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Not such smart tourism? The concept of e-lienation

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Abstract

The concept of alienation was adapted to tourism by MacCannell who identified it as a key feature of modernity and a strong driver of tourism where tourists seek to reconnect to authentic places and selves. Meanwhile the post-modern world has witnessed a revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) especially in the realm of smart tourism where its advocates talk eagerly of the internet of everything. Such a totalising prospect demands serious review and this article fills a critical gap by conceptualising the idea of *e-lienation* as a specific form of alienation in ICT-enabled tourism. It combines philosophic questions of meaning, sociological theory and empirical research to demonstrate the meanings of *e-lienation*, its dimensions, causes, consequences and strategies of resistance.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), alienation, authenticity, netnography.

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is ubiquitous in tourism. Its advocates boast of new gadgets, apps and channels and indeed who would disagree about its many benefits and opportunities. There is already plentiful research on the subject but most is about functionality and operations. It is characterised by an emphasis on innovation (e.g. Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2015) and marketing (e.g. Mistilis, Buhalis, & Gretzel, 2014) so there is a significant research gap where deeper sociological, psychological and philosophical theorisations are called for. This is particularly so as we move towards the internet of things and even the internet of everything. ICT is set to further radically change tourism and its ever more totalising prospect surely merits critical research (Munar & Gyimóthy, 2013; Tribe, 2007).

This rationale guides our interest in the relevance of alienation. Alienation describes the psychological and sociological situation where humans can feel a strong disconnect with their everyday lives and habitats. This emptiness in turn may drive a search for the authentic through travel (MacCannell, 1976). But the advance of ICT and the rise of the super-connected traveller surely gives rise to new questions of alienation. How does super-connectivity influence tourists' experiences of authenticity? For example, the super-connected tourist may have an obsessive need to be online: may be relentlessly routed and led by Tripadvisor: may crave approval by Facebook friends: may fail to disconnect from work: may stubbornly maintain chats and conversations with those back home: may over-tweet: may be diverted by a need to compose perfect selfies, may over-labour to project "the perfect me in a perfect place".

This gives rise to our broad research question which is to understand and critically evaluate the nature of alienating aspects of ICT in tourism (ICTT). We use the term *e-lienation* to describe this phenomenon and offer a thick, rich description of this concept. We start by framing our context and examining the intersections of tourism and smart technology. Next we explain and justify our method of netnography. The main section intermingles the findings with the literature review. Finally the conclusion summarises the original contribution and discusses limitations, implications and issues for future research.

Smart Tourism

There is no doubt that tourism consumption and experiences have smartened up. They are increasingly mediated by the use of smart devices - tablets, phablets, smartphones, smartwatches - among an ever-growing list of innovative ICTT gadgetry (Dickinson et al., 2014; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014; Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012; Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016). Indeed the claim of "the Internet of everything" has been extended to "the Internet of everything in tourism". There is no shortage of research on the impact of technology on tourism as an industry and as an activity (e.g. Buhalis, 1996; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Kah, Vog, & MacKay, 2008). It is comprehensive in its investigation of the affordances, in a functional sense, offered by ICTT (e.g. Bowen, & Baloglu, 2015) including for example smart bookings, smart advice and navigation, smart hotels and smart destinations and marketing.

However the majority of studies operate in the domain which Habermas (1978) calls technical reason. They do not question how ICTT developments impact on tourism at a socio-existential level. They overlook their implications on the tourist as an experiencing actor; as a seeker and negotiator of meaning; and as a performer on the tourism stage. By contrast this study seeks to unravel the subtle ways in which ICTT penetrates the touristic journey at the existential level. At that level we believe that the tourist/tourism-technology relationship is more intricate and far-reaching than has so far been understood or assumed. For the tourist as an actor is being reconfigured as ICTT has insinuated new appendages into touristic space and onto the touristic body in the form of smart devices.

ICTT is a vast area so within it we frame our study to incorporate the following sometimes overlapping dimensions of ICT in holiday usage: 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, What's App, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, WeChat as well as email and text messaging); taking pictures and selfies; and planning Apps such as Trip Advisor, Foursquare, TripExpert etc.

Method

Netnography (Kozinets, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2015), is an adaptation of ethnographic research to encompass online spaces as fieldwork sites. It seeks to understand online communities and their cultures by gleaning insights from a range of user texts such as discussion forums, blogs, customer reviews, wikis, posts, chats, tweets, podcasts, pins, digital images, and video. By tapping into online communities, the method resonates strongly with the new net-based epistemological turn in tourism studies which Liburd (2012) terms "tourism research 2.0".

There are however significant differences between ethnography and netnography, and it would be simplistic to view netnography as "online ethnography". While both approaches are immersive, netnography does not have access to the physical context that ethnographers draw from in real world fields. Further, in netnography it is virtually impossible to verify the identity of participants who often post content anonymously or pseudonymously. However netnography has significant strengths. Kozinets (2002) argues that it is far less obtrusive and time consuming than ethnography. A further strength lies in "its particularistic ties to specific online consumer groups and the revelatory depth of their online communications" (Kozinets 2002, p. 6). Additionally data is produced in natural (online) settings. "Participants" are not objectified by the researcher's agenda—they are not mere respondents to a line of questioning. Instead they are subjects engaging with other users

on their own terms, and as such, netnography accesses their authentic, engaged and voluntary expressed voices.

In this project both researchers were involved at each stage of the netnography through an iterative process of discussion, brainstorming, collecting and interpreting data while keeping a trail of sources and insights, debriefing, reflexive note-making, drafting and redrafting. The research process adopted a series of steps, adapted from Kozinets (2015) as follows. The first step was an *introspection phase* where the researchers unpacked the implications of moving from a technical to a more phenomenological approach to ICTT, mindful of its potentially alienating aspects. Next in the *investigation phase* the researchers collaboratively crafted and honed the netnographic issues, informed by their own experiences and observations of social media culture and interactions. The third *informational phase* was concerned with ethical issues. The passive, lurker approach (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2012) was adopted for the netnography meaning that the researchers would not actively participate online. This obviated any requirement for consent from participants or for researchers to disclose their status online. The rationale was that the data was already in the public domain, and that no further information was being sought from participants. To preserve the anonymity of participants' online usernames were not disclosed in the findings.

An *initial review stage* followed where useful online text sites were found through search engines (Google and Tripadvisor) using Boolean searches of related terms. Guided by our research question, the search terms were selected to capture the broad range of experiences tourists have with technology while away from home. Therefore, the starting point in generating data was to form combinations of related buzzwords that appear in the literature. Combinations of 'tourist experience', 'technology', 'ICT', 'social media', 'technology mediated' and 'digital tourism', were used first to generate an initial data set. Following perusal of this data, other terms and phrases which emerged repeatedly in the social media narratives (e.g. 'why I quit social media' and 'tech-free') were then also used to derive search words and generate further data. Consistent with the iterative format of data generation in netnography we continued to refine our keyword searches until no new patterns in were emerging in the narratives. Our searches returned over 100,000 pages but the data was overwhelming in volume and required further narrowing. Through more specific Boolean searches, the data was narrowed down to 33 sites (URLs). These were further screened for relevance and repetition in the *inspection phase* where a compact data set of URLs was selected for in-depth analysis. This final list comprised 1,235 posts with content directly relevant to the research question.

An *entrée strategy* followed where text was selected from the posts and carefully studied. Next in the *immersion stage,* the data was interrogated and organised, following the tenets of hermeneutic interpretation. A grid was constructed to organise the data using five columns (theme; quote/date; summary/comment; source; researcher). Further immersion occurred in the *indexing phase,* with the researchers checking and ensuring that an adequate but not overwhelming amount of data was collected from a relevant variety of sources. Kozinets describes this part of the process as using "some sort of a connoisseurship and then careful weighting of data". This strategy ensured that a manageable, high quality data set would be "used to reveal and highlight meaningful aspects of the particular" (p. 99). The process continued until there were no new insights emerging. In the final phase of *integration* research insights were interpreted within the wider literature.

The study followed an open, inquisitive, iterative approach which continuously reviewed and modified the salient issues, literature, lines of enquiry and themes as further immersion in the data occurred. To reflect this approach we integrated the literature review and the findings around themes arranged under three major headings of alienation, authenticity and resistance and relish.

However these groupings are not mutually exclusive and have permeable and overlapping boundaries.

From Alienation to e-lienation

Alienation

The concept of alienation was of particular interest to Marx (1972) who demonstrated how, through industrial capitalism, the proletariat had become detached and distanced from their work, the land and their fellow humans. Subsequently the concept was adopted in various areas of inquiry acquiring discipline-specific meanings (Mirowsky & Ross, 1990; Stokols, 1975). It was introduced to tourism by MacCannell (1976) in his seminal work *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. MacCannell argued that the tourist, feeling alienated by his daily life, embarks on a quest for an authentic Other. He observed that moderns were unsettled by the inauthenticity (shallowness, tackiness, pretension) of their day-to-day existence. Since alienation has received relatively limited attention in tourism studies we have sometimes reverted to more generic studies to understand the alienating aspects of ICTT.

Seeman (1959) developed a model which understood alienation in terms of normlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement, isolation and powerlessness. We used this model as a starting point since with one exception it offered a close match with and an appropriate theoretical organising tool for much of our data. The exception is powerlessness which is about despair from not having the means or tools to achieve desired ends. Since this is generally linked to socio-political disadvantage it is not relevant to this study, nor did any data fit into this heading and it was therefore omitted.

Seeman traces the alienating feature of normlessness back to Durkheim's concept of anomie denoting it as "a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective." (p. 787). A breakdown in norms attributable to ICTT was observed in this post: *"I have no issue with the dumbphone users that do no harm. It's the ones that ignore me through what's supposed to be a social dinner … who are a different story entirely."* Dann (1977) elaborated on this form of alienation discussing the situation where "norms favouring interaction have lost their integrative force …" (p.186) This loss of interaction and integration was lamented in the following post: *"It is kind of sad in a way how much our kids-- and us adults, too, in some ways-- have come to heavily depend on our "extra curricular technology" instead of "old fashioned" social interaction, so I believe that it is up to us parents to keep some balance between the two."* Similar quotes illustrate Goffman's (1957) discussion of "alienation from interaction" as an important aspect of normlessness: *"I always find it a bit weird when people use Facebook when we're out getting dinner: surely the social interaction with me in this moment is just as good as the online interaction with friends from home?".* This rise of normlessness is important since norms provide important anchor points for personal and social well-being. We found evidence that ICTT was disturbing norms about the rules that demarcate socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour particularly around social occasions involving traditional rituals like dinner: This was emphasised by many posts including: *"The saddest thing I've seen on holiday was in a restaurant, 2 Adults, 2 Teenagers sat eating a meal not talking to each other but glued to their "smartphones.""*

A further aspect of alienation identified by Seeman is meaninglessness (Seeman, 1959; Xue, Manuel-Navarrete, & Buzinde, 2014) which refers to the superficiality and pointlessness of some aspects of modern day lives. Seaman links its usage to Adorno's work on "the search for meaning" and Manheim's discussions about rationality and "the capacity to act intelligently in a given situation in the light of one's own insight …" (p.786). Seeman further clarifies meaninglessness in relation to "the individual's sense of understanding of the events in which he is engaged" (p. 786). Our data revealed

some trivialising tendencies of ICTT and a trend towards superficial understandings of tourism events at the expense of more complex meaningful insights that might occur without the urgencies and limitations encouraged by ICTT devices and practices. For example the following quote explains how the richness of a holiday is often reduced to a series of superficial e-boasts that reduce rather than enhance meaning: *"no one cares about … your new bikini … your check-ins to restaurants or airports … the list goes on and on."* Similarly the next case highlights how the harder work of thinking can be easily displaced by the easier practice of instant ICTT reporting: *"I really think that many people are scared of not just being out of contact with others, but scared, literally scared, of being alone in silence with their own thoughts, for fear of a self-reflection that may reveal something they can suppress with electronic babble, or they fear thinking deeply about society- or just about anything other than the superficial."* This next post illustrates meaning lost through over-editing for ICTT consumption so that meaningfulness is lost: *"I hate seeing people's life as the perfect life when we all know it's not real. What we share online it's not real life."*

The next aspect of alienation is self-estrangement (Otto & Featherman, 1975; Seeman, 1959) which is described as a feeling of dissonance when one acts in ways which are inconsistent with what one truly desires, for instance to attain a social or other outcome borne out of a desire to conform to some standard or expectation. Seeman draws on the work of Fromm to expound this aspect of alienation emphasising the notions of separation, distancing and rupture. In one case the estrangement experienced in our study was quite specific: *"Staying "connected" to all those virtual friends and keeping up with their every thought estranged me from a woman I lived with and loved."* There were further examples of ICTT promoting conformity to external expectations: *"I' m not sure 'selfies' are about presenting ourselves in the best possible way - isn't it more to do with a (sometimes) desperate need for the affirmation of others, which is lacking internally?"*

In relation to self-estrangement, problematic internet use has been linked to social (interaction) anxiety, which is defined as a state of anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings (Çuhadar, 2012; Pierce, 2009). There were examples of insecurities and feelings of self-estrangement arising from ICTT use: *"I had to cancel my Facebook page because it was making very depressed. I was constantly comparing myself to other people. In my eye, other people were having a better life than I was. They were getting more work, making more money, traveling and having relationships while I was single and lonely and unemployed. At one point it made me think of suicide."* These comments about self-estrangement echo findings made by Krasnova, Widjaja, Buxmann, Wenninger, & Benbasat, (2015) who noted how social media use can produce envy when people compare themselves with their counterparts online. According to their study, Facebook envy is especially caused by travel photos where participants compete to post their most perfect pictures. These unrealistic portrayals can be motivated by the need to keep up appearances and the envy that is engendered may contribute to a reduction in mental well-being among participants. A vicious cycle can occur when users feel their lives are comparatively unfulfilling and respond by portraying their best selves in their posts. This is illustrated in the following comment: *"People just write what they want always good leaving others thinking if only I had that. I personally struggle sometimes with my confident due to aniexty, I look at others and think I want to look like her way can't i , etc (sounds simple lol) but it can affect you that way."*

The final aspect of Seeman's alienation model is isolation (Calabrese & Adams, 1990; Seeman, 1959) or in a sense alienation from others. As one post put it: *"I loath when away that you see people attached to gadgets or reading their e-mails how can they appreciate being away or the people they're sharing the holiday with"*. Isolation refers to the feeling of not "fitting in", not belonging to a group which one wishes to be in, or is supposedly a part of. Many posts lamented how children

isolated themselves through ICTT: *"When our whole family was on the beautiful journey of Alaska on Koshertravelers.com cruise. My kids were not involved in any activities with us and kept themselves busy playing games on their mobiles and involved in chatting with the friends."* Nettler (1957) describes this as "apartness" which was a common concern running through our posts: *"This problem is faced by many parents, as when they are on vacation to have fun with all family members; their kids are usually busy in electronic media platforms."*

We need to revert to MacCannell to identify further aspects of alienation not touched upon by Seeman but relevant to tourism. Important here is the alienating tendency of work which Xue et al. (2014) categorise as alienation stemming from production. ICTT means that people can now bring work on holiday, enabled by the mobile office, thereby blurring the boundaries between work and holidays (Guerrier & Adib, 2003). Many posts spoke to this point: *"Checking emails if even for only 30 seconds a day still defies the point of a break. A holiday should provide a total break from the office and its stresses. Just the sight of my BlackBerry is enough to initiate a Pavlovian response and put my brain into work mode."* The penetration of work into holidays by ICT is confirmed by two small scale studies. The first analysed of over 23 million sales emails sent by Yesware users over a year. It found that email open rates on federal holidays — Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Columbus Day — were surprisingly similar to any other Monday. The second, by GFI Software, surveyed five hundred UK workers and found that sixty per cent looked at their work emails on holiday.

White and White (2007, p. 88) explored the broader distinctions between home and away in relation to early developments in ICT. They found that frequent contact with friends and family members facilitated by ICT "was associated with a feeling of being simultaneously at "home", with continued participation in pre-existing social networks, while also being "away"". Jansson (2007, p. 8) refers to a "balance, between being immersed in a liminal realm, and …" (referring to the potential effects of social media) "… being hooked up to the world of routines, duties and ordinariness". Analysis of our data demonstrated many instances of the bleeding of home into away so that being totally away was impossible. For example: *"The most notable difference for me is that when carry an internet enabled device, I no longer have that feeling of being somewhere remote."*

Authenticity

Rickly-Boyd (2013, p. 412) demonstrated the inextricable links between alienation and authenticity portraying alienation as authenticity's 'forgotten cousin'. In order to escape or at least resist alienation, one might pursue authenticity, in an existential sense, so authenticity and alienation are therefore two sides of the same coin (Xue et al., 2014). MacCannell proposed that it was to escape the alienating aspects of home that creates in tourists a spiritual hankering where tourism functions in a manner akin to religion and the tour resembles a pilgrimage in that both are quests for authenticity (MacCannell, 1976). Authenticity has indeed become a well-established concept in tourism, although its interpretation remains in contention among several schools of thought (Cohen, 1988; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). It would be unnecessary to delve into all of these as the concept is relevant to our research question only to the extent that it links with alienation.

Wang's typology helpfully distinguishes between existential authenticity (the true self) and object-related authenticity (authenticity of toured objects—tangible and intangible). For existentialists, authenticity is attained when a person is conscious of the mindless conformity that characterises society and transcends this condition by choosing to pursue projects that grant meaning in life (Xue et al., 2014). Thus, existential authenticity embodies a state of psychological elevation; an assertion

of true identity (Mkono, 2013). Taken more broadly, existential authenticity is intricately linked to personal identity, autonomy, individuality, self-realization and self-actualization (Mkono, 2013; Ryan, 2000; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The concept is "part of a long philosophical tradition concerned with what it means to be human …" (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 300). It is a search for who one truly wants to be based on asserting one's own decisions and choices - living in harmony with one's own sense of self, and being attuned with one's individual experiences - instead of seeing the world through institutionalized frameworks (Mkono, 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999).

Existential authenticity is, as such, a project that a tourist can pursue inwardly and outwardly: it is an ontological negotiation (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). On the other hand object authenticity, in relation to toured objects, is beyond the control of the tourist. Our interest for this study therefore lies in existential authenticity, rather than its object-related counterpart, as we look not at the objects encountered at the destination but focus rather on the ways in which the tourist's own behaviour and choices, technology in hand, shape the processes of meaning-searching, meaning-making and experience. These processes include the tourist's ability to resist alienation.

We may further unpack existential authenticity, in order to better comprehend how this psychological state interacts with the touristic quest. Kirillova and Lehto (2015) characterise existential authenticity as eudemonic, relative, and dynamic. Thus it is a highly nuanced, individual experience. It is also not something that one finds and retains, rather it must be pursued perpetually (Knudsen, Rickly & Vidon, 2016). Further Xue et al. (2014, p.190) note that existential authenticity is attained "when a person is cognizant of the mindless conformity that characterizes society and transcends this condition by choosing (in the Sartrian sense) to pursue projects that grant him/her meaning in life (be they leisure or work related)." In fact two kinds of existential authenticity can be distinguished, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). Intrapersonal authenticity relates to the individual self, and includes physical aspects (for example relaxation and invigoration), as well as psychological dimensions, such as self-discovery and self-realization (Mkono, 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). Interpersonal authenticity, on the other hand, describes social authenticity experienced via a collective sense of self that is enabled in part through the strengthening of social bonds in group pursuits (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 2000). In both forms existential authenticity sets the psychological environment in which the tourist can resist alienation. But, when ICTT is introduced into the touristic space, how well can the tourist succeed in this resistance effort? Does ICTT help or detract from this effort?

Intrapersonal Authenticity

If a sacred journey has been used as a metaphor for the quest for authenticity it is possible to identify the profane influences of ICTT that might interrupt this quest at the intrapersonal level. First, as the use of technology has increased, scholars have reported new psychological maladies illustrating a negative relationship between technology usage and psychological health (Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013). For example research has identified addictive Internet use, termed variously as Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD), Pathological Internet Use and Problematic Internet Use (Akin & Iskender, 2011; Dalbudak et al., 2013; Leung, 2004; Young & Rogers, 1998). Excessive users of technology have been labelled 'technocentred', 'techno-addicts', and 'technophiliacs' (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006). We define addiction as the continued dependence on something for relief, comfort, or stimulation, in part due to cravings when that something is absent (Akin & Iskender, 2011) as exemplified in this post: *"For me social media was like a drug—I'd refresh the feed and there'd be another line to read, another link to click, another rabbit hole to fall into"*. Thus, ICTT addiction is characterised as a psychological dependence with symptoms that include an

increasing preoccupation with and investment of resources on Internet activities and our research revealed this preoccupation: *"As I run a B&B it has become increasingly obvious that most people cannot do without internet."*

Further, IAD has been linked to significant psychological, social and occupational impairment (Akin & Iskender, 2011; Çuhadar, 2012; Leung, 2004; Young & Rogers, 1998). More specific studies have documented a relationship between psychological disorders and behaviours such as excessive texting, viewing video clips and social networking (Rosen et al., 2013) as this post shows: *"By the time I got a smartphone I was a goner; obsessively checking my time line dozens of times a day became routine."* Indeed, it has been suggested that Internet abuse can be as damaging as drug and alcohol abuse (Leung, 2004). Additionally, Krasnova, Widjaja, Buxmann, Wenninger, & Benbasat's (2015) study explains how social media participation has been linked to depression, anxiety and narcissistic behaviour as revealed in this post: *"I sometimes really do wish I could unplug, bc I do often find myself checking my reader feeds instead of enjoying a beautiful new destination."*

Studies have also linked social media (over)use with depression and compromised self-esteem (Jelenchick, Eickhoff, & Moreno, 2013; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). Internet addicts can exhibit the compulsive, urge-driven use (Çuhadar, 2012) demonstrated by this post: *"When my phone did not emit the requisite signal for a few minutes, I'd keep refreshing Twitter, Instagram, Gmail, or whatever platform I was obsessed with at the moment. I hated myself for letting it get this bad…."* When the individual is not online, he/she may experience unpleasant feelings such as anxiety, depression, emptiness and loneliness which are relieved by engaging in Internet related behaviours (Young & Rogers, 1998) as reported here: *"I feel disconnected…..and sometimes look longingly at the app on my phone. I try to check actual news from the news app instead…when I get the compulsion to check something. Often I check what'app and email desperately, wishing for some message from friends ... What do I do? I feel like my brain is stagnating. Not creating anything. Still just consuming."* In our analysis, anxiety was widely evident in the inner turmoil and agitation reported in relation to the use, or withdrawal from, social media. Our quotes illustrate anxiety expressed as self-hate from excessive phone-watching, to desperation and the nerviness evident here: *"I get jumpy every time my phone makes any sort of a sound, which kinda ruins the fun".* A loss of control over Internet use may have significant negative impacts on daily life functions, relationships, and emotional stability (Dalbudak et al., 2013). Problematic internet use thus raises the question of when tourists' use of ICT reaches an addiction or problematic threshold with its associated detrimental consequences. Clearly compulsive and addictive ICTT use can severely disrupt the search for the authentic self.

A further theme generated by the data related to intrapersonal authenticity is the extent to which tourists are able to engage with, or in a sense get lost in, absorbed by or inspired by the destination. This is what Andrews (2009) calls "tourism as a moment of being"- something observed as being absent in the following post: *"I'd come down on the side of technology ruining your vacation … On a recent trip to Baltimore, two couples boarded a public bus at the same time as me after a visit to Fort McHenry. All four of them spent their entire bus ride on their smartphones, doing whatever it was they were doing. They didn't share a word, an opinion, a comment, an observation."* Another useful way of understanding this is mindfulness (Chen, Scott, & Benckendorff, 2014). Brown and Ryan (2003, p. 5) describe mindfulness as "the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present". Factors that can reduce this being in the moment include loss of attention, distraction and the mind wandering to the past or future, as recorded in this post: *"Perpetual documentation, the idea that "this is the moment!" is so damaging. Just enjoy your holiday without the need to capture anything."*

Mindfulness may also be understood through the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) which involves complete absorption in an activity and being in the moment. This next post illustrates how ICTT can inhibit flow experiences: *"It seems a little weird that we have become more preoccupied with collecting evidence of having a good time rather than enjoying the experience itself."* Ideas of mindfulness and flow prompted our research to investigate whether ICTT impinges on the zone of liminality and whether it distracts tourists from "being there" and developing existential authenticity. One post expresses this distraction: *"Ah, one of those wonderful "see everything but look at nothing" holidays."* Liminality describes the transition from home to away where everyday rules can be suspended as the tourist enters the different realm of a holiday. Graburn (1989) describes this as a sacred journey. However, like many others, de Botton, in his book *The Art of Travel* (2003), challenges this by describing the paradox that emerged for him whilst holidaying in Barbados, reflecting that "I had inadvertently brought myself with me to the island." He discovered that he had not left his troubles, worries nor other pressing issues at home. ICTT can exacerbate this de Botton effect and we found many cases where it impeded mindfulness leading its users to "not being there", e.g: *"I also feel like this constant documenting and broadcasting of every moment dulls the beauty of it as well, as does looking at your phone every two seconds."*

Finally ICTT also impacts on intrapersonal authenticity at the pre- and post-experience phase of tourism, and this is reflected in the growth in dedicated tourism social media platforms such as Tripadvisor (Hodge, 2011). Such sites allow travellers to interact both as information seekers and information producers (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Several studies have highlighted the role of social media in information search and trip planning (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013; Lee, Law, & Murphy, 2011; O'Connor, 2010; Vásquez, 2011; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014) but social-existential implications continue to be overlooked. For instance while tourism social media sites increase the information available for choice they also reduce the likelihood of serendipitous discovery at the destination. Our posts illustrated this: *"Wi-fi has made travel so much easier. Mind you it does spoil the possibility of unintended departures from route which sometimes open up interesting doors."*

This may be further understood as an aspect of "mindlessness". For example Langer (1992) describes the human tendency to categorize the moment into pre-existing categories. In these cases the mind may act mindlessly on auto-pilot to deal with the new situations in routinized or pre-packaged ways. Here ICTT can perform a staging role, pre-packaging itineraries and experiences. As one post noted: *"TA … simply list[s] the most reviewed places and sadly that usually means Dave and Busters and the Zoo are always at the top."* Xue et al. (2014, p.193) neatly sum up this effect where "by only including the most symbolic and 'must-see' tourism destinations, the pre-packaged vacation confines tourists to fictitious and alienated tourist spaces and prevents them from exploring the different but real world. Our data demonstrates how Tripadvisor and similar sites can lead to this type of pre-packaging and consequent mindlessness: *"On things to do, it's really laughable. Locals would bother with few if any items … Numbers can't capture a place … Still, there are people who love to count and think that a the #4 place in Rome must be better than the #8 place. The numbers make life simple because now there is no need to think. Just follow the trail of breadcrumbs."* Further comments speak about a loss of serendipity and a closing off of creativity and experimentation caused by falling in line with a Tripadvised itinerary: *"sometimes it does take away from the spontaneity of seeing and experiencing things while you travel".* This is the opposite of Langer's (1992, p. 289) mindfulness which describes "a state of openness to novelty in which the individual actively constructs categories and distinctions" as demonstrated in this post: *"When I'm in a new*

place, I don't use my phone to look for where I am, I know (roughly) where I am, but I want to engage with the locals so I ask them. Same goes for food, I'm not really interested in that "special" restaurant on Trip Advisor. I don't want to "find" a place, I want to stumble upon it!"

Interpersonal Authenticity

Examination of interpersonal aspects of ICTT on authenticity includes the sending and sharing of photographs and videos via social media while away. This was unprecedented before the advent of Web 2.0 and brings us back to the subject of the "selfie" (Barry, Doucette, Loflin, Rivera-Hudson, & Herrington, 2015; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Sorokowski et al., 2015; Weiser, 2015) which encapsulates the fetishisation of the self. Selfies and other images showcasing the touristic experience are shared in millions every day across social media platforms (Lee & Ma, 2012; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013) as reported in this post: *"people of the modern age just so in love with them selves, still telstra must love it it make a truck load of cash for them with these people sending there pics all over the place. i just delete them."* The photograph and the selfie are popular among tourists, perhaps more than they are in many other social contexts. Travel is generally a peak experience (Quan & Wang, 2004), a memorable performance and there are fleeting moments to capture, if not in the human memory, then in the device. Additionally the tourist is always transitory, and this heightens the need to capture moments, places, and spaces; to freeze them in time and therefore create the opportunity to "revisit" them. Further, as Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) observe, the visual is central to tourists, and taking pictures of the extraordinary in tourism has long served as an antidote to the mundane daily life at home.

Selfies reflect the desire to frame the self in a photograph taken to be shared with an online audience (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Because of the redirection of the gaze to the self-gaze, selfies can be a tell-tale sign of narcissistic personality (Barry et al., 2015; Sorokowski et al., 2015; Weiser, 2015). Canavan (2017) argues that selfie taking pushes the focus onto the tourist, as the background has simultaneously been cropped and emphasised away. Further the selfie stick has been branded the "narcissi-stick" (Pearce & Moscardo, 2015). Our posts often associated selfies with self-love and narcissism: For example: *"Selfies are the purest expression of narcissism ever invented."* So although the selfie is born from a desire to share with others it is hardly part of an interpersonal quest for co-discovering the authentic self. Rather it can be a symptom of infatuation with the narcissistic self – generally not interested in self-knowledge but rather a journey to self-deception and deceptive portrayal of self to others. In the words of one post: *"Selfies are a sympton of a societal illness: the over-concern with self. It's a form of self-love that people show to themselves when living in a culture where everyone else is also busy self-loving and thus not able to show love to you."*

Interpersonal authenticity is also affected by what Foucault noted as the power of deep-seated discourses which could lead to self-surveillance. Examples in ICTT include the discourse of always being on-line, of instant response and of the committed worker. For Foucault, it was important to understand the sometimes subtle power mechanisms which regulate people's activity and behaviour. This regulation may be abetted by discourse (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2014) and surveillance (Hollinshead, 1999). Discourse analysis can include the analysis of language and social practices to uncover how their evolution affects what can and cannot be said and done (ways of saying and doing) as well as the power such language and practices may exert over their adherents. Self-surveillance is a behavioural self-consciousness and regulation prompted by actual or imagined observation by relevant others. For example the following comment betrays the self-surveillance of its author: *"One of the reasons my predecessor lost his job was he went on a two week vacation and didn't reply to any emails"*

This raises questions about how tourists may be disciplined through the evolving language and practices associated with use of ICTT as well as the gaze (Urry, 2002) of the ICTT audience - those who might view their Facebook and other posts. They tacitly learn to discipline themselves and behave in normalised ways. Bourdieu (2005) talks about peoples' 'habitus' which are socialised norms that guide behaviour. Insights here are also offered by Edensor's (2000) use of the metaphor of tourist performance. He notes for example how "certain tourist performances are intended to draw attention to the self. Tourism becomes a vehicle for transmitting identity" (p.74). The following shows how the Facebook stage can encourages a particular type of performance: *"When I came home and went on and on about the incredible food that I had, all my friends asked me why I only had 2 pictures of my food taken by my cellphone"*

Finally, ICTT effects on interpersonal authenticity may also be understood through the networks that connect and support it. Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 2001; van der Duim, Ren, & Jóhannesson, 2013) helps us to understand the role of both human and non-human entities in sustaining and ordering (Franklin, 2004) tourist performances through ICTT. Here the tourist performance is modified by the relationship between the tourist, other humans and things as demonstrated by this post: *"The quest to raise my profile or status became a preoccupation. There was no way to avoid those fluctuating numbers next to my avatar."* Networks might include the tourist, the smart device, the internet, apps and the ICTT audience so that the nature of each is affected by its relationship with other parts of the network. The network calls forth a particular performance. For example the perfect (staged) view/ beach / meal for posting to the e-audience constantly "hails" (Althusser, 2006) the tourist - including this one: *"I'm guilty of trying to get that perfect shot, or making sure that I capture everything on camera… which means that I lose out on being in the moment."* As such nonhuman entities such as the smart device and the internet can exert power over human entities in the network. They can bend behaviour, encourage certain actions, so that networks too may regulate and discipline.

Resistance and Relish

In this last section we found evidence of tourists who were aware of the negative aspects of ICTT and actively managed its use, and in some cases relished the special comfort that it brought to them. Foucault also provides a useful insight into this behaviour. He noted that discourse can be not only a site of power but also of potential resistance so that "discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy." (Foucault, 1980, p. 100). Some ICTT users were able to recognise its disciplining (rules) and devise a strategy to escape it (resistance) (Tribe, 2007): One such strategy was that: *"At the beginning of summer vacation, I declared "Tech-NO Tuesdays"* whilst another post declared that *"For me, it's a blanket 'no checking' of e-mails on holiday".* At the extreme is a retreat to "tech-free tourism" and e-detox. A number of posts spoke to this theme including this one: *"We had a holiday in the mountains recently. Away from all forms of modernity, no phones, gadgets, absolutely nothing. Just the sound of birds and the wind"*. The last comment emphasises the virtues of reconnecting with nature, a sensitivity to being there and resistance to enabling authentic engagement.

Resistance may also take the less extreme route of claiming sufficient agency (Giddens, 1979) to actively manage technology. This can be quite simple as this post explains: *"Digital detox? There is an off-switch on most gadgets, computers and phones."* Agency, according to Giddens, is in a dialectical relationship with the structures (in this case ICTT ones) that it acts within. The following quote demonstrates agency and a kind of measured management: *"I'm always on facebook, texting, on iPlayer, etc. but I have no problem putting it in my pocket and spending an afternoon climbing*

trees.” Similarly active agency can set parameters to manage ICTT use to reduce anxiety: *“Personally, I like to check my emails once a day even on vacation because it helps give me peace of mind that things are working as they should.”*

Finally one unexpected finding of this research was the sense of empowerment illustrated by a posting from an introverted user who relished ICTT: *“I find that the digital world is a my home away from a "real" world that I don't like very much. For a naturally retiring individual such as myself, conforming to the so-called social norms and expected dialogue trees can be exhausting. Being a stunning conversationalist for the 12 or so hours of my public life is a hard act to perform. Mute as a stone is my natural state but, that mannerism is not welcome or allowable in much of the non-digital world. Therefore, I like my digital world. I don't need a detox from it.”* Here is someone who reports a sense of inhibition and alienation as their normal state but who finds ICTT as a way of overcoming this. It confirms findings from the general ICT literature where Whitty and McLaughlin (2007) suggested that the Internet provides social opportunities which enable people who lack social skills to exercise them and improve them. Similarly this self-declared “geeky traveller” commented: *“As a geeky traveller, I don't think technology has ruined the overall travel experience at all”*. This supports the findings of Amichai-Hamburger & Ben-Artzi (2003) that the Internet can be a powerful empowerment tool, particularly among those with social inhibitions.

Conclusion

Our project sought to understand how connectedness through ICTT could paradoxically cause tourists to be more *disconnected* when analysed through the theoretical lenses of alienation and authenticity. We interpreted, applied, adapted and extended these concepts to the context of ICTT and its unforeseen effects on the tourism experience. We coined the term *e-lienation* as a useful organising concept to foreground these effects and to reveal a set of consequences that have not been previously distilled or brought together in a way that highlights their combined significance. The term should be seen as having its genesis in alienation rather than being a direct translation of it whilst embracing ideas from the literature on authenticity. Indeed it illustrates the dialectics between alienation and authenticity. We define *e-lienation* broadly as “the negative consequences of ICT on the tourist experience”. Of course not all ICTT use is *e-lienating* as we are reminded by one of our comments which noted: *“Anyone who tells you that travel was better before smart phones and the internet is fooling themselves”*

However existing studies on the authenticity and alienation have not caught up with technology. Many were undertaken prior to the Internet so that the question of how the alienation-authenticity dynamic operates in the face of ICTT has not been seriously addressed. Similarly ICTT research has been relentlessly technical, omitting the critical. Our analysis offers a significant contribution to knowledge in addressing this research gap in proposing our thesis of *e-lienation*. We provide a thick and rich description of this phenomenon using data generated in natural settings. The main *e-lienating* effects that we have uncovered are two-fold relating to the alienation-authenticity dialectic. On the one hand we find that ICTT creates extra opportunities for alienation where it can promote for example normlessness, self-estrangement, isolation and addiction and enables and encourages the bringing of home and work on holiday. This is in contrast to notions of travel being stress-free, restorative, and demonstrates that distinctions between home and away, work and leisure, and the material and virtual are further blurred. On the other hand we found that ICTT can frustrate any tourism quest for authenticity by stimulating anxiety, addiction, narcissism and mindlessness. This is in contrast to travel as self-enlightenment and a journey of becoming. Further where MacCannell saw staging as an activity which could frustrate the tourist quest for authenticity

we propose that ICTT can present similar obstacles and here we draw attention to the staging aspects of Apps such as Trip Advisor.

The research also found some interesting ways in which *e-lienation* effects were resisted, managed or even gratefully harnessed under the broad heading of resistance and relish. First there is a group who are combatting *e-lienation* through detox, withdrawal and rehab and actively seeking tech-free tourism. Second we unearthed a group of people who understand the pitfalls of *e-lienation* but are confident of their ability to contain it by managing and carefully navigating ICTT. Third there are some who find a special comfort in ICTT-brokered communications and engagement. Here a smartphone can provide company for a solo diner, respite from lonely travel, and virtual friends and conversation for those with debilitating shyness in the face of the actual presence of others.

There are two key limitation of this study. First it represents, by (netnographic) default, the perspective of participants who engage with social media or the online world in some form, thereby excluding users who might shun social media and other online platforms. Second our study was passive and did not probe participants for further detail or clarification. The main implications of this research apply to three groups. First for over-active ICTT users there is perhaps a need for greater self-understanding and self-help if ICTT is changing their behaviour and experience in ways that they do not wish it to. Second, related to this is the need for parents to actively monitor and manage any detrimental effects of ICTT use in their children. The third implication is for over-demanding employers. For whilst it may be convenient and productive in the short-term to encourage employees to answer emails and stay connected through ICTT during their vacations, such behaviour calls into question the whole point of a holiday as a period of rest, refreshment and rejuvenation and therefore the long-term well-being of staff.

Finally possible avenues for future research are summed up by two closing posts: *"We are so lucky to live in a time with all this amazing technology. It is what we choose to do with it individually and as a community, nation and planet that counts."* This represents a strong call to focus more reflexively on desirable ends rather than the means of ICTT. And next: *"Well, you lot can go gambolling in the forest with the chimps and wipe your arses with leaves if you like, but I'm staying firmly plugged in. Nature? I think I've got an App for it... somewhere."* The agenda prompted here is for a deeper understanding of how ICTT is consciously and voluntarily changing existential authenticity and the profound changes of what it means to be a tourist in the ICTT age where tourists may sometimes prefer the virtual to the real. So just as authors such as Ritzer and Liska (1997) argued that "post-tourists" may search for enjoyment and fun rather than authenticity and might actually enjoy simulacra, so "tech-tourists" might prefer digital connectivity, stimulation and distraction over a more self-directed authentic quest. This would be a research agenda about ICTT, ontological change and new understandings of authenticity.

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