone outside of the coverage area of their own network, tourists must utilise a different service provider, which in turn includes an additional service charge. The high rates accorded to roaming have been noted both in general terms and in the context of tourism (Tanti & Buhalis, 2017). In their discussion of roaming charges within the European Union, Spruytte, van der Wee, de Regt, Verbrugge, and Colle consider the effect upon tourists:

¹³ Tethering is the practice of sharing one's mobile data connection with another ICT device via the *personal hotspot* function available on some devices.

This resulted in most of the travelers deciding to switch off their mobile handset during the whole trip, switch off the data roaming capabilities of their mobile phone or smartphone, or only connect to the Internet using public or private Wi-Fi access points. (2017, p. 718)

Supporting this perspective, studies have noted the tendency of travellers to utilise wi-fi connections that may be accessed freely rather than pay additional fees for roaming (Dickinson et al., 2016; Neuhofer et al., 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2017). Rather than continuing to use their phone as they would at home, travellers adjust their approach to connectivity during travel in light of expense. In response to the high costs and inconvenience of roaming, the European Union has enacted a number of rounds of regulation on mobile service providers in order to reduce roaming fees for European travellers within the EU. This has culminated in the removal of roaming fees within Europe from June 2017 (Spruytte et al., 2017). Also, while a number of carriers offer continuous coverage through reciprocal arrangements with other service providers within which travellers do not suffer from roaming charges, such packages often incur additional cost or have to be specifically activated.¹⁴ While this is convenient for the travellers to which these service packages apply, the fact that connectivity infrastructure is not provisioned in a standardised manner but rather varies between different countries and regions means the customer is still likely to encounter different levels of travel connectivity.

In recent decades, the construction of connectivity infrastructure such as cable networks and mobile towers has been a significant concern of governments around the world given the rise of global informational commerce and the utility of the internet as a social tool. However, different countries have different provisioning of telecommunications infrastructure depending on various economic, logistical, and political factors relating mainly to service requirements and population distribution. The multi-sited approach of the current study was able to compare connectivity standards in a variety of different countries and regions and explore the negotiations involved with transition between locations. Inequality in access to internet connectivity has been investigated through sustained scholarship on the digital divide, including in the tourism context (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010). Traditionally, this was based on subscriber numbers calculated by organizations such as the United Nations led International Telecommunications Union (ITU). However, as the increased cost effectiveness of mobile phones has led to subscriber numbers representing a large percentage of the world's

¹⁴ An example of this is the UK provider Three's "Feel at Home" plan introduced in Chapter 1.

population, scholarship seeks to explore inequalities in how ICTs are used. Research on the second level digital divide has explored both exogenous influences on usage, including sociodemographic factors such as education, gender, age, and employment status (Büchi, Just, & Latzer, 2016; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014), and, endogenous factors such as infrastructure (Hilbert, 2016; Pearce & Rice, 2013).

Explaining the population coverage of different generations of mobile network, the ITU (2016a) reports the proportion of the world's population covered by 2G mobile as 95%, with 3G mobile networks accessible by 84%, and 4G (LTE) networks at 53%. In addition, owing largely to infrastructure costs, there is often a significant gap in the connectivity experienced between urban and rural regions. The ITU (2016b) explains,

A number of factors make rural areas particularly vulnerable: their remoteness, limited access to services (including electricity), and often difficult, i.e., mountainous or rugged, terrain. ... Even the most developed economies in the world struggle with connecting their rural and remote areas. (p. 196)

This disparity is constituted not only in terms of access but also in speed with cheaper, older generation services often being used in less populated areas. The consequences of the digital divide for travellers are varying levels of connection speed, stability, and availability. The physical movement implicit in travel means that tourists will traverse national and regional boundaries, networks, and coverage areas. As the contexts of roaming and the digital divide highlight, travellers' approaches toward connectivity will likely have to be adjusted during travel and may be negotiated at multiple points in the journey in correspondence with factors such as budget, technologies at hand, and the availability of telecommunications networks.

4.4 Four Modes of Connectivity

Literature has shown that travel connectivity may vary according to a number of factors including endogenous characteristics of the network (i.e., quality of infrastructure, connectivity range), exogenous influences on the network (including different forms of interference and network congestion), and personal choices (the ability to pay access fees, or the devices a traveller chose to bring on their trip). From these, the two overriding factors identified within fieldwork, which were ultimately used to determine four principal modes of travel connectivity, are quality and range. The *quality* of a connection is defined as its speed (download and upload bandwidth) and stability (consistent performance without dropouts or fluctuations). Connection

quality thus depends on a variety of factors including the technological specifications of the network, mode of access, as well as network traffic at a given time.

Range is conceptualised as the distance one may travel without losing the connection. This varies from short distances of a few meters with a wi-fi connection to hundreds of kilometres on some mobile networks. The ideal experience of connectivity for today's traveller is a stable fourth generation (4G) mobile connection that combines high-speed data transfer with mobility. However, the fact that such a connection is reliant upon costly infrastructure means that it is predominantly available in densely populated areas such as cities and is more likely to be found in developed, rather than developing, countries. As there are more potential customers within a city, there is likely a range of telecommunications networks to choose from meaning many different options for connectivity. If one moves into less populated areas, the number of networks will likely decrease, as well as the quality of the connection.

The range of a mobile connection is determined by the extent of the network, which is composed of antenna towers arranged in a honeycomb pattern. The further one moves away from an available antenna tower, the lower the quality of service until the point at which the connection is lost. Fixed networks, such as cable internet, may provide more consistent high-quality connections with lower latency, however, the user must remain relatively stable. The preconditions through which travel connectivity is accessed need also be considered. Access to connectivity may be costly and is frequently provisioned in contract form, meaning that short-term access may be inconvenient. Furthermore, mobile connectivity is generally limited to the network of a specific provider, implying that travellers who cross network borders may not be able to access mobile connectivity without an additional fee i.e., roaming. The network may then be seen as a significant element within connected tourism by defining a space of connectivity that may be utilised by tourists; and also imposing a boundary and distinction between connected/disconnected tourists. In sum, it can be seen that travel connectivity is a multidimensional concept and that travellers, who cross network borders and shift between locations throughout a journey, are likely to encounter unfamiliar networks and negotiate multiple experiences of connectivity as they travel. The experience of travel connectivity thus contrasts with home connectivity that is usually predicated on ongoing contractual agreements and a familiarity with the particular standards provided by the home network(s).

From most connected to least connected, the four tiers of connectivity proposed by this investigation are: fluid, serial, moving, and sporadic. Fluid mode comprises of a 3G or 4G mobile data connection allowing the traveller to complete high-speed data transfers on the move. While this mode is considered as the most connected, the added costs of roaming (or wi-

fi rental) mean that travellers may forego this mode of connectivity. Next, the serial mode is presented as middle tier connectivity with variable connection speeds accessed via a fixed connection. Moving connectivity is that encountered on transport such as on a plane, train, ship, or bus. It is accessed via mobile or satellite networks but is often limited in terms of access time or data download and is furthermore confined to the physical locality of the vehicle itself. The lowest tier connectivity presented is the sporadic mode. This is a low bandwidth connection with very limited functionality and often truncated usage periods but greater potential range than moving and serial connectivity (Figure 4.2).

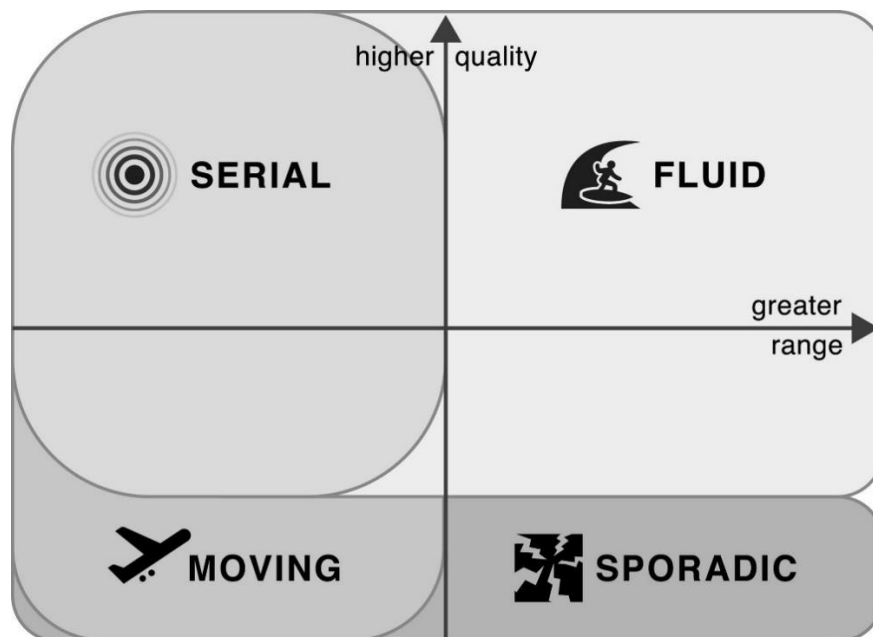


Figure 4.2. Four modes of travel connectivity in relation to connection quality and range.

While each mode is explained through a particular set of conditions through which connectivity is experienced, the modes are not mutually exclusive and may coexist within a single location. For example, an airport that is experienced in serial mode by vacationers using the wi-fi connection in a frequent flyers lounge could easily be experienced as fluid connectivity by a business traveller who has a mobile connection with a service provider in that country. Similarly, backpackers sharing an overcrowded wi-fi connection at the departure gate might experience the airport in sporadic mode. Thus, travellers may experience different modes of connectivity depending on their needs, budget, and the availability of networks and devices; and may voluntarily or involuntarily transition between modes at the same location. With this in mind, a description of the four modes is presented using field data.

	Connection quality	Potential access location	Usage pattern	Restrictions	Feel
Fluid	High	Urban region	Ongoing bursts of usage	Data/roaming fees	Home
Serial	Variable	Hotel, café, airport, internet café, public space	Limited connection range means that internet tasks are completed in block sessions	Access/data fees or time/data usage limits. Limited connection range	Away
Moving	Variable	Plane, train, boat, or bus	Pay walls may restrict data/time usage	Access/data fees or time/data usage limits. Physically confined to mode of transport. Service interruptions	On the move
Sporadic	Low	Remote region	Slow progress. Text only. No uploads	Limited connection speed	Off the grid

Table 4.1. A summary of the characteristics of each mode of travel connectivity.

4.4.1 Fluid Connectivity



Figure 4.3. Rental wi-fi in Kochi Airport, Japan (Author).

The fluid mode is experienced by travellers who have a mobile data connection with a 3G or 4G network via a smartphone or portable modem. A salient factor within fluid connectivity is that the traveller has the connection with them as they move and so is able to use the internet at their leisure without time and range limitations. This means that communications can be easily maintained and information obtained when needed. In fluid mode, travellers may engage in ongoing communications as they travel and are able to share experiences and receive feedback in real time (Hannam et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2014). This (largely) unimpeded connectivity can be seen in fieldnotes by the author recounting his connectivity experience in Southern California, with this example likewise highlighting the tendency to engage in quick, ongoing bursts of sociality within the fluid mode:

Our Japanese phone company has a reciprocal deal with the American company Sprint. We get calls and data as per our home plan whenever their network is available. Coverage, on the whole, is pretty good. While somewhat patchy in the north of the state, Southern California has near constant connection. While in the north we had to find cafes or hotels with wi-fi in order to do our internet tasks, in

the south, the everpresent connection allows us to use high speed (4G) internet throughout the day. We can have conversations and monitor responses, but we may be less likely to sit and take time out for net use. With constant connection, I'd say that I spend less time writing about my travel experiences overall as my stories are narrated quickly while I'm on the go and doing other things meaning that I don't often go into detail or explain events at length. (Magasic, 2016d)

This real time communication has significant implications for the travel experience as tourists are able to cocreate travel experiences with online audiences or service providers as they happen (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2013). It is argued that this method of usage is very similar to that which many travellers would use at home. Limitations that may exist within fluid mode are roaming charges (Tanti & Buhalis, 2017), along with general data costs/limits. Travellers who have reciprocal or free roaming deals or unlimited roaming data may not experience these constraints and may consume data more freely. Prepaid data SIM cards, used in combination with an unlocked smartphone or portable modem (Figure 4.3), are a recent development allowing travellers to engage in fluid connectivity in a manner that is usually cheaper than utilising roaming. Websites such as the Prepaid Data SIMcard Wiki (http://prepaid-data-sim-card.wikia.com/wiki/Prepaid_SIM_with_data) are available to assist travellers in finding information about local telecommunications companies offering prepaid mobile data. Although fluid connectivity generally feels like home in the sense that it provides stable, high-speed connectivity, restrictions such as in the case of China that limit access to certain websites can disrupt storytelling habits even in fluid mode. Alternatively, better infrastructure in the visited regions can create a better-than-home experience that supports social media use.

4.4.2 Serial Connectivity

The serial mode is hotspot connectivity provided by fixed networks. Serial mode is usually accessed as wi-fi though it may also comprise an ethernet cable connection. Serial connectivity can commonly be found, either free or for a fee, in locations such as cafés, libraries, hotels, stores (see Figure 4.4), or public spaces like parks and transport hubs. Serial connectivity is commonly encountered in urban destinations and comprises connections of variable quality. The author recounts:

Generally speaking, access to the Internet in Los Cabos [Mexico] is fair. There are a variety of wi-fi connections available (in hotels and restaurants), and indeed

every hotel we enquired with boasted a connection. Also, the speed of internet connection is consistent and fast enough to upload photos or watch YouTube clips (maybe not in HD though). It is, however, notably slower than our home connection in Japan. With this consistent connection available we were able to approach our online narratives in a regular manner, spending a couple of hours each day in the hotel room or at a café. (Magasic, 2016c)

As the serial mode is obtained via a third party such as a café or hotel that the tourist patronises, the connection is often shared between users and quality may vary significantly depending on the subscription service the proprietor has and the number of users sharing the connection at any given time. Indeed, some serial connections, such as those found in the common room of a hostel or at a transit lounge in an airport, suffer from noticeably busy periods when many users are seeking to connect to the internet at the same time.

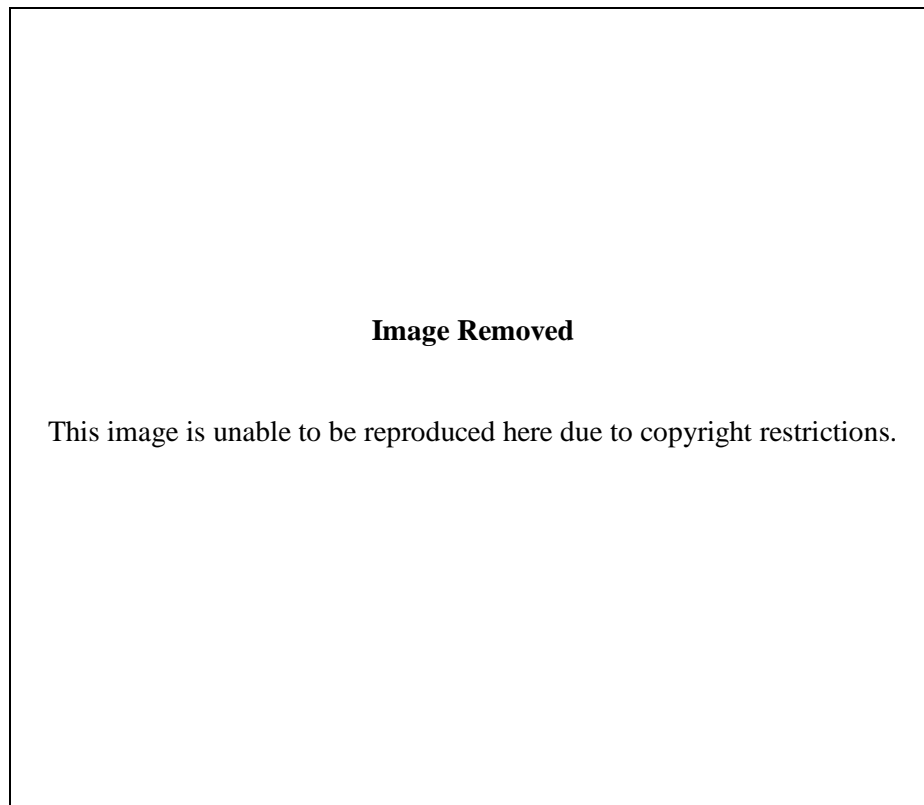


Figure 4.4. A poster advertising the wi-fi service offered by 7-11 convenience stores in Japan (Author).

As serial connectivity is accessed via a fixed network, the range of the connection is limited and as such the traveller is effectively forced to remain in a certain physical space. Gass and Diot (2010) highlight the space constraints that apply to fixed wi-fi networks, stating, “wi-fi is not an ‘always connected’ technology. It is designed primarily for the mobile user that accesses the network while relatively stationary” (p. 71). When the traveller leaves a space of connection they are unable to follow and update communications unlike those using a mobile data connection (unless they return or find another network to connect to). The consequences of this in the author’s experience is that travellers tend to access the internet in block sessions in which a number of tasks are completed concurrently. It is argued that this usage mode is different from that of the home routine of many tourists who are accustomed to having a smartphone and available mobile data (i.e., the fluid mode) and who must correspondingly adjust to a hotspot-centric mode of internet usage. The internet café, a seemingly fading entity from the period before abundant wi-fi and cheap ICT devices where the traveller rented an internet connected computer for an hourly fee, is also an example of serial connectivity.

4.4.3 Moving Connectivity

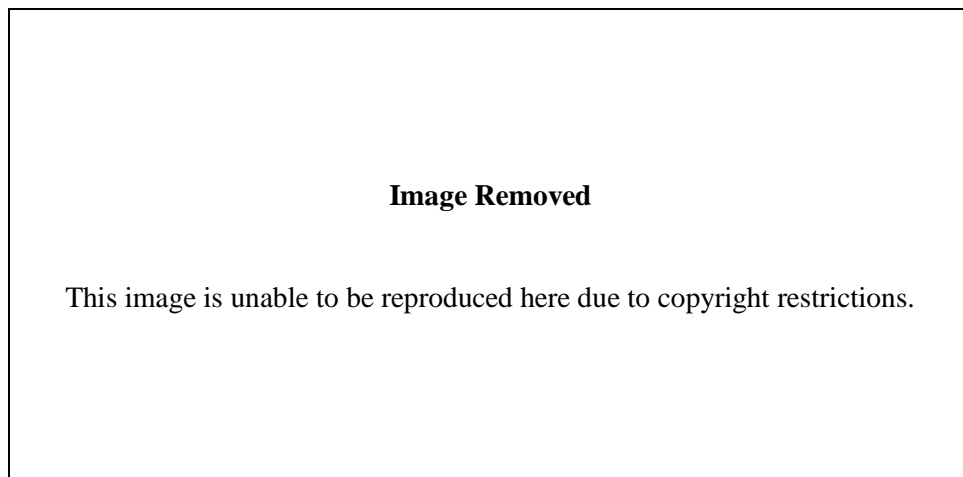


Figure 4.5. In-flight wi-fi (Emirates, 2016).

Moving connectivity is accessed on public transport such as airplanes, trains, ships, or buses. In this mode, connectivity is provided by the conveyance and utilised by passengers as part of the transport service. The author’s experiences with moving connectivity are explored in fieldnotes ruminating upon the use of personal devices on airplanes:

Transit brings with it a need to communicate: To inform others of arrivals, departures and delays, to say goodbyes, and coordinate pick-ups. Yet, until recently, the experience of flying on a plane has provided a strange respite from the connected everyday. Ironically, given that planes are emblematic of mobile sociality, it is the term *airplane mode* which we use to symbolise total disconnectivity from the social interactions our devices allow. Shortly after boarding, airplane mode enabled, we find our social interactions suddenly and uncharacteristically reduced to the limited confines of the plane itself. This is quite an adjustment. While some planes have offered wi-fi, its limited functionality meant that it was an emergency option only. Communications with loved ones, or colleagues, almost always waited until arrival. Times are, however, changing. Perhaps drawing inspiration from ground transport like buses and municipal subways which increasingly provide passengers with serviceable wi-fi, airlines seem to be paying more attention to in-flight connectivity as a part of their service (and revenue stream). (Magasic, 2018)

In general, internet connectivity on transport has been somewhat slow to develop owing to the challenges inherent in maintaining a connection whilst travelling across a broad area, which may include vast unpopulated spaces like oceans or physical impediments such as mountains and underground tunnels. Mobile data transfer from a moving vehicle is generally slower and may include service disruptions as the vehicle transitions between different antenna towers.

Saliently, the moving mode is distinct from that of an individual using a mobile connection in a vehicle because the connection is provided by the conveyance itself. Thus, the range of the connection is limited to the vehicle. On airplanes, internet service is accessed via mobile or satellite networks or a combination of both. Typically, this access is offered via a paid subscription (restricted either by time or data limits), however, some airlines are beginning to offer limited free services. In August 2017, Emirates offered travellers in economy class 20Mb of data and/or two hours of connectivity for free (Figure 4.5). In-flight connectivity has been criticised for lack of bandwidth relative to ground level connections, although connection speeds are expected to increase as new technological advancements are developed.

Ships, which have the challenge of connecting far from land, typically utilise satellite networks to provide connectivity to passengers. Royal Caribbean cruises (n.d.) which boasts of having the “fastest wi-fi at sea” offers paid plans for two different modes of usage—“surfing” and

“streaming”—with usage starting from US \$10 a day. Moving connectivity is also increasingly available on metropolitan public transport. Subway systems in major cities such as New York and Tokyo offer free wi-fi to passengers. Like serial mode, however, the large number of users potentially sharing a single connection within a vehicle can reduce connection speeds. Demonstrating a tiered system, the train company Deutsche Bahn (n.d.) offers limited free wi-fi to second class passengers and increased access to first class. As moving mode is frequently offered as part of the paid service of transportation, it may be a source of revenue for transportation providers. Thus, within moving mode, variable quality connectivity is frequently accompanied by pay walls. It is expected that with new technological deployments within the transport industry, service, accessibility, and pricing will improve and, thus, the moving connectivity experience as well.

4.4.4 Sporadic Connectivity



Figure 4.6. Wi-fi at a roadside stop in Baja California Norte, Mexico (Author).

In the sporadic mode, the traveller utilises a low bandwidth connection from fixed, mobile, or satellite networks. This mode is typical of rural or wilderness areas where network coverage is poorly distributed owing to a lack of antenna towers and/or cable infrastructure. It may also occur in areas where landscape features such as mountains interfere with signal strength. In the sporadic mode obtaining a connection is challenging as the signal is weak and

bandwidth is low. The challenges inherent in sporadic mode connectivity can be seen in the author's description of the connectivity experience in rural Mexico:

Our new cell phone and portable modem had long ago lost service, and, yet, along the way, at small cafes, hotels and RV parks (presumably serviced by travellers coming down from North America), signs for wi-fi kept popping up. These came in stark contrast to the desert surroundings and general lack of connectedness (these remote locations frequently do not have other facilities such as phone signal, pipe water, postal service or state electricity). I assume now, having seen an advertisement in a remote town popular with tourist surfers and fishers, that the wi-fi service is provided by satellite. ... While we have been surprised at the availability of wi-fi in all of the locations we have visited so far on the Baja Peninsula [Mexico], a connection itself is not necessarily a guarantee that one will be able to access and use their social media portals. So far, the quality of connection has depended on the size of the town (bigger is better), amount of people connected (less is faster), and, even the weather (in one location, wind, apparently, wasn't good for the connection). A slow or unstable connection can provide more frustration than satisfaction, and, in most locations updating photos has been a difficult proposition resulting in prolonged loading screens, or recurrent error messages. (Magasic, 2016e)

In sporadic mode, internet use is characterised by extended loading times, dropouts, and a reduced spectrum of available websites and functionalities. Only the most basic, data-economical tasks such as email and simple websites (such as Google search) may be successfully accomplished meaning that the traveller's ability to use the internet is effectively limited to text only features. Pages featuring images will load extremely slowly (if at all) and the user is not able to upload images.

During fieldwork some sporadic connections provided by third parties (such as those in a café) did indeed come with specific instructions in the form of a sign or notice explaining the type of websites or software that could be accessed (such as email) and those that were too data-heavy (such as Facebook, YouTube, or Skype) for the connection (Figure 4.1). As sporadic connectivity is generally found on the boundaries of commercial tourist experience, it is more likely to be encountered by travellers seeking frontier or specialty experiences such as trekkers, adventure tourists, or various forms of niche tourist such as scuba divers or surfers

(see Magasic, 2016i). Additionally, within an urban area, heavy load on a network can occur during a large-scale event and may cause sporadic connectivity. Damage to connectivity infrastructure during a disaster or maintenance could produce the same effect, or indeed, disable mobile and/or fixed connectivity completely. In a recent report, Akamai (2016) highlights a number of factors which may disrupt internet connectivity, stating:

Internet disruptions are unfortunately still all too common—occurring in some countries/regions on a frequent basis. These disruptions may be accidental (backhoes or ship anchors severing buried fiber), natural (hurricanes or earthquakes), or political (governments shutting off Internet access in response to unrest or other local events, such as student testing). (p. 55)

Interestingly, the experience of tourists intermittently using text only functions like messaging within roaming in order to save on data charges does indeed parallel, and could be considered, sporadic connectivity.

4.5 Discussion and Conclusions

In the current travel era connectivity amounts to a near indispensable resource for travellers of all types. Developments in work arrangements, social structure, and communication patterns mean that it is often necessary to maintain communication with social contacts despite physical distance. Whether for communicative purposes such as sharing travel moments with friends and attending to work commitments, or information and entertainment related activities; the internet increasingly infiltrates travel experience. However, as this chapter has highlighted, connectivity levels vary on both a regional and national basis. This means that in the process of planning, travellers are often interested in the connectivity standards to be expected at their destination. While agencies such as the ITU provide reliable statistics about connectivity infrastructure on a country by country basis, this information has perhaps little bearing when it comes to assessing the state of connectivity proffered by a particular hotel or touristic zone. For this reason, it is possible to find an increasing body of information pertaining to travel connectivity created and shared by travellers themselves. This is exemplified in the wi-fi ranking service Rotten WiFi or travel blogs such as FoxNomad and Too Many Adapters that provide technology related information for connected tourists.

From an experiential perspective, after arriving at the destination travellers face the prospect of actually engaging with connectivity and assessing available standards and modes in

regard to intended online activities. As Germann Molz and Paris (2015) discuss in their examination of technologically empowered “flashpackers”, contemporary travellers must increasingly plan strategies through which connectivity will be negotiated throughout the journey. The authors state, “flashpacking entails making choices about which devices to use, whom travelers will stay in contact with, when they will make contact, and how they will stay in contact” (p. 188). Such choices assist travellers in reconciling online worlds and activities with physical travel scapes and experiences. The positive relationship between (well-managed) connectivity and touristic experience is illustrated by a recent advertising campaign by Deutsche Telekom (2014) for which the tagline reads, “Don’t waste your holidays looking for wi-fi”. Here, it is possible to see that choices about the frequency and complexity of communications have become an essential part of the planning process for connected tourists and that connectivity is a major factor in how these choices are implemented.

This chapter introduced the concept of travel connectivity and demonstrated that it involves a heterogenous spectrum of modes which vary according to quality and range. By acknowledging that different modes of connectivity facilitate or inhibit particular online practices, research and management may more accurately analyse the expressions and themes present in traveller UGC. Indeed, greater knowledge of tourists’ connectivity practices can help inform understandings of tourism as a whole. While scholarship has commented upon the increasing convergence of travel and everyday life (Hannam et al., 2014), a viewpoint indeed supported by the communicational affordances of ICT devices, the process of accessing the internet is an instance where these two domains remain surprisingly disparate. From a future perspective, the abolishment of roaming for European travellers, in combination with developments like portable wi-fi and the Apple SIM may make it easier and more cost-effective for travellers to access mobile networks. Moreover, initiatives for reducing digital inequality such as the Facebook-led Internet.org suggest that affordable high-quality internet connectivity may reach more people and be accessible from more places in the future (Internet.org 2016). However, while such developments may indeed come closer to realizing ubiquitous connectivity in the regions where they are applicable, the idea of conceptualizing internet connectivity as a heterogenous entity with different modes of usage is still important. Even as network coverage and access affordability improve, the fact that the “bandwidth divide” (Hilbert, 2016) between high and low-income countries is actually increasing gives the idea of conceptualizing access through different modes of connectivity sustained relevance.

As the first study to describe and categorise different experiences of travel connectivity, this chapter is able to suggest numerous avenues for future research. Owing to the inchoate

nature of travel connectivity, the modes presented are themselves intended to be adapted, refined, or validated within future research. By applying the presented typology as a conceptual framework, the consumptive and creative practices of connected tourists can be understood in greater detail. For example, are travellers with serial connectivity more likely to group together online searching, purchasing, and reviewing behaviours as their usage is more likely to comprise of block sessions? Conversely, do travellers with fluid connectivity perform these activities further apart as they are able to access the internet at their leisure? Moreover, how do the experiences of tourists utilizing fluid mode at a destination compare with those using serial mode? From a service point of view, roaming, including increasing regulation as in the European context, need be further explored as a dimension of connectivity. This could include investigating the conditions and price points where the fluid mode becomes attractive to travellers or specific impacts on tourism consumption. Finally, from an experiential viewpoint, greater attention could also be given to the practices travellers use to negotiate connectivity, including the performance of actions and/or movement as motivated by the need to find wi-fi or other types of internet connectivity.

This chapter has outlined a spectrum of four modes of travel connectivity that relate to the quality and range of available connections. These attend to the experiential dimensions of travellers' internet usage and highlight the variable experiences of connectivity possible at the confluence of different sociopolitical and personal factors. Such a view critiques a binary connected/disconnected view present within much literature by demonstrating the experiential breadth that exists within these poles. By introducing the theoretical context of roaming and the digital divide, the chapter explains the fluctuations in connectivity standards on a global scale whilst highlighting the ongoing negotiations that travellers have with connectivity as a travel resource. As telecommunications providers utilise regional networks, the movement inherent within travel supports the idea that travellers will move between experiences of connectivity. While global connectivity standards are improving, these developments are matched by changes in technology (i.e., higher quality digital cameras which produce photos with a larger file size) and media habits (such as the increasing consumption and exchange of online streaming video), which do at the same time continue to push the standards of bandwidth required by travellers. As Hilbert (2016) makes the case that the bandwidth gap between high and low-income countries is increasing, the possibility of different experiences of travel connectivity is potentially an ingrained dimension of connected tourism.

The model of travel connectivity presented here is important for theory development in the context of connected tourism and also for the successful commercial exploitation of tourism

experiences. Typologies provide effective structures for explaining nonlinear arrangements or relationships, as has been the case with this chapter where the multiple actors within tourists' experience of connectivity including service providers, devices, telecommunications infrastructure, local connectivity hosts, and external influences are addressed within a single classification system. The modes introduced in this chapter provide a contextual understanding of the different types of connectivity that may be encountered during the journey and their effects on tourist experience. Indeed, studies that don't pay attention to the personal and contextual dimensions of traveller ICT usage risk becoming overly dependent on technological determinism when explaining tourists' motivations, behaviours, or UGC. As an example, the author describes the feeling of "more frustration than satisfaction" that occurred when he connected to a low-bandwidth sporadic connection (Magasic, 2016e). This frustration was caused by the fact that the author was connected enough to access basic online services but not connected enough to upload his content there. While technology is often valorised as an enabler, this anecdote shows that this promise may be counterbalanced by an attention to lived experience and actual real-world conditions. The author's experiences with lacklustre connectivity highlight how technology may fail and indeed exacerbate the needs of tourists, increasing, rather than appeasing, the desire for connectivity.

For tourists, planning connectivity strategies is an increasingly important part of travel preparation. Furthermore, connectivity is one area that shows the burgeoning community sphere of connected tourism as tourists take the time to educate one another on different connectivity standards and technological work-arounds within online spaces as per Jenkins theorisation of participatory culture. Judging from these resources, it can be seen that the experience of travel increasingly involves moving between connected spaces (or, conversely, those of organised disconnectivity) where the traveller is able to satisfy connectivity needs. Finally, this chapter has shown that connectivity supports sharing in all its forms and thus promotes the integration of online storytelling within travel.

From here, the next chapter will move on to consider tourists' personal negotiations with mediated relationships and information using the lens of social connectivity.

Chapter 5. Fitting ICTs Within Travel: Social Connectivity and the Dual Journey

To use a camera is to experience place through the lens, with its creation of borders, inclusions and exclusions, its potential capacity to enlarge the scene in front of us, or illuminate through the flash. (Crouch & Desforages, 2003, p. 13)

Devices, platforms, and internet connectivity increasingly permeate our lives influencing the things we do, the relationships we keep, and the choices we make. These changes do likewise pass into the realm of tourism and influence how, where, when, and why we journey. The effects of the rapid integration of ICTs into global society over recent decades have been theorised in scholarship looking at the informationisation of modern social life under terms like “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000), “network society” (Castells, 2010) and “mobilities” (Urry, 2007). From these theories it is mobilities that has been most thoroughly applied within tourism studies given its sociological foundation and focus on explicating different forms of movement and their relevance to contemporary society.¹⁵ Technological advancements, predominantly in the fields of communication, media, and transportation, mean that travel increasingly occurs within the context of everyday life rather than separately as it was previously seen to be (Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007). The techno-social networks underpinning the systems of modern life increasingly enable travellers to maintain a connection to home in a variety of different forms; be it a direct flight leaving the following morning, the availability of goods from their home country, or the ability to make a video call on their personal device. Following these changes, tourism scholarship increasingly accepts what Larsen (2008b) calls a “de-exoticised” view of modern travel that extends rather than breaks from quotidian routines as the traveller moves outside home space.

From the aforementioned travel technologies—transport networks, consumer goods, and ICTs—it is arguably the internet, and social media in particular, that amount to the most significant impact for travellers. Accessed via ICTs, the internet fulfils the role of a travel partner extraordinaire that mediates social contact, provides information, and assists with many needs commonly encountered on the road. Such affordances do at the same time threaten to overwhelm the shape of tourism as it has traditionally been conceived and experienced by introducing new tasks and sensations into the journey. These imperatives are both initiated by the traveller, such as choosing when to check for new emails or contact loved ones, and by the

¹⁵ See Hannam et al. (2014) for an overview of the application of mobilities theory in relation to tourism.

technology itself, such as charging or updates. The previous chapters have highlighted how devices and platforms (Chapter 3) and internet connectivity (Chapter 4) are insinuated within and influence the modern journey. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the broader personal strategies through which ICTs are brought into the journey, that is, how they are made to fit within travel and the effects they have within it. Building on the groundwork laid out in Chapters 3 and 4, this chapter will respond to this thesis' first research objective: Investigate how connectivity creates new routines, opportunities, and obligations during tourism.

Given this thesis' focus on storytelling, social connectivity is chosen as the lens through which to explore how ICTs are integrated into travel. Social connectivity is defined as the ability to interact with other people in order to initiate or maintain social relationships. This principal is in some ways suited to travel as physical movement has historically been a vehicle through which relationships were established between disparate peoples and groups; and in other ways antithetical to it, as much human sociality has traditionally been based around relatively stable place-based groupings from which travel would premise a temporary or permanent rupture. However, travel and sociality do also have a deeper relationship than the dialectic of presence/absence. The act of travel does in itself, through the promise of knowledge, change, and uncertainty, provide ways of enriching, extending, and, indeed, creating personal relationships through social activities such as storytelling (Yeh, 2009). Thus, the social connectivity enabled by ICTs finds resonance within the journey at the same time as challenging traditional conceptions of travel.

As ICTs allow travellers to maintain communications from a distance, the social aspects of travel such as the recounting of travel events and the building of relationships and capital this supports are increasingly prominent aspects of the journey. Regarding leisure travel in particular, it may be argued that there are no longer separate realms of home and away (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Germann Molz & Paris, 2015; Wang et al., 2016; White & White, 2007). Contemporary travellers simultaneously connect with outer peripheries and central core creating new modes and experiences of travel. Ongoing social connectivity introduces its own exigencies into the experience allowing support and companionship yet opening avenues for interruption and distraction that can detract from the lived present. Supporting this point, literature has so far portrayed ICT-enabled social connectivity as a double-edged sword with mixed positive and negative effects. In order to explore the dimensions of this experiential shift further, a selection of mainstream texts, theoretical material, and fieldwork data will be analysed to help understand the gravity of these changes and the implications they present.

As connected travellers negotiate the twin contexts of the physical and digital, it may

seem as if the journey is split into two distinct iterations: a sensory reality and a mediated online environment. Connectivity is thus premised as a travel tool allowing access to a heady space of information and communication. Given its power, this functionality need be approached strategically by travellers; and the tool, as any other, requires care of usage, maintenance, and personal expertise, at the same time as it imposes its own logic upon the user. In order to explore the twin experiential worlds connectedness enables and how these are negotiated by travellers, this chapter will draw from literature and fieldwork data in order to identify routines that social connectivity creates within travel as well as the opportunities and obligations it presents. The two separate travel environments, indeed, separate forms of travel, will be understood here as the “dual journey”; with this idea being fleshed out to consider the complex negotiations undertaken in order to traverse hybridised physical/virtual spaces.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, social connectivity is explained and literature outlining the perceived beneficial and detrimental repercussions of social media for travel experience is discussed. Next, the routines through which social media are used and the positive and negative effects of social connectivity are explored through the lenses of opportunities and obligations respectively. The concept of the dual journey, the interpenetrating nature of physical and digital travel components, is discussed in order to provide a functional basis for understanding travellers’ relationship with connectivity. Finally, it is argued that travellers’ negotiations with connectivity occur on a personalised basis and that investigation into the fulcrums of ICT use—devices, connectivity, and platforms—can reveal more about the role and function of connectivity to tourists and tourism.

5.1 Social Connectivity as Double-Edged Sword

There are many theories explicating how ICTs are involved within human social networks. Broadly, these have looked at the ways in which the transfer of information allows relationships to be created or sustained at a distance, as well as the benefits or outcomes of such sociality for the participants. Frames such as “weak co-operation” (Aguiton & Cardon, 2007), “networked publics” (boyd, 2010), and “affective publics” (Papacharissi, 2016) describe different configurations and outcomes of online social connectivity. For many theorists, networked relationships extend the connective imperative of human sociality, increase the amount of relationships one is able to maintain, and make these more conveniently available. It is this last point in particular that is of interest in accounts of tourists’ social media use as social contact pervades and communalises the previously more solitary endeavour of travel. The social connectivity enabled by ICTs recalibrates the way travel is experienced, supporting shifts

from disconnectedness to connectedness, isolation to support, escape to absence, and, as will be discussed throughout the course of this thesis, inwardly to outwardly focussed experience of the landscape.

The affordances enabled by devices and digital connectivity (such as communication and information retrieval) have been described in terms of their potential to enhance or improve the travel experience by increasing the capabilities of the traveller, particularly within positivistic, supply-focussed accounts. However, the communicative and information-related affordances of social media are accompanied by complex emotional and cognitive repercussions that cannot be understood as inherently positive or negative, but rather represent both aspects at different times, under different situations, or, indeed, simultaneously. In this way, social connectivity may be explored as a double-edged sword within the travel experience that must be negotiated by tourists as part of the experience of connected tourism. In order to further consider the effects of ICT-enabled social connectivity within travel, this chapter will firstly discuss fieldnotes comparing a number of articles from popular media. While admittedly a limited sample size consisting of only four articles, this discussion is useful as ICT-enabled social connectivity has rapidly found its way into the travel experience bringing widespread and pervasive changes, and, in some cases, confusion and concern. As connected tourism is a new and rapidly changing phenomenon, academic scholarship is still coming to terms with these changes and engaging with mainstream media provides valuable insight into the ways tourists experience connected tourism. The analysis of these popular perspectives will be followed by an overview of academic theory addressing the experiential reality of ICTs for tourists as comprising both positive and negative effects.

A web search for *social media tourism* or related terms on Google will produce a significant number of articles considering the role of ICTs within tourism from a variety of viewpoints. Some of these articles proclaim (often in attention-seeking hyperbole) social media's role in impacting upon, changing, or ruining tourism; in notable contrast to industry-led rhetoric. Such pieces highlight the significant experiential shift which the interpolation of ICTs into the tourist experience represents and the challenges this poses to different groups of tourists. During the fieldwork period, the author selected four articles from different sources and years in order to consider public opinion toward ICT use within travel (Table 5.1; see Magasic, 2016g). Two of these articles recount recent travel undertaken by the authors while two are opinion pieces. All four articles address the increasing presence of ICTs within tourism and attempt to make sense of their role within the journey by comparing the experience of connected travel with that of earlier unconnected travel. The articles were selected on the basis of this

commonality and may be thought of as presenting a variety of viewpoints from different positions such as journalist, travel scholar, and travel blogger.

Title, Author, Periodical, and Year
How Social Media Ruined Backpacking Through Europe Alexander Besant, <i>The Globe and Mail</i> , 2013
Grand Tour of the Self Timothy Egan, <i>The New York Times</i> , 2014
Are Travel Selfies Narcissistic? Maria Lombard, <i>CNN</i> , 2015
Is Social Media Ruining Our Experience of Travel? Jamie Jenkins, <i>The Boar</i> , 2016

Table 5.1. Four mainstream news articles considering social media use within tourism.

In terms of a summary of the collected themes and content of the articles, it is interesting to contrast the language through which un/connected travel is portrayed by the authors:

- **Unconnected:** “lose ourselves” (Besant, 2013), “lingered” (Besant, 2013), “immersion” (Egan, 2014), “surprise” (Egan, 2014), “living in the moment” (Lombard, 2015), “unedited memories” (Jenkins, 2016)
- **Connected:** “distracts” (Besant, 2013), “insular” (Besant, 2013), “cocoon” (Egan, 2014), “isolates” (Egan, 2014), “documentary one-upmanship” (Egan, 2014), “counting the number of likes and shares” (Lombard, 2015), “pressure” (Jenkins, 2016), “impress other people” (Jenkins, 2016)

From this comparison, an image is formed of ICTs as a force that distract tourists from the physical reality of a particular location by burdening them with social concerns. This may prevent tourists from connecting deeply with the visited landscape and may contribute social pressure to document and share travel experiences for others. Overall, while these articles tended to be quite critical toward the ways social connectedness was deployed by travellers, there is an implied understanding of the beneficial outcomes of digitally mediated social connectivity for traveller sociality and sensemaking. The articles do then present a duality of benefits and problems concerning travellers’ connectivity practices even while this is skewed toward the perceived problems connectivity has created within travel. This duality will be further

pursued through academic literature exploring the experiential repercussions of ICT-enabled social connectivity within the journey.

Exploring the ramifications of the mobile social relationships enabled by ICTs, Germann Molz (2004, 2006, 2012), investigated travellers who kept round-the-world travel blogs. Germann Molz notes that social connectivity is not a new phenomenon within travel and has traditionally been achieved through letters, phone calls, and other forms. Internet-based communications, however, allow travellers to maintain relationships during the journey in a way that is more pervasive than that offered by earlier technologies (2004). This ongoing social connectivity is found to fit with the experience of travel in interesting ways. For example, the process of recording and sharing travel experience within a blog, while allowing contact with one's social networks, also promulgates a surveillance effect resulting in the responsibility to continually inform the readers of one's experience (2006). Such responsibility, related to the affective dimensions of performing contact with the audience as well as maintaining face in terms of showing that one is having exciting experiences overseas, means that travellers may experience a tension between physical experience and online visibility. Germann Molz (2006) states,

Not only are travellers obligated to be 'out there' in the world, travelling on behalf of the on-line audience, but they are also obligated to be 'there' on-line, regularly available to the audience's surveilling gaze via the website. (p. 387)

This online performance may prove difficult to maintain depending on the frequency of contact established within the blog, the standards of connectivity encountered within the destination, and the traveller's personal desire for experience and/or social dis/connectivity. The benefits of sharing online narratives, however, can be found in the receipt of social and symbolic capital (Germann Molz, 2004). Accordingly, in a later work Germann Molz concludes that travel experience is now negotiated not only through choices about physical movement but also in choices regarding online communications, stating, "escape is now as much about strategic connections and disconnections as it is about physical displacement" (2012, p. 158). Germann Molz's studies point to a clear trade-off between connection and "escape" (Germann Molz, 2012, Chapter 7) that must be managed by connected travellers as an implicit part of modern, mobile lifestyles (see also Germann Molz & Paris, 2015).

Further studies argue the equivocal presence of ICTs within the experience of travel. White and White (2007) explain that the accessibility and convenience of digital communication

methods such as emails, short messages (SMS), and mobile phone calls, mean that travellers are at once “home and away”. For the authors, the result is that the “liminal experience is transformed into a continuing engagement with established relationships and an ongoing connection to people back home” (p. 101). Taking a more critical tone, Jansson (2007) explores how ICTs are interwoven within tourism using the conceptual background of the twin experiential states: “encapsulation”, immersion within the experience of tourism, and “decapsulation”, the dissolution of an immersive tourist reality. Jansson’s framing is pertinent as it highlights that the valency of ICT use may be configured in relation to its impact on immersion, a perspective that was also prominent in the mainstream media discussed earlier. More recently, Neuhofer (2016) has outlined the poles of value co-creation and co-destruction in order to explore the capacity for online interactions to both add to and diminish the quality of tourist experience (see also Tanti & Buhalis, 2017). Finally, concentrating primarily on the negative aspects of ICT use, but also invoking positive outcomes as it discusses how tourists use ICTs to approach the elusive experience of authenticity, Tribe and Mkono (2017) draw on MacCannell’s concept of alienation to show how digital connectivity may “paradoxically cause tourists to be more *disconnected*” (p. 112).

In a way that is similar to the mainstream texts introduced, theoretical literature has also identified both positive and negative consequences of ICT use during travel. While the discussion in scholarly texts is understandably more balanced than that of mainstream media; at this initial stage of protean connectivity routines and practices, the unresolved tensions created by the integration of ICTs into travel play an important counterpart to the perceived benefits. Thus, it is argued that ICTs need be understood as a double-edged sword with both beneficial and detrimental consequences for travellers. The mixed outcomes of social connectivity will be explored by looking at the specific personal practices and experiential negotiations through which social connectivity is enacted within travel. A key locus for investigating social connectivity is storytelling and the practices whereby travel narratives are shared with others. Here, the departure points for discussion were identified within fieldwork and literature. The next section will consider the personal routines through which connectivity is accessed and employed by the traveller.

5.2 Routines of ICT Usage

While tourism in some sense connotes a break from everyday routine, tourists are commonly involved in the routines of tourism itself. These include typical activities like buying souvenirs, taking photographs, seeing famous attractions, or consuming local specialities, which

have been socially encoded as parts of the tourist experience (Edensor, 2009). Alternatively, the idea of routines can go deeper; beyond the visible practices of tourists in a collective sense, to the repeated personal behaviours of tourists that often occur in private or unseen contexts (Larsen, 2008a). From such a viewpoint, tourists' social connectivity is achieved on the back of regularly performed activities like charging devices, connecting to different internet networks, checking mail, and creating narratives. The templates through which these behaviours are achieved, while continually adapted to the particular surroundings in which the tourist happens to find themselves, can in some ways be seen to extend from everyday usage. This point is supported by Germann Molz (2012):

tourists travel with an embodied habitus, reproducing familiar routines and quite ordinary activities in new surroundings. Some of these routines include online habits, such as logging on to the Internet to send emails, updating status on social networking sites, or checking up on friends. (p. 165)

Given the pervasive nature of social connectivity, perhaps one of the main challenges faced by connected tourists is figuring out how to balance patterns of communication with the experiential frame of the journey. This section will go on to investigate tourists' use of ICTs in terms of repeated behaviours in order to frame tourists' digital social connectivity within ongoing travel practice. By picturing connectivity in terms of repeated travel practices, it is possible to highlight its effects on the journey.

Despite the integral status of devices, connectivity, and social media within modern tourism, there remains a lack of knowledge on the behaviours through which ICTs become part of travel. This chapter identifies three routines: charging of devices, connecting to the internet, and creating travel narratives, from which to build an understanding of the personal practices whereby ICTs are integrated into the journey. Charging is an important facet of social connectivity as many devices have batteries that deplete quickly with usage. As noted in Chapter 3 of this thesis, one obvious piece of evidence signalling the rise of connected tourism is the ever-increasing presence of charging stations in transit hubs, cafés, hotels, and other travel-related venues (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3). Less obvious, however, is how tourists undertake the practice of charging when considered in terms of the amount of time spent, when and where this occurs, how they decide it is necessary, and what they choose to do during the time when devices are charging. Understanding these factors can help illuminate how tourists' attitudes towards particular locations or activities might change in relation to the status of their device and

how this may shape the experiences or events of tourism. For example, travellers may not want to visit a remote place, or a particular photogenic location, when their battery is low (Neuhofer et al., 2015, p. 795). Thus, exploring the patterns of how travellers manage devices can help understand how they approach and consume the touristic landscape.

Next, travellers' strategies for accessing connectivity will be discussed. The variety of different standards of connectivity that may be encountered by travellers were explicated in the previous chapter (Figure 4.2). By picturing connectivity as a spectrum, theory is better able to appreciate that maintaining, or maximising, connectivity is an ongoing project within travel with multiple moving parts. Consequently, travellers deploy personal routines to locate, connect to, and assess the suitability of available connections. Given the value of connectivity, travellers may take time out to find a connection that is suitable for their needs. Moreover, such routines are likely to take on heightened priority in new environments where connectivity standards are unknown. As both charging facilities and internet connectivity vary on a global basis, it is worth considering that travellers' routines need be amenable to such inconsistencies and that these imperatives may at times become essential tasks that take first priority within the journey (Magasic, 2014).



Figure 5.1. Public charging and internet facilities in Kansai International Airport, Japan (Author).



Figure 5.2. A secure charging station accessed by credit card in Helsinki International Airport, Finland (Author).



Figure 5.3. A public charging service available on a train in Taiwan (Author).

Finally, creating narratives. There has been some initial work investigating the processes through which travellers transform their experiences into online narratives. Lo and McKercher's (2015) examination of how travellers take and share photographs to social media presents the five stages of tourists' social media photography as: before, on-site, post production, editing, and post-posting dissonance (this process will be explored further in Chapter 7). Such an account is insightful in bringing to light practices like editing, which are invaluable to online self-presentation, yet have not been widely discussed in studies of tourists' online narratives. As social routines are an element of connected travel, an important factor in storytelling is maintaining relations with others via ongoing practices like checking and responding to mail.

Regarding a time-based perspective into the routines of recording travel, the author logged daily social media usage over a three-month period during fieldwork (see Appendix 2). While the author initially wrote that two hours a day spent recording travel online "seems about right" (Magasic, 2016i), a later calculation based on log data found the average daily time spent recording travel was two hours and fifty-two minutes (Magasic, 2016a). Despite the absence of more detailed portraits of the frequencies and ways travellers engage with social media throughout the journey, it can be argued that routines of social media use like monitoring feeds, inboxes, and statistics; composing status updates and personal messages; and participating in ongoing conversations around media items, occur on an ongoing basis throughout travel, and, consequently, influence how it takes place (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013, p. 79). The exact nature of such routines likely depends on personal choices by the traveller, in accordance with exogenous factors such as the standard of connectivity encountered, meaning that these routines may be approached reflexively throughout the journey. Nonetheless, it may be considered that storytelling routines are a key practice through which digital social connectivity is reified within the journey.

In order to explore the mixed positive and negative dimensions of social connectivity further, this chapter will move on to discuss opportunities and obligations of travel social media use.

5.3 Opportunities

In general, the opportunities provided by social connectivity pertain to the way online platforms allow the traveller to exchange information and cultural products with others. While the most obvious benefits here are the social relationships that may be established (or maintained) in both public and more intimate forms, another significant benefit is the use of online platforms to accrue intangible benefits. In short, the three opportunities discussed are: (1) community; (2)

feedback and social support; and (3) capital. While these categories are addressed separately, from the discussion it may be seen that these are interconnected rather than discrete elements in terms of their potential utility to tourists.

5.3.1 Community

As noted in Chapter 3, the participatory culture present within social media communities facilitates interpersonal connections between travellers. These connections are formed through interactions with media as travellers both create and consume with both actions serving a connective imperative. The vast myriad of platforms that have arisen within social media such as blogs, microblogs, social networks, curation and review platforms, and media sharing sites have in turn spawned a variety of different yet interconnected forms of traveller communication and community. Thus, Munar et al. (2013b) explain how the online interactions between travellers encourages the development of a broader traveller sociality:

Tourists share their travel images on Flickr, upload videos on YouTube, write personal stories on Travelblog, provide reviews on TripAdvisor, and publish updates about their tourism experience on Facebook. Hence the participatory web has enabled new kinds of tourism interactions (such as electronic word of mouth), which complement and expand their travel experience in diverse ways. For example, virtual communities such as Wayn or Dopplr focus especially on exchanging content to facilitate the planning of the journey, and by doing so they also encourage sociability and virtual knowledge sharing among members. (p. 2)

Theory has explained how online communities create knowledge through the sharing of expertise and the social curation of information (Jenkins, 2007; Raynes-Goldie, 2004). The online hubs where travel knowledge is produced have been referred to as virtual travel communities (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002). Examples include TripAdvisor, a repository of reviews of travel destinations and service providers; Couchsurfing, a peer-to-peer service where members offer accommodation or organise to stay at the houses of others; Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree forum where travellers ask and answer questions by destination; and, Travelblog where travellers create online diaries. While these are communities dedicated to the subject of tourism, it can also be seen that travellers congregate in other more generalised ways such as by uploading content to travel-unspecific portals, contributing to a

particular hashtag, or participating in the comments section of a media piece.¹⁶ In this way we see that tourists participate in community interactions both within tourism specific hubs and also outside them in more general locations.

The connections formed in online communities, and the transfer of knowledge these entail, are deployed strategically by travellers to plan, solve problems, and increase the enjoyment of travel. Travellers often choose to share information that can be of use to other tourists. As an example, Mascheroni (2007) explains that some travellers “wish to give interesting and detailed information on routes, destinations and travel practices to newcomers” (p. 538). Owing to its current, or personal nature, the information shared by travellers online is often more relevant than paper materials like guidebooks. Personal experience and/or online information is transformed into knowledge as it is organised in ways that assist tourists in better planning for and experiencing the journey. However, outside the desire to assist others, the sharing of travel stories may also be seen as a source of value in itself as Germann Molz (2012) explains, “The pleasure of interactive travel derives not only from consuming sights and experiences, but also from producing and publishing them as sites of interaction with friends, family members and other travellers” (p. 166). In this way, we see that the sharing of information plays an important role both in the development of tourist sociality and in the experience of connected tourism itself.

However, it is not only sharing but also the centralised storing of information that is significant. Travellers are by definition peripatetic and as such have traditionally struggled for a sense of group identity and connectedness based on the fact that they were dispersed and mobile (Neumann, 2001, p. 11). Travellers often bonded in fleeting moments of contact such as serendipitous encounters, short meetings, or through the exchange of email or letters rather than in more ongoing, settled ways based around a fixed locality/ies. Increasingly, travellers may perceive their online profiles as their virtual homes through which they are able to conduct social relationships and stay connected regardless of physical location (Germann Molz & Paris, 2015; Paris, 2012). Online communities (both travel specific and unspecific) provide travellers with increasing connectedness and a sense of place and community. Here, online forums provide not only information and sociality but also the benefits of belonging to and acting within a group. This community is enacted through the sharing of travel stories that support the development of touristic identity and collective agency. For example, the ranking of businesses based on consumer reviews on TripAdvisor opens up an opportunity to publicly rate and review

¹⁶ See Shakeela and Weaver (2016) for an account of social interactions in the comments section of a tourism-related YouTube video.

touristic services. This is significant as travellers previously had only limited opportunities to reach a wide audience with their travel stories (Gretzel et al., 2011). Following this change it has been theorised by Munar (2013) that the development of touristic community and voice supports an ongoing power shift from professional to amateur tastemakers within tourism (this will be further explored in Chapter 8).

Virtual travel communities allow different levels of benefits as travellers can receive topical information, share with others and form connections as they participate in the community. At a social level, they allow a stable place for physically dispersed travellers where affinity ties may be created and maintained through information exchange. Perhaps most significantly, however, connected tourists' group identity constitutes a form social power wherein tourists can develop collective sociality and agency.

5.3.2 Feedback and Social Support



Figure 5.4. A screenshot of the statistics page for the author's Tumblr account showing "notes" and "followers" accumulated to his profile in the months of April and May, 2016. Note the spike at the end of the timeline.

Social media is an interactive genre that allows users to respond to another text or user in forms such as messages, comments, likes, or emoticons. While the previous subsection referenced community in the collective sense of belonging to a social group, this section focusses on the dimensions and effects of interpersonal online interactions during tourism and

the transfer of social support. Research has considered the responses to tourists' online narratives as feedback providing responses and reactions from the audience. While online feedback includes both positive iterations, and negative ones such as trolling (Mkono, 2018), so far within literature feedback has primarily been seen as positive. As the audience's feedback may be received within the journey itself via the near-instantaneous communications techniques afforded by social media, research has theorised that connected tourism is a collaborative experience that is shared with others (Neuhofer, 2014). For this reason, feedback is an important dimension of connected tourist experiences. Recent research has shown that the feedback received from the audience can provide encouragement, suggestions, or advice that may lead to new interpretations of touristic experience (Wang et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2014).

Interactions with one's account, especially quantitative feedback such as numbers of likes and follows, may be monitored using statistics pages. In the author's experience, following feedback acted as an incentive to keep posting, especially in the situation when a piece of content attracted the attention of others. During fieldwork, one of the author's posts was re-blogged by a popular account creating an exponential, though ultimately temporary, rise in interaction (Figure 5.4). This brief spike in popularity was very exciting for the author and motivated him to continue uploading content into the near future. Differing from quantitative feedback, extended qualitative forms allow for not only the transfer of information but also emotion. Kim and Tussyadiah (2013) use the concept of social support to describe the affective dimensions of online feedback within the journey. Based on a study of young Korean travellers, the authors explain that affective feedback received from the online audience may assist travellers in shaping their online self-presentation and as such may support an improved experience of tourism. Social support can also be thought of as a connection that reduces feelings of separation and isolation. As an example, Mascheroni (2007) explains the perceived benefit of ICT-mediated social connectivity for solo women travellers: "The ontological security provided by the sense of friends and relatives being only an email away is especially significant for young women travelling alone" (p. 539; see also Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014b). While the emotional connection of loved ones is significant, social support can also be impersonal. Travellers commonly address forums such as Thorn Tree to seek answers for their questions and this may be felt as a form of reassurance even though it comes from strangers. In summary, online feedback allows for a social experience of tourism. The feedback itself may be more or less affective depending on the method and subject of communication with more direct forms allowing for meaningful social support within the journey.

5.3.3 Capital

In their study looking at the increasing distance that people go to regularly visit social contacts, Larsen et al. (2007) contend that “the analysis of obligations, social networks at-a-distance, and social capital should be central to 21st century tourism analysis” (p. 259). While their study was based on physical meetings, the authors’ sentiment is easily extended to the social capital procured from networked relationships given that online interactions are not only an increasingly normalised part of travel movement, but an important forum for building social capital (Pearce & Rice, 2017). This chapter has already shown that travellers use ICTs not only to maintain social relationships but also to extend and deepen them in ways that may lead to the accrual of social capital. However, the use of ICTs during travel also enables travellers access to economic, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1987). In fact, the accrual of different forms of capital via the sharing of online travel stories is a key theme in this dissertation and will be discussed in Chapter 9. As such the function of this subsection is to provide an introductory discussion of the different ways tourists may procure capital through their online activities.

In a broad sense, the capital accessed through the use of ICTs is enabled through different forms of connectivity and interaction with online audiences. In their discussion of online sociality, Papacharissi and Easton (2013) explain the way in which public blog entries, in contrast to a private diary, provide access to “social, cultural, political, and possibly economic capital” (p. 179) via their positioning of the writer’s content online. As an example from a travel context, the ability to share a narrative from a particular destination can be seen as a potent method of address owing not only to factors like taste and distinction—as indicated through choices in place and composition, which relate to cultural capital—but also those like timing and public demonstrations of sociality as well (see Magasic, 2016k). Referencing social capital in particular, Wang and Fesenmaier (2013) note the way online social networks allow travellers to connect with new friends met during the trip, enhancing their social networks (see also Wang et al., 2012). In a wider sense, leveraging online interactions to the point that one gains a large following, becomes a prominent member of a particular community, or develops a symbolic status may create a pathway for travellers to accrue economic capital. There is an increasing segment of professional and semiprofessional travel influencers whose job it is to produce travel content that is disseminated on social media and/or by professional news outlets. This will be discussed more in Chapter 6.

5.4 Obligations

Obligations may be understood as the negative consequences of social media use that infringe on travel time and reduce the traveller's enjoyment of the experience. The obligations discussed are: (1) maintaining an online presence during travel; and (2) divided attention.

5.4.1 Maintaining an Online Presence

As travel entails movement to less-familiar environments, it is customary for the traveller to notify their loved ones of safe transit and arrival. This task is easily achieved on social media and this ease may also lead to a series of ongoing updates throughout the trip that serve the dual purposes of assuring the audience of the traveller's safety and informing them of notable happenings. Germann Molz (2012) describes the increasing frequency of traveller communication as enabled by social media use:

The frequency with which travellers are expected to update their status and check in with friends and family has been recalibrated in a world of ubiquitous connectivity. Whereas an occasional postcard or phone call from a traveller may have been sufficient to alleviate parental concern a couple of decades ago, today's travellers feel compelled to be in touch weekly, or even daily, so that their friends and family will not worry about them. (p. 175)

The process of maintaining a regular online presence through practices such as status updates, answering emails, or sharing pictures allows tourists to maintain a "normative level of presence, attention, and intimacy with their friends and family" (Hannam et al., 2014, p. 180). In order to conform with social pressures and assuage worries, this presence may be enacted in a continuous manner by repeatedly sharing travel moments throughout the trip.

Intermittently making contact online may be thought of as a social practice of presence and being there. However, as social media is an interactive format, presence means not only checking-in or producing topical content but also taking a role in ongoing conversations. Hannam et al., (2014) explain an important point of tourists' online sociality: "Tourists are not only sharing their experiences, but also responding to the subsequent 'comments' and 'likes' that they receive on their social media" (p. 179). Services such as Facebook's "seen" message—which shows that a communication has been received and at what time—and Snapchat's Snapstreak—which records the amount of days which an individual has exchanged images with another user—demonstrate the ways platforms deeply involve users in routines of

reciprocity that extend beyond presence to interaction and creation. Moreover, different forms of communication—live interactions such as voice calls or text chatting; or the asynchronous communications common to forums or comments sections—produce different, sometimes overlapping, levels of presence (Hogan, 2010).

Here, the author recounts an experience where after publicly posting about his journey, he was conflicted about how to balance his presence in the online conversation on social media with his experience of the visited landscape:

There was no phone signal at this place, but, after reviewing the photo and deciding it was ok, it was promptly uploaded to my Facebook wall once we entered the next town. Putting the shot up was fairly significant in terms of my Facebook avatar as I don't post publicly very regularly, and doing so usually indicates some kind of milestone. While there was some commentary from friends relating to the post, the area in which we stayed that night had no connection and I did not respond. The next day we got up with the mission to drive into LA (I was full of trepidation about the traffic!) and another day passed without response. From there we were staying with friends who took us out around LA and Facebook seemed a far and distant concern. I still haven't replied to those comments wishing us well and feel somewhat guilty about this, yet, at the same time, I think it is important to soak up experiences in a new place. Usually I try and reply to people's comments on my social media portals and I wonder if it is rude to take leave of this kind of socialising (especially casual communication with friends) while on the road? (Magasic, 2016k)

As the above example illustrates, the traveller's online presence on social media has specific consequences for their experience of the journey, particularly as relates to the depth and frequency of communications that need to be managed as part of their strategy for social connectivity/disconnectivity. Furthermore, it may be difficult for travellers to separate between checking in and showing they are okay, and producing interesting, engaging content that demonstrates they are having a good time. What begins as a strategy for mitigating concern may end as a burden of responsibility to not only satisfy concern but also curiosity and may extend into the need to compete against the stories of other travellers (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Gretzel, 2017a). Online presence may then weigh upon the traveller as they struggle to balance social connectivity with physical experience and their own expectations of the trip. Given that

the sharing of experience is encouraged and incentivised by social media platforms (Section 1.2.6), future research could investigate travellers' strategies to negotiate between online and offline experience.

5.4.2 Divided Attention

The process of splitting one's attentional resources between multiple simultaneous tasks is referred to as divided attention. Literature on divided attention asserts that it has both beneficial (i.e., being able to participate in multiple tasks at once) and detrimental (i.e., reduced efficacy in completing individual tasks) characteristics (Friedenberg, 2013, Chapter 6; Wickens & McCarley, 2008). Recent study has looked at the effect of ICTs in capturing the attention of users and the possibility for negative effects such as a reduction in the quality of in-person social relationships (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2016; Wilmer, Sherman, & Chein, 2017) or reduced efficiency in primary tasks (Grinols & Rajesh, 2014). In a tourism context, research by Ayeh (2018) identifies five distinct forms of distraction created by the use of mobile devices within the journey: visual, auditory, manual, emotional, and cognitive. The study reports that these distractions may negatively impact on the quality of experience as they inhibit the tourist's individual interpretation of the destination. This section will continue to explore the distracting effects of ICTs upon connected tourists by looking at the underlying ways ICTs attract attention via technological functionality and operational strategy.

Although the decision whether to use ICTs during travel, and the particular sites and services one chooses to access, may be thought of as personal choices, it is argued that travellers are also unavoidably exposed to myriad forms of information that flow through ICTs. This is because the functionality of ICTs makes it so that multitasking and peripheral awareness are mandatory consequences enfolded within the protocols of usage including within a travel context. As Pearce and Gretzel have noted, device usage is rarely a singular activity: "Once the technology is switched on as one element of the vacation experience, it is likely to be used beyond immediate holiday purposes" (2012, p. 3; see also Jansson, 2007). This flow-on effect may seem like a personal choice, but it is actually initiated through the functionality of the technology. ICTs commonly involve a variety of simultaneous purposes and contexts facilitated through features such as windows, tabs, and alerts. This multifunctionality means that any single task is liable to be pervaded by others at any time. Many smartphone applications make the user available to updates, notifications, messages, or phone calls by default. In this way, using a device for any reason, or simply entering an area of connectivity, brings with it the opportunity for informational updates. While these updates may come as seemingly innocuous

forms of information, like a message from a friend, an invitation, or a special offer triggered by a location-aware service, such inputs may easily capture the user's attention and distract them from the moment at hand (Wilmer et al., 2017, p. 4).

In a similar way, the operational principles of social media platforms are designed to capture users' attention as a way of supporting business performance. For example, users are susceptible to peripheral informational inputs as they open up a particular webpage or application. During fieldwork, the researcher analysed the visual and functional aspects of the home pages from five online platforms—Tumblr, Instagram, Vimeo, WordPress, and Facebook—concluding that, “The user is inescapably exposed to external information when they log in” (Magasic, 2016f). This information comes under the guise of news feed or editor's pick services. The content which is shown in these services is often determined by proprietary algorithms such as Facebook's EdgeRank (Langlois & Elmer, 2013, p. 3; van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 7) as the most likely to capture the user's attention and keep them on the site. Such a strategy supports the connectivity promoted by social media platforms and encourages sharing on the part of the user as they witness the positive outcomes reaped by others. Here, social media platforms' strategic imperative to capture user attention not only distracts tourists but also encourages them to share their own experiences.

From these two examples regarding divided attention, functionality and business strategy, we see that ICTs situate the traveller in a rich environment of information and interactions with only fluid boundaries separating essential and peripheral, intended and automatic, and wanted and unwanted. This environment, produced through the multifunctionality of devices and connective imperative of social media platforms, inherently introduces informational updates that compete for the user's attention and result in divided attention. Although research in this area is still developing, studies have demonstrated a correlation between technological distraction and a reduced quality of tourist experiences (Ayeh, 2018; Tribe & Mkono, 2017, p. 110).

5.5 Discussion and Conclusions

It is fair to say that the development of the internet and social media has created a new forum for the extension of tourist experience. But what is the shape of this forum? And how do travellers include it in their journey? By looking through the lens of social connectivity, it becomes apparent that ICT usage has both positive and negative elements that it brings to the journey, and by extension, that ICTs are something that must be negotiated by travellers. This and the two preceding chapters have laid the groundwork for understanding how travellers

negotiate social connectivity by means of personal choices and strategies relating to their usage of ICTs. The method proposed for understanding these collected choices is to conceptualise connected tourism as being composed of two separate yet interrelated journeys: one in physical space, one online. This conceptual framework is referred to as the dual journey and will be explained further in this section.

While many accounts have prioritised the physical journey, there are other recognised forms of travel. Sharpley and Stone (2011) have done as much by describing the popular travel novel *Jupiter's Travels* as “a story of two journeys: the physical trip through time and space, with an identifiable beginning and end; and a personal, spiritual journey of discovery and transformation” (p. 1). Indeed, the idea of concurrent *outer* physical and *inner* personal journeys is well established in tourism literature and travel writing, especially as relates to the interrelated themes of pilgrimage (Cohen, 1979; Youngs, 2013, Chapter 6) and self-transformation (Lean, 2016). Following this lead, the dual journey is defined as the interwoven totality of combined physical (outer) and online (inner) travel. In the case of connected tourism, the inner journey is externalised as it is shared with an audience, however, it may still be considered an internal journey in the sense that it is the result of personalised aesthetic choices i.e., the telling of travel stories. The context of connected tourism transforms the once-private journal, or ruminations inside one's head, to a form that is arguably constructed for and in concert with the audience—a performative multimedia narrative spread across interconnected online platforms.

This perspective of interrelated physical/online journeys has been approached in the literature. Munar et al. (2013b) explain parallel physical and digital journeys stating, “Social media emphasize the role of fantasy and imagination as part of a fluid tourism experience. This implies a virtual, emotional, and imaginative mode of travel, preceding as well as running parallel with the actual physical journey” (p. 2). The current investigation also recognises significant formal differences between the physical and digital components of the journey. The physical journey is composed of embodied interactions with the landscape, while the digital journey is more metaphorical and is composed of the online narrative representations. The “imaginative” aspects of the virtual journey are constituted in the ability to creatively redact representations; whereas “emotion” may be seen in the wide potential audience and the performative aspects of talking through an avatar toward the audience i.e., “addressivity” (Bakhtin cited in Azariah, 2012). From these factors it can be seen that the digital journey is more fluid than the physical yet also depends on physical experience, at least at the current point in time. The well-publicised story of Dutch graphic designer Zilla van den Born—who constructed a five-week journey to Thailand using Adobe Photoshop software—sparked

significant controversy. *The Guardian* has reported on this and other similar examples using the term “fake-ation” (Coldwell, 2016). This suggests that from social and generic perspectives online travel narratives should still relate to physical experience in order to be considered authentic.

While agreeing with the functional components of the two respective journeys outlined by Munar et al. above (the physical being more stable and virtual more fluid), this thesis builds upon their conceptualisation of separate journeys “running parallel” along twin tracks by proposing twin journeys which are overlapping and interrelated. This means that each side is intimately bound with and dependent upon the other; or, put in different words, the physical and digital journey are shaped by and shape each other. It is argued that physical experience forms the basis for the narratives shared while online interactions influence how travellers perceive and interact with the physical landscape. To explain the interrelatedness of the dual journeys further, this chapter shares the view of the sociologist Saskia Sassen (2002) who purports that the online and physical are imbricated. The overlapping nature of online and physical realities suggested by Sassen and other scholars (Fuchs, 2015), in combination with many platforms’ requirement that users create an account using their real name and/or phone number (Marwick, 2013; van Dijck, 2013a, Chapter 2), means that there is little if any ontological separation between travellers’ physical and online experience. Experientially, they are one and the same as they occur in a synergistic fashion. However, as highlighted through the opportunities and obligations discussed above, this is not to say that the two parts are always in harmony.

Connectivity within travel is, generally speaking, ongoing. It may be lost, reduced, or managed strategically, but it is rarely switched off or completely inaccessible; and when it is this is often under the experiential banner of its own distinct form of “disconnected tourism”. In this way, connectivity is an integral part, if not the defining characteristic of, contemporary travel. This is not to say, however, that connectivity dominates or subsumes the physical aspects of travel, rather it is something incredibly potent that is enacted within the domain of the journey. Travellers’ approach to connectivity is then closely related to the physical experience, mingling with it in myriad ways: conflicting with it, supporting it, altering its structure, but not overcoming it. For this reason, this thesis claims that connectivity need be seen as a journey in and of itself, one implicitly related to the physical and yet separate from it. The connected journey occurs online. It is a story. The records and traces of travellers’ experiences created both purposefully and unwittingly. It is largely but not exclusively a mediated representation; it is primarily a narrative (in the linguistic sense of structured utterances) but also includes metadata created as a by-product of online interactions and the wider processes of navigating the internet. The

online journey brings benefits such as community, support, and capital, but it also presents detrimental aspects in the form of commitments and distraction as well.

With this view of the dual journeys in place, it brings us to consider how travellers negotiate internet connectivity. The answer is that travellers do this by bringing connectivity into the journey at strategic points and by incorporating routine behaviours into travel through which connectedness is enabled and its outcomes managed on an ongoing basis. Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that ICTs have their own imperatives that exert influence on travellers and must be managed as part of their use; devices are needy and valuable, platforms shape communication and sociality following political imperatives, while internet connectivity brings different modes of usage. This chapter, via an exploration of social connectivity, has shown both beneficial and detrimental outcomes of ICTs within travel, as well as the various repeated practices enacted within travel to support its usage. Here, we see that travellers not only grapple with connectivity as a tool but also at a formal level as they interact with devices as material items, as well as grappling with the commercial imperatives assigned to connectivity by technology companies like internet providers, social media platforms, and device makers (van Dijck, 2013a). In sum, travellers negotiate the dual journey by balancing positives with negatives. However, as connected tourism is still a new phenomenon, connected travellers at both individual and community level are still developing the skills and knowledge needed to manage connectivity in a satisfactory manner. This chapter argues that there is no standard practice through which travellers negotiate connectivity but rather that this is enacted on a personal basis most readily observable at the points tourists interact with ICTs. As such there is a need for future study into the dynamics of the dual journey and the give and take between digital and physical journeys experienced by travellers.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the practice of storytelling is an apt lens to study tourists' use of ICTs as it broadly encompasses primary tasks such as information search, communication, and service transactions as these occur online. Tourists' negotiations with the routines, opportunities, and obligations of social connectivity do also flow through the practice of travel storytelling. The technological mediation of travel storytelling reengineers this creative process into the practice of sharing, which is influenced by the politics of the connectivity, devices, and platforms. Sharing brings new dimensions to travel that did not exist previously (or were less prominent) such as how to manage devices and connectivity, when to log on, what forms of narrative to share, and how to handle feedback and affective social relationships from within the journey. In this way, the practice of sharing underpins tourists' negotiations with connectivity as it provides the basis for community interactions, feedback, and support. This finding also

suggests that tourists' sharing and the ways this occurs is a performance that is shaped by personal goals as well as the social learning of tourism.

Finally, as there is no fixed practice or routine for negotiating connectivity and fitting ICTs into the journey, it is proposed here that this may be understood as a personalised behaviour through which identity is expressed; in Goffmanian terms, a presentation of self. Following this idea, the next two chapters will be united by the common theme of performance and will explore the way connected tourists perceive the landscape (Chapter 6) and how travel experiences are transformed into online content (Chapter 7).

Chapter 6. The Selfie Gaze



Figure 6.1. Young women pose for photographs amidst a background of colourful lights in downtown Tokyo. (Author)

This chapter begins with the premise that the integration of ICTs into tourism changes how tourism is known by tourists and the ways they perceive and consume the touristic landscape. Collectively, the many different processes involved within tourism such as experience, consumption, and marketing have been understood through the concept of the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990). The idea of gazing has a long and rich history within academia as a theory for investigating structured ways of seeing and doing. As a theoretical framework, the tourist gaze has been widely deployed to study and explain tourist experience and the perpetuation of touristic culture since its inception almost three decades ago. The tourist gaze is not universal and varies in relation to different sociocultural groups or situations. For this reason it can be considered that a specific type of gazing is engendered by the use of ICTs within tourism. The purpose of this chapter to explore the structuring factors of the ICT-mediated tourist gaze and propose a new version of the gaze related to the influence of social media on travel.

While the tourist gaze is a mental phenomenon, it is externalised in the sense that it is productive of touristic behaviours and representations. The dimensions of the tourist gaze are revealed in the representations created by tourists, which in turn go on to shape ways of gazing in those who consume them i.e., the hermeneutic circle of touristic representation (Urry, 1990). It is not, however, the representations of the ICT-mediated gaze that will be investigated here but rather the practices and theory which underpin its enactment. As the online audience has been identified as a key factor in contemporary gazing, the audience's involvement with the tourist and the strategies the tourist uses to appeal to the audience will be tracked using conceptual models applied to social media. This angle is in fitting with the interdisciplinary investigation established by this thesis.

The version of the gaze proposed within this chapter is the selfie gaze. Selfies have been defined as a "digital self-portrait intended to be shared with the networked audience" (Albury, Leaver, Marwick, Rettberg, & Senft, 2017, p. 172). These self-portraits are a significant element of social media culture that have developed along with advances in technology such as the increasing availability of cameras in smartphones and the evolution of online publication forums i.e., social media. In many ways, selfies can be seen to stem from the participatory culture within social media wherein individuals are able to create and publish texts using consumer technologies. With smartphone cameras, and the editing and publishing capabilities that are available as applications within these same devices, individuals have creative control to produce, polish, and publish texts about the self as a way of explaining who we are, what we like, and just what it is that makes us, us. Based on her research into selfies and digital media cultures, Rettberg (2014) explains,

One of the most frequent reasons given for enjoying taking selfies is that it allows the subject full control over the photographic process, from deciding to take a photo, to choosing the angle and expression, to editing the image to choosing which photos to share with others. (p. 80)

This freedom to define and represent the self is perhaps one reason why selfies have become so popular as an element of social media and indeed mainstream culture (Tiidenberg & Gómez Cruz, 2015; Tiidenberg, 2018). However, perhaps for this same reason, there has been heavy criticism of selfies' purportedly narcissistic or self-absorbed nature. While a relatively new genre, selfies may be considered as the subject of a particularly high level of media attention acting as

a touchstone for “politicizing discourses about how people ought to represent, document, and share their behaviors” (Senft & Baym, 2015, p. 1589).

Through these developments, selfies come to represent not only digital self-portraits but also identity, self-presentation, and the attention-driven economic model prevalent within social media. For this reason, the digital ethnographer Gómez Cruz (2016) contends that selfies may be considered the paradigmatic practice of digital photography. As such, the selfie gaze introduced in this chapter is intended to address the full array of multimedia travel representations shared online rather than just self-portraits. While this phraseology at some level buys into the hype around selfies, this choice is also pragmatic, based on a dearth of research on online self-presentation within travel (Gretzel, 2017a, p. 116). Given their widespread media attention and compelling resonance with the human condition, selfies have acted as a locus around which popular and academic attention has coalesced, including within recent work exploring travellers’ online self-presentation (Cardell & Douglas, 2018; Gretzel, 2017a; Kohn, 2018; Seong, 2016). Following this contextual background, the selfie gaze is defined as a mode of touristic perception that sees the landscape in terms of online self-presentation. As a practice, the selfie gaze searches for elements in the landscape which have the capacity to attract attention and views these in terms of how they might be shared with the online audience.

In studies addressing connected tourism, the online audience appears as a new and significant feature of experience as tourists are able to remain in close contact with their social networks using ICTs. It has as such been argued that tourists increasingly travel on behalf of the web audience (German Molz, 2006, p. 387), “gazing with their own eyes as well as the eyes of their imagined audience” (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 129) as they consume the visited landscape. From such perspectives, the mediated presence of the audience is an obvious influence on how the tourist gaze takes place. As the online audience is accessed via social media, this chapter seeks to unpack the underlying components of social media itself so as to better understand tourists’ selfie gaze; and as such the social construction of tourist perception and tourism as a whole.

This chapter’s investigation of social media is performed via an examination of three core concepts that have been used to understand online environments and interactions: the attention economy, microcelebrity, and influencers, which will be discussed in the context of tourism. This thesis started by looking at how tourists negotiate connectivity. Part II (Chapters 6 and 7) will focus on the theme of performance and how connected tourist experiences are consumed in strategic ways that fit both the personal aesthetics of tourists, and the social, and

industry, structured understandings of tourism. This chapter will explore how connected tourists perceive the landscape, with the following chapter considering how experiences are transformed into representations. Together, the two chapters within Part II will answer the second research objective: Identify the practices through which travel experiences are transformed into online content.

The structure of this chapter will be as follows. First, it explores the concept of the tourist gaze. Following which, existing work on the ICT-mediated gaze and the online audience is discussed and the selfie gaze is explained. Next, the aforementioned social media concepts will be discussed in the context of tourism and the selfie gaze. Finally, closing discussion on the selfie gaze and its relationship with tourism is provided.

6.1 The Tourist Gaze

The tourist gaze is a theoretical concept for understanding tourist behaviour and consumption. This concept was developed by John Urry in order to explore tourism as a sociological phenomenon in which tourists interact with foreign landscapes in a way that is structured by the machinery of the tourism industry and, more broadly, society at large (Urry, 1990; Larsen, 2014b). To look more closely at the foundations of this theory, numerous modern philosophers such as Sartre, Lacan, and Foucault have utilised the metaphor of gazing to describe a structured way of seeing that privileges certain values. To provide an example, in his *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (1973) worked with the idea of the “medical gaze” in order to describe the relationship between doctor and patient as organised by the system of formalised medical knowledge. In the clinic, rationalised scientific knowledge meets and negotiates with the particular physical sensations experienced by the patient through the gaze of the doctor who assesses the patient and determines the particular ailments they are suffering from. The medical gaze then references the power relationship between doctor and patient, which is framed within the metaphor of the doctor’s *vision*, the various ocular and cognitive processes through which the patient’s body is assessed and understood.

For Foucault, the visual phenomena of gazing is used metaphorically to mean perception (1973, p.xiv), or by extension, understanding; a comparison that is made based on the primacy of vision within the human condition. The analysis of how a doctor sees a patient’s body reflects how it is perceived, known, and understood by not only doctors, but the medical industry, and to some degree wider society. *The Tourist Gaze* utilises a similar principle with Urry (1990) arguing that a tourist’s understanding of the landscape is based in the representations produced by the tourist industry (and to a lesser degree, other tourists) that

educate the visitor as to what elements of the landscape are of interest and how they should be consumed. The relationship between the tourist and the landscape is then similar to that of doctor and patient; the tourist views the landscape from a position of power that they use to make sense of it. The understandings underpinning the tourist's sense of order are produced by the tourist industry and go on to be reproduced in the tourist's own representations of travel. Using the gaze as a lens, tourism may be understood and studied as a socially systemised activity.

In *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry (1990) describes tourism as a temporary break from work and the normal quotidian routines that are part of postindustrial Western life. Here, tourism industry promotion in the form of brochures, guidebooks, postcards, and souvenirs helps shape the form of touristic movement and constructs the locations which form the objects of touristic intent. Building on the work of Heidegger (2001, Chapter 2), Urry describes the mechanism through which the tourist gaze is perpetuated as the "hermeneutic circle" (1990, p. 140). Within this cultural system, tourists' perception of a particular tourist site is influenced by the representations they have consumed earlier (Albers & James, 1988; Caton & Almeida Santos, 2008; Jenkins, 2003; Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Such a learning process, as per the tenets of consumer culture, is usually prescriptive in its simplicity. Urry (1990) explains, "People have to learn how, when and where to 'gaze.' Clear markers have to be provided" (p. 9). Thus, within promotional materials, as within the tourism industry as a whole, overt targets for touristic consumption are established. Certain sites, practices, and/or images are privileged as representing a certain area and may be understood as signs through which that destination is consumed. In this way Urry (1990) describes tourists as semioticians who recognise and interpret signs within the touristic landscape:

There is a seeing of particular signs such as the typical English village, the typical American skyscraper, the typical German beer-garden, the typical French château, and so on. This mode of gazing shows how tourists are in a way semioticians, reading the landscape for signifiers of certain pre-established notions or signs derived from various discourses of travel and tourism. (pp. 12-13)

While certain signs are established as objects worthy of the gaze by marketers or tastemakers from within the tourist industry, it is tourists themselves who maintain their interestingness through the productive functions of the gaze. Tourists' complicity in the

perpetuation of industry-created understandings is seen as tourists reproduce the images and tropes present in commercial accounts of tourism by taking photographs similar to those they have seen already in brochures or postcards, purchasing souvenir versions of famous sights, and reproducing the tourist language, practices, and routes presented in guidebooks. However, recent research into tourist practice, including that looking at tourists' production and consumption of UGC, has started to question the viability of the hermeneutic circle as a structuring factor within tourist experience.

Even though gaze theory explains tourism as a socially structured activity; it is important to understand that such a perspective does not dominate tourists' ability to develop practice at an individual level. There have been many arguments against the deterministic tendencies of tourist gaze theory. This is particularly true within the performance turn in tourism research that sees Urry's earlier interpretations of the gaze as both overly focussed on the visual, and as undermining tourists' ability to interpret the landscape as individuals (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, & Manfeldt, 2008; Larsen, 2006a; MacCannell, 2001). In a similar way, the performance turn works to recognise the agency of hosts, equalising the relationship between visitors and locals (Maoz, 2006). Through ethnographies investigating the day to day life of tourist sites such as Edensor's (1998) examination of tourist routines at the Taj Mahal, and Larsen's studies of tourist photographic practices at the Hammershus castle ruins in Denmark (2005, 2006b; see also Haldrup & Larsen, 2003), research has sought to engage with the diversity of actions through which tourists make sense of and consume tourist sites. Inasmuch, criticisms of the gaze have eased in the face of recent literature arguing that tourism may be societally structured at the same time as tourists perceive and approach touristic sites at an individual level i.e., that tourists are both gazing, and performing tourism in a way that is shaped by their personal aesthetics (Larsen & Urry, 2011; Scarles, 2009; Stylianou-Lambert, 2012).

In explaining the nature of the tourist gaze, it is also important to note that theory has been continually updated since Urry's original work; both by Urry himself and in the derivative understandings and versions of the tourist gaze produced by other scholars. Urry's theory of the gaze has been revised significantly to deal with the increasingly global and quotidian nature of tourism (Urry, 2002), as well as the integration of digital technologies into the tourism industry and experience (Urry & Larsen, 2011).¹⁷ Further studies have paid attention to different types and dynamics of tourist gaze. Through their discussion of the family gaze, Haldrup and Larsen (2003; see also Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen & Urry, 2004, Chapter 6; Larsen, 2005) introduce

¹⁷ See Larsen (2014b) for a comparative analysis of the different versions of the tourist gaze expounded by Urry.

the idea that the gaze is enacted through the cooperation of different family members and involves corporeal as well as visual processes. The wider bodily and aesthetic dimensions of the tourist gaze are fleshed out through ethnographic studies linking embodied practices such as making sandcastles (Obrador-Pons, 2009), bungee-jumping (Ferguson & Veer, 2015), and taking photographs (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, Chapter 7; Larsen, 2005, 2006b; Noy, 2014; Scarles, 2009, 2013) with the formation of touristic experience. In this way, it is possible to understand the tourist gaze as an embodied phenomenon that brings into play the full range of sensory inputs to perceive and interact with the landscape. It is this attention to the changing nature of tourism, and tourism theory, that has ensured the sustained relevance of gaze theory within the study of tourism and allowed the concept to be applied in a variety of touristic studies

As we move into the era of ICTs, the system of cultural production through which touristic texts are created has become more sophisticated and complex. The next section will explore unfolding research on the ICT-mediated tourist gaze and its effect on connected tourists.

6.2 ICT-Mediated Tourist Gazes

As discussed previously in Chapter 3, the integration of ICTs into the field of tourism has produced a fundamental change in the way tourism is experienced and tourism services are provided. In fitting with such changes, it can now be argued that tourists adopt an ICT-mediated gaze that is shaped through the use of technologies during planning and on site, including increased exposure to the representations of other tourists. This section will go on to explore how the ICT-mediated gaze is configured and its effects on experience using existing literature. In particular what appears within literature is the figure of the online audience who are able to infiltrate tourists' consciousness via the communicational affordances of ICTs and who consequently play a role in how tourism is experienced. From this realisation, it is worthwhile investigating how the audience has traditionally been configured in relation to the gaze in order to frame the involvement of the online audience in connected tourism. This section will thus begin with an overview of perspectives on the role of the audience within the tourist gaze, before coming back to address two cases of the ICT-mediated gaze.¹⁸

The figure of the audience, both copresent at the site, and removed in time and space, has been continually referenced as a structuring factor within tourist gaze theory. The gazing audience may include members of one's travel party, other unknown tourists, locals present at

¹⁸ Discussion concentrates on the subject position of on-site tourists, rather the virtual tourist gaze from a distant location (see Robinson, 2012; Shakeela & Weaver, 2016; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

the site (Maoz, 2006), and, in a more abstract way, the distant audience who view (or could view) tourist behaviours in media products such as photographs and video. In the original iteration of the tourist gaze, Urry (1990, pp. 136-138) talks about the simultaneous possibilities for gazing and being gazed upon in 19th century Paris based on the lively boulevards and outdoor cafés that composed a Bhabbian third space for heterogenous social interactions. In Urry's account, the audience adds to the pleasure of consumption as the visitor feels a sense of thrill knowing that they are an object of interest to others. Other accounts have, however, placed tourists and the audience in different relationships, perhaps owing to the more hierarchical understandings of social interactions in typical touristic locations as compared to Urry's example of Paris. Löfgren (2008, p. 10) has noted that tourists often watch other tourists out of social curiosity, while Noy (2007) takes this a step further to contend that tourists are always being watched, stating, "they are constantly under the gaze of other people, such as tourists, locals, and tourist operators, and their behaviors are constantly regulated and monitored so as to avoid 'improper' expressions" (p. 144). Supporting this line of thought, Edensor (2000, p. 327) considers present others as composing a form of disciplinary gaze that "restrict the scope of performances and help to underscore communal conventions about 'appropriate' ways of acting as tourists" (p. 327). From these accounts, the effect of the audience is largely to regulate the behaviour of tourists within social or locally-established norms. This understanding of the touristic audience assists in theorising the inchoate ICT-mediated tourist gaze.

The use of internet-based communications technologies such as blogs, emails, and social networking services enables travellers to engage in mobile social relations throughout the journey. The effect of such relations is not only to communicate information about the self but also to share the events and places of travel so that these may be experienced by the audience. This process of sharing travel with the online audience allows feedback that supports the management of self-performance. However, there is also the potential for negative effects depending on the frequency and severity of self-regulation. Based on a study of the discourse produced by round-the-world travel bloggers, Germann Molz (2006) contends that the effect of ongoing travel sharing is that travellers take on and "internalise the audience's "tourist gaze"" (p. 387). This means that during travel the audience is felt as a form of mediated presence that the traveller is conscious of while they search for, undertake, record, and share their experiences within the foreign landscape. Germann Molz goes on to explain the effect of the audience's gaze using Foucault's (1995) discussion of the panopticon through the term, "surveilling gaze". This is a phenomenon in which connected tourists' interactions with the visited landscape are shaped through their social connectivity with the audience.

Following this logic, connected travellers interpret the landscape through the filter of the audience in order to ensure that their narratives are well-received. Such a view highlights the role the online audience plays not only in terms of supporting tourist experience (Chapter 5) but also in shaping the very ways that tourists perceive and experience tourism. In the decade since Germann Molz proposed the idea of the surveilling gaze, there have been developments in the theorising of both social media and its relationship to the tourist gaze that help to further explicate the effect of the online audience within tourism.

In their third version of the *Tourist Gaze*, Urry and Larsen (2011) make the point that there is a communal element to the tourist gaze in which the tourist cooperates “with a (future) audience at hand or in mind” (p. 213). This idea is utilised by Dinhopf and Gretzel (2016) as they explore the ICT-mediated gaze as framed through the practice of tourist selfies. The authors explore selfies as a form of “touristic looking” in which tourists interact with and consume the physical landscapes of tourism through visual narratives of the self. From this basepoint, Dinhopf and Gretzel propose the “self-directed gaze” as a creative mode of expression through which tourists are able to record and share visions of tourism and self. Following the dynamic of surveillance identified by Germann Molz (2006), the self-directed gaze is inherently conscious of the online audience, which it manages through three self-presentation techniques: (1) “othering the self”, imagining oneself through the vision of the online audience; (2) “stylized performing the self”, in which different versions of the self are performed in order to convey particular messages or sentiments to the audience; (3) “producing/consuming the self”, in which the tourist becomes the focus of the touristic representation with the destination used as a backdrop (Dinhopf & Gretzel, 2016, pp. 132-134). Expanding on these three tensions, the authors contend that the nature of tourism has shifted from previous notions of gazing outwards toward touristic sites as in sightseeing, to inward gazing and using touristic sites to reflect characteristics of the self. The authors support this argument by showing examples of tourist sites designed for self-presentation.

From this overview of existing research, it can be argued that ICTs affect how connected tourists perceive the landscape and that this change is primarily felt in the form of the semi-present online audience.¹⁹ Dinhopf and Gretzel’s (2016) self-directed gaze accepts the regulatory influence of the audience and posits strategic self-presentation as a way of ameliorating the audience’s surveillance. The self-directed gaze thus connects with the beneficial aspects of the audience’s gaze as explored by Urry (1990) in the example of Paris

¹⁹ See Ayeh (2018), Duffy (2018), and Willis, Ladkin, Jain, and Clayton (2017) for recent studies of the ICT-mediated gaze and its relationship to the online audience.

discussed earlier. The idea of the audience as a constituent element not only within tourist experience but within the overall cycle of tourism will be explored in the next section that outlines the idea of the selfie gaze.

6.3 The Selfie Gaze

The selfie gaze is proposed by the author as a way of understanding the structuring factors within connected tourists' perception of the landscape. It is similar to the self-directed gaze as it proposes that "tourists' relation to their visual recording equipment and social media audience becomes an integral component of the tourist experience" (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 136); however, it also differs from the conceptualisation of the ICT-mediated gaze put forward by Dinhopl and Gretzel in key ways. While the self-directed gaze is an internally focused gaze that reflects tourist sites and "ascribe[s] the characteristics they [tourists] otherwise associate with tourist sights onto themselves" (p. 126), the selfie gaze is presented as an outwardly focussed gaze oriented toward both the landscape and the audience that utilises these resources to project a desired image of self; not as a reflection but rather as a composite that is shaped through and with these discursive frames. Put another way, in the self-directed gaze tourists perform experiences of tourism for the audience, while in the selfie gaze tourists perform their experiences of tourism with the audience. Such a conceptualisation positions the online audience as occupying a place of power from which they are able to legitimise and/or extend the online self-presentations of others. Within the selfie gaze, the audience becomes a crucial factor contributing to the hermeneutic circle of representations by which the gaze is established and perpetuated.

The tourist's selfie gaze understands tourism through, and actively seeks, locations that can grow the self as it is represented online. Langlois and Elmer (2013) explain how ICT-mediated gazes are conscious of the audience not only at the level of creation of online representations but also at the level of audience interactions stating, "The digital object articulates different forms of being online, from an individual to a collective gaze, where one is aware that one's interactions with an object will have consequences for other users" (p. 14). The online travel narratives created by tourists are the subject of the audience's gaze as they move between different networks. This movement is fuelled by the audience as they interact with (through likes or comments) or republish (through sharing or reblogging) material within or between their own portals; actions that provide momentum for a particular item to travel online. Such circulation increases the possibility to "find an echo and define a new attentional context" (p. 14) through the intersection with new audiences (on a different platform, for example) or via

the production of additional meanings (such as through extended commentary or the development of derivative texts i.e., memes) that focus attention back toward the creator/s. This movement and/or interaction adds to the legitimacy of a given text as a worthwhile or interesting piece of content; as well as the reputation of its author. It is proposed that through the selfie gaze tourists seek to produce interesting content that can draw in the attention of others and enhance the reputation of their online self.

How do travellers produce interesting content that stands out given the context of global mobilities, the audience's familiarity with tourist sites, and the continual bombardment of travel content online? Haldrup and Larsen (2003) have discussed the difficulty of producing travel content that is interesting to a wide audience:

People are clearly aware that the snapshot-world has reduced experiences to such a degree of private stereotypes that the truth is that it is very difficult for anyone who is not in the pictures to take any interest in their stories. Tourists are telling travel narratives to and for themselves. (p. 38)

In the authors' view, the oversaturation of travel content means that narratives may only be interesting to a limited audience familiar with the tourist. We may see, however, that Haldrup and Larsen's piece is dated from a particular time following the development of ubiquitous "de-differentiated" tourism (Uriely, 2005; see also Larsen, 2008a), yet which predates the development of Web 2.0 and the era of connected tourism. It is argued that the development of social media has disrupted this tendency. Tourists are not only sharing their narratives online in great numbers, but they are presenting them in ways that attract the attention of and connect with the online audience. This is achieved by creating attractive content, engaging with the kind of subjects that are able to gather interest, and by adding supporting information such as hashtags or captions that assist these texts in being seen by interested parties. Contrary to Haldrup and Larsen's assertion, tourists are then succeeding in making personal stories of travel interesting to others. The mechanism by which this is achieved is the selfie gaze.

The selfie gaze scans for facets of the landscape that are suitable to share. These may be prepackaged such as a famous tourist attraction, or they can be developed by travellers themselves in both planned (in the form of a presentation strategy enacted over time) and opportunistic ways (as in ad hoc, on the spot performance). As an example, lively and colourful backgrounds are able to stand out and draw attention within the environment of social media platforms and thus comprise an increasingly attractive component of tourist photography (see

Figures 6.1, 6.2, 6.3; see also Section 9.2 for a discussion on “Instagram walls”). As an example of how these features are identified and utilised by tourists, the author recounts an experience where a street performer creating vibrant bubble formations in the Old Town of Tallinn, Estonia, was able to feature as a popular focal point for touristic photography.

Because they [the bubbles] were bright, cheerful, whimsical, and inviting, they suited the type of image that people like to present online. In their dynamic, roving nature they were also interactive. Tourists waited with bated breath and chased them as they appeared, posing in front with a cheeky outstretched finger, or a mock hug, for a friend to snap. ... Many people took photos, and these airy, colourful globes surely added an eye-catching dimension to the snaps in which they appeared. (Magasic, 2017b)

It can be argued that the vibrant colours possessed by the bubbles acted as a sign that these tourists associated with online attention and self-presentation (another example is the colourful lighting featured in Figure 6.1 in the epigraph to this chapter). Through this example, it is possible then to see how tourists establish a connection between online self-presentation and the touristic landscape, and to theorise on how these signs are recognised and utilised using the idea of the selfie gaze.



Figure 6.2. A street performer creates colourful bubbles for tourists in Tallinn, Estonia (Author).



Figure 6.3. A tourist takes a photo of his companion with bubbles in the background (Author).

It is important to note that these facets, or signs, are seen through the filter of the self and the particular image or “self-brand” that the traveller seeks to cultivate (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016; Kuehn, 2016; van Neunen, 2016). In this way, the sites that appeal to the selfie gaze are less likely to represent the self as it exists but instead project a particular image or connotation of the desired self, which is constructed in cooperation with the audience and the technology at hand. The selfie gaze is likewise supported by new forms of touristic vision that are shaped by technology, platforms, and social media user cultures. In terms of technology, this can be seen through examples like the front-facing camera as well as the photographic functions in-built within current generation smartphones such as slow-motion capture and panorama, which present new ways of capturing, and seeing, the landscape.²⁰ This perspective should not, however, be limited to physical technology. Social media platforms offer affordances like filters or graphic overlays that allow users to make images more visually attractive; as well as geotagging where content is matched to a physical location using GPS data. While user

²⁰ Wearable technologies like Google Glass suggest further layers of depth here.

cultures like the production of memes, or the use of hashtags, provide new opportunities for sharing and categorising (as well as retrieving) interesting moments from the landscape.

Cognizant of digital technology and culture, the selfie gaze understands the touristic landscape in terms of *hooks* by which the individual is able to connect with online attention. In simple terms, these hooks are things which are likely to attract the attention of the audience; be these iconic sights, colourful scenes, appetising food, attractive bodies, markers of status, or combinations of these different elements strategically shaped by the tourist. However, the key to maximising attention is more than simply connecting with what is attractive. It also involves finding things which are meaningful to the audience. On a deeper level, the hooks sought by the tourist's selfie gaze may be thought of as latent meaning within the landscape. Examples include meanings derived from popular culture such as a location that was the setting for a film (e.g., tagging #lotr to a photo taken while hiking in New Zealand in order to reference the popular *Lord of the Rings* series), or entities that represent or connect to a particular feeling, emotion, activity, or current event. The selfie gaze seeks elements that are likely to gather attention online, connect with the audience, and result in one's online travel narrative being interacted with and moved about by others in ways that maximise beneficial attention.

The tourist is still a semiotician as Urry (1990) argued, but the nature of signs has changed. Signs are still perceived in relation to the representations previously consumed but now an extra layer or layers of digital information is added as travellers consider what is likely to be liked, shared, or followed by the online audience and the technology, hashtags, hyperlinks, captions, or filters they can utilise to help facilitate this outcome. The success of the traveller's selfie gaze in attracting attention depends on familiarity with the online travel world, social media user cultures, and the individual's skill in self-presentation in general. From here, it is worthwhile to explore theoretical models that explain how social media operates in order to understand the structuring factors that shape the selfie gaze.

6.4 Models for Understanding Online Social Interactions

Through the selfie gaze tourists identify interesting elements of the landscape that are featured in online content. These online travel narratives can take various forms such as blog posts, email, selfies, and more. Theoretical models have sought to explicate the ways individuals interact online and the principles guiding what content is shared and how and why it travels between users and networks. In order to understand the online audience and the economy governing interactions within social media we can look at three interrelated concepts: the attention economy, microcelebrity, and influencers. Exploring these can help us understand

the dimensions and structuring factors of the connected tourist's selfie gaze.

6.4.1 The Attention Economy

As the internet allows users to both produce and consume information, the amount of media available becomes larger than the audience is able to consume. The ubiquitous availability of online media contrasts with the broadcast era when limitations in broadcast space meant that the amount of entertainment available was relatively small. The repercussions of this in terms of media consumption as noted by Goldhaber (1997) are that attention becomes the scarce commodity (rather than media) and the ability to capture or hold the attention of others becomes a proportionately valuable property or skill. A media environment structured around this dynamic is referred to by Goldhaber as an "attention economy". In terms of travel, the internet means that there is travel information available like never before. Saliently, this is not only professional material produced by travel institutions but also that created by regular travellers such as blogs, videos, forums, reviews, etc. The consequences of this are not only timely, agenda-free travel content but also a profusion of travel information in general. According to the attention economy, this profusion brings with it strategic decisions pertaining to what will be consumed and what will be relegated to internet backwaters. While some research has confirmed the presence of an attention economy, which potentially shapes the way tourist narratives are produced (Azariah, 2012), and considered how tourists' attention is deployed toward particular sources of information (Paris, 2011; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), there have as of yet been no studies looking at how tourists attract the attention of others through the online narratives they produce.

It is plausible to state that travellers are aware their online representations are compiled with and compete against those of other tourists (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 133). Those travel texts that are able to gain a high level of visibility through user interactions are ostensibly successful as they are able to attract attention for their creator. One benefit of attention is that it can be a status symbol. Someone who is successful at attracting attention to their travel stories is Matt Kepnes aka Nomadic Matt (www.nomadicmatt.com) who has developed his skill in online self-presentation into a veritable travel empire rivalling established players in reach and scope (see van Neunen & Varis, 2017). Attention may not, however, necessarily be positive. One negative is that attention may reflect critically on an individual and may, in extreme cases, amount to an invasion of privacy. As an example, the media storm responding to Ben Innes' hijacker selfie accused him of being narcissistic, impudent, and putting other people at risk for the sake of a photograph (Figure 6.4).

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This image is unable to be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 6.4. “I’m not sure why I did it”. Ben Innes’ selfie with a hijacker on the front page of the British newspaper *The Sun*, March 30, 2016 (Sutton, 2016).

Research has shown that the display of online travel texts involves “impression management” whereby tourists construct favourable representations of the self to be shared online (Goffman cited in Lo & McKercher, 2015). What needs to be realised, however, is that the traveller’s impression management is deployed within a domain with an explicit focus on cultivating attention. Theory has shown that attention is recorded by particular metrics in-built within social media platforms (Marwick & boyd, 2011a). By providing metrics, these platforms imply that attention is a desirable commodity, a principle that is reinforced as platforms like WordPress offer digital trophies for reaching certain milestones in likes and followers (Magasic, 2014). Here, the important questions are: What kind of content can attract online attention? Through what strategies is it produced by tourists? And, how do these strategies impact on the experience of tourism?

6.4.2 Microcelebrity

The concept of microcelebrity refers to the variety of interwoven behaviours and presentational strategies through which attention is cultivated and managed online. The term was developed by theorist Theresa M. Senft in conjunction with her ethnographic study of *camgirls*, women who show live videos of themselves over the internet on a semiprofessional or professional basis. In her study, Senft (2008, p. 25) describes microcelebrity as the way camgirls perform cultivated personalities spread over an array of different online channels in order to build popularity over a sustained period. In this way, microcelebrity can be seen as a conceptual frame through which to understand the ways individuals strategically manage attention online. The concept has been used widely within studies of self-performance and sociality on social media. It is defined by Marwick and boyd (2011b):

Micro-celebrity involves viewing friends or followers as a fan base; acknowledging popularity as a goal; managing the fan base using a variety of affiliative techniques; and constructing an image of self that can be easily consumed by others. (p. 141)

In their study of Twitter and the “context collapse” present in this social environment where myriad audience members and social contexts are addressed simultaneously, Marwick and boyd (2011a) highlight microcelebrity as a performance strategy through which to negotiate multiple unknown audiences and contexts. The authors explain that the practice of microcelebrity is itself enacted through an amalgam of online behaviours such as interacting with followers, selectively sharing personal information, strategically editing texts about the self (see also Papacharissi, 2012), and engaging in varying performance styles for different situations or audiences (see also Hogan, 2010). Together these practices enable internet users to manage attention in ways that are beneficial. The result of ongoing microcelebrity performance is the creation of a self-brand that represents the holder at the conflux of discursive strategies (Khamis et al., 2016). Through a study of prominent or “instafamous” users on Instagram, Marwick (2015) found that one consistent way through which these users attracted attention was by engaging with the tropes of conventional celebrity. Here, Marwick explains that users engage in “aspirational production” by integrating references to high or celebrity culture within self-performance.

Microcelebrity may be understood as the strategic element of the selfie gaze that weighs up personal and reputational costs against the benefits to be accrued through sharing online. Microcelebrity can be seen to tie in with the individualised consumption of touristic sites espoused within the performance turn wherein tourists express agency through choices regarding how a site is consumed and the way records of visitation are produced and displayed (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010). The practice of microcelebrity deploys inherently personal judgements about how to present the touristic self online comprising of decisions such as what hashtags to use (whether to use those established by the destination, appropriate one from another tourist, or create new ones), what angle to photograph a location from, what filters to use, or to what degree to edit. We see the individualised or personal dimensions of the selfie gaze here but also realise that these are informed by the value systems of social media such as the attention economy, which travellers need comply with in order to be successful.

The element of aspirational production highlighted by Marwick (2015) demonstrates that the online self is constructed in a collaboration with the online audience. As such, the successful projection of self involves imagining not only the correct way to present oneself but also what the audience will like and respond to. This may involve packaging the self in interesting and innovative ways and displaying desirable touristic sites among other factors. Such strategic production of online texts might then be seen to tie in with specific choices in destination or activity relating to desired self-image. While microcelebrity may be conceived of as work that travellers engage with in order to maximise the reputational benefits of travel (see Chapter 8), one benefit of successful microcelebrity practice is the ability to become a professional or semiprofessional influencer.

6.4.3 Influencers

An influencer is somebody who is paid to produce and disseminate advertorial content through their social media profile (Abidin, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Influencers form a part of social media marketing in which goods or services are advertised, often surreptitiously, within content published on social media. Influencer marketing is a rapidly growing business segment including within the field of travel (Gretzel, 2017b). A recent article exploring the work routine of travel influencers Emily King and Corey Smith (@wheresmyofficenow) reports that social media users with more than 50,000 followers are able to receive paid influencer positions through

marketing firms (Monroe, 2017).²¹ Here, influencers' cache is often built on what is premised as an intimate look into the daily life of an individual and the particular brands or services that person uses as part of their life (Abidin, 2015; Khamis et al., 2016).

While influencers' desirability as marketers is built on their capacity to reach a given number of audience members, it also involves the ability to connect with and motivate the audience to particular causes of action. Van Dijck (2013b) describes the importance of compelling storytelling (in addition to quantifiable metrics such as follower numbers or user engagement through likes, follows, and shares) as a skill for influencers:

Narrative self-presentation is hence intimately related to data analytics: whereas algorithms define a quantitative validation of someone's influence, the quality of a person's narrative is what makes her or him a persuasive wheeler and dealer. (p. 207)

In addition to persuasive storytelling, influencers extensively utilise microcelebrity to maximise their personal brand. In this way influencers might be seen as an extreme of microcelebrity practice. However, the practices influencers engage in, and the perspectives they take, may be considered as trickling down to other users given their influential position.

The particular tactics influencers use to attract and maintain their following should be recognised as a facet of online travel storytelling. While there is a significant ecosystem of travel influencers, travel-related content may also be produced by influencers from other fields who engage with travel as a way of presenting interesting or exotic content within their output (Manovich, 2017, p. 112). In recent years, the American Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has imposed regulations that require individuals to disclose commercial relationships as part of promotional posts on social media. However, it may be seen that many influencers still do not comply with these guidelines (see Tobin, 2018). A study of travel influencers on Instagram found that while 64% report commercial relationships within relevant posts, only 20% did so in a way that met FTC standards (Infiki, n.d.). In this way, the element of corporate communication within influencers' travel stories may be more covert than overt and may permeate in ways deeper than predicted. This has flow-on consequences for travel experience.

²¹ Other notable travel influencers include @muradosmann who has built a series of work around the hashtag #followmeto (see Krieger, 2018), and @chrisburkhard a travel photographer with 3.1 million followers.

Literature has shown that tourists' experiences and stories are shaped by the professional materials such as postcards (Albers & James, 1988) and brochures (Jenkins, 2003) they consume prior to travel. The vocational model of the influencer similarly demonstrates a commercial presence within the selfie gaze countering arguments about the democratisation of tourist voice and representations within social media, as per Scarles and Lester (2013):

The productive capabilities afforded through the virtual spaces of social media and image-sharing erode reliance on commercial images and bestow an authority on the tourist voice as providing an insight to place that is not veiled by politics of selling. (p. 3)

Indeed, the model of influencer highlights not only the potential for commercial entities to pervade the selfie gaze; but also the ability for compelling storytellers to act as tastemakers within tourism at a higher level than previously considered (as per the example of Nomadic Matt previously).²² Given their significant followings and social currency, influencers should be acknowledged as tastemakers within the travel ecosystem who operate at a hybrid individual/corporate level utilising both quasi-individual aesthetic choices and the directives from the companies who employ them. Through their prominent positioning, influencers shape the selfie gaze by helping contribute to the meaning of what forms interesting travel imagery. As the influencer marketing segment is growing rapidly this might be the least settled part of the selfie gaze bringing up questions such as: Who are the influencers within tourism? How widely are they influencing? To what degree are commercial relationships underpinning influencers' content comprehended by the audience? And, are influencers an elite class with their own "influencer gaze" or an especial component of the selfie gaze?

6.5 Discussion and Conclusions

As quoted earlier from Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016, p. 136), tourists' use of ICTs and their relationship with the online audience have become an integral component of how tourism is perceived and experienced. The relational nature of the gaze, which orders what is seen according to particular values remains, but how it is structured and performed has developed in

²² Influencers also problematise Haldrup and Larsen's argument in Section 6.3 that travellers are telling travel stories "to and for themselves" as influencers' position in the industry is premised upon being able to connect with and motivate others.

the era of social media. The view of the selfie gaze explicated in this chapter agrees with Urry's idea of the gazing tourist as a semiotician. What has happened in the era of connected tourism is that the nature of the signs becomes more complex. The meaning of these physical/intellectual entities is now compounded by another layer of digital information pertaining to the online presence of a given entity. To be successful at the selfie gaze, the tourist must be familiar with how a site is portrayed online such as knowing particular hashtags associated with it, the angles it is typically photographed from, and the contexts (or platforms) where it is likely to form an object of attention.

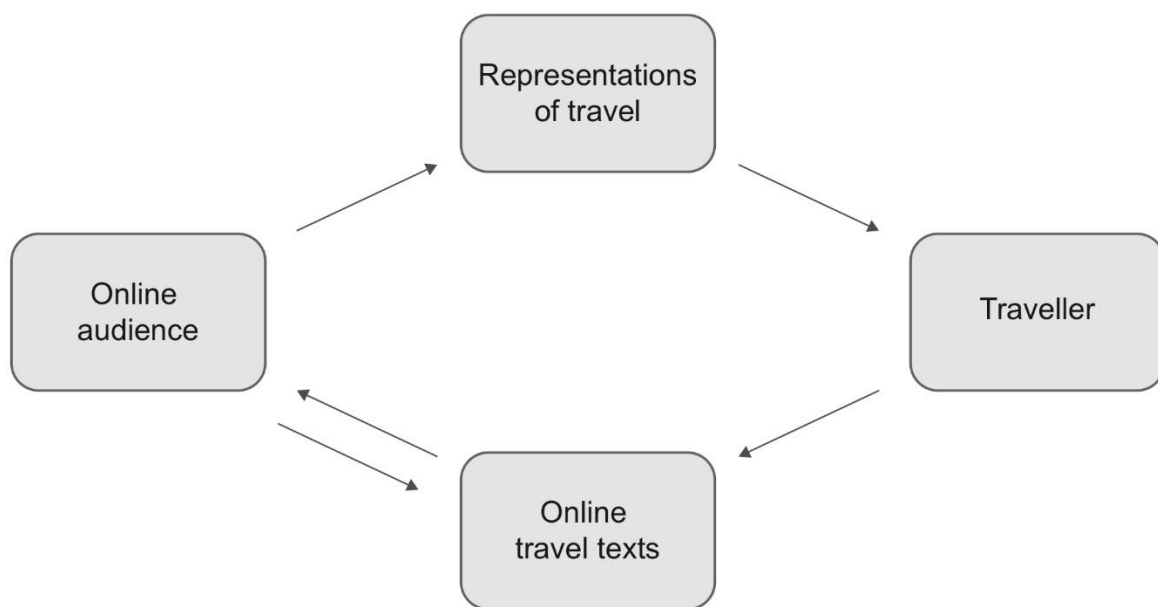


Figure 6.5. The hermeneutic circle of representation within the selfie gaze.

Recent literature has questioned the shape of the hermeneutic circle within contemporary tourism owing to the dual consumptive and productive functions of social media (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Gretzel, 2017a; Lo & McKercher, 2015; Månsson, 2011; Munar, 2013; Urry & Larsen, 2011). This chapter adds to literature reinterpreting the hermeneutic circle of tourist representations by suggesting the role of the audience as a feedback loop that affects the perception, telling, and memory of experience. This can be seen in Figure 6.5, which builds on the model of the hermeneutic circle proposed by Jenkins (2003, p. 308). Via the in-built affordances of social media platforms, the online audience has the ability to add meaning to tourist narratives. Moreover, it is audiences who decide how far a representation of travel spreads as it is they who propel its movement through actions such as sharing or liking, which

result in it becoming prominent content or not. Knowing how to negotiate touristic signs as complex objects replete with intersecting layers of meaning assists tourists in gaining the right kind of attention. Yet, as shown, this negotiation of signs requires sophisticated visual, communicational, and digital literacies that may themselves only be possessed by elite users (i.e., influencers).

The selfie gaze allows new ways of creating value within tourism which, at surface level, appear to be collaborative. It has been stated that in connected tourism, value is “co-created” (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2013) in mutually beneficial ways such as a tourist using the hashtag from the hotel they are staying in. The practice of microcelebrity recognises the importance of working with an audience through strategic sharing. Influencers frequently perform contact with the audience by communicating with them in the form of thank you messages, requests, and shout-outs (Abidin, 2015). A different form of interaction occurs between travellers and their companions (or others they meet during the journey) who may co-narrate experiences in order to develop new audiences. During fieldwork the author recounts how travelling with his wife brought negotiations about what travel material would be shared, how experiences were presented, and when it was okay to collaboratively perform travel experiences through tagging:

My “selfie gaze” (i.e. the structuring factors behind my performance of self for the online audience) is acutely aware of Kumi’s presence as a co-participant in my travel experiences. ... While Kumi and I are connected in physical life we are also connected as online actors as our profiles are linked to one another during the narrativisation of travel events: I sometimes tag Kumi in my posts and she more frequently tags me. We travel together not only physically, but in the online journey as well. Thus, Kumi’s status as a social actor connected to myself (online and emotionally) is an implicit part of my sharing of travel events online.

(Magasic, 2016h)

Drawing on the closeness between he and his wife in everyday life, the author parallels this in terms of the closeness of their online avatars and the negotiations this creates in terms of storytelling and tagging. This can be thought of as a form of selfie gaze that is developed and shared between physically copresent individuals and/or teams of tourists.

While it might be tempting to talk of collaborative identity building as the selfie gaze is used to build the self with and through interactions with the online audience; the attention economy of social media shows us that this environment is competitive rather than

collaborative. Attention is a finite resource that travellers (along with entities like service providers and travel media producers) compete for with one another. While the selfie gaze is aware of, and sometimes works with, service providers and the audience, this should be understood as temporary cooperation enacted strategically on the part of all parties within ongoing impression management. In contrast to this collaboration, attention may be sought aggressively by a sole entity seeking to benefit from an interesting source. The value of attention-grabbing content can be seen in the construction of made-for-sharing attractions or “selfie factories” (Pardes, 2017) such as the Art in Island museum in the Philippines (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016) or The Museum of Ice Cream in America. Such attractions evidence the influence of the selfie gaze in shaping tourism experiences and landscapes and will be explored further in the Part III of this thesis.

At the level of practice, we may see tourists who seek unique experiences as a vehicle for defining and differentiating oneself from others as may be seen in the trend of dangerous selfies and selfie-related accidents. Correspondingly, there need be more research into the attention economy as a structuring factor which influences the shape online tourist texts take and the strategies through which they are created. Future studies could explore how tourists’ online self-presentation is conducted over time including routines of checking and responding to audience feedback and engagement statistics (see Lo & McKercher, 2015). Another area for future research would be to investigate the position of influencers within the hermeneutic circle and the relationship between influencer output and consumer perspectives. This would help to illuminate the degree to which influencers act as structuring factors within the hermeneutic circle.

Part I of this thesis introduced the theoretical background of participatory culture and showed that tourists strategically manage connectivity as a component of travel experience. The focus of Part II is to explore how connected tourists perform their touristic experiences through the narrative representations of travel they share online. This chapter investigated the broader factors through which touristic landscapes are known, consumed, and represented by connected tourists. The theory of the tourist gaze, over its various iterations including updated versions and derivative works, understands tourism as a societally shaped process wherein tourists consume foreign landscapes in ways that are personally meaningful at the same time as conforming with broader expectations about being a tourist. Scholarly work looking at the integration of ICTs within tourism, and the effect of ICTs on the tourist gaze, has identified the online audience as a nascent structuring factor on tourist experience. The online audience plays the role of a mediated figure who witnesses the events of travel adding to the personal value

that can be achieved through contact with the unfamiliar. This section has delved deeper into investigating the characteristics of the online audience and in particular the operational principles whereby representations circulate within social media. Such a view has helped to unfold the idea of the selfie gaze. Using the selfie gaze, connected tourists read and understand the landscape in terms of self-presentation. Here, the gaze is constructed through and with the online audience, and the role of the audience is substantiated via their positioning within the hermeneutic circle of representation.

With the selfie gaze it may be seen that tourists respond to a new level of semiosis. An example of this was shown in the ability of vibrant, colourful landscape features to form focal points for touristic interest, photography, and performance. Here we see how the landscape is overlain with a layer of digital information pertaining to the online presence of elements within and this layer is fused with the preexisting meanings of tourist signs. Tourists scan for hooks, latent meanings that can be used to extend their online presentations. An important point to reiterate is that the selfie gaze is concerned not only with selfies but rather online self-presentation in any form. The attention economy should be understood as an implicit part of the value system of connected tourism as touristic representations are circulated within the forum of social media. The audience may be utilised to build identity, but they may also interact with content in unplanned, potentially unwanted ways as well. This is where practices such as microcelebrity assist individuals in managing this tension. In the outwards-facing configuration of the selfie gaze, the particular qualities referenced by the tourist are often deployed in a connective sense as they are sent forth to be encountered and assessed by others. In a productive sense, the selfie gaze manifests a desired personal image that is created through particular combinations of elements i.e., the landscape and digital affordances (such as filters, captions, or hashtags) and is substantiated through audience interactions (such as comments, likes, shares, and views). The development of the selfie gaze is reflected in the construction of physical touristic stages that facilitate the projection of positivistic self-images (see Chapter 9).

This chapter has sought to show how social media influences connected tourists' perception, the signs which they seek in the landscape, and the value system guiding them in this task. This is not to say that the selfie gaze is the only way to experience tourism, or even connected tourism; but it is one way (which is supported by models from internet studies) that demonstrates how the online audience is integrated into touristic experience. As with the sharing of family photo albums or the display of souvenirs in the home, within connected tourism the sharing of different kinds of travel moments to social media is an integral part of how tourism is accomplished. These texts are arranged as a part of the online personal profiles through

which individuals construct the self; and are formed at the confluence of different choices about where to visit, what to do, who to go with, and how to tell the story, which represent particular meanings about the self. Such a perspective helps us to move into the next section looking at the practices through which connected tourists' experiences are transcribed in narrative form and used as vehicles for identity building. Using a base of Goffmanian theory, in addition to recent studies explicating the particular mores of online self-presentation, the next chapter will outline the specific steps involved in the creation of online travel narratives.

Chapter 7. Online Travel Storytelling: Framing the Landscape and Presenting the Self



Figure 7.1. An image being framed on the screen of an Apple iPhone by a tourist in Japan. (Author)

Storytelling has traditionally been adopted as the method for recounting travel experiences (McCabe & Foster, 2006; Zilcosky, 2008). The historical continuity of the act of travel storytelling, spanning from early times to present day, has been indicated by Germann Molz (2012):

From the earliest explorers and pilgrims, the Grand Tourists of the eighteenth century, to the twentieth century's mass tourists and backpackers, travellers have kept logs, journals and diaries – some held privately, others published for mass consumption – to document their experiences on the road. (p. 68)

As shown in the above, travel has been shared in different forms and to different audiences at different times in history. As we move into the era of connected tourism the print postcard—the quintessential form of travel storytelling of the twentieth century—is in decline, replaced by media forms like the Instagram image or live video stream, which rather than lamenting *wish you were here*, draw the audience into immersive copresence through the screen (Germann

Molz & Paris, 2015, p. 180). This near-instantaneous transfer of information, and concomitant ability for the audience to look into travel, not only highlights the blurring of the distinction between home and away but also has significant impacts on travel storytelling and experience. This chapter shall focus on exploring the way connected travellers record and share travel stories. Rather than privileging a particular form of narrative, the practice of “online travel storytelling” represents a multimedia approach that agglomerates different forms of narrative creation such as writing, photography, and other media.

Complementing the examination of the selfie gaze established in the previous chapter, the background utilised here is performance. The understanding of performance included within is premised on Goffmanian theory, in particular, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) (hereafter, *Presentation*). This is because this text has formed the cornerstone for the analysis of both tourist behaviour (Edensor, 2001; Ferguson & Veer, 2015; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, Chapter 7; Hyde & Olesen, 2011; Larsen, 2005; Larsen & Urry, 2011; MacCannell, 1973; Urry & Larsen, 2011, Chapter 8) and online social interactions (Abidin, 2017; Hogan, 2010; Marwick & boyd, 2011a, 2011b; Papacharissi, 2009; van Dijck, 2013b; van House, 2009). While Goffman (1956) presented his theory based around the analysis of face to face situations, the application of Goffman to studies of online sociality (frequently in accordance with the work of Meyrowitz, 1985) has been used to describe a particular form of *online self-presentation* relating to the dynamic of networked environments. Online travel narratives have in many cases been considered as forms of electronic word of mouth or eWOM where tourists report on a service or experience to their social networks (Leung et al., 2013). However, there is more that can be seen from tourists’ online narratives beyond a service or marketing perspective (Mkono & Tribe, 2017). This chapter explores the process of online travel storytelling as a performance in which travellers shape a personal identity that at once precedes, draws from, and extends beyond the activity of travel. Following a call for more practice-based research into tourism (Crang 1997, 1999; Ek, 2013; Larsen, 2005; Scarles, 2009), and the processes whereby touristic social media content is created more specifically (Banyai & Havitz, 2013; Larsen, 2013; Mkono & Tribe, 2017; Yoo & Gretzel, 2012), the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the processes through which connected tourists’ experiences are transformed into online travel narratives.

This chapter shows how online self-presentation is implicit in narratives created by travellers using a model developed through personal introspection on storytelling during the fieldwork period. The model assesses and builds upon recent research by Lo and McKercher (2015) regarding digital tourist photography. Whereas Lo and McKercher’s study looked back at how tourists created and shared photographs from the post-trip stage, the current study has

developed its understanding of how narratives are constructed from within the creative process itself via the method of autoethnography. Such a viewpoint helps to elaborate upon the connection between storytelling processes and the different physical behaviours employed during travel as well as the relationship between on-site experiences and online self-presentation. This embedded perspective aims to show how travel storytelling exists as a functional element of the trip around which the self is produced and social interactions conducted. The current study is centred around the multifunctional technology of the smartphone in order to highlight how these tactile devices mediate between digital and physical layers of experience.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, it discusses Goffman's *Presentation* (1956) and the concepts of performance, self-presentation, and impression management. Next, the chapter looks at how Goffmanian performance theory has been applied in studies of tourists before exploring how online self-presentation is achieved in the virtual environment of social media. The following section provides a brief overview of the body of work on tourist photography before looking closely at Lo and McKercher's (2015) five step model for digital photography. After which, a nonlinear model for online travel storytelling is proposed using fieldwork data in combination with relevant theory. The chapter closes with an overview of the model presented as well as a brief discussion of the experiential implications of smartphones within connected tourism.

7.1 Performance, Self-Presentation, and Impression Management

In *Presentation* an understanding of social interactions is approached through dramaturgical theory. Goffman contends that daily interactions are theatrical in that they are often enacted under the auspices of certain magnanimous moral values at the same time as participants attempt to exert personal influence over one another (1956, pp. 6-8). In order to explain, Goffman parallels the process of behaving in public with acting using metaphors such as front and backstage, stage talk, and rehearsal. Backstage is an area where the individual prepares for, rehearses, and choreographs their performance. Frontstage is the public arena of performance where individuals enact a carefully managed persona. As in a stage drama, interactions are performed in complicity with others. Goffman explains that social interactions are undertaken alongside "teammates" who support the individual or are intimately familiar with their performance strategy (1956, Chapter 2). All in all, the purpose of daily social performance is the strategic management of self i.e., self-presentation. Here, the audience of present or imagined others comprise a significant factor determining what personal information is

conveyed and/or how this is done. For example, the way one presents oneself at home is different to how one presents oneself in a formal situation, which is different again to how one behaves on holiday, as are the goals and rules of engagement for each respective situation. Goffman explains that the general goal of self-presentation is to produce a favourable impression on the audience that has beneficial results such as esteem or renown, while minimising negative outcomes like awkwardness or loss of face (see also Baumeister & Hutton, 1987).

Through the use of real-life examples, *Presentation* goes to lengths to present social interactions as inherently multidimensional; we may package and present information to others in a structured way, but information also leaks out in ways which are less predictable yet equally self-referential. Inasmuch, another idea used by Goffman (1956, Chapter 6) is the term “impression management” referring to the process through which an individual refines their performance based on personal experience or the feedback from the audience or their teammates. Through the lens of impression management, successful self-presentation is contingent and relies on being able to read and respond to situations as they unfold in the moment.

Saliently, Goffman’s treatment of self-presentation is concerned primarily with face-to-face interactions that take place within quotidian, indoor social environments such as a workplace, home, or party; particularly as these exist within Anglo-American society. Goffman does, however, encourage the possibility of different kinds of performance, and different dynamics of social interactions, outside the Western context. It is such a possibility that leads him to reflect upon the varying performance strategies that may be practiced in different cultural contexts and the way social performance is negotiated by tourists:

Given our general dramaturgical rules and inclinations, we must not overlook areas of life in other societies in which other rules are apparently followed.

Reports by Western travellers are filled by instances in which their dramaturgical sense was offended or surprised. (1956, p. 157)

Having established this understanding of Goffman’s text and the ideas of performance, self-presentation, and impression management, the chapter will move on to examine the dimensions of how self-presentation occurs within the arena of travel, that is, how tourists perform the role of the tourist and how this at once differs from, confirms, and enriches the home self.

7.2 Touristic Performance

The cultural transitions inherent in tourism challenge the knowledge systems that we use to understand and interact with the world. During travel we are thrown into a new reality where to varying degrees our perception and judgement are recalibrated in relation to the social, cultural, and language systems of the destination. The process of adjustment that follows allows for a more liberal negotiation of the messages communicated between performer and audience and vice versa. An example used by Goffman is the tourist who feels free to embellish his status while amongst new company on a short holiday (1956, p. 143).

Drawing from and extending *Presentation*, touristic performance has been conceptualised in different ways. MacCannell (1973, 1976) borrows from Goffman's work in order to argue for front and back regions of tourism in which performances are presented to, or prepared for, tourists respectively. Such a conceptualisation is based on the premise that the sights of tourism are constructed events, put on for a touristic audience who have been trained to seek those very kinds of enactments. Building upon Goffman's front and back regions, MacCannell (1973, p. 598) supports his contention with a typology of six touristic regions ranging from the choreographed performances of local culture present on the frontstage, to false back regions arranged so as to appear as authentic spaces, to true backstage occurrences such as cleaning or preparation that go on largely unseen by tourist eyes. The understanding promulgated by MacCannell on the basis of these differentiated stages is that tourists seek "staged authenticity" that provides values missing from postindustrial Western lifestyles.²³ While MacCannell's work is valuable in highlighting the performative nature of touristic events, his application of Goffmanian theory in these works is more suited towards characterising tourism as a performance put on for tourists rather than an event through which the tourist reveals facets of their own personality (Hyde & Oleson, 2011, p. 901). The idea that tourists perform tourism in a way that fits with individualised aims or goals will be discussed next.

Within the performance turn, critiques of the figure of the *passive tourist* who readily takes on the role of the audience by unquestioningly consuming whichever sites are presented to them by tourist operators; rather than a performer who fills the landscape with meaning, have directed attention to the dimensions of tourist agency (Franklin & Crang, 2001; MacCannell, 2001). One of the ways tourist agency has been demonstrated is through ethnographies of

²³ A recent article by Pilon (2016) shows how the mundane backstage of tourist sights may be carefully edited out of the stories tourists share online. However, this is interesting to compare with work by Abidin (2017) proposing that influencers engage in "calibrated amateurism" in order to strategically release backstage content to fans as a way to build affinity and engagement.

tourist sites and “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the daily goings on at such places. An example is Edensor’s (1998) *Tourists at the Taj* from which the concepts of “enclavic” and “heterogenous” tourist space indicate new configurations of touristic stages and performances centred around the behaviours of tourists. From this research, Edensor moves on to look further at tourism as drama using Goffmanian theory and metaphors such as stage managers, rehearsal, and the dual tourist/actor (Edensor, 2000, 2001). Drawing on *Presentation*, Edensor (2001, pp. 73-78) outlines three types of tourist performance that produce a portrait of a more individualised tourist who brings both a past and a personal agenda on holiday with them. These are “directed tourist performances” in which the tourist is led by rules, signs, or guidebooks as part of the project of relaxation; “identity-oriented performances” that express personal identity by undertaking particular tourist activities in a particular style; and, “non-conformist tourist performances” where tourists subvert or reinterpret the rules or meanings applied to sites or practices. While retaining the idea of the stage as per MacCannell (1973), in Edensor’s work stages are created by tourists as well as for them. Supporting this reconceptualisation of tourist agency, Rickly-Boyd et al. (2016, Chapter 5) chart a shift in the application of performance theory within tourism from studying the structural dimensions of tourism to studying embodied enactments and the individual’s role in interpreting and producing tourist space.

Urry and Larsen’s (2011) third version of *The Tourist Gaze* works to reconcile the gaze paradigm with the values espoused in the performance turn by attention to multi-sensual experience and tourists’ creative consumption. One of the main examples used by the authors is the practice of photography, which is discussed in order to show how tourists’ actions can be both socially structured and individually meaningful (see also Haldrup & Larsen, 2010). This and other studies’ analysis of tourist photography (these will be discussed in Section 7.4) enliven the portrait of the tourist produced within tourism studies showing that “photo- (or video-) graphy is a social performance in itself, not simply a way of transparently capturing the tourist performances taking place *beyond* the viewfinder” (Merchant, 2016, p. 800). We might consider that through photography and other behaviours enacted during the trip, tourists are simultaneously performing tourism and presenting the self. Another example of how this is achieved is the selection of specific material goods that occurs during the packing process (Hyde & Olesen, 2011) or that are displayed on site (Curtin, 2010). Tourists’ self-presentations can be seen as a way of claiming selfhood within the activity of tourism and are productive not only of personal identity but also of place and touristic culture.

Both Goffman’s *Presentation* and the examples of tourist performance discussed here

have considered self-presentation in a primarily physical context. However, it is true that in addition to physical acts, tourists perform through narrative means such as the photographs produced on site, travel stories, and, increasingly through different forms of online narrative. In the last case, the presentation of narratives increasingly occurs within social media meaning that it conforms to a digital, rather than physical, social environment.

7.3 Online Self-Presentation

With the development of Web 2.0 in the early 2000s, there was a shift in online environments from static to dynamic internet pages where users were encouraged to create content and share information with others (O'Reilly, 2005). These practices took place in profile-driven social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter that were emerging at this time. Drawing on the idea of participatory culture, boyd (2010) conceptualises online social networks as “networked publics” (see also Ito, 2008). These are virtual public spaces where individuals are able to interact with others in similar ways as to which might occur in the physical public space of a park, plaza, market, or mall. However, this is a change from a social environment composed of atoms to one composed of bits, with widespread repercussions for identity building, interpersonal communication, and community formation. boyd identified four particular structural affordances of networked publics that differentiate them from physical space:

- **Persistence:** The ability of online interactions to be archived and to exist in perpetuity as data files.
- **Replicability:** The ability of data to be easily, quickly, and cheaply copied, allowing it to rapidly increase in abundance.
- **Scalability:** The potential visibility and mobility of online interactions beyond the moment of happening, depending on how this material is shared and distributed through actions such as liking, sharing, and commenting.
- **Searchability:** The ability for users to retrieve past social interactions from a database using keywords.

To this typology, Papacharissi and Yuan (2011) added a fifth characteristic—shareability—explaining the way the architecture of networked publics has been designed to precipitate the sharing of information (see also Raynes-Goldie, 2010).

Drawing on this and similar understandings of digital space as networked publics, many

theorists have analysed online social interactions using Goffmanian theory. One of the characteristic dynamics of online sociality is the presence of multiple audience types such as friends, family, and co-workers within the same vicinity. Marwick and boyd (2011a) refer to this phenomenon as “context collapse” (see also Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). The invisible imagined audience and the state of context collapse mean that the presentation of self in online environments may be carefully managed in line with Goffman’s contention that performers “tighten their front when among persons who are new to them” (1956, p. 142). Consequently, the audience may be imagined as its “most sensitive members” (Marwick & boyd, 2011a, p. 125) with individuals crafting “polysemic” (Papacharissi, 2012) or “lowest common denominator” (Hogan, 2010) presentations of self suitable to multiple audience types.

Context collapse is negotiated through impression management and the monitoring of context. Various affordances in both linguistic (public comments, private messages) and nonlinguistic forms (likes, shares, follows, reactions) present ways for layers of meaning to flow between the performer and the audience. This allows the actor to be deeply involved in impression management as can be achieved by monitoring statistics pages and experimenting with different performances. From her study of the social networking site Twitter, Papacharissi (2012) contends that play is a commonly applied performance strategy online as users manipulate grammar or literary conventions as a means of managing audience tension (see also boyd, 2014). Microcelebrity, as previously discussed in Chapter 6, is another broader performance strategy whereby audience attention is managed as per the tenets of celebrity culture such as via the strategic disclosure of personal information and interaction with fans (Senft, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2011b; Marwick, 2015).

From this discussion of performance across multiple contexts we see that individuals within a common society have shared protocols for performing in a social situation, that these rules may be challenged by unfamiliar situations and performance adapted as within travel, and, that new kinds of social institutions and environments, like social media, can produce wholly new contexts for performing social interaction and self-presentation. The next section charts how connected travellers’ narrative self-presentation is constructed from physical experience and the effect this storytelling process has on the journey.

7.4 A Model for Tourists’ Digital Photography

Photography has a long history within tourism that draws upon other visual methods of recounting the journey such as painting and sketching (Robinson & Picard, 2009, pp. 1-5; see also Sontag, 1977). It is owing to this venerable history, as well as the creative negotiations

present within the practice of photography itself, that this activity has been used as a lens to investigate how tourists do tourism. Indeed, tourist photography allows insight into a type of double performance, both of what physical behaviours tourists employ on site and also of how tourism is imagined and utilised by tourists in the construction of self i.e., the meanings presented in tourist photographs.

In terms of existing literature, studies of tourist photography contributed much of the thrust to the early performance turn (Bærenholdt et al., 2004; Crang 1997, 1999; Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Larsen, 2005, 2006b). As the performance turn itself matured and gained acceptance, more recent studies have utilised photography as a standpoint to delve further into the ways tourists construct and experiment with identity through tourism (Belk & Yeh, 2011; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010; Larsen, 2008b, 2013; Noy, 2014; Scarles, 2009, 2013; Stylianaou-Lambert, 2012; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Saliently, the division between these two bodies of research does also broadly mirror the shift from analogue to digital cameras as the chosen technology for tourist photography. As the investigative focus moves deeper into the practice of digital photography, this necessitates attention toward the role of social media within the photographic process and the use of travel narratives within online self-presentation (Azariah, 2017; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

A recent study by Lo and McKercher (2015) investigated how Cantonese young people captured and shared their travel photographs as well as the role of impression management within the photosharing process. From this, the authors produced a five-stage model through which travel photographs were captured and later shared within personal profiles.

- **Stage 1. Pre-production.** This stage centres around the decision of whether to bring a camera on the trip as part of the tourists' photo strategy. Aide-memoire, relationship maintenance, and impression management were reported as the reasons respondents brought a camera on holiday.
- **Stage 2. On-site production.** This stage encompasses tourists' decisions about when, where, why, and how to click the shutter while travelling. Respondents were classified as either "keen" photographers who invested money in quality equipment and prioritised this activity during their holiday; or "indifferent" photographers who used more generalised equipment and prioritised photography less.
- **Stage 3. Post production—the cutting room floor.** This stage explains the selection process in which tourists assess images from a given period, delete those deemed

unflattering, and select those to keep and share. Impression management is considered the most important structuring factor within the selection process.

- **Stage 4. Post production—editor’s cut and distribution.** This stage explains the process whereby images are shared online. This involves strategically selecting and manipulating images as well as choosing which photos to post to which personal portals. These choices are undertaken in relation to the dynamics of the perceived audience and present travel companions.
- **Stage 5. Critique and reception—post posting dissonance.** This stage involves the tourist monitoring the response to their images on social media platforms. Audience feedback may lead to the alteration or removal of pictures. By monitoring feedback and comparing their own self-presentation with that of others, travellers finetune their photographic style and photosharing strategy suggesting a circular process of travel representation.

Lo and McKercher’s stage-based model for how travel photos are taken and shared to social media provides insight into the process whereby personal meanings are shaped within online travel narratives. By documenting the journey from preparation to online content, the model demonstrates how self-presentation affects travel practice and is reproduced over time through the mechanism of the hermeneutic circle. Furthermore, it suggests that the value an image has when it’s shared determines what is prioritised within travellers’ photographic practice.

However, there are also avenues for improvement to this model. One is that the model is framed within “movie making metaphor[s]” (p. 109) such as “pre and post-production”, “cutting room floor”, and “editor’s cut”, which while related to the theme of storytelling are themselves unspecific to the practice of online self-presentation. There are significant differences between an online travel narrative (or photograph) and a feature film. The latter is an extended professional text produced by a team, while online narratives are frequently short, self-produced texts. This point is supported by Warfield, Cambre and Abidin (2016) who, using the example of the selfie, caution against relying solely on existing media theory to explain social media:

Broadly, if social media is *kind of* similar to ‘old media’ and if selfies are *kind of* similar to photography, then the potential hazard is that we fall into old habits of treating a seemingly new phenomenon from the same old positions. (p. 2)

This is to say that, rather than framing tourists’ online storytelling as a cinematic production as

within the example by Lo and McKercher (2015), it is advantageous to incorporate models and theory which have been developed specifically for online self-presentation in the analysis of this phenomenon. Thus, the next section builds upon and adapts Lo and McKercher’s work to propose a model for the creation of online travel narratives using a contextual background that draws from internet studies and wider sociology.

7.5 A Nonlinear Model for Online Travel Narratives

Drawing on fieldwork data (see Magasic, 2016n), this section presents a model for the creation of online travel narratives. The creation process is extended to online narratives as a whole given that textual, visual, and audiovisual features commonly share space on social media and are uploaded through the same template. The model produced adds new steps and explains a nonlinear creation process. A visual comparison of both models is presented in Figure 7.2. While a representation showing this thesis’ nonlinear model based around a *narrative core*—a fluid structure connecting the different narrative processes—is shown in Figure 7.3.

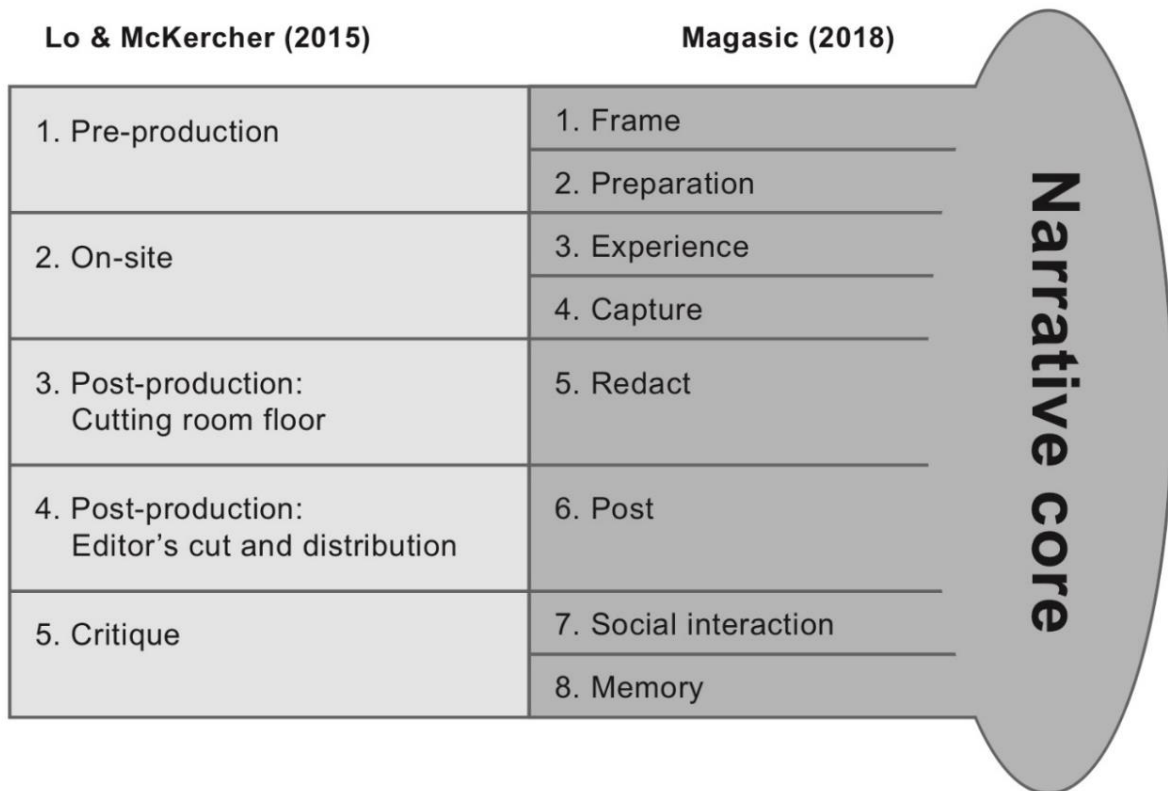


Figure 7.2. A comparison of Lo and McKercher’s (2015) and Magasic’s (2018) models.

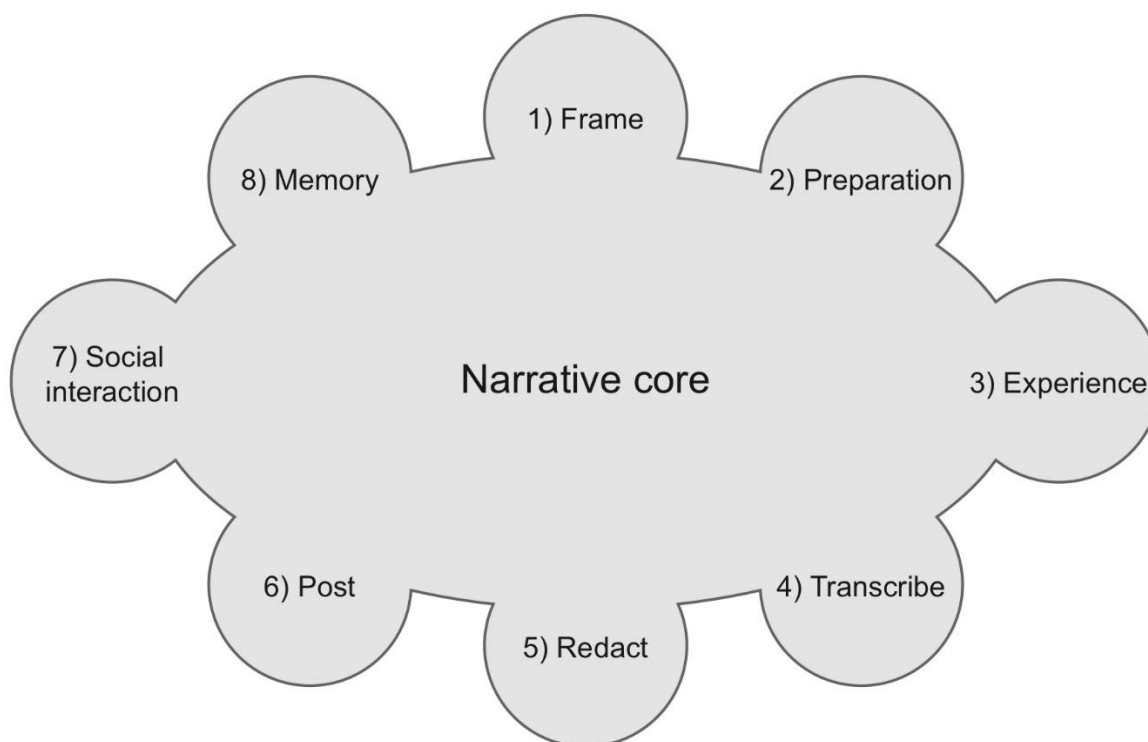


Figure 7.3. A nonlinear model for recording travel experience.

7.5.1. Frame

The traveller has an aesthetic strategy for storytelling in mind before the journey starts. It is argued that the narrative frame of connected tourists is the selfie gaze, which shapes how they understand and eventually perceive the visited landscape. The author has explained previously that the connected tourist's selfie gaze is constructed through a complex amalgam of elements such as aesthetic and cultural knowledge, technological familiarity and access, the representations consumed prior to travel, and perception of the audience (Section 6.3). Framing is the initial step where the tourist firstly imagines and anticipates, and later, scans and deciphers the landscape to find personally significant content that can be featured within travel narratives. The connection between the selfie gaze and the environment of social media means that the frame is conscious of, if not explicitly oriented toward, the online audience. Framing is moreover influenced by the technological routines of the traveller such as the number and type of active online portals, their posting rhythm, and who they follow, among other factors. This is not to say that travellers will necessarily maintain a single unchanging frame throughout the journey as audience interactions or other experiences may affect the traveller's framing and develop this throughout ongoing travel. In sum, the traveller's frame, and more broadly, the selfie gaze, is a kind of personalised *narrative vision* that helps tourists imagine, identify, and

extract meaningful stories from the landscape using ICTs.

7.5.2 Preparation

The necessity of preparation in terms of packing particular devices was highlighted by Lo and McKercher in their model. However, this largely pertained to packing in advance of the journey rather than the ongoing preparation routines occurring across its lifespan. Such routines are an underappreciated step in sharing travel experience particularly as such practices are undertaken within the ambit of travel and consume time within the journey. In order to record their experiences, travellers must prepare and carry their capture equipment and necessary peripherals; be it a pen and paper, SLR camera, GoPro, smartphone, or accessories like drones and tripods. Throughout the journey, preparation continues through ongoing practices such as charging, updating software, managing previously captured representations and device memory, and maintaining devices (see Section 5.2). Preparation may also include ad hoc activities like testing equipment or downloading certain applications on one's device as may comprise a form of planning for an intended narrative.

Having functioning and appropriate equipment is indeed a vital step through which personally significant narratives are crafted. The equipment the traveller has at hand guides which experiences will be shared and the shape they take as they become online content. In the author's experience, an impressive photograph, or thought noted down in the heat of the moment, can easily provide the catalyst around which an online travel narrative forms. In contrast, a moment that is not recorded in any way may be lost among the many experiences and memories of the day, or the trip. Tourists may not always have the time to prepare sufficiently, or similarly, unexpected outcomes like equipment failure may negate prior planning and this may lead to less than ideal outcomes within the tourist's narrative record, or the absence of recorded narratives altogether (Magasic, 2016i).

7.5.3 Experience

The traveller has embodied experiences in the landscape. It is argued that connected tourism is to some degree perceived and organised in relation to the traveller's ongoing online narrative and its audience. That is to say that the traveller has experiences which are perceived, or filtered, through the selfie gaze (i.e., their personal strategy for travel recording and sharing discussed in Section 7.5.1). The degree to which this narrative filtering occurs relates to the traveller's commitment to recording their journey and the amount of time and energy they are willing to invest in online self-presentation. It can also be argued that connected tourists may

suffer from a type of context collapse as communications from the online audience infiltrate travel potentially complicating the liminal experience (White & White, 2007; Magasic, 2014). This is heightened by the fact that there are multiple kinds of audience such as familiar, expected, and unknown, in addition to the local audience on site.

As technology increasingly forms the normative context for connected tourism, tourists may develop strategies for managing inputs provided by their devices or the audience; effectively normalising these as a dimension of experience. Another method for understanding the insertion of technological, narrative, and audience layers within tourist experience is Crang's (1997; see also Franklin & Crang, 2001) application of the concept of "proprioception" within tourism, where the technologies used by tourists shape the dimensions of experience. Drawing back to the idea of the selfie gaze, it is argued that connected tourists perceive experiences in the context of their online narrative. This mechanism allows tourists to intuitively make sense of and capture relevant content despite the mental and physical stresses of being in an unfamiliar environment.

7.5.4 Capture

The traveller records impressive facets of the landscape. This occurs either through an apparatus—camera, video, pen and paper—or, less concretely, through their memory. This raw material will likely not be uploaded without it being reviewed by the traveller as per the tenets of self-presentation where the tourist constructs a choreographed image of the self in their travel narratives.²⁴ As the majority of material created is revised before publication, tourists have freedom to perform different versions of the self during capture that will ultimately be assessed and critiqued before deciding what to share with others. An example of this process is described as the author recounts the multi-step process of capturing and approving a photograph to accompany a post on his Facebook profile:

...the photo is us holding the van's title just after getting it transferred into our name at the DMV. It's a good photo although, the selfie angle seemed to focus a little too much on us rather than the scene as a whole (i.e., the van, and our trip in America) and I decided to try again. For the second shot I realised that we'd probably need somebody else to take the photo in order to fit the girth of the van and some background in. Thus, we needed to find somewhere picturesque but

²⁴ Emergent forms of live video sharing may challenge this idea of carefully produced and edited personal narratives and are likely valued by the audience for this very candidness. This is not to say, however, that live videos do not contain performance strategy on the part of the author.

also with some people around to hit the shutter for us. It took two days for a suitable place to present itself but driving down the highway I spied a scenic vista point with a few cars scattered around and decided to pull over. We asked a passerby to take a shot of us in front of the view, and then one with us and the van. Unfortunately, these second shots weren't quite right either. Kumi and I were a little shadowed, and the scenery, compared to the rest of what we had been driving through, seemed lacklustre. ... We would have to try again, and this time, not trust a stranger to deliver the shot I imagined. Just down the way a rest area with a nice view presented itself. We pulled over, propped up my camera on my backpack, and took a shot together with the van and mountains in the background. ... after reviewing the photo and deciding it was ok, it was promptly uploaded to my Facebook wall... (Magasic, 2016k)

As demonstrated in the narrative above, within tourist storytelling, and especially within the digital era, there is commonly a number of takes where the tourist can try different poses, angles, camera settings, and other performance strategies. These activities may blend into the redaction stage below. Theorists have explored tourists' camera poses as a form of self-presentation whereby particular messages are expressed in concert with the background of the landscape (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, Chapter 7; Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). It is such that the practice of capture may be thought of as a frontstage where tourists perform for both a local and an imagined audience. Marwick (2015, p. 141) contends that in the era of social media expressive poses and facial expressions, as well as flattering camera angles, are learned by consuming the output of other users. In this way, capture may be thought of as a social or collaborative activity. This idea is in fitting with Haldrup and Larsen's (2010) concept of screen-ness in which the digital camera screen serves as a focal point where teams of tourists review and refine their photographic practice during the consumption of a sight.

7.5.5 Redact

This is a practice where tourists view, select, and edit narratives for publication online. Rather than an external editor, it is the traveller who is in charge of self-editing their personal appearance as it is produced across a variety of platforms. In the author's experience, this practice is typically performed postexperience, often with a cooler, more reflective mindset, in an indoors place like a café or hotel room. However, redaction may also occur on site, during the

experience itself, particularly for narratives shared by smartphone. In its most concrete forms redaction occurs through practices like using editing software such as Adobe Photoshop, applying lighting filters to change the appearance of images, or rereading and amending textual material.

However, rather than simply referring to editing practices such as cropping a photo or redrafting a story as mentioned above, redaction also refers to the process of crafting an online narrative that fits within the frame of the networked self, which is constructed across the tourist's array of profiles. Papacharissi (2012) explains, "redaction enables the gathering and editing of identity traces to form and frame a coherent performance" (p. 1994). In this way, redaction extends into more complex performances of editing such as altering or removing material which has been posted online. This also includes managing relationships with an audience/s by using a "polysemic" voice to address diverse groups simultaneously (Papacharissi, 2012). The practice of redaction has been noted among tourists and appears to follow the tenets of the attention economy (see Section 6.4.1). Here, Kim and Tussyadiah (2013) state, "While presenting their travel stories, tourists who upload photo [*sic*] and edit information in a selective manner potentially will have more social interaction and attention" (pp. 87-88). Indeed, Papacharissi and Easton (2013) argue that "redactional acumen" is a key survival skill through which individuals negotiate their place within online social environments. As a result of the redaction process some material will be recorded and edited but will not be chosen for sharing online.

7.5.6 Posting

Suitable material is uploaded to be shared with the online audience. This practice comprises the process of inputting information through the publication template of a particular platform. It thus includes important strategic decisions about the presentation of the experience for the audience such as which platform(s) to post to, what tags to use in order to disseminate content amongst particular audiences, and what time to post. The process of posting has performative and social aspects to it. As an example, the author recounts how during fieldwork he adapted his blogging routine to compensate for the 14-hour time difference between the travelled-to destination and his home in order to maximise user interaction:

In addition to personal communication on Skype or Facebook, the move across time zones has also altered my blogging routine as I try to hold off posting until I know people at home will be awake. It is a well-known fact that social media

platforms have certain peak periods in which higher numbers of users are online and/or users are more active. ... By posting within these periods one is able to increase the likelihood of other users coming across a post and potentially gain higher numbers of interaction through likes, shares, follows, etc. (Magasic, 2016m)

Furthermore, Azariah (2017, Chapter 6) notes that decisions about posting and tagging add layers of meaning to a narrative that contribute to its overall signification and may support the increased visibility of a particular piece of travel content within online networks (see also Papacharissi, 2012).

As posting is the process whereby media becomes online content, it should also be noted that the mode of internet connectivity available will also influence the form a post has or when it is posted (see Chapter 4). For example, a sporadic connection will only allow very low-quality images to be uploaded, or indeed, prevent images being uploaded at all (Figure 7.4). Finally, there is likely a brief moment of truth before the final click in which the individual decides whether they are comfortable sharing a given story, knowing that it could, potentially, travel far and wide across online networks. Papacharissi (2012) explains this decision in terms of a negotiation between reward and loss stating, “individuals balance social benefits with privacy costs when performing identity and sociality through online media” (p. 1990). Similarly, this negotiation likely influences what, where, and how travellers decide to share.

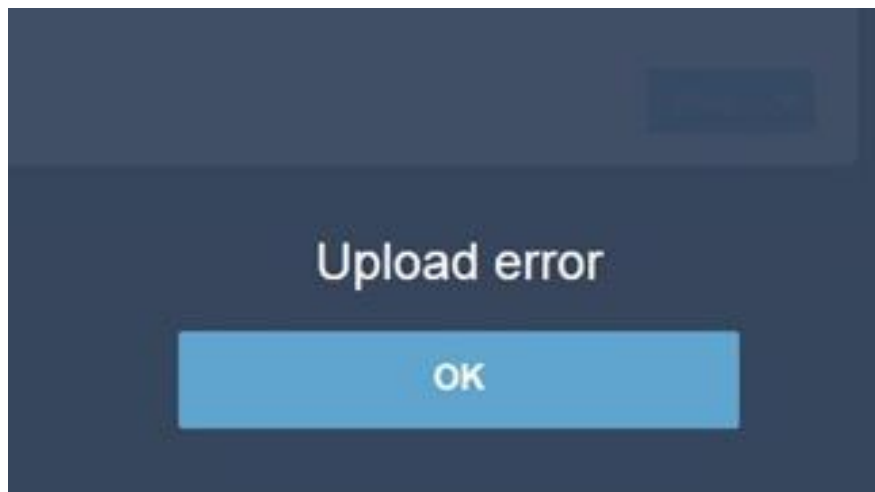


Figure 7.4. “The dreaded upload error screen” (Magasic, 2016i).

7.5.7 Social Interaction

The interactive, “polyphonic” (Bakhtin cited in Azariah, 2017, Chapter 2) format of social media means that the audience may write into travellers’ online narratives. Indeed, as Zappavigna (2016) has shown through her discussion of the genre of “social photography”, it is argued that social media narratives invite the audience to share, and participate in, experiences with the author. The audience’s contribution may come in both qualitative forms such as comments or messages and quantitative forms such as likes, follows, and shares. During internet use, the traveller may monitor audience activity and any social interactions with their profiles. The interactions that occur around uploaded content become part of the narrative itself as they add meaning and context and may extend or reshape the story. Travellers may also find the need to redact content after the interaction that has occurred around it.

This process of social interaction also has a performative aspect as this feedback is looped back into the traveller’s future performances and narratives. Lo and McKercher (2015) explain that “Audience response also seems to affect how people plan to take photographs on future trips or even how to travel” (p. 113). Qualitative feedback can help tourists tailor travel practices by providing suggestions, encouragement, complaints, or tips, which assist in impression management. While quantitative feedback may indicate broader trends, with the overall number of comments, likes, or shares, indicating which posts are successful (Marwick & boyd, 2011a). Here, ongoing connection with shared travel experience through social interaction allows it to be extended or relived over an extended time period.

7.5.8 Memory

This is a step wherein the narrative representation of an experience influences how that event is remembered by the traveller. Online travel narratives function as “mnemonic and symbolic device[s]” (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 315) through which trip events are remembered over time by tourists and others. Tourists’ online storytelling may be understood as a social memory shaping practice. Memories of an event are produced collaboratively between the tourist’s experience, the narrative of the event, and interactions with the audience. Exploring the souvenir DVDs produced for learner divers by dive operators, Merchant (2016) concludes,

Moving images, edited, re-arranged, clipped, saturated and framed in a certain style can become contradictory and inconsistent signifiers of a relation *to* and a version *of* tourist space, that was never realised yet is processually remembered

and shared with others. (p. 806)

The practice of crafting a narrative edifies a particular version of experience, prioritising certain events and neglecting others. As the above quotation highlights, the degree of truth at play here is less important than narratives' privileged position as "beacons of memory" (Scarles, 2009, p. 472) located within the networked self. As the traveller is aware their presentation is a shared presentation, the reception and subsequent feedback become important parts of the event. Through the interactive environment of social media and affordances such as Facebook's "On this Day" which replay posted content, the traveller also becomes an audience to their own performance within the social memorialisation of travel. These memories then come to form part of the basis for the perception of future travel experience. In this way, the mnemonic function of travel narratives supports the idea of the audience-integrated hermeneutic circle identified in Chapter 6.

7.6 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has built on Lo and McKercher's (2015) model in order to deepen an understanding about how tourists create online travel narratives. The model produced utilises the basic sequence identified by Lo and McKercher and supports the contention that tourists' social media narratives comprise a hermeneutic circle. At the same time, the model presented in this chapter differs from that proposed by Lo and McKercher in terms of its method, theoretical background of internet studies and online self-presentation, and structure. The current study has produced a more fluid and granular, media-unspecific model adding three practices to the creation process: frame, redact, and memory. Incorporating these extra processes helps to contextualise this model within theory on online self-presentation.

The practice of redaction is an area where more research can be applied to consider how performance strategies are enacted and how these influence physical travel. Furthermore, behaviours like editing, that demonstrate travellers' creative construction of media products, show that tourists are both gazing (following historical representations and outlines) and performing (approaching situations contingently). Both the current model and Lo and McKercher's are based on monocultural contexts. There are important usage differences to be found amongst particular social and cultural contexts that may be reflected in culturally specific procedures for producing online travel stories. This supposition is supported by Lee and Gretzel's comparative study of American and Korean bloggers, which argues that "bloggers share their stories with their readers in a way that is embedded in their particular culture" (2014,

p. 44; see also Enoch & Grossman, 2010). Future studies should consider these cultural differences by looking at the storytelling processes of different groups of travellers.

Nonetheless, the model presented is useful to future research as it provides a novel method for conceptualising the fluid, yet interwoven, storytelling practices of connected tourists.

Unlike Lo and McKercher's model in which the steps are presented as discrete and bounded processes occurring in a sequential nature, in the current model there is an emphasis on the nonlinear nature of online travel storytelling. This structural difference is explained via the situated research method of the current study and sensitivity to the overlapping nature of different narrative practices. This nonlinear nature is explained using the idea of a narrative core, a fluid space through which all practices pass and within which the narrative process might be expedited, repeated, extinguished, or divided. From this explanation, it can be seen that the narrative process is apt to lapse backward, skip ahead, or that different practices may occur simultaneously. For example, framing may be employed in a preparatory sense as the traveller anticipates the destination and how it might be shared with contacts. However, the tourist's frame is also utilised during the experiential phase wherein it is employed to assist tourists in deciphering the destination. Similarly, redaction occurs before posting but may reappear after social interaction. Regarding capture, it is possible to conceive various diverging scenarios. A traveller might plan to shoot a particular sight with their SLR only to arrive and realise they have forgotten their memory card; they may reassess and use their phone, quit the project altogether, search for a location to purchase an SD card, ask a companion to record the shot for them, or repost somebody else's image later that evening.²⁵ From these examples, it is possible to understand the narrative process as a flow which is fluidly based around eight practices rather than a fixed sequence occurring in linear fashion.

Another salient difference with Lo and McKercher's model is that while their study is concerned primarily with the use of digital cameras, the principle instrument of the present study is the smartphone. In their ethnography of digital photography in Turkey, Haldrup and Larsen (2010, Chapter 7) identify the emerging dynamic of "screen-ness" through which tourists check, edit, and delete images on the digital camera's screen as part of the photographic process on site (see also Introna & Ilharco, 2006). The ability to display images immediately after capture adds a social dynamic to screen-ness as companions are able to check images together and potentially instruct the photographer on how to recompose. With the development of

²⁵ The appropriation of material created by others such as photographs from a companion, purchased from professional photographer (Merchant, 2016), or downloaded from the internet could be further explored by research as an element of touristic self-performance.

smartphones, screens are likely to be carried by all members of a travel party instead of just a designated photographer. For this reason the social dynamics of screen-ness shift; rather than interacting with a single screen and the relatively static information displayed there, tourists may now communicate through and between screens possessed by each individual. In comparison to Haldrup and Larsen's (2010) digital camera screen-ness, this "smartphone screen-ness" has deeper implications for the way place is experienced and how travel material is shared.



Figure 7.5. A tourist's moment of smartphone screen-ness at Waikiki Beach, Hawaii (Author).

As alluded to earlier in Section 7.5.3, one relevant dimension of smartphone screen-ness is a form of context collapse as the online audience is brought into the experience and the tourist may be caught between communicating and experiencing the scene before them. Within their study, Lo and McKercher (2015, p. 114) contend that online self-presentation reconfigures the ideas of front and backstage as tourists react to the context of having simultaneous on-site and (imagined) online audiences. While this was indeed plausible of analogue photography, it is the real-time feedback and increased opportunities for creative control that are salient in the digital era. In the case of smartphones, this is further complicated as the capture device

converges with the online audience (i.e., material is shared through the same device which takes the photograph), challenging the traveller to simultaneously engage with both audience and landscape (Duffy, 2018). In this context, the screen of the smartphone forms a dynamic tactile focal point positioned between the relationships contained within the device and the records of experience. The information that traverses between these contexts and how it looks depends on screen-based interactions. The screen (which is also, in effect, a camera) liquifies the performance arenas of front and backstage into gestures and cognitive processes, which may or may not be decipherable to others present (Figure 7.5). Such performative negotiations and their complex experiential repercussions suggest new modes of touristic storytelling and consumption. With these developments in mind, this chapter advocates for ethnographies exploring how tourists use smartphones during travel. This is important because smartphones combine many tools and services and are emblematic of mobile technology use, social media, and the world of the connected tourist.

As a form of consumption and personal development, travel is inescapably performative. From a Goffmanian perspective, tourists' holiday choices, such as decisions about where to go and what to do there, are strategic choices woven within personal identity construction. Such performances occur not only as physical behaviours but also as narratives that accompany and form part of the journey. These narratives are a form of self-presentation and are told following the virtues of Goffman's (1956) "impression management", that is, utilising feedback from previous performances and ambient information to refine a positivistic presentation strategy. From fieldwork data, this chapter proposed a model for the creation of online travel narratives. The model produced is nonlinear, indicating a contingent cycle of travel representation. The mechanism wherein this is achieved is the narrative core: a fluid structure connecting the different narrative practices. By investigating tourists' self-presentation as the product of a complex, multistep process, this chapter was able to tease out the interplay between narrative and performative processes and the behaviours and decisions employed by connected tourists during storytelling.

Taken together, Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate that travel storytelling is the enactment of the gaze. The traveller's personal decisions about representing the self follow the tenets of the selfie gaze. In a similar way, the selfie gaze is shaped by the tourist's need for social connectedness. As connected tourists share their experiences online we will increasingly see the influence of the attention economy and performance strategies like microcelebrity within tourism. Dinhopf and Gretzel (2016) have highlighted this using the example of selfie stages constructed for tourists. We see that because of the selfie gaze in general and smartphones in

particular, an enhanced frontstage appears as tourists are using devices. This produces the dynamic of “smartphone screen-ness” that allows both social connectivity and context collapse and must be managed by connected tourists. Through the near-instantaneous communication enabled by the smartphone we also witness the development of an audience-integrated hermeneutic circle wherein representations are constructed and memorialised socially. Drawing back to Chapter 6, we see that the sharing of travel experience is more competitive than collaborative. The reason for this is that online travel narratives allow capital that is accessed through the attention economy of social media. As travel is harnessed as a stage, we might realise this is not coincidental but rather a purposeful strategy in which a location and/or situation is shared with specific reasons and connotations in mind. From here, Part III of this thesis will be structured thematically around the idea of place in order to investigate how the meanings contained with tourist landscapes are appropriated and transformed through the cultural practices of connected tourism.

Chapter 8. To Stand on a Giant Tongue and Address the World: Stories of Self-Transformation in Place @ Trolltunga

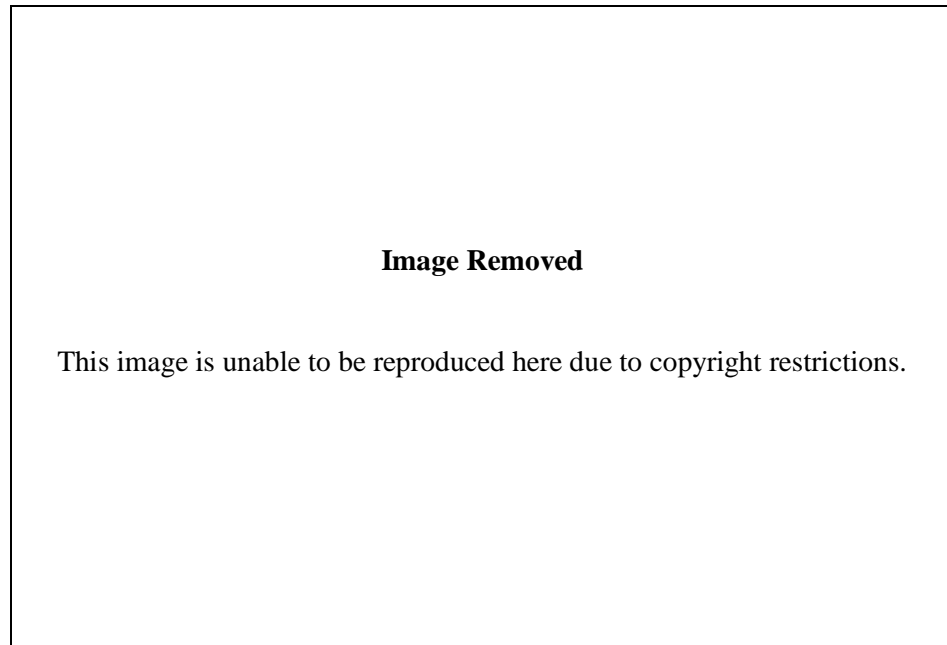


Figure 8.1. The rock ledge at Trolltunga. (Trolltunga Active, n.d.)

The process of self-transformation—the evolution of personal identity, often as the result of overcoming struggle or adversity—is frequently considered an inherent aspect of tourism (Adler, 1989b; Blanton, 2002; Desforges, 2000; Noy, 2004; Lean et al., 2014; Lean, 2016). The basis for this connection lies in the idea of gaining knowledge through contact with *other* peoples, cultures, and places. Over time, the idea of travel as self-growth has become embedded within the sociocultural tradition of tourism based on meanings established within classic literature, social practice, and the marketing strategies of tourism organisations. As modern tourism has developed it has structured itself around touristic destinations, which, like branded products, claim to offer certain qualities to the tourist such as sunshine, exoticism, culture, or relaxation (de Botton, 2002, Chapter 1). These qualities reference not only the implicit characteristics of a place but also speak to the wider process of self-transformation wherein a destination stands for the kind of person the tourist wishes to become.

As the setting for experiences of self-transformation, tourist places are interwoven into the life stories, relationships, and fantasies of tourists (Larsen, 2005). As an example, in his book considering the archetypal American tourist destination of the Grand Canyon, Neumann

(2001) explains that despite the rich signification possessed by this famous location, tourists feel compelled to “mak[e] it their own” (p. 11) by developing personally meaningful interpretations of their visit that add significance to their lives. While traditionally tourist sites have been promoted by institutions, in the era of social media representations of place are increasingly transferred directly from tourist to tourist (Munar, 2013). Here, we may see not only the promotional model of tourism challenged but also the development of new understandings about touristic places and experiences as epitomised by consumer-centred services like TripAdvisor. In order to explore these changes, this chapter provides a case study of the touristic site of Trolltunga, Norway, a destination which, while similar to the Grand Canyon in terms of aura and national significance, is distinct in the fact that it rose to prominence through social media rather than being institutionally created.

Trolltunga is a touristic site located in the Odda district in Western Norway. The name of the site means “Troll’s Tongue” in Norwegian as the main attraction is a protruding rock ledge stretching out over a 700m high sheer drop. The site is accessed via a minimum 20km return mountain hike that crosses challenging terrain and is rated in the “expert” category by Visit Norway (Visit Norway, 2018). The main hiking season occurs during the northern hemisphere summer between June and September when the majority of visitation occurs. The site’s popularity can be attributed to the unique photo opportunity provided by the rock ledge. The stage-like nature of the *tongue*, in combination with the incredible natural backdrop supplied by the Norwegian fiord landscape, allows visitors to capture a stunning image posing on the ledge. While formerly a little-known attraction, the circulation of images of Trolltunga on the internet has rapidly raised the profile of this location. In addition to promotion by news agencies and destination marketing organisations (DMOs), it is the sharing of narratives by visiting tourists in particular that has fuelled the ascension of Trolltunga as an attraction. As a result, visitor numbers rose from below 1,000 in 2010 to over 70,000 in 2015 (Fjelltveit, 2016). Owing to this history, Trolltunga may be considered an international tourist destination popularised by social media (Evers, 2016; Odemark, 2016). Thus, a case study of the development of Trolltunga provides insights into how place is constructed in the era of connected tourism and what implications this has for tourist experience.

Another salient component of Trolltunga’s growth being supported by online narratives is that we may track significant milestones in its development on the internet in order to consider the making of place over time. Two levels of analysis are used to explore the creation of Trolltunga as a touristic site. Firstly, a chronological overview of significant events constructed from a variety of sources including material published by DMOs, tourists’ online narratives, and

articles from news agencies—including both tabloid sites such as the *Daily Mail* or *BuzzFeed* and national providers like the BBC or the Norwegian national broadcaster (NRK). Secondly, the development of Trolltunga as an international tourist location is analysed using MacCannell's (1976) model of sight sacralisation, which is applied in order to investigate the effect of different discourses in contributing to the shape of the site. The application of the sight sacralisation model is guided by the contextual background of self-transformation as this was a significant theme that arose within the researcher's fieldnotes regarding Trolltunga (see Magasic, 2017a, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). The narrative trope of self-transformation is a salient theme here because, like place, it is a concept that has been thrown into flux by the integration of ICTs into tourism (Lean, 2012, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how touristic place is constructed in the era of connected tourism. The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, it looks at the ideas of place and virtual place. Next, it explains the narrative trope of self-transformation as a constituent part of contemporary tourism. Following which, it charts the history of tourism at Trolltunga and explores the development of this location using the model of sight sacralisation. Finally, discussion is made regarding the construction of place at Trolltunga and the significance of self-transformation narratives in this process.

8.1 Place and Virtual Place

Place is a complex and multifaceted concept with different meanings in different fields such as geography, politics, or business. For the purposes of this thesis, place is understood as the meanings applied to a particular area through material, cultural, social, or intellectual activities. Given that tourism comprises movement between locations, place is an understandably vital concept in understanding this activity. Despite its association with exploration and liminality, modern tourism is predicated on at least a limited degree of mental familiarity with the destination. Touristic knowledge of place has historically been created through entities such as DMOs, travel agents, guidebooks, and travel writing, which advise tourists on what is to be expected at a destination. Semiotic theories of tourism such as those by MacCannell (1976), and especially Urry (1990), portray touristic texts as shaping the places they feature as the knowledge these texts contain is inscribed onto the location through the repeated practices of tourists within the hermeneutic circle (see Chapter 6).

Addressing tourist placemaking as part of the performance turn, Crang (1999) criticises the semiotic process of “marking out places and objects for special attention, defining the sights to be seen and thus making sights out of sites” (p. 44). Whereas tourist places were formerly

conceptualised as being constructed by institutional entities, scholarship increasingly recognises tourists as not only visiting and consuming places but also contributing to the meanings held by that location through their individualised interpretations and representations of tourism. In this way, tourists are increasingly seen as placemakers who collectively shape the meaning and form of tourist locations (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010; Larsen, 2006a, 2008a).

Connected tourists' ability to shape place is extended by the forum of social media, which supports the collation of tourist stories in online repositories (Munar, 2013). The interrelationship between the representations of a location shared to social media and tourists' interactions with that place may be further explored using the concept of virtual place. This term has been used to describe the way tourist places may come to embody cultural ideals, such as through the work of institutional actors or via their emplacement in media texts (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1997). Using the background of film tourism, theorists have discussed the way popular Hollywood movies such as *Braveheart* (Edensor, 1997, 2005) and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (Crang, 2011) imbue physical sites with the meanings contained in the text. As shown in these examples, the concept of virtual place draws on place-based stories that extend the meaning of a physical site, and, in the case of tourism, add to its signification as a touristic location.

In this section, virtual place is used to consider the combined online representations of Trolltunga and how these collectively form a place image that can be accessed over the internet. Theorists have discussed how the internet is providing a forum for the creation of virtual place through the agglomeration of tourists' UGC (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Germann Molz, 2012). Taking this a step further to explore the construction of virtual place within social media in practice, Lexhagen, Larson, and Lundberg (2013) explore how community interactions by online fan groups of the Twilight movies add to the place meanings of locations featured within this movie series (see also Månsson, 2011). Using the example of the TripAdvisor page for the Ground Zero site in New York City, Ooi and Munar (2013) explain how tourists' meanings are layered onto the physical site through the practice of writing reviews. The authors demonstrate that over time these reviews come to form the place image for other tourists and mediate their experience with the site.

Here, we may see how social media narratives influence the physical experience of place. This idea will be further explored later in the chapter using the example of Trolltunga. Firstly, however, it is necessary to consider how the historical significance given to journeying shapes the form and meaning of modern-day tourism. The next section explores the significance of the trope of self-transformation within tourism.

8.2 Travel as Self-Transformation

The act of changing locations and/or experiencing the unfamiliar has typically been associated with positive self-change. This may be historically linked to classical travel tales such as *The Odyssey* that describe the hero's journey (Noy, 2004; Larsen, 2008a; Lean et al., 2014) and the formalisation of travel as an educational practice through activities such as the Grand Tour undertaken by the European elite between the 17th and 19th centuries (Adler, 1989a; Brodsky-Porges, 1981; Dann, 1999). Today, these themes are referenced in popular media such as the bestselling book and feature film *Eat, Pray, Love*, the YouTube clip *The Longest Way* (Rehange, 2009), as well as social practices such as backpacking or the gap year, which connect encounters with other cultures, peoples, and places with self-growth. The notion of travel as transformation, while often taken for granted as an implicit characteristic of tourism (Lean et al., 2014), has been explored in terms of its connection to emotion, storytelling, and industry promotion.

Picard (2012) has noted that travel produces an “emotionally heightened social realm” in which the distance from home routines and relationships allows space for travellers to experiment with new practices that “test the boundaries and foundations of their being in the world” (p. 3). While self-transformation might rely upon experience, it is substantiated through the practice of storytelling as experiences are shared with others (Bosangit et al., 2015; Desforges, 2000). Exploring the narratives of Israeli backpackers, Noy (2004) concluded that travellers' self-change is actualised through a three-part process that begins with receiving promotion, draws on experiences, and ends in storytelling. Here, we may see that the process of self-transformation within travel is based not only in the actual experiential dimensions of tourism but also in discursive traditions such as the marketing of tourism as a space for self-growth.

Part of the fixity of the trope of self-transformation within travel can be seen to relate to the tourist industry itself. Lean et al. (2014) explain that the idea of travel as transformation is promoted by the tourism industry as an antidote to disenchantment with modern lifestyles. Following Giddens' (1991, Chapter 7) idea of “life politics”, the activity of travel supports the (re)making of the desired self as the individual uses the liminal space of travel as an opportunity to construct and disseminate self-narratives such as postcards, letters, online posts, and oral travel tales. It is not surprising then that we see travel advertisements featuring starkly exotic images, or pleasurable elements—such as the infamous sun, sea, sand, and sex—that entice the imagination and promise beneficial self-growth achieved through time away (Figures 8.2, 8.3). Such imaginaries are, however, complicated by the development of online communication.

Not only do tourist stories shared on social media poke holes in the romanticised premises of tourism advertising: *the locals aren't friendly, the beach was much more crowded than in the brochure, the weather was terrible* (Scherle & Lessmeister, 2013, p. 98); but also the infiltration of ICTs into travel challenges the project of self-transformation as the experience of liminality becomes more complicated (Jansson, 2002; White & White, 2007).

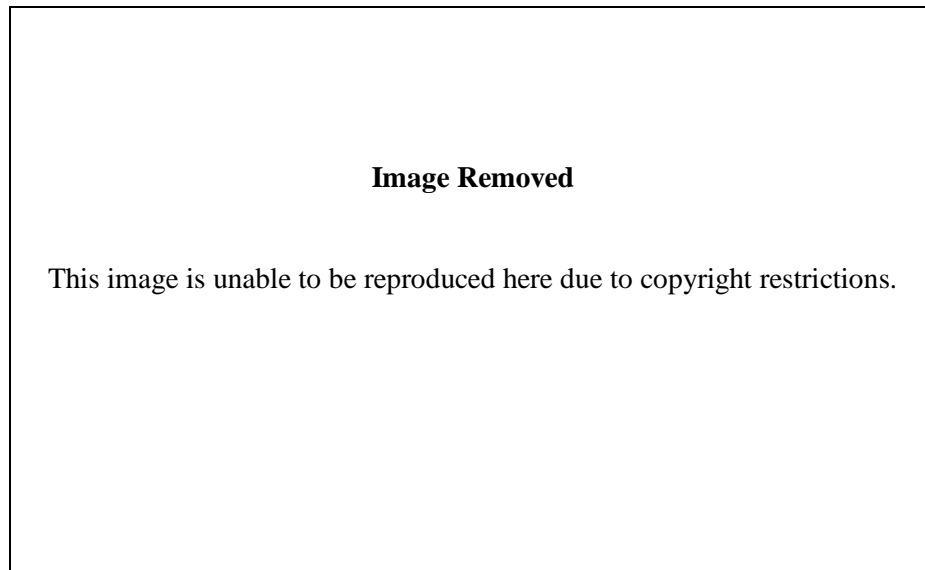


Figure 8.2. A vintage travel advertisement from Qantas airlines featuring exotic cultural imagery (van Zyl, 2015).

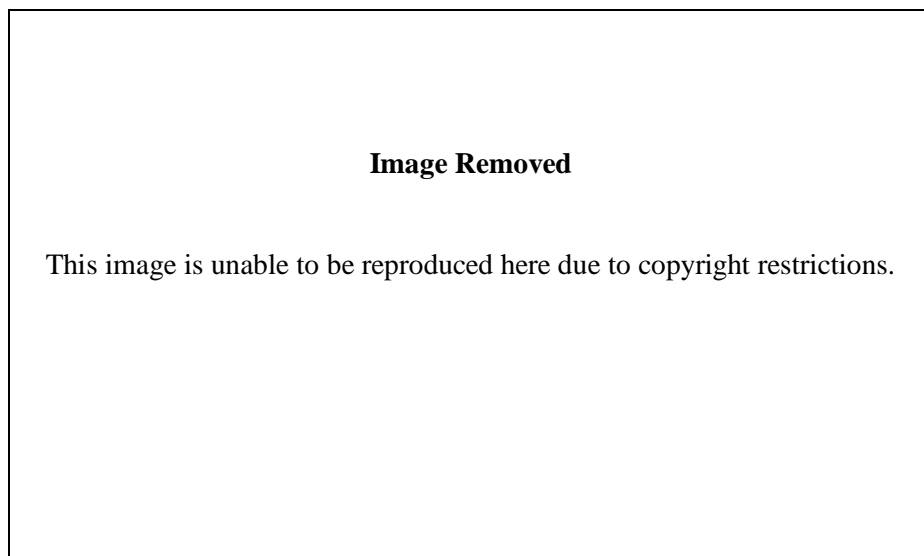


Figure 8.3. A bare-chested Paul Hogan promoting Australian beaches (Traveller.com.au, 2014).

Lean (2012) notes that connected tourists may find it difficult to isolate themselves from elements that remind them of home and the particular normative ways of being these elements connote. Given tourists' ongoing requirements for social connectivity during the journey, Lean (2012) explains, "it is even possible that the character, frequency and intimacy of contact via electronic means will not change during physical travel" (p. 161). From such a situation it can be argued that unlike previously, when self-transformation may have been seen as implicit owing to the disconnection of travel movement, in the era of connected tourism this must be demonstrated by tourists themselves through their storytelling practice.

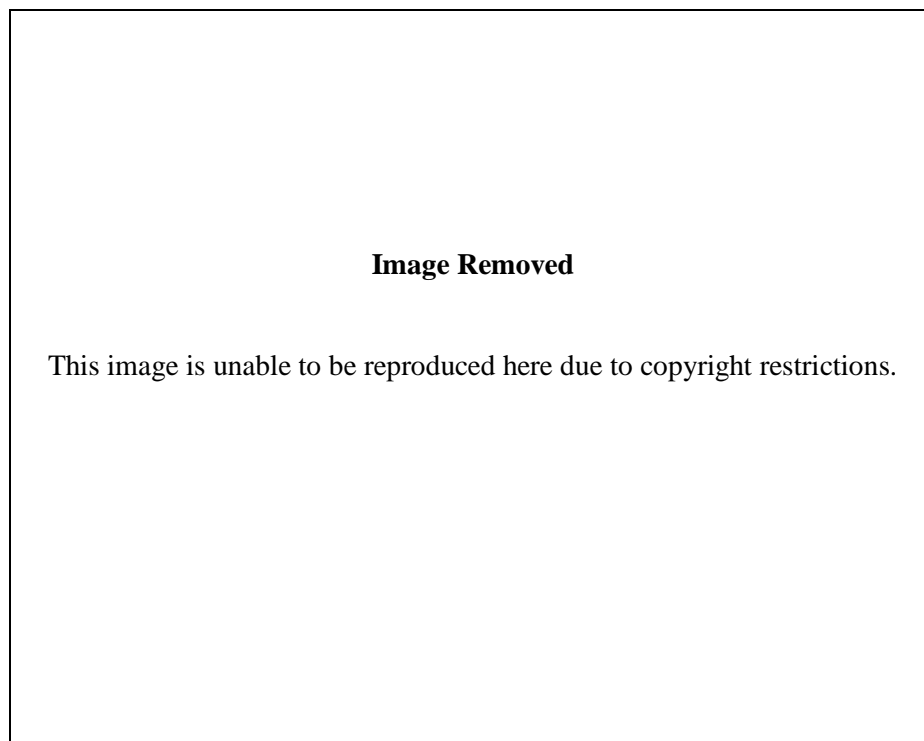


Figure 8.4. Story-themed promotion from a 2013 Visit Arizona campaign (Rainey, n.d.).

Within connected tourism, social connectivity is maintained through the use of ICTs (see Chapter 5). Social media forms a locus where travellers collect contacts and memories and where they may reflect on and develop their travel stories with others (Bosangit et al., 2015; Lean, 2016). Thus, it is through storytelling practice on social media that self-growth is demonstrated and proven through the quality of tourist narratives. The tourist industry, while continuing the promotion of travel as a special time-space for self-transformation, now

advertises destinations not as locations that necessarily contain fixed or inherent qualities but rather as fluid backgrounds where the traveller stages their own personalised narratives of self-growth. This is demonstrated in promotional material focussing on destinations as locations for storytelling such as the slogan of Oahu’s Turtle Bay Resort “Breathtaking. Story Making” (see also Figure 8.4) and through a focus on experience in service provision as seen within the Airbnb Experiences and Conrad Hotels 1/3/5 programs.

While the trope of self-transformation remains an integral aspect of connected tourism, the emphasis has shifted to put the burden on the tourist in terms of configuring the content and persuasiveness of self-transformation narratives. Furthermore, the changing nature of tourist promotion, experience, and storytelling are intrinsically related to changes in tourist place and consumption. The next section will provide a historical overview of the tourist attraction of Trolltunga in order to demonstrate the role played by social media in the development of this site. Key events in the develop of the site are summarised in Table 8.1.

8.3 Trolltunga Chronology

Year	Event
Historical context	An outdoors culture Outdoor activities are supported within Norwegian discourses of <i>friluftsliv</i> , <i>allemannsretten</i> , and <i>fjellvettreglene</i> .
1967	First photograph taken Highlighting the inherent aura of the location, the photographers produced a successful postcard version. An editor refused to publish the image for fear of encouraging dangerous behaviour.
2012	First TripAdvisor review “You want this picture on your wall” In addition to providing details about the hike, the author describes how to take a good photograph on the rock ledge.
2012-2014	Promotion as a social media showpiece TripAdvisor: “22 spectacular places” HuffPost: “The scariest Instagram spot on earth” BuzzFeed: “The 17 most stunning places in the world to take a selfie”

	Fjord Norway: “If you want Facebook ‘likes’ you should go walking in a picture postcard”
2015	Accident Fatal fall of an Australian tourist at the site. DMOs remove photos and text encouraging tourists to perform dangerous stunts.
2016	Rebranding Visit Norway’s #besafie campaign reacts against social media photography. The documentary feature <i>Alarm Trolltunga</i> explores the tension between Norwegian mountain culture and the experience of underprepared tourists. 40 on-site rescues.
2017	A focus on safety DMOs promote safe hiking on websites and through topical content such as YouTube videos. 20 on-site rescues.
2018	#trolltunga 84k Instagram posts (May)/ 110k (September) 1013 TripAdvisor Reviews (May)/ 1186 (September) [5-star rating] 196 Google reviews (May)/ 336 (September) [4.7-star rating] #besafie 596 Instagram posts (May)/ 537 (September)

Table 8.1. A chronology of key milestones in the development of Trolltunga.

In order to appreciate the history and development of Trolltunga, it is necessary to situate the site in the context of the three principles of *allemannsretten*, *friluftsliv*, and *fjellvettreglene*, which are reflective of wider Norwegian culture and values. *Allemannsretten* is an ancient principle that can be simply described as the right to roam, camp, and forage across public and private land. *Friluftsliv* is a philosophical principle that encourages outdoor recreation as part of a healthy life, which was coined by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in 1859 (Gelter, 2000). *Fjellvettreglene* is the Norwegian Mountain Code created by the Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT) and Norwegian Red Cross after 18 people died in the mountains during the Easter holiday of 1967. The code consists of nine guidelines promoting mountain safety and preparedness. Taken collectively, these three principles are interrelated in the

development of Norwegian outdoors culture (Gelter, 2000; Higham et al., 2016) i.e., the responsible use of wilderness areas as part of a healthy lifestyle.

The Norwegian national broadcaster (NRK) reports that the rock ledge at Trolltunga was first photographed by two Norwegian climbers in 1967 (Hauso, 2016). The article provides the story through which the photograph was taken and its afterlife as a successful tourist postcard said to have sold in excess of 10,000 copies. After this time, according to the literature Trolltunga remained a relatively little-known hike for several decades. Visitor numbers reported by the NRK (based on figures from the Norwegian Nature Conservation Agency) indicate that in the years prior to 2010 the attraction saw meagre crowds of only a few hundred visitors annually (Fjelltveit, 2016). However, it was at this time that the fortune of the location would change. A white paper published by the Swiss travel booking software company Trekksoft reports that local DMOs circulated images of Trolltunga in the hope of revitalising the area's ailing economy through tourism (Odemark, 2016). According to the report, the catalyst for Trolltunga's fame came when it was featured on the popular travel website TripAdvisor in 2012 (p. 5).

At this time the first TripAdvisor review can be found with the portentous title "You want this picture on your wall" (live1284, 2012). An alternative reading here is that "Wall" is the name for the original Facebook profile space where users shared pictures and information, which was re-branded as "Timeline" in late 2011. In addition to providing details about the hike itself, the review outlined the most appropriate colours to wear in order to achieve a striking picture. The online promotion continued shortly after as Trolltunga was proclaimed the "scariest Instagram spot on earth" by the internet tabloid *HuffPost* in 2013 (Strutner, 2013) and was featured as number one in *BuzzFeed's* compilation "The 17 most stunning places in the world to take a selfie" (Zarrell, 2014). In these resources, we see a dominant promotional discourse featuring Trolltunga as a social media showpiece, that is, portraying it not just as a scenic spot but as a location that can attract attention on social media. With this background in place, Trolltunga's popularisation as a tourist attraction was fuelled by the online narratives shared by the increasing numbers of visitors (Evers, 2016; Odemark, 2016). During this time, the number of yearly visitors to Trolltunga quickly rose from less than 1000 in 2010 to 70,000 in 2015 (Fjelltveit, 2016).

As visitor numbers increased, an event occurred that would further push Trolltunga into the international spotlight and, also, change the signification of the site. In the summer of 2015, an Australian exchange student fell from an area close to the rock ledge resulting in the first recorded fatality at the site. Particularly in the tabloid press, this incident was widely reported as photography-related serving to situate Trolltunga with the context of dangerous selfies and

general selfie-mania in vogue at the time (see Senft & Baym, 2015, for an overview of the development of selfie culture).

Such a view, while perhaps hyperbolic in reality, was at the same time justified by the actions of DMOs and the way they promoted Trolltunga. Norway-based internet scholar Jill Walker Rettberg shows how promotion by the DMO Fjord Norway directly connected Trolltunga's unique aura with social media attention using text like "If you want to get lots of likes on Facebook then you should go walking in a picture postcard" as well as photographs of travellers performing impressive stunts on the ledge (Fjord Norway cited in Rettberg, 2015). After the incident, Norway's national DMO Visit Norway is reported to have taken down photographs of tourists performing stunts from its site in order to promote a more safety-oriented message (The local, 2015). Here, we may see the accident as a catalyst toward an overall rebranding of Trolltunga by DMOs toward a more safety-conscious image (Odemark, 2016, p. 7).

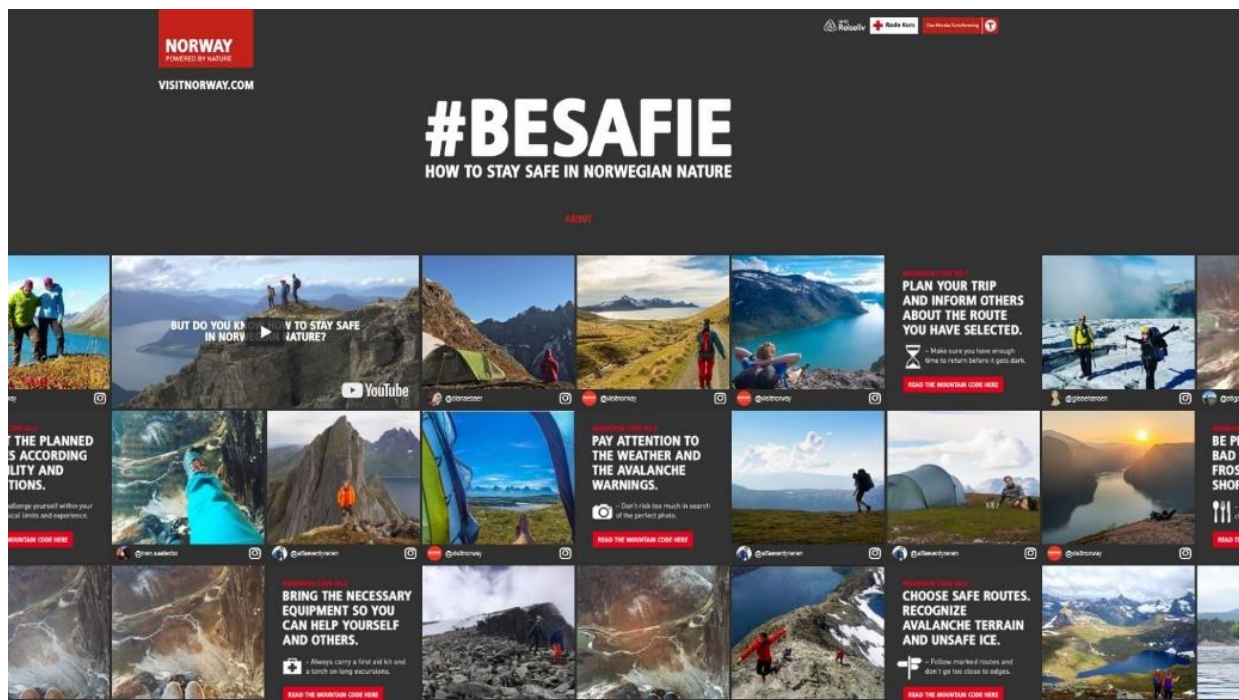


Figure 8.5. Visit Norway's #besafie campaign homepage (Visit Norway, n.d.).

In 2016, Visit Norway launched the #besafie campaign focussing on mountain preparedness and safe photography. On the campaign homepage, approved UGC from Instagram is juxtaposed with the nine tenets from the Norwegian Mountain Code in order to create an image of safe social media photography. By engaging with the discourse of the selfie

and attempting to reengineer this with a focus on safety i.e., the “safie”, the campaign may be seen as a response to the accident at Trolltunga specifically, and the tourism practices promoted within tourists’ UGC more broadly. In its appropriation of tourists’ UGC, the campaign moreover represents a clever manipulation of tourists’ sharing practices designed to encourage the responsible consumption and sharing of place. This signals a recognition of the way touristic culture is increasingly embedded in social media practice. Thus, in a similar (though less impactful) way to the Three campaign introduced in Chapter 1, #besafie reifies the sharing of travel experience as an integral facet of modern tourism.

Safety-oriented promotion took on particular importance with the rapidly increasing number of visitors to Trolltunga. Given both its growing international profile and the rise in on-site rescue operations, Trolltunga became a focus of Norwegian media attention and was featured in the NRK investigative documentary series *Brennpunkt* under the title *Alarm Trolltunga* (NRK, 2016). Focussing on the role the local Red Cross play in assisting rescues, *Alarm Trolltunga* chronicled several rescue operations during the 2016 season highlighting the way tourists were on many occasions poorly prepared for the harsh mountain environment.²⁶ In 2017, Visit Norway published a series of short YouTube videos entitled “Welcome to the Norwegian Mountains” providing general hiking tips and advice for first-time visitors to popular hikes including Trolltunga (Visit Norway, 2017). These videos focus on the importance of responsible hiking, a message increasingly promoted within online material published by DMOs. The new educational materials and an increased Red Cross presence on site have helped to reduce the number of rescues from 40 in 2016 to 23 in 2017 at the same time as visitor numbers increased to a new annual record of more than 80,000 (Angell & Hauso, 2017).

While relatively brief, Trolltunga’s rise to fame highlights the tensions between the creation of virtual place online and the realities of the physical location. As shown in *Alarm Trolltunga*, the education received by many tourists is incommensurate to the realities of the site. In many cases, tourists’ behaviour demonstrates little knowledge of local cultural traditions such as *fjellvettreglene* that exist in order to mitigate the risks that might be encountered within the Norwegian mountains (Dell, 2017). While DMO-instigated campaigns such as #besalfie show a low-engagement rate, we may see the body of tourist-created material relating to Trolltunga growing steadily on photosharing and review websites (see Table 8.1). From here, the chapter will move on to analyse Trolltunga in light of MacCannell’s (1976) sight sacralisation model in combination with the author’s fieldwork data.

²⁶ See also Kane’s (2012) discussion of the dialectic of environmental danger/social reward in his exploration of mountain climbers’ personal narratives from Mt Everest.

8.4 Sight Sacralisation @ Trolltunga

In his influential text, *The Tourist* (1976, pp. 42-48) MacCannell identifies five steps through which a tourist destination is created: naming, elevation and display, enshrinement, mechanical reproduction, and social reproduction, in a process he called “sight sacralisation”. Referencing the seven wonders of the world, MacCannell explains the way certain locations may be considered as inherently attractive noting that there are many other locations that produce the same effect in a “limited social setting” (p. 44). In order to attract attention, these lesser-known sites require “institutional support” (p. 44). In this way, sight sacralisation may be understood as a social process wherein a particular location is overwritten with a “secondary inscription” (Edensor, 1998, p. 104) that supports its particular aesthetic or historical pedigree and serves to situate it within the bounds of touristic culture as a thing to be visited. With the phrase “institutional support”, MacCannell likely refers to the DMO, a tourism institution whose job it is to attract tourists to a particular country, area, city, or attraction (Pike & Page, 2014).

While MacCannell’s outline focusses mainly on the physical elements present at a tourist site, scholars have used this model in different contexts. For example, Fine and Speer (1985) have looked at sight sacralisation as it is conducted through the spoken narratives of tour guides employed at a historic residence. In another noteworthy example, Jacobsen (1997) applies an extensive historical analysis to the Norwegian tourist attraction of the North Cape. These studies show that while DMOs are a central factor in sight sacralisation, there are other entities such as historical signification, media flows, and the work of private institutions at play too. The analysis presented here shall be one of the first applications of sight sacralisation within the era of social media.

From the chronological overview of Trolltunga provided it is contended that there are three main players who have contributed to the shape of Trolltunga as a tourist destination. These are: (1) the DMOs who produce physical and virtual promotional materials related to the site;²⁷ (2) tourists’ online travel narratives created in a variety of forms such as blog and Instagram posts, TripAdvisor and Google reviews, and videos; and (3) online tabloids, which aim for eye-catching content that can be circulated by readers on social media. The discourses produced by these three entities are discussed alongside fieldwork data using self-transformation as the theoretical background.

²⁷ There are three DMOs involved in the promotion of Trolltunga: Visit Norway, operating at a national level; Fjord Norway, responsible for a number of fjords in Eastern Norway; and Fjord Hardanger, responsible for the Hardanger Fjord region where Trolltunga is located.

8.4.1 Naming

As MacCannell describes it, the naming stage involves the “authentication” of the attraction and its value as an object of touristic curiosity. The process of authentication is achieved on the back of paperwork such as reports “testifying to the object’s aesthetic, historical, monetary, recreational and social values” (p. 44). Using these processes, the stage of naming serves to protect the site from other developments that might threaten its integrity. Providing a more modern take on the naming stage, Robinson explains this as the process through which an attraction develops its “identity or brand” (2013, p. 159). Trolltunga is situated within the “Powered by Nature” brand discourse established by Visit Norway. While a rhetorical framing seeking to capitalise on the rugged natural beauty of Norway as comprising fiords, mountains, islands, and wilderness areas, this brand image does at the same time draw upon local principles such as *allemannsretten*, *fjellvettreglene*, and *friluftsliv*. Indeed, it is owing to these traditions that the site at Trolltunga looks the way it does with limited amenities and a naturalist aesthetic. This is not to say that the area is devoid of human influence as low-profile bridges and cabins have been installed that significantly ease the hike (Figure 8.6; Magasic, 2017d).

The hashtag #trolltunga is used by both DMOs and tourists and functions as a locus for representations shared across social media. In September 2018, #trolltunga on Instagram contained more than 110,000 pieces of content representing the visual image of this site. Similarly, the Trolltunga page on TripAdvisor is a place where tourists can share their experiences and have these ranked collectively producing a simple star rating indicating the overall quality of the site. More than 1,100 travellers have reviewed the attraction culminating in an overall five-star rating. As discussed in the previous section, tabloids have dubbed Trolltunga with several superlative monikers such as “the scariest Instagram spot on earth”, indicating how naming may shift from the DMO to other outlets. For the author, naming was reflected through on-site aesthetic:

The hike is relatively well-amenitied especially given its remote feel. There are frequent signposts, bridges over the worst stream crossings, trail markers and emergency cabins, not to mention the presence of the Norwegian Red Cross on hand at a ranger station and in helicopters. If the site was popularised on social media, these elements undoubtedly add to its accessibility and facilitate the hike and Trolltunga’s growth as a tourist destination. (Magasic, 2017d)

The minimalist aesthetic of the amenities at Trolltunga emphasise Norwegian outdoors culture and Visit Norway’s “Powered by Nature” brand. While nature is tamed to a degree to provide basic infrastructure, it can be considered that the naturalist surroundings at Trolltunga assist in developing tourists’ emotional connection with the hike and strengthen, or validate, the narratives of personal transformation shared from this site. This naturalist aesthetic is also maintained by tourist narratives focussing on pristine and picturesque elements rather than mundane aspects such as crowds (see Pilon, 2016, for a recent example from the Cambodian tourist site, Angkor Wat).



Figure 8.6. Construction of low-profile bridges on the trail to Trolltunga (Author).

8.4.2 Elevation and Framing

These are dual processes that promote the site and enforce its rules. Elevation relates to the “display” of the site, that is, how a particular location is “put on a pedestal” and “opened up for visitation” (MacCannell 1976, p. 44). This includes the way the site is promoted to the wider

public and the dissemination of the particular meanings it contains. The process of elevation necessitates that the site be framed within a boundary that protects and enhances its defining characteristics (p. 44). The process of framing highlights the values associated with a location and also what is excluded from and inappropriate for that location.

From the perspective of DMOs, Trolltunga was framed firstly as a social media showpiece and subsequently reframed as a nature hike and sublime Norwegian landscape using promotional material such as the #besafie campaign. In his examination of the Norwegian North Cape, Jacobsen notes the way in which physical exertion helps to elevate an attraction as a rarefied experience (1997, p. 347). Accordingly, tourists' process of elevation comes through sharing stories of peak experience and awe that are framed within the context of the physical effort needed to reach the ledge. Here, we may consider that the hiking experience legitimises the self-transformation message delivered by tourists by contextualising this within the extreme physical exertion necessary to reach the ledge.

Tabloids elevate Trolltunga as an extraordinary experience by focussing on attention-grabbing examples like the Polish man who posed with his deck chair on site (Cuskelly, 2016), or a climber who used wires to hang from the ledge (Dean, 2016). By doing this, they frame Trolltunga as a social curiosity and a space where people are able to gain attention. For the author, elevation came from the grand scale of the scenery present and the especial atmosphere this produced. In his fieldnotes, the author explains that, "the sublime beauty of the surroundings adds an auratic character to the landscape and, inevitably, the photos taken" (Magasic, 2017c). Framing was seen in the explicit context of the online audience referenced through pervasive on-site photographic activities as well as prior knowledge of the site's online presence. Through the collective elevation and framing layers, the environment at Trolltunga is cast as a natural, performative, and auratic tourist landscape, suitable for not only personal enjoyment and wellbeing but also for performing an improved self in light of physical achievement.

8.4.3 Enshrinement

Enshrinement relates to the layering of symbolic elements, how these are arranged, and how this shaping contributes to the meaning of the attraction. By organising the tourist site into a particular sequence of spaces and events, enshrinement guides the "ritual negotiation and performance" (Fine & Sheer, 1985, p. 82) whereby the site is consumed. This process addresses questions of what is front and backstage, as well as the overall impression the site provides to visitors. From the author's experience, there are three primary elements involved

within the enshrinement process at Trolltunga: the hike, the waiting area where tourists line up to take a photo, and the ledge. These can be arranged in different ways to create different versions of the site.

Trolltunga is increasingly promoted as a natural destination by DMOs. For this reason, the ledge is enshrined within the hike as a constituent part of the overall experience. DMOs emphasise responsible hiking and communion with nature, while the waiting area is absent from promotional materials. In tourist narratives, the ledge is generally featured as the frontstage, however, this is often balanced by attention to backstage elements in the form of the hike and the waiting area. While the main element utilised in tourists' self-presentation is the iconic photo of the ledge, tourists may also refer to the arduous conditions during the hike, their camping area, or the crowded conditions at the waiting area as asides to their Trolltunga experience. Indeed, those tourists who do not make it to the tongue may use these peripheral elements as the frontstage of their experience, while others may create guides focussing on the hike and other logistical information so as to inform aspiring visitors.²⁸

Tabloids create a version of the site where its most extreme or titillating versions are in view. They show tourists performing extreme stunts or the crowded conditions present at the waiting area (Maclean, 2017). As such, tabloids include almost no practical or logistical information to assist aspiring visitors. For the author, the orderly system whereby photos are taken enshrined the tongue as the most sacred and important part of the hike. Such a system, the author felt, reflected an ethic of private performance and the context of social media photography:

The naturalisation of the photographic process at this space through the popularisation of the solo or group performance image in both traveller-created (social media) and official (DMOs) imagery creates a space of outwardly-motivated performance. On the day I visited, a lengthy line of travellers wishing to take a photo on the 'stage' formed at the base of the ledge. The travellers take turns occupying the ledge and getting a photo. Other line members may assist in taking photos for those out on the ledge. At midday, the estimated wait time was an hour and a half. (Magasic, 2017d)

²⁸As part of fieldwork preparation, the author searched for online information about the hike at Trolltunga. The most memorable resource was a seven-minute online video by a pair of travel bloggers known as the Tenacious Trekkers (2017). This video documented the duo's day trip to Trolltunga focussing on practical information such as parking, hiking conditions, timeframe, and packing tips.

Through this organised system of self-presentation, the recording of self-narratives becomes an integral aspect of visitation to the site. While not all tourists may make it to the end of the hike, their narratives are constructed in relation to the dominant photo-quest undertaken by the majority of visitors (Magasic, 2017d). Similarly, the large number of rescues on site might be seen to relate to tourists who have been overly ambitious in seeking to reach the ledge for a photo but who have not conserved the energy for the return leg.

8.4.4 Mechanical Reproduction

Mechanical reproduction is the stage in which the site is produced through photographs or other media texts. These texts serve to promote a site by disseminating its image or brand name. At Trolltunga, for DMOs, mechanical reproduction includes the distribution of promotional images, brochures, and videos where tourists may gain information about the site. For tourists, mechanical reproduction occurs by creating and sharing personally meaningful narratives about their experience. These may take many forms including reviews, blog posts, videos, or photographs. While some material is created for personal use, much will be shared online. In her study, Evers (2016, p. 40) found that 83% of visitors to Trolltunga had a strong intention to share their experience on social media shortly after the event. Indeed, the images present within tabloids' extreme representations of Trolltunga are often sourced from tourists' narratives shared on social media.

For the author, as well as through his own practice recording his experiences, the stage of mechanical reproduction was emphasised by the vast variety of photographic equipment such as smartphones, professional quality SLRs, point and shoots, 360-degree cameras, GoPros, drones, tripods, monopods, and selfie sticks witnessed on site; often with the same individual or "team" of tourists (Urry & Larsen, 2011) possessing a variety of different devices (Figure 8.7). The type of photographic device/s possessed by a given tourist likely speaks to their self-presentation strategy (Lo & McKercher, 2015, p.110) as well as the particular forms of capital possessed by that individual (Curtin, 2010). For example, those tourists with SLRs demonstrate a substantial investment of economic, and perhaps cultural, capital which may be reinforced through behavioural practices such as time spent capturing professional quality images on site (see Chapter 9). Additionally, the author noted the presence of props such as flags, personally significant items, and special outfits, which stood out during the hike given the survivalist ethic of most clothing and equipment and that were likely utilised within visual narratives (Magasic, 2017c; see also Hyde & Olesen, 2011). The presence of both diverse photographic equipment and personal props speaks to tourists' desire to capture unique and

personalised narratives of their experience. Such practice arguably highlights the importance of anchoring self-transformation narratives in individualised representations that stand out from the body of existing texts in some way.



Figure 8.7. Tourists posing for a drone photograph during the Trolltunga hike (Author).

8.4.5 Social Reproduction

This is the stage where wider social narratives are constructed about the site over time. These include discourses, traditions, or cultures that serve to widen and perpetuate its meaning. As an example, MacCannell (1976) explains that over time “groups, cities, and regions begin to name themselves after famous attractions” (p. 45). In the case of Trolltunga, this can be seen as hotels, restaurants, and other businesses in the nearby town of Odda appropriate the Trolltunga name (Figure 8.8). For DMOs, social reproduction involves connecting Trolltunga with broader issues in Norway such as through the #besafie campaign or videos instructing tourists in Norwegian outdoors culture. For tourists, this stage is realised by producing a corpus of knowledge on Trolltunga seen in the growing bodies of material on Instagram, TripAdvisor, and YouTube. These materials assist others to anticipate and plan for the experience in advance. Tabloids situate Trolltunga in the context of social media (consider the recent headline “A 27-kilometre hike for likes” by Bauman, 2017) and selfies more broadly. They also put it in the context of “click bait”, where an arousing headline draws readers into a story perhaps

capitalising on prior knowledge (Blom & Hansen, 2015). For the author, social reproduction came as he noticed the iconic image from Trolltunga at different points throughout the trip:

From my experiences, it did seem that the rock ledge at Trolltunga was the current star of Norwegian tourism. Its image kept popping up throughout the trip: on postcards and brochures, a glossy canvas in the restaurant at our hotel, in a slideshow at the rental car office... Throughout the trip I felt its presence: Something worthwhile, something we should go and do... (Magasic, 2017b)

This exposure, repeated across different sites and contexts as it were, made the attraction seem like an important location in the country, and ultimately a symbol for Norwegianness itself.²⁹ In this light, the iconic image of Trolltunga could be used as representative text to say, “I’ve done Norway” giving it pertinence and longevity as part of the networked self.



Figure 8.8. A Trolltunga brand jacket for sale at the beginning of the hike (Author).

²⁹ As a comparison, see Yeh (2009) for an investigation of Taiwanese tourists’ consumption of Englishness through tourist photography.

8.5 Discussion and Conclusions

By exploring the sight sacralisation process at Trolltunga we are able to see that in the era of social media touristic locations are constructed polyphonically from contrasting discourses—such as nature, culture, self-presentation, and click bait—that are produced by different social actors: hosts, DMOs, tourists, and news agencies. In Trolltunga's case, what is salient is that the dominant source of place meaning is not an institution but rather tourists themselves. One example can be seen in the framing and elevation stage where DMOs have struggled to preserve a brand image of Norwegian outdoors culture at Trolltunga. This is partly due to choices made by DMOs in contributing to a discourse promoting Trolltunga as a social media showpiece (see Rettberg, 2015), however, it also relates to the attention-grabbing power of social media stories. Tourists' narratives of the iconic cliff, supported and extended by tabloids who thrust select representations into the limelight, have acted as a siren song attracting visitors who are not aware of the challenging accessibility at the site yet who wish to record their own version of the iconic photo on the ledge (see Dell, 2017).

The effect of this discourse of self-presentation is supported by the sheer profusion of narratives produced by tourists, the value these narratives hold, and their ability to influence others as eWOM. We may see two versions of virtual place developed here: one, a vision of Trolltunga as a natural place produced by DMOs since 2015, and the other of Trolltunga as a place for self-presentation produced by tourists and tabloids. While these visions may overlap at times, they sit incongruently creating an unsettled whole in which virtual place does not adequately reflect the physical reality of the site. In this way, the example of Trolltunga highlights the impact of social media created virtual place on physical location, particularly in terms of how virtual place image can grow quickly and influence the perception of physical place. Specifically, at Trolltunga the great photo opportunity available overshadows the site's challenging accessibility and unique cultural heritage. It is worthwhile then to look further at how virtual place is created through tourists' representations of Trolltunga in order to consider what meanings are embedded in these texts.

This chapter has used the theme of self-transformation as a lens to consider how connected tourists interact with, represent, and construct place. As the pervasive social connectivity of ICTs makes online storytelling an ongoing and embedded act within travel, it is argued that tourists prove their self-transformation through their online narratives. This practice is achieved through persuasive and engaging travel stories that are told using the presentational affordances of online space such as about pages, hyperlinks, and comments sections, in addition to the narrative itself (Azariah, 2017, Chapter 3; van Neunen, 2016). Internet studies

theory has described the concept of microcelebrity wherein users apply self-presentation techniques similar to those used by celebrities in order to manage flows of attention (see Section 6.4.2). It is argued that in a travel context, performances of microcelebrity are rhetorically framed within the trope of self-transformation as a means of stimulating online attention. Utilising this trope helps tourists to attract attention by situating their self-performance within an established facet of travel discourse. As an example, in the author's case the journey of self-transformation undertaken at Trolltunga may be seen in the transmutation of travel experience into cultural authority within the author's reflective blog. Here, the author uses fieldwork travel as the basis of his scholarly conviction stating, "Looking back on my experiences at Trolltunga, I am convinced that travel is a vehicle for defining self. This idea is shaped by a variety of intersecting moments witnessed as part of my fieldwork" (Magasic, 2017a). In a broader sense, tourism provides a fruitful location for the "aspirational production" (Marwick, 2013, 2015) of self through the sharing of online narratives given its connotations of liminality and "extraordinary ordinariness" (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p. 24). Such a resonance supports connected tourism as a rarefied time-space for self-creation.

The media items produced at Trolltunga have a potentially long lifespan as showpieces within tourists' online profiles and are valued accordingly. It is as such that recording and sharing experience is prioritised within the touristic process as a kind of social (Germann Molz, 2004; Larsen et al., 2007) and aesthetic work (Duffy & Hund, 2015; Manovich, 2017) undertaken by tourists. This view is supported by the array of photographic equipment and personal props witnessed by the author on site at Trolltunga, which constitute extra effort shouldered by the tourist within the arduous nature of the hike. As a further example, the author recounts his experience meeting two visitors who after lining up for an initial photograph, were willing to spend in excess of an hour lining up again after it became apparent that the first shot, taken by a bystander, while showing them on the ledge, was deemed as being overly zoomed in and not a suitable record of the event. Next, we may consider how tourists' sharing of self-transformation narratives influences place via the hermeneutic circle of tourism.

In the era of social media, theory need be attentive to the way digital activities and representations shape physical place. The sharing of tourist narratives helps to build place but may also complicate a stable or unified place narrative. As seen in the contested place meanings at Trolltunga, the aesthetic lure of the iconic Trolltunga image may overshadow the extreme nature of the physical environment and the preparation necessary to safely visit this location. As tourists seek the fluid experience product increasingly promoted within contemporary tourism and engage in the work of sharing narratives throughout the journey, they

may be less attuned to the characteristics of the physical place they visit and the particular sociocultural competencies needed to navigate these spaces. So far tourism studies has tended to look at virtual place in terms of the meanings created within texts such as books or movies. It is argued that research needs to explore how the creation of virtual place in online media comes to influence the embodied experience of tourists. Given the prominence of representations of travel within social media and the unique textual affordances provided by this environment, a more suitable conceptual framing suggested here is “online place”. This is a characteristically polyvocal version of place created through the collected travel stories and institutional representations shared to the internet.

Through the hermeneutic circle, the construction of online place may influence the place meanings at the physical location. These meanings may be manifest in tourist practice as audiences who consume, and interactively cocreate, online materials visit the site themselves. Regarding Trolltunga, tourists’ narratives of self-transformation imbue the landscape with performative and aspirational meanings as seen in the enshrinement of the rock ledge as a space for private performance. This thesis has already commented upon the presence of an audience-integrated hermeneutic circle based on social media feedback within the experience (Chapter 6). From the analysis presented in this chapter, factors such as the unsettled nature of place at Trolltunga, tourists’ ambivalence toward official DMO strategy, and the increasing profusion of material in online repositories, highlight tourist narratives as the dominant framing device for Trolltunga. This realisation demonstrates the importance of tourists’ narratives and online place within the tourism cycle. Consequently, more research is needed to investigate the degree to which tourists’ narratives operate as the pedagogical material for tourism and also in what ways the online place shaped by tourists’ influences the meaning of physical place and on-site behaviour.

This chapter has provided a case study of Trolltunga using a chronological overview and MacCannell’s sight sacralisation model in order to consider how touristic place is created within connected tourism. The analysis has shown that place at Trolltunga is created polyphonically at the hands of three distinct groups: DMOs, who collaboratively produce a destination brand that is managed in line with social, economic, and cultural concerns; tourists, who use the location as a background for self-transformation narratives; and, tabloids, who aim to shock and titillate the audience with extreme images. While the local Norwegian media, and local community at Trolltunga, are also significant sources of information about the site, it is argued that their role in the site sacralisation process is less pronounced as much of this content is in Norwegian and

fulfils an informational rather than promotional role.³⁰ Trolltunga is a pertinent example case as having risen to fame within connected tourism, it did not have a strong institutional place image prior to the creation of online place. From the analysis, it is argued that tourists' online narratives are the dominant source of place image based on an unsettledness between the performative signification of online place and the experiential reality of physical place as situated within the discourse of Norwegian outdoors culture.

This unsettledness is played out in terms of rescues on site and concerns that tourists ignore local values and culture (Dell, 2017; NRK, 2016). While such outcomes are arguably a by-product of the tourism process at large, in which intercultural exchange is conducted under the guise of leisure, in the era of connected tourism a further extenuating factor is the enactment of social and aesthetic work within the experience itself. As connected tourists must demonstrate their journey of personal self-transformation through online narratives, the production of online place is tied up with the aspirational production of identity and over time physical place may come to take on the values expressed in these performances. From the analysis of the site at Trolltunga, it is argued that the trope of self-transformation is an integral part of tourists' microcelebrity practice that is utilised to stimulate attention. Through the trope of self-transformation, tourists establish a productive relationship with the visited landscape, demonstrate achievement and attract attention based on the discursive traditions of tourism. This thesis argues that storytelling may be conceived of as work performed by connected tourists and a mechanism through which to procure long-lasting value from their experiences. In this way, online travel narratives can be understood as purposeful tellings of lives through the background of place and experience, even if couched within seemingly objective narrative genres such as the review (Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

This chapter has contributed to a small corpus of study investigating how online places influence tourism (Lexhagen et al., 2013; Månsson, 2011; Ooi & Munar, 2013) and has added to these works by being the first to consider the relationship between online place and physical place through a component of on-site fieldwork. This is an increasingly vital area of tourism and more research into the interplay between online and physical place is encouraged. In order to look further into the accrual of value through interactions with tourist places, the next chapter goes on to explore touristic consumption in relation to capital.

³⁰ Further research could explore the degree to which discourse from the local community is present in the shaping of online place (see Ooi & Munar, 2013).

Chapter 9. Capitalising on Tourist Experience: Performing Authenticity in Presentational Places

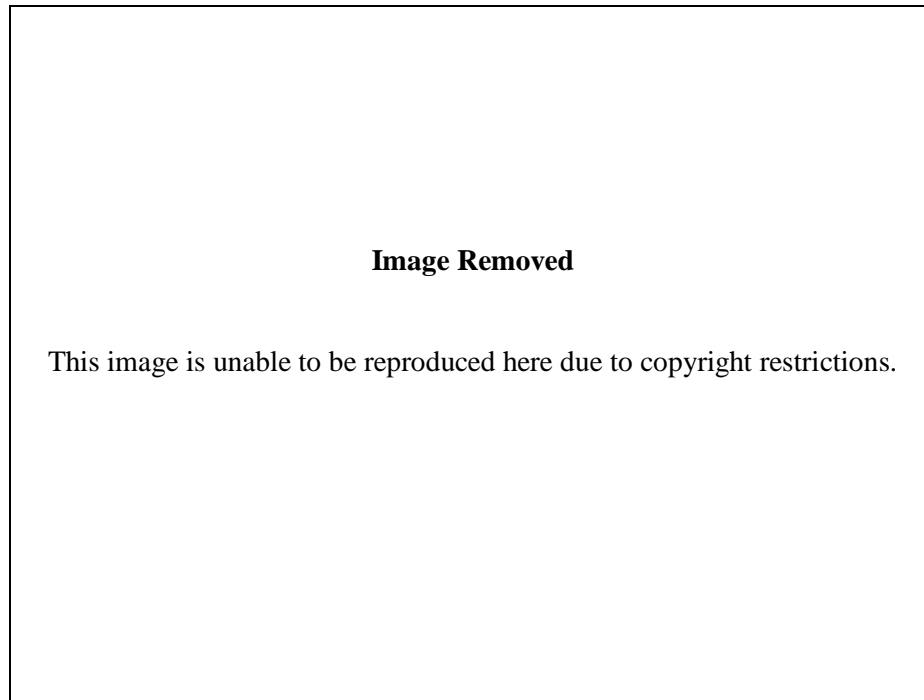


Figure 9.1. A sign directing guests to an “instagenic” attraction at the Hamilton Princess Hotel and Beach Club, Bahamas. (Bratskeir, n.d.)

It may be considered that the practice of travel contains an inherent value that has supported the growth of the tourism industry and that protects the relevance of embodied tourism experiences even in an era when digital technologies make it possible to see, hear, and socially interact with the location of our choosing. The value product inherent to modern tourism has been conceived of within literature as authenticity. For theorists like MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1990), who promoted a semiotic understanding of tourism based on differentiated regions within the landscape, authenticity was conceived of as being constructed by the tourist industry. In this view, authenticity was performed by local hosts and visually consumed by tourists through the act of sightseeing. One example is the Kodak Hula Show, which ran on the island of Oahu between 1937-2002 allowing visitors an opportunity to photograph Hawaiian culture. Reacting against what was understood as the contrived nature of tourism situations and an inordinate focus on the visual consumption of events, recent scholarship has produced new understandings of touristic authenticity based not only in seeing but also in the embodied doing

of experiences (Noy, 2004; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Wang, 1999).

This focus on experience brings new developments in how authenticity is portrayed and achieved within tourism. In a recent definition, Florida (2002, p. 228) defines authenticity as “not generic”. As applied within tourism, we may then consider authenticity as relating to genuine, or what is perceived to be genuine, experiences with local culture, people, or places. Because tourism is essentially a service product, the consumption of the tourist experience is reflective of broader social and cultural trends of the time in which it is situated (Scarles, 2013). In the current era, touristic consumption is bound within and reflective of broader sociocultural trends such as postmodernism, neoliberalism, globalisation, and digitisation, which are interwoven with the penetration of ICTs into global society (Hannam et al., 2014). While authenticity remains as a viable value product within the connected tourist experience, it is, however, necessary to consider how the involvement of ICTs within tourism recalibrate the concept of authenticity, and, in turn, how authenticity is consumed by tourists.

Following the argument of Walter Benjamin (2010), the authenticity of a given entity is related to the abstract experiential concept of aura—the emotional resonance produced by an authentic entity or experience. According to Benjamin, aura may be captured and transported as an image or physical item, however, its power is reduced in proportion to the extent of reproduction and accessibility (see also Berger, 1972; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Increasing global connectivity means that physical items such as souvenirs, which may previously have only been obtainable in proximity to the entity itself, may now be purchased from home using the internet, circulate as secondhand goods, or are reproduced as vintage fashion trends by main street retailers. This accessibility is even more profound within the digitisation of images. On the internet, images may be reproduced and circulated conveniently. Moreover, emergent audiovisual and virtual reality technologies create immersive mediascapes that virtually transport the viewer to a location whilst permitting social interaction. The ubiquitous availability of information, products, and images problematises the idea that authenticity may be sought individually through visual or even embodied consumption of experience as the accessibility of the virtual form makes the physical seem increasingly mundane (Jansson, 2002). Owing to these factors, it can be argued that within connected tourism the authenticity of touristic experience is sought in new ways by tourists (Polson, 2018).

This chapter introduces a nascent trend of “presentational places” in tourism, looking at the way certain attractions, such as Trolltunga, or the Museum of Ice Cream in America, have been popularised based on the self-presentation opportunities they present. This discussion is extended using the artefact of the presentational travel guide, a travel website combining

logistical and cultural information about a site with pointers about social media photography and online self-presentation. This trend in service provisioning is discussed in order to show how the sharing of experience is increasingly a constituent part of touristic consumption (Munar, 2013, p. 51). As tourist experiences are shared online, they are framed within the networked self and utilised in the production of self over time. Viewing tourist experience through these frames of mediatisation and self-construction suggests that the authenticity of a tourist experience is achieved through the presentation of experience to others. Using the theoretical background of capital, which posits the receipt of value in the accomplishment of symbolic action, this chapter will investigate how connected tourists achieve authenticity through the sharing of experience. This discussion is linked back to tourist experience by exploring the ways that sharing influences tourists' interactions with place.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how connected tourists experience authenticity. The structure is as follows. First, the chapter provides an overview of Bourdieu's four forms of capital and their relevance to connected tourists' storytelling within the attention economy. Second, it looks at the rise of presentational places that are effective in generating attention and provides an analysis of the rock ledge at Trolltunga focussing on five structural elements: stage, aura, private performance, audience, and textualisation. Third, the chapter looks at presentational travel guides via the emerging techno-social discourse of instagenic in order to map how presentational places are used to garner particular forms of capital. In the discussion, the chapter deliberates the implications of the ubiquitous sharing of travel experience on touristic consumption and place.

9.1 Bourdieu's Four Forms of Capital

Based on his sociological studies of French and international society, Bourdieu outlined four distinct yet interrelated forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1987; Calhoun, 2006). Bourdieu's purpose in differentiating these varied forms of value was to highlight that individuals are social agents who, while inheriting certain characteristics, may also change their social standing by undertaking particular courses of action such as travel (Bourdieu, 1984). As general principles, Bourdieu explained that capital is achieved through specific procedures, can be transferred from one form to another, and is used to further self-development. A growing body of research has highlighted the way in which travel is used to gain capital, particularly as regards tourists' storytelling (Belk & Yeh, 2011; Crang, 1999; Desforges, 2000; Thurlow & Jaworksi, 2011; Thurnell-Read, 2017). This chapter will expand on this theme by providing extended discussion on Bourdieu's four forms of capital and

the specific ways these are procured through travellers' online storytelling. Employing Bourdieu's theory of capital in relation to connected tourism can help to understand the underlying motivations for tourist actions as relating to one form of capital or another. In addition, analysing the receipt of capital within the field of connected tourism allows Bourdieu's theory to be extended into new areas such as the attention economy.

9.1.1 Economic Capital

Economic capital is the most concrete of the four capital types identified by Bourdieu and relates to money or finance. Besides enabling tourist experiences, there are a limited number of ways connected tourists may gain economic capital through their storytelling. These relate primarily to the opportunity for a successful storyteller to become a professional blogger or influencer (see Chapter 6). Abidin (2016a, 2016b, 2017) explains how the commercial model of the professional blogger, who is paid for producing and disseminating content on their blog, has morphed into the figure of the influencer, who in addition to producing content across one or more platforms, may operate within an influencer marketing agency and participate in organised meet-and-greets with fans. Accordingly, Abidin (2016a) describes how influencers are able to transmute personal narratives disclosing experiences and preferences into financial capital by promoting goods or services within the frame of self-narrative, stating, "Instagram has been creatively appropriated for commercial rewards, primarily through the vehicle of selfies that have been established as latent commodities that recast selfies as (financially) valuable forms of property" (p. 15).

An influencer's reach, comprising of the number of friends, fans, and followers across their aggregated profiles, as well as their ability to stimulate engagement with content, determines the value of their promotion to a prospective company and the amount of financial compensation they are able to receive. In addition to promoting goods and services within personal narratives, further pathways for the receipt of financial capital exist such as the publication of books (Azariah, 2016) or engagement in public speaking (Kane, 2012). Influencer marketing (i.e., partnerships between tourist organisations and influencers) accounts for an increasing percentage of travel marketing budgets (Gretzel, 2017b). Thus, there exists significant opportunity for prolific or well-followed users to generate financial capital from their online storytelling (see Monroe, 2017, for an account of the professional practice of travel influencers in relation to the travel subculture #vanlife).

9.1.2 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is generated using the particular physical characteristics, knowledge, or qualifications that an individual has that are productive to the extent that they are in demand by wider society. In his essay “The Forms of Capital” (1986) Bourdieu outlines three types of cultural capital: “embodied cultural capital”, relating to the physical characteristics of the individual such as physique or hairstyle; “objectified cultural capital”, knowledge that facilitates an individual’s interaction with material items such as knowing how to operate a specialised machine; and “institutionalised cultural capital” that the individual carries in the form of qualifications such as a university degree.

Cultural capital may be accrued through travel storytelling and making particular statements about the self that represent one’s skills, taste, or cultural knowledge. Day Good (2012) has compared the usage of Facebook to keeping a scrapbook in which the individual makes statements about who they are and what they believe in via the arrangement of personal narratives and curated media items signifying personal preference (see also Berger, 1972, p. 30). In this way, the decisions an individual makes about subject or composition within travel narratives represent personal choices indicating dimensions of taste or distinction that may accrue cultural capital. This practice is able to straddle and combine the different forms of cultural capital. A selfie on the beach shows off the travel body, while another image (or potentially the same one) featuring particular local products or items demonstrates “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen, 1899/2013) and/or the employment of cultural knowledge. As an example of how economic capital may be transferred into cultural capital within the sphere of connected tourism, the luxury Conrad Rangali Resort in the Maldives is the first location in the world to offer the service of an “Instagram Butler” who educates guests on the best locations, times, and subjects within the resorts’ grounds for social media photography (Mulvihill, 2017). This service allows guests to tailor and enhance the content of their narratives by drawing upon the objectified cultural capital of an expert.³¹

Finally, it should also be considered that the structural system of social media platforms provides implicit ways for cultural capital to be garnered and displayed. Kuehn (2016) has shown how usage practices, such as regularly contributing to forums, can be a source of cultural capital. Such status may be gleaned or verified by others through information displayed on a profile, such as the number of followers or friends, indicators of contribution, association with high-profile users (Abidin, 2016b), or through institutional capital such as the *blue tick* used

³¹ The “Instagram Butler” may, moreover, be considered a contemporary adaptation of the traditional concierge service which has been remodelled for the era of connected tourism.

by many platforms to authenticate special users such as institutions or celebrities. Highlighting the effect of these markers of capital, Germann Molz (2014) has explained that personal profiles symbolise a user's "digital reputation" and thus act as powerful signifiers of trust and reliability determining the social interactions a user does or does not have within the platform.

9.1.3 Social Capital

Social capital is the benefit received by being a member of a group. This includes not only the social ties formed but also the status or privilege associated with membership in itself. Membership is maintained through ongoing interaction and social work such as communication, exchanging gifts, or performing favours. The era of ICTs brings a shift in how social capital is obtained. Drawing on the theoretical background of mobilities, literature has explained how transport and communications technologies broadly (Larsen et al., 2007) and online social networking services specifically (Acevedo, 2007; Pearce & Rice, 2017), make it more convenient for individuals to sustain kinship ties with dispersed groups of individuals. Using the growing segment of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism, Larsen et al. (2007) contend that travel is an integral way through which social relationships are sustained. This is not, however, only through face-to-face contact but also through experiential narratives shared to social media during travel which provide opportunities for individuals to reconnect (Germann Molz, 2006). In addition to maintaining existing relationships, travel also permits the formation of new relationships as travellers interact with new people, often from intercultural contexts. As an example, Yeh (2009) has explained how using a camera during tourism allows the development of new social relationships that are initiated through the taking or exchange of photographs. Connected tourists may seek to build their social circles by collaborating with fellow travellers as a form of cross promotion or by seeking new audiences using thematic output relating to travel. Finally, as regards online social interactions in particular, interaction, or association with high-profile users in the form of friendship, fandom, or collaboration can assist in the receipt of social capital (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016b).

9.1.4 Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is the benefit received through the act of creation itself. As Bourdieu (1987, p. 14) explains it, symbolic capital "consists in the power to make something exist in the objectified, public, formal state which only previously existed in an implicit state". Symbolic capital can be achieved through connected tourists' storytelling as this creates a certain reality based in the retelling of actions in a particular way. Literature has discussed the period of

homecoming as a special time-space where travel experiences are converted into symbolic capital by telling stories, showing souvenirs, and accentuating the idea of self-change after a period of absence (Desforges, 2000; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Noy, 2007). As discussed in the previous chapter, connected tourism problematizes this process as the individual maintains contact throughout the journey (Lean, 2012, 2016). Connected tourists may develop symbolic capital by consistently sharing narratives, however, this process also entails personal decisions about when, how, and how much to share (Chapter 3; see also Germann Molz & Paris, 2015). Using the example of the touristic subculture of urban explorers, Jansson (2018) explains how the sharing of experience online is accompanied by complex negotiations relating to personal enjoyment and group trust that determine what experiences are shared, where they are published, and how they look.

Within the transfer of symbolic capital, there is an implicit balancing act as the reception of narratives depends on “the extent to which these visions are themselves grounded in reality” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 15). Connected tourists’ acquisition of symbolic capital relates to their ability to put together and manage storytelling elements such as photographs, text, hashtags, and audience comments; and, how believable the overall presentation is. An important skill that “presents the means for capital accumulation” is that of “redaction” in which output is edited to fit the networked self (Papacharissi & Easton, 2013, p. 181). One way to consider the success of an individual in obtaining symbolic capital within social media environments is through the receipt of markers of interaction such as likes, shares, and follows that provide a “quantifiable metric for social status” (Marwick & boyd, 2011a, p. 127).

From this explanation, it can be seen that there are multiple avenues for tourists to generate capital from their online travel storytelling. For all forms of capital discussed, the key factor is the online audience as capital is bestowed either directly by the audience or as a function of audience interactions over time. Within the attention economy, capital is transferred through the audience’s attentiveness to a particular item and is granted using the affordances of social media such as likes, shares, and follows (as well as in other related ways that can be measured by social media platforms such as the time spent engaging with a piece of content). Thus, within the environment of social media, attention is the gateway to capital accumulation. Another significant observation is that the accrual of symbolic capital may be seen as the key factor indicating whether an individual has been successful in creating convincing travel narratives and thus acts as a filter for the successful acquisition of capital overall. As shown through the concept of redaction, the persuasiveness of a given narrative relates to its congruency with the frame of the networked self (see Section 7.5.5).

Aside from redaction, however, this section has not considered what kind of performative strategies are effective for gaining capital within online storytelling. In the context of travel, online narratives are performed not only within the frame of self and platform but also within that of place; meaning that the significations possessed by a particular landscape are used to convey meaning and emotion. Accordingly, we may consider that place is an important discursive element within tourists' self-presentation. Moreover, there exist certain locations that are especially effective in attracting online attention. These "presentational places" will be discussed next followed by an analysis of the rock ledge at Trolltunga in order to consider the features such locations offer to tourists.

9.2 Presentational Places

Presentational places are locations that, owing to a combination of physical and contextual features, are effective in attracting attention on social media. A useful example to introduce the idea of presentational places is *Instagram walls*. These are street art or mural projects that provide a colourful or interesting background for social media photography. The appeal of such locations within connected tourism can be seen in articles such as "Los Angeles' 12 Most Instagram-Worthy Walls" published by the travel guidebook company Fodors (Rae Uy, 2017), or numerous similar lists produced by fashion or travel influencers. Through their efficacy in supporting online self-presentation, these walls are seen as tourist attractions in their own right. As an example, the LA store for the fashion brand Paul Smith was painted an eye-catching *millennial pink* in 2005 and became a presentational place organically as it was featured in social media narratives (Mau, 2017). As distinct from this example, we may see that in many cases private businesses, such as cafés, commission Instagram walls in order to increase patronage. The example of Instagram walls then demonstrates two types of presentational place: those arising organically as the subject of user narratives and those produced in order to be the subject of social media photography. The phenomena of presentational places is not, however, limited to murals or street art. Rather, it extends into the landscape and whichever elements of place are suitable for gathering attention. A recent article published by *Smithsonian Magazine* explains how "Previously ignored bits of urban infrastructure—manhole covers, crosswalks, subway tunnels—become sought-out spots" for the presentation of touristic experience to the online audience (Matchar, 2017).

While it is possible to view presentational places as a fad, mainstream news articles highlighting the effect of visual social media on the design, marketing, and operation of hospitality businesses suggest that presentational places are an enduring feature within modern

tourism (Brown, 2017; Newton, 2017). Perhaps the best indication of the importance of presentational places within connected tourism, however, is the recent rise of “made for Instagram” attractions (Pardes, 2017) like the Museum of Ice Cream and The Museum of Selfies that provide an assortment of themed rooms featuring attractive backgrounds for self-presentation. Indicating a different version of the same principle, the Hongyagu and Zhangjiajie glass-bottom bridges in China were designed with not only a stunning visual experience in mind but also a stunning photo opportunity (Miller, 2017). A further example are natural sites such as Trolltunga and Brazil’s Pedra do Telégrafo, which have grown exponentially in visibility based on the superlative self-presentation opportunities available at these locations.



Figure 9.2. “Share your experience”. A social media-friendly departure gate in Tallinn International Airport, Estonia (Author).

With the aforementioned sites’ rising prominence, we may understand presentational places as a new interpretation of the touristic landscape based in its applicability for self-presentation on social media, which is related to the selfie gaze (Chapter 6). The way

presentational places work is by providing an attractive context for the creation of tourist narratives that focusses attention toward the self (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Gretzel, 2017a; Duffy & Hund, 2015). Such locations may supply further contextual information such as instructions or hashtags that assist visitors in maximising their performative potential (see Figure 9.2). In order to consider the concept of presentational places further, the next section will analyse the composition of place at the rock ledge at Trolltunga based on fieldwork data in order to consider the specific elements that support online self-presentation at this site.

9.3 The Sublime Stage @ Trolltunga

Throughout the author's time in Norway, the image of the rock ledge at Trolltunga appeared as a prominent symbol within a variety of visual materials (see Magasic, 2017c). The rhetorical framing through which the rock ledge was presented is important in establishing its performative significance as a tourist attraction. While images of other famous mountain locations in Norway such as Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen) often include a large crowd of visitors comprising a heterogenous mix of tourists, in contrast Trolltunga was commonly presented as a private scene featuring only a single individual or intimate group of tourists (Figure 9.3). In this sense, Trolltunga is portrayed as a catwalk-like space that may be privately occupied for a short period. This visual discourse, present since the original recorded image of the site (see Hauso, 2016), arguably culminates in the production of Trolltunga as a performative space for the presentation of self. Using the author's fieldnotes, this section identifies and describes five salient place elements present within the rock ledge at Trolltunga in order to explain its effectiveness for not only self-presentation but also the stimulation of online attention. These are: environment, aura, private performance, audience, and textualization (see Magasic, 2017e).

9.3.1 Stage

The rock ledge at Trolltunga is a roughly 20 by 5 metre platform protruding toward the nearby Ringesvaldt Lake that does indeed resemble a giant tongue extended into the crisp mountain air. The size, shape, and apparent stability of the ledge make it possible for visitors to walk out onto it. The ledge's flat, platform-like form supports the ability to perform poses ranging from the (relatively) mundane such as standing, sitting, and yoga positions; to more adventurous stunts such as group jumps, acrobatics, and the elaborate usage of props. The exposure of the ledge allows for these performances to be easily seen and photographed from a panorama of surrounding viewpoints. In Dinhopl and Gretzel's (2016) investigation of selfies

within tourism, the authors explain how attractions may incorporate “social-media worthy stages” (p. 136), which assist tourists’ presentations of self. From the discussion of Trolltunga, we see that the rock ledge supports self-presentation by providing a rarefied focal point from which to deliver personal messages. It would not be an exaggeration to describe this feature as a natural stage. This allusion is solidified by the performances of tourists at the site; perhaps none more so than a pair of Japanese comedians who, microphone and all, performed a truncated stand-up routine on the ledge (Trolltunga Active, 2016). The development of this stage reifies the performative context of Trolltunga and supports the attention-grabbing presentations of self recorded on site. It should also be emphasised here that the unique environmental context adds a powerful dramatic effect to the performances enacted on this stage. This consideration will be explored next through the concept of aura.

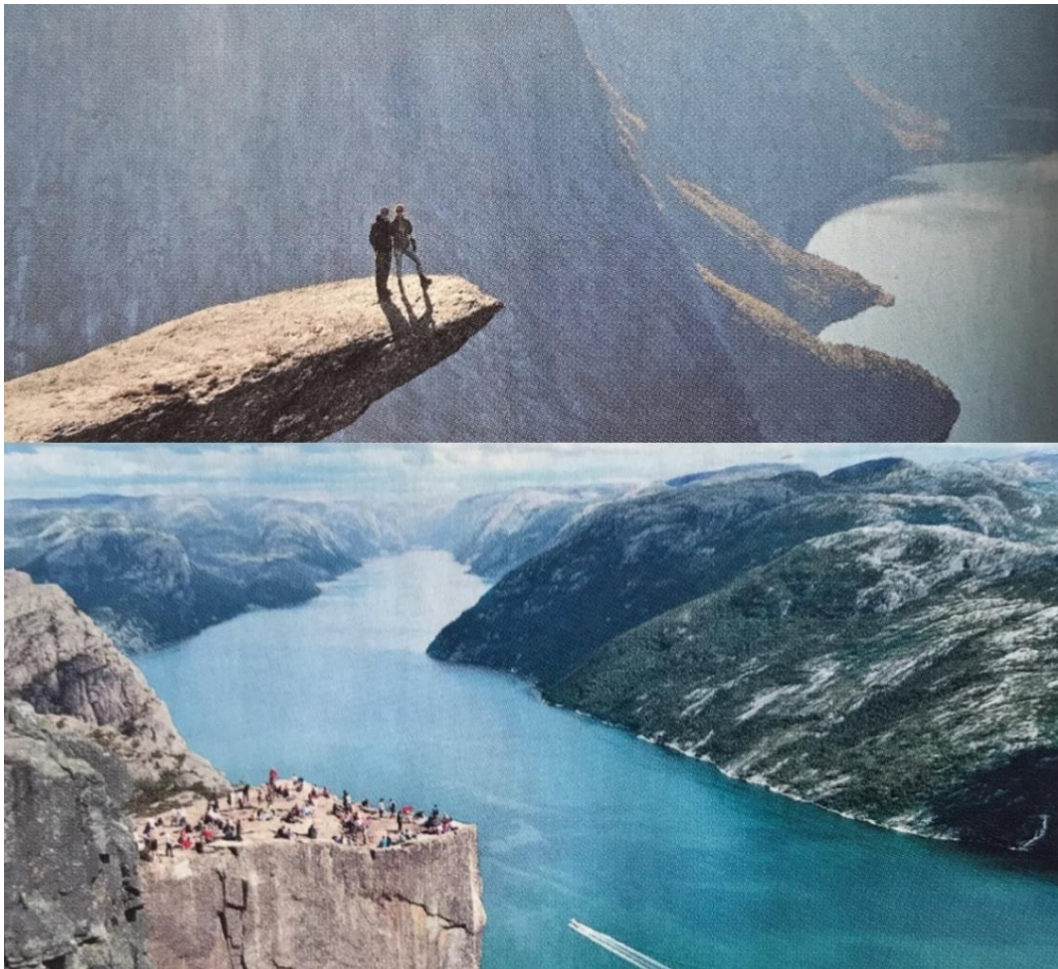


Figure 9.3. Contrasting views of Trolltunga (top) and Preikestolen (bottom) in a Fjord Norway (2017, p.8) brochure.

9.3.2 Aura

Aura is a subjective and abstract phenomenon that is shaped by the, generally positive, attributes of a given thing such as uniqueness, reputation, or impressiveness (Benjamin, 2010). Scholars have discussed the role of aura in contributing to the authenticity of a tourist destination (Rickly-Boyd, 2012) with MacCannell (1976, p. 48) pointing to the Grand Canyon (a site with significant parallels to Trolltunga) as an example of a tourist location with an inherent aura. The natural aura of Trolltunga is testified by the fact that the first recorded photograph of the location taken in 1967 was reproduced as a successful postcard which sold 10,000 copies. For the author, the auratic nature of the site at Trolltunga was experienced in terms of its dramatic scale and the interplay of natural elements. In his fieldnotes, the author explains how the impressive natural formations and complex layering of colours and light create a dramatic visual effect on site (see Magasic, 2017e, 2017f). Apart from hikers and minimalist amenities, no further human elements can be seen. The impressive visual aspect and feeling of wild nature coalesce in a profound sense of wonder and reverence. This emotional response, in combination with the physical exertion needed to visit the ledge, likely contribute to a heightened existential awareness on the part of visitors (de Botton, 2002, Chapter 6). The auratic experience is indeed supported by promotion of the site. Fjord Norway (n.d.) describes the experience of venturing out onto the rock ledge: “Imagine the feeling when standing, perhaps sitting out there at the tip, almost floating between the sky and the water, an almost surreal and truly sensational feeling”. Lastly, in terms of its reproduction on social media, Trolltunga’s unique aura serves to edify its iconicity and proportionate attractiveness as a tourist attraction. The consequences of this mass reproduction within social media for the authenticity of touristic experience will be discussed later in Section 9.5.

9.3.3 Private Performance

The space at Trolltunga has developed implicit rules for tourist conduct based on both environmental factors at the site and the shared goals of tourists. The rapid growth of the site in recent years means that during peak times within the hiking season tourists must line up to access the ledge. This practice is not only safety-oriented, it also ensures that tourists are able to take a private photo that features only chosen participants and does not contain unknown others (see Figure 9.3). The significant demand for photos means that visitors may only have a limited timeframe on the rock ledge in which to conduct photographic performances, or else risk violating the turn-taking rules. Such a process ensures that tourists may engage in a private performance, however, this system arguably creates a certain degree of determinism within

tourists' performances. Here, the private performance ethic in place at Trolltunga is reminiscent of Ingold's (1993) concept of "taskscape" in which tourists respond to the performative cues of those before them creating a ritualised space of social activity.

The fact that some tourists choose to carry props (such as flags or personally significant items) or costumes, despite the 20 or 30 km return hike to the ledge, highlights the explicit nature of the site as a stage for presentations of self. These props are used as signifying elements, in combination with other discursive choices such as camera angle, in order to personalise self-presentation. However, over time, poses, angles, and even props, may be repeated within the online place of Trolltunga meaning that individuals must strive ever harder to distinguish themselves from the crowd and create a personalised performance (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 133). Nonetheless, the culture of private performance is a salient element of place at Trolltunga as it essentially guarantees visitors an opportunity for choreographed performances of self.

9.3.4 Audience

Performances on the rock ledge are commonly viewed by an audience of tourists surrounding the ledge—both those waiting in line and others resting nearby.³² This is a common scenario at touristic sites where posing or other behaviours are regulated by the "disciplinary gaze" of onlookers (Edensor, 2000, 2001). Interestingly, in terms of performance, the ledge is similar to a catwalk on which the tourist or group walks out, takes time to pose for photographs, and returns. The amphitheatre-like arrangement of the cliffs around the rock ledge puts the ledge and tourist in view of the audience mimicking the arrangement and spatial separation of the theatre (Marcus, 2015, p. 37). The present, and by extension, online audience, form an explicit context for the performances taking place on the tongue. This allusion is so strong that in the author's experience, the online audience is palpably interwoven into the physical experience of the site:

On a deeper, metaphorical level, the physical environment: the open space, chill air, elemental quality of the sheer cliffs and exposure of the traveller whilst on the ledge itself could be compared to online social media space and the invisible, potentially dangerous and yet thrilling quality of the internet audience. (Magasic, 2017d)

³² In addition to quasi-institutional actors such as the hiking guides employed by local tourism organisations such as Trolltunga Active.

In this way, the presence of the audience verifies the tourists' self-performance and may assist in defining the persuasiveness and genuineness of the travel narratives produced at this location.

9.3.5 Textualisation

Tourists' performances at Trolltunga are recorded through photography and video and thereafter shared to social media in the form of multimedia narratives. These interrelated practices of on-site and online performance capture and present meanings that collect within the online place of a tourist destination. Over time, the dominant meanings within the online place of Trolltunga are embedded within the physical place of the rock ledge through the actions of tourists. Hjorth and Pink explain how smartphone photography and photosharing "partake in adding social, emotional, psychological, and aesthetic dimensions to a sense of place" (2014, p. 42). The way this information is transferred between virtual and physical place is through the hermeneutic circle of representation.

The rock ledge at Trolltunga may be read as a text as it embodies and reflects the meanings given to it in online narratives (see Rickly, 2017). In the case of Trolltunga, textualisation can be seen in the way the rock ledge has taken upon performative meanings: a system of private performance, Visit Norway's "Powered by Nature" brand image, and other sociocultural discourses such as that of dangerous selfies. In terms of self-presentation, the embeddedness of textual meanings within the site presents hooks that the individual might utilise within their personal narrative in order to assist this in travelling through digital networks and being seen by a wide audience (see Chapter 6). One example of how this happens is the folksonomic categorising system of hashtags through which an individual indicates the dominant themes present in their storytelling as well as other relevant information. Adding hashtags (as well as other forms of metadata such as geotags) allows for both the dispersal of personal narratives and convenient retrieval by other users via practices such as keyword searches. The implication for place is that hashtags and other metadata promote the synthesis of information contained within traveller narratives thereby assisting in the surfacing of dominant trends and emotions (Schwartz & Haleboua, 2015). The textual meanings of a tourist destination may then change fluidly over time supporting the layering of different meanings and potential adaptation of presentation styles and strategies.

The five place elements discussed illustrate the characteristics that make the rock ledge at Trolltunga an effective background for gathering online attention. Though some of these

elements may be considered as inherent to the site itself (such as stage and aura), all are emphasised through the storytelling of connected tourists. With this description of presentational places established, the next section will go on to consider how connected tourists undertake performances of self within tourist places and how travel guides assist this process.

9.4 Presentational Travel Guides

With the rise of presentational places in tourism, we see a new style of presentational travel guide such as the Japanese website Snaplace (www.snaplace.jp)³³ that assist tourists in locating social media-friendly attractions and utilising these places within online self-presentation.³⁴ Presentational travel guides exist in the context of the emerging socio-technical discourse of instagenic.³⁵ While the concept of photogenic has long been an element of tourist attractions (Larsen, 2006a; Sontag, 1977; Urry, 1990), the discourse of instagenic both builds upon and is distinct from this concept as it references the unique properties of social media images that are frequently utilised in ways that are self-presentational and seek to elicit audience engagement (van Dijck, 2008; van House, 2011; Zappavigna, 2016). The explanation provided on the Snaplace website states that while photogenic relates to the capacity of a subject to produce an aesthetically pleasing image (such as of an attractive place or person), instagenic relates to the ability of an image to stimulate attention and social interaction on social media (Snaplace n.d.-e; n.d-f; see also Lewis & Jacobs, 2018).

While it is not the purpose of this chapter to consider how instagenic is different from photogenic or to consider what is or is not instagenic, the concept provides a useful background for investigating the changing nature of touristic consumption. Specifically, the Snaplace guide is based in the Japanese consumer discourse of *instabae*, which while loosely translating as instagenic, also references a consumer trend that grew in Japan over the year 2017. The neologism *instabae* is a portmanteau combining the elements インスタ (insta), shorthand for Instagram, and 映え (bae), a shortened verb form meaning to pleasantly stand out or be eye-catching. As a consumer concept, *instabae* was popularised through social trends such as night pools (Ozaki, 2017) and social media-friendly products and was chosen as one of the Japanese words of the year in 2017. At the level of corporate strategy, *instabae* has been linked to the

³³ In Japanese. Content was translated in two phases using the Google Translate service firstly, and, following which, a native Japanese speaker.

³⁴ See also Colorful for Instagram (<https://colorful-instagram.com>) for another similar example from the Japanese context.

³⁵ Also, instagrammable, *instabae*. It is argued that these terms are related enough to be used interchangeably at a general level.

AISAS (Attention/Interest/Search/Action/Sharing) marketing model produced by the Japanese advertising firm Dentsu (Sano, 2017), which itself builds on the AIDMA (Attention/Interest/Desire/Memory/Action) model developed by the American economist Richard Hall in 1920 (Denstu, 2012).

As its contents, the Snaplace website provides an index of presentational places both within Japan and internationally, supplementary information in the form of curated guides such as “The best murals in Tokyo to take a picture” or “the most instagenic parks”, and guidelines about social media photography and online self-presentation in general. The presentational places featured on the site are grouped within three main categories: Cool, Haha, and Basic, which are separated as either eateries or attractions and can be navigated via keyword search or through a map present on the website.

Cool denotes locations where one can find hip or eye-catching subjects. These locations are reminiscent of Japanese celebrity culture or current consumer trends and encompass places like resorts, architecture, and eateries with showpiece menu items, décor, or Instagram walls (Figure 9.4).



Figure 9.4. Cool locations (Snaplace, n.d.-b).

Haha locations are places with unique, quirky, or subcultural features. These locations offer strange or niche experiences and include unique businesses, venues showcasing regional culture or products, specialty restaurants, and one-of-a-kind tours (Figure 9.5).



Figure 9.5. Haha locations (Snaplace, n.d.-d).

Basic comprises more traditional sightseeing locations such as views, monuments, attractions, and famous restaurants. In contrast to the other categorisations, these are iconic attractions that are likely present within traditional sightseeing guides and well known at a regional, national, or international level (Figure 9.6).



Figure 9.6. Basic locations (Snaplace, n.d.-a).

As its distinguishing feature, the Snaplace travel guide places an explicit focus on self-presentation as an aspect of visitation. The entry for a particular presentational place includes not only typical travel guide contents, such as logistical (address and contact details) and descriptive information, but also notes regarding the best angles and subjects for social media photography at the location. As an example, the entry for the Good Town Bakehouse (Figure 9.7), a Cool attraction located in Tokyo's fashionable Shibuya district, reads:

An American-style café with popular doughnuts. The neon pink wall makes it easy for instagrammers to take an *instabae* photo. They also have waffles, parfait, ice creams, etc., which are all *instabae* and recommended for girls' coffee time.

Below this information, content tagged at the location is provided in the form of Instagram and Twitter feeds (Figure 9.8). This UGC serves to show how popular a location is and/or how it is perceived in the eyes of other visitors. By combining the dictions of a traditional travel guide, self-presentation primer, and vernacular content, the Snaplace travel guide conflates online self-presentation as a constituent element of tourism. That is to say that visiting a particular location creates the expectation that this experience will be shared online. In its location entry for the Good Town Bakehouse we may see that the Snaplace guide connects with some of the elements of presentational place identified earlier:

- Stage is seen in the Instagram wall that provides a performative context.
- Aura is found in terms of the pink neon and showpiece menu items.
- The site is textualised with the genres of the American café and "girls' coffee time".

This description assists the visitor in choreographing their self-presentation. The particular combination of place elements found in the Good Town Bakehouse is suggestive of the young female consumer (who represents the principal Instagram user in Japan). However, the wider supplementary material provided by the site assists tourists in tailoring their performance by explaining the ways particular colours, subjects, or narrative themes may be effectively utilised to garner attention within online self-presentation.



Figure 9.7. Snaplace entry for the Good Town Bakehouse (Snaplace, n.d.-c).

[Address] 1-30-1 Uehara, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0064

[Access] 35 meters from Yoyogi Uehara Station

【Opening Hours】 10:00 - 24:00 no break

【Price】 1,000 - ¥ 1,999

[Eating log page](#)

#goodtownbakehouse
📷 4876



Figure 9.8. Logistical information and UGC shown on the Good Town Bakehouse entry [Google Translate] (Snaplace, n.d.-g).

The place categories proposed by Snaplace should not be seen as discrete or all-encompassing (Trolltunga, for example, could be seen as a Cool or Basic location depending on personal opinion), however, they are useful for investigating how presentational places are performed by tourists. To understand the enactment of tourists' presentational strategies, it is possible to consider the process whereby an experience is converted into attention by comparing the three types of place featured on Snaplace with the three types of Instagram image identified by Manovich (2017). As part of an international project analysing 16 million photographs shared on Instagram between 2012-2016, Manovich designates three types of Instagram image based on content and aesthetic elements such as composition, lighting, and adherence to photographic rules.

- **Casual.** Casual photos portray an experience, mood, person, or event in an informal, often directly self-referential manner. Manovich (2017) explains that within casual images “representative function dominates over aesthetic function” (p. 118). In terms of a historical antecedent, Manovich explains that these images are related to amateur “home mode” photography that developed as cameras became a popular consumer product in the 1950s.
- **Design.** Design photos are polished and aesthetically pleasing photographs that “have been arranged and edited to have a distinct *stylized look*” (p. 67). Design images may be seen to embody elements of modern graphic design as they utilise particular lighting and compositional techniques that reference fashion and editorial photography.
- **Professional.** Professional images are those which most strictly follow photographic rules and conventions such as the rule of thirds. Manovich explains that users who create professional images employ “rules, conventions, and techniques, which they likely learn from either online tutorials, posts, videos or classes” (p. 118). Saliently, “professional” does not necessarily refer to the sale of photographs or the profession of the user but rather the enactment of a particular aesthetic achieved by adhering to established photographic rules of practice.

Similarly to the example of the Snaplace attractions, the three types of Instagram image should be read as fluid markers of practice rather than rigid distinctions in image type. Here, Manovich's simplistic categorisation provides a way of viewing presentational logic on Instagram, that is, the basic systems of self-messages present within different kinds of images. Considering the representational function of tourist photography, Urry and Larsen (2011) explain

how “tourism’s desires and fantasies are located within a palpable visual grammar that looks real and invites identification. This is a seductive mix of reverie, reality and fiction - simultaneous ‘naturalisation’ and ‘fictionalisation’” (p. 176). While Manovich’s image types are not specific to travel, they may be used in relation to tourists’ social media photography and provide a way to unpack the “grammar” of connected tourists’ storytelling whereby particular features and tropes are utilised in self-expressive ways to deliver particular messages.

As an example, Manovich explains that image type often correlates with the subject featured: Landscapes and cityscapes are often used within Professional images while items in “flat lay” style are generally featured in Design images (p. 119). Given this connectivity between subject and aesthetic, it is possible to heuristically map the visitation of a particular type of presentational place (Haha, Cool, Basic) with a deliberate self-presentation strategy on the part of the tourist (Casual, Design, Professional). For example, the Haha presentational place connects with the self-presentation strategy of the Casual image. To take this another step forward, the presentation strategy utilised by the tourist furthermore maps onto a specific form of capital (social, cultural, economic) through the filter of the audience and the granting of symbolic capital in the form of attention (Figure 9.9).

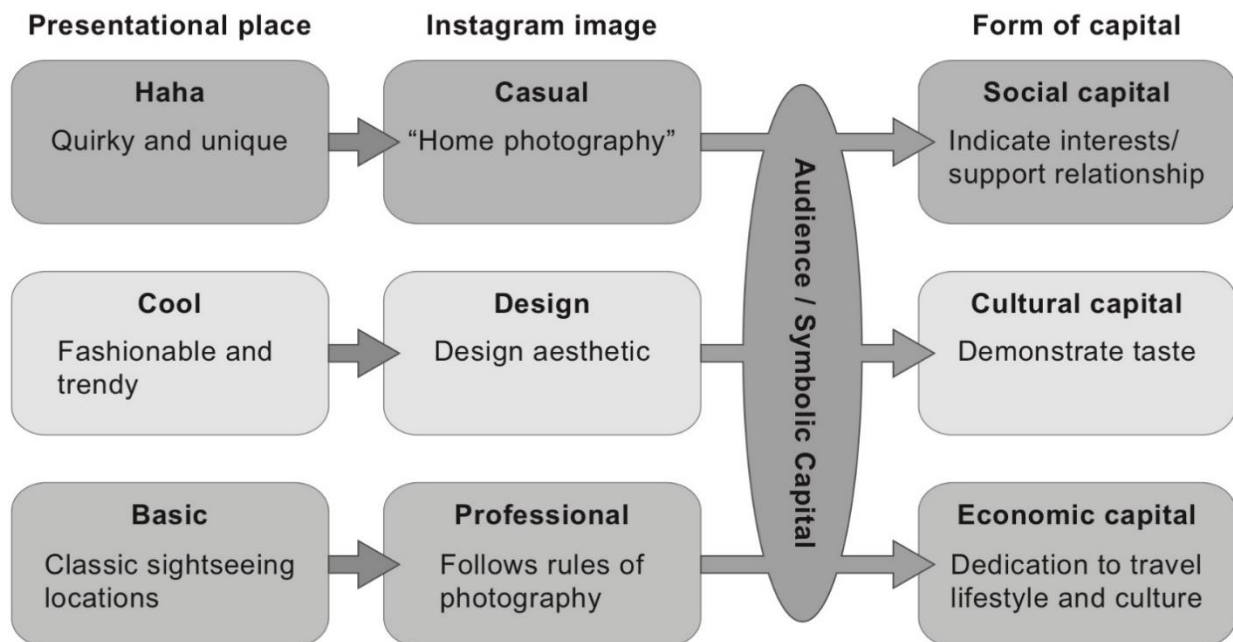


Figure 9.9. Presentational place—performance—capital sequences.

Three sequences are presented that map place to performance strategy and the form of capital that may be received by the tourist. Firstly, the Haha—Casual—Social capital sequence references the fact that Haha attractions are unique locations that may be associated with a particular social group or subculture. Consequently, a representation of such a place may serve to maintain or create social bonds with others who are sympathetic to this interest. Next, the Cool—Design—Cultural capital sequence speaks to the “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen 1899/2013) of associating oneself with a fashionable or interesting location. This kind of place allows the tourist to distinguish between what is new and interesting, and what is mundane, both in terms of the where and the how of presentation. Finally, the Professional—Basic—Economic capital sequence speaks to the necessary expense associated with tourist movement and the purchase of photographic equipment, which are mirrored in a particular photographic aesthetic. Such investments in time and money are a way to demonstrate the dedication of the individual to the practice of travel and authority in this field. This status could thereby lead to paid work as an influencer or otherwise. The figure of the online audience is seen as an essential factor in determining the success of a particular performance through the granting of forms of symbolic capital such as likes, shares, and follows that assist in the gathering of online attention. Returning to Urry and Larsen’s assertion above, the grammar utilised within connected tourists’ storytelling serves to match place backgrounds with specific performance strategies. In light of which, the location chosen by a tourist should, in general, correspond with things the tourist wants to say about him or herself. In this way, we may consider that the amount of capital a tourist may extract from a particular location is dependent on the persuasiveness of their performance within the contours of their networked self and the particular place featured.

9.5 Discussion and Conclusions

The three sequences outlined here are heuristic and intended to indicate the connection between place, self-presentation, and capital at a broad level rather than map out processes of touristic consumption exactly. Whilst it is reductionist to say that the type of attraction determines the presentation style of the tourist, this contention supports the mapping of some of the processes whereby the connected tourist garners capital through online travel storytelling. From the model produced, the persuasiveness of a performance, and, in a related way, its ability to attract attention, are the key determining factors in whether a tourist is able to procure capital from their storytelling. In this light, it is advantageous for tourists to utilise presentation strategies—such as the three shown above—that support the gathering of attention by matching

particular messages and place backgrounds.³⁶ For tourists, being able to decipher which landscape features will support self-presentation relies on cultural competencies and acquired knowledge. Presentational places, however, aid this process by focussing attention within the online place representation of a given location. The examination of the rock ledge at Trolltunga identified five features that may be present in presentational places. As Trolltunga is a superlative example of a presentational place, it may be considered that a minimum of one or more of these features are necessary for a location to become a presentational place. The discourse of presentational travel guides shows how touristic consumption is increasingly focussed around the sharing of personal narratives as a part of authentic experience.

This chapter introduced the idea of social media-friendly locations as a new kind of tourist attraction. These attractions are not, however, an entirely novel idea but may rather be considered as updated (and expanded) versions of photography-related features such as your-face-here wooden signboards or the outlandish models used by tourist attractions such as the infamous Wall Drug roadside attraction in South Dakota.³⁷ In contrast to Benjamin's assertions about mechanical reproduction degrading aura, the authenticity of such attractions is, in fact, based on reproduction. Hence, Franklin and Crang's (2001) explanation of Wall Drug as famous for being "nothing other than a celebrated place" (p. 10). Presentational places have an interesting relationship with authenticity as images and stories of these locations are shared to and reproduced within social media moving quickly within the interconnected cultural circuits of online space.³⁸ Unlike the example of Wall Drug, presentational places are not, however, purely kitschy attractions whose fame is based in the saturation of presence. Despite the constructed nature of many presentational places, they are not fake attractions, or simulacra, either, as they are not a copy or model of something that exists more genuinely in another place or time. Rather, presentational places indicate a new way of consuming authenticity within tourism.

In the context of the rich mediated experience that is increasingly available over the internet, embodied experience is problematised as the site may be consumed online. In light of this, what begins to count is not experiencing a location for oneself but rather the witnessing and appreciation of the experience by others. When myriad images of a site may be accessed at the click of a button, a strategy to preserve authenticity of experience is achieved by personalising

³⁶ It would, of course, be possible for tourists to mix messages and to experiment with hybridised versions of the presentation sequences identified above.

³⁷ This is a highway-side attraction that is famous for using a variety of innovative marketing strategies and bills itself as "one of the world's most well-known tourist attractions" (Wall Drug, 2018).

³⁸ See the example of how UGC featuring Trolltunga was republished by online tabloids to create click-bait news stories about this location in Chapter 8.

one's narrative. This may be performed by putting oneself in the picture (i.e., the selfie), or by making it self-representative in some way, such as contextualising it within a personal narrative or including a personal totem in the photo (Cardell & Douglas, 2018). It may then be argued that connected tourists' relationship with authenticity is configured in relation to the existence and visibility of narratives produced at a location rather than interaction with the site itself. In connected tourism, rather than seeking to consume authenticity through experience, the balance shifts to performing authenticity through personalised narratives. We are led to consider the way in which connected tourism produces a new mode of tourist consumption, one that is concerned not with physical presence and/or ocular consumption of a sight, but in which the consumption of an event is achieved by telling. As opposed to sightseeing, this can be thought of as "sitiesharing" and will be discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

It is important to consider the implications for touristic place related to tourists' performance of authenticity. In the era of social media, tourist texts are produced in greater quantities and take on new meanings as they increasingly involve social communication and microcelebrity presentation strategies. As Gretzel (2017a, p. 121) has shown in her investigation of tourists' selfie-taking practices, tourists' accounts of experience in the landscape (#trolltunga, #fiord, #stunning) are commonly interspersed with lexical elements used within the project of identity construction (#hiker, #challenge, #vegan). This performance strategy can be seen as a way for tourists to manage attention, but the wider consequence is to embed these personal elements within place itself. In this light, places are overwritten with the imaginaries and desires of tourists in the form of UGC (the stories told) and related metadata (hashtags, geodata, likes, or other markers of interaction).

This is not new, since the first explorers travel writing has overwritten place with personal meanings (Zilcosky, 2008). However, regarding the narratives of connected tourists, it is possible to argue that as information about a place accretes in the network, and the sorting algorithms utilised by platforms become more powerful, that place becomes responsive and interactive through the filter of tourists' use of mobile technologies on site. At this point in time Snaplace is a website, yet in the future it could easily become an app that communicates with tourists based around their movement and data flows. Through the use of geolocation information, we may receive place-related notifications such as a special discount code from a nearby location, or be able to unlock special features such as Snapchat's Geofilters. This view of places as lively and responsive allows new ways to consider the self-presentation of tourists. Meyrowitz (1986, p. 2) explains that Goffman's theories of performance are based on the premise of static backgrounds in which the context of social interactions is determined by the

actors present rather than the environment in which they are performed. However, through the responsiveness of locative media, place begins to look less like a background to performance and more like a social actor with agency within this process.

This chapter has looked at the way connected tourists encounter authenticity. Based on the increasing mediatisation of social life including the tourist experience, and the relevance of tourism as a setting for the collection of social and cultural symbols, this chapter has discussed the way authenticity is performed by tourists using the theoretical background of capital. As the internet dilutes uniqueness, authenticity is grasped through the filter of the audience through actions such as attracting the attention of others within social media and gaining the forms of capital available online. The responsiveness of tourist trends to this idea is seen in the themes discussed throughout this thesis such as the popularisation of Trolltunga and the development of social media butlers, stages, and presentational travel guides. The socio-technical discourse of instagenic highlights that sitiesharing is not only constructed by tourists but also by the wider cultural industries, and more importantly, the social media platforms that produce the structure through which certain things become more visible and others less.

Another important observation is the agency of the audience in determining the degree to which an experience may be perceived as authentic. This happens through the granting of symbolic capital in the form of markers of interaction. These indicators may assist a particular piece of content in moving through networks and thus reify this story as something extraordinary and—like Florida’s aforementioned definition of authenticity—“not generic”. Tourists’ narratives are consumed in relation to the frame of the networked self, the platform, and the place that is utilised within. Cultural scripts, such as travel guides, aid performance and assist tourists in enacting presentational strategies that are effective in persuading the audience to interact with a given story. An important distinction to consider is that while attention helps to achieve an appearance of authenticity, personal experiences of authenticity are not necessarily constructed through the receipt of attention or capital (although these responses may certainly help), but rather through the act of sharing in which an event is crystallised within the frame of self. Thus, the act of sharing itself, making an experience visible to others, is the key practice through which authenticity is approached by tourists. This explains why an experience may still be personally satisfying even though it is not socially successful.

This and the previous chapter comprise Part III of this thesis which considers the third research objective: Analyse the factors that shape online self-presentation in the context of travel. From the analysis it is concluded that these factors are self-transformation (Chapter 8) and capital (Chapter 9). Firstly, self-transformation is a key trope within the telling of travel.

Within connected tourism this discursive element is used by tourists as part of the microcelebrity performance in order to manage and stimulate flows of attention. As the tourist experiences the journey through the filter of connectivity, it can be argued that self-transformation must be demonstrated by tourists and in fact becomes like a tool through which social connectivity and obligations are achieved. The tourist describes experiences through the frame of self-development. This explains why even seemingly task-focussed narratives such as the review of a restaurant or hotel may become extended retellings interspersed with references to personal goals and growth. In this way, through the self-representative affordances of social media that allow one to be “producer, director, and star” (Turkle, 1995, p. 26), the trope of self-transformation provides a connective medium for memorialising travel events as personal milestones within the framing of online profiles. Finally, capital may be thought of as the reward inherent to sharing to social media. Capital is then the apparatus through which the abstract presentation of self is converted into something valuable. Tourists’ narratives should be considered in relation to the capital that they may gain through the use of certain narrative strategies. We see that online travel narratives approach specific forms of capital using particular backgrounds and aesthetic choices. While it is the act of sharing itself which authenticates an experience, the staging of self-transformation in ways that maximise persuasiveness allows the traveller to increase the value of an event using the online audience.

This part has shown that both self-transformation and capital are approached by tourists through awareness to the specific qualities of place. Correspondingly, as forming the background for tourists’ narratives, places (such as the rock ledge at Trolltunga) are overwritten with and shaped by tourists’ narratives. This third part of the thesis has tracked the practice of sharing as an emergent way of experiencing tourism and consuming the authenticity of place. Following this logic, the final concluding chapter will discuss the touristic mode of sitiesharing as a way of tying together the key themes addressed within this thesis.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

Coupled with digital photography, social media has changed how we share our holiday experiences. It's all on show. Instantly. Younger generations no longer travel to 'discover' themselves, but to say something about themselves to their social peers. It may even be that these travellers now think about an experience in terms of how they will share it with others. For younger travellers, nothing is real until it is posted and viewed by someone else. Sharing gives truth to travel. (Intercontinental Hotels Group, 2013, p. 28)

The purpose of this thesis has been to produce an embedded portrait of connected tourists and their experience of travel. Responding to a predominant trend of representation-focussed studies, the project reported in this thesis observed and analysed the personal practices through which tourists enact the socio-technical activity of connected tourism. Based in the subjective experience of the author and a hybrid autoethnographic approach, this project espouses a deep view of connected tourism that proffers insights into not only tourists' usage practices and negotiations with technology but also the embedded political structures of ICTs and how these are emplaced within and influence the practice of tourism.

The three parts of this project have each dealt thematically with a different aspect of connected tourism: connectivity, performance, and place. The analysis encompassed within these three parts leads the investigation to a point where it is able to answer the thesis' research question: How does the use of ICTs influence travel experience? From the perspective of the individual, ICT use is increasingly channelled through personal profiles and contributes to the building of the networked self over time within a broader culture of sharing. Consequently, this study has focussed on the storytelling of connected tourists as an exemplary practice through which to consider the wider effect of ICTs within tourism. To support this focus, the project utilised an interdisciplinary approach that investigated the usage and effect of digital technologies using theory from both tourism and internet studies. Such an approach provided a knowledge background that supported the consideration of not only the what, where, and when questions commonly addressed in studies of tourists' ICT use but also the how and why as well. To answer its research question simply, this project contends that ICTs produce a mode of touristic experience and consumption which is centred around social connectivity and the sharing of experience online: sitiesharing.

As this thesis has demonstrated, ICTs both threaten and support what has traditionally

been considered as the predominantly physical endeavour of modern tourism. Internet connectivity challenges the idea that tourist experiences are wholly located in a particular area, seemingly transporting some portion of travellers' cognition to dealing with digital space within a hybridised travel experience. At the same time, the affordances provided by social media provide myriad new ways to extend and enhance experience that deepen the kinds of physical and sensory immersion that happen on site. Following Meyrowitz's (1986) interpretations of Marshall McLuhan's thinking, the integration of ICTs into tourism can be thought of as creating a kind of extrasensory experience of the landscape as illustrated through the ideas of the dual journey (Chapter 5) and selfie gaze (Chapter 6) introduced in this thesis. It is from the basepoint of the experiential concept of connected tourism that this thesis seeks to move beyond the sightseeing paradigm. The logic behind this shift is presented in Chapter 9 of the thesis where it is proposed that tourists experience the authenticity of a location through the sharing of experience with the online audience. The context (and technological means) for this sharing of experience is provided by participatory culture and social media. Amidst the mediatization and simulacra of contemporary life, what authenticates an experience is not action in itself but rather the potential to have this witnessed by others.

The original contribution of this thesis to knowledge has been to produce the interdisciplinary conceptual framework of sitiesharing that explicates the interpolation of ICTs within the travel experience. While grounded in the personal experience of the author, such an investigation necessitates considering not only personal practices but also the wider structuring factors of the tourism industry and, particularly, digital technologies. This has meant looking at not only which ICTs are used, or how usage fits with (or diverges from) theory, but also going deeper to unearth the ways that the embedded structural characteristics of ICTs are manifest within the personal practices of connected tourism.

Such a perspective is not complacent toward the gradual modification of tourist practices as these are spliced with new technologies and networked affordances but rather interrogates these developments to view the divestment and reformation of power relationships between the tourist industry, new players in the form of technology companies, and connected tourists. What might have been seen as the democratisation of tourist power as online platforms put tourists in the driving seat for the ranking and reputation of touristic locations, can also be interpreted through the framing of the attention economy as forms of self and reputation building that still rely on the grand narratives established by the tourist industry such as self-transformation (Chapter 8) and in which power takes a covert appearance in the form of temporary alliances (influencers) or networked flows governed by platforms (algorithms).

An example was shown in the site of Trolltunga and the way the popularisation of this location, while strongly supported by tourists' online narratives, has still produced a destination that may radically diverge from visitor expectation in terms of physical experience. Some explanations for this situation which have arisen throughout the thesis are the techno-political influence of ICTs in general (Chapter 5), the economy and concomitant presentation systems implicit within social media (Chapter 6), the role of impression management in tourists' narrative creation (Chapter 7), the diverse groups involved in the making of online place (Chapter 8), and the implicit capital on offer within tourist experiences (Chapter 9). Such a view highlights that the impact of ICTs on tourist experience is far from simple, however, it demonstrates that the relationships between ICT and tourism may be successfully tracked through the employment of theory regarding online sociality and economy.

This study is one of only a small body of works that combines the fields of tourism and internet studies. In bridging these fields in the interpretation of fieldwork data, the investigation has been able to produce the touristic model of sitiesharing. This term was coined within this investigation in order to propose that tourist experiences are no longer authenticated as physical events, but rather as online narratives shared with others. Sitiesharing emphasises the fact that the use of ICTs is not a supplementary or peripheral element of tourism but rather an integral component that is holistically interwoven within the tourist experience. As an original concept, sitiesharing both draws from and breaks with the idea of sightseeing that has so far dominated examinations of modern tourism. By proposing this new concept, this thesis demonstrates a progression in thinking which suggests that the affordances of ICTs precipitate an ontologically distinct experience of tourism led not only by tourists themselves but by the wider sociocultural milieu. As the concept was produced throughout the thesis as a whole, in order to formally explain sitiesharing it is helpful to recap the results discussed within the body of this investigation.

This thesis situated connected tourism within the theoretical background of Web 2.0 in order to provide a realist view of ICTs as physical and/or political objects that influence the meaning of the tourist experience. An example was provided using the idea of travel connectivity (Chapter 4). While portrayed in technologically optimistic ways (both within mainstream and academic literature) as an idealised form of togetherness; through critical analysis via the concepts of roaming and the digital divide, travel connectivity is revealed to be a heterogenous experience with mixed consequences for tourists. Within this first part, the conclusion is that while ICTs permit engrossing social (and informational) connectivity, these states involve both beneficial and detrimental aspects and are correspondingly negotiated on an

individualised basis. Such a view highlights the mixture of structure and agency present within the experience of connected tourists and supports recent scholarship arguing that tourists both gaze (i.e., perceive tourism in structured ways) and perform (act independently and strategically) (Larsen, 2014b, in press; Larsen & Urry, 2011; Scarles, 2009; Urry & Larsen, 2011, Chapter 8).

Exploring the nature of tourists' negotiation with, and utilisation of, ICTs through the activity of storytelling, Part II of the thesis is framed within the concept of performance. In this part, the integration of ICTs within tourist experience and the negotiations this brings are crystallised around the figure of the online audience. Drawing from the corpus of literature detailing online sociality, this part proposed the idea of the selfie gaze; a self-presentational mode of touristic perception that is filtered through the figure of the audience as the receiver and arbitrator of mediated experiences. In order to contextualise the selfie gaze in terms of practice, this part provides a model for online storytelling highlighting tourists' creative control in capturing and presenting experience within the frame of self and the audience's role in contributing to these performances. In this way, the figure of the audience is referenced not simply as a spectatorial, disembodied context for tourist experience, but rather an agential figure which is, in fact, the engine of the attention economy. The live, multimedia communicational affordances possessed by the audience highlight the increasingly social nature of tourism and yet also the entanglement of tourist experience within (digital) self-construction and the emerging economic and socio-political models of the digital economy.

Part III explores the experience of connected tourism in relation to place. It shows how certain places are able to focus attention and become instagenic and considers the implications of the interweaving of presentational discourses within the sphere of tourism. Using the example of Trolltunga, Part III interrogates the effects of tourists' aggregated digital storytelling using the idea of online place and demonstrates the connection between the online and physical iterations of this tourist site. The trope of self-transformation is identified as the way tourists package experiences and make these interesting within the online performance strategy of microcelebrity; while audience-granted capital is shown as the value mechanism of this process and wider experience. Through the publication and circulation of tourists' mediated experiences, the place of Trolltunga is overwritten with the desires and fantasies contained within these accounts, with the environment of the rock ledge becoming a special ritualised stage for self-presentation. Through this example it is possible to see certain tourist places as stages—presentational places—which have been given a performative context through tourists' online storytelling. This suggests at least a partial redistribution of power away from tourism

institutions as tourists contribute to (or even dominate) place image through the sharing of travel stories. It also evidences the presence of a hermeneutic circle led by tourists' narratives, which itself may be coopted by industry through inchoate promotional strategies such as influencer marketing, as well as being sculpted by the political structures of ICTs such as content-sorting algorithms. This final part of the thesis points to the implicit importance of storytelling for connected tourists as a way of not only generating value from experience through the acquisition of capital, but, moreover, as the method for approaching the illusive quality of touristic authenticity. From here, this chapter will move on to discuss the concept of sitiesharing, how it occurs, the meanings it contains, and possibilities for the future.

Sitiesharing is the consumption of experience through the sharing of online narratives. To explain in more detail, sitiesharing is a recalibration of tourist consumption in which the creation and display of online narratives forms the essential component of touristic visitation. Understanding sitiesharing, both as a socio-technical concept and as an element of lived tourist practice requires the unpacking of its two lexical elements. "Site" is touristic place. Using the logic of the performance turn and Web 2.0, tourist sites are locations that the tourist enters, interacts with, and, potentially, leaves their mark on via their engagement with place and/or the production of experiential narratives. The concept of the site then contrasts with that of the sight, from which the tourist is separated by institutional barriers and at which the tourist gazes at from a distance.³⁹ This juxtaposition of homophones gives a stylistic nod to Clifford (1997) whose deconstruction of the terms routes/roots helped open up the theoretical terrain in which tourists are perceived as agents who produce (and not only consume) culture. Using the conceptual framing of site foregrounds the tourist's interactions with the destination and highlights how, through the practice of online storytelling in particular, tourists may (re-) engineer and (re-) shape the landscapes of tourism through personal interpretation. Site then puts the focus on tourists' engagement, interaction, and potentiality in regard to both tourist places and tourist self, and is a worthy metaphor for the spatial interactions of connected tourism as set within the context of participatory culture.

Secondly, it is necessary to discuss just what is meant by *sharing* (see Section 1.2.6). Tourists have always told stories. They have recorded journeys as oral and written tales, sketched landscapes, taken photographs, and purchased souvenirs that function as inspirational portals for the future telling of events. Tourists both visit and tell and the two are

³⁹ It is worthwhile revisiting Crang's (1999, p. 44) assertion from Chapter 8 which explains the way sites are fenced off as "sights" within the sightseeing mode. Sitiesharing suggests the opposite, not a distancing of tourists from place but an involvement within it.

strongly linked in the experience of tourism overall. In the era of ICTs, however, sharing equates to more than the telling of a travel story; it becomes the production of a data record that is stored within the wider totality of the network self and which may travel fluidly at the behest of other users or institutions as a data entity. Sharing in this case is tightly bound to identity production and capital accumulation and also, by generating touristic data, supports the overall functioning of the tourism industry. In the digital era, the acts of visiting and telling are brought closer together and eventually collapse into one such as with the new technology of live streaming where the location is shared as it is visited. Inasmuch, within the experiential mode of sitiesharing, telling becomes visiting and visiting telling. From this introductory discussion, it is possible to further understand the enactment and implications of sitiesharing in terms of three key characteristics that map onto the three parts of this thesis: collapsed time-space (connectivity), community (performance), and self-creation (place).

ICTs dramatically reduce spatial and temporal differences making possible near instantaneous communication from disparate points, while social media contain and construct audiences allowing both intimate networks and a vast “superpublic” (Senft & Baym, 2015, p. 1589) with only permeable boundaries separating one from the other. Connected tourists undergo a dual journey that involves synthesising both physical sensations and digital informational inputs into a multilayered experience of travel and place. In connected tourism, the audience moves fluidly and is present within the experience itself. The connected tourist’s sense of the landscape is constructed through their perception of the audience. As the tourist shares experiences and receives feedback, they come to know the landscape in a way that is both personal and social. Sitiesharing then acts as a kind of layered contact that encompasses both physical and mediated experience and reflects both the structure (ICTs) and agency (the affordances at the hands of the user) implicit within connected tourism.

The second aspect of sitiesharing is community. The practice of sitiesharing situates connected tourists’ use of ICTs within the connective imperative of social media and the culture of sharing. ICTs support access to a range of communities and services that may assist travellers in accessing information or tools that improve the quality of their experience. The operation of such entities is underpinned by access to traveller data regarding preferences, opinions, itineraries, and experiences, provided as travellers share their experiences in the form of reviews, geodata, multimedia storytelling, or service transaction records. The person-to-person experience of connected tourism achieved through platforms like TripAdvisor or Airbnb relies on the sharing of experience and it is such that sharing is promoted by these platforms (as well as social media as a whole). Travellers are incentivised to share, such as leaving an Airbnb

review as part of the accommodation experience, or in a social sense, uploading a photo to let contacts know you have arrived safely. The result is that the sharing of travel narratives becomes normalised and interwoven as not only a constituent part of experience but the perpetuation of touristic industry and culture.

Finally, sitiesharing is guided by the tenets of online self-presentation. Given the overwriting of the physical landscape with digital information, tourists' online narratives are set within hybridised places functioning as both backgrounds to, and discursive elements within, online self-presentation. In presentational places, discursive, physical, and social features are emphasised to create a performative context, or stage, facilitating the creation and dispersal of online narratives. Such narratives allow tourists to collect cultural and social symbols i.e., capital that support the production of self-identity. Here, the media narrative becomes totemic proof of experience and self-development situated in the tourists' networked self while capital is a reward pursued through the stylisation and curation of self-image. In a related way, tourists' sharing of narratives produces the performative context of tourist sites emphasising the need for sharing as proof of visitation.

From the discussion of these three factors it is proposed that connected tourists' consumption of the landscape occurs through sitiesharing. Sitiesharing puts the socio-technical elements of connected tourism into focus and highlights the power redistributions between consumer, the tourism industry, and technology companies cohabiting this space. Personal devices layer social and aesthetic work within the travel experience at the same time as permitting new forms of value creation and authenticity. Platforms, while permitting the sharing of events and construction of self, also reflect a specific set of values comprising the affordances offered, terms of service, and the algorithms that control how users interact and content circulates. We see that aside from being personal, sharing is also political. Current events like the Cambridge Analytica scandal indicate the importance of data within contemporary society. This is partly because of the inherent shareability of data by which personal information may be distributed beyond known or intended audiences, but also owing to the intense profiling that becomes available through computer analytics through which it is possible to correlate trends and even predict future actions. These consequences apply to travel in forms of location-aware announcements and special offers, which, while potentially welcomed by the tourist, may also be viewed as incursions on personal privacy. In this way, just as sightseeing was shaped by the sociocultural doctrines of its time, so we may locate sitiesharing in the matrix of contemporary social life.

There are limitations to the current study. The hybrid method centred around the

author's subjective experience was chosen to be mobile, nimble, and sensitive to the application and synthesis of existing theory across tourism and internet studies. This strategic direction has, however, produced a study that centres heavily around the experiences of the singular figure of the author. Such a choice comes at the expense of polyvocality in the presentation of empirical data as might be achieved through techniques such as interviewing. It also leads to a text that is theory heavy and focussed around the development of conceptual framework rather than the presentation of rich personal narrative. Owing to the interpretative nature of this project, there should be further testing of key findings under different circumstances and/or with tourists from a wider range of backgrounds. As an example, the four modes of connectivity presented in Chapter 4 may be assessed by using these as a framework to examine the connectivity experiences of a wider, and preferably diverse, group of tourists. This study could employ ethnographic interview to discuss connectivity experiences, or engage in the retrieval and analysis of connectivity-related narratives from wi-fi ranking websites using digital ethnography. The selfie gaze presented in Chapter 6, or alternatively the non-linear storytelling model presented in Chapter 7, may be further explored by using photo-elicitation interview to examine the inner workings of tourists' creative processes (Scarles, 2010). The idea of presentational place introduced in Chapter 9 may be analysed by using longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork that follows tourist practice from the visitation of the site through to the afterlife of tourists' photography and storytelling on social media (see Haldrup & Larsen, 2010). Such a method would assist in highlighting the connection between specific places and particular types of storytelling. Additionally, one area that was touched upon tangentially but that has further potential to assist investigation into tourists' practice of online storytelling is the body of research on travel writing.

Another salient point is that technology and regulation are rapidly changing. Within the course of this project the EU dropped roaming charges (Chapter 4), as well as changing the regulation for the sharing of users' digital data within the General Data Protection Regulation (Tiku, 2018). Such examples show the involvement of governmental bodies in shaping tourists' use of ICTs and the way the contours of connected lifestyles and social spaces are fluid and responsive to wider structures.⁴⁰ As new technologies and user practices are constantly emerging, the current study should be read as a portrait of the time period in which it was undertaken (2015-2018) and as a marker within an evolving landscape.

There are numerous avenues for future research. In particular, the practice of storytelling

⁴⁰ Another interesting example that warrants further attention is the FTC's regulation of influencers' commercial relationships (see Section 6.4.3).

is a key locus of interconnection where travellers' negotiations with ICTs and the effects on tourism practices may be approached. Researchers may continue this seam of investigation by examining online travel narratives as presentations of self while also considering the political nature of platforms and their influence on tourism, particularly as large companies gain more social power (van Dijck et al., 2018; Srnciek, 2017). Tourism scholarship need engage with tourists' use of social media taking place outside virtual travel communities within wider social media. As an example, Facebook is currently the world's largest social network and a common location for sharing travel narratives yet only a minimum of studies have engaged with it.⁴¹ In this endeavour, research need utilise methods and framework such as the dual journey which address hybridised tourist experience that occurs across physical and digital planes. By studying how ICTs are incorporated into the experience of place, tourism studies has a valuable opportunity to contribute to wider sociological study on mobile and locative media. This is because rather than focussing on usage set within urban place (i.e., the smart city), tourism studies may elaborate upon usage both within and between places on a global scale allowing the development of more nuanced and truly mobile understandings.

Finally, a note on the practice of sitiesharing itself. Just as with sightseeing before it, this mode of experience is not all encompassing. There will, necessarily, be those who challenge the paradigm of sitiesharing by not sharing experiences, disconnecting during tourism, or ignoring online communities and services altogether, that can be understood through the model of the post-tourist or otherwise. Furthermore, it is possible that this mode adapts to changes in technology and politics. In this way, sitiesharing constitutes a dominant but not dominating frame. To appreciate the diversity encompassed within this frame it is necessary to produce embedded accounts looking at connected tourists themselves. Both tourism and digital technologies permit varying ways of interaction. A salient focal point here is the adoption and use of digital technologies and how these are brought into the journey. The author of this study represents a relatively high-level of technological adoption, however, the lower end of the scale is also of importance in defining what connected tourism is and the forms it takes. Varying modes and preferences regarding technology usage including abstinence, selective unplugging, and lesser interest and literacy need be acknowledged and studied as part of the connected tourism spectrum or potentially distinct modes of tourism. As the business and landscape of tourism becomes increasingly digitised, it is indeed possible to have connected tourists with myriad different extents and ways of engaging with digital technologies. Thus, despite rapid

⁴¹ Supporting this, Larsen (2013, p. 40) writes that, "Facebook is where most tourist snaps live virtual lives these days".

innovation and adoption in a holistic sense, tourists' personal choices should remain at the forefront of studies into connected tourism and sitiesharing.

To connect the outcomes of this thesis with current research trends, it is worthwhile to look at the findings of this project in regard to the emergent industry paradigm of smart tourism (Gretzel et al., 2015). This is the iteration of the tourist industry concerned with big data and the internet of things. Smart tourism valorises ICT as a technological agent facilitating connections between stakeholders in order to increase the value of tourist experience. However, one of the unaddressed fallacies of current understandings of smart tourism is that it tends to treat data in a singular manner as accurately representing the actions and/or needs of tourists. One of the key practices by which smart tourism works is data mining whereby tourist preferences are extracted and on the basis of which connections enabled. However, it must be realised that what tourists share online, whether in the form of interpersonal communication, reviews, or even seemingly more objective acts like information searches and service transactions, are sculpted presentations of self at the same time as being potential reflections of actual experience. This is to say nothing of the structuring influence of the technology or platform itself on the data product. Here, van Dijck's (2014) interpretation of the doctrine of dataism provides useful criticisms of present ways of data mining and analysis. Thus, investigations and/or processes that focus on the data produced by tourists need to consider the agency of tourists and also the potential of data to misrepresent lived practice.

The example of Trolltunga shows that the deployment of online promotion and tourist services does not necessarily make an improved tourism situation as the site approached, as Munar (2011) has forewarned, "an international success and a local catastrophe" (p. 302). What was underestimated here was the self-representational significance of tourist narratives and the way these messages may be echoed and amplified in social media to the point where they become the dominant framing for the attraction. In representing disruptive change to the tourist industry, ICTs have both beneficial and problematic consequences, especially when considering the broad social strata encompassed within the tourism product. It is prudent not to regard ICT-based tourism services as automatically *smart* or beneficial even if these are integrated into the tourism ecosystem in ways that are financially successful and experientially useful to tourists. As an example, the August 2017 anti-tourism protests in Barcelona have their roots in reactions to the accommodation sharing platform Airbnb and its influence on rental prices and neighbourhood dynamics in the city (Hughes, 2018).⁴²

⁴² The website www.airbnbvsberlin.com provides another example from the German city of Berlin.

These examples show the importance of understanding tourists' activities at the level of practice, and local community, not only data; and lead toward a final point regarding the role of ICTs within tourism. The practice of sitiesharing highlights the importance of sharing not only for achieving authenticity but also in the way this practice connects with political imperatives manifested within economic systems and platform architecture. These structuring factors shape the way data is produced and disseminated and need to be taken into account as salient components of connected or smart tourism. Sitiesharing also demonstrates the importance of tourism as a personalised identity-shaping practice that is used to produce capital and define the self. While there are undoubtedly benefits of big data analysis within tourism, the personal and political dimensions of connected tourism discussed throughout this thesis highlight the insight that may be achieved by studying tourists' data within the context of connected tourist experience rather than as discrete reflections of it. Furthermore, the discussion of sitiesharing presented here has shown how online storytelling forms the integral engine of connected tourism at personal, social, and industry levels. From this perspective, we may see that technology not only mediates and supports the experience of tourists but increasingly that technology is the experience. Research need consider not only the data produced but also how tourists implement, negotiate with, and are influenced by technology within tourism. The experiential mode of sitiesharing outlined here provides a conceptual framework that is intended to address this concern by conflating tourism and internet studies theory within its conceptualisation of the journey and tourist experience.

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Appendix 1

As part of data collection (see Section 2.2), the author recorded critical reflections regarding primary and supplementary fieldwork in a reflective blog. The thesis text has included both direct excerpts and also indirect references to individual posts in order to support its argument. Additionally, to promote transparency regarding the research process and allow for a deeper understanding of the events and themes discussed, the blog is presented in its entirety at www.destinationunknowntravel.wordpress.com. Situating this appendix online allows the benefit of these fieldnotes being presented in their original context.

Appendix 2

During fieldwork periods the author logged internet usage for storytelling purposes along with the primary type of connectivity encountered. These logs were later tabulated within Google maps in order to provide a visual representation of the trip itinerary alongside connectivity information. Fieldwork period 1 is accessible at: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bAqC-D5tFtosAuCibxGcGZJ-7Uk&usp=sharing>. Fieldwork period 2 is accessible at: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1I6gHpOvC-xGjAhYn4F1sTsljnyQ&usp=sharing>.

Fieldwork Period 1: April-July 2016

Date	Location	Connectivity type	Email	Social media	Offline	Total hours
April 5th	Kochi-Tokyo	Fluid				No data
April 6th	Tokyo	Fluid				No data
April 7th	Tokyo-Beijing	Serial				No data
April 8th	Beijing-Palo Alto	Serial				No data
April 9th	Palo Alto-Nevada City	Serial				No data
April 10th	Nevada City	Sporadic				No data
April 11th	Nevada City	Sporadic				No data
April 12th	Nevada City-Reno	Serial				No data
April 13th	Reno-Bridgeport	Sporadic				No data
April 14th	Bridgeport-Mammoth Lakes	Sporadic				No data
April 15th	Mammoth Lakes-Bishop	Sporadic				No data

April 16th	Bishop-Long Beach	Serial				No data
April 17th	Long Beach	Fluid				No data
April 18th	Long Beach	Fluid				No data
April 19th	Long Beach	Fluid				No data
April 20th	Long Beach-Dana Point	Fluid				No data
April 21st	Dana Point	Fluid				No data
April 22nd	Dana Point	Fluid				No data
April 23rd	Dana Point	Fluid				No data
April 24th	Dana Point-San Ysidrio	Fluid				No data
April 25th	San Ysidrio-San Quintin	Sporadic				No data
April 26th	San Quintin-Santa Rosalillita	Sporadic				No data
April 27th	Santa Rosalillita-Mulege	Sporadic				No data
April 28th	Mulege-San Juanico	Sporadic				No data
April 29th	San Juanico	Sporadic				No data
April 30th	San Juanico	Sporadic				No data
May 1st	San Juanico	Sporadic				No data
May 2nd	San Juanico	Sporadic				No data
May 3rd	San Juanico-La Paz	Sporadic				No data
May 4th	La Paz	Serial		1		1
May 5th	La Paz	Serial		2		2

May 6th	La Paz-Todos Santos	Serial	1	1		2
May 7th	Todos Santos-Nine Palms	Serial		1		1
May 8th	Nine Palms	Sporadic			2	2
May 9th	Nine Palms-San Jose del Cabo	Serial		2	2	4
May 10th	San Jose del Cabo	Serial	1	2		3
May 11th	San Jose del Cabo	Serial		3		3
May 12th	San Jose del Cabo-Cerritos	Serial	1	1	1	3
May 13th	Cerritos	Serial	1	1	1	3
May 14th	Cerritos	Serial		1	2	3
May 15th	Cerritos	Serial		1	1	2
May 16th	Cerritos	Serial	1	2	1	4
May 17th	Cerritos	Serial	1	1	2	4
May 18th	Cerritos-Cabo Pulmo	Serial	1	1		2
May 19th	Cabo Pulmo	Sporadic	1	1	2	4
May 20th	Cabo Pulmo	Sporadic	1	1	1	3
May 21st	Cabo Pulmo	Sporadic	1	3	2	6
May 22nd	Cabo Pulmo-La Paz	Serial	1	1	1	3
May 23rd	La Paz	Serial		3	1	4
May 24th	La Paz-Mazatlan	Serial	1	1	2	4
May 25th	Mazatlan	Serial	1	2	1	4

May 26th	Mazatlan	Serial	1	3	1	5
May 27th	Mazatlan-San Pancho	Serial		1		1
May 28th	San Pancho-Boca de Iguanas	Serial		1		1
May 29th	Boca de Iguanas-Melaque	Serial		1	2	3
May 30th	Melaque-Tecoman	Serial	1	1		2
May 31st	Tecoman-Guadalajara	Seral	1	3		4
June 1st	Guadalajara-Tecoman	Serial	1	2		3
June 2nd	Tecoman-Rio Nexpa	Sporadic		1	1	2
June 3rd	Rio Nexpa	Sporadic		1	1	2
June 4th	Rio Nexpa	Sporadic			1	1
June 5th	Rio Nexpa-La Placita	Sporadic		1		1
June 6th	La Placita-Tecoman	Serial	1	2		3
June 7th	Tecoman	Serial	1	2		3
June 8th	Tecoman-Playa del Carmen	Serial	1	2	2	5
June 9th	Playa del Carmen-Tulum	Serial		1		1
June 10th	Tulum	Serial		2		2
June 11th	Tulum-Playa Del Carmen	Serial		1		1
June 12th	Playa del Carmen-Guadalajara	Serial		2	1	3
June 13th	Guadalajara	Serial	1	1	1	3

June 14th	Guadalajara-Tecoman	Serial	1	1		2
June 15th	Tecoman	Serial		2		2
June 16th	Tecoman-Rio Nexpa	Sporadic	1	1		2
June 17th	Rio Nexpa	Sporadic				n/a
June 18th	Rio Nexpa	Sporadic				n/a
June 19th	Rio Nexpa	Sporadic		1	2	3
June 20th	Rio Nexpa-Tecoman	Serial	1	2		3
June 21st	Tecoman	Serial	1	2	2	5
June 22nd	Tecoman	Serial	1	2	2	5
June 23rd	Tecoman-Chacala	Serial		1		1
June 24th	Chacala	Serial			3	3
June 25th	Chacala	Serial				n/a
June 26th	Chacala	Serial	1	1		2
June 27th	Chacala-Tepic	Serial		1	2	3
June 28th	Tepic-Navajoa	Serial		1	2	3
June 29th	Navajoa-Tucson	Serial	1	1		2
June 30th	Tucson	Fluid	1	1		2
July 1st	Tucson-Dana Point	Fluid	1	1		2
July 2nd	Dana Point	Fluid	1	1		2
July 3rd	Dana Point-Monterey	Fluid		1		1
July 4th	Monterey-Fort Bragg	Fluid		2		2

July 5th	Fort Bragg-San Francisco	Fluid	1	1	2	4
July 6th	San Francisco-Waikiki	Fluid	1	1		2
July 7th	Waikiki	Fluid	1	3	1	5
July 8th	Waikiki	Fluid	1	2		3
July 9th	Waikiki	Fluid		1	2	3
July 10th	Waikiki-San Francisco	Fluid	1	1	2	4
July 11th	San Francisco-Beijing	Serial		1	2	3
July 12th	Beijing-Tokyo	Serial	1	1		2
July 13th	Tokyo	Fluid	1	2	2	5
July 14th	Tokyo-Kochi	Fluid	1	2	2	5

Fieldwork Period 2: August 2017

Date	Location	Connectivity type	Email	Social media	Offline	Total hours
August 3rd	KIX-DXB	Serial		1		1
August 4th	DXB-Oslo	Moving	2			2
August 5th	Oslo	Serial	1	1	1	3
August 6th	Oslo	Serial	1			1
August 7th	Oslo-Odda	Serial	1		1	2
August 8th	Odda	Serial		1	2	3
August 9th	Odda-Torvikbygd	Serial	1	1	2	4

August 10th	Torvikbygd-Nesflaten	Serial	1		1	2
August 11th	Nesflaten-Oslo	Serial			1	1
August 12th	Oslo-DXB	Serial	1		1	2
August 13th	DXB-KIX	Serial	1		2	3