

A native-visitor in Western Australia:

An account of an insider-outsider

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Abstract

Purpose

This study applies confirmatory personal introspection (CPI) to illuminate the experiences of the authors as partial native-visitors to Western Australia. The native-visitor is the tourist who is able to see beyond Urry's shallow conception of the Tourist Gaze through their lengthy immersion as 'insiders' in the destination's culture. In this paper, the experiences of two immigrants, the authors, to Western Australia illustrate the different perspectives of the Tourist Gaze 4.0.

Design/Methodology/Approach

The paper uses Confirmatory Personal Introspection as this is a more reliable method of uncovering traveller's experiences than subjective personal introspection (SPI) because CPI uses additional data sources such as written historical records and photographs for confirming the researcher's accounts. In this study, accounts of both authors alongside photographs are used to both confirm and contrast their individual experiences.

Findings

The paper demonstrates the varied forms of the tourist gaze, with an emphasis on that of the native visitor. The findings illustrate how individuals' both maintain aspects of their original cultural identity and adopt those of the new country after an extended time living in that country. This enables individuals to see attractions and destinations from an insider perspective.

Practical Implications

This study shows how even after an extended period of time living in a new country, visitors may not have the cultural confidence to behave as local residents at tourist attractions and destinations, which could limit their engagement and enjoyment of these experiences. Marketers should take this into account in designing and promoting tourist experiences to visitors.

Originality/Value

CPI provides a valuable means for illustrating the range of perspectives within the Tourist Gaze 4.0. The method enables individuals' rich experiences to be uncovered but at the same time uses multiple data sources to provide additional rigour.

Keywords: Australia; Confirmatory Personal Introspection; native-visitor; Subjective Personal Introspection; the tourist gaze 4.0

Introduction

This study examines the experiences of two British immigrants to Western Australia in order to illustrate and illuminate the tourist gaze 4.0. The tourist gaze 4.0 is detailed elsewhere in this issue and seeks to go beyond John Urry's (1996) original and earlier conceptualisations of the tourist gaze by identifying different recipes for the tourist gaze based on the tourists' depth of gaze from shallow to the deep native-visitor: "the rare person not borne into the destination culture but having completed a long-time residency as a near-native with exceptional destination language and cultural fluency." (Woodside & Martin, 2015: p4). The authors may not be quite so rare given in 2011 37% of the Western Australian population were born outside Australia, with 10% born in the UK (ABS 2011).

The paper reports on the experiences of two partial native-visitors: two immigrants to Western Australia from the UK—the authors—who have lived in Western Australia for eight years. The authors have a more in-depth level of "native" insight into the destination compared to casual tourists, yet at the same time they view the destination still through the lens of their British world views.

Becoming a native-visitor

Both authors emigrated to Western Australia (WA) in 2007. We originally planned to come for two years but we are still here in 2015 and both of our children were born here. In our experience WA is a beautiful state, covering one-third of the Australian continent, although three quarters of the population (around two million people) lives either in the capital city Perth or in the south-west of the state. There is a very distinct sense of WA being separate from the rest of the continent – particularly the East Coast – and this is facilitated by the 3000km of desert that separates both coastlines. Geographically, WA is closer to parts of Asia than other Australian cities, with flights to Indonesia and Singapore being shorter than

flights to Sydney (and conveniently on the same time zone). Australia has a federal government system and the separate state governments increase this sense of differentiation. Our experiences in WA may be similar to elsewhere in Australia, but we have only lived in WA and are can therefore be only native-visitors to WA, and then really only Greater Perth as remote, regional and rural areas have a significantly different culture (Davies, 2008).

To illuminate our roles on the spectrum towards being native-visitors, we both explain our cultural identities.

My identity: Kirsten

I was born in south-east England and lived in various cities around the country before moving to Perth. Although I have become an Australian citizen and have adapted much of my life style to living in this city, I still feel that culturally I am British. However, when I visit England, the country has changed substantially and I start to view it through my Western Australian lens. For example, the colours of the landscape in Western Australia are very different from England. The sky is a darker blue, the land is red and dusty and the sun is harsh and bright. In contrast, England seems paler from the northern sun, greyer from the cloudy sky and higher storey buildings and greener from the grass and fields. While I still feel British, my children identify as Australian.

My identity: Steven

I grew up in the south west of England before spending the next fifteen years living in cities in the northern part of the country. I too still feel British finding it very difficult, despite being an Australian citizen, to support Australian sports teams against UK teams; rugby and cricket being prime examples. Having two Australian children is certainly increasing my sense of Australian identity because as they grow up in this culture if feel I must embrace it

for their sake. Travelling back to the UK does make me appreciate the advantages of Western Australia; the ability to get outside, pop to the beach and the sense of space. It also highlights what I miss about the UK; family, pubs and the ability to hop on a train or a plane and be in another city or even culture in less than 4 hours. The weather is a big part of life in WA. With sun for around 9 months of the year, in fact days in the middle of winter can still be beautifully warm, it really opens that outdoor life. Weather is never predictable in the UK but the excitement I felt as a child when the weather forecasters predicted snow is something that cannot be replicated in Perth.

Since cultural theorists argue that a country's cultural values are transmitted through formal education (Schwartz, 1994) and both authors completed their education in another culture, it is not surprising that our identities are not entirely West Australian.

Methods

This study applies confirmatory personal introspection (CPI) as the method to uncover the experiences of the native-visitor, which goes beyond subjective personal introspection (SPI). SPI refers to a group of methods that use the researcher's own memories and experiences as data sources (Holbrook, 2006; Woodside, 2004). The method has been developed in consumer research as a means of uncovering the value of consumer experiences (Holbrook, 2006). In such studies, the researcher as consumer (or consumer as researcher) reflects on their own consumption experiences in a form of participant observation conducted about themselves. More recently, the method has also been used to explore tourism experiences, particularly epiphany travel experiences (Montanari, 2013). However, SPI is not without its critics (Montanari, 2013) noting that relying on the researcher's own ability to recall their experiences is problematic. Methods for addressing these limitations focus on collecting data beyond the researcher's own experiences, including interviews with additional

respondents, surveys and physical reminders of the experience: photographs, souvenirs (Wallendorff & Brucks, 1993; Woodside, 2004). Woodside calls the use of additional data sources to augment and confirm the researcher's own memories Confirmatory Personal Introspection (2010). Both PSI and CPI have been found to be effective methods for eliciting and identifying the meaning of personal travel experiences.

In this study, we are using CPI to illuminate our experiences within the tourist gaze in Western Australia. We recount our memories of three experiences in this paper. The accounts are reported separately: first Kirsten's and then Steven's so that the comparison of the two accounts can provide confirmation of what was experienced both individually and together. We also used photographs of our visits in the examples of Broome and the winery to stimulate and confirm our memories.

CPI is used in three vignettes described below to illuminate the experience of the native-visitor. The first experience is about travel to an iconic Western Australian tourism destination; the second is about a visit to a winery – a key feature in the hospitality industry in WA; the third vignette examines an archetypal cultural event: the child's birthday party.

Travel

Broome is an iconic tourism destination in north-west WA, listed by Tourism WA on their main web page as one of five must-see tourism destinations in the state. Broome is famous for its 22km long, beautiful Cable Beach, lined with luxury resorts; it's multi-cultural heritage – as a former pearling town there is a long history of Asian immigrants who came to work in the town's pearling industry; and the monthly phenomenon of the 'Staircase to the Moon', whereby the moon casts a reflection across the sea from the horizon to the shore (<http://www.westernaustralia.com/au/Destination/Broome/9009574>). Broome's cultural

heritage is celebrated, particularly the old Chinatown (Frost, 2008), the pearling history and the Asian connections.

Broome was perceived as special by many colleagues, who made an annual trip to Broome during the Perth winter months, when Broome experiences its most comfortable climate with average daily temperatures of 28 degrees Celsius (<http://www.visitbroome.com.au/discover/facts-figures/climate>). However, it is not merely the weather that attracts local people to travel north—Broome is 2, 500km north of Perth, which involves an expensive 3 hour flight—rather they spoke of wanting to experience their ‘Broome time’ (http://www.discoveraustralia.com.au/western_australia/broome.html), a laid back vacation mind-set.

To the recent arrival in WA, Broome sounds lovely and is also a must-see destination so we planned a short family trip in July 2009 for our daughter’s first birthday. We had only been in WA a couple of years at this point.

The beach

Kirsten: We stayed in a resort near Cable Beach as the town and the beach are quite separate settlements. Cable Beach is spectacular, although for a British person almost any Australian beach is spectacular. My memories of going to the beach as a child are mainly about visiting Redcar beach in north-east England every Easter when we visited my grandmother. We have many family photographs of standing on the beach in our waterproofs and wellies as Easter in northern England is not good beach weather. Cable Beach, however, is beautiful even by Western Australian standards. The tide comes in over the beach twice daily, which means it is very flat and firm. It is famous for camel rides at sunset and Western Australians like to drive their 4 wheel drive cars on the beach or, perhaps more sustainably, ride horses. We chose, instead, to take our daughter in her stroller and to encourage her to

practice standing and walking, as she was starting to take her first steps. The flat sand was also perfect for her to crawl around on (and eat).

Watching the sun set over the beach is also a very popular activity, particularly with a drink and some nibbles, called a 'sundowner'. Sundowners are very Western Australian as it is only on the west coast that you can watch the sun set over the ocean and this is very much a part of our lives now, though often limited by small children's bed times. I have a picture of my daughter sitting down with the sunset in the background, smiling: this was a happy family moment. Figure 1 shows Cable Beach at sunset with people engaged in a variety of recreation activities: walking, swimming in the sea, camel riding and Four-Wheel Driving.

Steven: The beach means something different in Western Australians than to me. My experiences of going to the beach on holiday are of visiting the pebble beach of Penarth in South Wales or a hotel beach overseas – in Greece for example—where the beach is the focal point of the holiday because it is not a normal daily activity. Many Western Australian's use the beach for recreation – it is an everyday place to visit, not necessarily a holiday destination. They drive their cars on the beach, exercise, go fishing, walk their dog and swim in the sea. For me, I do not feel Australian in the way I use the beach. When I go to the beach, it feels like I am on holiday, rather than somewhere I live. Before we had children we used to go to the beach after work and watch the sun set, something totally at odds with after work experiences in the UK. Familiarity with the beach changes the way you use it. In Broome the beach was a new experience because of its dislocation from home making me feel very much the tourist.



Figure 1: A variety of recreation types on Cable Beach, Broome

Kirsten: As Cable Beach, with its resorts is some distance from the town of Broome, we hired a car to drive over and see the historic centre. Here our Britishness revealed itself. The UK has a lot of historic buildings and historic town centres in the UK tend to be pretty, in my perception: old Tudor timber-framed buildings, stone cottages, chocolate box images. The first buildings in WA were functional: private buildings such as homesteads or mining camps; public buildings such as courtrooms, prisons and hotels. Later, Goldrush architecture, such as that seen in Fremantle's west end is attractive from a British perspective, but Broome's town centre was not. It is also not that old (for a Brit). In looking for Broome's celebrated China town, we were looking for something more exotic than the shacks that we saw. Broome's town centre also seemed to us to be largely comprised of expensive art galleries and pearl jewellery shops and backpackers' hostels. There seemed to be a clear distinction between two groups of tourists: wealthy, tourists staying at the resorts and thrifty

backpackers. We fitted into neither group, but I suspect that many Western Australian visitors feel the same, perhaps they just avoid the town centre?

Steven: The town centre of Broome certainly was a disappointment but perhaps we expected too much. It is simply a base for many Western Australians that take their annual trip from Perth. It is somewhere to stock up on food and drink before exploring what Broome really has to offer; the unique geography of the Kimberley. Our failure to do this meant we did not experience Broome the way native Western Australians do, as a functional base with sufficient attractions to retain interest for a few days before moving on to enjoy what the Kimberley has to offer.

Kirsten: The stairway to the moon is a must-see Broome attraction and we had timed our visit to include the event. The place to watch the phenomenon is at Town Beach, which also hosts a market and various rides. An adjustment to WA life that we struggle with as Brits is turning up to everything at the designated start time only to find that it is already packed with people. West Australians typically get up earlier and go to bed earlier than Brits and arrive early at outdoor events to get a good spot.

Steven: We always turn up to events on time and find that everyone else has been there for hours. For Western Australians, going to an outdoor event early with plentiful supplies of food and drink to meet family and friends is part of the experience - the wait for the event is part of the event. In Britain, the event is the event. If it's an outdoor event, there's no point getting there early and waiting in the cold and the rain! In many circumstances, and I include weekends here, Western Australians' operate at a slower pace, taking time to enjoy the outdoors in the company of family. In contrast we would rush to an event at its start time only to find nowhere to park and get frustrated at how busy it is. We have still yet to learn you do not get to an event at its advertised start time.

Steven: When we visited Broome, I didn't feel that we were able to experience it like natives as a major part of visiting the north-west Australia is to drive out into the Kimberley going off-road in a 4-wheel drive car and finding kilometres of deserted beaches. I have a colleague who thinks nothing of driving his car and boat the 2,200km to Broome to meet his family that have flown up separately. The drive and the isolation is part of the trip for him. They meet in Broome, take their camping gear and head out into the Kimberley. As a Brit, we hear too many stories of danger in the outback to be comfortable doing this ourselves and this limits you to the town. It's not the full Broome-Kimberley experience of the native. It becomes a beach holiday that you could experience elsewhere, only cheaper.

Kirsten: We had to hire a car to get around Broome as the distances between the resorts and the town were too big but we never thought about hiring a 4 wheel drive car or doing on an outback tour, partly because we were with our baby daughter but also partly, because it just never occurred to us – it is so outside of our normal experiences.

Hospitality

Another iconic WA tourism destination is the Margaret River region, south-west of Perth. Margaret River is a small town but the region around the town includes world-class surfing beaches, wineries, gourmet restaurants and food producers alongside other tourism attractions such as caves and an old homestead. It is also less than 3 hours by car from Perth, which makes it a very popular weekend destination.

We have visited the Margaret River region numerous times both before we moved to WA and afterwards. We have stayed in the township, on the coast and at both the northern and southern ends of the region. We have stayed in a campervan, bed and breakfast accommodation and in luxurious private houses. There are always new attractions to visit – new wineries, food producers and since we have had children, family activities. Our

experience of the Margaret River region is not the insider-perspective of someone who has lived in the region but rather as typical repeat weekend visitors from Perth.

Wineries are a major factor in Margaret River's attractions and also other regions of WA. Wineries in WA are designed to sell the wine available for tasting to visitors but also operate as marketing services. While visitors may not buy the wine during their visit, it is anticipated that the visit will lead to a positive association with the brand for later wine purchases. The typical wine-tasting experience involves pleasant conversation with the cellar door staff, while tasting a range of wines starting with the lighter, whites and moving onto the reds. Visitors can taste as many of the wines available as they choose. Wine-tasting is normally free of charge although there may be a fee to taste premium wines. Even with small children, we still try and visit our favourite wineries and try out new ones when we visit. The wineries in Margaret River are established as tourist attractions, with beautifully-landscaped cellar doors, restaurants, art galleries, picnic areas and children's play areas. The wine is only a part of the overall winescape (Quintal, Thomas & Phau, 2015). Figure 2 shows a group of visitors to a winery hearing about the wines from a member of the cellar door staff, before tasting.



Figure 2: The winery experience in WA-discussing wine with the cellar door staff

Kirsten: The experience that stays in my mind is the first time we took my parents, visiting from the UK, on a weekend trip to the region. I wanted to show my parents why I love living in Perth and WA and I organised a weekend staying in cottages on a winery. We drove down, stopping at Howard Park winery – the particularly beautiful cellar door of an upscale winery, which has won an architectural award (<http://www.burchfamilywines.com.au/cellar-door/margaret-river/default.aspx>). My parents are not big drinkers but they do like wine and I have many memories of family holidays in France, where my parents were keen to try local wines.

Kirsten: We arrived at the winery and my husband and I began to taste the wines. However, from the start it was clear that my parents were not comfortable with the situation of coming into a winery and tasting the wine for free. My mother soon adapted and joined us in discussing which wines we did and did not like. My father, however, wandered around the winery, admiring the art, sipping his small tasting measure. The following day, we set off

again in the car to show my parents more of the sights. We said we would visit a different winery and my mother responded ‘another one?’ As we had planned to take them to several different wineries over the weekend – something we had got used to during our visits to Margaret River – this shocked us into thinking about what else we would do.

Steven: Wineries are totally outside of the British experience. I never visited a winery in England (there are only a few in the south). When I first started visiting them in Australia, I felt guilty for just tasting the wine and not buying. However, this feeling tends to dissipate the more wineries you visit and the more wines you taste during the day.

Kirsten: As tourists, we first travelled to Western Australia in 2004 and hired a campervan, in which we toured the Margaret River region. We bought quite a few bottles of wine there.

Steven: Now I would say that I am a native-visitor to wineries. I am happy to try just one or two wines at a specific winery and if I don’t like them, I won’t buy. I have my favourite wineries and I prefer to visit those, with specific wines in mind to try, and perhaps purchase. If I have heard of a new winery opening up I will make the effort to visit. Now it is less about drinking as much free wine as possible and more about quality. This may be less about the native-visitor and more about age and children. Kirsten’s parents were behaving normally for many British visitors to an Australian winery for the first time, my parents included.

Culture

We have had two children since we moved to Western Australia. Children’s parties are a major milestone in their lives and a source of much excitement for the party goers. As the weather in Perth is immeasurably warmer and drier than in England, it is common for

children's parties to be held in the local park all year round. This has the advantage of being low-cost, keeping a large number of boisterous children out of the host's house and having ready-made activities such as swings, slides and other play equipment. The children's party in the park to us epitomises the Western Australian childhood: outdoor and laid back.

Kirsten: The first party I took my daughter to at her new school was in the local park. There is an enclosed play area here, which is ideal, public toilets and barbecues. The children were only aged 3-4 years so parents all stayed for the party. The food was typical party food you would see in England—crisps, fruit, and cake—but the main food was hotdogs, with the sausages cooked at the park on the public barbecue.

Steven: British people just don't do the family gathering in the local park as the weather isn't good enough. In Perth, families gather every weekend and spend the whole day talking, eating and drinking in the park in huge groups. If you get to a park early in the day you often see someone sitting on their own on a picnic bench surrounded by food and drink or they have put up a load of folding chairs and wrapped tape around them to reserve the area for the event taking place later in the day. This happens every weekend of the year. It is the weekend ritual for many, meeting the same family and friends in the same park. It is a cheap and sociable way to entertain but it remains something I still find rather alien.

Steven: Barbecues in Western Australia are typically odd experiences for me. In my experience they tend to be gender segregated with the men standing all around the barbecue with a beer (does not matter what time of day) and the women sitting down somewhere else, usually dealing with the children. There are exceptions of course but these are the experiences I remember. Barbecues are such a novelty in the UK that you perhaps don't notice the segregation, I'm sure the men still gather round the barbecue. With Western Australia as it is such a common occurrence it starts to feel strange and is not something I

think I will ever be comfortable with. I prefer to be helping with the children if I am not to be cooking.

Conclusion

This study used a confirmatory personal introspection by two British immigrants to Western Australia to illustrate the concept of the Tourist Gaze 4.0-the idea of the native-visitor, who has a deep understanding of another country from immersion in that culture but is still able to view that culture with the perception of a tourist.

The three vignettes presented in this study illuminate key tourist attractions and cultural markers within WA. We are able to view these through the lens of our British identity but we can also recognise what they mean to local Western Australians. In some instances we are able to share this experience and act as natives (as in the winery visit) while in others (in Broome or at a family barbecue) we can appreciate the phenomenon from a local perspective but cannot fully adopt their behaviour patterns. The accounts we have given in this paper reveal where we sit on a continuum between native and visitor. In our explanation of our cultural identities given at the start of the paper, we clearly identify as more British than Australian but this is changing as our children grow up as Australians.

Confirmatory personal introspection offers a useful method for uncovering rich accounts and meanings of a phenomenon. The use of alternative sources such as photographs and memorabilia, auditors and alternative accounts from others who shared the experience offer a more robust account of the phenomenon under investigation than Subjective Personal Introspection. There are many opportunities to explore the further use of CPI in the field of tourism research.

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