



**Understanding Blogging Behaviour and Motivation in
Narrative Construction of the Tourist Experience at the
Pre-visit, On-site and Post-visit Stages: The Malaysian
Travel Blogger and Tourist Perspective**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the research is on the mechanisms and structures of the motivations for engagement of tourists with travel blogs and how those behaviours and motivations influence the three different stages of the tourist experience: pre-visit; on-site; and post-visit. The study examines this issue by focusing on Malaysian travel bloggers, using in-depth interviews with travel bloggers and narrative and content analysis of respondents' blogs (i.e. texts, photos and videos). The findings of this study show that tourist bloggers had diverse blogging behaviours at the three stages of the tourist experience. At the pre-visit stage, tourists were merely passive consumers seeking more reliable and realistic information and seeking the lived authentic stories of others' tourist experiences with the planned destination(s). At the on-site stage, tourists generally did not engage with travel blogs, but tourists became more active users of travel blogs at the post-visit stage, motivated by the opportunity for instrumental, hedonic and social responsibility motivations.

The research suggests that potential tourists merely browse and read travel blogs at the pre-visit stage. This blogging behaviour is motivated by instrumental motivation which influences the pre-visit experience by supporting decision-making and providing inspiration for travel destinations, and enabling the tourists to narrow down their choices. The tourist experience is enhanced through interaction within the blogosphere, where tourists communicate with the readers, allowing the tourists to form a more realistic understanding (the image and perception) of the destination, leading to increased excitement as they anticipate their impending travels. Posting behaviours sees tourists producing and interacting with the blogs' readers. This engagement is motivated by factors (including hedonic and social responsibility), which all have the substantial potential to shape and influence the narrative construction of the tourist experience. These are important elements in the essence of narrative construction of the tourist experience. Content creation and interaction within the blogosphere enables the tourist to create and contextualise potential tourist experiences and can contribute significantly to the overall positive tourist experience.

The findings highlight – through texts, photos and videos – how tourists construct their experience based on: emotional expression; novelty and otherness; media representation; and learning and reflection. The research makes a significant

contribution towards assisting commercial and governmental tourism stakeholders to develop a more strategic and effective approach to developing targeted and sustainable marketing plans.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

‘I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledge any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.’

Nik Alia Fahada Wan Ab Rahman

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Blog

Online diaries created by a person and located on the web which can be accessed by anyone (Sharda & Ponnada, 2007).

Blogging

Activities of maintaining or adding new entries to a blog (www.dictionary.com).

Blogger

In this study, blogger refers to a person who creates and maintains a blog.

Blogosphere

The activities and communities of blogs and bloggers are referred to as the 'blogosphere' (Carson, 2008).

Moblogging

The activity of updating a blog through a mobile device (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008).

Entry

Entry refers to one episode of travel stories (Volo, 2010).

Comments

Remarks in response to an entry or blog (Volo, 2010).

Content creator

In this study, the content creator refers to the travel blogger.

Readers

In this study, the reader refers to both the actual and potential recipient of a travel blog. Hence, the term 'readers' includes those who are targeted, non-targeted and actual viewers of the travel blogs.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Blogging, an activity where a person creates online content about any issue, is one of the most increasingly popular forms of social media. It allows readers to instantly give their views on any issues raised by the original blogger (Thevenot, 2007). Blogs, like other online Word of Mouth (WoM), share the same traits as traditional WoM communication. Blogs are also usually considered to be unbiased and reliable (Mack, Blose & Pan; Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). Blogs, therefore, are widely acknowledged as an alternative medium to other traditional communication media and have gained popularity among internet users. In addition, blogs are increasingly becoming an accepted information source; according to a 2013 Technorati Media Digital Influence Report, blogs are the third most prominent digital resource in terms of overall purchase decisions, after retail websites and brand websites. Also, the report revealed that blogs rank among the top five ‘most trustworthy’ sources, and are more influential in shaping purchase decisions than Twitter and Facebook (Technorati, 2013).

From a tourism perspective, the digital revolution has changed the complexity of the tourism environment and has impacted the way tourists access and experience tourism products (Volo, 2012). Blogging has captured the attention of tourism researchers who are now investigating blogs as a source of travel information (Pan,

Maclaurin, & Crotts, 2007; Schmidt, 2007), social interaction (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005), and self-expression (Keshelashvili, 2005, Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006). Pudliner (2007), in particular, highlights the interest in understanding blog functions in the creation and sharing of the tourist experience. Pühringer and Taylor (2008), Waldhör (2007), and Pan et al. (2007) have all studied the use of travel blogs as a source of marketing intelligence and emphasised the potential of blogs as efficient marketing tools. The credibility of travel blogs is also discussed by many researchers (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Mack et al., 2007; Tan & Wang, 2011), and there are also several studies that specifically explore travel blog content in order to understand tourist behaviour and the potential of using the travel blog as a marketing tool (see, for example, Banyai, 2009; Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009; Lin & Huang, 2006; Pan, et al., 2007; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008; Volo, 2010; Woodside, Cruickshank, & Dehuang, 2007).

The travel blog is acknowledged as a place for tourists to share their tourist experiences (Volo, 2009). The tourist experience has been extensively studied and remains the central focus of tourism research. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that experiences have now become offerings in the marketplace. They further emphasise that an effective marketing strategy encompasses engaging customers in personal and remarkable ways. The tourist experience has been widely researched in a variety of theoretical contexts – including within the frameworks of authenticity (Cohen, 1979; Pearce & Moscardo, 1986), performativity (Edensor, 2000, 2001; Larsen, 2005; Mordue, 2001), and embodiment (Everett, 2008; Small & Darcy, 2011) – and employing a variety of methods, for example, using interviews, surveys and travel diaries. These methods of understanding the tourist experience rely on the tourists' oral report and interviews, in which they follow a guideline set by the researchers. Recently, alternative data collection methods have been used to understand the tourist experience, such as diaries, videos and smartphone applications (e.g., Pocock, Zahra, McIntosh, 2008; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Wang, Park & Fesenmaier, 2012). In addition, some researches have also explored the potential of online diaries, or travel blogs, which offer an alternative approach in understanding the tourist experience (Banyai & Glover, 2011; Banyai & Havitz, 2010; Carson, 2008). Banyai and Glover (2011) suggest alternative analyses, such as content, narrative or discourse analyses, can be employed to fully utilise information available in travel blogs in order to understand the tourist experience.

Travel blogging behaviour can be understood through examining blogging motivations (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Travel bloggers' motivations to blog are varied (Wu & Pearce, 2014). In this regard, the way bloggers see themselves and the purpose of their blogs may be related to their motivation to create content (De Zúñiga, Lewis, Willard, Valenzuela, Lee & Baresch, 2011). Pan et al. (2007) suggest that blog content is related to the bloggers' motivation to write and their target audience. The content posted relies on the blogger's identity, which is identity that they deliberately construct. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008) suggest that travel narrative is "a picture of lived identities created through actions, attitudes, and values" (p. 309). Thus, travel bloggers' narration in travel blogs embodies self-identity and social identity. Bosangit, McCabe and Hibbert (2009) express that blogs are an important way in which tourists deliver and discuss their identities with audience. They explain that identity is revealed by what stories are told, how the stories are recounted and the connection of the stories to values, preferences, skills and social roles. Other than content creation, another aspect of blogging behaviour is interaction with the readers. Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004) express that the relationship with the readers is an important motivation to maintain and create content. Positive feedback from readers gives a strong emotional support to blog authors to continue writing (Miura & Yamashita, 2007).

Tourists read blogs, interact through comments and some decide to share their experience through posting texts, pictures and videos (Volo, 2010). Travel blogs serve as more than just a medium for travel reporting about place, culture and people – travel blogs are also about authors' representation and how they see others (Bohls & Duncan, 2005). Wang, Yu and Fesenmaier (2002) express that travel blogs enable tourists to share meaning and convey social benefits. Kang and Schuett (2013) point out that social influence has an impact on tourist experience sharing behaviour in blogs. This is due to the fact that tourist experience sharing through a blog is related to personal meanings and reward goals (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Kang and Schuett (2013) further mention that goals can be accomplished through interaction within the blogosphere or through members of communities.

Pan et al. (2007) state that in narrating the touristic experience the tourist includes all aspects of their journey, including expectations and anticipations as well as their on-site experiences. As such, the tourist experience can be understood in three different stages – pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit – and tourists connect with social

media at each stage with different engagement and motivation. For instance, at the pre-visit stage, texts, photos and videos help potential tourists to plan the trip, form expectations and anticipate potential destinations (López, Gidumal, Taño, & Armas, 2011; Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & Tussyadiah, 2011; Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). During the visit, the availability of mobile technologies and internet connection also shape tourists' actual experiences (Gretzel, Wang, & Fesenmaier, 2012). Such technologies allow tourists to engage with travel blogs and to search for vital on-site information, such as restaurants, places of interest, and where to take pictures (e.g., hot spots for photographs). They then upload their experiences to social media to be shared with friends in real-time (Gretzel et al., 2011). Finally, tourists at the post-visit stage use travel blogs to document and share their whole experience (Gretzel et al., 2011). Thus, travel blogs have progressively changed the ways in which tourists narrate and recount their experiences.

Previous researchers have emphasised that it is important when examining the tourist experience through social media, to also take into account the level of engagement and the motivation behind performing these activities (Shao, 2009; Tedjamulia, Dean, Olsen, & Albrecht, 2005). Furthermore, past studies have shown that the motivation to engage with social media influences the extent of the engagement (Bronner & Hoog, 2011; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). In this regard, engagement with travel blogs can be understood through tourists' activities within the blogosphere in general, such as whether they solely lurk or actually consume the blogs, communicate with other bloggers, and post content (Shao, 2009; Tedjamulia et al., 2005). This activity is associated with different motivations, such as 'to satisfy information needs' (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004) 'to express one-self' (Huang, Chou & Pin, 2010; Shao, 2009), and 'to document experience' (Bosangit, 2014; Schmidt & Wilber, 2005). Also, tourists' motivation to engage with travel blogs includes the need to share their experiences, both positive and negative, with other tourists (Gretzel et al., 2011; Pan et al., 2011; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007).

Despite the increased research interest in the blogging phenomena within the travel and tourism context, there are some critical gaps in the way the phenomenon has been approached to date. Among these, five concern the researcher here. Firstly, within the travel blog context, previous studies have been carried out in order to understand many aspects of the tourist experience, such as to gain insights into the image (re)creation of a destination (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Jani & Hwang,

2011; Li & Wang, 2011; Tse & Zhang, 2013), to identify the destination image perceived by tourists (Huang, Yung, & Yang, 2011; Pan et al., 2007; Sun, Ryan, & Pan, 2014), and to discover the most communicated aspects of the tourist experience (Wenger, 2008; Woodside, Cruickshank, & Dehuang, 2007). In this regard, travel blogs have been acknowledged as an appropriate medium for which to understand the tourist experience. However, there are a lack of studies that attempt to understand how engagement with travel blogs influence and shape the tourist experience construction. Although recent work of Bosangit, Dulnuan and Mena (2009) and Bosangit McCabe and Hibbert, (2012) explore narrative construction of tourist experience in travel blogs, her studies are limited to the post-visit stage of the tourist experience, which means there is a gap in the holistic view of tourist experience construction.

Secondly, in the social media-related literature, there are a number of studies that investigate how the motivation and engagement with travel blogs impacts on destination choice, travel preferences and satisfaction (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2011; Gretzel et al., 2011; Magnini, Crotts, & Zehrer, 2011). This suggests that in order to understand the influence of social media on any parts of the tourist experience, it is important to take into consideration the tourist engagement in a particular social media and the motivation behind their engagement. This is supported by Robinson (2004) who suggests that the narratives of the tourist experience should be the focus of future tourism research, considering the travel motivation and performances. Although the levels of engagement and motivation are both important in the context of travel-related social media, the relationship between these two elements and narrative construction of tourist experience is yet to be examined.

Thirdly, in relation to the above mentioned gap, most of the previous studies into engagement with travel-related social media, including travel blogs, merely focus on the active engagement (such as producing content) and the motivation behind the active engagement (Bronner & Hoog, 2011; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). Little work, however, has been done focusing on the other activities on blogs, such as replying or leaving comments and simply lurking. Van Dijck (2009) mentions that distinguishing different levels of engagement is crucial because it also enables an understanding of the engagement activities. Therefore, this study attempts to understand different engagement, which is beyond posting and motivations throughout the three stages of the tourist experience, which in turn will

provide a holistic understanding of the travel blogging phenomenon in constructing the tourist experience.

Fourthly, past studies into social media, including travel blogs, have focused on understanding the tourist experience at a certain stage only, for instance, the pre-visit, on-site or post-visit stage of the tourist experience separately (Bosangit, 2012; Bosangit et al., 2012, Chen, 2011; Yee & Tussyadiah, 2011). For instance, in their travel blog research, Bosangit and colleagues only focus on the post-visit stage of the tourist experience, highlighting that this stage covers more than just an evaluation of the experience (Bosangit et al., 2012). Similarly, Yee and Tussyadiah (2011), focusing on the visual content posted on blogs, investigate the role of visual images in constructing the experience expectation of potential tourists, thus only covering the pre-visit stage. The current study includes all the stages of the tourist experience in order to deliver a holistic understanding of tourist experience construction and the interrelationship between those stages.

Finally, Bosangit, McCabe and Hibbert (2009) argue that most of the recent studies are limited to using quantitative content analysis (see, for example, Carson, 2008; Kurashima Tezuka, & Tanaka, 2005; Pan, et al., 2007; Jani & Hwang, 2011; Li & Wang, 2011 Wenger, 2008; Magnini & Crotts, 2011). These studies focus on analysing textual information to explore destination image and tourists' evaluations of the destination. Although recent studies have employed qualitative methodologies, such as narrative and content analyses (see, for example, Tussyadiah Fesenmaier, 2008), these studies have particularly focused on one type of content, such as textual or visual content separately. Content in social media can be in many forms, such as texts, photo, video and audio (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008; Daugherty, Eastin, Bright, 2008), and tourists talk about their experience on social media through texts, photos and videos (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; White, 2010; Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). The use of photos to understand the tourist experience seems to be limited (Govers & Go, 2005) even though travel bloggers often upload both texts and photos, and increasingly videos too. Researchers are calling for more study into the visual and aural information in travel blogs in order to gain further insights into how the tourist experience is being constructed textually, visually and aurally both by bloggers and tourists (Leung, Law, & Lee, 2010; Wenger, 2008). It is therefore important to consider these three different contents simultaneously.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the underlying mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivations and the narrative construction of the tourist experience at the three different stages of the tourist experience, namely, pre-visit, on-site and post-visit. Within a Malaysian context, the particular focus is on comprehending how the tourist experience is shaped and influenced by the different levels of engagement and motivations at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages. Also, this study seeks to discover the interrelationship between level of engagement and motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience. As this study involves the three different stages of the tourist experience, it also examines the commonalities and/or differences in narrative construction of tourist experience throughout the stages through different types of travel blog content (i.e., texts, photos and videos).

Therefore, the following central research question will be explored:

How do travel bloggers' strategies and behaviours influence the narrative construction of the tourist experience in the blogosphere at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage of the tourist experience?

In order to answer the main research question, this study undertakes five objectives:

- (1) to explore blogging motivation and influence on narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout the stages of the tourist experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)
- (2) to explore blogging strategies and behaviours, and their influences on tourism decision-making and experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)
- (3) to analytically deconstruct the content of travel blogs that construct tourist experience
- (4) to investigate the meanings of texts, photos and videos that construct the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience

- (5) to understand the mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivations and narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience

The rationale and justification for this study are as follows. The first two objectives provide an understanding of the behaviours, strategies and motivations of the engagement of the travel bloggers within the blogosphere. This is essential as understanding the behaviours and the motivations behind the engagement of travel bloggers may shed light on how the engagement may be connected to the narrative construction of the tourist experience.

The third and fourth objectives provide understanding of the complexity of the travel blog content that constructs the tourist experience and the meanings behind the different types of travel blog content (i.e. texts, photos and videos). Since travel bloggers use different content to communicate and share their tourist experience – primarily texts, photos and videos – this study attempts to analytically deconstruct these three different types of travel blogs' contents. These two objectives will reveal how the tourist experience is constructed, contextualised and packaged in travel blogs. This study, therefore, fills a gap in the existing literature by providing a better understanding of how both engagement and motivation in travel blogs plays a role in constructing and shaping tourist experience within the three stages of the tourist experience. Understanding how the narrative of tourist experience is constructed, contextualised and packaged through travel blog engagement is crucial for destination marketers in designing effective marketing plans (Gretzel, Wang & Fesenmaier, 2012). Thus, this study offers important practical implications for the tourism industry; the findings will help marketers to design suitable marketing and advertising strategies as consumers are always seeking new entertaining, stimulating and informative advertisements (Gretzel et al., 2012). Furthermore, with regard to the emerging competition, it is essential to understand the meaning and the value of the experience which has become an important issue for destination marketers (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica & O'Leary, 2006). Hence, it is noteworthy to address this issue as the tourism industry is concerned with unpacking the narratives which represent the place and the structure of the experience (Edensor, 1998).

The fifth objective provides insights into the relationship between blogging behaviours, motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience. In addition, it sheds some light on the relationship between the blogging behaviours and motivations. This study hopes to achieve a holistic understanding of the interrelationship between those three elements. It also provides insight into the dynamic of engagement and motivation in the narrative construction of the tourist experience by understanding the mechanisms and structures between those elements.

This study's propositions draw from multi-discipline perspectives. It covers a broad range of literature including tourist behaviours, tourist motivation, and media engagement, specifically social media engagement and tourism studies. First, the blogging behaviours and motivations are considered as the central influence of narrative construction of the tourist experience. Second, the study will consider the blogging behaviours' influence on tourism decision-making at the various stages of the tourist experience, the formation of expectation at the pre-visit stage, the actual experience at the destination, and the recounting of the tourist experience at the post-visit stage. Third, the study will examine how different blogging behaviour that motivated by different sets of motivation impacted on narrative construction of tourist experience.

1.3 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

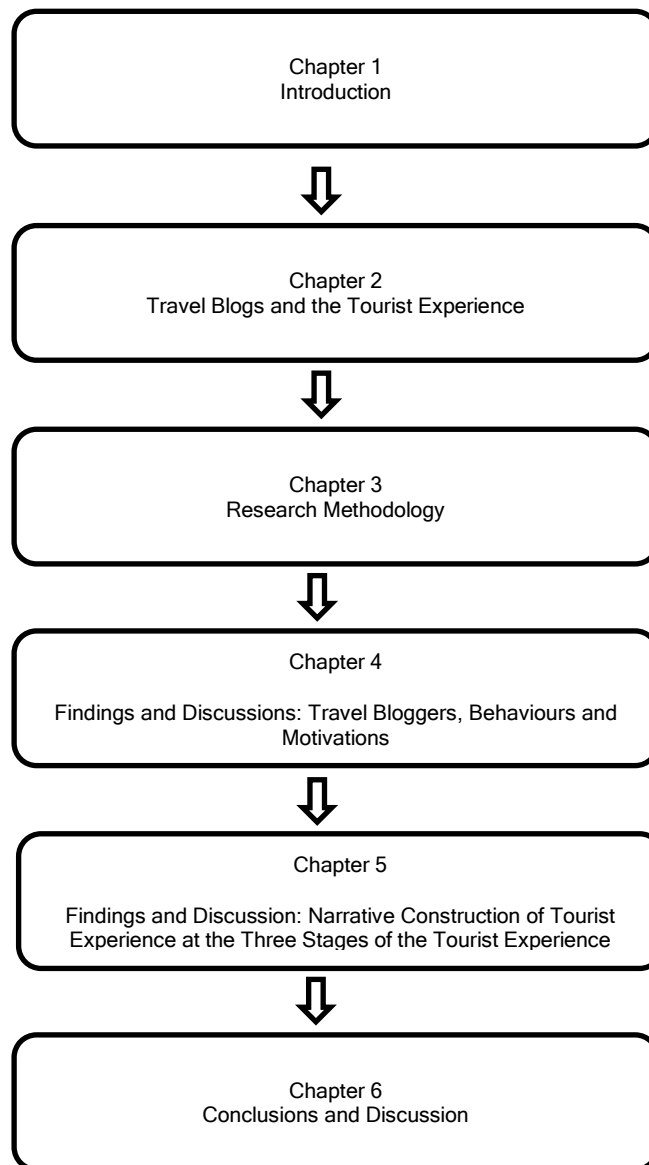


Figure 1.1 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the travel blogging phenomenon and discusses different blogging behaviours and the motivations behind the behaviours. It reviews and discusses the different behaviours with travel blogs by highlighting the activities performed on blogs. Also, the blogging motivation is discussed through a uses and gratification approach. This then leads to a discussion of the travel blogging phenomenon. It further reviews and discusses the concept of the tourist experience through authenticity and highlights the three different stages of the tourist experience.

It also discusses the role of travel narratives, including the use of texts, photos and videos- in understanding narrative construction of tourist experience at each stage of the tourist experience. The potential of travel blogs in understanding narrative construction of tourist experience through travel blog engagement with regards to the different types of contents (i.e. texts, photos and videos) is then discussed. The research objectives and questions are revisited and the conceptual framework of the study is proposed.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of the study – how the study identified and operationalised the research problems in relation to research methods and analyses. It begins with a philosophical consideration of the epistemological and ontological approaches to the research before clarifying the theoretical position of this study. The overall research design is then outlined, followed by a rationale for adopting a qualitative method for this study. Ethical issues, including consideration of collecting content data that is publicly available online, obtaining consent, and maintaining confidentiality, are then discussed. In addition, the issue of validity in a qualitative study is discussed, and the actions taken to ensure the validity of the findings are outlined.

Chapter 4 presents the analyses, findings and discussions from the in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers that unfold the travel blogging behaviours and the motivations behind their blogging behaviours. Subsequently, Chapter 5 presents the analyses and findings, and then a discussion about travel blog content from the data gathered from the travel blogs and the in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers. The in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to understand the blogging behaviours and motivations, and also the meaning assigned to the photos and videos that described their tourist experience. Further, the narrative analysis unpacked the meaning of the textual content, while a qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to examine the content of photos and videos that construct the tourist experience. This chapter specifically presents the findings and discussion about the narrative construction of tourist experience in the travel blog context and its relationship with the blogging behaviours and different sets of motivations discussed in Chapter 4. Next, Chapter 6 provides a more in-depth discussion of the key findings, followed by an outline of the contributions of the study and final conclusions. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggested future directions for research are offered.

CHAPTER 2

Travel Blogs and the Tourist Experience

2.1 Introduction

Travel-related social media use continues to grow, with more and more people choosing to engage with travel blogs when consuming and producing the tourist experience. Readers as potential tourists are free to choose which media they want to engage with for their travel preparations and, at the same time, which media they want to engage with throughout the three stages of the tourist experience in order to fulfil their needs. Clearly, social media's influence on travel is becoming more complex and requires further consideration and research.

The first section of this chapter illustrates the blogging phenomenon in general and aims to provide insights into the complex engagement with travel blogs by unpacking the motivation behind it, in order to better understand travel blogging behaviours. It begins with an exploration of the potential for travel blogs to be a source of tourism research data, and is followed by an examination of blogging usage from the communication perspective and the motivation of blogging engagement from the uses and gratification approach. It also highlights that different needs and gratification do influence the way people engage with blogs.

The second section reviews and discusses the tourist experience in general, by focusing on the travel narratives, photos and videos. It begins by outlining the concept

of the tourist experience which can be understood through the perspective of authenticity, and the different stages of the tourist experience (i.e. at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage). The review and discussion then moves on to the role of travel narratives, photos and videos in narrative construction of tourist experience at each of the three different stages of the tourist experience. It also highlights the interrelationship of narrative construction of tourist experience before, during and after the visit. The third section specifically reviews the role and impact of travel blogs at each stage of the tourist experience, and highlights that to a large extent blogging behaviours with travel blogs influence the construction of the tourist experience. This chapter ends by presenting a conceptual framework of the research.

2.2 Travel Blogging Phenomenon

2.2.1 Definitions and Types of Travel Blogs

Travel blogs are the equivalent of personal online diaries and are made up from one or more individual entries strung together by a common theme (for example, a trip itinerary or the purchase of a round the world ticket). They are commonly written by tourists to report back to friends and families about activities and experience during trips (Pühringer & Taylor, 2008, p.179).

Blogs are the social media equivalent of online diaries that presented in various mediums such as texts, photos and videos (Huang, Chou & Lin, 2010). Unlike traditional diaries, blogs offer a two-way communication between the blogger (the writer of the blog) and readers (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). The term ‘blogger(s)’ refers to the people, either an individual or a few authors, who run and manage the blog and post an entry or comment. The activities and communities of blogs and bloggers are referred to as the ‘blogosphere’ (Carson, 2008). ‘Entry’ refers to one episode of travel stories, whereas ‘comments’ are the remarks in response to an entry or blog (Volo, 2010). Travel blogs are usually presented in a chronological order in a webpage interface that has a specific structure (Wenger, 2008): (1) header: information about the blogger, title and date of the entry; (2) body of the blog: may contain textual, visual and other files; and (3) comment boxes: a place where the

audience can give feedback and interact with the author and other readers. Travel blogs are hosted by travel blog website providers.

There are four types of blog in the area of travel and tourism: individual, collaborative, corporate, and traditional (Thevenot, 2007). Thevenot (2007) defines individual blogs as online diaries which comprise thoughts, comments, experiences and photos related to personal tourist practices and experiences. Collaborative blogs provide links for travel and tourism services, travel tips and guides. He refers to corporate blogs as those owned by tourism service providers, such as hotels and restaurants, whereby they actively engage with customer comments and feedback. Traditional media blogs refer to those that have bloggers who post travel information on a regular basis. These bloggers keep information up to date, covering a wide range of issues regarding tourism and hospitality.

Thevenot (2007) classifies travel blogs as consumer to consumer (C2C), business to business (B2B), or business to consumer (B2C). The nature of the information delivered through C2C blogs or personal travel blogs is different from other categories. The information communicated in C2C blogs is usually spontaneous, as compared to B2B blogs. Also, both positive and negative experiences are reported on personal blogs. In contrast, other categories of blogs report positive information and comments only as they are created and monitored by tourism service providers or companies (Volo, 2010), which is similar to other traditional advertisement agents such as brochures and other print media advertising. Personal travel blogs also provide descriptions of destinations, attractions and activities.

Travel blogs are considered to be a record of a tourist experience (Volo, 2009). Travel blogs that are rich in narrative are valuable to potential tourists because they represent a tourist's personal information and are unique as they contain the tourist's subjective and individual perception and experience of their trip, which is very different to the information provided by a tourism service provider (Pudliner, 2007). More importantly, Jansson (2007) points out that travel blogs do not only provide a platform for tourists to create personal experience based on specific source of knowledge, but also reduce the risk of cultural shock or alienation. This is because the potential tourists may 'virtually experience' the place before being there physically, through detailed travel information, virtual tours and personal description of tourist experience.

Blogs have developed in tandem with technological advancement. The activity of updating a blog through a mobile device is known as *moblogging* (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008). Moblogging allows a tourist to share the events or scenery that they capture through their mobile phone immediately rather than waiting until they arrive home. This advancement has enabled tourists to update their travel plans whilst still at their destination (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). The recounted travel stories assist tourists to remember and recollect the experience at the post-visit stage. This is due to; travel bloggers reported every aspect of their trips, including anticipation, planning and tourist activities (Pan et al., 2007). Thus, travel blog is part of tourist practise when they get home, where tourists recollect, evaluate, store and enhance their experience (Bosangit et al., 2012). Similarly, Jansson (2007) highlights the importance of sharing tourist experiences in blogs because in this way the magic of a trip can be extended through the construction of ideal ensembles of representation and through the immediate sharing of multi-sensory impressions. Narratives, photographs or videos shared on blogs can be revised and reordered into a logical context for a touristic memory-scape in a website, photo-sharing site or weblog which are then viewed by a extensive audience (Jansson, 2007).

2.2.2 Blogging Motivation and Functions of Blogs

A common understanding among researchers is that a blogger engages within the blogosphere to gratify their information needs – their need to gather and disseminate information (Liu, Liao & Zhen, 2007). Researchers noted blogging is a multi-motivational activity (Bosangit, 2012; Nardi et al., 2004). Huang et al. (2007) proposed a research model that demonstrates that blogging behaviour and motivation are related to each other. The model identifies two blogging behaviours: interaction-oriented and information-oriented. Interaction-oriented behaviour is associated with self-expression, life-documenting and providing comments on other blogs, whereas information-oriented behaviour is related to commenting on other blogs, information searching and forum participation. Table 2.1 below presents the blogging motivations enumerated by prior researchers.

Table 2.1 Blogging Motivations

Authors	Motivation	Participants
Nardi et al (2004)	Life documentation	US bloggers
	Comment and give opinion	
	Express passions or obsessions	
	Communicate idea through writing	
	Form and maintain community	
Schmidt and Wilber (2005)	Fun	US bloggers
	Archive experience	
	Express own feelings	
	Exchange experience with others	
	Personal status and achievement	
Lenhart and Fox (2006)	To keep in touch with family and friends	US bloggers
	To document and share personal experience with others	
	To express themselves creatively	
	To motivate other people to action	
Huang et al. (2007)	Self-expression	Taiwanese bloggers
	Life documenting	
	Commenting	
	Community forum participation	
	Information seeking	
Miura and Yamashita(2007)	Benefit to self	Japanese bloggers
	Relationship with others	
	Skill in handling information	
Hsu and Lin (2008)	Ease of use	Taiwanese bloggers
	Reputation	
	Expected benefit	
	Enjoyment	
	Altruism	

(Summarised by the author, 2016)

As shown in Table 2.1, sharing emotions, opinions (Nardi et al., 2004), personal experience (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), and information or knowledge (Lenhart & Fox, 2006) are the main motivations for blogging. There are also other motivations that relate to documenting or archiving one's personal life details (Huang et al., 2007; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004). These two motivations affected the bloggers themselves as the owner of the blog. In addition, some blogs could also affect others, for example by influencing, motivating or entertaining their readers (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Another motivation for people to blog is to manage and support relationships within the blogosphere (Huang et al., 2007; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Nardi et al., 2004). Focusing on the psychological and social influences of blogging behaviour in the Japanese context, Miura and Yamashita (2007) identified that benefits to self, relationship with others and skill in handling information significantly encourage bloggers to continue

blogging. Their study also notes that the positive feedback gained through the interaction with readers motivates the bloggers to continue blogging.

Blogging motivation also can be understood from various perspectives, and depends on the diverse topics and contents of the blogs. In this regard, the motivations for blogging can be further understood by distinguishing the functions or the purpose of blogs. For example, Bosangit (2012) emphasises that understanding blog's function shed some lights of the motivation for engaging with blogs. Adapted from Bosangit (2012), table 2.2 below presents the different functions of blogs and how they can motivate travel bloggers to engage with travel blogs in consuming and producing the tourist experience.

Table 2.2 Purposes and Motivations for Blogging

Purposes	Motivations	Authors
Self-identity Construction	Self-expression	Hsu and Lin (2008), Papacharissi (2004)
	Self-representation	Nardi et al. (2004)
	Build and enhance reputation	Lenhart and Fox (2006)
Life Documenting	Online record of an event or experience	Lenhart and Fox (2006); Nardi et al. (2004), Schmidt and Wilber (2005)
Social Networking	Meeting new people with the same interest	Hsu and Lin (2008), Lenhart and Fox (2006), Liu et al. (2007)
	Establishing network with people with the same interest	
	Maintaining the network by providing support to the people within the network	
Information Sharing	Sharing knowledge and communicate ideas	Huang et al. (2007), Hsu and Lin (2008), Liu et al. (2007), Nardi et al (2004), Schmidt and Wilber (2005)
Communication	To keep family and friends updated	Lenhart and Fox (2006)
Entertainment	Entertain oneself and others	Schmidt and Wilber (2005) Kaye (2005)

(Adapted from Bosangit, 2012)

As show in Table 2.2, blogs are widely used as a means for the bloggers to construct self-identity, document life, connect with others, share information, communicate, improve one-self and be entertained. Bloggers aiming to construct their self-identity are motivated by self-expression and self-representation with the objective of building and enhancing their reputation. Via blogging, they are able to

show their inner selves to the world through expression of opinions, video casting and photography (Shao, 2009). In addition to constructing self-identity, people who blog to update and inform others of their activities are motivated to record their lives and experiences (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004). In this sense, they use a blog as a communication medium to keep family and friends updated of the events in their life (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). People also use blogs as a social networking tool and are motivated to meet new people with the same interests and maintain the established network by providing support to the people within the network (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Liu, Liao, & Zeng, 2007). The other function of blogs is information sharing, whereby bloggers who utilise this function are motivated to share knowledge and communicate their ideas (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Huang et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Blogs are also used as a source of entertainment, whereby bloggers engage in various activities, such as gathering information and communicating with others, which enables them to fulfil various emotional needs, such as relaxing, being entertained and being excited (Kaye, 2005).

2.3 Studying Blog

2.3.1 Travel Blogs as Research Data

Travel blogs as research data have been widely used in the tourism context, for example in research into the perceived usefulness of travel blogs as tourism communication channels (Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2007; Pühringer & Taylor, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008), blogs' influences on decision-making and intention to visit (Volo, 2010; Zehrer, Crotts & Magnini, 2011), blogs as an aid to understanding the meaning of the experience (Bosangit, Hibbert, & McCabe, 2015; Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009), and blogs being used to create destination images (Wenger, 2008; Sun, Ryan & Pan; 2014).

Most of the studies demonstrate that blogs are significant sources for Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) for understanding tourist behaviours, perceptions and activities at a destination. Table 2.3 summarises key areas of tourism research on travel blogs.

Table 2.3 Areas of Tourism Research on Travel Blogs

Perceived Usefulness of Travel Blog			
Author(s)	Research objective	Sample	Results
Mack, Blose, and Pan (2007)	Examine the use of travel blog as a means of marketing communication.	College students, reflective of bloggers' profiles.	Consumers perceive travel blogs to be as credible as traditional word of mouth.
Pühringer & Taylor (2008)	To identify the extent of blogs incorporated into the Austrian business community.	Tourist accommodation operators.	Although tourism operators already include travel blogs in their strategic marketing plans, they find it relatively difficult to utilise the data from travel blogs in a more efficient way.
Schmallegger and Carson, (2008)	How blog functions influence promotion, product distribution, communication, management and research.	Conceptual paper.	Travel blogs allow communication between the bloggers and the readers and enable exchange of information in an easier and flexible way, not always possible in other means.
Role of Travel Blog in Decision-Making and Purchasing Behaviour			
Author(s)	Research objective	Sample	Results
Huang et al. (2010)	Influence of ads on travel blogs on intention to purchase travel products.	Travel bloggers and active blog readers.	Positive impact of ads on purchase intention, and active readers have a favourable impression of ads in travel blogs.
Volo (2010)	Influence of tourist experience on potential tourist decision-making.	Blogs of tourists visiting South Tyrol.	Blogs have influenced readers' intentions to visit, particularly with regard to the tourist experiences that related to experience essence (feelings, mood, sensations, interpretation and learning).
Zehrer et al. (2011)	Impact of travel blog posts on travel blog users.	200 blog narratives of hotel and resort stays.	Mixed evaluation (positive and negative): negative evaluation are not bad if followed by positive counter reaction.
Understanding Experience			
Author(s)	Research objective	Sample	Results
Bosangit et al. (2009)	To investigate how tourists construct their experience as part of the process of identity management.	Top travel blogs of various destinations (30 blogs).	Bloggers construct their future experiences based on their expectations and their past experiences.
Bosangit et al. (2012)	To investigate how tourists construct the tourist experience in order to understand post-consumptive tourist behaviour.	19 British long-haul backpacker travel bloggers.	The post-consumption stage of the tourist experience extends beyond evaluation of experience, whereby tourists construct their experience that represents place, acts of self-presentation, identity construction, and 'othering'.
Bosangit et al. (2015)	To identify the processes by which events and activities are transformed into personally meaningful experience.	19 British long-haul backpacker travel bloggers.	Narratives related to self-reflection and emotions are central to the process of transforming the tourist experience into personally meaningful experience, and stories of risk, challenge, novelty and learning are found to be commonly narrated by the travel bloggers as memorable experiences.
Destination Image			
Author(s)	Research objective	Sample	Results
Law and Cheung (2010)	To examine the perceived destination image of Hong Kong.	2,247 blog entries from Chinese tourists who visited Hong Kong.	Hong Kong is described positively by Chinese tourists who highlight the shopping and food experiences, which leads to the perception of Hong Kong as an expensive tourist destination.
Pan, Maclaurin and Crofts (2007)	To gain an understanding of the tourist experience, and of Charleston's strengths and weaknesses as perceived by tourists.	Travel blogs on Charleston, South Carolina (40 travel blogs).	Revealed the main strengths and weaknesses of the destination.

(Summarised by the author, 2016)

Table 2.3 illustrates selected existing literature on travel blogs, demonstrating that travel blogs are utilised to understand various aspects of tourism. However, most of the studies were carried out at the early stages of travel blog development and consequently they focus on the travel blogs as a new communication channel (Mack et al., 2007; Pühringer & Taylor, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). The findings of these studies generally conclude that people who read travel blogs perceive them to be as credible as word of mouth (Mack et al., 2007), and they are increasingly used as an effective marketing tool for tourism marketers (Pühringer & Taylor, 2008). Similarly, Schmallegger and Carson (2008) acknowledge that travel blogs are an effective communication tool, emphasising that it allows information to be transmitted between bloggers and readers more easily when compared to other means.

Volo (2010) found that the tourist experience narrated in travel blogs has the potential to influence potential tourist intention to visit a destination. Focusing on the travel blogs narrated by tourists who visited South Tyrol, Volo further revealed that the experience essence related to feelings, mood, sensations, interpretation and learning influences the blog readers' intention to visit. Zehrer et al. (2011) focus their study on the impact of travel blog narratives of hotel and resort stays on the readers. The study highlights that readers perceived positive and negative evaluations of the experience helpful, while negative evaluations were not considered bad if they were followed by positive counter reactions. Based on these above mentioned studies, it is clear that it is important to understand the role of travel blogs in influencing the potential tourists and that more research needs to take place.

Other than the perceived usefulness and potential of travel blogs in influencing potential tourists to visit specific destinations, travel blogs have been investigated to understand more about destination images (Leung, et al., 2010; Pan, et al., 2007). Pan et al. (2007) analyse travel blogs on Charleston in the UK to ascertain what tourists communicate about the location. The results show that there is a discrepancy between the images presented of Charlestown as a town compared to the reality of it being a major metropolitan city. Also, by analysing the items that were communicated by the tourists, the strengths and weaknesses of

Charleston could be unpacked, which provided detailed and in-depth information about the destination. Similarly, Leung et al. (2010) examined the perceived images of Hong Kong from Chinese tourists' perspectives. Chinese tourists perceived Hong Kong to be an expensive tourist destination due to high food prices and accommodation rates. However, they were impressed with the shopping experience, due to the high quality of products available and competitive prices. The findings suggest that travel blogs are an appropriate source of accurate and realistic destination images as perceived by tourists.

Although many researchers acknowledge the positive impact of travel blogs in the tourism context and that they provide valuable insights into destination marketing and management (Akehurst, 2009; Pan et al. 2007; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008), less attention is paid to blogs to gain a deeper understanding of the tourist's experience construction (for example, Bosangit et al., 2009; Bosangit et al., 2012; Bosangit et al., 2015). Bosangit et al. (2009) employed narrative analysis to understand how tourists construct and make meanings from their experience. They identified that a tourist's identity and sense-making were revealed by the stories that were told, the way in which they were recounted and how they were linked to the aspects of self-concept, including values, preferences, skills, social roles and relationships. Subsequent research by Bosangit et al. (2012) examined how tourists construct their experiences, in order to provide insight into post consumption behaviour of the tourist experience. Focusing on the long-haul British backpacker, the findings reveal that travel bloggers demonstrate acts of self-presentation, identity construction and representing places in constructing the tourist experience. In addition, the study also reveals that travel bloggers also employ linguistic techniques and self-presentation strategies in their narratives. Bosangit et al. (2015) investigate how tourists transform their travel events and activities into personally meaningful and memorable experiences. Their study found that the narratives that related to self-reflection and emotions are central to the process of transforming the tourist experience into that personally meaningful and memorable experience. They further explain that stories of risk, challenge, novelty and learning are found to be commonly narrated by the travel bloggers as memorable experiences.

Based on the above mentioned studies, it is suggested that travel blogs have demonstrated their potential to substantially influence decision-making, intention to visit and purchasing behaviour (Mack et al., 2007; Pühringer & Taylor, 2008). Also, based on the above studies, it is clear that travel blogs have the potential to help unpack perceived destination images through analysing tourists' narratives, which in turn could help marketers to improve their services (Leung et al., 2010; Pan et al., 2007). Travel blogs have also been effectively used to understand tourist experience construction (Bosangit, Dulnuan, & Mena, 2012; Bosangit et al., 2015; Bosangit et al., 2009).

2.2.3 Blogging Motivation (Uses and Gratification Perspectives)

Since the introduction of the uses and gratification (hereafter U&G) framework to communication research, nearly all media, including traditional and internet-based media, have been studied under this lens. Understanding the functions and gratifications provided by media helps to clarify the interaction between media and the audience. The U&G approach is a paradigm which is used in mass communications research to guide the exploration of people's motivations for media usage (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Rubin (1993) further highlights that the audience's activities are central to U&G research and discovering communication motives. The main objective of a U&G investigation is to clarify how people use certain media to fulfil their needs. Its aim is to understand the motive for media engagement and to identify the consequences of the needs, motives and behaviours (Katz et al. 1974).

Prior to the rise of internet and communication technology research in academia, the U&G approach had been used to understand the motivation of traditional media use, such as television (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980; Rubin, 1979), radio (Herzog, 1940), and newspapers (Elliott & Rosenberg, 1987). Rubin (1983) classified television consumption motives into instrumental and ritualised motives, which are broadly used in existing U&G research. Instrumental motive is used to fulfil informational needs which are goal-directed, while ritualised motive is used to gratify diversionary

needs which are more or less routine media use. Also, audiences with instrumental motives are characterised as more selective audiences.

With the growth of new technology, research has been extended to include numerous other new media, including social media. Ruggiero (2000) proposed U&G as a progressive approach to research the future direction of mass communication, including new media that is related to internet technologies. The U&G perspective has been suggested as an appropriate framework that can be used to understand social media and the internet as it not only addresses the consequences of media consumption, but also the engagement motivation (Shao, 2009). This approach has been used to understand perceived motivations through content analysis and actual motivations through survey and interviews (Kaye & Johnson; 2000; Papacharissi, 2000, 2004; Tremmell, 2004; Whitting & Williams, 2013). Hence, the U&G approach has been widely employed in research on the internet (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004). It has also been applied to social networking sites, such as Facebook (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009), Twitter (Chen, 2011; Johnson & Young, 2009) and blogging (Chung & Kim, 2008; Hollenbaugh, 2010; Kaye, 2005).

With regard to internet use, the U&G approach has been employed in research which has examined user motivations. Research has explored why people connect to the internet and concluded the following: to fulfil entertainment needs and seek out enjoyment, fun and pleasure; to fulfil information seeking needs, where they seek out information or self-educate; to fulfil social interaction needs, where they connect, communicate and meet people with similar interests; or to pass the time, where the internet is used to occupy themselves and relieve boredom (Kaye, 1998; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Stafford et al., 2004).

Park et al. (2009) conducted research into social networking sites and found that engagement with Facebook was found to be motivated by the need to socialise and establish self-status, and to seek out entertainment and information. Using college students as participants, their study found that Facebook was used to fulfil socialising needs by meeting and talking with others, and also to gain

support within the same interest group of users. Entertainment gratification refers to engagement to satisfy amusement and leisure purposes, in which the participants perceived the engagement as fun and exciting. The students were also likely to engage with Facebook for reasons associated with seeking and preserving their personal status within the online environment, for example looking cool by engaging with Facebook. Finally, as for information needs, the students engaged in Facebook to learn and gain information about specific issues.

Acknowledging Twitter as a medium for communication, Chen (2011) conducted a study to investigate how Twitter is used to gratify the social connection needs. An online survey targeting people who actively use the internet and Twitter at the same time reveals that the longer a person spends on Twitter, the more they gratify their social connection needs. Chen (2011) further explains that spending time posting and replying to others on Twitter is also an important way for people to gratify the social connection needs. Additionally, Chen (2011) further explains that spending time posting and replying to others mediates the relationship between Twitter usage and gratifying such needs. Further, using the U&G approach, Stock, Rohrmeier, and Hess (2007), investigate the motivation of blog engagement by comparing two different blog users: webbloggers and videobloggers. The findings from the survey and interviews with the bloggers indicates that videobloggers and webbloggers differ in their motivation for producing content; videobloggers are motivated by fun and passing the time, while webbloggers' motivations are associated with information dissemination. Based on the above review, therefore, the U&G approach is considered an appropriate framework for studying blogs, because it asks what active audiences do with media, rather than what media does for/to audiences (Swanson, 1979).

Although U&G theory is prolific in communication studies and has been applied to different types of social media, including blogs, to date, little research has specifically examined the motivation of travel blogs through the U&G perspective. Previous studies into blogging motivation using the U&G lens have merely focused on the other types of blogs, such as personal blogs. For example, Li (2005) investigated blogging motivation by conducting a survey on American personal bloggers. Seven motivations emerged: self-documentation, improving

writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time and socialisation. Bloggers are motivated to write blogs to keep track of and to document their life. The study also found that blogging is used to improve writing – it provides users a site to refine and practice their writing. Bloggers are also likely to express themselves, as they want to show their personality to others. Furthermore, bloggers blog to express themselves, and they feel comfortable doing so in a blog, as compared to other mediums. Medium appeal refers to bloggers who are motivated to engage more with blogs as compared to other mediums, due to the convenience and cost effectiveness of publishing an opinion. Bloggers are also motivated to write blogs to provide and share interesting information with others. Furthermore, bloggers blog to fulfil entertainment needs, for fun and to simply do what they love. Bloggers are also motivated to do so simply to pass the time, as they have nothing better to do. Finally, through blogging, users fulfil their need to socialise, connect with family and friends, and meet new people.

Results of a survey of readers of political blogs conducted by Kaye (2005) identified six motivations for accessing political blogs, namely: information seeking and media checking, convenience, personal fulfilment, political surveillance, social surveillance, and expression and affiliation. These blogs' readers were actively searching for information and at the same time comparing this information with the traditional media. Readers access blogs because of convenience; readers are able to access information more quickly using different technologies and read it at a time that suits them. Personal fulfilment refers to gathering information to use to discuss with others, and to fulfil certain needs such as entertainment and relaxation. Readers also read blogs for political surveillance, and for the purpose of keeping up-to-date about the political environment. Social surveillance refers to readers' interest in learning others' opinion on various issues, and finally, they are motivated to express personal viewpoints and interact with people who hold the same interests and beliefs.

Whilst research focusing on travel blogging motivation is still in its infancy, it should be noted that there have been a few attempts at developing sets of blog U&G traits. A review of the few studies regarding blogging motivations

(Huang et al.,2007; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004; Schmidt & Wilber, 2005) is shown in Table 2.2 in the Section 2.2.2.

2.2.5 Blogger Engagement

Social media engagement including blogs, can be understood by examining the users' behaviour and activities (Shao, 2009; Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Tedjamulia et al., 2005). Huang et al. (2007) highlight that, other than motivation, an understanding of bloggers' engagement through examining their blog activities is another aspect that needs to be considered to provide a holistic understanding of the blogging phenomenon. Unlike other media, such as television and radio, where audiences can choose to be a passive or active recipient of the messages, internet-based communication demands attention and activity (Kaye, 2005). Blogs may function either as either one-way or two-way communication, whereby the audience may choose to passively browse blogs or actively participate within the blogosphere. Both modes are used for different purposes to fulfil specific needs (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

There has been limited work done to understand blogging behaviour further than the socio-demographic profile. For instance, an empirical study by Lenhart and Fox (2006) on US bloggers reveals what bloggers actually do: about 84% of bloggers go online daily, while the rest go online several times a day from home. Most of them spend five hours per week maintaining their blogs. Of these, almost half considered blogging as a hobby and 13% considered blogs as part of their lives, which indicates that blogging is important to them. Half of them own and maintain one blog and do not share authorship with anyone. They are also concerned about privacy as most of them use pseudonyms to keep their online life separate from their offline life. In terms of reading content, they prefer to read online news and to gather news from various sources. Further, the findings reveal that bloggers have a great interest in communication, as they took nearly every opportunity to communicate via blog. In terms of sharing, 77% of bloggers revealed that the content they shared was original work, including their own

stories, photos or videos. Their sharing was mostly rooted in personal experience, and things that they had read or observed inspired them to blog.

Scholars have noted that people’s engagement with online groups can be broken down into three levels: passive, moderate, and active. Table 2.4 presents and summarises these different levels of engagement (Baym, 2010; Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Shao, 2009; Van Dijck, 2009). The different types of engagement identified are based on previous research on many types of social media, such as online communities, and internet engagement, and based on communication behaviour (Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Shao, 2009; Tedjamulia et al., 2005; Van Dijck, 2009). As some of this research involved observing virtual communities (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004), it is assumed that the results and findings are also relevant to blogging in general. The engagement level is defined based on the activities performed by the individuals in the communities. The performed activities imply how bloggers use blogs, which can also be another way of understanding their engagement. Table 2.4 provides the blogging behaviour which reflects the level of engagement.

Table 2.4 Types of Engagement within Online Communities

Level	Activity	Description	Authors
Passive	Consuming/ lurking	Browses and consumes available information but never posts.	Baym(2010), Nonnecke and Preece (2001; 2000) Shao (2009)
Moderate	Participating	Engagement in the provision of the content and with other users but the participant does not produce any content.	Shao (2009)
Active	Posting	Posts own content and responds to questions asked by other people.	Shao (2009), Van Djick, (2009)

(Summarised by the author, 2016)

Table 2.4 illustrates the three different types of engagement: consuming/lurking, participating and posting. Consuming/lurking (passive engagement) indicates that the individual only browses and consumes the available information but does not make any contribution to the blogs. Nonnecke and Preece (2000; 2001) describe an individual who only consumes information but never posts in the virtual community as a ‘lurker’ – a passive recipient

consuming the content (Baym, 2010). In comparison, Shao (2009) defines a participating individual as one who engages in the provision of the content and interacts with other users but who does not produce any content themselves. This engagement can be classified as moderate, as the behaviour is between the passive and active engagement. The third type, posting, refers to an individual's active production of content and response to questions asked by others (Shao, 2009; Van Djick, 2009).

Previous studies on blogging specifically describe the users' behaviours in many ways (Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Schmidt, 2007; Wenger, 2008). Gretzel, Kang and Lee (2008) described the blogging behaviours in terms of adoption and use, for example time spent on blogs and how potential tourists use blogs for travel planning. Lenhart and Fox (2006) described blogging behaviour in terms of frequency of posts, hours spent on blogging and location of blogging. Schmidt (2007) reported on blogging behaviour by highlighting three issues: information management (reading blogs, providing RSS feeds, categories or tags), identity management (regularity of updating blogs, blog content and confession of personal information), and relationship management (network within the blog community, posting comments). Wenger (2008) described blogging practices by outlining the demographic characteristics, including the types of blogged trips, location of the posts, and the communicated aspects of their experience in blogs, such as transportation, attractions and accommodation. Hence, there is a need to understand blogging behaviour, in terms of the role of tourists (frequency of travel and travel information such as group or single traveller) and bloggers (blogging experience, number of followers and types of content). These behaviours can influence the experience of blogging and engagement with the readers.

Distinguishing the different types of blogging behaviours is significant for this study. Although it is understood that to be a blogger one must produce their own entries, it is also important to consider different types of engagement (i.e. consuming, participating and posting) when examining blogging behaviours. This is because this study examines the three different stages of the tourist experience (i.e. pre-visit, on-site and post-visit) and postulates that at each stage of the tourist

experience bloggers may have different blogging behaviours. For instance, in planning a trip, it is important to understand how bloggers engage with travel blogs, what content they are looking for, and whether they post before travelling.

2.4 The Tourist Experience

The tourist experience is a complex experience as it can be behavioural or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, and/or expressed or implied (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007). Also, the tourist experience is debatably different and unique from everyday and routine experience (Cohen, 1979; 2004), as it provides memories and emotions related to places (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The tourist experience has been defined by various disciplines including economics (Andersson, 2007; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966), psychology (Larsen, 2007), sociology (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973) and marketing (Mossberg, 2007).

From the economics perspectives, Clawson and Knetsch (1966) define the tourist experience as an event which includes anticipation and planning, the actual travel to the destination, on-site activities, travel back to the point of origin, and then remembering and sharing with others. From the same perspective, Andersson (2007) defines the tourist experience as the moment when tourist consumption and production meet. He also describes the tourist experience as something that one constructs based on the consumed resources.

The psychological view of the tourist experience considers it to be one's very important past personal travel-related event, which is influenced by the anticipations and occurrences (Larsen, 2007). Larsen (2007) further explains that anticipations and events constructed in one's memory thus form the foundation for new anticipations and preferences. Jennings et al. (2009) note that the concern about the tourist experience from a marketing perspective is rather new. From a marketing perspective, Mossberg (2007) defines the tourist experience as an encounter in a place, referred to as *experiencescape*, which is influenced by personnel, other tourists, the physical environment, and products and souvenirs. In the context of sociology, the tourist experience exemplifies a complex construct

which has been theorised as unique from one's mundane routine (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973).

The tourist experience is referred to as the subjective experience that allows a tourist to create different opportunities from his/her routine life, as the tourist seek out strangeness and uniqueness when he/she travels, often described as authenticity (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973; Neumann, 1992). The distinctiveness from everyday life is created when the tourist experience involves an unusual environment or spiritual pleasure during the travel (Jansson, 2002). Also, tourist experience usually relies on the meanings based on the experience (Andereck, Bricker, Kerstetter & Nickerson, 2006). In regard to the symbolic meanings of an experience, researchers attempt to understand what the actual experience means to the tourist by considering it as a continuously constructed event rather than as distinct engagements onsite (Arnold & Price, 1993). Furthermore, MacCannell (1973) accentuates tourist experience as a hunt for authenticity, and highlights that tourists search for authenticity missing in their mundane activities. This standpoint has formed the foundation for many existing studies in tourism literature (see, for example, Bruner, 1994; Olsen, 2002; Wang, 1999, 200). The concept of authenticity will be elaborated in the following section.

2.4.1 Tourist Experience and Authenticity

MacCannell (1973) believes that the tourist experience is a sincere quest for authenticity, pointing out that 'the concerns of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experience parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society' (p. 589-590). Previous studies have focused on the toured objects authenticity to understand the tourist experience. These conventional views of authenticity have been challenged by post-modernist modes (McCabe, 2005). Uriely (2005) proposes that research into the tourist experience has endured four shifts, as explained in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Four shifts of theoretical development in tourist experience

Concept	Description
De-differentiating the experience	The tourist experience was observed as being distinct from mundane routine and then shifted to being observed as being the same as other experiential processes.
Pluralising the experience	A shift from regarding the tourist experience as a homogenous concept to recognising that there are multiple types of tourists and tourist experiences.
The role of subjectivity	A shift from tourists passively receiving objects provided to them to negotiating meaning from the provided objects for themselves.
Towards relative interpretation	Acknowledgement that differing views about the tourist experience reflected different interpretations, and recognition that multiple views can co-exist, with no absolute truth but rather relative truth.

Summarised from Uriely (2005)

Early research into tourist experience construction highlighted the objective of authenticity (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973; Uriely, 2005). It was suggested that tourists would have an authentic experience when authentic objects were presented to them. The first two research phases emphasised de-differentiating the tourist experience from the daily mundane routine and were concerned with subjectivity and the pluralisation of postmodern tourism and the tourist experience. Cohen's (1979) research was one of the major works in this area. Cohen (1979) argues that people may desire different tourist experiences and hence the 'tourist does not exist as a type' (p.180) – instead, he suggested a number of different types existed. Cohen (1979) thus suggests a phenomenological typology of the tourist experience, which ranges from travel for pleasure to a quest for meaning within an alienated space. Other categories include recreational, where tourists restore their sense of well-being by travelling in order to escape from the pressure of their daily lives; diversionary, where tourists travel to escape from their tedious and meaningless mundane routine; experiential, where tourists recollect meaning through an authentic experience in a foreign society; experimental, where tourists hunt out foreign lifestyles and existential modes, and try to follow a new life and culture at the destination.

The third research phase, looking at the role of subjectivity, has been paid much attention by tourism researchers. Research has emphasised that tourists have shifted from passively receiving objects provided by the industry to negotiating meaning from the provided objects for themselves (Edensor, 2001; Lash & Urry,

1994). Even though tourists passively accept the objects presented by the industry, they subjectively construct their personal experience by taking fragments from different objects and reconstructing them based on their preferences (Uriely, 2005). Uriely (2005) suggests that the displayed objects are considered to be authentic not because they are naturally so; rather, it is perceived as authentic due to the construction of the tourists or service providers from their own perspectives (Uriely, 2005). This constructed authenticity emphasises that the role of tourists in the construction of authentic attributes is related to the displayed objects. Bruner (1991) further suggests that tourists would be disappointed if what is presented to them is absolutely fake. However, he argued, tourists can be quite satisfied with an 'authentic (re)production' as long as it is a good one. As such, he argues that all tourist experience must be 'intense and real'.

Alternatively, in underlining the tourists' subjective activities, Wang (2000) introduced a new concept of authenticity: existential authenticity. This concept emphasises that the feelings of authenticity are not related to the displayed objects, instead they exist inside the individual tourists. These feelings are associated with the potential existential state of being which is triggered by a tourist's activities. As such, a tourist would experience more authenticity through performing non-ordinary activities, in which they are more able to express themselves when compared to their daily routines. This concept of existential authenticity has been substantially used in many tourism studies contexts, including gastronomy (Chang, 2007; Mkono, 2013), homestay perception (Mura, 2015), and authenticity in travel blogs (Nuenen, 2015; Thurm, 2014).

Similarly, Larsen (2007) supports the notion of subjective experience, in which experiences are psychological phenomena that are rooted within individual tourists. In this sense, if communicating the tourist experience through a travel blog is turned into a kind of tourist activity, instead of merely treating it as an object, it thus constitutes a form of existential authenticity. As such, the sense of authenticity in travel blogs would not be limited to whether the communicated tourist experience is an exact replication of the authentic tourist experience, but rather can be extended to embrace existential authenticity. In particular, tourists' engagement with different types of media, including travel blogs, through

producing storytelling clearly represents the destinations with their own personal interpretation (Månsson, 2011). In this regard, Månsson (2011) further argues that the notion of authenticity within the social media context (for instance, the travel blog), gives rise to questions of authenticity, because the construction of the tourist experience is the new interpretation of the site.

2.4.2 Different Stages of the Tourist Experience

The tourist experience can also be understood through its different stages. In particular, time, space and the detailed processes at different stages of the experience have been regarded as the important elements to understand the tourist experience (Aho, 2001; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Larsen, 2007). Most analyses of the tourist experience discussed in the literature is based on Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) model of recreation experience. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) posit that tourists are involved in five phases of activity: (1) an anticipation or pre-purchase, (2) travel to the site segment, (3) an on-site experience, (4) a return travel component, and (5) an extended recall and recollection stage. Killion (1992) modified this model and made it a circular model rather than a linear model, arguing that various phases may replicate the entire tourist experience; this is especially true when tourists travel to various destinations (Jennings, 2006).

Aho (2001) and Larsen (2007) present models of the tourist experience that contain a more detailed process of those stages. Aho (2001) presents the dynamics of the tourist experience by outlining seven processes that are derived from the three different stages of the tourist experience: (1) orientation; (2) attachment; (3) visiting; (4) evaluation; (5) storing; (6) reflection; and (7) enrichment. The first two processes are about the pre-visit stage that describes the development of interest that drives the decision to visit a particular destination. The visiting and evaluation processes, on the other hand, refer to the on-site stage, where the tourist performs the actual event, makes comparisons with their expectations, and arrives at a conclusion about the experience. Finally, the last three processes explain the post-consideration of the tourist experience where the tourist stores, reflects, and enriches the experience.

Larsen (2007) highlights the importance of expectations, events during the trip, and memories in defining the tourist experience. He emphasises that the post-visit stage associated with remembering the experience is influenced by the expected experience (pre-visit) and events (on-site). He further argues that it is essential to accumulate the past experience in the process of remembering and reminiscing about the whole experience. In this regard, tourists share their personal memories of their tourist experience with others through narrations and photos (Marschall, 2012). Larsen (2007), however, noted that little attention is paid to the psychological aspects of the tourist experience. In fact, when tourists are asked about their travels they often refer to their experiences and memories, and not necessarily the actual destination.

2.4.3 Tourist Narratives and the Tourist Experience

Narratives that are central to the construction of the tourist experience have been studied in different manners including as part of culture, as a means for interaction and communication, and as dramatic performance (McCabe & Foster, 2006). Cary (2004) notes that the tourist experience can be considered as narrative because tourist consumption involves the creation and sharing of stories. The tourist's narrative is not only about a reproduction of the experience, but rather, narrative is (re)presented, (re)produced and (re)created through different forms of content, including travel diaries, photographs and storytelling (Boyd, 2009; Cary, 2004). Tourists employ a 'narrativistic' attitude; that is, their accounts involve development of a story, defining, describing, and providing reasons for the tourist events (McCabe & Foster, 2006). An abundance of tourism researches has dedicated on the narratives produced by the tourist at each of the three different stages of the tourist experience (i.e. before, during and after) (see, for example, McCabe & Foster, 2006; Noy, 2002, 2004; Tucker, 2005).

There are several important reasons, identified by Tung and Ritchie (2011) for considering the tourist narrative when examining the tourist experience. Firstly, Moscardo (2010) notes that during travel, tourists create stories, and the stories later are re-constructed as memories to be told to others when they reach home. Secondly, narrative, also referred to as storytelling, shapes memories and

impression of the site and events over time (McGregor & Holmes, 1999). Thirdly, interaction with people that tourists met during their travels, such as local people, tour guides and service staff, may influence the tourist's narrative, and thus affect the destination image and behaviour (Hollenbeck, Peters & Zinkhan, 2008). Lastly, narratives are not only useful because they connect emotion and understanding between the narrator and the audience (Woodside, 2010), but they also serve as a foundation for memory construction (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000).

Moscardo (2010) emphasises the value of narratives in understanding the tourist experience and proposes a framework to provide insight into which stories and themes might be applied into the overall system of the tourist experience. The framework highlights four areas for research: (1) the role of stories in effective destination branding; (2) the role of stories in destination choice; (3) the importance of stories told by others; and (4) the connection between stories and sustainability. The managerial implications of the framework outlined by Moscardo (2010) can also be applied to travel blogs. Moscardo (2010) states that the use of stories in building destination image could attract more tourists to visit a particular destination. This is due to the fact that travel stories cover various aspects of the tourist experience, including the tourists themselves, the people that they meet, and the local cultures, and that may give an overall image of the destination. Furthermore, stories and themes can be used to organise the information to be shared with other tourists when they arrive at the destination. Also, as tourists create stories as part of their activities while they are at the destination, the activities can enhance construction and evaluation of experience (Moscardo, 2010).

Cary (2004) argues that travel narratives are represented, reproduced and recreated through various forms of tourist narratives, including photos and travel diaries. Thus, photos and videos, which are also considered to be tourist narratives, have also been studied to provide insight into the tourist experience. In this regard, photos have been used to understand the tourist's images and expectations of a destination (Tussyadiah, 2010; Yee & Tussyadiah, 2011), and to understand the different experiences within a group of tourists (Fairweather &

Swaffield, 2001). Videos can influence attachment to a destination (Plunkett & Lee, 2015) and can be used as mediators of the tourist experience (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

Tussyadiah (2010) interpreted the pictorial narratives of Philadelphia by comparing images selected from the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation website photo gallery (gophila.com) and photos posted by visitors (obtained through Flickr (www.flickr.com)). Tourists reproduced images that were projected to them at the pre-visit stage. However, they then exemplified the destination differently, influenced by their own perceptions and experiences, and delivering this meaning and context to the audience. In addition, photos were arranged in sequential order or in an album. Thus, a single photo was a fragment of tourist narrative, as it was considered to be a piece of information that will complete an experience or storytelling when it is linked with the other photos in the same context. The study also highlights that as tourists share their perspectives through the photos, the audience is able to relate socially to the photos and albums and develop a cognitive understanding of the personalised trips.

Using photos from international and domestic tourists visiting Kaikoura, New Zealand, Fairweather and Swaffield (2001) highlight that the tourist experience differs within different groups of tourists. Factor analysis was employed to yield the groups describing distinct tourist experiences, and the results were interpreted on the basis of the photos most and least liked and the comments made about them by the tourists interviewed. The findings revealed how destination is experienced and unpacks the distinctions between the experience quested and appreciated by different groups of tourists.

Other than photos, videos have also been studied as tourist narratives. For instance, Plunkett and Lee (2015) examine the influence of texts and videos posted on Facebook and specifically viewed through a smartphone on mental imagery processing. The study discovers that smartphones influence mental imagery through the process of narrative transportation. Similarly, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) confirm that videos provide mental pleasure to the viewers. Using videos of New York City posted on Youtube, the study highlights that

videos stimulate fantasies, day dreaming and allow the viewers to recall their past travel memories. Furthermore, videos are also instruments of narrative transportation, as viewers are able to obtain access to landscapes and socioscape.

2.5 Travel Blogs for the Tourist Blogger and the Tourist Experience

The tourist experience is mediated and shaped by various types of media, including travel blogs, throughout each stage of the tourist experience (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). It is argued that the availability of different content on travel blogs, such as photos or videos, mediates the construction of the tourist experience at each stage (Gretzel et al., 2011). According to Gretzel et al. (2006) the use of travel blogs at the different stages of the tourist experience depends on the users' particular communication and information needs. According to the authors, at the pre-visit stage, travel blogs are used to obtain information and to develop expectations about the travel. In contrast, during the actual visit, i.e. at the destination, travel blogs are used to connect and obtain additional information in real time. At the post-visit stage, tourists then document and share their tourist experience, which in turn serves as the basis for them to create a sense of attachment with places, attractions and the service providers. Travel blogs, therefore, have shown their potential to influence and mediate the tourist experience. Details about the relationship between travel blog engagement and the tourist experience is further discussed in the following sections.

2.5.1 Pre-visit Stage of Tourist Experience

Travel blogs seem to play an important role at the pre-visit stage because they help create the desire to travel, assisting the tourist to form an accurate expectation and helping them with decision-making (Gretzel et al., 2011). Jansson (2002) associates this with the globalised media culture and the ability to make a potential tourist feel as though he or she were at the destination without actually being at the destination. He further argues that the tourist gaze is becoming more and more interconnected with the consumption of media images. However, Mansson (2010) argues that mediated tourism, which refers to the images of

places in media, will not replace the actual travelling, rather, it will initiate a need for first-hand experience.

Narrative at the pre-visit stage is about the pre-understanding of a destination (Bruner, 2005). The pre-visit narrative is already in the tourist's mind before the travel starts; therefore, the narrative is carried along during the journey. Gretzel and Jamal (2009) describe the pre-visit stage as an actively-involved and socially-intense phase. Conventionally, potential tourists become familiar with a destination through many sources, such as through well-known stories told in travel brochures, guidebooks, television and films. These conventional sources help the potential tourist to form a perception, understand the image of the destination and create an expectation about the destination (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Increasingly these days, potential tourists refer to the internet and social media created by other tourists to form their expectations (Choi, Lehto & Morrison, 2007). Compared to conventional sources, online sources are far more persuasive, because they offer a new reality by influencing the potential tourists during their information searching (Pühringer & Taylor, 2008).

The pre-visit stage is important as tourist bloggers explore, search for inspiration and communicate with others about the destination. Hence, Huang et al. (2010) highlight the opportunity for destinations to use new media, such as online tourist experience sharing (e.g., travel reviews and travel blogs), to assist in creating immersive virtual environments which enhance the tourist's experience even before their actual journey begins. Furthermore, online narratives (e.g., travel blogs) and digitised media, such as photographs and videos posted by tourists, can evoke jealousy so that potential tourists are stimulated to have the same experience. Compared to conventional promotional media (e.g., travel brochures and guidebooks), narrative that is created by tourist bloggers has a greater capacity to allow the potential tourist to experience a destination, thus making narrative an effective tool for influencing potential tourists' decision-making (Tussyadiah, Park & Fesenmaier, 2011; Volo, 2010) and facilitating potential tourist attention and stimulation (Grabe, Lang & Zhao, 2003).

Wang (2012) explores the manner in which travel blogs influence the audience's behavioural intention to travel through affecting their perceived destination images. He suggests that travel blogs have assisted in building affective images (e.g., generating empathy and experiencing appeal) and cognitive images (e.g., providing guides), and facilitating interpersonal interactions (e.g., social influence) which create a strong impact on how a destination is perceived, and therefore enhance the intention to travel to the destination. Focusing on hotel and resort stays, Zehrer, Crofts and Magnini (2011) demonstrate that travel blogs have a strong influence on expectation creation. This is due to the blogs' readers considering the posting to be useful; both positive and negative perspectives of the experience are perceived to be helpful as they unfold a more trustworthy picture of a tourism product. The study also suggested that multiple posts that are congruent with each other are most influential, and that negative postings do not necessarily lead to bad perception if followed by a positive counter reply.

While the above mentioned studies emphasise consuming activities, the engagement with travel blogs at the pre-visit stage is not limited to only that type. Instead, engagement with blogs also provides a means for communicating experience between the content creators (bloggers) and the readers (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009); bloggers encourage comments through links and comments boxes (Sorapure, 2003). Most importantly, the participatory and interactive features of blogs enhance their authenticity (Sorapure, 2003).

In their blogs, travel bloggers use textual and visual media to express a story which communicates the values of their content (Wu & Liu, 2011). The content is used by a tourist to preserve their experience but it can also be used to turn their personal moment into a commercial one (Bendix, 2002). A successful storytelling blog may attract a large readership and can be used as a marketing medium. For instance, a series of blog posts that consisted of the personal experiences and photographs of a Taiwanese engineer's travel to Greece, set to calm music, unexpectedly became a hit and attracted thousands of readers (Lin & Huang, 2006). The study found that the touching and amazing photography, the calm music, the brief words, and the fact that the story was shared by 'ordinary people' appealed to the audience. Additionally, a good storytelling blog allows the

audience to feel emotionally connected to the narrator and empathise with their experience (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003). In this regard, the information narrated by blogger tourists in multimedia, such as texts, photographs, videos, and the interaction among potential tourists and the narrator serve as a centre of transformation for the potential tourists.

Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) state that online travel videos, including those posted in travel blogs, allow potential tourists to imagine and create fantasies. In addition, they state that the shared videos help tourists at the post-visit stage to remember their experience. Their study also highlights that the communication that occurs between the content creators and the viewers enables the transportation of the experiential information to be shared and exchanged. Travel blogs, therefore, function as a circuit within the tourist experience context, as, at each stage of the tourist experience, travel blogs have their own role and impact on the tourist experience. For example, the purpose of a blogger-tourist's post-visit travel blog narration is eventually fulfilled for the blogger, but it may be used again in the future by a potential tourist pre-visit when building expectations of their upcoming trip.

2.5.2 On-site Stage of the Tourist Experience

The actual travel phase, often referred to as the on-site stage, in the physical time spent at the tourism destination. Somers (1994) notes that travel stories are narrated continuously as the tourist moves on to each new place. Therefore, the on-site stage of the tourist experience appears to be the most appropriate setting to share the tourist experience, as the narrator is still undertaking the travel and all their attention is focused on it (Bruner, 2005). The blogger's engagement with the internet and mobile technologies while they are on the move, in transit and at the destinations, enables information to be retrieved and shared at anytime and anywhere.

At this stage, the tourist not only appears to be living the moment but is also actively involved in collecting materials (e.g., taking photographs, collecting

restaurant menus and airlines tickets, etc.) that will be used to tell their stories in the future (Bruner, 2005). In addition, tourists also quest for unexpected on-site events, as these events have the potential to be the basis of future stories. Unexpected, spontaneous and surprising events can create intense and long-lasting memories in people's minds as they could consider themselves to be the heroic adventurer (Talarico & Rubin, 2003). Bruner (2005) asserts that on-site narratives not only transform and enhance pre-visit narratives but also serve as the foundation for the stories that will be recounted later when the trip is completed. The inconsistencies between the expectation and the real occurrence allow tourists to enhance and construct their own interpretation based on the pre-visit narratives that they had earlier collected, and to expand it to cover their own personal encounters in the destination culture (Chronis, 2005).

The tourist experience continues to be shaped by technological advancement as blogger tourists constantly and simultaneously engage with travel blogs during their trip in real time. The availability of internet connection at the location and the use of mobile technologies enable tourists to more easily perform immediate travel-related tasks, such as information searching and sharing on-site experience (Fotis et al., 2011; Gretzel, et al., 2011; McCabe et al. 2014; Wang, Park & Fesenmaier, 2011). These technologies also allow tourists to plan their journey and make decisions while travelling with an immediacy which was not possible previously (Gretzel et al., 2011; Wang & Xiang, 2012; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Nowadays, blogger tourists can easily update their blog content through their mobile phone. The activity of updating a blog through a mobile phone is known as *moblogging* (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008). *Moblogging* allows blogger tourists to share an event or scenery immediately rather than waiting until they return home. This advancement has also enabled tourists to update their travel plans during the on-site stage (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). Wang et al. (2011) investigated the mechanisms of the smartphone in mediating the tourist experience and discovered that the smartphone allowed tourists to change their behaviours and emotions by addressing various information needs, and allowed them to solve problems, share experiences and store memories. The findings also revealed that using mobile applications during the trip allowed

tourists to solve their immediate problems, such as car rental and hotel booking issues, while travelling. Also, engaging with mobile applications while travelling enhanced their travel excitement as they were able to meet and communicate with other people which, as a consequence, provided satisfaction.

On the other hand, because information and communication technology allows travel bloggers to stay connected with families and friends, the notion of a tourist being away from home becomes unclear (White & White, 2007). Jansson (2007) further accentuates that, while the technology allows the on-going experience to be instantly shared, nevertheless it can also interrupt the experience at the destination, as the tourist is connected to his home or work. He further claims that the simultaneity of activities causes the imagination, representation and recollection of the experience to dissolve. Thus, the meaning of being away becomes problematic (Gretzel, 2010).

2.5.3 Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

The documentation and sharing of the tourist experience is the activity that generally occurs at the post-visit stage of the tourist experience. The shared experience allows the creation of internal and external memory and assists tourists in re-experiencing their travels through remembering and nostalgia (Gretzel et al., 2011). At this stage the process of remembering and re-experiencing past event is associated with the adjustment of tourist's satisfaction and further destination image (re)development which in turn triggers their loyalty and their intention to revisit. Therefore, Gretzel et al. (2006) suggest that technological development has provided a new level of revitalisation in the tourism industry.

Bruner (2005) states that drama is imbued to modify and enhance on-site stories to make them more appealing to others on their return. When the trip is finished, the travel narratives are based on memory, and the tourist may continue to recall neglected events and stories for many years. Recollection and narratives are stimulated by the actual and desired experience (Abraham, 1986). Furthermore, Bendix (2002) suggests that narratives at this stage are able to help the tourist to overcome the travel illness suffered during the actual tourist

experience, as the aura of tourist experience is emotionally attached to the narrating self who endures to tell the travel story. More than that, in order to attract the audience's attention, the tourist uses colourful and descriptive language with further lots of detail in order to convey the tourist experience (Bendix, 2002). Unexpected events serve as a basis for rich stories to be told, especially as the tourist can make themselves appear to be the hero of the story (Bruner, 2005). In addition, a well constructed story can alter an undesirable experience into a meaningful experience (Bendix, 2002). It can change the difficulties which occurred during the trip into a beautiful journey of experience. The main objective is to ensure that the story narrated is interesting and fascinating. The use of new multimedia features such as images and videos benefit the narrator and the audience by enhancing and adding value to the tourist experience (Tussyadiah et al., 2011).

Crang (1997) accentuates that tourist events are not so much about the experience in itself, but rather for the future memory that it will yield. Thus, travel blogs continue to play a significant role in the post-visit stage of the tourist experience as blogger tourists extend the enjoyment of their visit by creating textual, visual and aural content to help them reminisce and share their experiences with others (Brown & Chalmers, 2003; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Furthermore, interaction that occurs within the blogosphere helps tourist bloggers to recall their experience and assist them in creating and reserving memories of their visit (Gretzel & Wang, 2012).

Although the activity of sharing and discussing the tourist experience imitates real-world storytelling, the travel blog has unique characteristics. The sharing and communicating of one's experience through travel blogs takes place with readers who have similar interests (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Hence, the recollection of one's experience at this stage serves as valid information for (potential) tourists (Gretzel, Wang & Fesenmaier, 2012). Also, by communicating their experience with people who hold similar interests bloggers create opportunities to fulfil their hedonic, psychological and social needs, thus creating a sense of belonging, fun and self-identification (Gretzel et al., 2012).

2.6 Research Objectives and Conceptual Framework

The current study proposes to understand the underlying mechanisms and structures between engagement and motivation in narrative construction of the tourist experience at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage. The current chapter has reviewed and discussed a broad range of media- and tourism-related literature. The literature has highlighted the importance of the dynamics of engagement and motivation at the three stages of the tourist experience in influencing the narrative construction of the tourist experience.

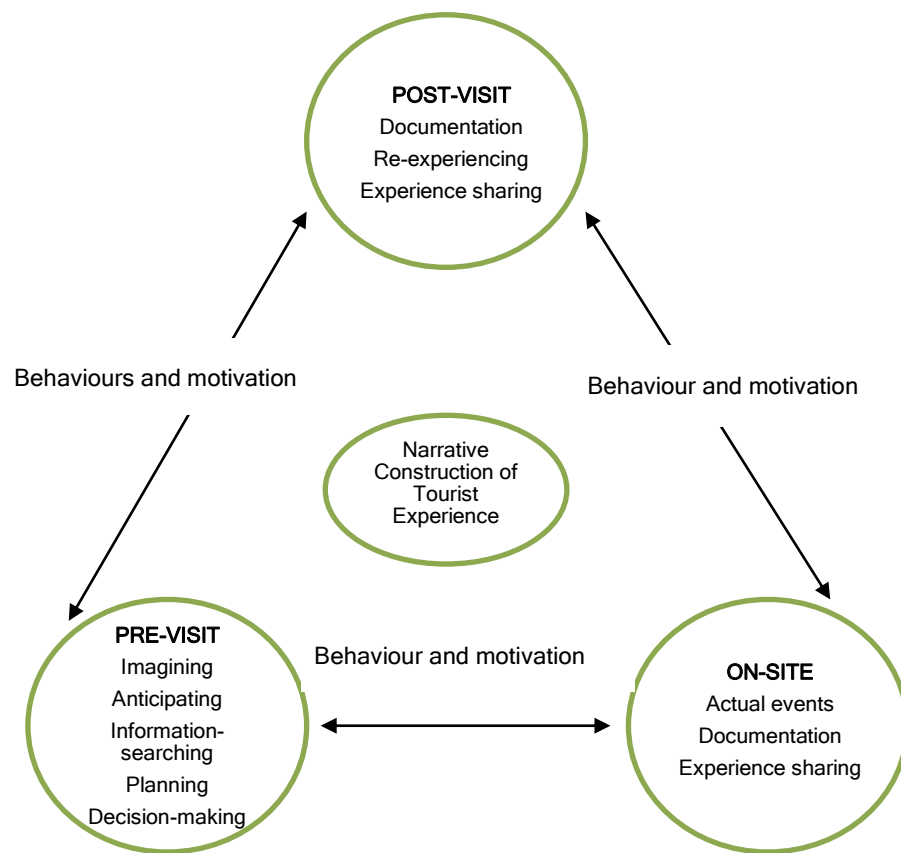


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

As presented in Figure 2.1, the narrative construction of tourist experience is the attention of the thesis. The black two-way directional arrows (behaviour and motivation) denote that behaviour and motivation shape blogging motivation and engagement at the different stages of the tourist experience and in response; they

shape and influence the narrative construction of the tourist experience. These arrows designate a dynamic process between the narrative construction of the tourist experience, the three different stages of the tourist experience, and engagement, behaviours and motivation.

A holistic approach is applied in this study as it attempts to understand the mechanisms and structures between motivations, and blogging behaviours at the three different stages of the tourist experience in terms of narrative construction of tourist experience. Based on the above literature review, the motivations to engage with travel blogs are associated with different behaviours generally associated with reading, commenting and posting. The conceptual framework also explains the interrelationship between the different stages of the tourist experience. This study, therefore, investigates how tourist bloggers' engagement with travel blogs and motivations shape and influence their narrative construction of tourist experience at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages of the tourist experience. For example, this study seeks to understand what tourist bloggers do at the travel planning phase in terms of their behaviours with travel blogs. This includes the types of content they refer to or post in blogs, and the motivation behind these blogging behaviours. As the pre-visit stage is generally related to travel planning and tourist anticipation, this study examines how the behaviours and motivation influence tourist bloggers' narrative construction of the tourist experience by looking at the content they create. The study also takes into consideration the types of contents referred to in blogs, bloggers' interaction within the blogosphere, and posting behaviour (including when to post) in order to understand the mechanism between blogging behaviour, motivation and narrative construction of the tourist experience. This study also explores how engagement with travel blogs, through different behaviours, such as reading blogs, interacting and creating content, influences their decision-making at various stages of the tourist experience. Further, as tourist bloggers engage with blogs at the on-site stage, this study seeks to understand how the blogs influence the tourist experience during the visit, and finally influence the documenting, remembering and sharing of travel stories at the post-visit stage of the tourist experience.

This study also examines the interrelationship and influence of each stage of the tourist experience on the narrative construction of the tourist experience. It examines how tourist bloggers' engagement with travel blogs and motivations shapes the creation of anticipated experience at the pre-visit stage. Then, it investigates how the anticipated experience, motivations and engagement continue to influence the creation of the actual experience at the on-site stage. Finally, at the post-visit stage, it investigates how the anticipated and actual experience, motivations and engagement influence the creation of complex experience. This study highlights the complexity of tourist bloggers' engagement and motivation at each stage of the tourist experience in influencing and shaping narrative construction of the tourist experience. By considering the interrelationship of each stage of the tourist experience, the connection between continuous engagement and motivation, and its relationship with narrative construction, can be understood. The longitudinal approach allows this study to identify the differences, in terms of travel blog content used by travel bloggers to narrate their tourist experience, at each of the three stages of the tourist experience.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established the importance of examining blogs to understand the tourist experience. To this end, the chapter has provided an in-depth explanation of the blogging phenomenon and travel blogging among tourist bloggers. In order to understand how travel bloggers engage with travel blogs, this research applies U&G theory which postulates that tourists choose to use media, from a number of possible choices, to fulfil their needs, which explains their motivations for engagement and gratifications. In this regard, the researcher explores the motivation and behaviour of blogging beyond the common aspects that have already been explored, such as interaction- and information-oriented. Hence, although it is noted that travel bloggers obviously publish their own content, this research posits that, due to the dynamic nature of blogging that can be used throughout the stages of the tourist experience, bloggers have other engagement that range from consuming to producing content. Travel blog engagement

contributes to the complexity of the narrative construction of the tourist experience, as it shapes and influences travel and the tourist experience. It is therefore envisaged that it is important to investigate how and the extent to which tourist bloggers' engagement shape and effect the narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout the stages of the tourist experience.

As tourist bloggers engage with travel blogs throughout the stages of the tourist experience, activities performed by tourists at each stage was explored in this chapter. The conventional understanding of the tourist experience was discussed by highlighting the concept of authenticity, and this was followed by a discussion of the influence and impact of travel blog engagement at each stage. This chapter explained how blog narratives have become the centre of transformation for potential tourists as some potential tourists completely immerse themselves in the narratives, which in turn influences the narratives construction of the tourist experience. Thus, it is the objective of this research to understand the mechanism and structure of engagement, and motivations in influencing and shaping narrative construction of the tourist experience at each stage of the tourist experience.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology utilised in this research. First, this chapter begins with a discussion of the philosophical considerations of this research, in terms of the epistemological and ontological viewpoints. It is then followed by a discussion of different research approaches, i.e. quantitative and qualitative research. Then, the rationale for adopting the qualitative method for this research is explained. Next, the research design is presented. It starts with the rationale of the study context and the sampling procedure. The selection criteria of travel blogs is explained next, followed by an explanation of the two phases of the data collection process. With regard to the overall research process, this section presents the research method for the first stage, which is selecting the travel blogs and travel bloggers. It highlights the sampling procedures for travel blogs and proceeds with the data analysis of the travel blogs' content (i.e. texts, photos and videos). Next, the second stage of research is presented, starting with a discussion about the pilot test of the in-depth interviews and the actual data collection procedure, followed by the data analysis procedure. The ethical considerations for

this study are also presented and this chapter ends with the trustworthiness issues that arise from qualitative research.

3.2 Research Questions

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the underlying mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivations and the narrative construction of the tourist experience at the three different stages of the tourist experience, namely, pre-visit, on-site and post-visit. The particular focus is on comprehending how the tourist experience is shaped and influenced by the different blogging behaviours and motivations at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages. Also, this study seeks to discover the interrelationship between narrative construction of tourist experience before, during and after the visit. As this study involves the three different stages of the tourist experience, it also examines the commonalities and/or differences in narrative construction of tourist experience throughout the stages through different types of travel blog content (i.e. texts, photos and videos). Thus, the following central research question is determined:

How do travel bloggers' strategies and behaviours influence the narrative construction of the tourist experience in the blogosphere at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage of the tourist experience?

In order to answer the main research question, this study undertakes five objectives:

- (1) to explore blogging motivation and influence on narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout the stages of the tourist experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)
- (2) to explore blogging strategies and behaviours, and their influences on tourism decision-making and experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)

- (3) to analytically deconstruct the content of travel blogs that construct tourist experience
- (4) to investigate the meanings of texts, photos and videos that construct the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience
- (5) to understand the mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivations and narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience

3.3 Research Context

Instead of conducting a cross-population study, this research only focuses on the Malaysian population. The reason why it is important to focus on a single population is that the interpretation of the tourist experience in different mediums, such as visual images, varies largely from culture to culture. This is due to the manner in which, for example, images are interpreted – it depends on the ideology shared within cultural groups (Albers & James, 1988). Hence, it is more logical to understand the narrative construction of tourist experience within a single population.

The primary reason for exploring Malaysian travel bloggers is due to the recent growth of population in terms of internet and social media usage. Malaysians are considered to be one of the most tech-savvy nations in Asia, as their internet penetration is particularly high compared to other Asian markets (just behind China, Korea and Japan) (Internetworldstats, 2013). In addition, a survey report published by the Nielsen Company in 2009 on Malaysian media consumption stated that Malaysia was in the top ten in the world for media consumption (Nielsen, 2009). The survey reveals that Malaysians are sophisticated users of the internet and consume a broad range of technologies, including entertainment, music, video games, and other digital media. Furthermore, the Malaysian blogosphere has emerged steadily in parallel with these technological advancements, as Malaysia ranked 14th in the world in terms of numbers of bloggers, representing 1.7% of all bloggers (Sysomos Inc, 2010).

In terms of the Malaysian tourism industry, social media is also widely used by the tourism services sector which uses it to communicate with potential tourists and is considered to be an effective promotional media to deliver their tourism products and services. For instance, Malaysian-based airline companies, such as Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia, have successfully attracted millions of followers through their social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Combined, the companies have over two million followers on Twitter, which indicates that social media is a powerful media for communication between providers and consumers. The Malaysian government has also shown tremendous support for using social media in tourism as evidenced by the initiatives taken by the Tourism Ministry of Malaysia. For example, they organise a yearly event known as the Malaysian International Tourism Bloggers Conference & Award (MITBCA) which commenced in 2012. This international event gives travel bloggers the opportunity to gain knowledge and share their opinions with tourism-related social media experts in order to maximise the potential of blogging for the tourism sector. In 2014 Tourism Malaysia in Hong Kong was given the ‘Most Popular Social Media – Tourism Board’ award at the U Magazine Travel Awards 2014. U magazine is a popular travel magazine in Hong Kong. This award was given to Tourism Malaysia for its aggressive marketing efforts using social media, including launching several Facebook campaigns. The promotions resulted in great responses and effectively attracted netizens to visit its Facebook page. Thus, it is evident that social media has become one of the most important media outlets for the major tourism service providers in Malaysia as a promotional and communication tool for their products and services.

3.4 Philosophical Consideration

Exploring the different research paradigms is the primary step in helping a researcher to identify the most appropriate research design and method (Bryman, 2012). The research paradigm is established by integrating different ontological and epistemological assumptions which are defined as ‘assumptions made about the nature of social reality and the way in which we can come to know this reality’

(Blaikie, 2000, p.9). Establishing a research paradigm is useful in guiding the researcher towards the kind of knowledge that needs to be sought and the manner in which to interpret the evidence (Morgan, 2007). Bryman (2012) further mentions that to understand why a particular methodological choice is preferred over other methods, it is necessary to comprehend: (1) the relationship between theory and research; and (2) the epistemological (how we come to know) and ontological (how we obtain the knowledge) aspects of this study.

Firstly, two broad approaches of research reasoning, i.e. inductive and deductive, are used to explain the relationship between theory and research. Using the inductive approach suggests that researchers begin by observing the phenomena and subsequently form a conclusion, i.e. to generate an abstract generalisation of ideas based on the observed phenomena (Sekaran, 2006). In contrast, in the deductive approach, researchers begin by drawing the logical relationships among the various concepts in order to arrive at a conclusion based on the known facts (Sekaran, 2006). In other words, the use of the deductive approach aims to test a hypothesis developed from the theory or literature.

Secondly, epistemology deals with the way knowledge is gained or a belief is justified. The primary issue of epistemology in social sciences research is whether the methods found in natural sciences are applicable to study social reality and human disciplines (Bryman, 2012). Some social science studies still advocate a positivism approach/paradigm that is based on the quantitative deductive approach. Positivist research employs systematic and scientific techniques (i.e. questionnaires) which aim to predict outcomes and to establish measurable truths that can be generalised to similar contexts. Positivism seeks to unravel objectivity by following a rational and logical approach in the research process whereby, positivists argue, it is possible to acquire concrete and secure objective knowledge about the reality (Carson et al., 2001).

In contrast, interpretivist perspectives, commonly called constructivism (Blaikie, 2000), as an alternative epistemology, views reality as being relative and multiple in nature and aims at understanding the motivations behind human behaviour, which cannot be reduced to any predefined element but must be

positioned within a cultural perspective (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). Interpretivism is concerned with the meanings, interpretations, motives and intentions that people use in their everyday lives that direct their behaviour (Blaikie, 2000). An interpretivist research method usually varies (e.g., direct observation, in-depth interview, and/or document analysis) as it attempts to obtain findings from multiple perspectives and meanings, and to honour participants' voices.

Thirdly, ontology is about the nature of reality and truth. The positivist paradigm considers social phenomena and their meanings independent of people (Bryman, 2012), and it is rooted in the belief that there is only one true reality, which is objective and measurable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Hence, there is a single reality and all societies would have the same reality. On the other hand, interpretivists argue that the phenomena and meanings are constructed and reconstructed continuously by social participants (Bryman, 2012). Hence, this perspective believes that reality is moulded and formed in the minds of people in a society.

Based on the above philosophical consideration, an interpretivist paradigm was deemed the most appropriate approach for this research. Knowledge is seen as an unavoidable product of interpretation rather than an objective truth acquired through employing controlled methods. This relies on the fact that social practices, including tourist experience construction, are not natural phenomenon, rather they are socially constructed (Goodson & Phillmore, 2004). It means that the social actors can change as well as be changed by the tourist experience. The major concern is not to establish universal laws and generalisations, but rather to search for the rules, both explicit and implicit, which shape the social behaviours. As discussed in the previous chapter, this research identified that travel bloggers act both as consumers and producers of the tourist experience throughout its three different stages. In this regard, they engage with travel blogs by performing various activities that are driven by a set of motivations that lead to the experience construction at the each stage of the tourist experience. For instance, engagement by consuming travel blog content rich in description about the real experience and full of emotion helps tourists form expectations of a potential trip. Interaction with

the travel bloggers further enlightens their expectation. These activities not only help them in travel planning but also assist them to construct their own experience at the on-site and post-visit stages. Thus, the constructed experience is interwoven with their travel blog engagement and also a reflection of their own expectations, perceptions, experiences and memories.

While the study's philosophical positions are stressed, the choice of the research methodology should correspond to the nature of phenomena being studied. In addition, the choice of the research strategy depends upon the extent of the existing knowledge in the research area, the research questions pursued, the researcher's skills and the availability of the resources (Bryman, 2012). In this regard, since research on the narrative construction of tourist experience via travel blog engagement and its related motivations at the different stages of the tourist experience is still limited, an inductive approach using qualitative methods is deemed to be most suitable. This is mainly due to the nature of the research questions pursued by this study and the complexity of the travel blog content; the study requires a research design that is flexible enough to reveal the dynamics of travel blog engagement in constructing the tourist experience. In addition, the qualitative research approach has already proven to be a suitable method for examining social media phenomena, particularly travel blogs that are considered to be rich in data (Banyai, 2010). Also, the use of an inductive approach and adopting qualitative methods to understanding the tourist experience in relation to travel blogs has already been undertaken in previous studies (see, for example, Banyai, 2010; Bosangit; 2012; Volo, 2009). The following sub-sections will discuss the different strategies of qualitative research in detail and explain the overall research process of this study.

3.5 Methodological Issues and Research Design

Exploring different research methodologies in order to arrive at the most appropriate one is the major step required at the beginning of a research. Social science researchers, including tourism researchers, are usually familiar with both the quantitative and qualitative research methodology. According to Bryman (2012), quantitative and qualitative methodologies are associated with different

theoretical perspectives. These two methodological perspectives, therefore, deal with research differently in terms of data collection, the questions of investigation and generalisability of the findings (Bryman, 2012).

Quantitative methodology allows the researcher to provide answers for ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘who’ questions. The data in the quantitative research are usually in the form of numbers and statistical analysis is usually involved. Instead, qualitative research involves non-numerical data (Finn, Elliott-White, & Walton, 2000). In the travel blog context, quantitative research has so far focused on the demographic profiles of the bloggers and the blog content in order to identify tourists’ impressions, perceptions, and behaviour, and to analyse destination image (Carson, 2008; Choi et al., 2007; Pan et al., 2007; Wenger, 2008). In this regard, travel blog content is quantified and reduced to categories, which could result in losing the reflection of the blog itself (Hookway, 2008). While Pan et al. (2007) note that the travel blog is a source of rich and authentic tourist experience, the quantitative research method limits the ability to capture the authenticity of a tourist’s experience. Despite the fact that the quantitative approach has been widely used in establishing the foundation for travel blog engagement and its implications in the tourism field, it is important to expand the research base to include qualitative investigation. Indeed, a qualitative methodology may further enhance understanding of narrative construction of tourist experience, particularly in the context of travel blogs.

Qualitative methodology brings to light a different research paradigm which enables a researcher to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions. In addition, the qualitative methodology involves an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, specifically to understand the motivation, experience and the meaning of the experience (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Ritchie (2003) further elaborates that qualitative research allows for the ‘... opportunity to “unpack” issues, to see what they are about or what lies inside, and to explore how they are understood by those connected with them’ (p. 27). Indeed, travel blogs and travel bloggers as the narrators are anticipated to be rich in detail and provide information that is important for attaching meaning to travel blog content. The

intense description of bloggers' social reality cannot be easily understood by using quantitative methods, such as surveys and assessment instruments.

A qualitative research approach enables a richer understanding of the underlying components of a tourist's expectations and experiences and the meanings assigned to their travel experiences (Banyai, 2009, 2012; Jeuring & Peters, 2013; Volo, 2010), much more than a quantitative approach could. In the social media field, particularly in the travel blog context, tourism researchers recognise that qualitative research has been shown to be more effective than quantitative research in understanding a specific phenomenon (Carson et al., 2001; Chandralal, Rindfleish, & Valenzuela, 2014; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008; Volo, 2010). As such, the qualitative approach is a more appropriate method for understanding how the tourist experience is constructed at different stages of the tourist experience with regard to the different levels of engagement and motivation.

Although travel blogs are rich experiential narratives, one limitation of the data source is that the accuracy of such narratives is hard to confirm (Chandralal, 2012). Taking this into consideration, this current study therefore conducted in-depth interviews with the bloggers of selected travel blogs in order to obtain a closer understanding of the meaning behind their content that helped construct their tourist experience. The in-depth interview is a widely used qualitative method that can facilitate gaining 'emic' meanings and 'thick description' of a study phenomenon (Chandralal, 2012). Furthermore, Keats (2009) suggests the use of multiple mediums (i.e. written, spoken and visual expressions) as a way of allowing an in-depth understanding of the complex human experience. The interview method is employed for the present study because it is an important window that opens up the unique knowledge possessed by the informants. In addition, interviews not only allow the researcher to obtain information or access processes that cannot be observed effectively by other methods, but also validate the information gained from other sources, such as observations and on-site documents (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Also, Morgan and Watson (2009) note that multiple techniques, including content analysis and narrative analysis, can reveal how the personal and social experience influences the meanings given to the total

experience. In order to maximise the use of travel blogs in tourism research, there is a call for complex methods that allow the researcher to fully utilise the rich data available in a travel blog (Banyai & Glover, 2011).

There are two qualitative methods highlighted by Banyai and Glover (2011) as the most popular methods for analysing travel blog content: content analysis and narrative analysis. Content analysis is defined as a method used to excerpt desired data from material by systematically identifying specified characteristics (Smith 2010). There are two general classes of content analysis in social science, namely quantitative and qualitative. Neuendorf (2002) states that content analysis is often related to quantitative methods of analysing message characteristics, including human interaction, films, novels, etc. In contrast, Smith (2010) argues that through content analysis, a more subjective technique can also be applied; the researcher can observe and interpret the data by coding or grouping words and images into themes developed and defined by the researcher. Unlike quantitative content analysis, qualitative content analysis does not merely involve word counting and measuring texts characteristics but is also subjective where the researcher can interpret the texts (Bryman, 2012). In this regard, Krippendoff (2004) notes that the meaning of texts depends on the researcher's stand point, associated with the research objectives and context. Smith (2010) further argues that the selection of either qualitative or quantitative content analysis depends on the aims of the study. Given that the aim of this study is to explore the effect of the travel blogging phenomenon on narrative construction of tourist experience, this study will employ a qualitative content analysis method. Narrative can refer to a number of different types of account, from true personal experiences to fiction (for example, stories, fairy tales or myths). Narrative analysis as a research method has already been used to understand tourist identity construction, the meaning of the tourist experience, and the temporal and spatial structure of the tourist experience (Banyai & Glover, 2011).

Table 3.1 summarises previous studies that have employed these two methods of analysing travel blogs. It is highlighted that content analysis and narrative analysis are both established methods in the field of social sciences, including tourism studies. However, their use within the travel blog context brings

a new perspective to the way researchers look at these methods and the research designs applicable when analysing travel blog content (Banyai & Glover, 2011).

Table 3.1 Summary of Research Methods and Analysis used in Past Studies on Travel Blogs

Content Analysis			
Author(s) (year)	Objectives	Application/discipline	Findings/comments
Pan et al., (2007)	To gain an understanding of the tourist experience, and of Charleston's strengths and weaknesses as perceived by tourists.	Travel blogs on Charleston, South Carolina (40 travel blogs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revealed the main strengths and weaknesses of a destination. • Mixed-methods approach could provide a more detailed understanding of blog content.
Carson (2008)	To understand personal and situational analysis and discover the dynamics of exchange between narrators and readers.	25 personal travel blogs on the Northern Territory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blogs contain valuable data but analysis of the content is time consuming.
Wenger (2008)	To explore the perception of Austria as a tourism destination and to identify the image of the destination.	Blogs of tourists visiting Austria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog entries provided insights into Austria's destination image and served as important online consumer platforms. • Value of blog studies rely on locating and segmenting the bloggers.
Volo (2010)	To understand how the tourist experience influences potential tourist decision-making.	International and Italian blogs on South Tyrol (103 blogs and 78 pictures).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blogs have influenced readers' intention to visit. Readers considered aspects of the tourist experience that related to experience essence (feelings, mood, sensations, interpretation and learning) when making decisions about travel. • Travel blogs have the potential to be an unobtrusive data source and offer the potential to understand many aspects of the tourist experience.
Narrative Analysis			
Author(s) (year)	Objectives	Application/discipline	Findings/comments
Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008)	To identify key marketing elements.	Blogs posted on Destination Marketing Organisation DMOs of Philadelphia (6 blogs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key marketing elements: character of the narrator, types of attractions and overall product and experience evaluation. • Travel blog narratives can be a vital source of information for destination marketer so that they can develop appropriate marketing strategies.
Bosangit et al., (2009)	To investigate how tourists construct their experience and understanding as part of the process of identity management.	Top travel blogs of various destinations (30 blogs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloggers construct their experience based on their expectations and their past experience. • Tourist identity and sense-making can be understood by examining the tourist narrative structure.
Netnography			
Author(s) (year)	Objectives	Application/discipline	Findings/comments
Martin and Woodside (2011)	To investigate how tourists interpret places, people, and situations	Four journal postings from visiting Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported the positive and negative association of concepts, events, and outcomes in visitors' stories • Travel blogs have the potential to influence audience's trip planning
Chandralal et al., (2014)	To understand the memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) narrated in travel blog	Various countries blog (100 blog posting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourist narrated about local people, life and culture, personally significant experience, shared experience, perceived novelty, perceived serendipity, professional guides and tour operator services as their MTEs • Travel blog narratives provides unobtrusive data that cannot be obtained through other methods

(Summarised by the author, 2016)

As shown in Table 3.1, content analysis has been employed in the majority of studies examining travel blogs. Past studies have emphasised activities undertaken at the destinations, the tourist's perceptions of the destinations, and the travel blogger's profile. Pan et al. (2007), for instance, used content analysis to understand tourist behaviour at Charleston, South Carolina and determine the destination's strength and weaknesses, based on tourist perceptions. Likewise, Carson (2008) content-analysed 25 blogs about travel to Australia's Northern Territory. Travel bloggers discussed visited attractions, tours and transportation, the people they met, the climate, wildlife and scenery, Aboriginal cultural sites, activities undertaken, and meals and accommodation. Wenger (2008) content-analysed 114 travel blogs related to Austria which focused on the season of visit, motives for travel, sights and attractions visited, services used, modes of transport, and problems encountered in the journey in order to understand the tourist's perception of Austria. Content analysis was also used to understand how the tourist experience shared on travel blogs influences potential tourist decision-making. Volo (2010) content-analysed 103 international and Italian blogs about South Tyrol and found that the experience essence related to feelings, mood, sensations, interpretation and learning influences readers' intention to visit.

Narrative analysis has also been employed in previous studies on travel blogs. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2008), for instance, used narrative analysis to analyse blogs posted on the Pennsylvania Tourist Office website to identify key marketing elements. The narrative analysis focused on the characterisation, causality and chronology structure of the narratives. Bosangit et al. (2009) sought to understand how tourists construct and make meaning from their experience. They identified that tourists' identity and sense-making were revealed by the stories they told, the way in which they were recounted, and how they were linked to aspects of self-concept including values, preferences, skills, social roles and relationships.

Other than content and narrative analysis, there is growing attention being paid to an online version of ethnography, which also known as netnography. Kozinets (2002) defines netnography as a process or research methodology, and as a "new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research

techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications.” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62). Netnography is argued to be an appropriate method for understanding the tourist experience because tourists recount their experience after the trip is finished, therefore their experience is not exaggerated by observations (Kozinets, 2002). For example, Chandralal et al. (2014) examined 100 travel narratives collected from Travelblog.org and Travepod.com to understand the components of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). The findings highlight that tourists recounted positive MTEs in their narrative, which included local people and culture, expressions of personally significant experiences and shared experiences, perceived novelty, perceived serendipity, reflections on professional guides and tour operators, and affective emotions. Also using netnography, Martin and Woodside (2011) examined how places, people and situations are interpreted. Focusing on international tourists’ blogs about their first experience visiting Japan, they found that travel blogs are able to influence trip planning and provide deep insight into tourists’ trip interpretation.

This study, however, does not adopt the netnography method, based on Kozinets’s argument on its limitation. Firstly according to Kozinets (2002), netnography needs researcher interpretive skills. Secondly, according to Kozinets (2002) the lack of informant identifiers present in the online environment leads to difficulty in generalising findings to groups outside the online community. Also, Mkono (2011, 2012) highlights that netnography solely focuses on the text and the researcher has no access to nonverbal communication with the online communities, thus limiting the richness of the data.

Despite the diversity of the methodological approaches, a research needs to prioritise its research aims and objectives. This is due to the fact that certain research objectives cannot be achieved using a single research method. For this study, a combination of several qualitative research methods was employed to answer the research questions, including: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) qualitative content analysis, and (3) narrative analysis. The decision to employ a combination of these three qualitative methods was based on the need to fully utilise the potential of travel blogs to understand narrative construction of tourist experience.

A combination of several qualitative research methods within a single research project can provide a greater understanding of the research phenomena. The present study starts with in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers which enabled the researcher to answer the research questions which are related to behaviours and motivations, and also the meaning assigned to the photos and videos that described their tourist experience. Further, the narrative analysis unpacked the meaning of the textual content, while a qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to examine the content of photos and videos that helped construct the tourist experience. As this section presents the method and approach employed in this study, the following section presents the data collection procedure.

3.6 Data Collection

Purposive sampling was employed in this study. It is primarily used in qualitative studies and it involves choosing specific and purposive samples in order to answer the study's research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Bryman (1993) describes purposive sampling as an exercise which can reveal some dimensions of the phenomena being studied. Selected participants provide insight and rich data on the studied phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Maxwell (2005), purposive sampling can be done in two different ways. One way is to select participants who reflect the typicality of the phenomena, and the other way is to select participants who can reveal variation within the phenomena.

Figure 3.1 below illustrates the phases of data collection involved in this research, i.e. analysis of travel blog content and in-depth interviews with selected travel bloggers. It is noted that each travel blogger selected for the interview stage is the owner of their travel blog. Thus, the selection criteria for the travel blogs are identical to the selection criteria for the travel bloggers for the interviews. The researcher first identified the blogs that met all the selection criteria, then the authors (bloggers) of the identified blogs were contacted. Once they agreed to participate, the researcher then selected the entries that would be discussed during interviews. The photos and videos posted in the selected entries would be also

used in the content analysis. The following sections provide details of the data collection procedures involved.

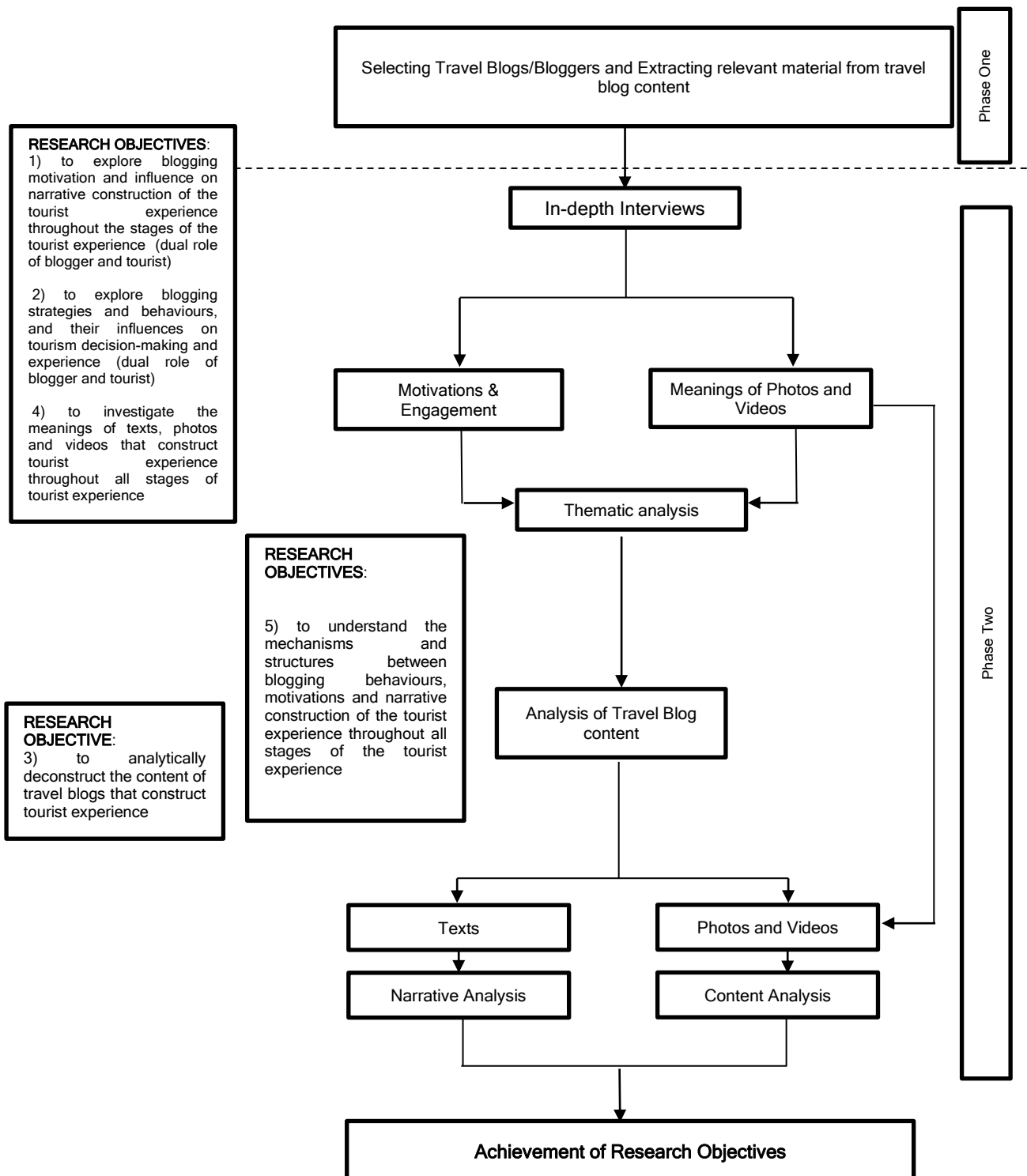


Figure 3.1 Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

3.6.1 Data Collection of Phase One: Selecting the Travel Blogs

Phase one of the data collection involved two activities: (1) selecting travel blogs/bloggers; and (2) extracting relevant content from the travel blogs. The following section describes the detailed process of each activity.

3.6.1.1 Selecting Travel Blogs and Bloggers

The travel blogs selected for the research were found through blog-specific search engines such as www.technorati.com, Google blog search, and IceRocket, using the following search keywords: 'Malaysia', 'travel' and 'blog'. The use of search engines is an acknowledged technique in travel blog research (Banyai, 2009; Bosangit et al., 2009; Carson, 2008; Pan et al., 2007). The travel blogs found from these search engines were screened based on the following selection criteria:

- (1) the travel blogs were owned by Malaysian bloggers who were residing in Malaysia
- (2) the travel blogs were solely about travel (not a mix of personal and travel)
- (3) the travel blogs were owned by the bloggers and not related to any tourism or marketing companies
- (4) the language used was either English or Bahasa Melayu or a mixture of both

These four selection criteria were important as they represent the main features of blogging to be examined to answer the research questions. Travel blogs had to be free from any tourism companies' influence as that type has already been widely used as a sample in understanding the tourist experience in the travel blog context (see, for example, Bosangit et al., 2009; Bosangit 2012; Pan et al. 2007; Wenger, 2008). Only Malaysian travel blogs written in *Bahasa Melayu* and English were chosen, due to the researcher's familiarity with those languages. The selection of travel blogs written in a language familiar to the researcher has also been a criterion of past studies (see, for example, Bosangit, 2012; Mura, 2014; Volo, 2010).

Based on the selection criteria, 332 travel blogs were identified and the authors (travel bloggers) contacted. Out of 332 travel bloggers, 71 indicated their willingness to participate in this research. They were then screened further to fulfil these two criteria:

(1) They had to have travelled and blogged within the last 12 months. This 12 month timeframe has been used in a number of studies (Fotis et al., 2011; Gretzel et al., 2011; Jani & Hwang, 2011) as it is thought that tourists still have a strong memory and attachment to that destination. Hence, the number of eligible travel bloggers was reduced to 41.

(2) Their blogs had to contain multimedia (i.e. texts, photos and videos), or at least a combination of texts and photographs. This criterion brought down the sample to 32 travel bloggers.

The recruitment of participants ended when the theoretical saturation had been achieved. In order to confirm that saturation had been reached, the researcher employed a constant comparative method, in which data were collected and analysed contemporarily (Morrow, 2005). The researcher selects the first sample, analyses the data and then selects a following sample to cultivate the emerging categories. This process is reiterated until it reaches a point where no new insights would be gained from increasing the sample further (Ritchie, Lewis & Glam, 2003). For this reason, 19 participants were deemed suitable for this study.

As soon as the researcher had obtained their consent to participate in this research, the researcher started to select the destinations and entries that would be used for analysis and discussed during the interviews. The next section explains the details of this activity.

3.6.1.2 Selecting and Extracting Relevant Content from the Selected Travel Blogs

Firstly, the researcher identified the destinations blogged about within a 12 month timeframe. The researcher then chose only one destination to be included in the study for each travel blog. As a travel blogger might have blogged about more

than one destination within a year, the selected destination had to be a trip of more than two days. This was to ensure that the blogged destination contained multimedia (i.e. texts, photos and videos), or at least a combination of textual content and photographs. If there was more than one destination that fulfilled these criteria, the selected destination was then based on when it was blogged. Hence, the most recent blogged destination was selected.

Secondly, entries produced to describe the selected destination were identified and selected. The selection of the entries followed the sequence of the entries being posted. By following this sequence, the researcher was able to identify at which stage the entries were posted. However, not all entries for that specific destination were selected. If a particular entry was very brief (e.g., only consisted of less than five sentences), the entry was excluded and replaced by the next entry. Entries with less than five words were excluded as they were considered insufficient to describe a trip (Bosangit et al., 2009).

Thirdly, after relevant entries were identified, the researcher started to extract relevant content from the blogs. The process to extract the relevant material involved a few steps. The first step was to save the links of the selected entries. The links were saved as a record for the researcher and as a reference when communicating with the participants later. The second was to copy and save the entries into a word document. This was done to ensure that the data was backed up in case the online version was deleted later by the bloggers or unavailable during the analysis process. However, there were cases where the content simply could not be copied by the researcher due to online protection applied by the travel bloggers. In this case, the researcher emailed the participants and asked them to provide a copy of their entries. For video content, the links were saved and the videos were downloaded. For the third step, all the entries were arranged sequentially and labelled according to its location within the tourist experience stages. This was done to make the interview flow smoothly.

3.6.2 Data Analysis of Texts

3.6.2.1 Narrative Analysis

While research employing content analysis of travel blogs has been widely used, narrative analysis is also gaining ground. Banyai and Havitz (2013) argue that while content analysis provides a researcher with more information about the trip itself, the meaning assigned to the travel experience is somewhat neglected. They further state that the uniqueness of the tourist experience can be fully comprehended by exploring the hidden meanings of the experience.

Narrative analysis is the most widely-used method to study travel blogs in order to understand the meanings behind the tourist experience (Banyai, 2009; Berger & Greenspan, 2008; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008). By understanding a travel blog through narrative analysis, it allows the researcher to unpack the patterns of the tourist experience by revealing common structures. Smith and Weed (2007) argue that narrative analysis could unpack how the experience is re-storied and at the same time enable the researcher to understand the meaning attached to the experience. In the context of this research, narrative analysis afforded the opportunity to understand how travel bloggers constructed their tourist experience within textual content. By analysing the structure of the narration, it unfolds the experience, activities and places which the bloggers emphasised through the textual content. In particular, the narrative analysis was adopted to obtain a deeper understanding of the textual content used by the blogger to describe their experience.

This study adopted Gubrium Holstein's (2009) 'narratives ethnography'. The rationale of employing 'narratives ethnography' lies in the recognition of the holistic approach of this method, which goes further than the texts-based approach used by other authors (see, for example, Elsrud, 2001; Riessman, 1993; Stern et al., 1998). While texts-based methods emphasise the organisation of the stories and themes, and other textual structures, narrative ethnography takes a 'close scrutiny of circumstances, their actors, and actions in the process of formulating and communicating accounts' (Gubrium & Holstein's, 2009, p. 22). In other words, this approach emphasised the analysis of both texts and context. Based on

Gubrium Holstein (2009) the coding of the narratives follows the same steps of the thematic analysis framework where it utilises both the codes based on the themes identified in the literature and the open codes process. During the process, particular attention was given to the organisation of the stories, the structure of the narratives and the actors of the stories.

3.6.3 Data Collection and Analysis of Photos and Videos

Instead of merely focusing on the meanings attached to each content, it was also important to understand the elements or types of photo and video content as it would provide a holistic understanding about the narrative construction of tourist experience.

3.6.3.1 Photo Sampling Procedure

For each travel blog, only 10 photos were selected for analysis. During the interview, using a laptop or tablet, the researcher asked the participant to review their entry and choose 10 photos, at least five in which the participant appeared. The photos chosen by the participant also had to meet the criteria outlined earlier (i.e. uploaded within the last 12 months, for a trip of more than two days).

There are two reasons for needing both types of photos (with and without the participant appearing). Firstly, images in which the participant appears are defined as being 'experiential'. On the other hand, if the participant does not appear in the photo, it is defined as a 'representation or reflection' of objects and activities (Govers & Go, 2005). Tourists themselves can be the attraction, thus tourist watching is considered an essential aspect of the tourist experience (MacCannell, 1999). Gallarza Saura and Garcia (2002) also argue that the tourist who is being portrayed in a photo is considered as the subject, not an object. It is therefore important to know the meaning behind the two different types of photos that were shared on the travel blogs.

Secondly, during the review of the sample selection process, it was noted that each blog followed a distinct pattern. There were either:

- (1) there were more photos in which the participant appeared
- (2) there was a balanced number of photos in which they did and did not appear
- (3) there were only photos in which they did not appear.

Based on this initial review, it is important for both types of photos to be included in the discussion to capture a more holistic representation of the meaning of the tourist experience through visual content. The participants, therefore, were asked to choose a combination of these two types of photos to discuss in the interview, except in the case of participants who only posted photos in which they did not appear.

3.6.3.2 Photo Content Analysis Procedure

As discussed in Section 3.5, content analysis has been employed in most travel blog studies in relation to: (1) socio-demographic characteristics of travel bloggers (Wenger, 2008), (2) the tourist's perception about a destination, and (3) the type of accommodation and transportation used during the trip and the information related to their experience (Pan et al., 2007; Volo, 2009; Wenger, 2008). By employing content analysis in a travel blog research, researchers are able to get access to many aspects of a visitor's trip (Pan et al., 2007).

However, Bosangit et al. (2009) argue that most of the recent studies on travel blog content are limited to using quantitative content analysis (see, for example, Carson, 2008; Kurashima, et al., 2005; Li & Wang, 2011; Pan, et al., 2007; Wenger, 2008; Zehrer et al., 2011). Content analysis, however, relies on word frequency in order to understand tourist perceptions, tourist behaviour and destination images, and does not pay attention to the meanings attached to the travel narratives. Although these studies provide insight into the tourist experience, Hookway (2008) argues that quantitative content analysis could

reduce the ability of the researcher to understand the actual meaning of the content. Banyai and Glover (2011) further argue that quantitative content analysis merely relies on word count and measurement, which is often questioned by researchers who seek to explore the meanings of the content. For instance, Volo (2010) investigated the tourist experience and its influence on potential tourist decision-making by considering the textual and visual content of blogs. Through qualitative content analysis, the study explored the essence of the tourist experience and Volo (2010) revealed that content that is related to emotions, perception and learning influence the potential tourist's decision-making. In addition, Banyai (2010) also used qualitative content analysis to understand the Western images related to Dracula Tourism, by investigating three different types of content: texts, photographs and videos. Banyai (2010) concludes that qualitative content analysis of travel blogs allows the researcher to understand the latent meanings of the research data. Importantly, travel blogs provide rich empirical material, available not only through texts, but also through photos and videos which are powerful tools with which to explore social reality (Loizos, 2000).

This study followed the image content analysis procedure outlined by Tussyadiah and Ye (2011). Firstly, it adopts the framework developed by Sternberg (1997) and Go and Govers (2005) which involves the identification of actual objects, arrangement and contextualisation. This step produced the categories of the visual images which were used later to synthesise the meanings of the visual images. Second, theme analysis was conducted using the explanation of the participants to identify the meanings attached to that particular visual content.

The data management was facilitated by software specifically designed for qualitative analysis (i.e. Atlas.ti) with the following steps:

- (1) The visual images were arranged in the order in which they were posted according to the stages of the tourist experience.
- (2) The textual data from the participants' explanation was carefully read to get an initial overview of the texts.

- (3) From the textual data, the significant statements were highlighted and the irrelevant statements were eliminated.
- (4) From the statement, codes were formulated and listed. The formulated codes were clustered into common themes and labelled as the embedded meanings that construct the tourist experience.
- (5) The themes were then synthesised with the categories of the visual images that had been identified in the first step.

3.6.3.3 Videos Sampling Procedure and Analysis

For the video selection, all the videos that were posted within the selected entries were included for analysis. This procedure was adopted as not all participants posted videos describing their tourist experience. As a result, only eight videos were used for analysis.

To perform the video content analysis, this research followed the steps of video analysis as outlined by Dimitrova, Zhang, Shahraray, Sezan, Huang and Zakhor (2002). Dimitrova et al. (2002) introduced a technique to organise and analyse video data into more meaningful information. According to Dimitrova et al. (2002), the first step of a video content analysis is to segment a video content into one of the following categories: a) frame: a single image which is composed of a motion visual; b) shot: a combination of frames from the moment the camera starts to roll until it stops; c) scene: an action that arises from shots in a single location and taken over a duration; and d) sequence: a series of scenes that is connected by time and location. Dimitrova et al. (2002) then outline the three steps that are involved in the video segmentation process, i.e. feature extraction, structure analysis and abstraction.

The feature extraction process allows the researcher to identify the important features of a shot. The process of the feature extraction includes viewing the images, motion and audio of the video. The second stage is the structural analysis that involves identifying the temporal structure and meaningful segments of the video. The abstraction process is the process of extracting the

important or relevant information from a video content in order to come up with a shorter version of the existing video.

For this study, during an interview the subsets of the video were played and the participants were asked to explain the meanings behind each selected scene or shot. The same set of categories developed for the photos was also applied to the videos. In order to understand the meanings of the videos, the meanings obtained from the interviews were then linked to the categories. The thematic analysis used in the photo analysis was also used for the videos. The next section explains the phase two data collection, including the interview pilot test.

3.6.4 Data Collection of Phase Two: In-depth Interviews

The second phase of the data collection involved in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers. As mentioned in the Section 3.6, the travel bloggers selected for the interviews were the owners of the selected blog. Thus the same sampling criteria were applied in selecting the travel bloggers. Interviews are able to provide an in-depth view of a specific subject and is one of the most powerful approaches for understanding human beings (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Jennings (2005) states that qualitative interviews are acknowledged as the most important way of gathering data in a phenomenology paradigm, as it provides a holistic understanding of the studied phenomena. A semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen for this study because it not only provides rich, valuable and descriptive data (Patton, 2002), but also presents a consequential illustration of the tourist experience (Finn et al., 2000).

In the context of this research, interviews afforded the opportunity to capture the participant's engagement, motivation to engage with travel blogs, and the meanings assigned to the tourist experience in relation to the content. It is important to unpack the meaning of the content from the creator's point of view as it provides an in-depth understanding of their engagement in constructing their tourist experience. Most importantly, the interviews in this study allowed the

researcher to understand the influence of different engagement and motivation on narrative construction of tourist experience.

3.6.4.1 Semi-structured Interview Pilot Test

A pilot test is a crucial step in the research process as the results from the pilot enable the researcher to modify the interview guides. Importantly, the pilot test enables the researcher to identify any redundant or missing questions, and issues with question sequence, and carry out validity and reliability checks (Bailey, 2008) which ensures that the actual interview procedure is realistic and effective.

The pilot test for the semi-structured interviews was carried out with five Malaysian travel bloggers. The exercise was carried out from January to March 2013. The pilot sample was chosen using the same procedure as the actual sample used in this study (as explained in the data collection section, Section 3.6.1). However, to get the variation in terms of the content, for the pilot interview, the chosen participants were selected carefully to ensure that all three types of content (i.e. texts and visual images) were available.

Once they agreed to participate, an email containing an interview guide (Appendix 2) was sent. They were given the option of completing the interview in several ways: through email, Skype or phone. Table 3.2 below summarises the participants who agreed to be interviewed for the pilot. Two of them agreed to be interviewed by phone, while the rest chose to complete the interview questions by email. However, for those who completed the interview questions through email, their responses were found to be unsatisfactory, due to the very brief answers given. They were contacted again and agreed to give further detail over the phone.

Table 3.2 Participants for Pilot Interviews

No	Participants	Interview Method	Date of Interviews
1.	Adam	Telephone	17 January, 2013
2.	Amin	Email and telephone	22 January and 10 February, 2013
3.	Mimi	Email and telephone	29 January and 12 February, 2013
4.	Daniel	Telephone	11 March, 2013
5.	Farah	Email and telephone	20 March and 25 March, 2013

One issue that emerged during the pilot test was that the participants found that some terms, namely ‘engagement’, ‘content’ and ‘meaning’ were not clear to them. As a result, the researcher felt that having a clear definition and providing examples would help their understanding of these terms. During the pilot study, the researcher first asked the participants about their understanding of the terms before providing a definition, as recommended in the literature. This was done to clear up any confusion about the meanings of the main terms used in the questions.

In addition, although they had been informed earlier about the entries that would be discussed during the interviews it was observed that out of five bloggers, four were not readily able to answer the questions related to the meanings assigned to their content, i.e. visual content, if the contents were not attached or showed to them during the interview. In order to guide them, the visual content from their blogs was shown to them and discussed during the interviews. This approach is called the photo-elicitation interview (PEI) approach. This method involved showing the chosen photographs to the interviewees with the purpose of bringing back their memories and at the same time stimulating the values and meanings attached to the photographs (Schwartz, 1988). Incorporating images during interviews in research, including tourism, has been revealed to greatly enhance the richness of the data (Boterill & Crompton, 1987; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Furthermore, Clark (2004), argues that the PEI approach is a suitable technique if the researcher is concerned about the embedded meanings of the images assigned by the producers. He further adds that this data gathering approach is a dynamic process as it not only enhances the participants’ ability to explain the photo, but also spur an in-depth discussion. The PEI approach is also a significant means of obtaining not only the reflective aspect of the tourist experience, but also the social construction of reality (Cederholm, 2004). Pink (2007) adds that visual and conversational content are closely intertwined, as sometimes the producer of the content may need to refer to the visuals to give meaning to it. The PEI approach, therefore, was chosen to enable the researcher to elicit the meaning behind the tourist experience as constructed in travel blogs.

With regard to the selection of photographs to be discussed during the interview, the participants seemed to select on average about eight to ten photographs, regardless of the number of all the photographs available on their blogs. This was mainly due to time constraints (the bloggers had been told beforehand that the interview would take about an hour). To this end, the researcher decided that, for the actual participants, only ten photographs were required to be selected and discussed.

The pilot test was crucial as it helped to clarify any potential issues that may have been missed by the researcher during the actual interviews. In short, the pilot study helped establish validity and reliability for the semi-structured interviews (Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001). The validity and reliability of the interview questions can be improved through a pilot study as it allows the researcher to assess whether each question allows the participant to give an adequate response, and obtain feedback to identify unclear or difficult questions. The pilot ensured that the interview would help the researcher to gain a better understanding of how the travel bloggers construct their tourist experience at the different stages of the tourist experience.

3.6.4.2 Semi-structured Interview Procedure

The topics for the interviews were grouped into four sections: (1) socio-demographic background; (2) engagement with travel blogs; (3) motivation of engagement; and (4) the meaning behind visual images. This was done to help structure the sequence of the questions and the interview flow.

The researcher contacted the potential participants via email in March 2013. The Information Sheet and Letter of Introduction (Appendix 1) were emailed to them upon their consent to participate in the study and a schedule was finalised by the end of May 2013. The process of selecting the travel bloggers for interviews has already been explained in section 3.6.1.1. Once the researcher selected the specific destination from their blogs, the particular links of the entries

were emailed to the participants. This was done to ensure that the participants were well prepared about the chosen entries to be discussed during the interviews.

Prior to each interview, the researcher familiarised herself with the blog content, including the number of entries, photos and video, and the blogger, including background information such as introductions, travel preferences and interests. The final sets of participants were then scheduled for their interview sessions. There is quite a gap between the initial contact and actual interviews due to difficulty in getting travel bloggers to participate in this study – the researcher's email was often identified as spam and therefore tended to be deleted or ignored. In some cases potential participants who received the invitation as spam refused to participate in the study. However, as some of the pilot study travel bloggers posted information about this study on their blog, some of those potential participants who initially refused contacted the researcher and agreed to participate in this study. Furthermore, a few initial interviews scheduled by the researcher were postponed due to the participants' busy schedule. The interviews, therefore, were conducted from June 2013 to September 2013.

In determining the interview location, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) suggest that interviews should take place at a location of the participants' choice. This is purposely done to avoid any inconvenience to them, such as anxiety which may disturb the interview's effectiveness. Also, the issue of safety for both the researcher and participants should be considered (Burton, 2000). Burton (2000) suggests that interviews in a public location, such as a café or restaurant, are suitable to provide a convenient atmosphere for both researcher and participants. In this study, the interviews were conducted in a convenient location based on the participants' preferences, such as a café or participants' office. A laptop computer or tablet was set up during the interview to display their selected blog entries. This step was taken to give participants the opportunity to refer to it when questioned about the content. Also, this step encouraged further discussion.

After a participant had agreed to participate, the researcher informed them through email that they would need to sign an informed consent letter before the interview started. The written informed consent included the following: a clear

explanation that his or her participation was voluntary and he or she could choose to refuse to answer any interview questions and/or withdraw at any point of time during the interview, the purpose and scope of the study, the types of questions expected to be asked, and the implication of the results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Finally, a permission to record the interview was also sought from the participants prior to the interviews. Each interview took a maximum of 90 minutes and was digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed into data script upon the participants' consent. Table 3.3 summarises the details of the interview methods and their schedules. In qualitative research, it is common to use part or all of the pilot data as part of the main study (Van Teijlingen, 2001). Therefore, it is noted that the first five were the same participants that were interviewed for the pilot interviews. This is because it was not possible to exclude these pilot study participants as it would result in too small a sample for this study.

Table 3.3 Interview Details and Schedules

No	Participant	Interview Method	Interview Date
1.	Adam	Telephone	10 June, 2013
2.	Amin	Email and telephone	13 June and 21 June, 2013
3.	Daniel	Email and telephone	19 June and 12 July, 2013
4.	Mimi	Telephone	21 June, 2013
5.	Farah	Email and telephone	22 June and 18 August, 2013
6.	Johan	Face to face	15 June and 07 July, 2013
7.	Mariah	Email	18 June, 2013
8.	Faris	Face to face	30 June, 2013
9.	Ani	Face to face	30 June, 2013
10.	Sarah	Face to face	03 July, 2013
11.	Haris	Face to face	04 July, 2013
12.	Ramli	Face to face	04 July, 2013
13.	Fasha	Face to face	04 July, 2013
14.	Fatimah	Face to face	08 July, 2013
15.	Laili	Face to face	08 July, 2013
16.	Maryam	Face to face	12 August, 2013
17.	Hazel	Skype	16 August, 2013
18.	Kamal	Face to face	19 August, 2013
19.	Khairy	Face to face	23 August, 2013

As presented in Table 3.3, among the 19 participants, three of them were interviewed through email and telephone, one fully interviewed through email,

one through Skype, due to time and location factors, while the rest of the participants agreed to be interviewed face-to-face. For the three bloggers who completed the interview via email, they were allowed to send their answers at their own convenience but no later than a month from the date they received the researcher's email. For this type of interview, the participants were given the links of the selected entries for them to refer to. This was to ensure that the participants would not lose track of the context of the questions. Furthermore, to facilitate them to select photographs from the entries and explain the meanings behind the photographs, the researcher selected a few photographs from their entries as an example to answer particular questions. This was to encourage them to look back at their own entries and select photographs to be explained. However, after their answers had been received, they were contacted again for additional details and further clarification. This was due to the incomplete answers given and some of them simply left the questions unanswered. To get a complete answer, they were contacted through telephone, depending on their availability and preference. However, one of them only agreed to be contacted again through email. The process to gather a complete set of answers therefore took longer than expected. One participant completed the interview through Skype. Similar to the face-to-face process, before the interview, the participant was given a link to the selected destination to be discussed and referred to. During this interview, both the participants and researcher were ready with a computer to assist them in viewing the blog content being discussed.

3.6.4.3 Thematic Analysis of In-Depth Interviews

This research utilises an inductive data analysis approach to more effectively explore how the tourist experience is constructed in the three different stages. Alongside the inductive-oriented approach, the literature review and the research framework have also assisted with shedding light on the analysis and the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Prior researchers have proposed various structures as the framework for qualitative data analysis. However, the majority of qualitative researchers agree on

the categorising framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005), which involves taking steps to categorise the data into codes and themes to emerge a pattern. This structure is also known as thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To conduct the thematic analysis, the researcher followed the structure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows: (1) become familiar with the data; (2) generate initial codes; (3) search for themes; (4) review the themes; and (5) define and name the themes. Maxwell (2005) adds that the structure, however, is not a firm framework, but could serve as a foundation for adaptation to suit qualitative data analysis, depending on the research objectives. This study followed this framework and the steps taken are described below.

Step 1: Become familiar with the data. First, the qualitative data was analysed as soon as possible to reflect the communicated messages from the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that the researcher will notice interesting issues that emerge from the data, if he or she is familiar with the data. Next, the researcher made every effort to transcribe the interviews as soon as possible. In this research, the interviews were first transcribed in Bahasa Melayu and then later translated into English.

Step 2: Generate initial codes. Upon completing the transcription, the researcher proceeded with the coding of the data. Ryan and Bernard (2003) state that coding is recognised as the vital and central facet of the textual analysis. This step began with labelling and coding the data. This coding process involved generating a category according to the relevant characteristics of the data in an organised way and assembling the data for each code.

Step 3: Search for themes. This step involved categorising the different codes into potential themes and assembling all the codes within the identified themes. A researcher needs to analyse the codes and consider how the codes may link to form a theme.

Step 4: Review the themes. Reviewing the themes allowed the researcher to check whether the developed themes were related to the code and the entire data set, which then enabled the researcher to generate a thematic map of the analysis.

At the end of this stage, the researcher should have a clearer picture as to what the themes are, and how they fit together to tell a story about the data.

Step 5: Define and name the themes. At the final stage of the data analysis process, the researcher refined each specific theme and generated clear definitions. In refining the themes, the researcher identified the essence of the themes and determined the aspect of the data that each theme captured. By doing this, a clear definition of the theme can be achieved. Finally, each theme was given a concise name so that the readers could get a sense of what they were all about.

The analysis was supported by the use of ATLAS.ti software. The utilisation of software in a qualitative data analysis is widely accepted (Forman & Damschroder, 2008) as it allows the researcher to observe links between the various data sources, i.e. the interview transcript, photo and audio files with memos, quotations and the literature. Qualitative software is considered to be a beneficial tool for data storage and retrieval (Esterberg, 2002). The use of ATLAS.ti for this study made the data handling and analysis easier. Table 3.4 outlines the procedures involved in data analysis using ATLAS.ti.

Table 3.4 Steps Followed in Data Analysis Using ATLAS.ti

Step	Procedure	Product
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview transcript was carefully read to arrive at the initial understanding of the content • Relevant parts of the interview were highlighted and were given a code name. 	Quotation, codes and memos
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes were compared, revised or deleted. • Codes were grouped based on the thematic similarities. 	Codes and network
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes were linked to create the themes. • Emergent themes were categorised and named. 	Network and query tools

(Summarised by the author, 2016)

3.7 Ethical consideration

There are ethical issues to be considered when carrying out social science research. These include the participants' right to privacy, avoiding the use of deception, the participants' right to be informed about the research, the need for confidentiality, the need for honesty in collecting data, and the need for objectivity in reporting the data (Zickmund, 1997, p. 257).

This research involved investigating content that was publicly available online. There is a debate regarding the ethics of the research involving online communities, including travel blogs in particular, in terms of whether ethical reviews are necessary or not. In this regard, Haggerty (2004) suggests that if treating content gathered from online communities as public posts, ethical reviews are not necessary. However, King (1996) argues that the researcher should undergo ethical reviews as the people who communicate or post via online communities might think that their activities or postings are ostensibly private. Ethical reviews therefore are considered important for this research. Although travel blog content is generally publicly available, the travel bloggers might not consent to the content being used for research purposes. Furthermore, there are cases where content simply cannot be obtained from the travel blog due to privacy settings, in which case the researcher would need to ask for permission from the travel bloggers to obtain access to the content. This researcher deemed it important to undergo ethical reviews and gain written consent from the bloggers to use their contents for research purposes.

To ensure confidentiality, the participants were assured that their identities would not be revealed to any third party and that all the information collected to be used merely for academic purposes. To this end, pseudonyms were used instead of the actual names of the participants throughout the thesis. Berg (1995) points that the assertion of anonymity is not only limited to the non-disclosure of participants' names, but that the researcher should also be very careful about revealing information which can lead to the identification of the participants. Kozinets (2002) suggests that in addition to the above mentioned steps to protect participants' confidentiality, other specific measures be undertaken for the online medium. It involves participants' consent to use any specific posting, including

texts, photos and videos, to be directly used in the research. Also, he emphasised that participants' confidentiality must also be considered for data involving visual images. Therefore, in this study, for data involving photos, participants were informed in the consent form that all photographs would be de-identified using computer editing software and that all photographs would be numbered rather than labelled to maintain their anonymity. Furthermore, the photographs of the participants were used at a minimal level and were selected to be included in this research only if: (1) the images were approved by the participants for publication, (2) the inclusion of the images was necessary, and (3) the participants could not be easily identified from the images. Thus, in order to comply with the ethical considerations for the study, an official letter was emailed to the potential participants to inform them of the researcher's personal details, research objectives, and the aim of the interviews and how the participants' blogs would be used, and that all research would be conducted in an ethical manner. Participants then gave their informed consent.

3.8 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Findings

The validity of a qualitative research is not defined by the dependability and the generalisability of the findings. Instead, the value of qualitative findings lies in the new knowledge it delivers through a thorough understanding about a phenomenon (Bansal & Corley, 2011). While a quantitative study emphasises the validity of the findings as the outcome from reliable interpretation, Lincoln and Guba (1985), on the other hand, proposed four aspects to enhance the 'trustworthiness' of a qualitative research: (1) credibility; (2) transferability; (3) dependability; and (4) confirmability. Bearing in mind the four aspects of trustworthiness suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), relevant strategies were employed to enhance the rigor of this study. They are outlined in the subsequent sections.

1) Credibility

The credibility of the research findings refers to whether the interpretation of the findings is congruent with the participants' intentions. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

proposed several strategies that can be employed to achieve credibility, including extended engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, referential adequacy and member checking. For this research, member check is used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) refer to member checks as a confirmation of what was heard from the participants to ensure that the information received was correct. In this regard, the transcriptions of the interviews were emailed to the participants to confirm that they were accurate. The member checks were aimed at establishing trustworthiness by validating that the questions asked and the responses given were consistent and correct. Apart from member checks, as the transcriptions were first transcribed in Bahasa Melayu and later translated into English, an English teacher who is fluent in Malay and English was also employed in order to ensure the credibility of the translation. The English transcript was subsequently compared with the Bahasa Melayu transcript and then checked against the audio recording to ensure the accuracy and consistency.

2) Transferability

Transferability refers to how applicable the findings are in other research settings or with other participants (Lather, 2001). Quantitative research often stresses the importance of large samples to ensure that the results can be generalised and transferred to the another study context. This qualitative study had a small sample because of their personal comprehensive involvement in the study phenomena. The approach for enhancing transferability in this study included a ‘thick’ description of the phenomena and purposive sampling. The subject of transferability was addressed by gathering a full description of the phenomena in context, and presenting the data in detail to allow for a better understanding of the phenomena. In other words, the issue of transferability in this study was addressed by assembling adequate vigorous descriptions of the studied phenomena (see appendix 7). Also, the data is presented in detail and enables readers to have a better understanding of the phenomena. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), applicability should be determined by future researchers who would like to

transfer the information to a different context. The theoretical context of this study, therefore, would be appropriate in a different cultural context in future research.

3) Dependability

Dependability refers to what extent the findings are consistent and reproducible. In other words, it is important to describe precisely the research design and its execution (Shenton, 2004). To control for consistency in the research process, the researcher recorded the observations in field notes throughout the study. For instance, any emergent themes from one interview were noted down to see if they recurred in other interviews. Also, the use of the same researcher as the interviewer for each interview session assisted with enhancing the consistency of the findings. Furthermore, the utilisation of qualitative software analysis (Atlas.ti) helped to provide consistency in analysing the data. This is because the software allows the researcher to observe the link between the various data sources, i.e. the interview transcript, photo and audio files with memos, quotations and the literature.

4) Confirmability

Confirmability ensures the neutrality of the findings. In other words, it attempts to determine that the findings are representative of the participants' perspectives, instead of the outcome of the researcher's presumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Morse et al. (2002), the interdependent nature of qualitative research involves the researcher moving back and forth between research design and implementation to reassure consistency among research questions, literature and findings. The research questions, therefore, may have to be changed, or the research methods may need to be modified and even the sampling plans may need to be extended because of the new emerging data. However, the main objectives of this research – travel blog engagement, motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience – were always monitored and confirmed throughout the whole research process. Also, the use of participants' 'voices' in this research whenever necessary also allows the reader to interpret the meaning on their own.

3.9 Conclusion

The current chapter has presented the way in which this study was carried out by discussing the methodological considerations and the research design. It began by explaining the epistemological considerations and the ontological issues that served as the guidance for planning the research design and research methods. As identified, the logical research methodologies and methods should be designed to meet the aims of the study and accomplish the research objectives. Taking this into consideration, this researcher believed that it was not possible to address the proposed research questions using a single method. This study, therefore, adopted a qualitative methodology that combined two different methods: content analysis and in-depth interviews. Also, this study included three different types of travel blog content (i.e. texts, photographs and videos) that were posted at the three different stages of the tourist experience as it was believed that this approach would be able to provide a holistic understanding of the studied phenomena.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted. The data collection process was divided into two phases. The first phase involved selecting travel blogs, trips and entries to be used for the analysis. . A specific criterion was applied (see Section 3.6.1.1 and Section 3.6.1.2) to select the content that was going to be used in the next phase. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with the bloggers (writers) of the selected blogs. Prior to the actual interviews, a pilot test was done. Its purpose was to ensure that the research conducted would be able to provide sufficient answers to address the research objectives. To this end, some modifications to the interview guides were undertaken. The in-depth interview was employed for this research as it would shed some light on the meaning of the content produced by the bloggers, and at the same time unpack how and why they engaged with travel blogs throughout the three different stages of the tourist experience. The issue of validity was discussed and it was achieved by taking care of three aspects: member checks, an appropriate selection of the participants, and utilisation of qualitative software analysis.

Finally, the issue of research ethics was taken very seriously in this study even though it involved data that were available online and freely accessible to

anyone. Hence, the anonymity of the participants was ensured through various measures in addition to disguising their names.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussions of the in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers to provide insight into travel bloggers' engagement and motivations.

CHAPTER 4

Travel Bloggers, Behaviours and Motivations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of travel bloggers' behaviours, strategies and motivations obtained from the in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers. The participants' demographic background, travel profiles and travel blog usage are presented. This chapter explores and identifies the participants' travel blog activities in order to understand blogging behaviours and strategies that bloggers use to frame their narratives of the tourist experience and the motivations behind these strategies. It analyses and discusses the travel bloggers' behaviours and strategies throughout the stages of the tourist experience and also the motivations behind their behaviours and strategies. Also, it provides insight into the mechanisms and structures of participants' behaviours and motivations throughout the stages of the tourist experience by presenting the dynamic relationship between different behaviours, strategies and motivations.

The findings posit that participants have different behaviours at each stage of the tourist experience; most of them read and browse other blogs before travelling, disconnect from travel blogs while travelling, and actively post their travel stories and interact with the readers after the trip is finished. This different

behaviour seems to be driven by three motivations: (1) instrumental, (2) hedonic and (3) social responsibility. The following findings discuss the blogging behaviours and the related motivations underlying the mechanisms and structures in relation to narrative construction of the tourist experience.

4.2 Travel Blogging Behaviours

The first objective of this study was to understand blogging behaviours, strategies and motivations. It investigated travel bloggers' behaviours within the blogosphere that subsequently relate to their motivations. The objective was accomplished in the second stage of the study through interviewing bloggers. Results of the thematic analysis of the interviews are presented and discussed as follows. The findings of this study reveal that bloggers had different behaviours throughout the three stages of the tourist experience. It was found that participants performed many activities with regard to travel blogs such as browsing, posting comments, sharing links and posting content. Specifically, to understand the blogging behaviours, the frequency of posts, types of content posted and views and when posts were posted are considered, followed by a discussion of the motivation behind those behaviours.

4.2.1 Demographic Information of Participants

Table 4.1 summarises the demographic information of the participants. They were de-identified by using pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Table 4.1 Demographic Information of the Participants

No	Name of Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Highest Education
1	Adam	Male	25-39	Engineer	Postgraduate
2	Amin	Male	25-39	Engineer	Undergraduate
3	Daniel	Male	25-39	Journalist	Undergraduate
4	Mimi	Female	25-39	Marketing executive	Undergraduate
5	Farah	Female	25-39	Bakery owner	Undergraduate
6	Johan	Male	25-39	IT consultant	Undergraduate
7	Mariah	Female	25-39	Stay at home mother	High school
8	Faris	Male	25-39	Engineer	Postgraduate
9	Ani	Female	-	Journalist	Undergraduate
10	Sarah	Female	25-39	Student	Postgraduate
11	Haries	Male	18-24	Full time blogger	High school
12	Ramli	Male	40-54	Full time blogger	Undergraduate
13	Fasha	Female	25-39	Advertising agent	Postgraduate
14	Fatimah	Female	25-39	Lawyer	Undergraduate
15	Laili	Female	25-39	IT consultant	Undergraduate
16	Maryam	Female	25-39	Graphic designer	Undergraduate
17	Hazel	Male	40-54	Lecturer	Postgraduate
18	Kamal	Male	25-39	Lawyer	Undergraduate
19	Khairy	Male	25-39	Public relations executive	Undergraduate

The participants included 10 males and 9 females. The majority of the participants were between 25 and 39 years, two participants were between 40 and 54 years, and only one participant was aged below 24. They were employed in various fields: education, law, engineering, information technology, communication and advertising. Some of them were self-employed, running their own business, while two were full time bloggers. Full time bloggers refer to those who make a living through their blogs. On certain occasions, they were invited to travel to certain sites, and then promote the sites in their blogs. However, for this study purpose, the selection destination was strictly based on non-sponsored vacations. It appears that all of the participants were well educated. A majority of the participants hold a bachelor degree, while six had completed postgraduate degrees. The rest were high school leavers.

4.2.2 Travel Profile

The steps and criteria for selecting trips for analysis were outlined in section 3.6.1.1 and 3.6.1.2. All of the selected destinations were overseas trips within Asia, except for Daniel who only travelled within Malaysia. Table 4.2 summarises the details of their trips and the content selected for this study. There were four participants who travelled together: Adam and Khairy travelled together to New Delhi, India while Laili and Fatimah travelled together to Yangon, Myanmar. All of the participants took independent trips rather than a group package. In terms of the type of content posted on their blogs, only five of the participants posted all three different types of content (i.e. texts, photos and videos), while the majority of them combined texts and photos only to describe their tourist experience. The majority of them travelled with family and friends, while six of them were solo travellers. Mostly, their trips were short trips, ranging from 2 to 7 days, covering one specific country, with multiple destinations, narrated in entries which ranged in number from 2 to 8. Other than texts, all of the participants posted photos to describe their experience. There was quite a big gap in the number of photos posted by each participant. The participants explained that there were certain limits on photos that could be uploaded in a single entry. However, they felt that these limitations did not have a big impact as they said that the capacity was quite adequate for them to describe their tourist experience. Thus, based on this reason, it can be assumed that the number of photos posted were related to other factors as the number of photos posted by the participants varied significantly. Only three participants posted videos to describe their tourist experience, and the reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 4.2 Information about the Trips and Content of Each Participant

No	Participant	Trips	Travel duration (days)	Number of entries	Types of contents	Number of videos per destination	Average number of photos per destination
1	Adam	Independent travel to New Delhi, India with Khairy (participant no. 19)	5	6	texts, photos, videos	2	50-80
2	Amin	Independent travel to Ho Chi Min, Vietnam with parents and two friends	4	6	texts, photos	0	50-80
3	Daniel	Independent solo travel to Sipadan Island, Malaysia	3	2	texts, photos	0	Less than 5
4	Mimi	Independent travel to Kashmir, India with best friend	6	8	texts, photos	0	50-80
5	Farah	Independent travel to Singapore with husband and three kids	3	5	texts, photos	0	10-40
6	Johan	Independent solo travel to Yangon, Myanmar	5	5	texts, photos	0	Less than 10
7	Mariah	Independent travel to Ho Chi Min, Vietnam with husband and three kids	4	4	texts, photos	0	10
8	Faris	Independent travel to New Delhi, India with two best friends	4	4	texts, photos	2	50-80
9	Ani	Independent solo travel to Mandalay, Myanmar	2	2	texts, photos	0	Less than 5
10	Sarah	Independent travel to Tokyo, Japan with husband	7	8	texts, photos	0	10
11	Haris	Independent solo travel to Krabi, Thailand	4	5	texts, photos	0	20
12	Ramli	Independent solo travel to Cairo, Egypt	7	3	texts, photos	0	Less than 5
13	Fasha	Independent travel to Coron, Myanmar with three friends	5	8	texts, photos	0	40
14	Fatimah	Independent travel to Yangon, Myanmar with three friends, including Laili (participant no. 15)	5	5	texts, photos, videos	1	50-80
15	Laili	Independent travel to Yangon, Myanmar with three friends, including Fatimah (participant no. 14)	5	6	texts, photos	0	50-60
16	Maryam	Independent solo travel to Manila, Philippine	3	2	texts, photos, videos	1	10
17	Hazel	Independent solo travel to Dubai, United Arab Emirates	2	2	texts, photos	0	10
18	Kamal	Independent travel to Pnom Pehn, Cambodia with three friends	4	2	texts, photos, videos	1	10
19	Khairy	Independent travel to New Delhi, India with Adam (participant no. 1)	5	5	texts, photos	1	70-80

4.2.3 Travel Blog Usage and Practice

Table 4.3 summarises travel blog usage, including the years of blogging, travel frequency in a year, frequency of blog usage, average number of posts and number of followers.

Table 4.3 Participants' Usage of Blog

No	Name of Participant	Years of blogging	Number of followers	Travel frequency in a year (trips)	Frequency of blog usage	Average number of posts per year
1	Adam	2	891	1-4	2-3 hours a day (mostly at work)	61-70
2	Amin	3	682	1-4	Everyday	21-30
3	Daniel	5	1,021	4-8	9 hours a day (mostly at work)	21-30
4	Mimi	3	617	4-8	Everyday	81-90
5	Farah	6	311	1-4	Everyday	21-30
6	Johan	3	603	4-8	Everyday	21-30
7	Mariah	8	216	1-4	Once in a while	Less than 10
8	Faris	6	2,461	4-8	2-3 hours a day (after work)	Less than 10
9	Ani	8	1,105	4-8	Everyday	31-40
10	Sarah	4	415	1-4	Everyday	21-30
11	Haries	6	926	4-8	All the time	31-40
12	Ramli	6	2,318	4-8	Everyday	31-40
13	Fasha	4	582	1-4	8 hours a day (mostly at work)	61-70
14	Fatimah	3	1,180	1-4	2-3 hours a day (after work)	61-70
15	Laili	4	741	4-8	Everyday	81-90
16	Maryam	2	300	4-8	2-3 hours a day (mostly at work)	31-40
17	Hazel	3	510	1-4	1-2 hours a day (mostly after work)	11-20
18	Kamal	6	338	1-4	1-2 hours a day (mostly at work)	31-40
19	Khairy	3	3,205	4-8	Everyday	81-90

Participants were asked to indicate their blogging experience. Eight participants reported that they had 5 to 10 years of blogging experience and three

had 3 to 5 years of blogging experience. The remaining participants had a 1 to 3 years blogging experience. All participants except Mariah would read or interact with others' travel blogs on a daily basis, especially at work. Some of them would bookmark interesting blogs on their computers or mobile phones so that they could easily surf when they had the time. To them, travel blogs functioned in a similar way as travelling. It is about escaping, and reading blogs helps them to escape from the reality of their work life for a while. It should be noted that those who spent more times on blogs were not necessarily active producers of content. They might just simply browse others' blogs instead of posting their own content.

The number of followers for each participant ranged from 217 to 3,105. Mariah, who rarely posted own contents and interacted with others' blogs but maintained her own, had the least number of followers. Most of the participants expressed that they made an effort to increase the number of followers. Most of them promoted their blog by linking it through their personal social media account, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Blog have functions that enable bloggers to link easily with other types of social media. In addition, the participants joined the Malaysian blogging community in order to make their blogs well known and noticeable within the community.

The blogs selected for this study were specifically about travel; none of the participants blogged about personal matters. All of them blogged about their travel stories except for Daniel and Fasha. Other than blog about his travel stories, Daniel also blogged about current tourism promotions or campaigns, such as travel fare campaign and tourist festivals, such as Hot Air Balloon Fiesta. Fasha was the same as Daniel in that on top of blogging about travel, she also reviewed specific services, such as airlines, hotels and restaurants. Most of the posts were paid because they were specifically invited by the provider to experience and review their services. It is noted that this study excluded these kinds of posts as they are classified as biased because the bloggers are paid and directed by the service providers. In terms of travel frequency per year, 10 participants travelled between 4 and 8 times per year, which included domestic and international travel. The rest of them travelled up to 4 times a year. This shows that the participants play a dual role – as active travellers and also travel bloggers.

The average number of posts per year was varied. Six of them posted more than 50 posts per year. This indicates that they are active travel bloggers. It was interesting to discover that the frequency of travel within a year did not influence the number of posts. For example, even though Faris travelled more frequently (4 to 8 trips per year), he posted fewer blogs than others who had travelled the same amount. This indicated that he was a frequent tourist but did not frequently post his travel stories. This is possibly because he also actively posts on the other social media, such as Instagram and Facebook. Blogging for him is not a major social media outlet to share his travel stories. Most of the participants posted on average between 20 and 30 posts per year. Fasha for example, travelled only 1 to 4 times per year, but she had a greater numbers of posts compared to participants who had travelled more than her, such as Haris and Ramli. This is due to the fact that she also does hotel, restaurant and food reviews. It was also found that participants who travelled more had a lower number of posts compared to those who travelled less, for example Daniel, Johan, Maryam and Haris. Adam, Fasha and Fatimah, posted more than 60 times even though they travelled less compared to others. This is because for each trip they travelled to a few different cities and usually took longer trips. Thus, they had a lot more stories to tell. Therefore, it can be concluded that the number of travels the participant undertook per year did not influence the number of posts they created.

Participants were found to follow each other on blogs. This can be seen through the published list of blogs on their site. Also, they form a travel community and more than half of the participants were members of the community. Many of the members within that community meet in the real world through organised trips. Most of the participants also “know each other”. Many of them have met each other personally and some “are virtual friends”. Most of them had met at the bloggers and tourism events organised by many organisations, such as NGOs and travel and tourism agents. In terms of interaction within the blogosphere, they interacted through open communication, for example via the comments sections.

4.3 Motivations for Creating and Maintaining Travel Blogs

In order to further understand the participants' blogging behaviour and perception of blogging, this study also examined the motivation for creating and maintaining blogs. Four motivations were identified: 1) altruism, 2) personal, 3) hedonic and 4) social which is explained below.

4.3.1 Altruistic Motivations

The first theme that emerged from the data was motivation related to altruism behaviours. These altruistic behaviours included their intention to educate, inspire and help others. Prior research indicates that individuals participate in blogs because they are driven to give knowledge and enjoy helping each other (Hsu & Lin, 2008).

1) Educate others

Participants created blogs as a platform to educate others. For this reason, some participants specifically created blogs focussing on certain issues and some of them even highlighted their travel style in their blog's tagline. To some bloggers, their personal information on blogs also reflected their travel preferences, which what they wanted to point out to the readers. Also, they used blogs to help their readers to learn about travel by sharing specific travel information and encouraging the readers to develop an interest in travel and extend their travel experience. Haries, who started blogging six years ago, specifically used his blog to educate people about how to travel with a limited budget. As he was able to travel around the world regardless of his limited budget, he had a desire to convince, educate and influence other people to also travel frugally. Therefore, he specifically revealed his ways and secrets to travelling despite financial constraints:

I personally do not have much money to travel. I want to tell people that not only high income people can travel around the world. So, I show them how to travel in a minimal ways, how to save cost during the travel and many more. So everyone can travel and enjoy life to the fullest. (Haries)

His desire to influence and educate people to travel despite financial constraints is expressed in the following statement. The intention to educate people is highlighted through mentioning what he usually shares with people. This indicates what's important to him and the main reason for him to blog. For him, blogging is an important medium to educate people as it portrays what happens in reality:

I share tips how to get free accommodation for example. How to get a free ride, many people afraid to do this in foreign countries, but I want to show people, travel is possible to everyone, as long as you have courage.. ..but you must know the tricks as well. See me first and then you will confident later (laugh) (Haries)

Participants also wrote blogs to provide examples and encourage readers to travel and extend their travel experience. Ani, who is a travel journalist, mentioned that her intention to blog was due to the fact that she wanted to educate people about the benefit and beauty of travelling. By sharing her experience through blogging, she was able educate people about the benefits gained, which included personal development and concern about each other's well-being:

I want people to realise that it is important to explore the world and learn different culture. From there we can appreciate each other and live in a more harmony without any prejudice. I never blog for money. Some do, but not for me. Satisfaction gained when people open their eyes of how travel can change you, change the way you see things, and appreciate things. (Ani)

She even made a point of saying that money is not her motivation to blog. This suggests that although she realised that she could generate income through blogging, she chose not to. Her statement suggests that it is common for bloggers to earn money and indicates that it could be the main blogging motivation for other travel bloggers that she knows. Her motivation was purely to educate and change people's attitudes through travel.

2) Inspire Others

Some participants expressed profound personal reasons for travel blogging, including the desire to inspire others to travel. For some, being an inspiration to others lead to a travel achievement and satisfaction. Thus, a travel blog became a place where they could fulfil their desire to inspire others. For example, Laili's considered her discovery and experience of a foreign country as an important achievement in her life. Through her blog, she wanted to show her travel achievement, and becoming an inspiration for others was an important desire for her to continue blogging:

I wish I can inspire others to travel. I want to show how blessed and fortune myself to travel to many places. Showing them the beauty of foreign culture, the uniqueness of amazing architecture, delicious authentic food and faces of friendly local regardless of their colours and religion. I feel good when people can take something from my journey, and become an inspirational to others. (Laili)

Maryam, who travelled solo to many western countries, suggested how travelling as a passion led her to inspire others. Based on Maryam's statement, travel blogs have become reciprocal motivator. For the readers, reading and knowing there is a solo-female tourist who safely travels around the world can persuade them to follow and begin living their dreams. For Maryam as the travel blogger herself, the desire to inspire others is what motivates her to keep travelling and blogging. Also, in Maryam's case, she had specific ideas about who she wanted to dedicate her inspiration towards. The specific goal indicates a great desire and effort to inspire readers to travel:

You know, I am a single women traveller. By showing how a small women be so independent and travel to so many places I think, I inspired others...people said...waaa...your blog is really interesting, or you are such an inspiration really encourage me to travel more and continue to blog. (Maryam)

3) Help Others

Other than to educate and inspire others, participants also mentioned that the main reason for creating a blog was to help others. ‘Help others’ can be understood in two ways. Firstly, they wanted to give back what they had gained from blogging. In this sense, they specifically had target readers:

Generally, I want to serve the society, and specifically I want to give back what I gained from blogs. I want to share things that little people know, add existing knowledge and benefit others. (Ramli)

Secondly, they feel responsible for helping others who might need first-hand information, and helping others to avoid possible negative experience. Bloggers share their experiences to warn and help others (Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). If they had faced challenging or negative experiences, through the blog they could help others avoid the same negative experience. Mimi’s statement supports such a claim:

It is more to share my experience to people who might need them. I want to serve others, help people who seek for unbiased travel information. I write real and honest stories, so people can avoid bad things from happening to them. (Mimi)

4.3.2 Personal Motivations

Participants were also motivated to create and maintain blogs for personal reasons, including to document their travels and to polish certain skills, such as writing and photography.

1) Travel documentation

Almost all the participants mentioned that they blogged to document their travel. This motivation is the most mentioned in existing studies (Bosangit, 2012;

Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et.al, 2004). Participants used blogs in the same way they would a travel diary, where they recorded all their travel experiences. The chronological order of blogs also allowed their travel experience to be organised. Mariah's statement below indicates that the main motivation for her to start blogging was to document her travel. Travel blogs therefore play an important part of her travel, where it provides a place for her to record and refer back to her travels.

I started to blog due to my passion in travel. For me, travel blogs is like my travel diary. I share everything...very details, from date, time, cost and pictures. Almost everything. I can look back and track my travel. (Mariah)

2) To Polish Skills

Enlightening certain skills and knowledge was repeatedly mentioned by participants as what motivated them to start blogging. Blogs were considered an open source where they could share their innovative ideas, including writing and photography. By putting this work on their blog, it could be accessed and judged by many people, which included the people they knew and other readers.

I love writing. Put my creative ideas into writing, and let people see what I have got (Sarah).

Also, their blog was a place where participants showed and shared with others their skills, as mentioned by Faris. Faris, who loves photography, used blogs to share his photography skills. This was also observed in his blog, where he posted more photos than text. For this reason, whilst travelling, Faris purposely seeks out unique moments and monuments to be captured. This indicates that he is enthusiastic about sharing his skill, and through blogging, he was able to both record his travel stories and at the same time share his creative ideas through photography:

Travel blog is like a place where I show my skills...I think I am good at photography skills. So when I travel, I spend time to capture good photo, unique moment. In addition to share travel stories, I put those pictures. I know many people like it (Faris)

For some participants, their travel blog was perceived as a place where they could focus on their interests. They simply stated that, through blogging, they could pursue their hobby of writing and travelling, as mentioned by one of the participants, Farah. Here, it is suggested that she was not concerned about her readers' perception. What she cared about most of all was fulfilling her hobbies and interests:

I am not sure, if there are many people out there read my blog, but since I love writing and at the same time I do travel a lot, I start blog and continue to blog until now (Farah).

4.3.3 Hedonic Motivations

The third motivation is hedonic where participants perceived the travel blog as a place that could provide entertainment to themselves and others.

1) To Entertain Others and Oneself

For some, travel blogging was part of their life in which they met and socialised with the followers and readers. The network environment of travel blogs gives people the opportunity to meet others and provides entertainment, where people can have fun through gaining and providing information. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggest that people engage with travel blogs to seek enjoyment, entertainment and fun. To some extent, communication with the readers was an important source of entertainment to the participants, as mentioned by Khairy in the statement below. Sharing travel stories with others provided him with excitement and enjoyment, which indicates his main motivation for creating travel blogs:

I have fun when I share my travel stories with others. In fact, I see blogging is part of my life. Here, I can talk to people around the world, and it is an enjoyable thing to do. (Khairy)

Hedonic motivation also drove him to seriously engage with the readers, on top of merely sharing his travel stories. This suggests that travel blogs are an important part of his real life, where he can enjoy meeting and talking to his followers and readers.

You know, when you do things that you like, you will do it whole-heartedly. I always entertain my readers, my followers like real friends. Maybe people think I did it for traffic, but, honestly, I really enjoy myself in blog. It is like my home, welcome all the guests and serve them. (Khairy)

Similarly, Ani who among the participants had a high number of followers, noted that the process of sharing travel stories on the blogs gave her significant enjoyment. More than that, other activities she undertook in the blogosphere, including interaction with the readers, gave her excitement.

The process of writing my travel stories is enjoyable. To communicate with people around the globe is a pleasure (Ani).

4.3.4 Social Motivations

The fourth theme which emerged from the data was social motivation, which is the desire to stay connected to and maintain relationship with people who share the same interests. They also maintained a blog because they wanted to connect with the public and maintain a relationship with their readers.

1) To connect with people who share the same interest

Another important motivation which drove individuals to start blogging was to meet and mingle with people who shared the same interests. Amin, who used blog

on a daily basis, mentioned that it was rather important for him to connect and know fellow travel bloggers because that drove him to actively travel and blog. In this regard, being connected to other bloggers allowed him to keep track with what was new in the travel environment. Also, by having a relationship with fellow bloggers, it created a notion of competition among them. By personally knowing other bloggers who had recently travelled to certain destinations, Amin felt more devoted to travel and in the end wanted to share it with everyone. Thus, the connection with other bloggers encouraged him to continue blogging:

It is nice where you participate in certain group where you can meet people, exchange knowledge. You know, sometimes, it becomes a healthy competition within the community. We tried our best to share interesting stories and put effort to travel (Amin).

Similarly, Fasha noted how important it was for her to create a blog in order to keep in touch with people that she followed. For her, social involvement with people with the same interests gave her an advantage. In this sense, she gained encouragement and motivation to travel more and come back with interesting stories to be shared:

I started blogging because to know some of the famous Malaysian and international bloggers. Before this, I only follow them but then, if I not mistaken, in 2009, I started to write and then people start knowing me. I love to involve with people who share the same interest. Seeing and knowing these people make me feel more enthusiast to travel and blog. Sometimes...I feel envy with people who travel more, have more stories to be told....but what to do, I have my full time job. (Fasha)

2) To Maintain Relationship with Others

They are some participants who continued to blog due to their relationship with the readers. In this sense, they had created a commitment with the readers and it seemed compulsory for them to share their travel stories to satisfy their readers.

Connection with the readers made the participants feel obligated to continue to contribute to the blogosphere, as highlighted by Johan in the statement below:

Blogs connect me with people who know more than I do. Discussion, events and communication with the readers is what keep me going. It is like encouragement for me to keep on travelling and writing...some give me very kind words, some ask for more.. they are very supportive. So every time I travelled, I remembered them, I always want to “bring” something that is new, fresh and interesting for them. (Johan)

For Johan, travel blogging was a part of travel. The commitment to his readers and followers made him committed to his blog. This connection to his readers made him realise the need to improve his blog in order to maintain that relationship. Based on the four motivations which emerged from the data, it can be observed that participants were concerned with the mutual benefits gained for themselves, as well as their followers and readers. For the travel bloggers as the content creators, the motivation to create a blog was related to what they would gain, including hedonic aspects of travel, such as the fun of sharing travel stories with others, the satisfaction of helping others, and the use of the blog to educate and inspire others. Followers and expected readers also played an important role contributing to their motivations. Bloggers were concerned for others and used their blog to benefit others, through educating, inspiring and helping. They also wanted to connect with people, and evaluate and polish their skills and, in return, gain a benefit for themselves. Participants also actively blogged and engaged with their readers because they wanted to provide fun and entertainment to the readers who participated in and supported their blogs.

By examining the participants’ blogging motivations, it was revealed that their followers and readers played an important role in motivating them to create and continue to blog. To some extent, they relied on the readers in order to ‘survive’. This indicates that they apply ‘a follower pleasing’ strategy as an initial step to blog and continue to be relevant in the blogosphere. They listened to their ‘readers’ voices’ and appreciated their engagement with their blogs. This is

obvious in relation to hedonic and social motivation, where readers and followers have their role in influencing the participants' contribution to the blogosphere.

Also, it was discovered that, some of the participants were more self-centred in blogging which can be seen in personal motivations. They created blogs to satisfy their self-interests which were related to their passions and hobbies. Also, they wanted to identify themselves with the established blogging community. By connecting themselves with established bloggers, they could pursue their interest in travel. Sharing their travel stories allowed them to 'be friends' with people they were inspired by. It can be seen that blogging allowed them to gain recognition. Dwyer (2007) argues that members in virtual communities gain recognition and prestige when posting content that can lead others to engage with their contents. Participants here perceived that they would gain a good reputation through sharing knowledge and information. Reputation is enhanced through knowledge sharing through travel blog participation (Hsu & Lin, 2008). In the travel blog context, by sharing their travel stories and personal experiences in their blogs, they felt proud of themselves and their potential to influence others to take action.

For some, blogging made them travel more. This is due to the notion of 'competition' mentioned by some of the participants. They felt they were challenged to travel more and come home with interesting travel stories. Based on the motivations discovered, participants did not seem concerned about potential monetary incentives gained through blogging. Lenhart and Fox (2006) state that people create and maintain blogs to share experiences rather than to generate income. This study found that although they realised blogging could generate income through advertising, traffic and paid reviews, they were more concerned about other issues, including their personal and social status, and their potential readers. For some participants, travel blogging was considered to be a leisure activity. This leisure activity or hobby provided them with enjoyment and was one way in which to socialise through community participation.

Based on the above mentioned motivations, it was understood that travel blogging was considered as part of the participants' leisure activities in addition to

travel. Also, it is noted that for some, travel made them start to write, and for some, their interest with these two aspects, travel and writing, influenced them to start blogging. It was discovered that their engagement with travel blogs was influenced by their position in the blogosphere, including their relationship with other bloggers and readers. Their altruism motivation included the desire to help others, to educate people and to give inspiration to others, and this also influenced what they shared on their blogs. Participants were concerned about their readers, which suggests that they wanted to attract more readers and satisfy their followers.

4.4 Behaviours, Strategies and Motivation at the Pre-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

4.4.1 Browsing, Commenting and Posting Behaviours and Instrumental Motivation

Engagement with travel blogs is related to an individual's motivations for blogging. At the pre-visit stage, the instrumental motivation influenced their engagement. Seven participants expressed that they only consumed travel blogs and did not interact any further. In this regard, they completely agreed that their motivation related to gratify informational needs and therefore they only had a limited activities performed on blogs before a trip. This suggests that the behaviour of merely browsing and reading blogs enabled the tourist to fulfil their informational needs. Eight of them extended their engagement with travel blogs by not only reading travel blog content, but at the same time commenting on the read content. Interestingly, they shared the same motivation with those who merely read blogs – primarily to gratify informational needs. In this regard, they initially started their engagement by only reading the blogs. The initial behaviour was driven by the information seeking, during which they felt that by only reading the blogs, their needs were not able to be fulfilled, therefore they extended their engagement to a moderate level. They interacted with the bloggers through commenting on posts. They perceived that through travel blogs, they could gain instrumental benefits (i.e., solving their information-seeking problems). In this regard, they received instrumental support from 'experienced people' who were

knowledgeable in specific destinations and could help them solve problems and give them travel tips.

To fully understand travel blogging behaviour and motivations related to browsing and commenting, this section expanded the discussion by highlighting what participants searched for in blogs. Also, although only four participants produced their own content before travelling, it is important to highlight and discuss this behaviour by specifically looking at what they produced and when the posts were produced.

4.4.1.1 Content referred to in Blogs

It was found that participants looked for thorough information in blogs. Travel blogs were considered a primary site for them to search for information. For example, for the purpose of information seeking and gathering, Fatimah mentioned that she rarely referred to blogs before travelling. Even though she considered herself to be among the pioneers of Malaysian bloggers, due to her involvement in the Malaysian Blogging Community and blogging experience, she only made limited reference to blogs while preparing for her travel. In this sense, travel blogs appeared to be the last choice for obtaining desired information. This however highlights the important role play by travel blogs in supplying travel information. In contrast, however blogs were used when it is impossible to find the desired information elsewhere. Travel blogs became a source of information which was impossible to obtain elsewhere. The type of content and information referred to in blogs at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience is obviously related to the instrumental motivation. The below statement from Fatimah illustrates how travel blog satisfied her information seeking needs even though they were not her primary information searching source.

I normally asked friends who had been there, and who stay there. It would be much easier to ask friends who are staying there because they would recommend places that less people go. My aim is to uncover infamous attraction. The locals would know that. Next, I do research via google map to know about transportation and location. It's all depends on what the attraction there. Thus, I would refer many sources. I do refer to blogs but I seldom do that. I only do that in case I could not get them. So I have no choice. Like

Pulau Karimujawa, I have not heard of that Pulau before and I knew it from my blogger friend. He mentioned about that and included some pictures and I was so curious to know more about that Pulau. When you google, you don't really know how to get there (Fatimah)

Based on her statement, fulfilling her information seeking needs was highlighted as she specifically disclosed the types of information that she looked for in blogs. It is suggested that travel blogs are relevant sources for potential tourists from which to access personalised and off the beaten path information, especially to unpopular destination. Fatimah perceived that a travel blog was an appropriate site at which to dig for the information that she needed to travel to an unpopular destination.

Other than that, to clearly explain the relationship between instrumental motivation with participants behaviour before at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience, the influence of blogging to their pre-visit behaviour. The influence of blogging on participants' decision-making before travelling was also studied. This was important to clearly explain the relationship between instrumental motivation and participants' behaviour at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience. Participants used blogs to assist them with creating their travel itinerary. They specifically searched for other itineraries, because the narratives in blogs usually contain detailed descriptions of the trip, from departure until they reach home (Pan et al., 2007; Volo, 2009). For this reason, a storytelling style was preferred, as it gave them more pleasure to read, as suggested by Haries in the statement below:

I like texts been told in dramatic way and it is sort of reading a novel but in a more relaxing way. I think because it speaks more about that person's experience and if we are searching for facts, there are many websites about it. Facts are more like a "dry" statement and yes they are more straightforward. When reading travel stories, it is like you are communicating with the writer... By referring to blog, it is easy to duplicate. I mean, it is nice to do it your way (Haries)

Similar to Fatimah, Haries's statement suggests that blogs were referred to only because of the nature of information offered. He preferred blogs as his information source as he enjoyed reading about others' experience and it seemed to replicate the traditional storytelling mode. A well-crafted story allowed him to imagine himself talking to the narrator. He highlighted that others' experiences led to much easier travel planning, as the storytelling assisted him to digest the experience and influenced his decision-making. Storytelling allowed him to 'follow' the experience and in the end it assisted his decision-making – he could adapt others' itineraries to his own preferences.

Travel blogs appeared to be the basis of potential tourists' decision-making. As travel bloggers' narration is based on personal stories, travel blogs were considered as a guide for travel planning. It was found that travel blogs provided personalised information that was similar to the participants' interests and needs, as mentioned by Maryam in the below statement.

I search for personal stories, usually to study their itinerary. There are many types of travel blog; one is narrative and also facts. By referring to their stories, I will come out with my own itinerary. I usually travel alone and I will look for more information. I am a lady thus I need to find a safer route. There are many female bloggers out there that travel by themselves, so it is quite easy to find such information. (Maryam)

A clear link between motivation and the browsing contents is presented by Sarah. Like Maryam, Sarah, with regards to her long awaited trip in 2013, explained that she did not get involved in any other travel blog activities except for reading and gathering information to prepare for the trip, as described in this statement below:

I browse and search for information and travel guide before I travel. Normally I do not post anything at this stage, as my main focus is to gather information and plan for my travel...I always search for logic, reliable information and how to move from one place to another in blogs. (Sarah)

It is highlighted that instrumental motivation controlled and influenced her blogging behaviour before the travel. This is because browsing and reading satisfied her needs and therefore she did not have any interest in undertaking any other activities, such as posting content or commenting on others' blogs. To justify the motivation behind her engagement, she further explained that her active consumption of travel blogs was to fulfil her information searching needs. Her motivation was then emphasised as she mentioned the characteristics of the information that she sought from the travel blogs. The fact that she purely consumed travel blogs and did not engage in further, such as comments or post contents any other activities in the blogosphere suggests that by consuming travel blogs, the information seeking desire can be fulfilled. This also reflects the activities that occur in the pre-visit stage, which is tourists prepare themselves for the travel. Sarah further conveyed her thoughts about her motivation to merely read travel blogs before she travelled:

When I browse blogs, it is enough for me to only read what they shared. As long as I understand it, it is enough for me. (Sarah)

The findings suggested that most of them view the consumption of information as more important than producing content prior to their actual trips. This is consistent with what Nonnecke and Preece (2001) have highlighted when explaining the browsing behaviour, which is characterised at the pre-visit stage by information searching and travel preparation rather than producing their own content. The most common mentioned reason for not posting or commenting on blogs was that just browsing or reading was enough (Preece, et al., 2004). In the travel blog context, for the participants who were motivated by information seeking, there was no reason for them to extend their engagement at the pre-visit stage, as they got what they wanted through browsing and reading.

4.4.1.2 Types of Content Post

The types of content posted at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience were influenced by the participants' posting behaviour, strategies and motivation. It was

found that two distinct strategies were adopted. First, for Johan, although he posted before he travelled, he tended to keep the travel destination a secret. He gave a hint that he would be travelling soon, but the destination remained unknown. The ‘secret’ strategy adopted by him was designed to attract readers’ attention and encourage them to follow his travel. This was considered as a tactic to make the readers eagerly wait for his update:

To some extent, I am a secretive guy (laugh). So you can see from my blog, no picture of me, right? I prefer to put something that attract readers’ attention and encourage them to comments, like what I did in my blog for Myanmar’s trip which I let them guessing where I am travelling to. (Johan)

The second strategy was that the participants openly shared their upcoming trips. They openly revealed their destinations, including the travel itinerary and the progress of their travel preparation.

Usually, I used travel blog for an extensive information searching. In addition to that, I also shared entries related to travel preparation for example, the visa application, passport, itinerary, accommodation, transportation, and may more. I put all this things for them (the readers) to refer before they start their journey. At the same time, I share my travel enthusiasm actually. The readers also seemed to be excited, by suggesting me to do this and that, crazy ideas come, and it was fun. (Adam)

Based on Adam’s comments, the detailed sharing of his travel preparations at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience was aimed at helping his readers to prepare for their own travel. At the same time, he shared his travel excitement with the readers. Interestingly, was found that the instrumental motivation that related to information seeking not only influenced the browsing behaviours, but also drove the participants to produce their own content and participated with the others’ content. Jeong and Jang (2011) suggest that the electronic environment serves as an innovative medium for people to search for reliable information. This study has discovered that reliable information can be obtained through a posting contents and interacting with others’ posts, bloggers were able to gain reliable information from those who had already travelled to that destination. Asking for

suggestions through posting content was generally a strategy to gather more information from various sources, including the readers. The following accounts illustrate how Mimi considered the instrumental motivation as one of the motivations for blog posting before the travel.

I need quick and instant information. So I welcome any suggestions that made my information searching easier. Some of them are very helpful by giving links to reasonable rate of hotel booking, and some left their personal tips, such as what things that should not be missed. I know it sounds cliché, but I really taking them seriously as the fellow bloggers really explore something that worth doing it. (Mimi)

Considering that the participants as potential tourists are exposed to a variety of information sources (including mainstream websites, and other promotional media, such as destination marketing websites and brochures), their instrumental motivation not only highlights the importance of travel blogs in helping them in their travel preparation, but also emphasises the unique characteristics of travel blogs that make potential tourists choose them over any other source. These include the convenience, usefulness and reliability of travel blogs. This is consistent with Johnson and Kayne (2004) who conclude that blogs are considered to be more trustworthy than traditional media.

4.5 Behaviours, Strategies and Motivation at the On-site Stage of the Tourist Experience

It was found that most of the participants did not engage at all with travel blogs at the on-site stage of the tourist experience. The finding is inconsistent with the travel-related social media literature in which tourists post content in real time instead of waiting until after returning home (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009; Gretzel, Fesenmaier & O'Leary 2006). It was discovered that at the on-site stage, travel blogs were not a popular choice of social media used by tourists to share and update their travel. They tend instead to update their travel news through other social media, such as Instagram or Facebook. These other types of social media

are easy to use in real time, compared to blogs that demand commitment and engagement. Some participants did not even use these more accessible types of social media, but waited instead until they reached home. This is because they wanted to wait until they had fascinating and complete stories to share. This is also related to their personal preference in blogging. They preferred to share comprehensive stories rather than update with photos or short narratives to explain their tourist experience, and thus, updating their blog while travelling was not comfortable enough for them. Some also did not bother to engage with social media at all while travelling. This is because they wanted to stay focussed on their travel and fully engaged with the real world. Three motivations can be highlighted to explain why they were keen to stay away from travel blogs during travelling, as discussed in the following section.

4.5.1 No Engagement and Engaging with the Real Word

During their trip, the main motivation to not engage at all with travel blogs was because they wanted to engage with the real world rather than ‘being’ in the blogosphere. They chose to fully engage with real people that they met personally rather than with virtual people. For Johan, although he needed guidance when he was in Myanmar, he did not seek help within the blogosphere. Although he actively interacted and produced his own content before travelling, he chose to disconnect and fully engage with the real world during his travels.

I kept away from blogging world during my journey... I prefer to stay offline and engage with the local and ask for their views and recommendations.
(Johan)

Similarly, other participants mentioned that they wanted to focus on their travel rather than spend time on their blogs while they were at their destinations. Such a claim was made by Hazel who consistently put a barrier between his virtual and real world every time he travelled. Although he was a passionate travel blogger, he did not put effort into updating his blog during the trip:

It is just my habits for do not care about updating my status or whatsoever during my trip. I just disconnected because I want to focus on my travel, enjoy and face the reality rather than care about the virtual word. (Hazel)

Based on the above statements, it is clear that as soon as their travel started, the participants made themselves fully engage with the real environment. Although they perceived that travel blogs are a useful source of information and a place for an interactive communication that can provide excitement at the pre-visit stage, they disconnected with travel blogs and chose to concentrate on the real world while travelling.

4.5.2 No Engagement and Time Constraints

Other than their preference to stay away from travel blogs to engage with real people and the environment, the other demotivating factor was time constraints. Time constraints was an important reason for not posting any content on social media (Chalkiti & Sigala, 2008; Gretzel et al., 2007). This current study discovered that time constraints not only demotivated them from posting any content while travelling, but obviously prevented them from making any engagement. Travelling fully occupied their time, therefore they did not have a chance to engage with travel blogs. The following statement from Fatimah illustrates how the time constraints became one of the motivations that discouraged her from engaging with travel blogs when she started to travel:

Usually during travel, I did not spent time for updating my blog. This is due to time factor. I have no time to refer to blog and update my blog either. And same goes to the other social media that I have, such as Twitter or what so ever. I want to solely enjoy and focus on my travel (Fatimah)

Similarly, Mimi mentioned time constraints as a motivation for staying away from travel blogs during her actual visit to India, as exemplified in her statement:

I cannot afford to even post an entry during my trip to India. This is due to time constraint and it is quite difficult for me to update where I had up to in travel blog. I prefer to post a lengthy and well explained story in my blog, thus I really do not have time to do that while I was travelling. I think posting a photo to Facebook was quite easy as my Facebook's friends were actually my close friends, compared to my blogs that can be accessed worldwide (Mimi).

Producing blogs needs commitment and time, and thus can be a barrier preventing tourists from creating blogs whilst on holidays (Brown & Calmers, 2003). This study highlights that bloggers preferred to share a lengthy and detailed explanation of their experience rather than short entries, but were prevented from doing so during their holidays, due to lack of time and commitment. In addition, they preferred to not post a short entry on their travel blog, but instead, shared a short and quick travel update on other social media better suited to such content, such as Facebook.

4.5.3 No Engagement and Safety and Privacy Concerns

Privacy and safety reasons have also been mentioned as motivations for participants to stay away from engaging with blogs during their visit. For participants who are concerned about their safety and privacy, they were found to keep their travel a secret until after they returned home. This means that at the pre-visit stage, they also did not post anything about their upcoming trip. Also, while interacting with others in the blogosphere, they did not reveal at all when they would travel. This is highlighted by Ramli and Fasha:

I do not want people know where I am due to safety reason. By letting the world know that I am not at home could give me trouble. So, I do not post anything during my travel. Also, this is the main reason why I always kept my journey as a secret until me at home. (Ramli)

I actually will not bring my travel blog with me during my travel. I don't think it is safe for me to let people know where I am, especially during my travel. That is the main reasons why I do not post anything on blogs while travelling. (Fasha)

The above remarks, therefore, imply that the participant was concerned about his safety and privacy issues. It suggests that this concern had impacted on his engagement at this stage, as he felt that it was not safe for him to share his current location with his readers or what he was doing at the moment via his travel blog.

4.5.4 Posting Behaviours and Hedonic Motivation at On-Site Stage of Tourist Experience

Although the findings reveal the great majority of the participants did not engage at all with travel blogs while they were travelling, it is also important to closely examine the three participants who did have a high degree of engagement with travel blogs by way of producing content and replying to their readers. Adam, Sarah and Khairy unanimously agreed that their engagement was related to the hedonic motivation for posting content and interacting with the readers at the on-site stage of tourist experience. Their comments revealed that in contrast to the participants who chose to shut down their travel blogs while they travelled, these three participants did not ignore the real world, but at the same time they enjoyed engaging with travel blogs as well.

I am so into blogging, that's why I still connected to my own blogs wherever I go. For my India's trip, I posted a few entries, just to update my readers and at the same time, I like to communicate with them. Therefore, I feel bit 'obligated' in a way to keep them updated with my trips as many of them also helped me out with the travel preparation. At the same time, I had to be creative in order to attract them to engage with my blogs. I had to put interesting stories to arouse them to drop comments and communicate with me. (Adam)

I followed the suggestion that I got from them (the readers). Indeed, by communicating with people that already been there, while I was there was very helpful. Usually, they suggested the best things to do to fully maximise my visit especially when knowing that I was at that place at that time. Although there were some changes from my initial plans, I really appreciate it and I was fully satisfied with my travel. (Adam)

Adam, who openly shared information about his trips at the pre-visit stage, stated that it influenced his engagement at the on-site stage in two different ways. Firstly, he was motivated to interact with the readers to let them know his current situation because he was actively communicating with them prior to departing for India. The interaction before the travel made him perceived that he needed to maintain the connection with them even while he was travelling. Secondly, the posted content at this stage of his travels served as more than just an update about him. He was actually motivated to engage with travel blogs by producing content, with the intention of receiving suggestions from the readers who had been to India before. Through the posted content, he could communicate with the readers and gain some excitement through the interaction. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggest that the communication that occurs in an online community creates a sense of fun and excitement for the participants. In the travel blog context, therefore, the excitement that they obtained through communication within the blogosphere encourages them to continue to engage with the travel blogs whilst travelling. Indirectly, the interaction that occurred within the blogosphere also brought excitement to Adam's travel, as he could follow the suggestions from the readers.

For Sarah, even though she only consumed travel blogs at the pre-visit stage, she produced a short entry that included a photo of Sakura when she arrived in Tokyo. The following account explains how her behaviour of producing an entry while she was at the destination was driven by the desire for interactive communication that subsequently affected her travel:

I posted on my blogs during my travel as to share my real experience that occur at that time.... I believed that by doing so, I can get many comments or suggestions from the readers. It is like an indirect way of communicating nowadays. This make my journey became smoother and more exciting.

I know there are many people out there that had been to this place. They actually tell me where to go to see better Sakura, based on their own experience. Communicating with these kinds of people is rather exciting, I can get information that I never thought before. (Sarah)

To some degree, the engagement with travel blogs while the travel bloggers were at the destination was largely driven by the hedonic motivation. Although it is clear that the participants needed to gratify their communication needs while at the destination, this study reveals that the engagement with travel blogs by producing their own content is related to their desire to solicit further suggestions and recommendation that could enhance the fun on their trip. Additionally, the engagement also satisfies the participants who need to socialise within the blogosphere in order to experience travel excitement.

4.6 Behaviours, Strategies and Motivation at the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

As all participants posted at the post-visit stage of the tourist experience, it is important to understand when they posted and the types of content posted. It was observed that the time it took them to post was quite varied. The quickest post after the participants reached home was within two to three days, while the longest time taken was more than two weeks. In order to understand the strategies of posting behaviour, the specific time it took for the first blog entry to be posted was sought. Findings reported that there was a gap in posting after they reached home which was related to the nature of their blog, and the personal and writing preferences of the bloggers. The nature of blog refers to whether the blogging involves assessing, analysing, reconstructing, documenting and sharing their travel stories (Bosangit, Dulnuan & Mena, 2012). Thus, it took time for them to post their travel stories. Personal preferences refers to the blogger's writing and blogging style; some preferred a dramatic style, while others preferred a comprehensive explanation of their travel stories. This latter blogging style demanded commitment and time, and as most of the participants worked full-time and only blogged during the weekend or free time, it took longer for them to post their first entry. For example, working full-time caused Fatimah to delay her first post. However, she tried her best to be as quick as possible and post regardless of her time constraint as illustrated in the below statement:

I am working thus I only blog during weekend. I would try my best to update it as soon as possible. Sometimes, I would update for the next five days. (Fatimah)

Personal preferences also affected the time it took to post after a trip, as mentioned by Haries in the statement below:

It takes weeks. It took a while, and there are stories that I have not post it for a month. Because if I force myself to blog, it will come out shitty and end up being very factual writing and I don't like it at all. I really love want to sit down and spend good hours to blog, write it very naturally and it comes out very beautiful. At the end of the day, I will read it back because it is sort of a diary to me. (Haries)

For Haries, who took weeks to post, it seemed that personal factors which also related to time factor influenced the time it took to post. Unlike Fatimah, Haries stressed that he was concerned about what he wrote. He needed a good amount of time before posting, as he preferred a natural storytelling style, rather than factual. This kind of content demanded more time to be produced. He was also concerned about the output of his travel narratives which he considered to be like travel diaries which he would refer back to in the future. It seems that, for those who did not tell the readers about their upcoming travels before they went, there was no urgency to post or update their travels once they were home. They did not take their readers into consideration in their behaviour about when to post, which was different to four of the participants who posted at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience.

It is appears that participants who posted while they travelled, did not wait a long time before posting after the trip was completed. For example, Sarah who posted while she was in Japan, and Khairy, who post throughout the three stages of the tourist experience, took only two days to post after they reached home.

Normally, two days after I touched down. I do not want to delay it, as maybe there are people who want to know the next episode of my story (Sarah)

It depends on my tiredness...normally, within a day or two, but I can say, two days after. My fans are waiting (laughing). I must keep my promise anyway.

In terms of the type of content posted, most of the participants shared text and photos, while six of them included videos on top of text and photos. In describing the type of content that they usually shared, participants expressed that it depended on their motivation. Two motivations were highlighted – social responsibility and hedonic – which is discussed in the following section.

4.6.1 Posting Behaviours and Social Responsibility Motivation

As explained by Maryam and Laili, for them the post created at this stage was related to their social responsibility motivation. This motivation is also associated with the notion of altruism, similar to traditional word of mouth communication as discussed by Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998). Altruism is a prevalent motive for a consumer to generate electronic word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This social responsibility motivation is also closely related to concern for others motivation which is mentioned by Yoo and Gretzel (2008), in which people share their experience with others to help them and prevent them from having an unfavourable experience. In this regard, after the travel, the participants wanted to share their real and firsthand tourist experience because they were concerned about and cared for others. They wanted to share with potential tourists what they had gained from the trip in order to help them in their travel planning and to have a fun memorable tourist experience.

It is a combination of photo and writing. Depends on where that I go, like in Myanmar, less people go there so I would provide details and latest information on how to get there, what to expect. You need to plan your trip well and to know for the schedules for public transportation. Basically I would provide guidelines and also would tell my stories and experience. I hope what I share will benefit others (Laili)

I wrote about my experience. Thus if I am unhappy about that particular place, I would just write it but I try to make it as interesting as possible for people to read and learn from my experience. I used to write a very lengthy post because of my writing style but I have learned that people don't like if it is too lengthy. So I try to make it short especially on the factual and put as much pictures as possible so that readers would have a better understanding. I have video to complement my writing. Thus they not only can imagine in their minds but to hear and see about places that I went. (Maryam)

For Maryam, the use of pictures and videos shaped the narration of her travel stories. She took consideration of the readers' preferences, and they preferred to see visual content, rather than lengthy text. The combination of pictures, text and videos allowed the readers to have a better and full understanding of her experience. In addition, she was honest in sharing her experiences, even though they were not always good. This indicates that she wanted others to learn from her experience and avoid the same thing happening to them. It is clearly stated that they felt obligated to share their experiences with others, particularly because they were concerned about others' wellbeing. In this regard, they wanted to give advice and useful tips to help their readers so that they too could have a better and more satisfying travel experience. The findings support the feelings of concern for others wellbeing as demonstrated in previous studies (Hsu et al., 2007; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). However, the findings also suggest that within the travel blog context, participants were not only motivated to serve their readers, but they were also concerned about their (the bloggers him/herself) wellbeing, in relation to fulfilling the responsibility felt.

4.6.2 Posting Behaviours and Hedonic Motivation

The second motivation that influenced people to post was hedonic motivation. People engage in travel-related online communities for entertainment and to engage with others within the community (Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). In the travel blog context, therefore, two-way communication with readers provided the participants with excitement. As such, being able to talk about their tourist experience, discuss specific issues, and answer their readers' questions may serve as an important source of enjoyment to them. The following

statements from Fatimah point out that travel enjoyment can be achieved through a high engagement motivated by an interactive communication:

I personally see travel blogs as a place to talk about my travel experience. I can 'meet' people from different and same background that have same interest with me. It is always fun to talk with people who have same interest with me, which is travelling around the world. (Fatimah)

Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) mention that the hedonic perspective sees tourists as pleasure seekers who engage in activities that elicit enjoyment, fun and amusement. Also, enjoyment was highlighted as an important motivation for tourist to engage with travel-related social media (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Based on Fatimah's statement, exchanging experiences with people that hold the same interests through two-way communication provides a sense of fun and excitement. In this sense, by answering the readers' questions and talking with people around the globe that were interested in her experiences served as a source of entertainment to her. This is supported by Litvin et al.'s (2008) argument that tourists enjoy sharing their tourist experience and sharing it after the trip is completed and is often considered as part of the travel enjoyment.

Kaye (2005) suggests that people perform various activities in the online community to fulfil various emotional needs, including entertainment and to gain excitement. Therefore, within the travel blog context, it is clearly expressed by the participants that a high engagement motivated by interactive communication provides excitement, as mentioned by Kamal. Like Kamal, Fatimah mentioned that through the interactive communication motivation, she produced her own content and communicated with readers. Fatimah believes that this communication enabled her to understand exactly what the readers wanted to know about her experience in Myanmar. The enjoyment was derived from the nature of the interaction itself, for example, by asking readers questions. Also, it is important to note that the engagement by just 'being' in the blogosphere also provided a sense of excitement and enjoyment. This is due to the participant simply perceiving that travel blogging itself as fun. Thus, producing and replying

to the readers' comments is simply considered as enjoyable. It is noted that the interaction thus served as an inspiration for Fatimah to share the best that she could in order to satisfy her readers. As she was able to provide satisfaction to the readers, this accomplishment served as a post travel enjoyment to her. Therefore, it can be concluded that by sharing and interacting with one's experience virtually, the participants were able to extend the travel enjoyment.

4.7 Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter was to investigate the underlying mechanisms and structures of blogging behaviours and the motivations behind those behaviours. The above findings therefore confirm that there is a relationship between blogging behaviours and blogging motivations. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study supports an application of uses and gratification theory to expound how tourists and travel bloggers in particular engage with travel blogs, and the gratification gained through different blogging behaviour. Overall, the findings from this study highlight that the travel blog is a useful tool for potential tourists and tourists, particularly as a source of information searching and sharing, and to generate travel excitement through interactive communication with other tourists and bloggers. Instrumental, hedonic and social responsibility motivations often appear in the uses and gratification literature, and were somewhat reflected in the gratifications gained from this study sample. The U&G has been found to be applicable for Internet research (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004) and has recently been applied to a wider range of online applications, such as social media, including blogs (Kaye, 2005; Li, 2005). Along with focus on the psychological and social needs, the interactive aspect of travel blogs makes the U&G theory particularly appropriate because it emphasises how a tool can gratify needs and motives to communicate (Rubin, 2009). U&G theory is particularly relevant for travel blogs because it describes how potential tourists choose travel blogs and eventually use them to fulfil their psychological and social needs.

During each stage of the tourist experience, certain behaviours and strategies become more prevalent than others. For example, at the pre-visit stage, engagement was primarily driven by a need to obtain or seek travel-related information. Reading and digesting others' stories, asking questions, commenting on others' stories and posting content helped the potential tourist with decision-making and helped them narrow down their choices. Most importantly, engagement with travel blogs at this stage allowed them to form an accurate anticipation of the destination. In contrast, during the trip, travel bloggers disconnected from travel blogs due to various reasons, including wanting to engage with real people instead, time constraints, privacy and safety issues. For the few of them who did engage with travel blogs during their travels, their motivation was to share the hedonic aspects of their travels – their actual experience happening in real time. At the post-visit stage, travel bloggers were still motivated to share their tourist experience with the readers. In addition, some also actively interacted with their readers to clarify certain queries and maintain a relationship with them.

Blogging behaviours are dominated by retrieving information behaviours. Participants read, interact with the content creators and readers, and post for the purpose of information gathering at the pre-visit stage. Information gathered through blog reading and interaction with other bloggers mediates the potential tourists' anticipation. It also influences their pre-visit decision-making. In terms of narrative construction, blogs influence the narrative construction in two ways. First, the travel narrative was based on the anticipation that was constructed through the blog. In this regard, they tended to see what other people see. Their decision-making was then influenced by others' stories. Second, they wanted to be different from the others. In this regard, they see travel as 'competition' among the bloggers. They contended to discover unique places and to show off their outstanding travel achievement through discovering beautiful places and doing interesting stuff. Also, at this stage, they felt obligated and thankful of what they gathered in blog, which helped them with travel planning and preparation. For these reasons, they want to give back to their readers who had helped them by 'satisfying' them with adequate or fascinating travel stories and photos.

It is also highlighted that the interaction within the blogosphere influence and shaped blogging behaviours throughout the stages of the tourist experience. Participants who posted content and actively interacted with the readers before their travels were found to be actively involved in blogging during and after the trip. This can be observed through the fact that they kept updating their readers while travelling and spent less time posting after they reached home. Vetere et al. (2005) suggest that posting and commenting behaviour can produce emotional attachment for those who engage in it. Therefore, within the travel blog context, by communicating with readers before a trip, they felt 'obligated' and wanted to continue to keep in touch with their readers who might be waiting for their updates.

Media related to internet technology has overcome the temporal and spatial limits of conventional media (Li, 2005). This current study highlights that while travelling, the participants were able to get quick and reliable suggestions that influenced their actual tourist experience. Through the interaction, travel bloggers obtained impromptu suggestions which allowed them to alter the travel itinerary simultaneously. The interaction not only generated important impromptu suggestions, but at the same time, it also generated excitement, due to the nature of the suggestions that the participants received. This study therefore, is consistent with the hedonic perspectives of online communities as highlighted by Chung and Buhalis (2008) who note that people immerse themselves in virtual communities to get entertainment from engaging in the content and from the community itself.

Interaction occurred at the post-visit stage served as a basis for them to get feedback from their readers as to what they wanted to see on their blogs, as explained by Maryam. Some might use the interaction as a tool for fulfilling the readers' information needs. At the same time, for the potential tourists at the travel planning stage, the interaction with the participants who just returned home would give them some valuable insights into the communicated issues. This is because the participants who are in the recollecting and reporting phase of their tourist experience still have a fresh memory of their journey. Therefore, based on the above examples, it can be concluded that, to some extent, the tourist experience stages may have served as a basis for the way participants engaged although they

were driven by similar motivations throughout. In other words, their motivation of engagement remained the same, but the way they engaged changed depending on the stage of the tourist experience.

CHAPTER 5

Narrative Construction of Tourist Experience in Blogs

5.1 Introduction

The data were gathered from two sources: blog content (i.e. texts, photos and videos) and in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers. This chapter discusses the findings on the construction of the tourist experience in texts, photos and videos by looking at their content and the embedded meanings behind the content. In order to understand the meanings of the textual content, narrative analysis was completed; whereas in-depth interviews were undertaken to obtain the meanings behind photos and videos that constructed their tourist experience. In addition, content analysis was carried out to identify the categorisation of the visual images posted by the travel bloggers in order to construct their tourist experience.

From the narrative analysis of the textual content and interviews with the travel bloggers to understand the meanings of the photos and videos, four themes emerged: (1) novelty and otherness, (2) media representation, (3) emotional expressions, and (4) learning and reflection. Photo and video content also generated additional specific categories. For photos and videos that contained the bloggers' images, three categories were identified: self and attraction-oriented, self and activity-oriented, and self and locale-oriented. For photos that did not

contain the bloggers' images, the following categories were identified: attraction and scenery-oriented, locale-oriented and scenery-oriented.

This chapter is structured into four parts, based on the stages of the tourist experience, incorporating the three different types of blog content, and the findings of narrative, content and interview analyses. It begins with the pre-visit stage, followed by on-site stage and ends with the post-visit stage. To this end, the themes and the types of photos and videos that constructed their experience are presented at each stage of the tourist experience. The final part of this chapter presents and discusses the relationship between blogging behaviours and the narrative construction of the tourist experience.

5.2 Overview of the Findings

This section presents an overview of the themes which emerged from the narrative analysis and in-depth interviews. The narrative analysis provides the meaning behind the textual content, while the in-depth interviews unpack the meaning behind the visual images (photos and videos). Similarities were found between the meaning derived from textual and visual content. The four themes that emerged from analysis of the textual content also emerged from analysis of the visual images. The results, therefore, integrate findings from the narrative analysis and in-depth interviews to explain the four emerged themes, as shown in Figure 5.1.

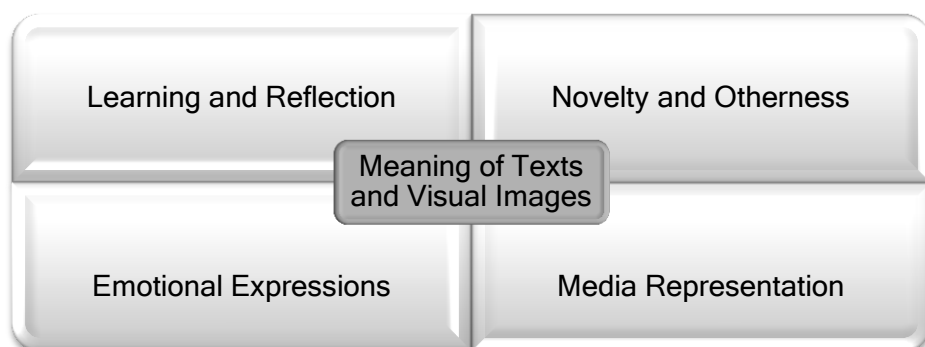


Figure 5.1 Four Themes that emerged from the Meaning behind Textual and Visual Content

Based on the analysis, four themes are identified: (1) novelty and otherness; (2) media representation; (3) learning and reflections; and (4) emotional expression. Each theme demonstrates how travel bloggers construct their tourist experience and why they are retelling these stories. This chapter also presents the findings of the content analysis of the photos and videos. Two different types of content were established – with or without the participants’ appearance – and the images were categorised as presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Image Content Categorisations

Tourist Appearance	
Content Categorisation	Image content
Self and attraction-oriented	Travel bloggers and/or the travel partners with local attractions including man-made landmarks and buildings (towers, historical buildings, heritage sites and museums) and natural attraction (beaches, rivers, countryside views and underwater views).
Self and activity-oriented	Travel bloggers and/or the travel partners engaging in recreational activities, such as hiking, kayaking, diving or boating, shopping or socialising with other tourists.
Self and locale-oriented	Travel bloggers and/or the travel partners within local surroundings, including the local people, towns, streets and local food.
Without Tourist Appearance	
Content Categorisation	Image content
Attraction and scenery-oriented	Attractions such as man-made landmarks and buildings with landscapes. Landscape could include trees, mountains and the sky.
Locale-oriented	Focusing on local elements, such as surroundings, streets and towns, and local people going about their mundane activities.
Scenery-oriented	Landscapes such as green views, rural views, trees, beaches, and sunrise and sunset.
Others	Maps, visa, clothes and shoes.

For photos and videos in which participants appeared, three categories were identified: self and attraction-oriented, self and activity-oriented, and self and locale-oriented. The most popular visual images posted on travel blogs fell into the category of self and attraction-oriented. This category refers to the travel bloggers and/or the travel partners with local attractions that include man-made landmarks and buildings, and natural attractions. Man-made attractions refer to towers, historical buildings, heritage sites and museums, while natural scenes refer to beaches, rivers, countryside views and underwater views.

The self and activity-oriented category is the second most popular and refers to the photos that contain the bloggers and/or the travel partners engaging in

recreational activities (such as hiking, kayaking, diving or boating), shopping or socialising with other tourists. Self and locale-oriented is the third most popular category. In this category travel bloggers capture themselves within the local surroundings, including with the local people, in towns and streets, and eating local food. There are also images where the travel bloggers try to imitate the look of local people. This includes wearing local clothing, such as traditional attire, and also performing actions imitating local people, such as performing locals' mundane routine.

Attraction and scenery-oriented, locale-oriented, scenery-oriented and other are the categories identified in the photos and videos that did not include the participants' appearance. Attraction and scenery-oriented appears to be the most popular category. This category refers to the visual images containing attractions such as man-made landmarks and buildings with landscapes. Landscape includes trees, mountains and the sky. The top three types of photos belonging to this category are photos of man-made landmarks with trees, buildings with trees and the sky, and man-made landmarks with mountains. The classification of locale-oriented is the second most popular subject that appears in the photos. This category also seems to act as a symbol of the local culture, the local lifestyle, the nightlife of the city, and the tough conditions for the local people. The participants also captured the local surroundings which included the streets, foods, town, people and transportation.

Photos least posted by the participants were scenery-oriented, which refers to the natural landscape containing green views, trees, beaches, and sunrise and sunset. The scenery-oriented photos were usually posted by bloggers who visited more natural landscapes compared to bloggers who visited less natural landscapes. However, for the travel bloggers who had less opportunity to capture the scenery due to the nature of the destination that they visited, they still put effort into capturing this kind of photo if they had an interest in natural landscapes, such as the sunset and sunrise. Also, participants posted photos of other things, such as visa, maps and clothes and shoes.

5.3 Pre-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

This section begins with the themes of the meanings behind the texts and the visual images, followed by the categorisation of photos. Travel bloggers who produced entries before their trip only included texts and photos – no videos were posted at this stage. Based on the narrative analysis of the textual content and in-depth interviews, ‘emotional expression’ emerged as a theme at this stage for both types of content (i.e. texts and visual images). With regard to visual images, participants posted photos in which they did not appear, categorised as attraction and scenery-oriented. To discuss the narrative construction of the tourist experience at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience, this section only focuses on three travel bloggers – Adam, Khairy, Mimi and Johan – as only these three participants posted entries that reflected their pre-visit experience.

5.3.1 Emotional Expressions (encoded) in Texts and Photos Posted at the Pre-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

As the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience is predominantly associated with travel planning and preparation that leads to the formation of the tourist’s expectation, travel bloggers described their pre-visit emotions such as excitement and eagerness.

Extract 1

1 ‘Love never claims it ever gives; Love never suffers, never resents, and never
2 revenge itself; where love there is life; Hatred leads to destruction.’-Mahatma
3 Gandhi, India. The quote actually symbolised how extraordinary and special
4 India is! I am extremely excited! The World is full of love and a symbol of an
5 eternal love that cannot be described in words. Actually I have never thought
6 and dreamt off to see the iconic and historical architecture of Taj Mahal.
7 However, it all started with a message and conversation with a fellow travel
8 bloggers (Kemang) who is well known with his tagline: Travel makes me a
9 wise man-.

10 After the flight ticket is confirmed, I started to gather information about India. I
11 only knew about Taj Mahal that is known as one of the seven wonders of the
12 ancient World. You must be crazy, you tell me, who’s on earth does not what
13 to see it? Now, I am busy with travel planning, travel itinerary, doing research
14 and asking around. Luckily I got some fellow bloggers who had been there.
15 Thus, I started to contact them. It was easy to get information and tips to travel
16 to India from them. Asking these helpful people makes my life easier, or else, I

17 just read and digest their stories. I started to imagine myself to witness the great
18 Taj Mahal and felt the eternal love by knowing the story behind it. Thanks to
19 my fellow travel bloggers. It was useful, indeed. And most importantly, I know
20 India has loads of interesting things to offer!

From the above extract, it is clear that Adam's engagement with travel blogs, especially through communicating with a fellow travel blogger named Kemang, had evoked an intention to visit the Taj Mahal. In this case, communicating with other people, travel bloggers, that held the same interest as him, persuaded him to plan a visit to the Taj Mahal. The general knowledge of India not only aroused his excitement, but also created a certain expectation in relation to learning and education through travel. India is well-known for its historical independent leader, Mahatma Gandhi, and Adam highlighted it as a reflection of extraordinary experience that India could offer him. Also, to see the Taj Mahal had been far beyond his travel aims, thus, the opportunity of being able to be in India, and witness the Taj Mahal created an extraordinary excitement which reflects his pride and personal achievement as shown in Lines 4 to 5. As the Taj Mahal is well-known for its link to eternal love stories, Adam then developed an anticipation of what he expected to experience while in India, which is the spirit of love. This indicates that the blogosphere has substantial potential to create expectation and influence potential tourists' intention to visit. Common knowledge about India as described in a quote about a well-known Indian icon, had become his inspiration, and at the same time constructed his expectation about India.

As soon as he gathered information about India, the tourist expectation of India was enhanced. It also created an excitement about seeing the iconic tourist attraction that he associated with India – the Taj Mahal. Initially, his excitement and expectation was constructed through the common knowledge reflected through factual information about India (Lines 9 to 11). Knowing that he was going to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world inspired him to gather information to make himself fully ready for the trip, as he wanted to fully utilise his time in India. He then chose to engage with travel blogs by asking questions of other travel bloggers who had been there and also reading about their personal experiences. This suggests that Adam considered contacting experienced travel

bloggers as a 'must do' thing in his travel preparation phase, as he anticipated receiving invaluable information.

Information gathering and reading firsthand accounts of peoples' experiences of the Taj Mahal both played crucial roles in creating his own expectation (Lines 13 to 15). Reading and understanding others' travel blog stories and asking questions of those particular bloggers allowed him to imagine seeing the magnificent monument and feeling the true love story attached to the iconic monument. This reveals that through the others' stories, he was able to visualise himself being there. Additionally, the expectation that was constructed based on personal firsthand stories and direct communication with travel bloggers, especially those who had been there, not only give him a clear picture of what he expected to see there, but at the same time arose his excitement and eagerness to visit the destination. An expectation was created and formed through his initial knowledge gathering and then confirmed through his travel blog engagement as evidenced by the following statement: 'I started to imagine of seeing Taj Mahal and feel the eternal love'. Bamberg and McCabe (1998) argue that personal narratives can convince, engage and entertain readers. Within the travel blog context, therefore, it suggests that through consuming others' stories and communicating with the other travel bloggers, he was able to first construct his expectation, and then confirm and enhance his initial expectation and excitement.

Furthermore, travel blogs also enhanced his expectation as shown in Lines 18 to 19. Initially, his expectation of India was merely focused on the Taj Mahal, however, as he read and communicated with travel bloggers, his understanding and expectation of India also grew. Therefore, his first entry, posted before his travel, exemplified how his pre-visit experience had been constructed, through a different engagement with travel blogs.

The next extract from Adam shows how he shared his excitement in an entry posted just a few hours before departure.

Extract 2

1 Extremely excited, this is what I feel now. I got a few more hours left before
2 departure. I managed to settle a few things before departures. The most
3 important thing is to apply for my work leave. Am I entitled to get the 7 days
4 leave during the peak period of my work? I absolutely have no idea. Luckily
5 my boss understood my situations. Thanks boss!

6 When preparing myself for this trip, I was thinking to get new shoes, pants and
7 bag. Wah! Some people might think it is really posh, but actually those things
8 are only from night market! I'm not a brand chaser; I can put anything, as long
9 as they are comfortable. If you want to know, the price of the shoes that I am
10 going to wear in India only costed me RM 11.20! Hahaha, very cheap, isn't.
11 What is important is comfort (Ops... I break the secret of the cheap shoes). As
12 the environment in India is 'not so good' (hope you get what I meant), my
13 attire should be appropriate with the surrounding. At least, after the trip is
14 finished, I can throw the shoes, if I cannot afford to clean it! Thus, I will not
15 feel too bad about it.

16 One more thing, I understand that if you were planning to travel to a third
17 World country, you need to be concerned about what you were wearing. My
18 advice is, please wear moderately, otherwise, you will be chased by the local
19 street seller. Trust me; my friends faced this during their Bali trip. I think the
20 situation would be the same, so, think smart.

From the extract, his excitement is not only triggered by the fact that he is about to depart to India, but he also expresses his relief at getting his leave approval from work. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) affirm that tourists not only travel to achieve satisfaction, but rather to escape and relax from their mundane routine. For Adam, work is the dominant part of his mundane routine and the feelings of relief at escaping from his daily routine not only stimulate excitement regarding his approaching trip, but also contribute to his eagerness to embark on his journey. As this particular extract was shared a few hours before departure, it also revealed the temporal aspects of this anticipated experience. While waiting to board a plane, he recalled his travel preparations, such as what he packed for India, which reflects his expectations about the local values, culture and the Indian condition.

As in Extract 1, Adam mentioned that his travel preparations were based on his engagement with travel blogs – reading others' stories and communicating with other travel bloggers. The next entry (Extract 2) presents the expectations built based on his engagement with travel blogs. One key aspect of travel

preparation and planning is that it is ‘satisficing’, which indicates that plans are just ‘good enough’ rather than detailed (Simon, 1955). Adam’s decisions about suitable clothes and shoes to pack suggested that he had formed an expectation of the value of local people and Indian culture as a whole. In addition, by providing a comparison between India and Bali, a destination that he had visited before, suggests that he was clear on what to expect whilst in India. This indicates that travel blog representations of places entail the construction of an imagined culture and the people’s identity.

At this stage the appearance of the travel blogger as the tourist in photos is not an important element in communicating the pre-visit experience. Findings reveal that the bloggers preferred to post photos that reflected their travel preparation and the main attraction that they planned to visit. Adam, who posted a few photos during his travel planning stage, mentioned this:

Before I travel, I do not have many stories to share, except about my travel planning. However, I am very keen to update my loyal readers about the trip. As I am not there yet (at the destination), I do not have anything interesting to share rather than the photo about my preparation to get there. (Adam)

Johan, another blogger, also appears to support Adam’s claims when he highlighted his reason for posting a map of his upcoming trip rather than a photograph containing himself before his travel:

Photo about my future destination is more important rather than a photograph of me. I want the readers to get excited about the place, so therefore, my highlight totally is about the place. (Johan)

Given only three participants posted photos at this stage, their photos are categorised others and attraction-oriented. For photos to be categorised as ‘others’, they contain information that represents travel preparation, such as their visa or maps of the upcoming trip. The embedded meanings of the photos are mostly

related to emotional expression, which indicate that they wanted to express, for example, relief, excitement and eagerness.

The first photo is a photo posted by Adam in his first blog post about visiting India. It illustrates a photo of his passport with a granted visa.



Figure 5.2 Participant's passport. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog

The first photo of the India entry is to let the readers know that I am going to India soon. I am really excited to explore India and it is a big relief as I had been granted the visa. This photo means, I have settled the some important thing before I fly. I want the readers to keep on following me, as maybe they will be curious of, when I am going, who I will travel with. Also, the reason that I put this photo is that, if there are my readers that have been to India, they can share some useful tips for me to consider. (Adam)

Tourists have their own ways of presenting their tourist experience to others (Desforges, 2000). The interviews revealed that travel bloggers who posted entries before they travelled had their own tactics in selecting photos to be shared. For Adam, the photo of his passport with a granted visa was entrenched in positive emotions, such as relief and excitement that might provoke jealousy, curiosity and make the readers constantly wait for more information about his forthcoming trip. To add to the intrigue, this photo was posted without any further explanation, which encouraged the readers to speculate about his upcoming trip.

Furthermore, as obtaining a visa to India is quite tough due to its long and detailed process, relief at the success of the application is reflected by him in his blog. The reflection indicated that obtaining a travel visa was an important facet of his travel, whereby it functioned as a sign that he is confirmed to fly to India soon. He wanted to show off his achievement of making his dream to see the Taj Mahal come true, and his ability to gain a visa also represents power. His pride served as a source of jealousy to his readers, and at the same time, encouraged them to continuously keep an eye on his blog in relation to his upcoming trip. Other than that, the photo functions as a means of attracting new readers to engage with his content.

In the following entry, Adam posted a photo that he obtained from a travel blog that he browsed while he was gathering information about the Taj Mahal. The photo that portrayed the iconic monument that he wished to visit in India helped create excitement about the upcoming trip.



Figure 5.3 Taj Mahal. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog

With this photo, I am extremely excited actually. What else to describe my feelings at the moment as my flight ticket has been confirmed? Conversation that I had with fellow travel bloggers who have been there added up some extra excitement. So this picture embodied my hope to witness this world famous

monument and also to explore the other beauty of India in general soon.
(Adam)

Posting the photo of the iconic monument shared by another blogger aroused his excitement. However, the excitement was created not only because of his keenness to witness the monument, but rather due to two other causes. First, getting confirmation of the flight ticket made him feel closer to the trip, therefore aroused more excitement in him. Second, his engagement with travel blogs, gathering information on the lived personal experience of others and communicating with ‘experienced tourists’, made him even more excited. For these various reasons, the photo denoted his excitement regarding his visit.

For Johan, another blogger who posted a photo of a map to inform readers about his upcoming trip, his excitement was explicitly emphasised in his statement below.



Figure 5.4 A map that describes the participant’s upcoming trip. *Source:* Photograph from the participant’s blog

I am about to fly and absolutely I am very keen to share my excitement to travel. I posted this map that had taken randomly from the internet. I want my readers to guess where I am heading off to. I gave hints in my storytelling, and this photograph may help them to guess. I found that some of them made a correct guess. (Johan)

In contrast to Adam who openly told the readers about his upcoming destination, Johan chose to keep the destination a secret. By sharing a photo of a map he elicited curiosity from the readers who then started to speculate about where he was about to travel. As he did not engage at all with travel blogs during his travels, this was a smart tactic to make the readers keep an eye on his blog. Johan copied and pasted a random photo that he obtained from the internet merely to indicate to his readers that he will be away for a vacation.

5.4 On-Site Stage of the Tourist Experience

The findings for the on-site stage are generally similar to the pre-visit stage, whereby only three participants (i.e. Adam, Sarah and Khairy) produced blog entries during their trips; their entries only contained textual and visual images. No videos were posted while they were travelling. Based on the narrative analysis process akin to the pre-visit stage, 'emotional expression' emerged as the theme of this stage for both types of content (i.e. texts and photos). Also, other than the emotional expression, stories of learning and reflection were also found in the entries that were posted at this stage. In contrast to the previous stage of the tourist experience, participants posted photos in which they appeared and these were categorised as self and attraction-oriented.

Adam and Khairy, who travelled together to a few cities in India, both produced a few entries during their travels. Both of them produced short textual content, with each entry being accompanied by a photo. Sarah only produced an entry to describe her on-site experience while she was in Tokyo. Her entry contained minimal texts with a few photos. These two different content types are both associated with the expression of positive emotions, i.e. excitement, enjoyment and appreciation of being able to fulfil their specific wishes.

Almost all entries at this stage contained stories that reflected their intention to update their travel plans and at the same time shared experiences that appeared to be important or significant without any emphasis on the movement between places or the time interlude. Furthermore, their narratives also seemed to

be selective, as they only shared the most significant experiences. This was the case for Adam and Khairy. This is due to their entries being merely about one particular occurrence, without any concern for other things, such as how they got there or the cost of transportation.

Also, it was found that photos played an important role in describing their tourist experience while they were still at the destination. Travel bloggers posted photos that showed themselves interacting with the visited tourist attraction. They also produced content that they considered to be eye catching, such as picturesque photos, to encourage their readers to engage with their produced content and interact with them. Also, travel bloggers were selective about their photos, whereby they only shared them if they had a “wow effect” that might attract readers’ attention. As mentioned in Chapter 4, lengthy narratives did not seem to be convenient as they faced a few limitations such as time constraints. Some bloggers simply did not prefer using comprehensive narratives to explain an experience. Photos, therefore, played an important role in describing their experience while they were still travelling, especially due to the fact that posting photos did not consume a lot of their time compared to posting textual content. Photos in which they appeared were posted at this stage to symbolise and summarise their current travel status in real time. For instance, photos that showed them smiling alongside an iconic monument or with local scenery as the background symbolised that they had safely arrived at the destination, and were enjoying themselves.

5.4.1 Emotional Expressions (encoded) in Texts and Photos Posted at the On-site Stage of the Tourist Experience

The tourist experience constructed while the tourist was at the destination was found to be based on their emotional expressions. Additionally, participants’ experiences were constructed based on their evaluation of the actual experience compared to their expectations. Extract 3 shows how the mixed emotions that Adam felt while he was at the destination were used as a basis on which to construct his actual experience. Extract 3 below was the first entry titled ‘Teaser:

Incredible India Means It Is Really Incredible!', produced by Adam while he was in India. The title of the entry itself represents his positive emotions, such as excitement, enjoyment and surprise. The phrase 'Incredible India' was adopted from the slogan used by Tourism India to promote tourism in India. The title further revealed that from firsthand experience he could confirm that India was as incredible as he expected and he was as content as he expected.

Extract 3

- 1 Just a quick update. Thank God, this is our third day we are at 'The Curry
2 Land' and there were a lot of things that we had seen and faced. In short, all our
3 sense had accidentally been used without we realising it. The most important
4 thing now is that we have to be together and united and at the moment, all
5 seemed to be OK! (OK means not perfect but our journey goes according to our
6 plan).
- 7 Yup, India is really INCREDIBLE and it can't be denied! More to explore,
8 and many things can happen. So, please pray for our safety. So guys, stay with
9 me, I have a lot more interesting things to be shared. Miss you guys so much!
10 We do have fun here (Shaking heads enjoying Hindi songs).

The first two lines of the extract, especially the phrase 'Thank God', describe his positive emotion, which is an appreciation of being able to survive the journey and discover India, despite the challenges that they encountered. It also indicates relief feelings that he had during his third day in India, despite the unexpected events that he had encountered. This finding confirms Richins' (1997) suggestion that positive emotions experienced by consumers is expansive, including enjoyment, excitement and relief. The words 'in short' literally show that Adam only wanted to make a short update or short entry while he was at the destination. This indicates that the entry described his travel status in summary rather than in detail or as a lengthy story. Lines 2 to 5 also suggest that they had encountered some unexpected events, but his travel was perceived to be all well at the moment. In this regard, the unexpected things are also important elements in constructing tourist experience at the destination. Even for the tourist with well-

planned travel preparations, the unexpected events can give satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the tourist, depending on the outcome of the events.

The confirmation of his actual experience as compared to his expectation was also expressed in the phrase ‘Yup, India is really INCREDIBLE and it can't be denied’. Through this phrase, it is revealed that positive emotion, for example excitement, that had developed from the pre-visit stage had been carried through to the on-site stage. Adam was excited about exploring and enjoying India to the fullest, as he perceived that the excitement that he imagined and expected before his travel would be fulfilled, as evidenced through the phrase, ‘More to explore, and many things can happen’. In addition, the phrase also indicates that he is not expecting the journey to be as smooth as he planned. He seemed to be ready to face unexpected events and challenges, which were not a negative matter for him, instead this excited him and made him eager to face the next experience and challenge. According to Oliver (1999), unexpected events can provide excitement or a surprise can cause positive emotions. Snepenger (1987) suggests that tourists enjoy surprises or unexpected events during their travel, as it could stimulate feelings of happiness. The phrase also suggests that Adam was trying to attract readers’ attention and stay connected to him while he was travelling and eventually follow his blog on his return. The last line of this extract also reflects that he wanted to attract the readers’ attention, by promising more interesting entries to be posted in the future. The promise also influenced his actual tourist experience. Adam would make an effort to continue to engage with the travel blogs whilst travelling because he had a commitment to his readers.

Together with the short narratives, he posted a photo of himself and his travel companion, Khairy, in front of a monument that they had just visited on the day the entry was produced (see Figure 5.5). The meaning behind the photo, categorised as self and attraction-oriented, is presented below:



Figure 5.5 Participant and travel partner in front of a monument at Qutub Minar. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog.

This is a photograph for a quick update to my followers who might be wondering where I am up to now. I am now safe and having fun exploring the places. The meaning is, I wanted to show my excitement for being here. Eager and excited to explore the place. It is like...Yaaaay...We are here..!(Adam)

The photo of Adam and his travel partner smiling in front of a monument indicated the current situation of their travel, which was that they were happily enjoying the site. Also, the appearance of himself in the photo suggests that the tourist as the performer of the tourist activity is an important element in showing the readers that they were physically at the sites. Tourists themselves can be an attraction, thus the appearance of the tourist in the visual images is an important aspect of the tourist experience (MacCannell, 1976). Visual images that portray the tourist at the site, performing tourist activities, such as interacting with the locals or the sites, offers readers the possibility of also having such an experience (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Therefore, the excitement delivered through a photo that portrayed them enjoying the place could perhaps evoke jealousy in the readers.

Based on Adam's explanation, the photo did not embed any deep meaning, rather it was only to share his current status and location to the readers. In this

regard, the photo of him is a kind of ritual passage to maintain his connection with the readers. Also, the photo influenced readers' engagement with his travel blog, as mentioned by him through the statement below:

I realised that by putting funny and aesthetic photos and story attracted more comments from my readers. Some of my friends advised me not to take too much hot and spicy food while in India, and some even asked about our condition. It is fun to have this kind of this communication with them. (Adam)

Another textual content produced by Adam, subsequent to Extract 3, suggests that it served as more than just an update for the readers. This is due to the fact that he shared his ultimate experience in India, which was visiting the Taj Mahal, as shown in Extract 4 below.

Extract 4

1 This is another update. OK, today is the ultimate of our travel. We have visited
2 Taj Mahal, the everlasting love's monument of a king to his queen. My dreams
3 to see the famous monument in the world has been contented. I was amazed
4 when I first see the Taj Mahal's dome from the main entrance. Feel likes still
5 dreaming! OK, tomorrow we will head back to Malaysia. Pray for our safety
6 and will share my story with whoever interested to know it!

As previously mentioned at the pre-visit stage, Adam specifically talked about how he was extremely excited to see the Taj Mahal. He therefore highlighted that the pre-visit excitement was fulfilled by being on-site. Witnessing the Taj Mahal with his own eyes indicates the important of the tourist gaze. The tourist gaze that he had at the pre-visit stage was confirmed by the actual tourist object. Also, this extract showed that his pre-visit stage of the tourist experience influenced the actual experience because at the pre-visit stage the Taj Mahal was the main tourist object and he continuously talked about and how much he was looking forward to accomplishing his mission of seeing the Taj Mahal. This also indicates that he wanted to confirm with his readers that he had indeed seen it. The

phrase, ‘Feel likes still dreaming!’ (Line 4), also suggests that although his dream had been fulfilled, he himself could not believe he had achieved his dream. The last sentence of the extract asking his readers to continue waiting for detailed stories on his return is an important mechanism for attracting readers’ attention. By making the readers aware that he would be returning home soon also encouraged the readers to keep on following his India trip stories in order to know the details of his experience.

Similar to Extract 3, this current entry also was accompanied by a photo, as shown in Figure 5.6 below. It illustrates him and his travel partners happily posing in their own traditional costumes with the Taj Mahal in the background. In explaining the meaning behind the photos, categorised as self and attraction-oriented, Adam explicitly highlights his emotion, that is, his excitement at being able to witness the iconic monument that he had really wanted to visit, as mentioned in the following statement:



Figure 5.6 Participant and travel partners with the Taj Mahal in the background. *Source:* Photograph from the participant’s blog

Taj Mahal is my main reason for visiting India and I was really proud of myself because we are able to make it. As I talked about it so much before I travelled, so I am very eager and excited to update it. I prepared a lot to visit it. We wore *Baju Kurung* and *Baju Melayu* (traditional Malay costumes) to make our photo in front of this monument become attractive and extraordinary. (Adam)

Sharing a picture indicating he was physically there reflects his self-achievement. The moment of being physically there gave him a sense of self-achievement. As mentioned in the pre-visit stage in Extract 1 in Section 5.3.1, his excitement and expectation about the Taj Mahal was constructed based on his engagement with travel blogs, through reading personal lived experiences and communicating with bloggers who had been there. This suggests that with that pre-visit experience, he had ideas about capturing the special moment of him and the Taj Mahal in a unique and extraordinary way. This indicates that his performativity at the destination was influenced by his expectation. His decision to put effort into bringing along the traditional costumes and wearing them while he was at the site suggests that being physically at the Taj Mahal site was a personal achievement and a special moment for him, in which he was able to turn his dream into reality. As Adam had already planned to capture himself in traditional costume and share it while he was at the site, it suggests that he wanted to show off to the readers, which also reflects his pride and self-achievement.

Other than to express his excitement of being able to fulfil his dream of visiting the Taj Mahal, the main reason for wearing traditional costumes at the site was to produce an eye-catching photo in order to attract readers' attention and keep them following his travel updates. In this regard, his appearance alongside the iconic attraction served as an important element in attracting the readers' attention.

As my entries while I was there is to update my travel, I think by including myself in the photograph makes it look real and more eye-catching. I think it will attract people's interest to follow my stories. Other than that, it's like a proof, yes I was there. (Adam)

Based on Adam's statement, his appearance in the photo that he used to describe his on-site experience makes it look picturesque and at the same time expresses the reality of the experience which can be felt by the readers. His main concern was to maintain his readership, and an attractive photo seemed to be important to him for attracting the readers' attention encouraging them to engage with the entry. It is also evidence that he continuously posted entries during his travels. It is suggested that Adam perceived that engaging with travel blogs at this stage was not only related to his actual travel experience, but because he also wanted to serve the readers. He sacrificed his travel time to blog because he wanted to satisfy his readers, as promised in Extract 3. Also, the fun and excitement elements that are delivered through an aesthetic photo could create a desire to know more about the place. Besides, he wanted to show that he truly was there. Travel bloggers who post photos of themselves in real time could help readers develop a sense of them being there. The statement below was expressed by Khairy in support of this contention:

I made myself available in the photographs because I wanted to show my readers, that at that time (at the time the entry is posted), I physically was there. I think, it is the quickest and simplest way to update my status (travel status). (Khairy)

5.4.2 Learning and Reflection (encoded) in Texts and Photos at the Pre-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

The analysis of the travel blogs' content posted while they were at the destinations also showed what travel bloggers learned during their travel about the places, people and culture. Stories related to the religion, culture and lifestyles of the local people were perceived to be self-beneficial to them in terms of what they gained through that experience that contributed to their personal growth. Participants were found to compare the experience with their personal and previous experience in order to appreciate the learning experience (for instance, Khairy and Adam), as shown in Extract 5 and Figure 5.7.

The extract below is from Khairy's account that reflected what he learned from the trip. The entry is entitled 'Incredible India: How small we are when in

India?’ and was shared during his fifth day in India. The narrative was shared when he returned to the hotel after visiting Agra.

Extract 5

1 I put so much effort to update you guys. My friend, Janggal told me that, I am
2 so over, but whatever *lah* ... hahaha. Just come back from visiting Fatehpur
3 Sikri in Agra. We were caught in a bad traffic jammed, and the facts that we
4 chose the cheapest bus made things even worst. That is really matching with
5 our trademarks, ‘Son of millionaire who choose to live in the hard
6 way..Muahaha.

7 Anyway, that is all right. When looked back of our journey in India, there are a
8 lot of things that I have learnt. How lucky we are staying in Malaysia. I feel so
9 small to be here, to see many bad and weird things that I never see in Malaysia.
10 We should be blessed to be in Malaysia, even though our corruption rates in
11 Malaysia is high, but that it is not as high in India. That is why it is hard for
12 them to develop. A thing to ponder...

The extract above highlights that learning can take place from a specific event; Khairy embraced new reflections and view generated by his experience. In this regard, talking about India made Khairy think about the situation in Malaysia, which was a situation that he was familiar with. He experienced a common Indian’s life and concluded it was not quite as good as that found in Malaysia. This experience, therefore, helped him to reflect and appreciate his fortunate life back in Malaysia. Even though Khairy did not emphasise or explain further about the actual events that he had encountered, to some extent the extract indicates that the events were not pleasant, as illustrated in Lines 7 to 9.

The account of learning and reflection was also found in a photo posted by Adam on his fourth day in Jaipur, India, as shown in Figure 5.7 below. The photo, categorised as self and local-oriented, portrays himself and his travel partners with a local that they met in the town.



Figure 5.7 Participant and travel partners with local. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog.

This kind hearted guy actually helped us a lot. We are very grateful to meet this guy that helped us a lot, a lot....I must say, and even he invited us to have a dinner at his place. At that time, I was very thankful to meet this guy, and I wanted to tell people out there that, not all Indians are bad. I know I have a stereotype perception about Indian, but the experience with this guy and his family really changed my perception about Indian. (Adam)

Tourists' interactions with people that they meet, such as locals, serve as a basis for storytelling to be shared with the readers (McCabe & Foster, 2006). This is evidenced in the above photo posted by Adam. As shown in the photo, Adam looked happy and quite comfortable mingling with the local (in the middle), which is in contrast with what his perception and expectation about the locals were at the pre-visit stage. His initial negative perception of Indians, formed before actually visiting the country, was challenged by the interaction he had with a local. The positive values of the local that he met and interacted with changed his perception of Indians. The local's helpfulness made him feel guilty about his bad perception. As for the readers, they might think that the locals are quite warm and the fear and worry that they might have developed as a result of Adam's stories during the pre-visits stage about the locals might disappear.

5.5 Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

At this stage, travel bloggers shared their experience with all three different types of content: texts, photos and videos. Based on the narrative analysis of the texts and the in-depth interviews, four themes emerged at this stage. They are perceived novelty and otherness, learning and reflection, media representation, and emotional expressions. It is noted that two of them have already emerged in the two previous stages (i.e. learning and reflection, emotional expression), while the other two themes have emerged at the post-visit stage. With regard to types of photo, the travel bloggers were found to have posted a mix of photos, i.e. with and without their appearance, categorised as self and activity-oriented and self and locale-oriented respectively. The details of the findings are presented in the following section.

5.5.1 Novelty and Otherness (encoded) in Texts, Photos and Videos at the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

Cohen (1979) highlighted that tourism activities are related to an escape from the mundane routine. In the context of travel blogs, Hanusch (2010) highlights that the purpose of travel blogs is to present otherness. Hanusch (2010) further mentions that travel blogs serve as a place where travel bloggers share with their readers the variety of ways that tourists can escape from their mundane routine.

Lee and Crompton (1992) identified that novelty has four components: (1) thrill; (2) change from routine; (3) boredom; and (4) surprise. Therefore, the analysis of blogs also observed for these components in the accounts of their narratives. It is revealed that thrill, change from routine, and surprise are conveyed in numerous ways and covered in multiple types of content, including texts, photos and videos. Three photos are presented to show how travel bloggers constructed for their readers experiences that they considered to be novel and demonstrating otherness, reflecting the authenticity of the experience. The first two examples show a travel blogger engaged in a first time and once in a lifetime activity. Novelty and otherness found through cultural differences is demonstrated in the third photo, while the fourth example is from a video that focussed on the

authentic experience of consuming local foods. In terms of the categorisation of the photo, it is found that to describe the authentic experience travel bloggers are likely to include themselves in the photos. The categorisations for these photos are self and activity-oriented, and self and locale-oriented. Also, there was one photo in which the participant did not appear, categorised as locale-oriented, which specifically showed the local scenes.

Figure 5.8 and Figure 5.9 show the authenticity in activities that the participants performed at the sites. The activities obviously can be undertaken in any part of the world but the locations where they have been undertaken make them authentic. The first photo is from Mimi, who travelled to a few different cities in India with her childhood friend, Baby.



Figure 5.8 Mimi posing with ski equipment. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog

In explaining the meaning behind one of her photos that portrayed her trying to ski for the first time in Kashmir, Mimi expressed the authenticity of the

experience by describing the setting and her emotions in performing such an activity, as evident in the following statement:

This photo shows that I was confidently posing in ski equipment after a few times I fell down. This was my highlight of my holiday in Kashmir as it was my first time skiing...I never witnessed the beautiful mountain that covered with thick snow like this and skiing in this place was once in a lifetime experience. It was really excited as I have never been skiing and at the same time it was quite challenging for me. (Mimi)

Based on her response about the meaning behind the photo, even though the photo did not show her actually skiing, the static pose with the ski equipment and the surrounding background of the thick snow delivers the authenticity of the experience and the place. This suggests that the authenticity is constructed from both – the unique landscape which is the snowy mountain, and the skiing event itself. As this was her first time skiing, the pose reflected her achievement of being able to stand up confidently and was seen to be comfortable and confident even though she did mention that she fell down three times before the pose. She realised that these events were extraordinary and momentous to her. Like Urry (2002) suggests, the extraordinary is always shaped by a comparison with one's mundane routine. Therefore, Mimi stressed the importance of searching for experiences that she could not find in Malaysia, especially events that she was likely to experience only once in a lifetime. The realisation of a highly significant, once in a lifetime experience, perceived to be exclusive or special, tends to be more memorable than a regular travel experience (Chandralal, 2012). Therefore, this once in a lifetime experience as perceived by Mimi reflects the novel and otherness experience, also considered to be a memorable experience.

The authenticity of a tourist experience can be evoked by the site itself (Pearce & Moscardo, 1986). The next photo of Daniel, who went diving on Sipadan Island, demonstrates how the island provides an authentic experience for him. For Daniel, although he had previous diving experience in other spots in the world, the authenticity of this experience was emphasised through the uniqueness

of the underwater life which he highlighted could only be found on Sipadan Island, as shown in the below statement:



Figure 5.9: Daniel with the underwater creatures while diving on Sipadan Island. Source: Photograph from the participant’s blog

Diving is one of my passions and this is my first time to dive in Sipadan Island. Even though I have had a lot of diving experience at other places, diving here is a very different experience for me. This is because not only I was impressed with the fascinating island as a whole, but also obviously, the diving experience is truly magnificent. Sipadan is a leading dive place and high on most divers list of must-dive settings in the world. People come here from all over the world to get the different that Sipadan may offer you. One very surreal moment was when I was surrounded by numerous numbers of turtle and I think it is quite impossible to get it anywhere else. (Daniel)

Based on Daniel’s statement, the authenticity of his diving experience is derived from the site and the activity that he performed. In this regard, the travel bloggers were perceived to quest for existential authenticity, as they did not passively observe spectacles (specific events/activities), rather they participated in the event or activities (Wang, 1999).

Other than the authenticity constructed by the ‘toured objects’, which is referred to as objective authenticity (Wang, 1999), participants also provided a more complex scenario concerning the authenticity of their experience. For

example, a photo shared by Mimi, which portrays locals in their mundane routine – fishing by the lake for a living – refers to existential authenticity. According to Wang (1999) authenticity resides in the tourist him/herself rather than the toured object, and grounded in the personal feelings and emotions generated in the tourist.



Figure 5.10 A local women fishing by the lake. Source: Photograph from the participant’s blog

I enjoy seeing the normal local life, to see what they do for living, their routine, for instance. This shot taken while we were ramble in the village. I miss my late great grandmother who fishing for a living. The village also remind me of my village that I have not visited for ages, since she passed away...remind me of my childhood moment, where I enjoy seeing the caught fishes. (Mimi)

Seeing people living in a rural area, in this context a village, gave Mimi a sense of authenticity as it stirred nostalgic feelings of her past, her hometown and herself. Tourists always try to confirm their self-identity by experiencing the other, and despite their quests for uniqueness and differences, the tourist also quests to experience their authentic self during the escape (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Based on Mimi’s explanation, therefore, it is understood that the authenticity of the experience is not the consequence of seeing sights, but also about mutually performing and experiencing the journey. In this regard, getting to know the

locals, even briefly, by engaging in the local's way of life, is an important criterion for authenticity for travel bloggers. Further, by being nearer to the locals, they could detach from what they regarded as a cursory tourist activity, sometimes paradoxically labelled as the tourist who photographs the locals but does not actually bother engaging with them (Cederholm, 2004).

Other than the through local mundane routine, participants also highlighted the authenticity of the local lifestyle through the local transportation. For example, Adam, who travelled with his friends Khairy and Mas to a few cities in India, posted a video of his experience travelling in a local taxi, also known as a 'tuk-tuk'. In describing the meaning behind the video, Adam perceived his experience in the tuk-tuk to be a unique one as he never experienced riding in a packed and open air taxi on a bumpy road before.

This is a very unique and fun experience for me, which is the main reason I shoot this video in the tuk tuk. This is what we can't have in Malaysia..! Being in a small taxi with six adults, can you imagine? I have never been travelling for around 30km with the poor road conditions and dusty throughout the journey. It was pretty scary, but in the end it was absolutely fun. Just to share the beauty of the local public transport and how exactly it was when we were on ride with my readers. (Adam)

The authenticity of the experience is highlighted by Adam when he mentions that he would never get a ride like this in his home country. Also, the experience contained a thrill element even though initially he perceived that the ride would be scary. Instead, he found that it was undeniably fun. He wanted to tell the readers that it is the norm for Indians to have as many people as they could in a taxi. The scary feelings reflected the fact that he never experienced travelling in a packed taxi, and was concerned about his safety. However, after he got used to the ride and saw that it was normal to travel like that in India and that he safely arrived at his destination, he then described the experience as a thrill. He wanted to share the beauty of the local public transport and the real condition of travelling with his readers. The beauty of the local public transport here denotes the uniqueness of the experience, even though initially he perceived the experience as unpleasant

and scary. The uncomfortable side of the experience, such as the poor road conditions, dusty roads and packed taxi, did not deter him from the quest for authenticity. Adam perceived it to be an authentic experience due to the fact that this was the common or real transportation nature of India.

Food has increasingly become part of the tourist experience which contributes to the authenticity of the place (Quan & Wang, 2004). There are a few bloggers who took the opportunity to try the local foods in every place they visited such as Mimi, Faris, Haries, Mariah, Fasha, Johan, Adam and Khairy. The participants found that trying local foods added variety to their experience. Thus, the authenticity of local foods appears to add to travel experience and life story.

Gastronomy represents the local culture as it provides the tourist with an opportunity to know the local food and the local people (Richard, 2002). The findings revealed that even though the participants had already tried the food somewhere else, for instance in their home country, the experience of having the food in its place of origin was highlighted as an authentic experience. A few specific examples are found in: (1) a video of Faris and his friends trying the local cuisine in one of the famous restaurants in New Delhi; and (2) a texts entry in which Fasha describes her experience of trying unique foods in Mynamar.

Faris travelled to New Delhi for four days with two friends. On his third day, during their tour to Red Fort, the travel guide stopped at one of the recommended restaurants in New Delhi. Although the restaurant had a few branches in his home country, Faris still wanted to try the famous Southern Indian cuisine, called, *Fixed Thali*, which is a local vegetarian cuisine. He then shared the experience of having the local cuisine in the local setting through a video portraying himself, two friends and a local taxi driver having their lunch in the restaurant. Faris, in explaining the reason for wanting to capture his experience of eating the local cuisine on video, emphasised that he wanted to show the whole eating experience, including the restaurant setting, which reflected the ambience and presentation of the foods. The presentation of the food included the way the food was served and the cutlery used to serve the dishes, as shown in the statement below:

I wanted to show how the local cuisine looks like, and how to eat them the right way. The bright colour of the food was so tempting and it was served in a very traditional way. Also, in the video, people can hear the noise, which indicates the busyness of the famous Indian restaurant. By showing I am enjoying the food, the readers also can feel and enjoy it as well and to show how spicy but delicious the food was. (Faris)

In the video, the natural sounds of the restaurant, such as the voice of the waiter, the customers, and the cutlery being used, was portrayed. The noise of the restaurant portrayed the busyness and the vividness of the restaurant and reflected the popularity and the quality of the restaurant that he had chosen to dine in. Also, the sound heard in the video could enhance the appeal to viewers, as it provides a thorough observation of the restaurant's ambiance. As seen in the video, the restaurant is quite full with mostly local people which indicated that the restaurant was a popular place to dine in. The viewer may think that the restaurant has good quality food that attracts local people.

Aside from tasting the local cuisine, what is important for Faris is that he can claim to have tasted the authentic and delicious local cuisine. The novelty of the food experience was also shown by having a local, who was their driver, Phuran, accompany them at lunch and teach them how to eat the *Fixed Thali*, as mentioned in the below statement:

Actually I am quite used to Indian food. But having it with Phuran who is kind and friendly to be part of this video that introduced to us the food, was a new experience for me. Now I know how to eat this food in the right way, so that it will taste more delightful. (Faris)

Quan and Wang (2004) point out that tourists quest for authentic food experiences. With regard to Faris, he was able to taste the local cuisine with local people who could explain about the food and give him a totally authentic experience. Although having Indian food was not a new experience for Faris, having it accompanied by a local gave him an opportunity to gain some knowledge about the local food, which implied that the experience was authentic

and new to him. As a consequence, by knowing the right way to eat it, he seemed to gain more enjoyment from the food. Phuran showed them the right way of eating Fixed Thali.

At the beginning of the video, Faris stated the name of the cuisine – Fixed Thali – instead of a ‘vegetarian dish’. The dish name expressed authenticity of a place (Hughes, 1995). In this sense, Fixed Thali represents the novelty and otherness aspects of the experience. He then gave a thorough explanation of the dishes by explaining the elements of each dish and how they were served at the restaurant. As Fixed Thali consists of a few side dishes, he then introduced each of the side dishes by showing in a close up what it was and how to eat it with the assistance of Phuran. Food is a medium that empowers an instant authentic connection with a culture or tradition (Heldke, 2003). Having a local guide them and explain how to eat the local food the right way also helped confirm for the readers the accuracy of Faris’s information about the local dishes and convince them that the experience was authentic.

Furthermore, showing the food in a close-up that highlighted the real and attractive colours of the food, could stimulate an interest in the viewers. In addition, the sense of taste was indicated by the action of his friend, Fahmi, who did the food tasting and demonstrated his enjoyment. Seeing how he reacted to every bite of food could stimulate in the viewers the sensation of actually tasting the food. Fahmi’s spontaneous feedback was seen as he had the first bite of the dishes as, ‘Emm, delicious and authentic’ which implied the good taste and authenticity of the dishes to him. Also, at the end of the video, Phuran encouraged the viewers to visit to taste more delicious local dishes for themselves. The use of a local person to give local insider information about the food would evoke the viewers’ intention to try the food at the same restaurant. At the end of the video, Phuran confirms that this restaurant is a highly recommended place to have Southern Indian Food in India.

The video not only focuses on the food itself, but also allows the viewers to see what’s happening in the background. Seeing the restaurant full of customers – families, teenagers – shows that the restaurant is suitable for a variety of people.

Also, it may suggest that the restaurant is not too expensive despite its location near tourist attractions, offers a good service and has a good food reputation.

Some of the participants also paid attention to the uniqueness of the food. Below is an extract from Fasha's blog about her travels with three friends to the Philippines. This extract is from her trip to Coron Island:

Extract 6

1 The food was awesome albeit the fact that I had to forego the grilled fish as it
2 was grilled together with pork ribs. The gulai was similar to Malaysian's gulai
3 except that the gulai was cooked using pumpkin which I considered as a new
4 taste for me. For all my life, I had thought there was only one seaweed that
5 comes in the form of sheets of dried Porphyra/nori sheets used in soups or to
6 wrap sushi. But Philippines introduced me to another type of seaweed that is
7 sea grapes (scientifically known as Caulerpa Racemosa). It does look like
8 small grapes suspended on a string. Sea grapes are best eaten raw with mixture
9 of chopped tomatoes and onions. Marc, our Filipino friend told us it should be
10 eaten with vinegar, to which idea, we had to politely decline because of our
11 restriction. Philippines has a great deals of interesting food! The last time it was
12 floral salad. This time around its sea grapes salad. What's next?

In the above extract, *gulai* is a Malay name for a spicy and succulent curry-like gravy. Instead of saying the local name, she used her hometown name to describe the food and compared the taste with Malaysia's *gulai*. She also provided a detailed explanation of how it was different from the commonly known *gulai* in Malaysia. The description implies that she wanted to give a clearer picture of how it tasted (Lines 1 to 3). Different from Faris's food experience description (using local names), the use of Malaysian terms to describe the food suggests that Fasha was concerned about her Malaysian readers and wanted them to quickly recognise what she had for lunch, even though it was prepared by locals. This also implies that the food that she had is similar to her own local food, but with a little differentiation which revealed the authenticity of the dishes. Furthermore, although she did not try the some of the food that she described due to her diet restrictions, she still shared her food experience as she considered it to be unique and novel. The words 'for all my life' imply that learning about and seeing the

different types of seaweed available in the Philippines was a new experience for her. It was additional knowledge that she acquired.

5.5.2 Learning and Reflection (encoded) in Texts and Photos at the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

Learning and reflection was not only recounted at the on-site stage, but also mentioned at the post-visit stage. Compared to the on-site stage where the stories of learning and reflection were limited to the current occurrences, at this stage the account of learning and reflection in travel blogs covers a wider perspective. Tourist experiences were constructed by learning and personal growth during the trips and included (1) religious places-related; and (2) interpersonal communication and interaction with locals.

Extract 7 below is taken from Laili, who blogged about a temple that she visited in Bagan, and an encounter from which she learnt something. The focus of her story is her decision to carry her shoes into the temple, although locals had reassured her that her shoes were safe to be left outside of the temples.

Extract 7

1 Have you been slap on the face at a foreign land? Well, I did. Notice the
2 signage on top, it's the same for every temple and one should respect. I did take
3 off my shoe (Yeah! My new Bershka) and what I intended was to hold it
4 everywhere I go. Sure, I did ask the locals whether is it safe to leave shoes in
5 public like that (worried that it'll go missing), and as suspected; they say it
6 won't. Like real I am going to believe that (even in the mosque, people said that
7 shoes will get missing, right) So, I took off my shoes and hold it as I walk.
8 After a few steps, the driver approached me and ask why did I not leave my
9 shoe there, I simply smile and said it's ok (Lame, I know!). Guess what he said?
10 'We are Buddhist, we believe in Karma. Your shoes would not be stolen' He
11 said with a smile. Stunned..... I walked back and left my shoe there. And it was
12 not stolen.

In the above extract, what she had learnt from her visit to the temple is emphasised. To illustrate the situation, she compared it with a common scenario in another religious prayer setting that she was used to, which is a mosque, where people said that leaving shoes in public is not safe and that they will be stolen. She preserved that perception as she visited the temple. In addition, because of this incident, she posted a photo of the signage. She even mentioned that all visitors to a temple should abide by the instructions contained in the signage and it reflects that the picture contains stories which reflect what she had learnt from the incident.



Figure 5.11 Signage located in front of a temple. *Source:* Photograph from the participant's blog.

Because of this incident, now I believed in purity and karma. Initially, I am not confident to leave my shoes outside the temple and I decided to carry it with me. I felt embarrassed as the driver told me that do not worry about it, as the Buddhist would never steel others' belongings. I have learnt something from the trip to the temple. (Laili)

The photo of the signage at the entrance of the temple looked like any other signage that could be found at any other temple, but what made it different is her personal story behind the signage. Through the incident, she had learnt something that had assisted her with personal growth development. This encounter had given her a life lesson, which as a consequence, turned her into a better person. The incident

changed her and opened her mind to having a good perception about others, and not simply generalising. As a consequence of the incident, she now even believed in purity and karma – concepts that she might have known before, but never took seriously.

Another example of learning and reflection is from Faris, as in the extract and photo below.

Extract 8

1 Over breakfast, we decided to discover New Delhi itself. We started off with
2 Masjid Jamak which is located in the Old Delhi, where ancient shops are still alive
3 as it is until today. Quite surprised with the layout of this big mosque, where the
4 covered area is only 1/4 of the whole building. For a comparison with the mosques
5 in Malaysia, it only can cater for the first five rows of the people. They actually
6 pray on the scorching hot tiles in the mosque area during Friday prayer especially.
7 Should Muslims in Malaysia be thankful for what we have now with air-
8 conditioned and carpeted mosque, but the only missing is the people.

In addition to the above textual content, his personal learning, reflection and growth were also conveyed through a photo of a mosque, categorised as attraction-oriented, that he shared to support his textual content (Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.12 A far sighted photo of a mosque in India. *Source:* Photograph from a participant's blog

This trip really changed me. By knowing the other people that live in difficulties, I really appreciate of what I have back in my home country that I always take for granted before this. I was thinking to make a more frequent prayer at the mosques in Malaysia as I think it is such a waste that the good facilities have not been fully used. (Faris)

The texts and image of the mosque reflected Faris's learning experience about the hardship of the local Muslim performing their prayers. Faris expressed his empathy and highlighted that the experience had made him appreciate what he had in his own country. Tourist activity related to religious experience can be a source of personal development (MacCannell, 1976). For Faris, the experience was not directly gained through the history or religious information related to the toured object. Instead, the direct observation of hardship and the poor living conditions in the locale made him perceive his life as luxurious compared to the people there. The observation indeed allowed him to develop self-actualisation and self-growth by realising how fortunate he was to reside in a better Muslim country which allowed him to practice his faith properly. The self-development and self-actualisation was literally mentioned by Faris – based on his observations and comparisons between local and home conditions, he sets a resolution to attend prayer at his own mosque more frequently, be a better Muslim, and make use of the better facilities provided in his home country which he had previously neglected.

Stories that contribute to self-development are not only related to attractions such as religious places as illustrated by Laili and Faris. Travel bloggers also shared stories that represented what they had learned from the people that they met and interacted with. Johan is a passionate traveller who always seeks personal fulfilment through travel. He shared a story about how his initial perception of Myanmar changed as soon as he set foot in the country. The highlight of his stories is how his negative perceptions about Myanmar were found to be untrue when he met the locals, as shown in the extract below.

Extract 9

1 As the days went by and the date got closer, I have this fear inside me that started
2 growing. It was not like this is my first time travelling alone. I did that for the first
3 time for my Vietnam trip this July and also to Brunei just last month. It was the
4 notorious reputation the country had built for itself, what with the lack of human
5 rights and the strict militant government. Upon landing, I found my fear to be rather
6 baseless for my 5 day trip was filled with nothing but memories of kindred hearts
7 and friendly faces of the Burmese. They were willing to go on extra length to help
8 you out, making you feel as welcome as possible in their homeland.

Expectation and real experience, including what the tourists encounter at the destination, influences the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2012). Lines 4 to 5 talk about the expectations that he had built before he arrived in Myanmar. The expectation had caused him to develop fearful feelings before he travelled, as expressed in Line 1. In this sense, the learning and reflections comes from his actual experience. The warm and friendly locals, in contrast to his expectations and perception, dispelled his fears. Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) mention that the tourist experience has the potential to spur personal growth and self-development. For Johan, the learning comes in two forms: 1) he develops personal wisdom about other cultures, regardless of their background; and 2) experiencing the locals' kindness made him feel that travel was a good way to self-educate. Johan realised that his existing knowledge about Myanmar as inaccurate and by travelling he was able to develop new ideas and open his mind to accepting that the locals are nice, regardless of their upbringing.

5.5.3 Media Representation Learning and Reflection (encoded) in Photos and Videos at the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

The tourist experience shared at this stage is also constructed based on the media they watched before travelling. This media includes a variety of television media such as documentaries, movies and dramas. This media inspired them to travel (Månsson, 2011; Roesch; 2009) and they wanted to enhance their tourist experience by enacting some of the scenes that they had seen before (Carl, Kindon & Smith, 2007; Kim, 2010). Some travel bloggers also wanted to show their own perception of the places or attractions and make a comparison between what they 'experienced' in the movies and what they had actually seen.

Faris, a young traveller who loves to watch Hindi movies, travelled to India and shared a photo of a street scene. In describing the meaning behind the photo, it was obvious that the meaning was related to a scene in a Hindi movie that he used to watch. Although he did not specify which movie he was referring to, it is assumed that it is a common scene shown in many Hindi movies – the photo portrays a narrow street behind an old building with some local faces. The photo, in which he did not appear, is categorised as locale-oriented as it shows the common view of a street and the locals.



Figure 5.13 A view of a local street. *Source:* Photograph from a participant's blog

This is the real condition of a street and shop lots in India. I used to watch Hindi movie a lot, and it was exactly the same. I remember the busyness of the street with the local crowd, the moderate level of cleanliness and the poor road condition that was always shown in the movies scenes. But overall, I think the real condition was much better than what I saw in the movie. I captured this to let my readers get the accurate picture of the true India. (Faris)

Based on Faris's statement, his expectation about India was constructed from the Hindi movies that he had seen. While walking along the street, he evaluated whether his actual experience matched his expectations constructed through the films. He then concluded that what he had seen in the films was quite similar but not exactly the same as his actual experience. Therefore, it can be seen that the photo perceived to

correct the disconfirmation of his expectation and actual experience. In other words, the photo demonstrated what he actually saw compared to what his expectations were. In this regard, the photo served as an example representing the real conditions and local surroundings.

When asked why he did not share a photo of himself in a street scene, this simple answer was given:

I think myself is not important to tell the story about it. The picture of the views itself is more than enough to explain it. (Faris)

Based on Faris's comments, it is found that whether to include himself or not depended on the intended meaning behind it. Faris wanted to let his readers see the real conditions of the streets in India; therefore, he perceived himself to be not important or suitable to be included in order to deliver the message.

Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) posit that online representation not only has a great influence on and shapes an individual's actual experience, but also for those who simply view them. They highlight that videos posted online, such as on YouTube, affect potential tourists' experiences and influence the destination image creation. Also, Riley, Baker and Doren (1998) suggest that through films, potential tourists can gaze upon the subjects or objects portrayed and be persuaded to travel to the filming locations. Thus, the influence of films seems to be important to travel bloggers who wanted to experience a particular scene, considered to be the main reason for their visit to the place. Sarah, who was on her honeymoon in Tokyo explained that her interest to visit Tokyo developed because of the film *Para Para Sakura* that she watched a few years back. Through the films, she became interested in seeing with her own eyes the beauty of the blossom Sakura. It was her wish to see the real Sakura in Tokyo, and she then shared a photo that portrayed Sakura blossoms. It is obvious that the meaning associated with this photo is related to *Para Para Sakura*, as mentioned in the statement below:



Figure 5.14 Blossom Sakura. Source: Photograph from a participant's blog

I know about Sakura from a famous film that I watched during my childhood. When I first saw the Sakura here, it reminisced me of that film. What was shown in the films was very much the same. To see it in reality was an amazing experience. So, I tried to capture as much as this Sakura photos and tried to get from the same angle as what I saw in the films. Maybe there are the Para Para Sakura's fans out there that aroused from my photos and influenced them to come here. (Sarah)

I don't like to take my own picture or *selfie*, and I prefer other people to take my picture because it will look nicer. For my blog, I prefer picture of scenery. I don't like to take picture of myself because I don't like such exposure. I think most readers like to see the scenery rather than the travel bloggers (Sarah)

In terms of the tourist's appearance in the photo, Sarah personally did not like to appear in her blogs. She prefers to post pictures in which she does not appear, and which focus instead on the nature and scenery. Different from Faris, who became familiar with India through Hindi films and tried to give an accurate account to his readers, the media played another role for Sarah and had a different impact on her readers' experience construction. Watching media creates personalised memories about a place and attachment to the watched location and at the same time stimulates tourists to enrich their experience by re-enacting the watched scenes (Kim, 2010). Since Sarah's visit to Japan was inspired by *Para Para Sakura*, seeing the Sakura in Japan recalled her memory of the film. She then considered the experience of seeing the Sakura blossom in Japan as remarkable. Due to the attachment that she had with the place through the previously viewed media, she put a lot of effort into capturing the Sakura blossom as it was shown in the film, with the intention of attracting her readers' attention. Kim (2012) suggests that film tourists want to confirm scenes

depicted on the screen with their own eyes. Sarah's past viewed scenes matched her actual experience, and she wanted to capture the scene in exactly the same way. The photo might inspire her readers to visit the destination. The symbolic, contextualised meanings behind this particular place might trigger her readers to form a strong attachment to the place.

It is also found that participants who were inspired by certain media, such as television programmes or films, appeared to attach a connection between themselves and the sites – visiting the site seemed to trigger memories about how they felt when they first viewed the media. This is evident in the participants' comments about wanting to experience the same sense and emotion at the actual visited sites. Another example of constructing the tourist experience based on media representation is provided by Daniel. Daniel, a traveller who enjoys adventure and nature, relates his photo of his diving experience in Sipadan Island to a documentary that he watched while preparing for his trip.



Figure 5.15 Daniel with the Barracuda vortex. *Source:* Photograph from a participant's blog

Actually, this is a must captured moment while we were underwater. I got the idea from a documentary that I watched while gathering the information about Sipadan Island, to pose into the vortex, but I missed the moment. I perceived this kind of photos will make your diving moments become more meaningful and look more real, so I captured the similar pose but in my own way. (Daniel)

When a tourist is at a destination, they are usually informed by the pre-existing discursive, practical and embodied norms which support their performance and achieve a working consensus about what to do (Edensor, 2001). Based on the participants' responses, it is demonstrated that their previous viewing experiences influenced the way they retold their own experiences. Media programmes provided readers with a means of preparation, aid, documentation and vicarious participation when visiting the viewed place (Kim, 2010). A photo that is categorised as self and scenery-oriented portrayed Daniel trying to get into the Barracuda vortex. Although he was unable to get into the vortex, he shared a photo of himself with a group of Barracuda. Film tourists can enrich their tourist experience by re-enacting cinematic scenes from films (Kim, 2010). For Daniel, the idea of getting into the Barracuda vortex was obtained from a documentary that he watched during his travel planning phase. Although he wished to capture himself with the vortex in a similar way as the documentary and failed to do so, he still shared the photo of him with the group of Barracuda. The attempt to re-enact the watched scene indicates that viewed programmes are highly personalised and unique to each individual based on their interpretation and memory (Kim, 2010). Even though the photo showed that Daniel's re-enactment was not perfect, he still perceived it to be meaningful and highlighted the reality of his diving experience. The reality of his experience is highlighted through his performativity; even though he missed the moment his re-enactment is still interpreted in a more playful, aesthetic, and even serious way.

5.5.4 Emotional Expressions (encoded) in Texts and Photos Posted at the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

Similar to the above findings related to the pre-visit and on-site stages, the emotional expression was also found at the post-visit stage of the tourist experience. At this stage, the participants recounted positive emotions, such as excitement, joy and happiness, and also negative emotions, such as fear, and being nervous and upset.

Consistent with Otto and Ritchie (1996), who highlight that hedonic dimensions, including excitement, enjoyment and memorability, are fundamental to the tourist experience within a tourism context, this current study finds that the feelings of excitement were mostly expressed by the travel bloggers through photos

related to visiting an iconic attraction. This iconic attraction refers to the attractions that they had planned to visit before they arrived at their destination. As the post-visit stage is related to the documentation and memorisation of the experience, this positive emotion was found to be related to the intention to show off their personal achievement of visiting a certain place or monument, as depicted in Figure 5.16 and Figure 5.17.

Emotional expressions are not limited to positive emotions. Travel bloggers also recounted their negative emotions, such as frustration, discontentment, anxiety and fear. It is interesting to discover that for the negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety and fear, the travel bloggers tended to share how they countered those emotions and at the end of the narratives, their feelings had changed from negative to positive. Travel bloggers also shared emotions of sympathy for what they saw, such as the hardship of locals and the surrounding of the sites that they visited. The change of emotion from negative to positive is evident in the textual content. An example of how the negative emotions changed to positive emotions is illustrated in an entry posted by Laili about her train ride, from Yangon to Bagan, Myanmar:

Extract 10

1 The train arrives on time, we went for our 'site inspection' routine. This overnight
2 trains run daily from Yangon to Bagan and it departs at 4:00pm, arriving in Bagan
3 at about 9:00 to 9:30am the following day. We paid USD55 for a 'luxury' sleeper
4 (USD50 - train tix, USD5 agent service fee). However, we were disappointed and
5 upset when we saw our berth, it was fan and not air conditioner as informed by the
6 agent and the best part, and the fan doesn't even work! OH!! So is the light (how
7 can I not get mad?) Bear in mind that we took a night train, no light means no
8 good! However, we found out that our 'luxury' sleeper cost USD40; obviously we
9 make a fuss on price differentiation. The station master/officer took our invoice and
10 makes a copy for reporting purposes; we found out later that they actually called
11 the agent on this matter. And yes, we did get our money refunded from the agent
12 later (happy). Now that we got that sorted out, we kind of settle with the fact that
13 we will not have any air conditioner, fan nor light. Whatever..... (Surrender). After
14 all the hoo-ha, to our amazement, we actually enjoyed the train ride! Seriously, am
15 not exaggerating on this, the journey was truly awesome. Why? (I know you going
16 to say that). My new experience in an old train: It's not the destination, it's the
17 journey; chances to meet locals and other travellers; experiencing the local
18 transport; to feel local, be local, to see the their daily life, especially in remote
19 villages and catching the sunrise and sunset (the best experience so far).

The above extract is from Laili's entry on her train ride from Yangon to Bagan with three of her friends (one of her friends, is a fellow participant, Fatimah). Lines 5 to 10 show that Laili was frustrated before the train ride began and she conveyed her upset feelings to her readers by using descriptive words and justification for her actions. For example, in Lines 5 to 7 'disappointed' and 'upset' are words that indicate her dissatisfaction with the conditions of the train. As the train journey comes to the end, she expressed the positive emotions. The appreciation of her experience can be seen in Lines 15 to 20. She even mentioned that the train ride gave her a new experience which it remarked the best experience. This extract shows how in one specific event, emotions can be changed from negative to positive. Although initially she encountered unfavourable experience with the train, the train journey however, delivered an enjoyable experience.

For Faris, visiting the iconic Taj Mahal was considered the ultimate experience of his trip to India. The visit to the historical site provided him with an emotional tourist experience, conveying an important message about his emotions of seeing the Taj Mahal at the most suitable time, as suggested by the tourist guide that he hired to bring him there. Faris purposely does not share a lot of textual content about his experience of seeing the Taj Mahal, but he does explain how he gets there. To describe the Taj Mahal and his experience, he then makes this statement: *I'll let the pictures and video do the talking of our experience.* Among the photos that he shared to describe his experience while he was at the site, the photo below was chosen for him to explain the meanings.



Figure 5.16 Faris’s jumping pose with Taj Mahal as a background. Source: Photograph from the participant’s blog.

This is the excitement pose. And maybe you are aware that this is the current posing style, so I posed this way to show my excitement for being here. For me, the Taj Mahal as the background is important as the reason of what I am excited for. I know I did not write a lot about this in my blog, but I think this photo really shows my true feelings at that time. (Faris)

Faris described his experience at the site through a photo that presented himself jumping, full of energy that reflected his excitement, with the monument of the Taj Mahal in the background. This photo also relates to the fulfilment of his personal goal of witnessing the iconic attraction. He strategically planned to visit the Taj Mahal at the most suitable time for photography purposes as advised by the tourist guide that he hired. By following the tour guide’s advice, he was then able to capture aesthetic views of the Taj Mahal.

Another example of the positive emotions portrayed in a photo is presented by Mimi in Figure 5.17 below. The photo shows Mimi happily jumping with a monument that she visited in India in the background.



Figure 5.17 Mimi with a monument in the background. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog.

I jumped because I was so excited to get there. India had been in my travel wish list for quite a long time and to be here was an accomplishment for me. I wore Kurta that I got with a very good price from a nice Indian girl. I bought one because I see many locals wore this and it really comfy me in warm weather. Also, it made me look like local, and the chances of being cheated by local sellers and taxi drivers was rather low, but I do not think it worked though (laughed). (Mimi)

It is found that the photo is associated with the excitement of her being there, as symbolised by the jumping pose and smiling face. Her jumping performance here served as a manifestation of her success at setting foot in India and being able to visit a famous tourist attraction. At the same time, she conveyed the fun experience she had in India. As illustrated in the photo, she wore a traditional Indian cloth, called a Kurta. Mimi put effort into being seen as a local as a strategy for bargaining for good prices with sellers and taxi drivers. Her performance was seen as a fun thing to her as she laughed when it failed to be effective. In Mimi's and Faris's examples, emotions were used as a manifestation of their personal achievement. By demonstrating their achievement through emotions

communicated via picturesque photos, it evoked a sense of jealousy in their readers.

It is also found that the environmental setting arouse different emotions and feelings that construct the tourist experience. It is obvious that natural settings, such as the beach, a blue sky, the sunset and sunrise, contributed to the element of escapism which constructed the participants' positive emotions. It is interesting to discover that such natural settings were associated with participants' positive emotions related to their escapism from work, as shown in Figure 5.18 and Figure 5.19 below. Figure 5.18 below was a sunrise scene taken by Lily during her train ride from Yangon to Bagan. Another photo that really delivers the emotional response of the photographer was posted by Khairy. The scene was captured while he was sitting on a bench, taking a rest after an hour-long tour of Qutub Minar in New Delhi.



Figure 5.18 A nature view of sunrise. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog

It was magnificent and peaceful. To enjoy different scenes, including this sunrise along our train journey was like a perfect for me. I really need this break actually, after a really tough and hectic year (Lily)



Figure 5.19 A nature view of flying birds. Source: Photograph from the participant's blog

This means freedom, relaxation and happiness. Being away from workloads really relief my stress. I really feel relax and stress free at this time. Birds were chirping and flying freely, so was I, enjoying my travel moment to the fullest. I really feel happy as I was able to travel this far and explore so much thing in my young age. (Khairy)

Based on these two examples, it is shown that a natural setting constructed an escape for them, and as a consequence, positive emotions, such as enjoyment, relief, relaxation and happiness were stirred. The expression of positive emotions was related to their physically being away from their mundane routine, such as hectic work. The environment was responsible for evoking such emotions in the tourist.

5.6 Relationship between Engagement and Motivation and the Tourist Experience

This section explains the relationship between engagement with travel blogs, motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience throughout the each stage of the tourist experience, based on the findings from the narrative analysis, content analysis and in-depth interviews. Blogging behaviours, motivations, and the participants' stories and meanings assigned to their tourist experience can provide a vivid understanding of the influence of travel blog engagement and motivation on narrative construction of tourist experience. This section presents a

series of reviews that reflect different ways blogging behaviours and motivation and how they have influenced their narrative construction of tourist experience.

5.6.1 Relationship between Blogging Behaviours and Motivation and the Pre-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

It is interesting to discover that before the visit, participants browse, read, make comments and post content on their blogs. These different behaviours, driven by different motivations, considerably influenced their experience construction before the travel. Regardless of the behaviours and motivations, all of the participants were found to play an active role in information searching. Most only browsed and read travel blogs, motivated by instrumental motivation which is related to information seeking; some of them not only reading blogs but also interacting with travel blogs through commenting which was also driven by information seeking. Four of them produce their own content, also driven by instrumental motivation. This suggests that different blogging behaviours contributed to the same outcome, that is, for travel preparation, which leads to an accurate formation of expectation. To further discuss how these different behaviour and motivations influenced their pre-visit experience construction, examples from Adam and Mariah is presented to explain the mechanisms and structures of travel blog behaviour and motivation in constructing the tourist experience.

Firstly, Adam began his engagement through reading about fellow bloggers' trips to India. After reading travel stories and seeing photos of the Taj Mahal, he then started interacting with travel bloggers. This engagement led to an inspiration to travel to India. This result confirms that online textual and visual information has a substantial influence on motivation to travel (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2015). Furthermore, this initial engagement reflects that travel blogs serve as more than just a credible source of information to satisfy the information seeking needs and support for travel planning, but are also a place to be inspired to travel. Traditionally, print media, such as travel magazines and brochures, and screen media, such as films and television programmes, have been significant sources for travel inspiration and ideas for travel (Månsson, 2011; Gretzel & Wang, 2012).

Travel blogs have not replaced the traditional channels, but have given potential tourists additional options for finding inspiration. Also, communicating with ‘experienced people’ within the blogosphere had a substantial influence on visiting a destination, as shown by Adam in his textual content as discussed in Section 5.3.1. According to him, travel blogs inspired him to travel more, even to a place that he never dreamed of before.

Also, it is noted that the tourist experience was used as inspiration when planning but in very different ways. Most of them read about experiences so that they could do what others had done before. They simply desired to duplicate others’ itinerary with the intention of having the same experience. In contrast, some used others’ experiences as a base of their travel planning and they actually sought to avoid what others had done before. In this sense, they wanted to come out with a unique and different experience. Passive blogging behaviour, through reading and browsing blogs had assisted the construction of the pre-visit tourist experience. Travel bloggers who only read and browsed blogs perceived that travel blogs mainly provided an assisting role, in helping them plan their travel, select a destination, and narrow down their choices, as described by Mariah below:

I usually visit other travel blogs before any trip to get information, ideas, where to go, what to buy and eat, what to see. To gather information and to plan ahead before any trip so you will not be travelling and wasting time looking for what you want to do, buy, see when u reach the destination. (Mariah)

Secondly, for Adam, as soon as the flight ticket to India had been confirmed, he then continued to actively engage with travel blogs to seek more information, through reading travel stories and communicating with the bloggers that had already visited India. This engagement made his travel preparation easier, as he could gather a lot of relevant information via blogs. Given the vast amount and ease of availability of information, potential tourists can often be overloaded and overwhelmed before obtaining the desired information, and this can lead to confusion and stress (Frias, Rodriguez & Castañeda, 2008; Gretzel & Wang,

2012). Furthermore, it is interesting to acknowledge that interacting with travel bloggers, and asking specific questions of readers to clear up confusion, provided peace of mind to the potential tourist. This highlights that through communicating with readers, whether with people that had been there or not, enhanced the tourist experience. eWoM has been acknowledged as the most used and prominent source of information when comparing alternatives (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). This study discovered that participants engaged with travel blogs mostly at the beginning of the travel planning process. They used blogs to seek inspiration, ideas and to narrow down choices. In this regard, potential tourists actively engage with travel blogs and the engagement shape the creation of their tourist experience. The clarification obtained from his communications allowed Adam to create a better and more accurate expectation, as stated in the statement below:

I read many different blogs, which provide me so much information, from the best time to go there, what to wear, how to get good transportation deal, and many more. This kind of travel information actually give me a peaceful mind to travel, as I am well equipped. I can easily ask them, any specific questions to clarify my doubt, for instance, I ask some bloggers on some shopping tips, as I saw many of them shop a lot women's jewelleryes and Sarees (Adam)

In addition, as discussed in Section 5.3.1, reading others stories allowed Adam to imagine himself seeing the Taj Mahal and sensing the romantic atmosphere which he associated with the Taj Mahal. Findings confirm Green and Brock's (2000) suggestion that when a person reads stories, he or she becomes transported by and immersed in the narratives, and can feel and imagine the realness of the narratives so that their own belief is effected by the beliefs of the characters in the narratives.

Thirdly, producing content and communicating with the readers motivated by hedonic needs, enhanced the pre-visit experience. This is because produced content served as a basis to trigger interaction within the blogosphere. In this example, Adam produced textual content about his travel preparation, and visual images of the main attraction and his visa that reflected the power of the tourist to turn his dream into reality. Through texts and photos, his emotions, such as

excitement, relief and eagerness were expressed and associated with, for example, attractions to visit, travel preparations and work leave being approved. This indicates that the posting behaviour was a strategy to seek information. The produced content also served as a medium for attracting readers' attention to getting them to engage with their blogs. The more active WoM information is sought, the higher the chance that the individual will be influenced by WoM communications (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Thus, travel planning became easier and at the same time helped develop a better expectation of the destination. As a consequence of interaction with readers, including those who had already travelled to the same destination, participants gained information about, for example, must do experiences, dangers to note and other personalised advice, such as what medications to carry. These kinds of suggestions, obtained from readers who had already been to the destination, enhanced the participants' pre-visit experience, and also influence their actual experience. Adam's statement below describes such claims:

I read many blogs about India. Among the highlight of their stories was about many of them had diarrhoea while travelling. Some told about the unsatisfactory hygiene of the restaurant and some told about the strong spices used in their cooking and the hotness of the food. I can imagine how hot they were, as Lily (a fellow blogger), who is a chillies lover also cannot stand with it. She even reminds me to bring along some medication and instant noodles, if in case I cannot stand with the food there. Therefore, I was really careful when having food there, especially the curry and spices food. (Adam)

5.6.2 Relationship between Engagement and Motivation and the On-Site Stage of the Tourist Experience

Despite little engagement with travel blogs at the on-site stage, the engagement and motivation both continue to influence the narrative construction of tourist experience. Most of the participants did not engage at all with travel blogs due to their focus on the real world, their concern about safety and privacy issues, and time constraints. Very few of them post contents which motivated by hedonic motivation. However, despite their different engagement during the travel, their tourist experience was highly influenced and shaped by travel blogs. For

participants who did not engage at all, their actual tourist experience was influenced by their engagement at the pre-visit stage. They are inclined to replicate activities performed in the blogs that they engaged with. In other words, they wanted to have the same experience. For four of them who posted contents, their actual tourist experience was influenced by their interaction with the readers. The interaction with the readers allowed the participants to obtain suggestions, and they provided room for change in their activities. It made their travel more spontaneous, causing more unplanned undertakings.

The relationship between these two components (engagement and motivations) and the tourist experience is explained using examples from Haries and Adam. Firstly, Haries did not engage at all with travel blogs while he was travelling because he wanted to stay focused on his trip and engaged with the real world. Although he disconnected from travel blogs, his actual experience was influenced by travel blogs. This is because his experience at the destination was associated with his engagement at the pre-visit stage, as stated in the below statement:

Most of my activities in Thailand, was based from fellows' bloggers experience and of course, what suit my travel preferences. Jeff, (a fellow travel blogger) made a lengthy entry about fantastic food that he had in Thailand, and yes I did enjoy myself with the local food. It was really a food hunting journey for me. Wherever I see local street seller with many customers, I stop and try their food. They were really yummm...I really pleased to have such experience with the food.(Haries)

It is funny, but interesting when I keep on hunting food that I did not remember the name, but I can imagine the looks. So I keep on walking along the street and searching for the food that he wrote on one should not missed. Lucky me, I found them, and they tasted incredibly good. (Haries)

This highlights that his earlier engagement with travel blogs at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience influenced his actual experience, as some of the activities that he performed were based on the read stories. Haries found that Jeff's blog posts (among other blogs that he read before travelling) were interesting and suited his own travel preferences, for example, trying local authentic foods. He was envious of Jeff's experiences and this stimulated the desire to have the same experience, for example, tasting good local food while in

Thailand. Haries' engagement with other blogs also confirmed that Thailand offers an abundance of great food. These expectations developed through the travel blog engagement at the pre-visit stage influenced his actual tourist experience whilst in Thailand. This is confirmed in the excerpt above – he purposely searches for food mentioned by Jeff, and does not want to miss any other foods mentioned. Furthermore, the great taste of the food indicates that his actual experience matched prior expectations he had developed through travel blog engagement. Haries was satisfied with the experience, as his expectation matched what actually occurred (Hui, Wan & Ho, 2007). This study confirms that tourist satisfaction can be achieved through travel blog engagement – an idea supported by Rojek (1993) who posits that tourists aim to ratify their own world view and so they look for what they expect to see rather than discovering something new. This confirmed that travel blogs structure tourist gaze and experience by highlighting particular ways of seeing, forming certain images, anticipation and belief, and specifying what people should see and remember.

Secondly, the tourist experience at a destination is also influenced and shaped by posting behaviour motivated by hedonic needs. Participants who posted during the trip initially intended only to update their readers who had initially engaged and supported them at the pre-visit stage. Engagement with travel blogs, therefore, enhanced narrative construction of tourist experience. In this regard, participants posted aesthetic photos and stories of the real experience while it occurred. Adam communicated with readers before travelling and so felt obligated to update them about what he was up to during his travels. This indicates that this participant's engagement and motivation at the pre-visit stage not only influenced the actual narrative construction of tourist experience, but also had a substantial influence on his engagement at the next stage of the tourist experience. Thus, the actual construction of the tourist experience was based on his engagement with travel blogs before he travelled. Adam was motivated to engage with travel blogs while he was travelling by hedonic aspects offered within the blogosphere, and it is found that this communication with the readers played an important role in constructing his actual tourist experience. As soon as he confirmed his adaptability to the spicy food there, which was one of the concerns that he read

and communicated about within the blogosphere, he let his readers know his experience with the food. Also, because Adam had shared his eagerness to see the Taj Mahal with his readers at the pre-visit stage, as soon as he accomplished this dream he excitedly shared his experience through a photo which symbolically showed his sense of pride and achievement. Here is what he described:

Many of the travel bloggers suggest me to do this and that before I travel. They wanted to know how I am going with the spicy food and my traveling there, as most of them have drama and some bad experience with the people in India. So, I am very excited to share what I encountered there, while I was still there. As expected, they all wait for my update and I feel really excited to explain further of my experience. However, due to time constraint and wanted them to keep following my journey, I only reveal the most important things, the rest details will be posted when I come back. (Adam)

The act of sharing the actual experience during the visit had a significant impact on the intensity of his experience. His blog post attracted his readers' attention and they engaged with the content. In turn, the readers' engagement allowed him to communicate with them, and as a consequence, increased his travel excitement, as they talked about his achievement of seeing the Taj Mahal. Here, it is discovered that blogging is itself a tourist activity and a fragment of the journey, thus, the emotional affects that the tourist obtains through blogging influences the way they approach the actual experience. Also, similar to the pre-visit stage, producing content served as a basis for him to obtain further suggestions and ideas from the readers. The findings confirm that interaction within the blogosphere is an integral part of actual narrative construction of tourist experience. This is evident through Adam's example – obtaining suggestions from 'experience real people' influenced his actual tourist experience. He perceived some suggestions as 'crucial' to follow. He was convinced that a 'hot' suggestion was really a 'must do' while he was there and he considered it a waste not to follow the ideas and suggestion of his readers. Following their suggestions allowed him to fully utilise his travel and time there, and as a consequence, gave him travel satisfaction and generated even more excitement. Here is what he described:

You know, it is always interesting when some people suggested me to go to this certain place, while I was at the Taj Mahal site. Some suggested me to pose at the other side of the building at certain time for a beautiful pictorial effect. Not wasting any time, we then look for the said angle, and it turned out fantastic. (Adam)

5.6.3 Relationship between Engagement and Motivation and the Post-visit Stage of the Tourist Experience

Traditionally, tourists get together with family and friends who were not there during the travel to talk about their tourist experience. Brown and Chalmers (2003) suggest that photos are central to the activity of sharing the tourist experience, as tourists talk about the visit through the photos. They further argue that the communication about the photos allowed the tourist to reminisce about their experience. Travel blogs are valuable in the anticipatory and reflective phases of the tourist experience (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Thus, this study highlights that the engagement with travel blogs at the post-visit stage, by sharing the experience using text and visual images, not only allowed the travel bloggers to reminisce about the tourist experience, but also, attracted other travel bloggers who had already been to the same destinations to engage with their stories.

After their trips, all the participants produced their own content and participated with the created content, associated with two different motivations: hedonic and social responsibility. The findings reveal that narrative construction of the tourist experience was highly influenced by their motivations. It is found that participants perceived sharing travel stories as an extension of their travel enjoyment and considered it as a fun activity. Some enjoyed communicating with others about their experience. Also, participants collectively highlighted that communicating within the blogosphere enhanced their experience and allowed them to re-experience the trip, as described in the following statement:

As much I enjoy sharing my stories through writing, I also enjoy talking with my readers... This is interesting as, sometimes they (the readers) ask me about my last few months' trips. So, talking to them remind me of that certain

moment, for instance, I don't do this quite often, but sometimes I do....like, 'throwback' entries, which surprisingly attracting many comments...obviously I chose good photos.... it is like flashback some memories, and make me happy, and I feel like, oh gosh, I want to be back again. (Farah)

Based on Farah's statement, engagement with travel blogs not only allowed her to recollect the memory of the trip, but also created a strong attachment with the destination. The tourist experience at the post-visit stage served as ideas and inspiration for future travel (Fotis et al., 2011). Thus, communicating with her readers allowed her to recall the memory and these recollections made her feel good. In addition, communicating with her readers also created the desire to re-visit the destination.

Also, sharing the tourist experience through travel blogs served as a place for the participants to gain recognition. They wanted feedback on their shared experience. The readers' feedback acted as the source of the reflections. Getting feedback allowed them to measure the readers' perception of the experience. Positive feedback made them feel good, served as an encouragement to do better in travel, and finally served more to the travel community specifically. They can serve the community by filling in the information gaps, assisting potential tourists in making decision by responding to their enquiries, and also to give inspiration to others to travel as mentioned by Ani dan Hazel:

Blogging is not only about writing, but it is also about communicating with people who have interest on what you share. I personally spent my time to read and response to any enquiry, sometimes, people just say hi and hello, and telling me that they are inspired by my stories...this maybe look simple, but it means a lot to me. I think that, it is really my life achievement, somehow an encouragement to travel more, to explore more unique places that people do not usually go. (Ani)

I enjoy interacting with the readers, as I can know whether they enjoy my stories or not, also from there, I know someone is interested in my stories.....Differentiation is my priority. As this is what I look for in blogs, so I want to give it back. What is the reason for posting the same things that others already posted? Many travelled to a same place, but definitely I will share something different. (Hazel)

As mentioned earlier, produced content acts as a source of interaction, whereby travel bloggers and readers discuss and interact according to the blog post. In this sense, the interaction within the blogosphere enhanced the tourist experience. It allowed the creation of stories that met the readers' needs and expectation as indicated through their feedback and comment. This suggests that travel blog engagement becomes the most important element and essence in narrative construction of tourist experience.

5.7 Conclusion

From the narrative analysis and interviews with the travel bloggers, this study has identified how travel bloggers tell the stories of their tourist experience at three different stages of the tourist experience using three different types of content (i.e. texts, photos and videos). The findings suggest that emotional expressions, perceived novelty and otherness, learning and reflection, and media representation are found in most of the 19 travel blogs examined and reflect important aspects of their tourist experience which they shared with their readers. These themes reflect the wide variety of tourist activities undertaken in visits to multiple destinations.

The main category of the tourist experience is emotional expression, whereby travel bloggers expressed their positive and negative emotions when describing their experience throughout the three different stages of the tourist experience. The emotional expression is constructed differently by the travel bloggers at the three different stages. It can be identified through the different ways of representation and words used to represent their emotions. The second construct of the tourist experience is learning and reflection, which was found to be recounted at the on-site and post-visit stages, in which these stories contributed to the travel bloggers' personal growth and intellectual development. These stories highlight what they learnt while they were travelling. The third theme is perceived novelty and otherness, whereby the travel bloggers highlight the authenticity of the places visited, the activities that they engaged in and the local food that they tried. Last but not least, travel bloggers also included media, such as documentaries and films that they watched in constructing their tourist experience.

Watching this media influenced their actual experience as they tried to reproduce the consumed image.

In terms of the content shared throughout the stages of the tourist experience, it has been found that travel bloggers preferred to describe their tourist experience through texts and photos at the pre-visit and on-site stage, and all three different content at the post-visit stage. However, a different preference was found in terms of how the texts and photos were used to describe their experience. It was found that throughout the stages, emotions played an important role in the narrative construction of tourist experience.

At the pre-visit stage, participants shared their tourist experience through texts and photos, which related to emotional expressions. It is found that participants expressed their emotions when communicating information about their upcoming trip and the attractions they intended to visit. Also, the sharing of their readiness to travel and update of travel planning indirectly give them travel excitement, as many of the readers showed their support by giving advice and suggestions which at the end helped them with their travel planning and making decisions. At this stage, the use of photos was merely related to showing off their travel planning and to describe the most important attraction that they wanted to visit. Also, participants used photo as a strategy to attract readers' attention and get them to stay tuned for their travel update. Passively reading the information available on travel blogs seemed enough for them, as the read information satisfied their information searching. In this regard, the read information also assisted their travel planning by providing an accurate and realistic expectation.

At the on-site stage, participants shared their tourist experience through texts and photos, demonstrating their emotional expression and learning and reflection. Although textual content was shared, it was very limited and not as detailed as the pre-visit stage. In addition, most of the travel bloggers did not engage at all with travel blogs. However, it was found that travel blogs still played an important role in constructing the actual tourist experience. This is because they carried the expectations built via travel blogs at the pre-visit stage through to the on-site stage. Furthermore, through producing and participating with produced

content, enabled the travel bloggers to obtain travel excitement. In this regard, the produced content served as a medium to interact with the readers. The interaction with the readers who had been to the destinations sparked suggestions that the bloggers then sometimes followed. As for the readers, the ‘fresh’ experience shared by the travel bloggers may evoke jealousy and stimulate feelings of wanting to ‘be there’ too. The embedded meanings related to emotional expression and learning and reflection were important to the construction of experience. The analysis of travel blogs has shown how participants value this aspect of their experience. This is because the stories of learning and reflection also served as the outcomes of their experience. As stories, they are used as narratives for reconstructing their tourist experience for their readers.

The post-visit stage is a prevailing way of prolonging the enjoyment of the actual visit. In addition, the personal storytelling that occurs at the post-visit stage allows the readers to see a destination from a different perspective to the conventional and commercially produced views, such as brochures and television (Crang, 1999). At the post-visit stage, other than texts and photos, videos were also used to describe their tourist experience. The use of multiple types of content to describe their tourist experience after the trip had finished gave the travel bloggers more opportunity to describe their experience. At this stage, the account of perceived novelty and otherness, learning and reflection, media representation and emotional expression were reported by the travel bloggers.

There was a significant pattern with regard to whether or not the participant appeared in photos posted throughout the stages of the tourist experience. Four participants (Johan, Ani, Hazel and Ramli) did not share any photos that contained their image, while half of the participants posted more photos that did not contain their images than contained their image. The participant’s appearance in the photos was used as a way to distinguish between tourist gaze (Urry, 2002), and tourist performance (Fairweather & Swaffield, 2002; Garlick, 2002). Obviously, no photos containing their image were posted before the travel. Participants only posted photos of the main attractions and maps of the destination, and images that related to their travel preparation, such as a visa, a passport and clothes.

Most participants did post photos containing their image at the on-site stage. This study suggests that this is because they wanted to prove that they were physically there and also as a platform to ‘show off’ the achievement. However, at the post-visit stage there was a combination of photos in which the participant was present or absent – mostly the former. Only two participants did not post any photos in which they appeared. These participants may have wanted to emphasise place more than themselves since they did not consider their appearance to be the selling point of the performance. Other participants chose not to appear in photos related with a natural setting, such as scenery, beach, sunset and sunrise. This is because they wanted to emphasise that the setting was the highlight of their experience. Also, photos describing the authenticity of the sites, for example, by including a local, was also important in constructing their experience. Also, the main reason for preferring to post photos in which they did not appear was simply personal preference: they did not want expose themselves to the public and they perceived that the readers were more interested in their travels than themselves personally. This study confirms Haldrup and Larsen’s (2003) suggestion that the popularity of people as subjects in photos is due to photography’s role in producing social relations, rather than producing place. Half of the visual images portrayed the tourists and their travel partners, such as family and friends, performing social acts and experiencing attractions. Also, to some extent, the participants purposely shared photos of them engaging in specific activities, such as diving, skiing, hiking, and kayaking, to fully describe their experience.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the underlying mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours and motivations in influencing and shaping the narrative construction of the tourist experience at the three different stages of the tourist experience, namely, pre-visit, on-site and post-visit. This study examined how travel bloggers engaged with travel blogs at different stages of the tourist experience and what motivated them to engage with the travel blogs. In order to understand the narrative construction of tourist experience, this study also attempted to understand the embedded meanings of the constructed tourist experience throughout the three different stages of the tourist experience by considering three different types of travel blog content (i.e., texts, photos and videos). To achieve it, a qualitative methodology was adopted, combining several qualitative research methods: in-depth interviews, qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis.

In order to answer the main research question, this study undertook five objectives:

- (1) to explore blogging motivation and influence on narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout the stages of the tourist experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)
- (2) to explore blogging strategies and behaviours, and their influences on tourism decision-making and experience (dual role of blogger and tourist)
- (3) to analytically deconstruct the content of travel blogs that construct tourist experience
- (4) to investigate the meanings of texts, photos and videos that construct the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience
- (5) to understand the mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivations and narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience

The previous two chapters have been devoted to presenting the analyses and the findings of the in-depth interviews with the travel bloggers and the content analysis and narrative analysis of the travel blogs' contents. In summary the results revealed that there is a two way relationship between blogging behaviours and motivations. In other words, blogging behaviours and motivations are associated and can be influenced by each other. This study discovered that travel bloggers had diverse blogging behaviours at the different stages of the tourist experience with a different set of motivations. Similarly, the different levels of engagement and motivations were found to influence the narrative construction of tourist experience.

In order to understand and interpret those findings at a more theoretical and conceptual level, this chapter attempts to conclude and discuss the findings in four ways: (1) travel bloggers' profile, behaviours and motivations (Section 6.2.1); (2) underlying mechanisms and structures between blogging behaviours, motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience (Section 6.2.2); (3) narrative construction of tourist experience in travel blogs; (Section 6.2.3); and (4)

relationships between blogging behaviours and motivations with the narrative construction of tourist experience (Section 6.2.4). The following sections are discussed and matched to the objectives outlined above as follows: Section 6.2.1 (Objectives 1), Section 6.2.2 (Objectives 2 and 5), Section 6.2.3 (Objectives 3 and 4), and Section 6.2.4 (Objective 5). In discussing the findings, this chapter highlights the contribution of this study and reviews the aims and objectives. In addition, research implications for the tourism industry including destination marketers and tour agents are presented. Lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations for further research are suggested.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Travel Bloggers' Profiles, Behaviours and Motivations

The travel bloggers' profiles can be summarised in the following key points:

- The travel bloggers are young (mostly between 25 and 39 years old), educated (mostly completed bachelor and postgraduate degree), and employed.
- The travel bloggers use different blog sites for blogging their tourist experience. They do not use specific blog sites for tourism such as lonelyplanet.com or travelblog.com. Instead, they use other blogs sites, such as blogspot.com. The majority of them have 5 to 10 years of blogging experience.
- In a year, the majority of travel bloggers travelled between 4 and 8 times, mostly international trips. The length of trips varied depending on the destination, ranging between 2 and 8 days.
- Most of the travel bloggers know each other, follow each other, and are members of the blogging community. In the travel community, they meet each other in the real world through organising travel trips and annual gatherings.

- The travel bloggers use blogs on a daily basis, with the minimum time spent being an hour to two hours per day. Most of them post more than 50 entries within a year.
- In sharing their tourist experience, text and photos are commonly used, while a few of them use videos to describe their tourist experience.

Blogging behaviours can be understood through activities performed within the blogosphere, including browsing, participating with own or others' blogs, and producing content. This behaviour is related to different motivations: instrumental, hedonic and social responsibility. This study found that only a few of the travel bloggers used travel blogs as a means to share their tourist experience at the pre-visit stage. Although all of the participants actively engaged with travel blogs before their travel, their engagement was limited to browsing and commenting on browsed content. Only four travel bloggers produced their own content at this stage. For those four travel bloggers, in addition to browsing and commenting on others content, they extended their engagement by producing their own content, which included texts and photos. The produced texts and photos reflected their expectations and revealed their preparations for their upcoming trip.

This kind of engagement was associated with the travel bloggers' motivation at the pre-visit stage – instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation represents the bloggers' desire to satisfy their information-seeking needs. Travel blogs are online diaries intended to deliver information and engage the reader in the travel stories (Banyai & Govers, 2012). At this stage, two strategies were adopted by the travel bloggers in order to satisfy their information-seeking desires. These strategies were executed through interaction within the blogosphere. The first strategy involved participating with the read content by commenting. The second strategy was through producing their own content. Both strategies took advantage of the nature of travel blogs, where travel blogs allow interactive communication within the blogosphere. The interaction in the blogosphere occurs when content creators (travel bloggers) share travel stories and readers acquire information from them and base their decision-making on this

information (Zehrer, Crotts & Magnini, 2011). In this regard, interactions within the blogosphere played an important role in satisfying their information needs. For example, posting content about their upcoming trips attracted readers' attention, especially those originally from that location or people who had visited the destination. Readers were keen to share important tips and recommendations, and thus enabled the information gathering process to become more efficient.

At the pre-visit stage, the behaviour of consuming, participating with travel blogs and posting contents is obviously related to instrumental motivation. Despite three different behaviours (consuming, participating and posting content), the purpose of the engagement remains the same, that is, it is to plan properly and to create a more accurate and realistic expectation. This indicates that travel blogs are acknowledged as a preferred information source (over traditional or conventional information sources such as magazines and guidebooks). Thus, this study supports the previous studies claiming that travel blogs are at least as credible and trustworthy as traditional media and marketing communications (Akehurst, 2005; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). Furthermore, their travel excitement can be enhanced through interaction with readers, including people who have already been there. This study therefore emphasises that interactive communication is an important motivation for the potential tourist to engage with travel blogs at the pre-visit stage. This interactive element is a unique and crucial aspect of travel blogs when compared to traditional media. Other than commenting about countries they are interested in visiting, readers write comments about places they know very well, and they are keen to share their knowledge with other bloggers (Panteli, Yan & Chamakiotis, 2011). Direct interaction with readers who have been to the same destination allows bloggers to obtain additional and personalised information. Personalised information is obtained through asking readers specific questions and asking for clarification about unclear matters, and that allows the bloggers to gain a better sense of anticipation and support their travel planning. Also, the interaction with readers who are interested in the shared stories serves as an entertainment source to the tourist. In fact, the sharing of tourist experience in the travel blogs and interaction

with the people who are interested in their stories is also considered fun and exciting for the travel bloggers.

At the on-site stage, it is interesting to discover that their engagement totally changed, regardless of their engagement at the pre-visit stage. Most of them stayed away from travel blogs when they were at the destinations, and only three of them posted content during their travels. The behaviour of totally shutting down their connection with travel blogs was found to be motivated by their intention to fully engage with and experience the real world of the destinations, and because of time constraints and safety and privacy reasons. For the travel bloggers who were motivated to stay away from travel blogs due to time constraints, they were found to still connect to other types of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It was suggested that travel blogs were not a convenient enough medium for the travel bloggers to communicate their tourist experience at the on-site stage. Although three of the participants produced their own entries while they were still at the site, it was found that their entries only contained short pieces of texts with a few photos, which was different from what they would usually do at the pre-visit and the post-visit stage. This also implied that at the on-site stage photos were more influential in conveying actual tourist experience compared to textual content. Travel bloggers, therefore, put more effort into deciding on the type of content to be posted while they are travelling. It is highlighted that they put extra effort into being creative with photos in order to attract the readers' attention and engage with their content.

Also, it was found that travel blog engagement at the on-site stage was limited to produce and not to produce content. Travel bloggers only highlighted their posting behaviours and the reasons for not producing content. This suggests the limited role played by travel blogs during the visit. Travel blogs were not read or used as a medium to communicate with readers while travelling. This behaviour was closely related to motivational factors such as engaging with the real world, safety and privacy issues, and time constraints. This also indicates that travel bloggers perceived travel blogs merely as a tool to share their tourist experience. Travel blogs were not perceived as a suitable site to look for additional information or as a communication medium with people back home.

This is also related to the nature of the blog itself, which is synonymous with travel documenting and sharing. It is also related to the travel bloggers' preferences, where most of them preferred to share details of their travel when they returned home.

At the post-visit stage, the behaviour and motivation of travel bloggers' engagement were found to be broader and greater compared to the two earlier stages. All participants actively engaged by producing and interacting with their own content. It is found that most of the travel bloggers shared their own content as quickly as possible when they returned home, generally within two days. It can be concluded that regardless of their engagement at the prior stages, most of them showed a high commitment to their travel blogs at the post-visit stage. Although their content varied in length and detail, their commitment to engage with travel blogs could be observed through the emotions, thoughts and reflections that were embedded in their content. Other than producing their own content, their behaviour of actively participating with their own recently shared content also indicated their high commitment to their travel blogs, and may also indicate that they enjoyed being in the blogosphere to share their recent trips. At this stage, the identified two motivations included hedonic and social responsibility. In summary, the travel bloggers' engagement not only revealed their activities and behaviour but also their motivations behind their engagement. Understanding travel bloggers engagement and motivation provides a better understanding of the travel blog phenomenon.

6.2.2 Underlying Mechanisms and Structures between Engagement, Motivation and the Tourist Experience

This study highlights that different blogging behaviours and motivations have their own potential in influencing and shaping narrative construction of the tourist experience at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages. This section discusses the mechanism and structures of these elements in terms of decision-making, tourist activities and the affective tourist experience.

Readers play an important role in the narrative construction of the tourist experience. There was a sense of obligation to the blogosphere and the desire to make a contribution to the blogosphere. Travel bloggers personalised their writing to accommodate their readers' interests. Travel bloggers wrote in a more precise way, and included different types of content, such as photos and videos, in order to provide comprehensive material for their readers. They responded to readers' request for more photos of certain destination or more stories of certain activities. They also provided more general information about matters such as transportation cost, and gave specific tips and warnings. Participants' narration was found to be more specifically addressed to targeted readers. This trend was observed in the posts at the on-site stage. Further it was also observed that participants specifically named their fellow bloggers in explaining their experience. It indicates that they wanted to satisfy specific readers and knew exactly to whom they dedicated their narration.

Further, in narrating their experience, travel bloggers were not only concerned about their readers, but also wrote for themselves. The travel blogs were considered to be like an online diary, in which the chronological order of their entries helped them to remember their trip in the future. Reading blogs brought back memories. Therefore, the travel blog acted as a 'virtual diary and virtual photo album' where they wrote details of their experience and posted photos for their own future reference.

Further, blogging motivation leads to broader blogging behaviour. For example, travel blog engagement at the on-site and post-visit stages of the tourist experience, motivated by the hedonic aspect of blogging, appeared to be an important motivation for travel bloggers to share their travel stories and interact with their readers. Travel bloggers enjoyed sharing and talking about their tourist experience in the blogosphere. Also, reading travel stories excited readers. They became aroused by fascinating photos and details of the storytelling. Also, reading blogs allow people to remember past experience and some used blogs to discuss their opinion with other bloggers. In this regard, interaction within the blogosphere was an opportunity for people who had been to that specific destination to comments and share their knowledge with others. Both the bloggers

who recounted their experience and the readers who engaged with the created posts benefited. The bloggers who sought information were satisfied, while readers shared or provided knowledge that could potentially inspire others.

It was found that travel bloggers' engagement through posting content and interaction with the readers significantly influenced decision-making. They used travel blogs to seek out inspiration and information. This was obvious at the pre-visit stage where travel bloggers interacted with the readers to specifically ask for recommendation and advice. Suggestions from readers familiar with the destination or who had been there significantly influenced their decisions. However, the influenced occurred in two ways – some directly followed the suggestions and some altered their itinerary a little, and others decided to organise their trip in a totally different way in order to come out with a new and unique experience.

The travel blog engagement and motivations shaped and influenced tourist activities and their interpretation and subjective perceptions, which are vital parts of the tourist experience (Jennings & Weiler, 2006). Tourist activities refer to those activities at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage. At the pre-visit stage, most of the participants stated that travel preparation was easier than ever before, because of their engagement with travel blogs. Some of them associated travel blogs with: (1) ease of use – due to travel blogs covering a wide range of travel information; (2) trustworthiness – due to the fact that travel bloggers have been acknowledged as sharing unbiased and real experiences compared to other promotional media, such as official destination websites; and (3) accurate and realistic information – due to being able to communicate with other readers and the content creators as well, from whom they can seek clarification on unclear information.

Also, some participants highlighted that engaging with travel blogs had impacted on their travel planning. Travel patterns, accommodation, destination and activities could all be influenced and shaped by blogs and interaction within the blogosphere. Travel blogs offered various and detailed information, including suggested travel itineraries, and specific information (such as the best time to be at

certain destination to avoid crowds), hot tips, things to avoid and so on. This influenced their expectations about the destination, and as a consequence, their travel planning became more thorough. Information acquired through the interaction is often perceived as more credible compared to conventional marketing (Akehurst, 2009). Thus, this study highlights that travel blog interaction appears to be the fastest and most convenient way for potential tourists to evaluate a destination prior to visiting, and is more influential in shaping their expectations compared to traditional media. This can be seen from an example provided by Adam in his travel planning to India. Through reading, and communicating with fellow bloggers, he started to worry about the spicy local food, and as a consequence, he decided to bring medicine with him and was more careful of eating local food and avoiding diarrhoea. In addition, because travel blogs provide off the beaten path information, different to conventional media, this also increased potential tourists' travel planning. They undertook more travel planning than before because they wanted to discover a 'hidden' attraction. Also, communication with other travel bloggers who had been to the same destination increased planning effort because they suggested some interesting activities to do and spots to visit. As a result, the participants tended to do more travel preparation than before.

In terms of the on-site stage of the tourist experience, even though most of the participants did not engage with travel blogs while they were travelling, their tourist activities were significantly influenced by their engagement at the pre-visit stage. Travel blogs changed the way tourists engaged with destinations. They were not necessarily guided by the locals they met, but rather the blogs with which they engaged with at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience. This is because their performance was influenced by what they 'see and understand' in the blogs at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience. A good example is provided by Haries and his food hunting journey while he was in Thailand (Section 5.6.2). Although he did not specifically engage with travel blogs during his travels, he was still able to recall food that he really wanted to taste from his pre-visit reading, and he put effort into searching for and trying the food, as he did not want to miss the opportunity to taste delicious local food, as suggested by

other blogs. Through Haries example, it is evident that the previous exposure to and engagement with travel blogs guided and tailored his tourist experience related to food. This indicates that the tourist experience was constructed by the information about the food that he gained through blogs and through the searching of the mentioned food. For three participants who actively posted and communicated with their readers while travelling, their travel activities also changed. Participants considered their trips to be quite flexible, where they could ask for suggestions and alter their travel itinerary during the journey as recommended. Also, their activities at the destinations increased because readers who had already been there suggested they should undertake specific activities.

At the post-visit stage, engaging with travel blogs also influenced their tourist activities. The bloggers undertook activities such as sharing and re-experiencing their tourist experience with their readers who eagerly awaited updates or a full version of events, for example, from Adam, Mimi, Faris and Johan. They made a promise to continue sharing their experience, and the communication with readers and exchanging experiences with them allowed the participants to re-experience the tourist experience. At this stage, participants had more time to interact with the readers, and the readers' feedback about their experience also changed their plans for their next trip. For example, positive feedback give them encouragement to do more travel, and a praise of photography skills also encouraged them to capture more creative travel moments in the future.

Travel blog engagement also influenced the affective tourist experience. For example, by obtaining personalised information and gaining a more realistic image and perception of the destination, they were able to properly equip themselves and feel confident about travelling. They highlighted that as they were well informed, they could fully enjoy the travel without worrying unnecessarily. Also, communicating with readers who had already been there gave them more excitement and created a desire to have the same experience, as illustrated by Adam (Section 5.3.1) and Haries (Section 5.6.2). The hedonic motivation therefore changed their affective tourist experience.

While there could be many consequences from the engagement with travel blogs throughout the stages of the tourist experience, this study stressed the most substantial influence of the travel blogs on the tourist experience. As can be understood, travel blog engagement influences the tourist experience by ‘unlocking’ the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stages in relation to various behaviours and motivations. Even though not many of the participants engaged with travel blogs at the on-site stage, this study highlighted that the activities that the tourists used to accomplish only at the pre-visit and post-visit stage were now being accomplished at the on-site stage of the tourist experience too, leading to some modifications in the tourist experience.

Firstly, due to the fact that they can plan their travel with the help of travel bloggers whilst they are travelling, tourists tend to plan not as much at the pre-visit stage. Second, tourists tend to share their current location or post a travel update and welcome any ideas on any other interesting activities to discover while they are still at the destination. They are open to suggestions and willing to change their travel plans if they are offered a better idea. Tourists therefore tend to commence on-site decision-making and the interactive communication within the blogosphere enables this to happen. Travel activities therefore become more spontaneous and less planned. Thirdly, tourists tend to document and share their tourist experience while they are on-site because of prompt feedback and suggestions. The suggestion makes their travel become more spontaneous. Interestingly, participants stated that instant feedback and communication with the readers during their travels enhanced their travel excitement. This is due to readers mentioning their impatience to know details of the blogger’s experience. Thus, it influences their posting behaviours, in terms of the timeframe to post and types of contents posted at the post-visit stage of tourist experience.

6.2.3 Narrative Construction of Tourist Experience in Travel Blogs

6.2.3.1 Travel Blogs Content

Visual images can be categorised into those in which the tourist appears and those in which the tourist is absent. Each of these categories then contains three sub-categories, which are presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Categorisation of Visual Images that Construct the Tourist Experience

Tourist Appearance			
Self and attraction-oriented	Self and activity-oriented	Self and locale-oriented	
Without Tourist Appearance			
Attraction and scenery-oriented	Locale-oriented	Scenery-oriented	Others

Tourists capture unique landscapes, locals, fellow travellers and family members, and routine street scenes (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Urry, 1990). The main construct of the tourist experience in visual images in which the travel bloggers appeared is self and attraction-oriented, followed by self and activity-oriented, and self and locale-oriented. Humans appeared in most of their visual images, especially in conveying experiences with iconic attractions, or performing specific activities such as kayaking, skiing and diving. Travel bloggers also shared visual images in which they were absent, categorised as attraction and scenery-oriented, locale-oriented, and scenery oriented.

In terms of images in which the tourist appears (including videos), there was a significant difference in the way travel bloggers shared their tourist experience before, during and after the travel. Before the travel, they shared photos in which they did not appear. This is due to the highlight of their pre-visit experience being their expectations and travel planning. Also, as they were not yet at the destination, there was nothing to share to the readers about the actual destinations and their landmarks, for example. As their appearance in images did

not seem at all important, therefore, the visual images shared by the travel bloggers were more about ‘displaying’ the destinations, triggering curiosity in their readers and capturing the ‘feel’ of the destination.

At the on-site stage, their appearance in the visual images did seem to be more important than anything else because their appearance symbolised the reality of the experience, as it was still happening. Also, their appearance in the visual images showed a sense of one’s personal achievement, as evidence that they had been there, and also as a way to attract readers’ attention. In addition, the visual images in which they appeared, shared at the on-site stage, served as an important element to attract readers’ attention. It is found that participants had a desire to make well performed photos to show to the readers rather than showing the reflection of their experience. Participants, therefore, made an extra effort to pose for creative and eye catching photos.

At the post-visit stage, combinations of photos with and without their presence were shared and each type was shared differently. The tourist experience images related to scenery and natural settings generally do not contain the tourist’s image. Also, to some extent, the decision to show themselves in the photo depended on the context of their experience and also their own preferences. For example, in sharing their experience with local people or a local setting, some shared photos of themselves posing with the locals, while some merely showed the local, as presented in an example from Adam (Figure 5.7) and Faris (Figure 5.13) respectively. Adam, in Figure 5.7, shared a photo of himself and a friend with a local who helped him out while he was in India. Faris shared a local setting and highlighted a street, building and local people, without appearing in the photo himself, because he wanted to show the real India which might be ruined by the presence of himself as tourist. This particular example shows that the tourists’ appearance and absence in visual images depended on the message that they wanted to deliver. On the other hand, their appearance in photos was significant for describing their experience at iconic attractions, such as the Taj Mahal. Also, for activities such as kayaking, diving and skiing it seemed to be important for them to include themselves in the photos.

6.2.3.2 Meanings of Travel Blog Content

The interviews with the travel bloggers and narrative and content analyses revealed four themes in the travel blogs, which are: (1) novelty and otherness; (2) media representation; (3) learning and reflections; and (4) emotional expression. Within those themes, the emotion is explicitly and implicitly expressed in their stories. Therefore, it is concluded that emotions is an important elements in constructing the tourist experience.

Emotion plays an important role in narrative construction of tourist experience in travel blogs as the theme of the emotional expressions were found to be reported at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage of the tourist experience. Also, emotions were embedded in experience with the local food, site and performing certain activities. For example, at certain destination, even though the highlight was the destination itself, the tourists expressed their emotions, feelings of being there, rather than solely focusing on describing the destinations. It is revealed that a variety of emotions can be identified over the entire experience of a particular activity, for example as seen in Adam's video of the tuk-tuk ride (Section 5.5.1), Mimi skiing in India (Section 5.5.1) and Laili's train experience in Myanmar (Section 5.5.4). For instance, Adam explained that during his experience riding in a tuk-tuk, initially, he was quite fearful, then as he felt more comfortable, positive emotions were stimulated. He concluded that the experience was pleasant for him and he enjoyed it, and that it was an experience that he could not have had in his hometown. For Laili, the unfavourable experience with the train condition during her train ride change into an enjoyable experience. This is due to, despite the frustration with the train service, during the train journey itself, she encountered with many favourable experience, which she considered as the best experience. This shows that emotions have a dynamic nature, as one's emotions might change many times during an event.

The analysis of different content types on travel blogs revealed that the account of novelty and otherness was recounted in various stories that related to culture, food and activities. These accounts suggested that travel bloggers quested for authenticity in their experience, as most of the stories were the events that they planned ahead, such as the ski experience as shared by Mimi, and Daniel's diving

stories. Also, the meanings related to authenticity embedded in text, photos and videos indicates that, within the travel blog context, highlighting the novelty and otherness in their stories was an important construction of their experience's narration. While the authenticity of the toured objects was discussed and highlighted by most of the participants, the existential authenticity of the experienced was also emphasised by the some of them. An experience is perceived as authentic as it involves 'personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities' (Wang, 1999, p. 351).

6.2.4 Relationship between Engagement and Motivations with the Narrative Construction of Tourist Experience

Engagement and motivation have been extensively studied in travel-related social media, but little attention has been paid to both components in influencing the narrative construction of tourist experience. This study therefore attempted to understand how engagement and motivation influence and shape the tourist experience at each stage of the tourist experience. Firstly, travel bloggers relied on others' blogs to make travel decisions before travelling which was a result of instrumental motivation, which is related to information-seeking needs and narrative construction of the tourist experience. Travel bloggers' behaviours by browsing and reading travel blogs generally provided support and assisted the travel bloggers to prepare for their travel and narrow down their choice. In this regard, the travel blog details and depth of the tourist experience, rich in personal perception and emotions which cover a wide range of information, play an important role for the potential tourists planning their travel. Potential tourists therefore, are open to many options, have more knowledge about the destination, and other travel bloggers' experiences and evaluations assist them to make a decision.

Secondly, participation with the blogs, by commenting on the read blogs, enhanced narrative construction of the tourist experience. For example, communication with content creators allows potential tourists to have a better understanding of one's own experience and in confirming existing information.

This study also highlights that bloggers' tourist experience is influenced and shaped by their interaction within the blogosphere, either with the content creators or with other readers. In this regards, a blogger's motivation to post is in large part due to their shared relationship with the readers who give them social capital as a condition of their interaction with their posts. A post's success can be measured by the number of 'likes' it collects (Papacharissi and Easton, 2013). The bloggers' were concerned about the acceptance of their posts, whose success was measured by 'likes' and 'follows'. This shows that travel bloggers habitually take their virtual readers into account as they travel.

Thirdly, narrative construction of the tourist experience can be enhanced through posting behaviour. A posting behaviour characterised by producing content, and communicating with readers, allowed the travel bloggers to express themselves, benefit others and interact with readers. For self-expression, participants shared their opinions through which they reflected their inner selves. Through blogs, they shared their tourist experience which reflected their personal interests, such as journalism and photography as mentioned by Ani, Faris and Ramli. Also, by sharing detailed travel stories, including hot tips and warnings, travel bloggers were able to help other potential tourists with their travel planning and support them in having a better or the same experience as them which is related to social responsibility motivation as suggested by Fatimah and Kamal. Through interactive communication, participants changed their opinions, asked for suggestions and received feedback. This allowed the participants to extend their travel excitement and provide an idea for the next trip to the same or a different destination.

This study highlights that, within the travel blog context, travel anticipation constructed at the pre-visit stage influenced the actual tourist experience at the on-site stage. Bruner (2004) mention that the most appropriate setting to share the tourist experience is while the tourist is still at the destination, as the tourist is still undertaking the travel and all the attention is focused on it. While the availability of mobile applications may help this to occur, this study discovered that participants preferred to be totally disconnected from travel blogs whilst travelling. Most of the participants did not post content before and during

the travel, nevertheless, the relationship between the anticipation and actual experience was discovered through their post-visit engagement. This is because at that stage they recalled and compared their expectations with reality. To some extent all of the travel bloggers evaluated their actual experience in text or photos. In this regard, it was revealed that the engagement with the travel blogs allowed one to have more realistic image and perception of the destination. Some participants emphasised that their actual experience was even better than the expectations constructed through previous engagement with travel blogs, it nevertheless highlights that travel blogs are a key source of information. As for the participants who produced and participated with their own content whilst travelling, their actual experience was strongly influenced by their interactions within the blogosphere. This is because to a greater extent their activities were influenced by the suggestions and comments obtained from the interactions with other bloggers.

Reciprocity is an important mechanism in influencing tourist engagement, in which motivations play a central role in this context. For example, tourists who were driven by information seeking motivations, which they fulfilled at the pre-visit stage, were inclined to contribute more at the post-visits stage, which was driven by the social responsibility. By sharing their experience, they stated their need to support others in making the better decision. They felt obligated to give back to the potential tourist what they had gained at the pre-visit stage in the travel planning phase. Interestingly, although they passively read blogs at the pre-visit stage, they showed their desire to give back what they had gained. In this regard, they did not specifically contribute to the blogs they initially read, but they did feel obligated to serve others in general, who are in the same position as they were at the pre-visit stage.

The sense of obligation influenced the travel bloggers to continuously engage with travel blogs. It applied to engagement at the on-site stage and post-visit stage. This is because they had developed a commitment to the readers at the pre-visit stage, especially for bloggers that post their own contents before the visit. Their interaction at the pre-visit stage, for example, indirectly formed a commitment to their readers because readers also literally showed their eagerness

to see how they travelled. Thus to maintain the relationship, travel bloggers continued to update their travel at the next stage (the on-site stage of the tourist experience). Therefore, the interaction at the pre-visit stage, especially by the travel bloggers who posted their own content, influenced them to continue the posting behaviour while they travelled. It is found that interaction at the pre-visit stage influenced the content that they shared at the on-site stage. They kept their promises to update their readers and communicated with them during their travels. For the travel bloggers who did not engage with travel blogs at the on-site stage, they repaid their debt at the post-visit stage. They contributed back to the blogosphere and helped potential tourists in their travel preparations by sharing the details of their experience, and at the same time, interacting with them to answer any queries. They even just had a leisure interaction with the readers just to have fun, to chat with the readers and to extend their travel excitement.

6.3 Contribution of the Study

6.3.1 Theoretical Implications

In order to highlight the position taken by this study, Chapter 1 examined the gaps in the literature with regard to narrative construction of tourist experience in the travel blog context. The findings of the study provide important theoretical contributions to the existing knowledge on travel-related social media engagement by addressing scarcities, particularly with regard to the three different stages of the tourist experience. The findings provide a better understanding on the mechanisms and structures between engagement, motivation and narrative construction of tourist experience.

Firstly, as discussed in section 6.2.1-6.2.4, this study significantly contributes to the current literature on travel-related social media and tourism that demonstrates, to date, very limited studies investigating the mechanisms and structures between engagement and motivations in narrative construction of tourist experience. This study's findings indeed provide rich understanding on the following issues: (1) the different behaviours and strategies at each stage of the tourist experience; (2) motivations behind the different behaviours and strategies;

(3) how the different behaviours, strategies and motivations influence and shape the narrative construction of tourist experience throughout each of the stages; (4) the themes of the meanings behind the constructed experience; and (5) the contents of images that construct the tourist experience.

Secondly, there has been little if any focus on the three different stages of the tourist experience in one particular research. Existing studies focus on the post-visit and pre-visit stages of the tourist experience separately. By incorporating the three stages of the tourist experience, this study adds to the existing literature in the travel blog context that contends that there is an interrelationship between each stage. This study highlights that the tourist experience at the pre-visit stage, constructed by the initial engagement with travel blogs, influenced and shaped the on-site tourist experience. The post-visit experience was also influenced by their expectations and actual experience.

Thirdly, existing studies have investigated narrative construction of tourist experience mainly at certain stages separately, for example, at the pre-visit or post-visit stage. By combining all of these stages into one study, this research highlights that the engagement and motivation with the travel blogs influenced the actual tourist experience, regardless of their engagement at the on-site stage. It is highlighted that the actual tourist experience highly relies on their pre-visit engagement. For those who do not engage at all, their actual tourist experience was still influenced and shaped by their previous engagement with travel blogs, thus implying that travel blogs play an important role in shaping their actual experience. This is because the participants specifically imitate the travel itinerary provided by other travel bloggers, follow their advice and suggestions and also specifically perform the same activities as other travel bloggers in order to have the same experience.

Fourthly, this study attempted to investigate the relationship between each stage of the tourist experience. It is confirmed that the engagement and motivation at each stage influenced the following stages of engagement and motivation, and finally influenced and shaped the tourist experience. It is demonstrated that travel bloggers who posted content at the pre-visit stage continued the same level of

engagement throughout all stages. For those who only read and commented on blogs, they tended to disconnect from blogs during their travel, but then become an active content creator again after the trip was finished. Therefore, as the majority of past studies merely focus on a certain stage of the tourist experience, this study contributes to the existing literature that has been missing a holistic picture of the relationship between each stage of the tourist experience.

Fifthly, this study specifically focuses on travel blogs and does not take account of others blogs, which has become the focus of the previous studies. For instance, blogging motivation has been comprehensively studied, involving other types of blogs, including political and personal blogs. In addition, to understand individual behaviours in social media, past studies have merely focussed on online reviews and virtual communities, which they consider function similarly to blogs. This study, therefore, makes a significant contribution to the study of travel bloggers who play a substantial role in influencing and shaping tourists' experience at the three stages of the tourist experience. Also, this study adds understandings to the dichotomies of lurkers versus posters (Bishop, 2007; Schlosser, 2005) by including different engagement which represents a few behaviours beyond just lurking and posting. This study, therefore, sheds some further light on how the engagement is gradually enhanced, which depends on the needs fulfilment.

Sixthly, and related to the above, the study adds additional knowledge on the application of the U&G approach in travel-related media studies. Previous studies within the U&G perspective have merely focused on the behaviour of reading and maintaining blogs. Therefore, this study highlights that internet and social media could all be examined by exploring the content creators' and the readers' needs at different blogging behaviours.

Last but not least, since limited academic attention has been paid to understanding the relationship between the blogging behaviours and motivation in relation to the tourist experience at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage of tourist experience, this study made an initial attempt to investigate the influence and relationship of different blogging behaviours on narrative construction of

tourist experience. As discussed and presented earlier in Section 6.2.4, the findings of this study suggest that regardless of the blogging behaviours, it does influence and shape narrative construction of tourist experience at each stage of the tourist experience. It further highlights that interaction within the blogosphere plays a very important role in constructing tourist experience as the interaction produces excitement, enhances tourist experience and influences the actual tourist experience.

6.3.2 Managerial Implications

Due to the evidence of the impact of travel related social media (e.g., travel reviews and virtual communities, such as TripAdvisor) on the tourism industry, it is often assumed that tourists are automatically influenced by the information shared by other tourists. This simplistic assumption has led destination marketers to use social media in marketing and promoting their tourism product and services without appropriate understanding and thus strategies. Also, destination marketers and tour operators seem to market their destinations without a clear understanding of the essential nature of the blogosphere in narrative construction of tourist experience construction. The results of the study, therefore, suggest several managerial implications with reference to tourism stakeholders, such as travel agents, tour operator services, and DMOs.

1) Travel Agents, and Tour Operator Services

The study discovered that highly professional and quality tour facilitators such as travel agents and tour operators can significantly contribute to the narrative construction of tourist experience for both potential and actual tourists. Although tourist experiences are considered to be highly subjective phenomena by scholars (Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011), the present study suggests that tourism marketers have many ways for actively engaging in constructing tourist experience for their customers. The potential managerial actions listed below are some examples that tourism suppliers can consider.

Firstly, the findings reveal that at the pre-visits stage, participants rely on travel blogs to satisfy their information searching needs. This suggests the importance and reliability of the information supplied by the bloggers who are considered to be ‘experienced people’. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2003) highlight that consuming another’s opinion about a product can help an individual to make a better decision and save time spent on making that decision. Thus, it is evident that, at the pre-visit stage, the behaviour of browsing and reading visual and textual narratives of other tourists’ experience assists the potential tourists in creating their anticipated tourist experiences as well as preparing their own travels. Destination marketers, therefore, need to monitor and observe the nature of information supplied by the ‘experienced people’ – the travel bloggers. Marketers need to recognise the type, the depth and characteristic of the information that potential tourists prefer to consume in assisting with their travel planning. For example, in visiting an iconic attraction, potential tourists usually ask for the best time to be there to avoid crowds, and hot tips to get a good deal, such as public transportation. Also for the people who are passionate about photographs, they are concerned about the best time to be at a certain destination for photography purposes. For people who are concerned with their well-being while travelling, they look for safety tips, things that should be avoided, such as food, and advice about what personal belongings they should bring with them to make their travels smooth. Also people look for details and specific information, such as the transportation costs and time required to get from point A to B. They’re usually particular on this as they want to be thoroughly prepared so that they can fully utilise their time.

Secondly, tour companies should acknowledge the significance of the interactive and more personalised communications within the blogosphere. This is because the findings have discovered that communication within the blogosphere has the potential to assist with the construction of the tourist experience throughout the stages of the tourist experience. The dynamics of the interactive communications serve several functions to both the travel bloggers and the readers. Firstly, interaction allows potential tourists to clarify and confirm their expectations before the travel. In this regard, tour companies should closely

monitor the nature of these interactions, as participants mentioned that the interaction provided pre-travel excitement and encouragement. In this context, destination marketers can establish a connection with the potential tourists in a more interactive and enjoyable environment, rather than in a formal conversational environment. Secondly, interaction at the on-site stage allows the participants to obtain prompt suggestions, while they are still at the sites. In this sense, monitoring such interaction by destination marketers allows them to specifically identify the activities or experiences that tourists would not skip or miss at that specific destination. Such information might provide the latest or current needs of tourists at the site. This therefore allows the tour companies to recognise immediate and simultaneous needs of the tourists. Next, at the post-visit stage, interaction provides substantial potential to the tourist to re-experience the destination. Monitoring the communicated subjects among the readers allows the tour operators to identify the most communicated aspects of their tourist experience which also reflects their most memorable and satisfying experiences. The most communicated aspects of the tourist experience is important to be considered because it will be more likely to be copied by potential tourists who would seek out the same romanticised experience when their time comes. Based on the communicated aspects of the tourist experience, tour operators can develop or improve the facilities at the destinations. Also, they can develop marketing plans which highlight the strength of the destination. For the negative side of the communication aspects of the experience, the tour operators can make strategies to improve it.

Thirdly, participants were found to construct the tourist experience based on other media, such as film and television programmes. As these types of stories were only shared when they come back, it suggests that this kind of tourist experience plays an important role in remembering the tourist experience. Therefore, destination managers can make a connection or network with film or television producers to engage with their destination. Destination managers can provide their destinations for filming, for example, and indirectly 'show' the specific attraction or destination to the viewers. Focusing on the aesthetic views, such as panoramic views of the destination may evoke viewers' interest to visit

the destination. This is seen as an interactive marketing strategy as it may allow viewers to be inspired by what they see on the screen.

Fourthly, travel bloggers' experiences were found to be related to the local interaction. Therefore, tour companies can create packages that involve, for example, interaction with people, foods and culture. Another important finding of this study is that tourists who constructed their tourist experience based on local interaction were found to have a considerable recollection of their past experienced. Therefore, destination managers can increase their tourists' recollection of their experience by offering a trip package that includes engagement with local people and culture.

Fifthly, the findings highlight the use of emotional expression in communicating the tourist experience, which is used by the travel bloggers throughout the stages of the tourist experience as reflected in each theme of the stories. Destinations have the potential to provoke strong emotional responses because they are rich in experiential attributes (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). The stories of their experience can provide tour companies insight into the kinds of experiences that can provoke emotions and achieve emotional connection.

2) Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs)

Firstly, the findings highlight that engagement with the local people played an important role in constructing the participant's tourist experience. This could include, for example, passive engagement such as seeing the local mundane life, or direct interaction with locals. Attraction authorities, therefore, should play an active role in engaging the local communities with the sites. Supporting and educating the local communities to be more 'tourist friendly' allows the tourist to enhance their tourist experience. Educational training programmes, for example, can be introduced to create awareness and educate the tourists about the destinations. Such programmes enable the tourists to have a closer relationship with the sites, culture and people which will enhance the tourist experience. Through direct communication with the locals it creates the potential for the

tourist to obtain firsthand stories, which may enhance tourist understanding and alter tourist perception towards the destinations.

Secondly, DMOs can use communicated aspects of the tourist experience as a mechanism to monitor the quality for specific services or destinations. For example, if tourists constantly complain about a frustratingly long queue at attraction ticket counters and the tardiness of the opening hour at the ticket counter, DMO could address this by providing alternatives ticket counters, not just at the destination only. They can open ticket counters at tourist spots, such as airport, bus stations and shopping malls or they can make online ticket purchasing available. These actions not only eliminate tourists' frustrations but also assist tourists with their travel planning. Potential tourists will travel with peace of mind and do not have to worry about it anymore.

Thirdly, in relation to the above, also based on the communicated aspects of tourist experience, DMOs can identify the tourist preferences and market segmentation. For example, they can segment their tourist based on the tourists' preferences. Based on the segmentation, they can develop appropriate plans to satisfy them. For example, they can assign a person to guide the tourists with photography interests by providing as much information as possible for the best results of photography. They can engage their experts to assist the tourists to capture perfect angle or suggest a suitable time for the best photography outcome. Also, DMOs can display the destination with appealing and creative photos. The identification of the latest trend in photography usually posted by tourists, such as unique and eye-catching photos, may evoke potential tourists' envy to have the same moment with the attraction or destination.

Fourthly, in addition to seeking pleasurable experiences, tourists are increasingly seeking intellectual development during their travels (Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008; Morgan, 2010). This study reports that learning and reflection is one of the themes which emerged in the narrative construction of tourist experience. This indicates that when visiting a tourist attraction, tourists expect to learn something rather than simply observe the monuments, for instance. Therefore, any relevant authorities of such attractions, such as religious and

heritage sites can use the information to develop their marketing plans and re-visit their destination images. For example, DMOs can use the information from stories that lead to personal growth and intellectual development, in promoting the destination. Also, they can use photos that reflect learning elements in order to attract potential tourists to visit the destination.

Lastly, the novelty and otherness theme highlighted the significance that authenticity, such as the food, transportation, activities and the sites itself, played in the evaluation of the tourist experience. DMOs therefore should pay attention to what travel bloggers write and communicate. For example, they can benefit from these stories by developing marketing strategies that enhance its uniqueness. DMOs can also take action on the negative aspects narrated about the locals by the travel bloggers by assisting tourists to understand and appreciate the uniqueness.

6.4 Limitation of the Study

The findings of this study have contributed to the current literature on narrative construction of tourist experience within the travel blog context and to managerial implication for destinations marketers. Similarly, this study has a few limitations that should be acknowledged.

Firstly, using travel blogs of different destinations and the variation of trip duration has greatly influenced the richness of the data. These two aspects could influence the construction of the tourist experience. Different destinations may offer different attractions, while variation of trip duration may influence many aspects of tourist experience, such as the tourist pre-visit activities including travel planning and preparation. Therefore, future studies might consider specifically focusing on a certain travel duration period, for example, long haul journey, short trip, weekend trip, day trip or business trip. An investigation of this research area that focuses on a specific destination and trip duration could provide more in-depth data as tourist engagement and motivation may differ depending on the destination and the length of the trips.

Secondly, this study provides an understanding of narrative construction of the tourist experience throughout its three different stages and highlights the similarities and differences. However, the study findings reveal that at the on-site stage, only a few participants engage with travel blogs. Due to this reason, this study offers a limited finding on the on-site narrative construction of the tourist experience. Limited blog content could be used for analysis as only a few of the participants posted content at the on-site stage of tourist experience.

Thirdly, the study includes three different types of contents: texts, photos and videos. These three types of contents are usually posted by the travel bloggers to describe their tourist experience. However, in this study, not all the photos posted by the travel bloggers were used for analysis. Rather this study was only limited to a certain number of photos which depended on the participants' choice. Therefore, the present findings in this study would be limited in terms of its representation of photos used in describing the destinations and experience. The use of all the posted photos to understand the narrative construction of tourist experience would provide more insights into narrative construction of tourist experience and eliminate bias in the photos selection.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the above limitations, the study still encourages further explanation, discussion and development of current knowledge regarding tourist engagement with travel blogs in creating their tourist experience. This study suggests a number of issues that remain unexplored to better understand the social media and travel blogging phenomena and tourist experience in a wider context and in broader dimensions, outside of this study's scope.

Firstly, the engagement and motivations (e.g., uses and gratifications) needs to be further researched in a broader context, such as by employing a different kind of travel-related social media, such as a social networking site (e.g., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). This type of social media is widely used by tourists on mobile devices, which offers accessibility and flexibility for browsing and updating travel information as mentioned by the travel bloggers who did not

engage with travel blogs during their travel. As this kind of social media is usually 'carried' by the tourist during the holiday, a further study on how tourists engage with this kind of social media and their motivation behind their engagement in relation to the narrative construction of tourist experience could provide an in-depth understanding of narrative construction of tourist experience, especially at the on-site stage.

Secondly, this study highlights that travel blog engagement, in association with a set of motivations, influences and shapes tourist experience. Through the identified engagement and motivations, this study highlights that travel blogs are more than just a means of gathering information and sharing the tourist experience. Travel bloggers engage with travel blogs for entertainment and to communicate with the readers, to express their self-identity and also for social networking. These aspects can be considered as important and complex functions of travel blogs, rather than simply a means of searching for and sharing tourist experiences. Future studies could consider these other travel blog functions to further understand the holistic picture of the travel blogging phenomenon in relation to the tourist experience.

Thirdly, in terms of the methodology perspective, future studies might consider adopting a more time effective methodology, such as netnography (ethnography applied to the internet). Netnography is less time consuming compared to the other qualitative methods, such as ethnography and in-depth observation and interviews (Kozinets, 2002). Adopting a longitudinal approach through the netnography method, which also included the comments from the readers, may provide a better understanding of the relationship between each stage of the tourist experience construction through the travel blogs lens. Netnography offers great potential for a deeper understanding of the travel blogging phenomenon by give researchers the opportunity to obtain emic interpretive data of the meanings lived by tourists while at the on-site and post-visit stage of the tourist experience (Woodside et al., 2007; Woodside, 2009).

Last but not least, readers and their comments are important considerations for producers who post and share on social media (Cohen, 2005; Whitty, 2007).

Readers' comments and feedback influence producers to continue to share their writing (Miura & Yamashita, 2007). Also by considering readers' comments, the influence of the read travel stories can be assessed as potential tourists express their intention to visit or to have the same experience as the travel bloggers (Volo, 2009). Since comments are considered an important influence on what is shared by the producers, future studies could look at the tourist experience construction at the three different stages of the tourist experience, the three different contents posted by the producers and the comments from the readers. Looking at all of the elements contained in travel blogs would therefore allow a more in-depth understanding of tourist experience construction in the travel blog context.

In conclusion, despite the above mentioned limitations, it is clear that this study has provided opportunities for future research directions. This study indeed was just an initial step in exploring the substantial potential of travel blogs in influencing and shaping tourist experience at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage of tourist experience. As technology continues to improve rapidly, and tourists continue to rely on such technologies, it can be expected that more interesting findings will arise.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction



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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce N Alia who is a Ph.D student in the Tourism Department, School of Humanities at Flinders University.

She is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of '**Constructing Tourism Experiences via Travel Blog Engagement: A Longitudinal Study of Malaysian Travel Bloggers and Tourists**'. By analyzing a selection travel blogs and interviews with travel bloggers, she aims to provide deep insights into how tourism experiences are continuously constructed and shaped via travel blog engagement.

She would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project by granting an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than 50 minutes on one occasion would be required. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since she intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +618 8201 3039, by fax on +618 8201 3635 or by email (sean.kim@flinders.edu.au).

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sean Kim
Senior Lecturer
Department of Tourism
School of Humanities
Flinders University

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number: 5875). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

inspiring
achievement

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Interview agenda:

- Explanation study to the participants
- Informed consents
- Audio-recorded interview

Interview questions:

(1) Self-introduction of the participants

- Can you briefly introduce yourself to me?
- Can you tell me the type of travel do you prefer
- Why do you like travelling?
- How was your trip to _____?

(2) Engagement and motivation (in regards with the selected trip to discuss)

1. Can you tell me general information about your blogging behaviour, such as, where do you blog, how much time do you spend on your blogs?
2. Why did you start to travel blog?
3. What are the reasons for creating and maintaining a travel blog?
4. How do you engage with travel blogs before your trip?
5. What contents do you look for on travel blog at this stage? (If any)
6. What contents do you post on your travel blogs? (If any)
7. Based on your above answers, what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?
8. How do you engage with travel blogs during your trip?
9. What contents do you look for on travel blog at this stage? (If any)
10. What content do you post on your travel blogs? (If any)
11. Based on your above answers, what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?
12. How do you engage with travel blogs after your trip?
13. When do you post content to your own travel blog after your trip is completed?
14. What content do you post on your travel blogs?
15. Based on your above answers, what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?

(3) Travel blog's content (depends on the participant's blog)

1. Why do you prefer to share more textual contents compared to photos?
2. Why do you prefer to share more photos compared to textual contents?
3. Take a few minutes to have a look at your own entries dated _____ to _____

4. Please choose five best photos with and without your/travel companion appearance (If any)
5. Why did you post this photo?
 - i. Why your appearance in photo is important for such photo, and why not for the other one?
6. What is the meaning behind this photo?

Appendix 3: Transcript of Participant no 8. (Faris)

I. Engagement and motivation (in regards with the selected trip to discuss)

1. How much time do you spend on your blogs, on daily basis?

I am quite busy actually with my daily work, but at least, I will spend around 2 to 3 hours, depends on my schedule. But surely, I will make time blogging, not writing I mean, but maybe just leisurely “open” my blog, do some reading and so on. Usually after works, before sleep, like that.

2. How do you engage with travel blogs before your trip?

Before travelling, I would do some research by referring to trip advisors and search for recommendations as well. In addition, I also refer to other’s blogs and observe their personal experiences.

I personally believed that travel blogs influence what I did before travelled, as I told you earlier about my silly drinking water that I brought to India. That’s among what I learnt about India from travel blogs itself, and I think that it worth the effort to bring them there. When I was there, I remember someone from the blog remind me not to take so much of spicy street food, as I will easily get diarrhoea, I follow the advice, and thank god, I was all good during the travel. I took extra care of cleanliness and sometimes I wore face mask, because I cannot stand with the dusty road. For me, my main motivation to read blogs is to get as much as information, so I really fully utilised what I read from blogs, as I trust this kind of information source. What I gained from the blogs really help me to plan my travel actually, especially in terms of transportation selection and important stuff to bring from Malaysia.

3. What contents do you look for on travel blog at this stage? (If any)

Simple information such as on how they prepared themselves for travelling is very useful. What I remember, as I observed that moderate level of cleanliness in India,

I do bring a few bottle of mineral water to India, sound silly, but then, I do not want to feel sick while travelling.

4. What contents do you post on your travel blogs? (If any)

Usually, before I travelled, I do not post anything on my blogs. I do not have time to do such things, and also, I do not have anything interesting to be shared, as I have not travelled yet.

Based on your above answers, what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?

Usually, I read blog to plan my travel as it is easier to get what I want. The way information is arranged in the blog makes it is easier for me to access to that information. For example, for my recent trip to India, and I wanted to visit Taj Mahal. I have a few list of my favourite bloggers who had been there. So I just go to Taj Mahal section in their blogs and all the related information range from transportation, the best time to be there and many more will be easily found. I don't have to waste my time to search for this kind of information at different sources. All I can say is, it is like a one stop centre. In one click, I can get all the relevant information. Of cause the information were reliable, as they were experienced people and bloggers would not lie about their experience.

5. How do you engage with travel blogs during your trip and what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?

I am not updating my travelling plan due to privacy and safety concern. This is just a precaution because other people can trace my location easily. At the same time, I hardly find time to write and share my experiences interestingly and sometimes it is tough for me to search for the right words due to fatigue. I am afraid that my blog's readers unable to understand and appreciate what I have experienced.

6. How do you engage with travel blogs after your trip?

I try to write a new post within one month and the fastest that I can make is within a week. I would also put some pictures and it takes time for me because besides being a blogger, I am also working. Thus, I need to find an appropriate time to

write well. Not only post entries, I also reply to the readers' comments. I believe this is a good interaction. This is how I communicate with my readers besides other social networks such as Facebook and Instagram.

7. What content do you post on your travel blogs?

Mostly, I will include photos and with brief explanation and description and I seldom include video. Maybe it is due to I was a photographer back then, so I like to play with photos. Moreover, readers would get more interested when they see photos and they would like to read and know more about my journey. Furthermore, I think my writing skill is not that good, so that is why I like to include photos. Photos will portray the truth about a particular place. Even if the place is dirty, somehow I will be able to persuade people to go because what matters is experience. It is okay to manifest the true condition of a place. For an instance, in India, there is a very small market and packed with locals as well as tourists, it is very warm and humid sometimes but people would still go there.

8. Based on your above answers, what makes you choose to use travel blogs in these ways?

After the trip is finished, I share my travel stories, as I have interest in sharing my knowledge and experience with others. Maybe it is due to the fact that I was a photographer back then, so I took a lot of photos, and by sharing in blogs, I consider it as one of my personal interests. Readers would get more interested when they see beautiful photos and they would like to read and know about my travel experience. I know my skills in photography and would love to know whether my audiences like it or not. Through some comments, lucky me, they all like it, and some asked for more photographs that make me feel proud.

II. Travel blog's content (depends on the participant's blog)

1. Why do you prefer to share more photographs compared to textual contents?

I love photography and I am not so good in writing. But sometimes, I try to balance it. However, I personally think that picture worth thousand words. Pictures will bring the readers to the place by sharing beautiful and attractive photos. I imagine that explanation in words without any prove in pictures make my storytelling dry. Hope u can get it. I think it is easier to understand a story in photos then.

2. Please choose five best photos with and without your/travel companion appearance (If any)

With tourist appearance

Picture 1



This photo taken when we check in at the hotel. The hotel's staff gave me the flower, as a symbol of welcoming us. Thus, I captured this image to show that I have been greeted and welcomed. Also this to express my excitement and eagerness to explore India and also the culture.

Picture 2



This is the door/entrance that I tell I tell the audiences about; you can whisper over this wall. This is magic experience that myself found here, as I never read or know this from any reading material/blogs/ people. This to perform that I was whispering at that time. Also, wanted to share my magical experience, so that's why I appear in this photo.

Picture 3



This is the excitement pose. And maybe you are aware that this is the current posing style, so I posed this way to show my excitement for being here. For me, the Taj Mahal as the background is important as the reason of what I am excited

for. I know I did not write a lot about this in my blog, but I think this photo really shows my true feelings at that time.

Why your appearance in photo is important for this photo?

Well...seeing Taj Mahal with my own eyes is absolutely a special moment. Actually I do not have any special reason or what so ever, but, maybe spontaneous, that, me and the Taj Mahal. It is like, finally, yeah. I am here everyone. (laughing)

Picture 4



The floor is quiet cold so and this pose is basically a Bollywood Style. By the way, I purchased this Bollywood Style clothe in New Delhi. So I try to look like local people. I brought another clothe just to visit Taj Mahal and I never do this before at other destination. I wore another shirt on my way to Taj Mahal and to feel more comfortable after a long journey, that is way I changed my shirt. In conclusion, it is because Taj Mahal is one of the 7 wonders in the world. Definitely you want a perfect photo of you with Taj Mahal. I would think that, this is a once in a lifetime experience. But perhaps I can revisit Taj Mahal some other time. I would try to make it meaningful and you can feel the excitement. Extra effort needed for you to get a great picture and enjoy the moment at the same time

Without tourists appearance

Picture 1



This is the real condition of a street and shop lots in India. I used to watch Hindi movie a lot, and it was exactly the same. I remember the busyness of the street with the local crowd, the moderate level of cleanliness and the poor road condition that was always shown in the movies scenes. But overall, I think the real condition was much better than what I saw in the movie. I captured this to let my audiences get the accurate picture of the true India.

Why you do not make yourself appeared in this photo?

I think myself is not important to tell the story about it. The picture of the views itself is more than enough to explain it. (Faris)

Picture 2



This is the central part of my journey to India. The main reason I travel to India is to see the Taj Mahal with my own eyes. The full image with far sighted view means I am really eager to see the magnificent monument that has attracted millions of people to be here. Also, as you can see, there are too many people that heading to this place. I want to show that how “hot” this place are, and I also one of them that don’t want to miss to visit this place. This photo also represents my dreams to be here. And today, I made it.

Picture 3



This trip really changed me. By knowing the other people that live in difficulties, I really appreciate of what I have back in my home country that I always take for granted before this. I was thinking to make a more frequent prayer at the mosques in Malaysia as I think it is such a waste that the good facilities have not been fully used.

Picture 4



I was impressed with the architecture. The landscape also was wonderful. Actually I was standing still for a few minutes before I captured this photo as I totally impressed with the green landscape and magnificent and fine art of the building. This monument is set amidst a lush garden that complement the beautifully carved, red-ochre sandstone tomb Also I was eagerly can't wait to see what they have inside.

Picture 5



This is what the main attraction for me in India was. I am so ready to go.

Meanings of video:

I wanted to show how the local cuisine looks like, and how to eat them the right way. The bright colour of the food was so tempting and it was served in a very traditional way. Also, in the video, people can hear the noise, which indicates the busyness of the famous Indian restaurant. By showing I am enjoying the food, the audiences also can feel and enjoy it as well and to show how spicy but delicious the food was.

Actually I am quite used to Indian food. But having it with Phuran who is kind and friendly to be part of this video who introduced to us the food, was a new experience for me. Now I know how to eat this food in the right way, so that it will taste more delightful.

Appendix 4: Faris's Blog

TAKING OVER NEW DELHI - DEPARTURE DAY

Destination: New Delhi, India.

Travel Date: 17 - 21 May 2012 (4days, 3 nights)

Air Route: KUL-DEL-KUL via Malaysia Airlines (supposedly to fly with AirAsia)

One word. Its incredible India. This is my first time going to central Asia, among all the feeling was how can I survive the weather, atmosphere and food? I've done few research from several travel bloggers and most of them were complaining about extra hot weather, less clean food and dusty atmosphere. For the first time ever, I packed my own food. 8 bottles of mineral waters, couples of pre-packed bread, chocolates for energy and of course medication. :P That's how nervous I was.

This trip was pre-booked earlier in 2011 via AirAsia Go. Halfway through, AirAsia cuts the route. An alternative was given in return and they booked us on Malaysia Airlines (MAS). That's one part. Another part was, we've found out that the pre-booked hotel was sealed. Yes, SEALED! Haha.. Too much trouble. Too much hassle. Tweeted @AirAsia and emailed them for urgent response as its 3 days left before the arrival. Everything settled within 24 hours before the departure. A replacement hotel was given.

NEW DELHI & AGRA: Road to Rumble

Thousand apologies from me for not updating my travelogue since then. Work has been hectic and turned out that there are too many changes in life. As I am now in transit at Colombo Aiport (Bandaraynake International Airport) for 9 hours before waiting for my next flight to Charles De Gaur Paris, I feel like I would like to complete my post on Delhi Trip.

The day we touchdown in New Delhi, we waited for approximately 2 hours for the shuttle to arrive and bring us to the hotel. New Godwin Hotel is located in the central of busy streets of Delhi where the tourist hotels are situated. The shuttle drove through the narrow streets in between buildings. Quite exciting area where there is no proper road but lively with beautiful lightings from the hotels signages n restaurants. We checked in and settled ourselves for exciting tomorrow.

As the sun rise and shine, we started off with breakfast complimentary by the hotel at the rooftop next door. We wondered why next door? We realised that the next door also owned by the same hotel management, but with different room rates. Of course much expensive than ours. LOL. The mixed buffet of English & Indian was served. No offence, but after read through the reviews in other travelogues, I was literally being very careful on the food intakes as my tummy is super extra sensitive. But on the first day I already stuffed myself with traditional Indian food. The Puree. hehehehe.. The tummy accept is as fine as it is. I'm glad.

NEW DELHI & AGRA: Road to Rumble - Day 2

Its the day for Taj Mahal! We've been searching for the best way to get to Agra to see one of world's wonder, The Taj Mahal. Among all, we've come a crossed this one way recommended by Shahfariz.com and Masviona. However, due to the last minute the train tickets were not able to be purchased online, in advance. So we've decided to just go with the flow until we reached the hotel.

Driver was hired to bring us to Agra. it was believed that the route to get to Agra by car is much longer (5hours) compared to by train which only takes 3 hours. But seeing that we have no choice due to last minute preparation, we decided to grab a car with a driver, Pooran. The journey started off early morning at 6am from the hotel.

Going to Agra from Delhi was an experience to share. You can see that the traffic in India was not that bad at all. It happened that we passed by the train station area and there were heavy traffic as it was on weekend morning. We stucked for half an hour before head off to Indian highway/motorway which is more or less like journey from Kuala Lumpur to Kuantan via old roads. It was good to see the view of Indian settlement from the car window. We stopped for typical breakfast (prata) before continue our journey.

Before we reached Agra itself, we made a quick pit stop at Sikandra Fort. This fort was built by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar. He is well known of his passion in arts, literature, religion, architecture and statesmanship. This one of the best piece of architecture that I've visited in India. Surprisingly, he planned his own tomb and selected the site himself. Have this ever came across your mind? This monument is set amidst a lush garden that complement the beautifully carved, red-ochre sandstone tomb.

Believe it or not, at each corner at the entrance of this building, you can actually whisper and the person opposite you can hear you. Myself, I was surprised. I haven't read anything about this from the Internet/travel blog, but it is believed that this was designed for the communication between the guards at each corner of the entrance of the building.

Further, we reached Agra around 1300hrs Indian time. Had quick lunch of Briyani and then we headed for Agra Fort tour from the outside. Brief explanation was given in relation how this fort was built by Shah Jahan and the existence of Taj Mahal by our tourist guide. Its an interesting story of this fort where Shah Jahan built and arranged the marbles where we can actualy see the Taj Mahal from his room at the fort.

In between before we visit Taj Mahal, the tourist guide brought us to few places, the Taj Mahal marble workshop, leather shops and carpet shops. It was an experience to see how the marbles was made and the conservation team working hard to ensure the workmanship of the marble produced are at the same quality as the one used for Taj Mahal.

Nearly evening, around 5pm. Its time for the most awaited moment, The Taj Mahal. The tour guide was hired inclusive of the driver from New Delhi. It is advisable to get this tour guide as this person will lead your from the entrance until the end of the tour of Taj Mahal. During the visit, there were many locals (too many in fact!) and yes there will be a very long queue if you don't know there's a special lane for foreigners. :D So, for Taj Mahal itself, I'll let the pictures and video do the talking of our experience.

The visit ends around 7pm and went straight to New Delhi. It took us almost 5 hours to get back to the hotel as the traffic remains the same as the day. We were totally flat throughout the journey with a mesmerizing memory of Taj Mahal. Final day awaits us.

Till later,

Fashran Fauzi.

NEW DELHI & AGRA: Road to Rumble - Final Day

Final day in Delhi was really interesting. We get to discover another part of the city. We decided to check out early around 10am. The driver brought us around for a quick tour of the city.

looking forward for more bargains at our next stop, Sarojini Market. Fingers crossed. After 40minutes of looking around, we decided to leave the market.

Quick stroll at the circle area of Connaught Place is a much of experience. It's a colonial area with variety of shops from local to international brands. You can see the good looking people of Delhi around. From Aishwarya Rai to Rani Mukherjee, pick your choice. Lol. The shops around here are little bit tiny, I believe it was previously designed by the British colonial. If you're a big fan of Pepe Jeans London, it is a must for you to drop by their shops here. it's their official shop and yes it's way cheaper here as I compared the price to UK/ Europe and Malaysia. Normally, shirts are selling around £60-£70 and in Malaysia around RM 200, but here in Delhi you can get it at RM60 after conversion. It's worth of the price and quality they're offering. I'm not sure why it can be that cheap, but I believe that the textile industry is big in this region; some might have been made here.

As was suggested by Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Cabin Crew, we went to Sarojini Market which is located a bit off from the Delhi centre but still within our reach. First

impression, the market is like Chatuchak Market in Bangkok. After few rounds at the area, I find that it's close enough to Chatuchak as the items are cheap and you can even bargain more. Believe it or not, I've found quite number of Massimo Dutti, United Colour of Benetton, Zara & Esprit clothing here at super bargain price. I think I just rob them shirts at less than RM20 each. LOL. But please take note, there's no paperbag and nice shops to shop. it's just ordinary shops that sells super bargain items. Besides that, you can find vast selection of Saree materials & Indian clothing such as khurta that actually comfort to be worn on daily basis. ;)

We promised the driver to be back by 6pm, however we reached the car at 7pm. hehehehe.. Then we rushed to the airport to catch our flight. Quiet worried as we can't predict the traffic on that day. Reached the airport by 8pm and got to know that our flight was delayed. Phew. So we have extra time for freshen ups and dinner. Took a 1hr package of shower room at the airport transit hotel, and had dinner later with our takeaway chicken.

It has been tiring and exciting days in Delhi, and definitely I'll come back again for a visit. Thank you Delhi for such a great experience in Central Asia.

-----x-----

Appendix 5: Johan's Blog

LAST TRIP OF THE YEAR

Not satisfied with my Brunei trip, I decided to go for another vacation, this time, crossing another country off my Southeast Asia list. I guess my resolution to cover all the ASEAN countries (excluding Timor Leste which is still off limit for me at the moment) will come true comes July next year.

I will be flying this Friday for a 5 day holiday, coming back next Tuesday morning. Can you guess which country I'm going to? Here's a hint, it's a country that I have yet to visit before.

See you soon!

p/s I guess I won't be able to finish off my Vietnam trip before year end as I hope. Well, I tried and that's the only thing that matter, right? I'll continue after I'm back from my trip.

Myanmar - Bogyoke Market

So, back to my Myanmar trip.

After my visit to [Bogyoke Aung San Museum](#), I took a taxi to the next destination, Bogyoke Market. Also known as Scott Market, this bazaar is located in city centre, inside Pabedan township and is the place to go for souvenirs such as gems, art paintings, clothes, et cetera. This is also the place to go to for black market money changer, where you can exchange your dollar for the local currency at the best rate.

The appeal of this Bogyoke Market is not only the gems and antiques being sold but also the colonial construction of the building. The importance of this market can be attested to with the market being inscribed into Yangon City Heritage List, a list of national landmarks to be preserved for future generations.

After having my lunch here, I went to explore the market. There are two stories in this market and both floors is mostly dominated by shops selling souvenir materials like cloths, paintings, old banknotes, et cetera, as well as Burmese gems. I didn't buy anything from the market as I didn't feel like carrying extra weights throughout my trip.

I continued to walk aimlessly around the city centre after my visit to the market, taking in the sight and sound the city has to offer. It is easy to navigate around the city even without a map as all you have to do is just to put Yule Pagoda as your central point. When you make too many turns and you are not sure where you are, as long as you can see the temple, you can move back to your starting point.

When it was about late afternoon, I boarded the local bus no. 43 to Aung Mingalar bus terminal for my night bus to Bagan. It was in this bus terminal that I met a friendly Taiwanese chap, Boris, who became my travel partner for the rest of the trip.

TO BE CONTINUED

Sharing is caring. A word of advice and a piece of information.

If you want to buy some Burmese gems as souvenirs, be careful so that you would not ended up with fake jewelleries. To be sure, when you are buying one, ask for the gemstones certificates to authenticate its quality. Only gemstones with certificates are

allowed to be brought out of the country. There are strict rules when it comes to carrying gemstones out of the country such as how many gems and jewelleries you can bring back to your country, so before you make any purchases, you should find out more information on this matter first.

Yangon - Bogyoke Aung San Museum

It was early in the morning when my flight landed Yangon International Airport. My plan to secure a night bus ride to Bagan has me taking a taxi to the main bus terminal, Aung Mingalar bus terminal, first before proceeding to downtown Yangon. Little did I know that I can actually purchase the same bus ticket within the city centre, thus, saving me an unnecessary trip. Well, not that big of a deal.

Once in the city centre, I began exploring the neighbourhood as well as scouting for potential hotel to call it my home for my last night in the country. I did not make any hotel reservations at all for this round as I want to survey around the city. Eventually, I made a reservation in Okinawa Hotel for a double room (they ran out of dormitory beds) for USD 28.00 per night. A waste of money, as it turned out, for my plan detoured. More on that soon.

While I did not spend much time in the city, I did however go to a few tourist spots and one of them is the Bogyoke Aung San Museum. This museum is dedicated to showcase the life of General Aung San, a revered revolutionary and nationalist as well as the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

The building that houses this museum is actually the home that Aung San Suu Kyi grew up in. We are given a glimpse of the Bogyoke's (that's general in Burmese) life as most of the exhibitions in the museum are of his belongings such as family portraits, furniture, clothing, and so on. Besides that, memorable speeches and quotes delivered by the general are also on display; giving visitors a sense of how the man became the revered man he is today.

As I toured around the house, I can understand the strong love for her country in Aung San Suu Kyi's heart. Growing up in such a strong patriotic household, how can you not be instilled with these characteristics?

If you have a few moments to spare, why not give this museum a visit when you are in Yangon?

TO BE CONTINUED

Sharing is caring. A word of advice and a piece of information.

The entrance fee to Bogyoke Aung San Museum is 300 kyats (the exchange rate for kyat is about USD 1.00 to 848 kyats) and it is advisable to take a taxi to go to the museum for it is not located along main road. Taxi fare should cost around 2,000 kyats. The museum opens from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm and closes on Mondays, Tuesdays and gazetted holidays. No photography is allowed in the museum.

Appendix 6: Coding and Categorising

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples of Quotes
Novelty and otherness	Thrill	It was really excited to see the breathtaking views of the mountain. Walking along the hanging wooden bridge give me a new experience. I was nervous at first, but then, I was blend with the nature. It was great. I felt so close to nature and it was really calming when I can see the virgin forest, which difficult to be seen nowadays.
	Change from routine	I enjoy seeing the normal local life, to see what they do for living, their routine, for instance. This shot taken while we were ramble in the village. I miss my late great grandmother who fishing for a living. The village also remind me of my village that I have not visited for ages, since she passed away....remind me of my childhood moment, where I enjoy seeing the caught fishes.
	Once in a life time experience	This photo shows that I was confidently posing in ski equipment after a few times I fell down. This was my highlight of my holiday in Kashmir as it was my first time skiing...I never witnessed the beautiful mountain that covered with thick snow like this and skiing in this place was once in a lifetime experience. It was really excited as I have never been skiing and at the same time it was quite challenging for me.
Media representation	Comparing and evaluating the watched scenes with the actual experience	This is the real condition of a street and shop lots in India. I used to watch Hindi movie a lot, and it was exactly the same. I remember the busyness of the street with the local crowd, the moderate level of cleanliness and the poor road condition that was always shown in the movies scenes. But overall, I think the real condition was much better than what I saw in the movie. I captured this to let my readers get the accurate picture of the true India
	To experience the specific scene watched on other media	I know about Sakura from a famous film that I watched during my childhood. When I first saw the Sakura here, it reminised me of that film. What was shown in the films was very much the same. To see it in reality was an amazing experience. So, I tried to capture as much as this Sakura photos and tried to get from the same angle as what I saw in the films. Maybe there are the Para Para Sakura's fans out there that aroused from my photos and influenced them to come here.
Learning and reflections	Stories related to the religion, culture and lifestyles of the local people were perceived to be self-beneficial to them in terms of what they gained through that experience that contributed to their personal growth	I put so much effort to update you guys. My friend, Janggal told me that, I am so over, but whatever <i>lah</i> ... hahaha. Just come back from visiting Fatehpur Sikri in Agra. We were caught in a bad traffic jammed, and the facts that we chose the cheapest bus made things even worst. That is really matching with our trademarks, 'Son of millionaire who choose to live in the hard way..Muahaha. Anyway, that is all right. When looked back of our journey in India, there are a lot of things that I have learnt. How lucky we are staying in Malaysia. I feel so small to be here, to see many bad and weird things that I never see in Malaysia. We should be blessed to be in Malaysia, even though our corruption rates in Malaysia is high, but that it is not as high in India. That is why it is hard for them to develop. A thing to ponder...

Emotional expression	Positive and negative emotions	The train arrives on time, we went for our 'site inspection' routine. This overnight trains run daily from Yangon to Bagan and it departs at 4:00pm, arriving in Bagan at about 9:00 to 9:30am the following day. We paid USD55 for a 'luxury' sleeper (USD50 - train tix, USD5 agent service fee). However, we were disappointed and upset when we saw our berth, it was fan and not air conditioner as informed by the agent and the best part, and the fan doesn't even work! OH!! So is the light (how can I not get mad?) Bear in mind that we took a night train, no light means no good! However, we found out that our 'luxury' sleeper cost USD40; obviously we make a fuss on price differentiation. The station master/officer took our invoice and makes a copy for reporting purposes; we found out later that they actually called the agent on this matter. And yes, we did get our money refunded from the agent later (happy). Now that we got that sorted out, we kind of settle with the fact that we will not have any air conditioner, fan nor light. Whatever..... (Surrender). After all the hoo-ha, to our amazement, we actually enjoyed the train ride! Seriously, am not exaggerating on this, the journey was truly awesome. Why? (I know you going to say that). My new experience in an old train: It's not the destination, it's the journey; chances to meet locals and other travellers; experiencing the local transport; to feel local, be local, to see the their daily life, especially in remote villages and catching the sunrise and sunset (the best experience so far).
Instrumental motivation	A desire to engage with travel blogs to fulfil certain information needs	Obviously before I travelled, I really equipped myself by obtaining important information. I looked for off the beaten path of information. As I travelled to the not so popular destination compared to London or Paris that most people went to, I think travel blog is an excellent place to gather information to Cambodia. How to move from I place to the other, the best local place to eat with good deal and most importantly what to avoid when travelling were the kind of information that I looked for in blogs. By knowing a few blogs that shared about trips to Cambodia, it was easier for me to get such information
Social responsibility	Concern for others in which people share their experience with others to help them and prevent them from having an unfavourable experience	I try to help as much as possible whenever people asked me on what to do at a certain place...I want to make sure that others who are going to the same place that I have been would not face the difficulties that I faced, so that they would enjoy the place as much as I had enjoyed
Hedonic	Blogs is a place gain excitement	I personally see travel blogs as a place to talk about my travel experience. I can 'meet' people from different and same background that have same interest with me. It is always fun to talk with people who have same interest with me, which is travelling around the world.
Engaging with real world	Fully engage with the real world for rather than the virtual world.	I kept away from blogging world during my journey... I prefer to stay offline and engage with the local and ask for their views and recommendations
Time constraints	Have no or limited time	Usually during travel, I did not spent time for updating

	to “be” in blogosphere	my blog. This is due to time factor. I have no time to refer to blog and update my blog either. And same goes to the other social media that I have, such as Twitter or what so ever. I want to solely enjoy and focus on my travel
Safety and privacy	It refers to the concern about safety and privacy issues.	I do not want people know where I am due to safety reason. By letting the world know that I am not at home could give me trouble. So, I do not post anything during my travel. Also, this is the main reason why I always kept my journey as a secret until me at home
Altruism	Educate others	I want people to realise that it is important to explore the world and learnt different culture. From there we can appreciate each other and live in a more harmony without any prejudice. I personally do not have much money to travel. I want to tell people that not only high income people can travel around the world. So, I show them how to travel in a minimal ways, how to save cost during the travel and many more. So everyone can travel and enjoy life to the fullest.
	Inspire others	You know, I am a single women traveller. By showing how a small women be so independent and travel to so many places I think, I inspired others...people said...waaa...your blog is really interesting, or you are such an inspiration really encourage me to travel more and continue to blog. I wish I can inspire others to travel. Showing them very the beauty of foreign culture, food and many more.
	Help others	It is more to share my experience to people who might need them. I want to serve others, help people who seek for unbiased travel information. I write real and honest stories, so people can avoid bad things from happened to them. Generally, I want to serve the society, and specifically I want to give back what I gained from blogs. I want to share things that little people know, add existing knowledge and benefit others.
Personal	Travel documentation	I started to blog due to my passion in travel and writing. For me, travel blogs is like my travel diary. I share everything...very details, from date, time, cost and pictures. Almost everything. I can look back and track my travel.
	To polish skills	I love writing. Put my creative ideas into writing, and let people see what you have got. Travel blog is like a place where I show my skills...I think I am good at photography skills. So when I travel, I spend time to capture good photo, unique moment. In addition to share travel stories, I put those pictures. I know, many people like it. I am not sure, if there are many people out there read my blog, but since I love writing, I continue to blog.
Social	To be with people same interest	It is nice where you participate in certain group where you can meet people, exchange knowledge. You know, sometimes, it becomes a healthy competition within the

		<p>community. We tried our best to share interesting stories and put effort to travel.</p> <p>I love to involve with people who share the same interest. Seeing and knowing these people make me feel more enthusiast to travel and blog. Sometimes...I feel envy with people who travel more, have more stories to be told....but what to do, I have my full time job.</p>
	To maintain relationship with others	<p>Blogs connect me with people who know more than I do. Discussion, events and simple communication with the readers is what keep me going. It is like encouragement for me to keep on travelling and writing.</p>
Hedonic	To entertain others and oneself	<p>I have fun when I share my travel stories with others. In fact, I see blogging is part of my life. Here, I can talk to people around the world, and it is an enjoyable thing to do.</p> <p>The process of writing my travel stories is enjoyable. To communicate with people around the globe is a pleasure.</p>

Appendix 7: Trustworthiness (Transferability)

To demonstrate this, a set of interview questions and the answers (to answer research objective 2) is provided. It demonstrates how transferability is demonstrated and applied by providing a thick description of the phenomena. The comments in *italic* indicate how the questions and answer reflect the transferability. In other words, the issue of transferability in this study was addressed by assembling adequate vigorous descriptions of the studied phenomena.

Research Objective 2: To explore blogging strategies and influence on decision making and experience throughout all stages of the tourist experience (dual role of blogger and tourists)

Researcher: Can you tell me general information about your blogging behaviour, such as, where you blog, how much time do you spend on your blogs? *(This question is asked to unfold the participant general blogging behaviour. It covers their general blogging practice, including the travel blog. By knowing the general blogging behaviour, it reflects the participant preferences and commitment to blog. For example, a high commitment with blogs can be observed through time spent on blog.*

Participant: I am quite busy actually with my daily work, but at least, I will spend around 2 to 3 hours, depends on my schedule. But surely, I will make time blogging, not writing I mean, but maybe just leisurely “open” my blog, do some reading and so on. Usually after works, before sleep, like that.

Researcher: Where you blog?

Participant: At home. I think that is the best place to think and write.

Researcher: How do you engage with travel blogs before your trip? *(This question specifically asks about the participant’s behaviour with travel blogs at the pre-visit stage. By separately asks the question according to the stage of tourist experience, it allows the participant to fully explain what they do with blog in travel preparation for example, or how travel blog influence their decision making. This question allows the*

participant to explain to what extent the blogs are used in travel planning, influence their decision making and influence their pre-visit tourist experience)

Participant: Before travelling, I would do some research by referring to trip advisors and search for recommendations as well. In addition, I also refer to other's blogs and observe their personal experiences. I personally believed that travel blogs influence what I did before travelled, as I told you earlier about my silly drinking water that I brought to India. That's among what I learnt about India from travel blogs itself, and I think that it worth the effort to bring them there. When I was there, I remember someone from the blog remind me not to take so much of spicy street food, as I will easily get diarrhoea, I follow the advice, and thank god, I was all good during the travel. I took extra care of cleanliness and sometimes I wore face mask, because I cannot stand with the dusty road. For me, my main motivation to read blogs is to get as much as information, so I really fully utilised what I read from blogs, as I trust this kind of information source. What I gained from the blogs really help me to plan my travel actually, especially in terms of transportation selection and important stuff to bring from Malaysia.

Researcher: *What contents do you look for on travel blog at this stage? (To explain to what extent they rely on blog, this question is asked. It allows the participants to explain the specific contents and types of contents that looked for in blogs. This allows the whole picture of the blogs to be unfold, in terms of what is being offered in blogs that match their needs).*

Participant: Simple information such as on how they prepared themselves for travelling is very useful. What I remember, as I observed that moderate level of cleanliness in India, I do bring a few bottle of mineral water to India, sound silly, but then, I do not want to feel sick while travelling.

Researcher: *What contents do you post on your travel blogs at this stage? (if any) (Other than what contents did they refer to, in order to fully understand their blogging behaviour, it is also important to know what contents they post. This allows the research to fully capture their behaviour).*

Participant: Usually, before I travelled, I do not post anything on my blogs. I do not have time to do such things, and also, I do not have anything interesting to be shared, as I have not travelled yet.

Researcher: How do you engage with travel blogs during your trip? *(This question specifically asks about the participant's behaviour with travel blogs while they are travelling or at the destinations. By separately asks the question according to the stage of tourist experience, it allows the participant to fully explain what they do with blog in travel preparation for example, or how travel blog influence their decision making. This question allows the participant to explain to what extent the blogs are used in travel planning, influence their decision making and influence their on-site tourist experience)*

Participant: I am not updating my travelling plan due to privacy and safety concern. This is just a precaution because other people can trace my location easily. At the same time, I hardly find time to write and share my experiences interestingly and sometimes it is tough for me to search for the right words due to fatigue. I am afraid that my blog's readers unable to understand and appreciate what I have experienced. At this point, I jotted down the specific name or place or whatever important notes that I think I must share with my readers. You know, sometimes, we as a blogger also cannot recall what we encounter such as, how much we spent there, what time we checked out, for example. Some readers would love to read the details. By jotting down, it also make the writing later becomes easier. One more thing, picture, it is always helpful to tell my story. From picture, my story grows. Let say, I browse and transfer pictures from camera to computer. It always remind of the place or journey, so from there, I get idea on what to write. I definitely took as much photo as I can, anything, such as signage or information of the place, for example. They really help me when I wanted to write them in blog.

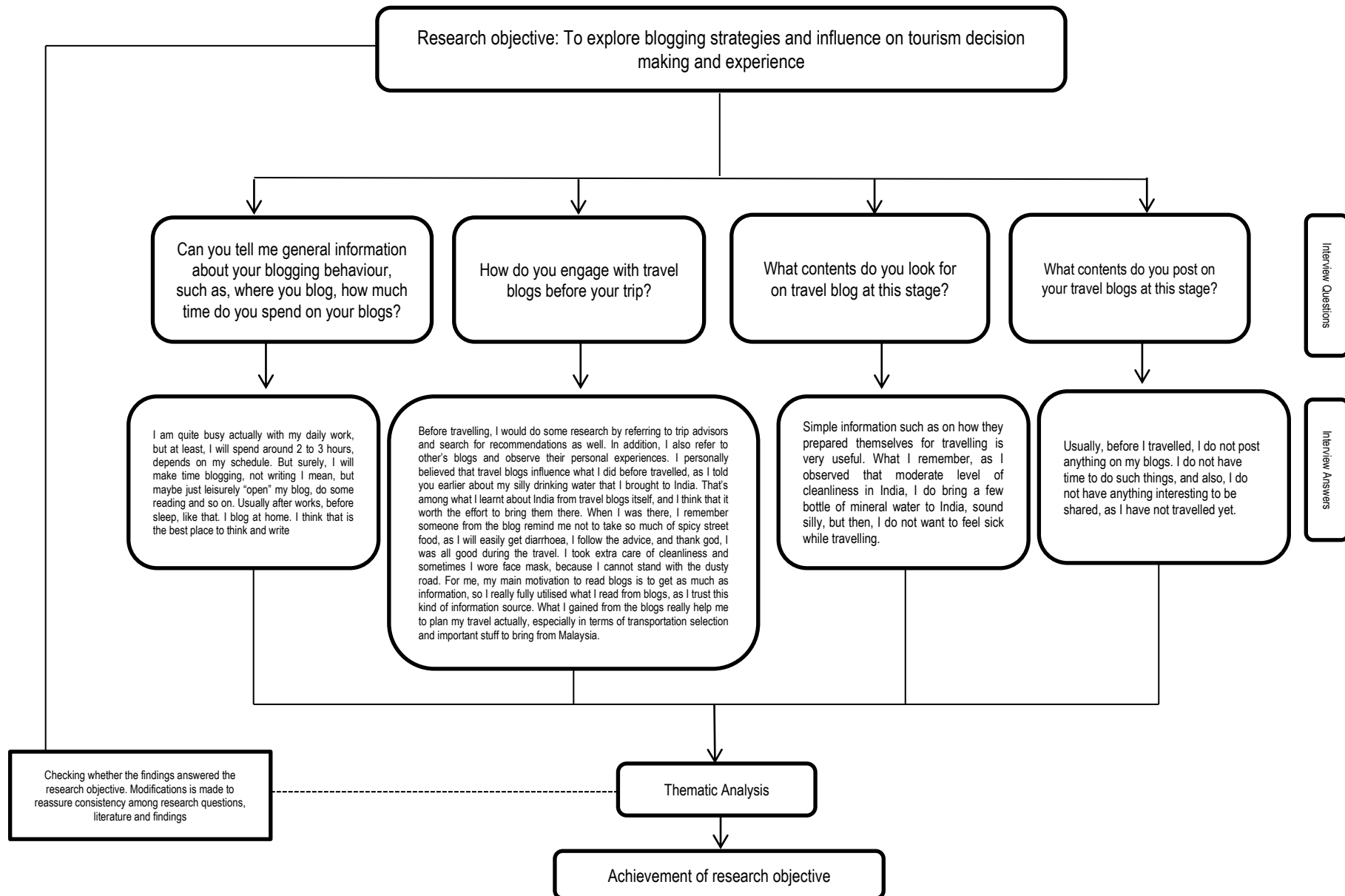
Researcher: How do you engage with travel blogs after your trip?

Participants: I use blog as a platform to share my travel stories. Some people quickly make updates of their travel, I hope to do so, but for some personal reasons, I cannot do that. I cannot give full commitment to my blogs. As you know, I work full-time in KL. So I hardly find time to post when I come back. I realise that it is very important to share them (the travel stories) immediately, as I might forgot something or missed something important. Sharing while it still “hot” will attract readers’ attention actually. I try to write a new post within one month and the fastest that I can make is within a week. I would also put some pictures and it takes time for me because besides being a blogger, I am also working. Thus, I need to find an appropriate time to make a comprehensive story. Not only post entries, I also reply to the readers’ comments. I believe this is a good interaction. This is how I communicate with my readers besides other social networks such as Facebook and Instagram.

Researcher: What content do you post on your travel blogs?

Participant: Mostly, I include photos and with brief explanation and description and I seldom include video. Maybe it is due to I was a photographer back then, so I like to play with photos. Moreover, readers would get more interested to know my experience when they see photos. Furthermore, I think my writing skill is not that good, so that is why I like to include photos. Photos portray the truth about a particular place. Even if the place is dirty, somehow I will able to persuade people to go because what matter is experience. It is okay to manifest the true condition of a place. For an instance, in India, there is a very small market and packed with locals as well as tourists, it is very warm and humid sometimes but people would still go there. They want to know and experience the place.

Appendix 8: Trustworthiness (Conformability)



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