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Alternative Literature and Tourist Experience: Travel and Tourist Weblogs

Betsy A. Pudliner
Eastern Illinois University

Journaling has been a staple art form of the traveller for many centuries. Queen Victoria, Samuel Johnson, Robert Southey and others have used journaling to depict the landscape, describe encounters with their host and as a reflective tool to understand their adventures out into the openness. These tourists at the time of their writing were limited by the bounds of economic status, social standing, education, and degree of travel infrastructure development (Towner, 1985). Travellers, in the act of journaling, record their thoughts and observations about their life as a tourist for private and public consumption. Allen remarks

> … journals can take the form of essays or poetry or the 'non-form' of stream-of-consciousness fragments. They can emphasize nature (complete with sketches or watercolors), family, spirituality, reading, or just muddle along with no particular emphasis at all. In some cases, journals are the wellspring of great works of art; in others, they are simply a way for one's mind to cope. (Allen, 2002: 19)

Robinson and Andersen (2002: 6) pose that such works 'can legitimately be analysed to see how they reflect and shape the economic, political, and socio-cultural realities of the world'. In the post-modern world, technology and the

Internet/WWW, has become the medium, in which we as individuals, chronicle our lives. This use of technology parallels the increasing perspective that tourism is becoming an individual act. Each person derives a different degree of value from the interaction and subsequent use of the technology as well as tourism (Buhalis, 2003). Powazek puts forth that blogging, virtual journaling, allows for a cacophony of personal voices online:

> Here is the mother lode of personal expression – the one place in our lives that we (as people lucky enough to have access) can say whatever we want, about anything we want. (Powazek, 2002: 3)

Weblogs generate a bevy of information and representations of various places. They also foster the creation of communities of common interests (Blood, 2002a). Each is unique because it delivers an interpretive viewpoint of each traveler and their journey into the open spaces of our world. In respect to tourism, there are three constructs in which to originate the discussion; tourism as a language, tourism as a place of experiences in space and time, and the authenticity of tourism. Very little to no research has been devoted to this area of Internet use and how it affects destination promotion and consumption. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to uncover and evaluate this form of narrative in a modern age. The researcher as ethnographer and story teller hopes to convey an understanding of this use of alternative forms of literature and tourist experiences by examining the use of traditional and modern forms of communication. The paper will begin with a brief discussion of the history of weblogs and blogging, progress to the three concepts, presenting narratives in both traditional (written) and modern (digital) communication forms, and conclude with an overview of the argument.

This section will briefly explain the history of weblogs/blogging. Blood (2002b) indicates that 1998 marks the initiation of weblogs. The author defines weblogs and the act of blogging as the compilation and construction of lists of relative links, personal commentary, observations and filtering of pertinent web content by the website author. The author, of the weblog, establishes relationships through on-line linkages to 'create social alliances and to broadcast tidbits of their days to those who [are] interested in reading them' (Blood, 2002b: x). Weblogs can take several forms. They can be links with snippets of information or composed in journal form. The evolution of technology has allowed the online journals to expand to include intricate multi-media materials such as pictures and streaming video. This enables the reader to explore and disseminate vast amounts of information quickly, seeking out the factual, the real and the truth. The initial weblog sites were devoted to current events whereas today they can run the gamut of news related material to commentary on movies, literature, and tourism experiences.

The one important aspect that they share in common is that of interest. Powazek (2002: 6) articulates 'I love weblogs because they're yet another way for people to express themselves online. Sure, they're full of links. They're also full of lives'. Katz (2002) noted that the web is about the individual. It is

a 'place' where the self can create, seek, and interact with information and other humans. The Internet could be a network of common communities. Conhaim concurs and states that 'online journal writing is a new way of reaching out to people who care enough to read an account of a person's thoughts and feelings' (Conhaim, 2003: 27).

From my own experience, I was first exposed to the Internet and its capabilities during the fall of 1994 when I returned to school to pursue a Master's degree. The Internet, I soon learned, was fast becoming a repository of information; a virtual on-line library. I spent numerous hours trawling for information on my interest as well as tourism information. My first foray into online publishing was a static web page of my favorite links to different travel sites, excerpts of poems from my favorite authors and my own pictures. I learned to use the different web development programs as well as hand code in web based languages, such as HTML. The computer was a way of simplifying my life both professionally and personally. The earliest weblog in link form, that I found useful, was *Tourism Research Links by René Waksberg* (Waksberg, 1996–2004).

Journaling has been a constant reflective practice, in my life, for over 25 years; professionally, utilising this form of analysis to organise and understand tourism and research concepts. In 2002, I wanted to expand my websites from simple static pages to an interactive space. My research led to weblogs. The sole purpose of creating such a site was to engage and enable my readers to gain insight into my research interests and acquire more knowledge about my chosen field of study. I also wanted to 'talk', present my own unique interpretation of events, places, landscapes in which I inhabited or visited.

The technology was simple to install and run; I was one link away from posting. I created categories that would focus on travel related subjects but also viewpoints on ideas and concepts uncovered in my research. Yet, as Dibbell (2002) points out one problem plaguing most online writers is the frankness in which a weblog exposes the writer and their personal point of view to their readers. I was and still am reluctant to post due to the fact I really do not know my audience, who would be reading. But I understood one thing; here was a way of communication that was under utilised by the tourism industry.

As stated earlier the structure of this paper, the argument will originate from the discussion of three paradigms. This section will discuss weblogs and blogging in respect tourism as a language. Dann (1996: 1) expresses that tourism has a language all its own and tourism lends itself to verbal and written communication. He defines it as '. . . verbal descriptions, along with their glossy displays of photographs and film footage, collectively constitutes a very special type of communication, one which differs from other forms of human exchange'. Simply, Dann argues that a language is a form of symbolic representation of words, graphic depiction and sounds that informs and educates about a unique experience. How much meaning we grasp from such depictions is based on individual interpretation.

The Internet, with its sheer holding capacity, allows many to share their adventures into the open spaces of our globe. The marketing capabilities are endless and enable the proliferation of the tourism language to 'persuade,

lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in so doing, convert them from potential into actual clients' (Dann, 1996: 2).

Dann articulates writing and communicating in the tourist space:

> . . . it focuses on the inner feelings they [tourists] experience and communicate, along with the questions of self-identity they rhetorically pose in their descriptions of far flung places, sentiments which have the cumulative effect of physically and psychologically distancing themselves and their readers from the more familiar voyager of today: the tourist. (Dann, 1999: 160)

This eludes to the fact that tourist want to describe for others their journeys beyond their normal sphere of familiarity. MacCannell (1999), in his study of the tourist, was a voyager himself into the semantic representations that could be delivered in various mediums. We use words, images and sound to describe our experiences; the journey to discovering meaning from our interaction in different environments. He argues that tourist exist within and out with their own sphere of influence. Campbell and Moyers (1991) debate the power of myth in our lives, where each individual is on a personal journey of discovery with particular agendas. We reach an impasse or moment in our lives where we are pulled, pushed into a decision. We make the decision to move or not to move beyond a threshold of current thought, to journey out into something new. Through this journey we encounter various points of development and challenges, we acquire information and, then at a particular moment, if we survive, impart to others what we have seen and come to understand. We speak of the journey through symbolic representations that we have created or attained along the path. In the end, we could create our own mythology or reinforce tradition through continual self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Our meaning about these journeys into the open spaces is uniquely our own; each interpretation is different. Yet, researchers may draw common threads of thoughts through individuals and generations. MacCannell reinforces this idea of tourism as a personal journey of discovery.

Tourism is not just about travel; it is an opportunity to explore ones own self. Wearing and Wearing (2001) and Galani-Moutafi (2000) convey that travel, 'passages' into the openness of our world, fosters self reflection. Interaction unlocks the potential for dialogue between host and guest. In return we 'see' another different realm of diversity that may not be encountered within our own domestic arena. As Galani-Moutafi (2000: 205) points out 'the interlocking dimensions of time and space make the journey a potent metaphor that symbolizes the simultaneous discovery of self and the Other'.

The very nature of experience, as MacCannell (1999) stipulates, is 'self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other is a basic theme of our civilization, a theme supporting an enormous literature: Odysseus, Aeneas, the Diaspora, Chaucer . . .' (MacCannell, 1999: 5). This would reinforce Campbell's position that each culture has similar symbolic representations running through various forms of story-telling. Would this hold true for the modern form of story-telling, the weblog?

MacCannell's enlightening work hints that the evolution of such experience will develop from the single 'hero' to a 'universal experience'. The author puts forth that 'all tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel' (MacCannell, 1999: 10). The basic need for travel is to uncover greater meaning.

Dann (1999), Towner (1985), and Towner and Wall (1991) disclose that tourism of the 19th century, predominately a select group of Victorians, communicated spectacular accounts of their travels. Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, *Ulysses*, epitomises the heart and energy of the Victorian traveller. It also demonstrates the powerful command of the language by the composer. The long prose suggests a surreal world, unobtainable, and unreachable but by a select few.

> *I cannot rest from travel, I will drink*
> *Life to lees. All times I have enjoy'd*
> *Greatly, hav suffer'd greatly, both with those*
> *That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when*
> *Thro' scudding drifts the rainy haydes*
> *Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;*
> *For always roaming with a hungry heart*
> *Much I have seen and known, – cities of men*
> *And manners, climates, councils, governments,*
> *Myself not least, but honor'd of them all –*
> (Tennyson, A. L. Ulysses [WWW]. Retrieved 5/20, 2004, from the World Wide Web: http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Alfred Lord Tennyson/8054)

Words describe and hint at the power tourism and travel has in our lifestyle. Robinson and Andersen (2002: xvi) remark 'literature can potentially be engaged with at a personal level by anybody who can read and who understands the conventions used by the author in telling a story or arranging words to create aesthetic and semantic patterns'. The rhetoric and discourse employed by some entice and spur others to do the same. Story-telling can be a traditional written account and/or digitised for distribution but each conveys a common language of experience.

Our world perhaps is best understood through the eyes and creative writing of the tourist. The traveller and blogger, Rolf Potts, is an award winning travel writer and his weblog, Vagablogging.net, offers various insights about his chosen lifestyle. Potts (2004a) recently posted on his weblog a travel quote and definition of experience from a book he had been reading.

> <u>Travel Quote</u>: *True experience begins when we break out of our routines.*
>
> *What is an experience? Something that breaks a polite routine and for a brief period allows us to witness things with the heightened sensitivity afforded to us by novelty, danger, or beauty. To experience something is to fully open one's eyes in a way that habit prevents us from doing, and if two people open their eyes in this way at the same time, then we can expect them to be drawn together by it.*
> Alain de Botton, On Love (1993)

In the spring of 2002, I had been working through Dann's, 1996 book, *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*, in the hopes of understanding tourism promotional power for my research. At the time I was also involved in tutoring first year students in an introduction course on tourism. At the end of one session about communication, I felt that I had not been able to truly put into words the linguistic power our industry possesses. I gave the students my web site and asked them to check for a greater clarification at their leisure. The power of the medium helped me to reach the students in a different manner and at a different level, simple, yet complex. I hoped to prompt their engagement in the debate and further investigation in the topic. Later in the week, I received several posts from my students on how the words I used, conveyed certain clarity about tourism and how its' promotional impacts ripple across global boundaries.

This supports the notion that travelers may be actively discerning the question as to why travel. Trying to ascertain the physical and mental rewards it contributes to our need for self-discovery and self identity. Perhaps, through investigation, they were looking for commonality among the symbols used by others. Potts demonstrates the power of the new technology and the vast potential of communication. As Morgan and Pritchard (1999: 141) impart '[the] media choices have grown beyond all recognition and the new technology continues to push the media frontiers beyond previous boundaries'. The previous boundaries refer to traditional written publications. Technology can only enhance their limited resources and explanation of the tourist space.

Tourism exists in space and time; a particular moment. Herbert (2001) suggests that literary places draw visitors for various reasons. The meaning may be for the author or for their work. The synchronicity of the work and the individual view point are interwoven into the elements of the landscape. Weblogs allow the traveller to showcase their journeys in several different formats. Just as in traditional mediums, images and prose mix to give the reader an impression of a destination; a sense of place. We may be pushed and pulled into their places by the language employed. Robinson and Andersen (2002: 2) concur that creative writing, such as journaling, 'is an under-used instrument through which we can explore the nature, development and meaning of tourism'.

Carol Watson (2004), a Canadian living in the states, utilises her domain, *Lost Canuck in Texas*, on the Internet to showcase her travels around North America. Her writing is characteristic of weblogs; short and concise commentaries to entice future exploration. But her pictures capture more information for the reader to disseminate, adding depth, texture and structure to what she is writing about. She describes and depicts an intimacy with the landscape visited at a certain moment in time. Her comment implies the 'moment', suggesting that future visitors may not be able to capture that particular unique display of the landscape.

Figure 1 Mesa Falls, by Carol Watson, 'Lost Canuck in Texas Weblog' 19 September 2003, reproduced with permission

> *Comment: We got very lucky and had this whole waterfall to ourselves during a daytrip into Idaho. I set up my tripod and tried some slow exposure shots to soften the water. Actually, I could have sat here all day … I find waterfalls to be very mesmerizing – especially if you can get up close and intimate with them.*

As Dann reveals,

> [tourist] as philosophers of many varying persuasions agree, space and time are the very qualities of perception through which all experiences are framed. Consequently, to interweave these elements throughout a travel account is no more or less than to relate to the essence of the human condition itself. (Dann, 1999: 182–183)

Yet as Trauer and Ryan (2004) and Urry (2002) divulge, tourists may develop such an intimacy with the scene because they want to blend into the surrounding landscape. Tourists construct experience that would afford the landscape to 'speak' for itself.

Ernest Hemingway (1938) spent time traversing the plains of Africa. His short story, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, hint at the vast, spectacular scenery and the oddities, the uniqueness that could be found.

> *He lay then and was quiet for a while and looked across the heat shimmer of the plain to the edge of the bush. There were a few Tommies that showed minute and white against the yellow and, far off, he saw a herd of zebra, white against the green of the bush. This was a pleasant camp under big trees against a hill, with good water, and close by, a nearly dry water hole where sand grouse flighted in the mornings.*

Pugh (2002a) mirrors Hemingway's character's thoughts. But if we eliminate key descriptive, we loose vital information; a blending of spaces. It is those phrases that denote difference, uniqueness. The symbolic representations between the two are apparent and distinctive for varying points in which their respective experiences occurred. Pugh blogs:

> *We passed through dramatic scenery – vast grassy planes dotted with acacia and baobab trees, craggy mountains with rocky outcrops, thick forests, endless desert wastelands, and long stretches of classic African savannah.*

Urry (2002) extends the argument for the tourist in relation to their role in a destination space. He offers that technological developments, trends and mass globalization of tourism as the leading economic industry constrains the tourist; placing them in a contextual field of vision. He acknowledges how the Internet has transformed tourism and narrowed the boundaries that protected fragile environments. The Internet has broadcasted the destination choices to a wider audience. The implications of such inter-reaction and inter-relationship my restrain the tourist selection behaviour; they may confine their experiences to familiar fields based on specific interest in literature texts.

Desforges (2000) suggests that tourism is not just a consumption process. He articulates that repetitive visitation into the open spaces, accumulates memories. And those memories enhance reflection about the tourist self identity. That narration may be evident in the dialogue created in the tourist journals. Pugh (2002b) titled his blog, 'One Man, One Year, One World'. He acknowledges his optimism about travelling to distant places and how tourism affords us the opportunity to explore different socio-cultural systems. He also points to tourism as the 'great educator'. This engagement with other readers affords those potential tourists an opportunity to experience the tourist place on a personal level, an intimate level. Pugh blogs,

> *I view travel as life's great educator. There's no better way to learn about people and nature and your place in the world. The more you travel, the more you realize how little you've seen.*

Stauffer (2004: 4) reaffirms the use of the weblog by the traveller; an immediacy to deliver content, '. . . weblogs contain articles or entries that are grouped primarily by the date and time they are posted; an online journal tends to be about the author and a weblog tends to be the author's observations of the outside world'. Yet, he exposes a deficiency in the technology; 'personal, expressive but remote, cold and digital' (Stauffer, 2002; 4). Sometimes the content is creatively constructed to hook the reader into visiting time and time again.

Marshall and Rossman (1995: 3) explains the element of ethnomethodology is to examine the discourse occurring in 'speech exchange systems'. This may help to uncover the inter-relations between blogging prompts, personal engagement with the medium and individual tourist travel behaviour. I entered the following entry in my weblog after a debate about tourist's information overload among other tourism researchers in my department. I am

always struck by the complexities we make of the act of tourism and its communication.

> *Is there too much? (July, 2003)*
> *Writing about communication is rather difficult at times. I scan the wealth of information in brochures, books, newspapers, and magazines and somehow, someway I usually end up getting lost. How do I disseminate all of this information from a kaleidoscopic mess into something meaningful about the landscape in which I visit? What is my sole purpose behind information discovery? Why do I spend probably too much time, looking and not enough time analysing? Why is there so much? How am I supposed to make any decision? Where do I find the unique? Is it all contrived?* (No Author, 2003)

Cary (2004) proposes that tourist, as story tellers, utilise narration to explain their time in tourist spaces. This speaks of tourists living for the moment. Journals are comprehensive accounts of what happens to the traveller. As McClanahan (2001: 35) illiterates journals 'record events, trace life passages, and order experiences'. This quote from Queen Victoria's journal (in Sawyers, 2002) illustrates the well kept precision of an avid journaler.

> *Friday, October 7, 1859*
> *Breakfast at half past eight. At ten minutes to nine we started, in the sociable, with Bertie and Alice and our usual attendants. Drove along the opposite side of the river. The day very mild and promising to be fine, though a little heavy over the hills, which we anxiously watched. At Castleton we took four post-horses, and drove to the Shiel of the Derry, that beautiful spot where we were last year – which Albert had never seen – and arrived there just before eleven. . . . Just as we sat down, a gust of wind came and dispersed the mist, which had a most wonderful effect, like a dissolving view – and exhibited the grandest, wildest scenery imaginable!*

'Travel blogs reflect the linear nature of travel itself. There is a beginning, middle and end to any trip. Few people travel ceaselessly (although it might seem like that to some)' (Valhouli, Forbes Website, 20/5/2004). This reflects Campbell's (1999) notion of life as a journey. Tom Hodgkinson (2004) is a writer who has moved to Devonshire to write a book. He chronicles his exploration of his new surroundings. His entry, as well as Queen Victoria's, demonstrates that a tourism space can be both familiar and unfamiliar. Hodgkinson's commentary about Coleridge's own visit may mark the moment of reflection on the author's own writing project. The degree to which he draws parallels between Coleridge and himself is left up to the reader. This hook entices the reader to read on, becoming entrenched in the mind of the journal author and his visit to the surrounding countryside; his journey of becoming a writer.

> *Sunday 10am*
> *Took the van and the family off to Culbone Church, a tiny and ancient chapel a few miles along the coast from our house. It was near Culbone that Coleridge, in the middle of one of his long walks, stopped off for the night at Ash Farm, took opium and, his biographers say, wrote his great hymn to the idle life,*

> *Kubla Khan. The Church is at the foot of a beautiful wooded valley and very remote. Could he have been describing the scene in these lines:*
>
> *"But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted*
> *"Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!"*
>
> *I can't claim to have garnered any poetic inspiration from the experience but there was a pleasing sense that this area has simply not changed for hundreds of years, and you could easily imagine the wide-eyed young dreamer Coleridge appearing at the churchyard gate.*

Herbert (2001: 313) expresses that Hodgkinson as a writer and familiar with Coleridge's work, derives a degree of appreciation for the place; '[he] understand this form of heritage'. Like Coleridge, Hodgkinson was using his journey to build his writing expertise. Writers may be able to impart a certain degree of genuineness, authenticity about the landscapes they are immersed in even though their purpose for travel may differ extremely.

Taylor (2001), Fawcett and Cormack (2001) and Olsen (2002) visit a constant debate in tourism; authenticity. The question of validating what is truth in the seen has fuelled a lengthy discourse between scholars (see Cohen, 1988; MacCannell & Prentice, 1999; McIntosh, 1999; Shackley, 1994). Journaling, as previously stated, is a tool used to catalogue, chronicle, and reflect on experience; a journey. Authenticity can be rooted in historical fact but romanticised with poetic licence. Validation may only exist with repetitive similarities in the textual voices and images published in both traditional and modern forms.

Cohen (1988) speaks of authenticity as a motivator for tourists to leave their familiar surroundings and seek out the unique. It is about choice. Some tourist will seek the difference while others gravitate towards contrived experiences. Information may differentiate between the two spectrums. The author suggests that finding truth may be difficult due to the modern structures of tourism. Yet, what is the tourist really searching for but escape from the mundane familiarity of their every day life. In essence tourists are seeking out real places, real experiences.

Hughes (1995) concurs that authenticity is a paradox. Authenticity could be contrived as a commodity. It is created by the tourism industry and marketed to the potential tourist; it sells. Some tourists embark on an experience that is a compelling show of choreographed encounters. But some tourists break out of the stereotypical pattern and look for the real, facilitated by the use of technology. Revisiting Pott's (2004b) weblog, he posted a commentary by Alan Bell, made in Jan/Feb, 2000:

> *Living an authentic life in an age of image and spin*
> *I find the very image-conscious culture that we live in to be incredibly oppressive. . . . It fascinates me, especially now in this media-driven age, that we're encouraged to purchase a pre-packaged experience rather than have the experience ourselves. You know, you watch the politicians debate, and, as if that wasn't phony enough, then there's a commentary afterwards where someone's going,*

'Well, I thought he looked really good. He handled himself. He seemed at ease.'
They don't even comment on what the person said; they're commenting on
how he appeared as he said it. . . . I think as human beings we have a spiritual
need to live an authentic life, and that's becoming more and more difficult. You
see so many people who strive to live the inauthentic life and then they get
there and they wonder why they're not happy. – Alan Ball, Creative
Screenwriting interview, Jan/Feb 2000

Olsen (2002) utters that authenticity must be examined from the individual
tourist perspective. What is real or not depends on what the tourist wants
from the experience. It hints back to MacCannell (1999) and Cohen (1988) pre-
mises that tourists want to seek out difference; an 'alienation' from their
respective societies. Weblogs could assist in the decision-making process by
reporting true encounters. But they are limited. This refers back to tourism hap-
pening in time and space; a particular moment. Experiences are unique. Pugh
(2002c) recounts his good fortune at witnessing the crowning of a Chief during
his travels in Swaziland:

> *Stumbling Into the Extraordinary*
> *Jordan, a Canadian I met in a backpacker's hostel in Mbabane, the capital of*
> *Swaziland, told me about the Chief crowning ceremony. An intern for the UN,*
> *Jordan and his coworkers were attending this event as part of their development*
> *program. After a little finagling it was decided that I could tag along and video*
> *the proceedings on the condition that I provide the UN with a copy of my footage.*
> *This association proved to be auspicious. I was transformed from an obscure*
> *American traveler to a United Nations photographer, and given an all-access*
> *pass to the event. The former Indvuna, or Head Man of the constituency, went*
> *out of his way to alert people to my presence, and he encouraged me to follow*
> *the Chief-to-be closely and capture as much of the proceedings as possible.*

Pugh's language is simple but conveys the singularly instance of an event. It
demonstrates that uniqueness and power of the experience of tourism in
alternative forms. It points that the journey, marketed by digitized story-
telling is owned by the tourist at a particular moment, in a particular place.

The purpose of this paper was to place in context the use of weblogs/blogs in
a modern age. Today, tourism is a global motivator. Dorner (2002: 52) articulates
that weblogs are a personal journal of an individual's journey; 'a physical
journey'. This means that they are 'personal . . . or a collaborative effort based
on a specific topic or area of mutual interest and may be the future of web pub-
lishing' (Dorner, 2002: 52–53). There is a multitude of voices each having its dis-
tinct point of view and language. If we are to make an informed choice then
such discourse allows tourists to 'see' what is possible. This paper strove to
place in context blogs within tourism as a language, tourism in space and
time and address authenticity.
Robinson and Andersen (2002: xiv) impart that understanding of tourism,
its behaviours, development and creation, may stem in part from the examin-
ation and comprehension of the inter-relationship of literature structures.

The genesis of such structures, tourism and literature, may stem from each respectively. Tourism is a rooted in the promotional power of communication. As the authors suggest, participants engage on a personal level.

As Dann (1999) illustrates tourism has a distinctive language. The descriptive words, verbal and non-verbal, communicate to the reader the self perspective of the tourist. King (2000) expresses that writers establish a pace and style in the language of truth that the reader understands. The success of the writer is hooking the reader into continual visitation to the medium. Journaling is a form of self-reflection exercise, engaging the writer in their respective landscape, whether familiar or distant destination. Weblogs are another form of conversation, communication between the travellers in all of us. Their form ignites a longing or curiosity to explore our global destinations even if it is just from an arm chair.

Buhalis (2003) imparts that tourism is a value chain, an amalgamation of products. Information is a key factor in the interactions provoked by weblogs; a value chain of information of the varied voices that share the same experiences and interests. They articulate the individual in a tourism space at a specific time, at a specific moment. A destination is far more than a tangible product that can be validated through use; it is an intangible asset that can be expressed through the creative prose of the traveller themselves. The words express the moment of encounter. A balance of the positive and negative voices demonstrates the disparity and uniformity that can exist in the quality and authenticity of experiences.

Weblogs offer the Internet surfer the opportunity to immerse themselves in the writer's experience. They can become entrenched in the world from a distance. They can live vicariously through the acts of others. There has been little research into the impact of such mediums on the decision making process of other tourist, the power in promotion, and the cultural power that could be exploited by the destination itself. This paper has only touched the surface of the potential body of constructs and paradigms on which to progress the examination and arguments. Our understanding of blogging cultural and weblog promotional power within the industry may benefit our understanding of the evolving nature of communication.

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