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Conceptualizing the creative tourist class: technology, mobility and tourism experiences

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Abstract

Increasing mobilities and an ever greater amount of technologies that support creativity have led to the emergence of a so-called Creative Class in our postmodern society. Creative Class members have distinctive experiences that blur the boundaries between everyday and touristic life. These experiences challenge conventional typologies of the tourist experience and have tremendous implications for tourism research and practice. In this article we discuss first what the Creative Class is, what experiences it has, and how it uses emerging technologies to create, mediate, and reconstruct these experiences. A special emphasis is placed on the relationship the Creative Class has with technology, in particular consumer-generated media. The discussion draws on literature from different fields, stressing the need for an interdisciplinary perspective to analyze and understand the phenomenon. Next, the article proposes that there is indeed an emergence of a creative tourist class with distinct tourism experiences. We then argue that these insights call for a new conceptualization of tourism experiences in general. A tourism experience sphere is presented and described that seeks to overcome some of the limitations of our current conceptualization and understanding of tourists' experiences. The sphere represents a multidimensional space enabling combinations of experience aspects and dimensions (these are illustrative items and not meant to be an exhaustive categorization). The article closes with an agenda for future research regarding tourism experiences, creative tourists, tourism product development, and tourism marketing.

Keywords

Conceptualizing, creative, tourist, class, technology, mobility, tourism, experiences

Disciplines

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE CREATIVE TOURIST CLASS: TECHNOLOGY, MOBILITY, AND TOURISM EXPERIENCES

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Increasing mobilities and an ever greater amount of technologies that support creativity have led to the emergence of a so-called Creative Class in our postmodern society. Creative Class members have distinctive experiences that blur the boundaries between everyday and touristic life. These experiences challenge conventional typologies of the tourist experience and have tremendous implications for tourism research and practice. In this article we discuss first what the Creative Class is, what experiences it has, and how it uses emerging technologies to create, mediate, and reconstruct these experiences. A special emphasis is placed on the relationship the Creative Class has with technology, in particular consumer-generated media. The discussion draws on literature from different fields, stressing the need for an interdisciplinary perspective to analyze and understand the phenomenon. Next, the article proposes that there is indeed an emergence of a creative tourist class with distinct tourism experiences. We then argue that these insights call for a new conceptualization of tourism experiences in general. A tourism experience sphere is presented and described that seeks to overcome some of the limitations of our current conceptualization and understanding of tourists' experiences. The sphere represents a multidimensional space enabling combinations of experience aspects and dimensions (these are illustrative items and not meant to be an exhaustive categorization). The article closes with an agenda for future research regarding tourism experiences, creative tourists, tourism product development, and tourism marketing.

Key words: Creative Class; Experience; Mobilities; Technology; Consumer-generated media

Introduction

The landscape of tourism, put very simply, is vastly different today than it was even 20 years ago. Paradigmatic changes in tourism have occurred and challenge existing notions of tourism and travel, and the experiences they encompass. Globalization and technological changes enable rapid movement of resources, capital and labor

transnationally and worldwide (Meethan, 2001). Consequently, tourism has to be conceived differently than we have done to date. Sheller and Urry (2006) call for a new "mobilities paradigm" that would allow us to better understand new forms of travel. In general, there is a new sense of heightened mobilities and dynamism. Every component of life—people, goods, services, labor, technologies, etc.—has become mobile to the point that all

are tourists in their own cities. People travel and move more frequently; as they uproot and move to other cities, fewer have full knowledge of the cities in which they live. Long-distance commuters, who live in one city and work in another, have some local knowledge of both cities, but not enough to be considered true residents of either. Business travel has also become a way of life for some people who may own a home in a particular city, but spend the majority of their time elsewhere (nationally or globally). International students consume education in faraway places while frequently traveling back to their home countries. Tourists spend often considerable times in exotic locations to receive medical treatments or engage in other forms of health tourism (Goodrich, 1993). Cultures mix and collide through socioeconomic and touristic travels, and the new mobile world exemplifies a touristic culture. Tourism destinations are increasingly selected as sites of life and work by what D'Andrea (2007) calls global nomads. Thus, the line between the everyday and the holiday are increasingly blurred, and the vacation is increasingly becoming a mere extension of people's everyday lives (Franklin, 2003). Franklin and Crag argue that today "the world" is an extension of "the home," and that because of increased mobilities and resulting changes in the experience of space, tourism "is at least part of the way we now perceive the world around us, wherever we are and whatever we do" (Franklin & Crag, 2001, p. 8; see also Jamal & Hill, 2002).

Globalization has drastically changed the way tourism should be studied. The world of today has experienced a shift from cultural tourism to a *touristic* culture, as Franklin (2003) puts it. With people being tourists in their own cities, one no longer needs to travel to Japan to eat Japanese food, or Thailand for Thai food. Many cities around the world have these exotic cuisines available right there, whether in Australia or North America. Music is yet another cultural venue that one need not travel to its country of origin to experience, because various types of music have been transplanted all over the world (consider the popularity of "World Music" CDs, for instance). The process of globalization and increased mobility has made such movement of food and music, and other goods and services possible.

Technologies mediate and shape the nature of interactions with and between people and places (Crouch & Desforges, 2003). Recent technological developments have accelerated changes in the mobility of people, the mobility of goods and services, the mobility of information, and the mobility of technologies themselves. They have also changed the power relationships between producers and consumers, turning tourists into prosumers (Tofler, 1980). Most importantly, technologies such as cell phones and Skype increasingly compress time and space. The instantaneous communicability afforded by now available technologies distorts past orderings of time and space. Proximity and connectivity have changed and need to be imagined and understood in new ways (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006). Harvey (1990) argues that time horizons are collapsing, leading to different senses of time and space. Time and space relationships provide a crucial framework for human experiences; thus, it has to be assumed that tourism experiences are undergoing significant change as well. Since technology use has become pervasive, time-space compression touches all areas of our life, including tourism. If emerging technologies indeed profoundly impact tourism experiences, the task of revisiting and redefining what "tourism experience" means is imperative to guiding future research as well as current and future tourism development and marketing practices.

Ubiquitous mobility and emerging technologies have given rise to a new type of consumer, termed the "Creative Class" by Richard Florida (2002). Experiences of the Creative Class are fundamentally different because of their increased mobility and innovative uses of technologies. Studying the new Creative Class that has emerged in this distinctly different (postmodern) landscape of the 21st century is a pressing priority, for this group's experiences may provide strong insights into the challenges that face the tourism industry as this early adopter segment grows into a larger societal phenomenon.

Our article draws upon a wide range of theoretical, philosophical, and empirical contributions to offer a starting discussion to these three imperatives of changing mobilities, technologies, and tourist experiences. The article continues as follows. In the next section, we identify the new Creative

Class that has arisen. This is followed by a section that discusses briefly new technologies and new virtual sites and spaces that influence the everyday and touristic experiences of the Creative Class. The question concerning technology (drawing upon Heidegger) is addressed briefly here, for surely no good conceptualization of creative uses of technologies and technologically mobile experience can be done without a look at Heidegger's (1977a) defining work *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. We then go on to identify the new tourists and the new experiences that are shaping travel and tourism today. We propose a multidimensionally oriented sphere of experience that attempts to capture a broad spectrum of experience types, each delineated along a continuum. The article concludes with implications for tourism practice and future research regarding tourism experiences.

The Creative Class

In *The Rise of the Creative Class and How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Florida (2002) provides an extensive study of a new social class made up primarily of professional people whose job is to be creative. As Florida explains, the Creative Class includes some 38.3 million Americans, roughly 30% of the entire US workforce. It includes entrepreneurs, musicians, artists, scientists, and teachers, and represents a fascinating shift in choices, values, and approaches to work and leisure time. Their self-motivated engagement and creative ethos actively reforms the structures of 20th century society into a new economy imbued with new forms of creative and social capital. Old categories no longer apply to these new people. The creative class does not fit traditional social classes and market segments based on demographic characteristics. They "see themselves simply as 'creative people' with creative values, working in increasingly creative workplaces, living essentially creative lifestyles" (Florida, 2002, p. 211). It is important to understand what drives the Creative Class as their values and lifestyle choices are increasingly adopted by other social groups. The active, experiential life of the Creative Class is "becoming more prevalent in society as the structures and institutions of the

Creative Economy spread," says Florida, and experiences increasingly replace and/or enhance the acquisition of goods and service because experiences "stimulate our creative faculties and enhance our creative capacities" (p. 168). It is not a hedonistic, superficially aesthetic life that this group of people seeks—the creative ethos is a participatory ethos that will help society function as much as it will creatively live it (Florida, 2002).

We examine Florida's study in the context of tourism, mobilities, and technologies. The rise of a new Creative Class of consumers, we argue, is constitutive with new mobilities and emerging technologies. As described earlier, the new global landscape is characterized by increasingly mobile populations, such as the migration of workers, diasporas, and travelers seeking temporary, long-term or second-home destinations (Hall, 2005). The Creative Class is highly mobile because creative work is not bound to a traditional workplace. Members of the Creative Class are "neo-nomads" (D'Andrea, 2006), changing locations frequently and engaging in extensive travel for work and pleasure. Florida (2002) argues that the Creative Class perceives those locations as attractive that offer extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation. This is the case not only because they like to engage in outdoor activities, adventure and extreme sports, but also because the existence of such opportunities signals that a place favors a creative lifestyle. In addition, they look for places that offer abundant high-quality amenities and an openness to diversity. The mobility of their work and their high incomes afford the Creative Class with the opportunity to move to such highly attractive places, including tourist destinations and resorts, while maintaining active careers (Moloney, 2007).

Pink (2005) stresses that this new Creative Class thinks in profoundly different ways from the sequential and logical thinking promoted since the Enlightenment era. According to Pink, creative, postmodern thinking is simultaneous, metaphorical, aesthetic, contextual, and synthetic. New ways of thinking and making sense of the world redefine experience and desires for certain types of experiences. Play, aesthetics, and empathy strongly characterize new creative experiences. Rather than being categorical, experiences sought after by the

Creative Class increasingly cross the boundaries of domains. Further, stories woven around experiences support meaning creation, which is central to creative experiences.

Creative thinking requires stimuli. Consequently, the Creative Class lifestyle is characterized by a "passionate quest for experience" (Florida, 2002, p. 166). According to Florida, the Creative Class seeks out experiences that are intense, high-quality, multidimensional, active, unique, meaningful, and authentic, with authenticity being defined as "not generic" (Florida, 2002, p. 228). The Creative Class defines the quality of their lives by the quality of the experiences they consume. Further, the Creative Class, says Florida (2002), craves "real" experiences, favoring active, participatory recreation over passive, institutionalized forms. Their experiences are not driven by escapist motivations, nor are they sought to kill time. Rather, the Creative Class is time deprived and does not have time to kill. Florida continues to describe the Creative Class as engaging in "imaginative hedonism," where anticipation is a central part of the experience and is often more important than the actual consumption.

Creativity not only dominates their work but also their leisure time. Indeed, there are no clear boundaries between work and leisure. Thus, the Creative Class favors places that provide them with creative stimulation, whether it is for work or pleasure (Florida, 2002). According to Florida, they want a multitude of options and preferably want to create the options. They situate their experiences in locations which are physically and/or intellectually engaging and seek out venues where the lines between participant and observer or producer and consumer are blurred. Quoting *The Experience Economy*, Florida claims that what is described there by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore as consumer desires for experiences that are memorable and highly valued, is more about prepackaged Disney type experiences. The Creative Class, rather, wants a hand in structuring their experiences.

The life of the Creative Class is also marked by rapid technological change and cultural diffusion. The globalization of capital, technology, and labor has helped to create a culture industry that has multiplied the range of leisure products and

places available to the emerging Creative Class (Rojek & Urry, 1997). The Creative Class's expectations and perceptions of particular sites and events are therefore influenced heavily by the impression, images, frames, and social constructions that arrived through the "culture brokers" and various cultural media—novels, films, poetry, art, music, travel writings, newspapers, interpretive guides, and tour brochures, to list just a few (Dann, 1996). Yet, while mass consumers consume culture through mass media, the Creative Class exposes itself to a diverse array of often independent media. Creative Class experiences are also increasingly constructed through and mediated by emerging Internet technologies. However, Florida argues that the virtual life is not replacing real life, and members of the Creative Class are not looking for life "delivered through a modem" but rather a life that is "heart-throbbingly real" (Florida, 2002, p. 166). Members of the Creative Class use technologies actively and creatively. New consumer-generated media such as blogs, video-sharing sites, and podcasts afford the Creative Class with ever greater opportunities for construction and reconstruction of experiences, while social networking applications and mobile technologies add to the mobility of this autobiographic/experiential information. Consequently, emerging technologies provide the Creative Class with new horizons of meaning and action (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006). It is therefore important to closely investigate how the Creative Class uses and relates to technology.

The Question Concerning Technology

There are three popularly cited philosophical views on technology. As explained by Introna (2005), the most common view of information technology is as an artifact or tool available for humans to achieve their objectives and outcomes. This view can be criticized for a greater or lesser degree of technological determinism since it is assumed that a particular technology has certain determinate effects. Technological determinism is "the view that technology more or less causes certain ways of doing or ways of organizing to come about" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006). The social constructionist view argues dif-

ferently: one has to recognize that technology itself is socially constructed—it is the outcome of complex social processes. Both in its design and in its actual use there is an ongoing reciprocal relationship in which society and technology co-construct each other; they act through and upon each other. Those working from this constructivist view (e.g., Bruno Latour) attempt to understand how technologies become part of particular social practices.

The third view is the phenomenological perspective, where it is claimed that the above two views are not adequate. A major influence on this view is Heidegger (1977a), who argued that society and technology co-constitute each other; they are each other's ongoing condition or possibility for being (Introna, 2005). Technology is not just an artifact but emerges from a "technological" attitude towards the world. A prior technological attitude towards the world (Heidegger 1977a) means that we will tend to view problems as requiring a technological solution—technology is the outcome of a technological way of looking and relating ourselves to the world. Information technology, following Heidegger, can be viewed as a horizon of meaning and action, as it allows the world to show up in certain ways. As Godzinski (2005) explains: On the one hand, Heidegger sees modern technology as a "challenging" [*Herausfordern*]. On the other hand, Heidegger also views modern technology as a form of revealing. Accordingly, in and through its revealing, modern technology has a tendency to unlock, transform, store, and distribute the resources that nature has to offer.

The best explanation of the promises and dangers inherent in modern technology, says Mooney (1998), appeared in a speech Heidegger gave to the Bremen club in 1949 called "the Enframing." This speech was later expanded and retitled "The Question Concerning Technology" when he presented it to the Bavarian Academy of Arts in 1950. In his speech, Heidegger warns that the scientific-technological way of looking at things (*Enframing*) may prohibit us from viewing the biophysical world in any other way than instrumentally, as something to be consumed (standing-reserve). What is Heidegger's solution to this Question Concerning Technology? Heidegger suggests fine art, the

"bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful" (Heidegger, 1977b, p. 315). The reasons he picks fine art are multiple. As Mooney and others point out, Heidegger argues that technology is simply another form of art springing from needs in the human consciousness similar to the needs from which poetry and music spring. For Heidegger, technology and fine arts are different elements of the same thing. Hence, the growth of *Enframing* (which is the essence of technology) also entails the growth of that which is capable of saving us from *Enframing*, namely the fine arts (Mooney, 1998).

Following the ancient Greek, Heidegger claimed that art was not appreciated on an aesthetic level, nor was art only a (cultural) sector—the existence of a few practicing artists in society is inadequate. Rather, it is the artistic and poetic process that we must embrace, as did the ancient Greeks. Heidegger points out that in ancient Greece, the arts were simply referred to as *techne*. It is also the root of the word "technology," which is the form of art that reveals itself through the process of *Enframing*. We can escape this process of *Enframing* by embracing a view based upon other forms of art—the fine arts, in this case. The process of engaging in the fine arts is such that things may be revealed to us differently and in such a way that we are "amazed" and returned to a state of innocence. "Once this state of innocence is achieved, the creative process in which one engages when creating fine art will become the way in which truth is revealed" (Mooney, 1998).

It is this aspect of Heidegger's "solution" that is intriguing with respect to the Creative Class that Florida (2002) addresses. Heidegger wants us to reflect upon and question the creative process. By engaging in the creative process, by questioning this process and the art, we can engage in technological activity without *Enframing*. As he argues, technology is not merely a means to an end (instrumental). It is a mode where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens. In many respects, Heidegger's solution to The Question Concerning Technology appears to fit the Creative Class very well.

The Creative Class is technologically oriented, but has a particular technological attitude, which goes beyond *Enframing*. The way they use tech-

nologies is as a tool (to accomplish a task), as an instrumentum (instrumentally), and as an increasingly given part of reality (almost taken for granted in some instances, like expecting wireless access in a three- or four-star hotel room). The Creative Class has distinct "rhythms" of technology use (Green, 2002), which need to be understood. They use technology to extend their social space and time while remaining "locally continuous" (Green, 2002, p. 291). Their use of mobile technologies, especially, leads to new continuities across space and time, a new form of mobile temporality. However, going beyond the instrumental, the Creative Class also values aesthetic dimensions of technology and technology use. Technologies are no longer functional tools, but rather become experiences and an integral part of the creative lifestyle, as can be exemplified with the Apple iPhone. From this perspective, aesthetic, hedonic, affective, and experiential aspects of technology use define the quality of technology. Consequently, user experiences rather than usability define creative consumers' interactions with technology (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006).

The Creative Class is comprised of curious, reflective, participatory people; more importantly, their way of being is in the *Lebenswelt* (Life-world),—is as creative, experiential beings-in-the-world. Emerging technologies (e.g., consumer-generated media and participatory worlds such as SecondLife) as well as peer-to-peer applications and approaches (e.g., open source software) increasingly foster this form of creativity and, in fact, strive on creativity. There is growing evidence of an ever greater use of technologies for the sake of creating. Thus, art and technology indeed merge for the Creative Class.

Mobilities, technology use and relationships, creative thinking, and distinct everyday life experiences also inform and shape the tourism experiences of the Creative Class. As much as the values and lifestyle of the Creative Class have started to penetrate the rest of society, their approaches to tourism are also expected to become increasingly common, thus changing the nature of travel and tourism.

The Creative Tourist Experience

The new landscape of mobilities, and the rise of the Creative Class and a touristic culture opens

up troubling questions related to the blurring of boundaries in so many different spaces, places, sites and even cultures. "Hybridity" and "pastiche," once the purview of the postmodern, are common to the readers of newspapers like the *New York Times*. Traditional conceptualizations of the tourist experience are no longer effective in the vastly different local-global systems of the 21st century. In this highly mobile world, experience is a new phenomenon that begs for new conceptualizations to inform tourism research, planning, and marketing practices.

It is clear from the above discussion that the touristic experience of the Creative Class has to be conceptualized differently, for the old categories and old components do not apply. Drawing from Florida (2002) and Pink (2005), we suggest that the postmaterialistic values and conceptual thinking of the Creative Class lead them to creative exploration of people, places, activities, and things. Theirs is a creative quest for meaning at "home" and in the "world." Their places of dwelling are creative, their urban city streets are zestfully alive, and their urban destinations and nature-based experiences are rich, participatory and storied, narratized and shared through multiple media. Social capital is being replaced with "creative capital," diversity and innovation are cherished values (Florida, 2002). These values directly translate to tourism experiences.

The life of the Creative Class is a "mobile social life" (Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007) in which travel is an everyday experience and touristic experiences are part of the everyday life. Thus, tourism for the creative tourist is no longer a retreat from temporal and spatial features of labor practices and everydayness (Jansson, 2002); rather, it is an integral part of their continuous quest for experience. As much as the Creative Class seeks creative stimulation in their everyday life, the creative tourist is on a quest for aesthetic experiences. Creative tourists are essentially peak experience consumers (Wang, 2002), expecting life-transforming experiences on a regular basis. Because their everyday life is very exciting, they need to "push the envelope" to achieve peak experiences, leading to adventure orientation (Florida, 2002) and a tendency to seek out extreme experiences.

Further, the touristic *Lebenswelt* of the Cre-

ative Class is lived with the same Creative Ethos (to use Florida's term) as their everyday life. The Creative Class denotes empowered consumers actively participating in (re)constructing their everyday experiences at home and in the world. These empowered consumers are creatively, poetically, artistically (re)constructing experiences through embodied, physical engagement with the environment and with technologies.

Emerging technologies are increasingly involved in the creation of new sensuous tourism experiences (Crouch & Desforages, 2003), and this especially applies to creative tourists. The multiple Web-based media that can be accessed enroute and at the destination via wireless services or other Internet facilities hook creative tourists instantaneously to highly aesthetic, cultural, and often consumer-generated offerings via podcasts, videos on Youtube, information on tripadvisor.com, etc. And new mobile technologies like camera-enabled smart phones now allow consumers to not only consume but also capture, construct, and share these experiences while on the move, thus changing the very fabric and structure of their experiences (Green, 2002). Moreover, the sharing of tourism experiences with others through mobile and Internet technologies makes it possible to remotely experience someone else's trip (Molz, 2006). Mobilities and new technologies have therefore influenced the rise of a new actively engaged social class and a dynamic landscape of travel and tourism interconnected through social networks and virtual and actual narratives.

Creative tourist experiences can be also seen as mindful experiences. Following Moscardo (1996), this means that the Creative Class becomes a class of mindful visitors who actively process information—they draw novel distinctions, examine information from new perspectives, are sensitive to context, are interested and active participants. They are questioning and reflexive—capable of reassessing the way they view the world and their own relationships to "the other." Aided by the various technologies they own and take with them when they travel, or use after returning home, they are capable of constructing new experiences and reconstructing old ones, thus adding personal meaning to the experience. Most importantly, their relationship to the technologies of travel is co-constitutive

(technology creating the tourist experience and vice versa), artful, and artistic. It is artful in the ease and comfort of creating, for instance, personal virtual trip accounts can be easily created by writing blogs and uploading video clips and digital photos in the moment (at the destination) to the blog site. It is artistic in the sense that multiple emergent and newly emerging technologies are used to enrich the travel narrative as well as the travel experience. Reviewing existing narratives prior to traveling and postings one's own on trip advisor.com, YouTube, and My Space, either during or after the trip enable co-constitutive experiences that have a different temporality and further blur the boundaries between "home" and "the world" in the new landscapes of travel and tourism.

The experiences of the Creative Class are constitutive of the experience of a growing segment of travelers in an increasingly mobile world. They are rich, participatory experiences in creative activities that comport well with the "new tourism" forms that have emerged, such as travel involving extreme adventure and extreme sport activities, health and wellness travel (yoga retreats, spa, and massage), specialized learning-based travel (art, history, photography courses delivered by 'experts'), designer hotels, specialty hotels (ice hotels, underwater hotels), and exclusive luxury resorts in highly aesthetic landscapes. Those seeking sites of death and disaster have contributed to a relatively new form called dark tourism; heritage tourism caters to a range of motivations including nostalgic forays into the past, and roots-seeking travel engages part of the mobile nomadic flows of leisure-seekers (including the growing second-home owner segment), business travelers, economic or amenity migrants, and diasporic populations. The quest for meaningful experiences transforms tourism experiences increasingly into forms of pilgrimage (Cohen, 1992). Meaning is also found in pro-poor tourism (Roe, Goodwin, & Ashley, 2004) as well as volunteer tourism (Singh & Singh, 2004). Continuity in touristic and everyday experiences as well as authenticity is achieved by mingling with locals. Technologies support these experiences through bridging the divide between locals and tourists by providing forums of exchange (see www.like-a-local.com and [CONCEPTUALIZING THE CREATIVE TOURIST CLASS](http://www.couch</p>
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surfing.com). The extreme is experienced through travel to geographical peripheries (Spletstoeser, Landau, & Headland, 2004) as well as through adventure travel and extreme sports (Varley, 2006), while travel to space is seen to be the ultimate frontier (Laing & Crouch, 2004). New experiential forms of tourism continue to arise that have yet to be labeled.

(Re)Conceptualizing Tourism Experiences

The range of experiences that the creative tourist class has is diverse and not easy to encapsulate, but we offer a start here in the form of a sphere comprised of descriptive "spokes" (Fig. 1). The spokes identify continuums of experience such as: conventional-extreme, active-passive, solitary-social, internal-shared, bodily/sensory-aesthetic/visual, virtual mediated-(un)mediated, meaningful-generic, and local-glocalized. All these are distinct aspects of experiences and cannot be captured through traditional conceptualizations of tourism experiences based on activities or desired destination features. One can of course imagine a number of other spokes which could be added. The ones presented in Figure 1 exemplify the extremity, sharing, meaning creation, mediation, em-

bodiment, glocality, and aesthetic needs inherent in the experiences of the Creative Class. Yet, the sphere also accommodates more "conventional" tourism experiences. We assume that any particular tourist experience could be situated in a space determined by any number of dimensions and characteristics. For example, a Creative Class visitor at the Austin City Limits music festival may be very mindful of the music variety, and seeks direct, unmediated experience of her favorite artists (that she knows are attending the festival). For a different visitor, the experience of the festival can be social, conventional, and passive. Thus, rather than providing static categories, the analytical experience framework is presented in the form of a sphere in which different types of tourist experiences are embedded.

An ever-increasing number of new tourist experiences seem to become available as new technologies support new types of activities. Some involve significant risk and require skill, for instance, storm (or hurricane) chasing, kite-skiing, and heli-hiking. The experiences and activities are not easily accounted for in conventional frameworks of tourist motivations and experiences. They are extreme and tailored for exclusive groups, yet they

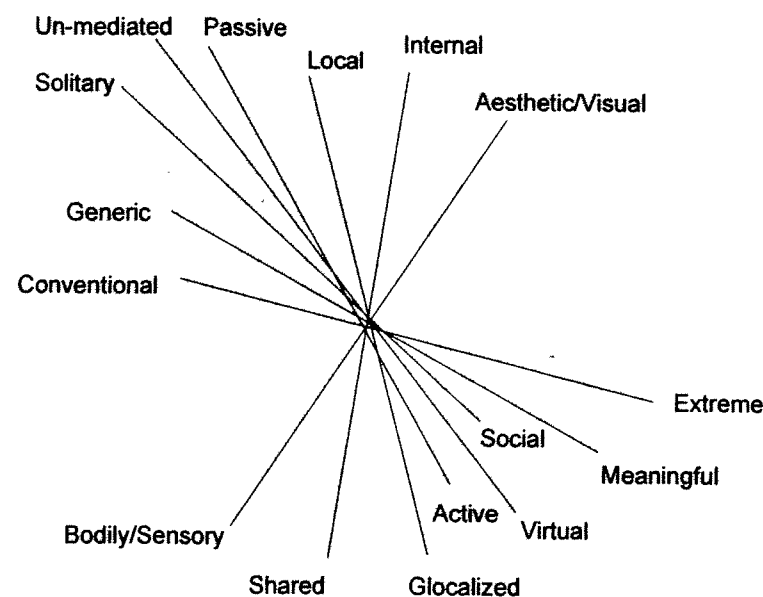


Figure 1. Experience sphere.

are growing in popularity. At the same time, conventional mass tourism experiences such as Disneyworld and cruises continue to draw a significant number of people. Experiences also range from participating in triathlons to indulging in spa treatments. Creative consumers venture out alone but often also participate in social gatherings. They enjoy very private and exclusive experiences but regularly share them with the world. Blog and social networking site technologies greatly support this sharing of experiences. These technologies also support virtual experiences through the information presented by others. In addition, virtual tours and virtual worlds such as SecondLife afford a new way of experiencing space. On the other hand, depriving oneself of technology through travel to remote areas is popular. Somewhere in the middle lie experiences that are mediated to a greater or lesser extent by available technologies. Some experiences support a more distanced aesthetic enjoyment, while others enable a full bodily immersion. Experiences can be situated in their "natural environment" or obtained vicariously elsewhere, such as in the case of Japanese food eaten in New York City. A multidimensional representation of tourist experiences as illustrated in Figure 1 is useful for showing the multitude of experiences available to and desired by a creative tourist class.

The Creative Future: Directions for Research and Practice

The proposed framework clearly calls for a new conceptualization of the tourist experience. Tourist experiences in the existing literature are mostly described based on the activities they include (e.g., shopping vs. outdoor experiences). The experience sphere suggests that there are many dimensions of experiences which should be considered. The same activity can be experienced in many ways, for many different reasons. This results in very unique and different behaviors, perceptions, information needs, and rituals. Thus, research is needed to identify additional spokes within this sphere and to verify their existence and importance to the emerging Creative Tourist Class through empirical research. While the sphere model suggests an infinite number of experience combinations, some

might be more prominent than others. Whether such prototypical experiences exist would have to be empirically verified as well. Capturing the dimensions of creative tourist experiences is also a question of finding appropriate methodologies to obtain meaningful data.

The different dimensions illustrated in the experience sphere span various phases of a trip. Sharing might happen during trips (e.g., through posting streaming video on a website while still being on vacation) or after the trip. Mediation can surely occur in all phases of a trip. The tourist experience can involve varying phases of active versus passive experiences and social engagement versus solitariness. Experiences can also involve embodiment during pre- and posttrip phases (e.g., through avatars in virtual worlds). Meaning is distinctively created and experienced in different stages of tourism consumption. The preparation before a trip as well as the reliving and potentially restructuring of experiences after returning home are important factors to be considered when studying experiences. Posttrip experiences have been largely neglected in research but more insights regarding the active, extensive, often socially shared and intense anticipation phases inherent in creative tourist experiences are also needed.

Marketing to the Creative Class is complex. Simple demographics- or benefits-based segmentation and appeals might reach its members but it is very unlikely that they would identify with such a message and act on it if it does not truly reflect their personal needs regarding tourist experiences. The good news is that the Creative Class makes its experiences and desires openly available on blogs and social networking sites. These Creative Class-generated materials represent crucial market intelligence and need to be carefully analyzed. Also, marketing approaches need to be developed that can creatively engage these new consumers. Recent advertising campaigns by Sheraton and Jet Blue, which actively elicited and promoted customers' travel stories in relation to the brand, serve as examples of how such engagement of creative consumers can be implemented. The arguments presented with respect to the mobile life of the Creative Class and their integration of tourism experiences in everyday life calls for paying greater attention to residents in tourism promo-

tional efforts. They also suggest that a greater use of mobile technologies for tourism promotion will be important.

In addition, important implications can be derived for product development. It is not clear how the tourism industry will be able to satisfy the quest for ever more exciting and deeply meaningful experiences sought after by a growing number of tourists. Tourism products will have to, at the minimum, reflect the values of the Creative Class, especially their need for creativity and personalization. They will also have to incorporate increasing technology use and demands for seamless connectivity. Hotel rooms especially, and maybe even the concept of hotels themselves, are expected to have to change dramatically as touristic life and everyday life merge. At the destination level, one can expect that residential and touristic spaces will increasingly blur. Tourism planning will become "lifestyle" planning, addressing the needs of a mobile creative class which engages in touristic life on a continuous basis.

The goal of this article was to connect creative experiences and tourist experiences to outline challenges for tourism research and practice. It will hopefully spur discussion regarding existing notions of tourist experiences and encourage others to contribute to the conceptualization of a multidimensional framework of tourist experiences that can inform future research and practice on increasingly mobile and creative societies.

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