

Destination image, romance and place experience—an application of intimacy theory in tourism

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Abstract

In some forms of tourism, and perhaps particularly in the case of special interest tourism, it can be argued that tourism encounters are service relationships with emotional attachment through the special interest focus and a level of enduring involvement on the part of participants. This involvement is two-fold. First, an interest with the activity; second, a sharing with like-minded people in a social world that extends from home to tourist destination and return. Intimacies in tourism can thus be interpreted through the model of the relationship cycle that comprises the stages A, Acquaintance, B, Buildup, C, Continuation and D, Dissolution. The paper builds upon this concept by utilising ideas of other-centred and self-centredness in personal relationships, and extends the concept of other-centredness to host environments. It also suggests that, in the academic literature about place, location may be secondary in that the quality of experience is primarily determined by the intimacies that exist between people at that place, especially that existing between visitors.

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1. Introduction

Within tourism literature, both academic and commercial, concern is expressed about the nature of the tourist experience, and more specifically about an experience of place. It has been argued that such understandings of place are largely socially constructed (Henderson & Frelke, 2000; Stokowski, 2002; Williams, 2002) and thus governed by a number of factors. These include the attribution of meaning by tourists, which meanings are determined by tourists' own past travels, experiences and perceived and 'actual' knowledge, the reaction of 'hosts', the promise made by the commercial sector, the 'actual nature' of the place (its history, culture, topography and aesthetics) and the nature of the company that a tourist enjoys. The presence, or absence of significant others is a factor that lends or inhibits additional intimacies with place and people and it is these relationships that are explored in this paper. While recognising that a large body of literature exists relating to human relationships, this paper will, in

particular, draw upon the work of Stern (1998) and Levinger (1991) while also reviewing conceptualisations pertaining to intimacy and romance. Bickmore (1998, p.5) has argued that in a consumer-oriented society 'it is no wonder that many industries have already sprung up to meet this demand for intimacy, for a price of course. Psychotherapists, phone-in psychics, and phone sex lines all provide intimacy for hire.' Inherent to tourism has been the provision of intimate spaces with romantic notions, and thus this paper attempts to relate the literature of intimacy to that of place. Its premise is that in the literature of destination image one aspect has been considerably understated, which is that places possess meanings as the context for personal relationships. It is these relationships that can create the holiday memory and it implies that place attributes possess importance only in the way that people use a place and then subsequently evoke place to relive a happy memory. As Protagoras stated in the 5th century BC, 'man is the measure of things' (Barker, 1967, p.69). This is, therefore, a speculative paper presenting ideas rather than a formal framework, but motivated by a wish to develop a new perspective from which to analyse the tourist experience. The paper therefore seeks to build upon

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the romantic gaze noted by Urry (2002). It is also, as will become clear, a slippery concept, as varying degrees of types of intimacy exist between, for example, lovers, friends and companions, between those bound by deep bonds and others by moments of chance.

2. Types of intimacy and tourism

Adopting the work of Piorkowski and Cardone (2000) it is argued that four types of intimacy exist, physical intimacy (actual contact), verbal intimacy (exchange of words and communication), spiritual intimacy (sharing values and beliefs) and intellectual intimacy (sharing reflection and disclosures of knowledge). Hence two situations can exist. First, intimacies within a place are created by interaction with those local to that place, and second, that intimacy and meanings associated with a place emerge from the nature of the interaction between those who visit the place; particularly when those people possess meaningful relationships between them. In the latter case, the meaning of place recaptures memories of shared behaviours that reinforce personal intimacies.

With reference to the first situation it can, for example, be argued that a place or space to which a tourist is being introduced by someone with intense, longitudinal experiences of, and association with, creates a level of intimacy to which a 'normal' tourist would never be exposed. Childhood memories and personal ancestry can therefore enter the economic focus of place and tourism (Stokowski, 2002). This kind of 'relationship' approach (tour guiding by locals, the 'experts', the 'insiders') is potentially a high level of intimacy disclosure, because the place may carry sacred values not easily disclosed to people not trusted. For example, tours of places conducted by indigenous peoples can create highly emotional experiences (Ryan, 1998). Tourists can 'buy' this insight or trust. However, there exists a danger that this bought trust is one of dishonesty with no real interest and care for the place that is scared to the other/the host. Thus indigenous people complain of mis-representation by third parties (Aotearoa Maori Tourism Federation, 1994, 1995). On the other hand trust, respect and ethical behaviour is often assumed by hosts as an underpinning value within the relationship of 'tourist-the other' (see Unruh's (1980) theory of social worlds, a spectrum from strangers, tourists to insiders and Ryan's (1991) similar spectrum of tourist to guest). It can be argued that strangers/tourists might 'rob' the host of this intimacy for a purely self-focused and self-serving (hedonistic) benefit rather than that of 'true intimacy/real intimacy/honest intimacy' that possesses concern for the other. However, as research indicates, this intimacy is often one of rhetoric and is undermined by non-caring individuals, caring only for self while at times displaying hypocritical

behaviours (e.g. see Weaver, 2001; Duffy, 2002). At a macro-level this is signified by tourism as part of a process of globalisation, mobility and migration, of finding itself involved in political and economic agendas, yet also in the creation of modern identities that have also entered political conflict on a personal level (Giddens, 1999; Urry, 2000; Williams, 2002).

The justification of negative/self-serving/self-caring tourists' behaviour is often based on notions of commercial and tangible transactions and not on the intensity and value of emotional and psychological involvement or investment. Disclosure by hosts is thus compromised by tourists, with an initiated intimacy created by the willingness of sharing by the host being used and abused for self-care with no concern for 'other care' (Wearing & Wearing, 1992, 1996, 2001). Thus tourism facilitates reduction of human interactions to "functional exchange values" Stokowski (2002, p. 378). Hence, for example, indigenous tourism becomes education, travel becomes a collection of memories for ego-sustainment or for the purposes of prestige. Stokowski (2002, p. 376) sums this up as follows: "Leisure, formed around the notions of freedom, self-expression, and personal enjoyment, serve to encourage individualism, but these also simultaneously camouflage the political agendas and orientations of participants, managers and legislation bodies". Equally, on the other hand, it is recognised that the host may deliberately package entertainments of pseudo-intimacy designed to protect the host experience of place. In short, the paradox is one of where commodification becomes a mechanism of the host's intimacy with the actors in his/her own social world (Unruh, 1980; Ryan, 2001). The modern day tourist, however, is not ignorant of this staging and liminality of holiday experiences. Indeed it is the creation and interpretation of images that are purchased, anticipated and consumed by the 'experience hungry' tourists of the 21st century (Sack, 1992; Rojek, 1997; Opaschowski, 2001).

However, there is also another form of intimacy associated with place, where place is a centre for emotional and physical exchange, a felt experience of sensual intensity and complexity (Tuan, 1977; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992; Li, 2000) and where the sharing of place with loved ones suggests romance within the tourism experience. Here the place becomes a means by which personal inter-relationships are reinforced. The otherness of intimacy is directed not at the host, but between family members or lovers. The place becomes a backdrop of sharing, a place of intimacy but for personal reasons, imbued with personal memories engraved in the heart and relived through narration (Stokowski, 2002). The tourist place is potentially a 'home of hearts', a second or another home full of feelings and intimacy, albeit different in nature from the conventional home. There is therefore a

romance of tourism wherein the place has importance for attributes that contribute to otherness, but where such otherness is directed to a loved one and rests largely independent of place characteristics as conventionally assessed through itemising physical attractions and facilities. A possible exception to this comment is the situation where one partner is a local person, an insider to a place through early experiences, through emotional and affective bonding to place of longitudinal or enduring nature and varying intensity (Williams et al., 1992; Li, 2000). Consequently the loved one can share this place of historical, cultural and family memories, this place of identity formation, with the partner, thereby instilling the place with a new romance full of ‘immediate sensory delight’ (Henderson, 2000, p. 19). This sense of place is special through personal relationship. Under these circumstances place may have a secondary role in memory generation because memories are primarily shaped by the nature of the personal relationships that exist between the holidaymakers and the behaviours to which this relationship give rise. Hence place provides opportunities for shared experiences, and it is the sharing that possesses importance for lovers/family members/affectionate ones, and in a sense many alternative places supportive of creating interest, or permitting escape from daily lives would suffice for such people. Such intimacies also possess characteristics of the paradoxical. There are circumstances where temporary nomads find both self and other (Opaschowski, 2001), where the varieties of love are found in liminal, transitional states and understandings of intimacy exist within the globalised commercial patterns that form tourism.

These two separate but entwined understandings of intimacy in place (between tourist–host and between tourist–tourist) are conceptualised in Fig. 1, which is derived from Smail (1993). The self is located at the centre of a range of enveloping worlds—the immediate of family, work and leisure moving out into structures of the local, regional, national and international. As Smail (1993, p. 63) notes, ‘A person is partly body, certainly, but is also partly environment’ and thus the tourist interacts with and is influenced by both place visited and the people met at those places. This ‘environmental self’, based on schema theory, reflects embodied experiences through self-narratives, the self being associated with an environment of dynamic nature (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001). Narratives serve to structure people’s senses of self and place, while also influencing interactions with others on a personal as well as community level. Stokowski (2002, p. 373) makes the point that ‘The story of one’s life is always the story of one’s life in relation to others and in relation to the meaningful places created and contained in one’s surroundings’. Tourism places no longer simply present continuity in time and space with historical and biographical meaning

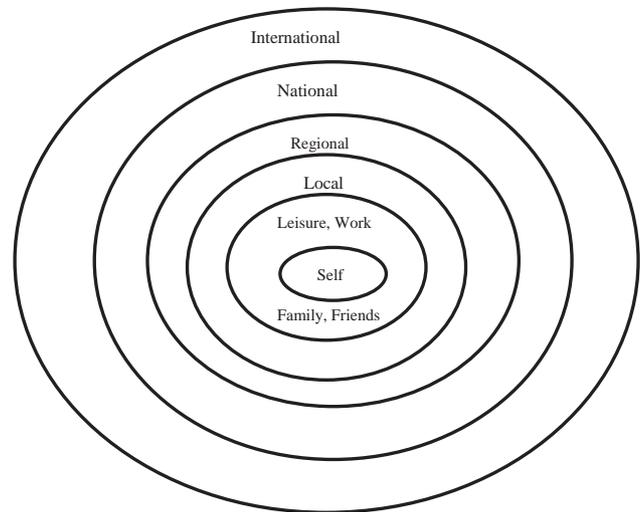


Fig. 1. The self, place and experiences.

but are instilled with physical and emotional sensations of a consumption-oriented society, where image creation, including stories, turn places into tourist destinations, and tourist destination or places evoke stories to be told (Morgan, 1996; Hlavin-Schulze, 1998a, b; Morgan & Pritchard, 1999; Urry, 2000). According to Hlavin-Schulze (1998b) individuals increasingly adjust their needs and desires based on images of societal behaviour that ‘promises’ societal acceptance.

3. Personal relationships, intimacy, romance and commodification in tourism

In the wider literature of travel writing and advertising, the romance of travel, in whatever form, is often alluded to. For example, the Brisbane Courier Mail, dated 20 January 2003, ran a piece headlined ‘Heart Reef set to rekindle tourism love affair’ and continued to state ‘An exotic island in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef has replaced Paul Hogan and Greg Norman as the face of Australian tourism in North America. Images of Heart Reef, with the inscription ‘Follow Your Heart Down Under’ are part of a Tourism Queensland, Qantas and ATC initiative to rekindle the lost United States holiday maker market’. Is this simply marketing hype, or is it recognition of more deeply felt emotions?

Within popular fiction, this concern with intimacy has been exemplified by the play *Shirley Valentine* and the novels of David Lodge, wherein romantic encounters have been key components of travel experiences and an exploration of self. For its part the academic tourism literature has often, from a psychological perspective, been located within a humanistic tradition associated with writers like Maslow, but while self-actualisation

has received attention, love and intimacy has received less attention, if only, perhaps mistakenly in the view of the authors, needs for and the capacity for giving love do not occupy the higher parts of the Maslowian pyramid of needs. It is the view of the authors that Maslow's work has often been decontextualised from the original concerns of its author. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi and Kleiber (1991, p.100) state that 'the most satisfying way to actualize the self is by helping others to do the same.' The misconstruction of Maslow's work might arise because commentators have not read carefully his preface to *Motivation and Personality* or subsequent text where it is made clear that the work was motivated by 'various personal moral, ethical and scientific problems' (Maslow, 1970, p. 149), and certainly have not sourced his own diaries where it is abundantly clear that he was concerned with moral issues of psychological health and well-being (Maslow, 1979). The commercialisation of his philosophies, for example through the VALS Index, has reinforced tendencies of a connotation of superiority/control/power given to people who strive for self-actualisation. In our post-modern society media perpetuate the need for individualism that requires a self-actualisation increasingly referenced to 'personalities' or products. Wearing and Wearing (2001) argue that media and 'ageism' existent in society do not generally foster a caring for self and other care but rather promote an ethos of individual success. Tangibles like financial success, career status and associated social connections provide for power positions that can be further exploited for perceived self-actualisation.

One foci of tourism, that on sex, the 'embodied commodities' as part of human relationships, is a topic in tourism that has attracted past academic concern (e.g. Pruitt & LaFont, 1995; Taylor, 2000) particularly with reference to the exoticism of the 'other'. Given a post-modern nature of tourism with its theme of de-differentiation, sex tourism implies a form of de-differentiation of self-actualisation that, as Ryan (2001) notes, raises issues of self- and other self denial. Perhaps the question here is whether this kind of post-modern self-actualisation is not 'self-actualisation' at all but rather reflects a kind of 'self-deception', or if a form of self-actualisation, it is through an embodiment of physicality rather than of an emotional or spiritual nature.

Similarly, while tourism and leisure provide for conspicuous consumption (and to be conspicuous requires some kind of tangibles), the nature of intimacy requires a sense of closeness beyond 'embodiment of commodities', something emotional that is potentially profound, something that is 'real' rather than superficial, something requiring enduring involvement (EI) rather than purely situational involvement (SI), and a commitment to wanting to identify with the other.

Hence the difference between sex tourism and romance in tourism is that perhaps 'sex' carries a connotation of 'being able to be bought'. Having sex carries a notion of SI of purely short-term involvement for self-satisfaction with an emphasis on physicality. On the other hand, being in love implies being intimate, and carries a notion of caring for the other. Being in love suggests romance, gentleness, sensuality incorporating all senses, a love affair imbued with happiness viewed through rose-coloured glasses. But the term being *in* love also suggests that one can also be *out* of love. Roget's Thesaurus describes an affair as a business, event, thing, and thus the love affair of a holiday implies temporality and by implication, the end of an affair, of love, of intimacy—and consequently SI implies a context with minimal responsibilities. In short, holidaying intimacies can be either *supportive* of enduring relationships, or *creative* of the situational.

In many holidays people can be seen to be searching for 'paradise' or the 'ultimate', for novelty and new stimuli, gaining new 'fresh' memories, leaving old 'bad' ones behind, including those of relationships and homes, trying to fulfil 'new needs' with 'new' people' and within a 'new context' in a 'quick-fix fashion', thus being superficial (Lewis, 2003) and nomadic in nature as discussed in '*Das gekaufte Paradies*' (*the bought paradise*) by Opaschowski (2001). But as Opaschowski (2001) points out: there is no specific place that is paradise, and there is no specific time for happiness, both are constructs within ourselves.

Moreover, it can be argued that loving someone or something implies enduring involvement (EI), a continuing intimacy that is long term, that is caring, empathetic, compromising and responsible to and for someone beyond self. Holidays potentially possess, therefore two more nuances of intimacy or involvement; the situational specific to place *and* the enduring to which the specific makes a contribution.

These points propose a difference between commercial situational involvement through the exchange of monies in tourism when compared to enduring involvement in an overall life-style context. A 'home' is a 'castle', a 'safe haven' that offers a protective and nourishing environment that goes beyond simply being a financial asset. It is an environment that has to be established and maintained through constant giving and caring for the 'other', the latter being more that of centrality rather than basic attraction, or for that matter, one purely for self-expression and sign value. The place of escape possesses importance as a place of self-recovery and re-creation, and thus obtains a sense of being an intimate place by reason of the visitor attributing to it a sense of self and 'other caring' that are the underpinnings characteristics of intimacy.

Consequently, if the nature of place and its relationship to intimacy and romance in tourism is to be

understood, any conceptualisation must go beyond applications of the tourist–host, tourist–place, tourist–other relationship as a matter of exchange as per ‘social exchange theory’ or ‘resource theory’. Rather it becomes a relationship of giving for the love of giving without expectations of equal or even obliging/subservient giving in return, the latter being that of a power position exploited by one party over the other. Within the academic tourism literature there have been studies that have alluded to intimacy. The work of Wickens (1994, 1999, 2000) for example has located female travellers in Greece as seeking and attaining degrees of intimacy with lovers not usually found in their lives. Again, Bauer and McKercher (2003) entitle their edited book as *Sex and Tourism: Journeys of Romance, Love and Lust*. Interestingly, though Bauer and McKercher discuss a nexus between Tourism, Romance and Sex, they do not specifically define the terms of their title, and within the framework of this paper it is suggested that:

Romance is the caring for self first and then possibly the other;

Love is caring for both the other and self care in a mutually healthy relationship;

and

Lust is driven by self-care.

A human has desire for all three, sometimes each can exist in isolation, in other cases they might exist simultaneously, therefore being mutually reinforcing, their direction able to operate both ways, in varying orders (see Fig. 2). However, it is here contended that only within fully functional relationships, operating as a whole, do the three come together creating intimacy on all levels, enriched by honesty, trust and respect and evidenced by the parties valuing the relationship to the point of psychological and behavioural commitment to each other.

In spite of a deficiency of title definition, Bauer and McKercher’s work (2003) is one of the very few academic works to utilise the word ‘romance’ in its title. Indeed a search of ‘leisuretourism.com’ based on the words ‘romance’ and ‘intimacy’ for the period since 1976 revealed that in the tourism literature the word ‘romance’ has often been alluded to in the context of (primarily commercial SI, e.g., Pruitt & LaFont, 1995) sex tourism, while ‘intimacy’ is more commonly analysed in a leisure studies literature related to friendship, activities and family (EI).

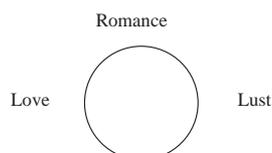


Fig. 2. The circle of whole relationships.

SI is situation specific, a temporary increase of awareness, attention and concentration, a passing feeling of involvement within a specific situation, externally driven (Richins & Bloch, 1986; Laverie & Arnett, 2000). EI on the other hand reflects the general, ongoing underpinning feelings a tourist brings into the situation, “independent of situations”, internally driven (Laverie & Arnett, 2000, p.7). It engages the affective component of recreational specialisation, comprises attraction (importance and enjoyment), self-expression and centrality, and is being recognised as an important facet beyond the simple behavioural (use history) and cognitive (Bryan, 1977, 1979; Little, 1976, 1979; McIntyre, 1989). Laverie and Arnett (2000) argue that when EI is closely related with an individual’s identity or self, a high level of personal relevance exists and thus is often regarded as ‘emotionally charged with complex personal meanings’; meanings that are derived through enduring involvement, high investment and commitment based on total trust. Commitment is a reflection of underpinning values that are stable, central and more permanent within an individual’s life compared to attitudes that are specific to situations, objects and/or person (Madrigal & Kahle, 1994).

In discussing conceptions of love, Deaux and Wrightsman (1984, p. 153) refer to Walster and Walster’s (1978) comment that two kinds of love have to be considered: passionate (or romantic) love, being that of momentary nature and concern for one’s own needs, while companionate love is that of deeply intertwined and longer-term relationship nature, motivated by ‘other’/partner’s interests and concern rather than that of self. After evidence suggested that unrelated experiences of fear appear to be positively related to increased sexual attraction, Walster and Walster (1978, cited in Deaux & Writsman, 1984, p.155) argued for a two-fold theoretical definition of passionate love based on cognitive and physiological factors. Thus, given that certain cognitive perceptions about another person is present, or for that matter place, and the situation is ‘right’, then any external event that facilitates increased physiological arousal potentially could be interpreted as romantic love. Thus the aspect of ‘propinquity’ (Deaux & Writsman, 1984; Urry, 2000) fosters greater attraction to a person, object or place, stimulated by repeated exposure to constant stimuli related to that specific context, where the simple interaction will promote intensification of liking for people, objects or places. The songs ‘When I’m not near the one I love, I love the one I’m near’ from Finian’s Rainbow or ‘to love the one we’re with’ by Stephen Stills reflect the importance of proximity to person or place as an antecedent of interpersonal interchange, or even place, attraction, often a simple fact of familiarity through regular social interaction (Deaux & Writsman, 1984, p.150).

4. Intimacy and special interest tourism

In some forms of tourism, and perhaps particularly in the case of special interest tourism, it can be argued that tourism encounters are service relationships with emotional attachment through the special interest focus (activity and/or destination) and the kind (SI and/or EI) and level (high/low) of involvement on the part of participants. This involvement is two-fold. First, an interest in the activity, destination or setting, and second, a sharing with like-minded people in a social world that extends from home to tourist destination and return. This, we would argue, is illustrated by conferences, where participants are highly involved in the focus of the underpinnings of the conference that comprise activity (research) and sharing (networking) that is not only professional but companionable. Hence an immediate attraction and perceived understanding exists that consists of a sense of sharing 'intimate' knowledge and passion for work, which fosters exchange and communication with others, both in terms of a situational involvement (that of the here and now) and enduring involvement (through a professional relationship). Thus both combine to provide a central focus to the way in which people perceive themselves. It is argued this exemplifies a form of 'intellectual intimacy' of shared understandings.

The link between intimacy theory and special interest tourism is evident in the following interpretation of intimacy as (Oden, 1974 cited in Stern 1997, p.9): "knowledge of the core of something, an understanding of the inmost parts, that which is indicative of one's deepest nature and marked by close physical, mental and social association". In tourism, the tourist is involved in a personal project, that of a holiday or perhaps a business trip, pursuing his/her special interest away from home in a special place, chosen for special qualities and on the promise of a satisfying personal experience. It is here argued that exchange theories purely based on the economic model appear limited in the context of tourism, especially that of special interest tourism.

5. Intimacy and liminality

In the literature of marketing relationships one seminal work is that of Stern (1998). The model proposed in such literature is readily applicable to tourism and the associated concepts of tourism as possessing the nature of a liminal experience. In the language of liminality and rites, novices enter a sacred space, are induced, become initiated, acquire a sense of *communitas* and leave to return to a wider world. The model proposed by Stern is a relationship cycle that comprises the stages A, Acquaintance, B, Buildup, C,

Continuation and D, Dissolution. The rationale for this is based on three premises: first this relationship model recognises the influence of emotions (affect) in relationship contexts of intense interaction and extended duration between (in our context) tourists and providers in tourism, as well as other participants of like-mindedness. Second, the model considers the formation, maintenance and dissolution of relationships. A similar model is proposed by Levinger (1991)—namely an ABCDE model comprising the stages (and illustrated, following his example, by popular songs, and readers may wish to provide their own).

- A. Attraction ('Only the Beginning' 'Something in the Way She Moves')
- B. Building ('Getting Better Every Day')
- C. Continuance ('The Power of Love' 'Love is a many splendored thing')
- D. Deterioration ('You've lost that loving feeling' 'Love is a battlefield')
- E. Ending ('I've had enough Bad Love' 'Pretending' 'Love Hurts' '50 ways to leave your lover')

Sternberg (1998) argues that love in long-term relationships involves:

1. deep understanding of each other,
2. sharing ideas and information,
3. sharing deeply personal ideas and feelings,
4. receiving and giving emotional support to each other,
5. personal growth and helping with other's personal growth,
6. giving help to others,
7. making others feel needed and needing others,
8. giving and receiving affection.

The application of such models to the nature of the tourism experience are readily shown. Tourists anticipate holidays, engage in ritualistic behaviours prior to departure—for example, scanning the net or brochures, buying suntan and medicines—then depart for a temporal escape from the ordinary, acquiring new and intimate experiences of place and people, absorbing these into their neural networks, before returning home. One implication of such a model is that the tourist does not simply return as before, but now contains a potential for change not previously present. There exists the possible continuation of intimate association, if not with the providers, but possibly with other participants and co-travellers, established while on holidays or while being a business tourist. Either an existent interest stirred an intimate connection for interaction or a newly found stimulus is being taken up and possibly maintained upon returning home. Finally, intimacy theory emphasises the association between relationship stages and persuasive communication that enhances the services firm's ability to apply relationship management

to advertising as well as to personal sales and delivery in service encounters (Stern, 1997, 1998).

Another example of intimacy in tourism is provided by Haldrup and Larsen (2003) in an examination of family photographs taken on vacation. They note the ways in which families use the camera to ‘display success, unity and love’ and that ‘Like tourism, popular photography produces a small world of positive extraordinariness’ (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p.26). Similarly Cant (2003, p. 69), writing of caving as a form of adventure tourism, writes:

Intimacy is a wonderfully suggestive and evocative word to describe relations between humans and caves: closely acquainted, familiar, secret, innermost, deep. But ideas of intimacy may disrupt ideas of ‘toughness’.

She thence continues to write of the sensualities of caving and questions the masculine orientation of traditional stereotyping of this form of experience.

6. Intimacy and ‘sensecapes’

Thus far this analysis has concurred with conventional modelling within the pertinent literatures, but it seems that the concepts of romance and intimacy can be further expanded. Intimacy in personal relationships is about openness and other-orientation, and hence the establishment of trust between people. It is through these transparent processes that one begins to learn about self through interaction with a specific other and then through others more generally. The linkage with ‘classical’ humanistic psychology as expounded by writers like Maslow (1970), Csikszentimihalyi (1975), Rogers (1959) and others is that this process is one of excitement, of acquiring and sharing a sense of fun, of an appreciation of the aesthetic, exotic and erotic with a significant other; thereby both becoming a fulfilled person able to initiate action.

It is also thought significant that the word ‘sense-scapes’ has been used to extend the ocular vision of the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002). This is not to underestimate the importance of the ocular. Urry (2002, p. 150) notes the cultural construct of gaze and produces a categorisation of ‘gazes’ such as the romantic gaze (‘solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze’) the anthropological gaze, the environmental gaze and so on. But sense-scapes highlight the personal by, for example, heightening intensity of the experience so that future rendering of a song or piece of music can effectively recall a holiday experience. Not only does this concept incorporate the other senses of hearing, taste, smell and touch in addition to sight—all which are important in developing a sense of the intimate, but sense-scape can be yet again re-interpreted

as *sense-scape*.....tourism providing for escape both from and to a place and/or person (Iso-Ahola, 1983) and, by its nature intensifying an awareness of sense scapes. This semiotic importance of the semantic is recognised in the German, e.g. *Urlaubstraum* is holiday dream and *Urlaubswirklichkeit* is holiday reality. Opaschowski in fact argues by going into historical linguistics that *Urlaub* (holidays/vacation) from the historical perspective is linked to *Erlaubnis*, that is ‘permission’ to stay away, being liminal (time and space), knowing that one can cross barriers normally not dared at home, yet aware that this crossing barriers is limited and that one has to come to terms with this liminality because every holiday has a beginning and an end. Yet, he of course also points out that, without tourists consciously recognising it, they too have to come to terms with this liminality. Thus holidays stand not in isolation from *Alltag* (every day/daily living) but are part of related worlds, *Wunschwelt* (dream world), *Erlebnisswelt* (world of experiences) and *Gegenwelt* (world of opposites) and thus *machen die Alltagswelt ertraeglich*—make the ‘daily world of living bearable’. Hence a healthy relationship between two people is where the familiar relationship is one of intimacy which creates a continuing sense of the exotic and erotic in each other, with which the individuals are comfortable and find rewarding, and familiar, and thus a constructive, positive intimacy results. This might be said to be a functional relationship through it being rewarding, close and loving for both individuals. The opposite, dysfunctional relationship is where the familiarity between two people is one of addiction to certain acts, based not on openness and trust, but perhaps on fantasy, power or control. The sexual acts become other denying based on self-gratification, they become not intimate but habitual, potentially exploitative and the erotic is an act of personal arousal without sharing, potentially, it might be argued, as a form of ‘deviant leisure’. It might be an exploitative relationship. Eventually such a relationship is destructive of both self and the other, and the relationship between the two.

7. Intimacy and place relationships

Thus far this discourse may seem based within a specific arena of human behaviour, the sexual, and if having reference to tourism, solely to sex tourism. However, it is possible to extend the model much further to analyse not only the nature of intimacy but also the relationship between tourist and place. For example, it might be said that a healthy psyche has two concerns—about self and about others, and the relationship that exist between these two aspects. The healthy, intimate relationship may therefore be shown in Fig. 3, where between two individuals, concern for the other shapes

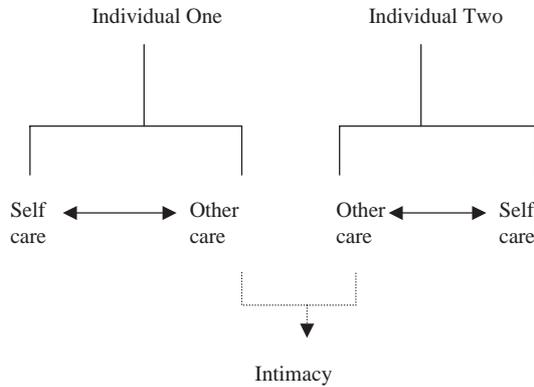


Fig. 3. Intimacy based upon 'other care'.

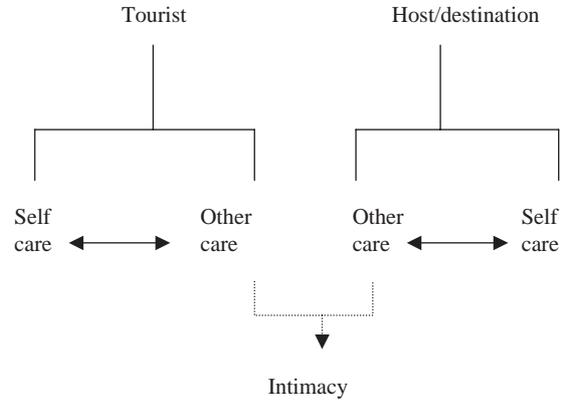


Fig. 5. Other care in tourist-place/host relationship.

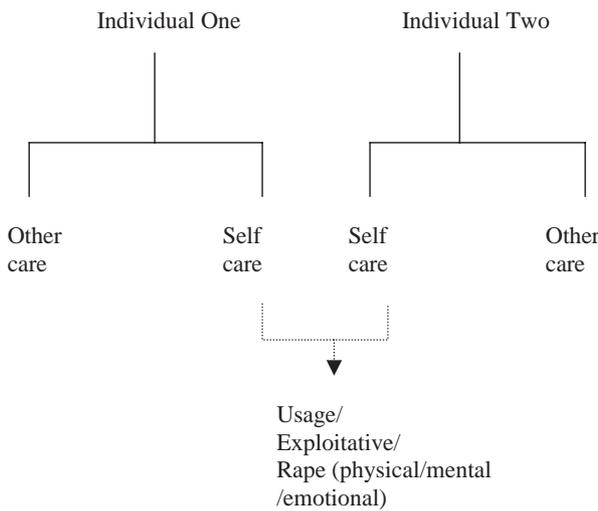


Fig. 4. The dysfunctional relationship.

the relationship between the two. This can be compared to Fig. 4, which is characterised by a dysfunctional relationship where the interaction between the two is premised on 'self-care' (Wearing and Wearing, 2001). Such relationships are destructive, a relationship based on familiarity, habituation and perhaps addiction, but not intimacy as defined above. Again, such relationships have an inherent predisposition to destruction, particularly when the relationship ceases to be between those of equal power.

The sense of belonging has also been discerned as one of the key elements in the leisure experience in that it comprises one of the items in the much cited Beard and Ragheb (1982, 1983) Leisure Motivation Scale. Again, from the perspective of the Leisure Studies literature, a sense of belonging implies a wish for enduring involvement, that is, to belong is not simply a temporary phase but one which implies commitment to something, to some one, to some place over and above the impermanent. From the perspective of tourism this wish for an involvement, this sense of wanting to belong seems at first sight an oxymoron because, almost by definition,

the tourist is a time constrained visitor who remains an outsider. However, the academic literature is replete of concepts and evidence that point to the tourist wishing to sustain relationships in meaningful ways. From MacCannell's (1976) tourist who wishes to intrude beyond the façade onto the back stage, from categorisations of tourists offered by commentators such as Cohen (1979a–c) and Pearce (1982) that include the anthropologist, the drifter, the linguist, all of whom wish for meaningful contact to even Urry's (2002) post-tourist who, by denying the role of tourist, implies a wish for some other role, even if ludic, but meaningful in the social constructs that the post-tourist weaves for an occasion or place. The evidence also offers examples of involved tourists, from the tourists who continue to visit the same place e.g. Mallorca (Ryan, 1995) or indeed have inter-generational linkages with favourite family holiday homes, shacks or baches (Stroud, 1995).

It then becomes possible to slightly redraft Figs. 3 and 4 by replacing the individuals with 'tourist' and 'host/destination'. Thus Figs. 5 and 6 result. In these instances the term 'host' is symbolically used to represent the holiday locale, the people usually reside there, the tourists that frequent the place, the economic, organisational and commercial structures of the place. A commentator such as Aramberri (2001) has argued that the reality of most people's holiday experiences is not one of being hosted by a core group of residents offering specific hospitality as understood in Smith and Brent 'Hosts and Guests Revisited (2001), but rather one that is shaped by commercial interest. Moreover the use of the term 'host' sustains a notion of human contact.

8. Characteristics of the intimate place

Following the concepts of Sternberg the intimate place in tourism might be said to possess the features illustrated in Fig. 7. From the research literature one study that arguably supports the thesis is that of

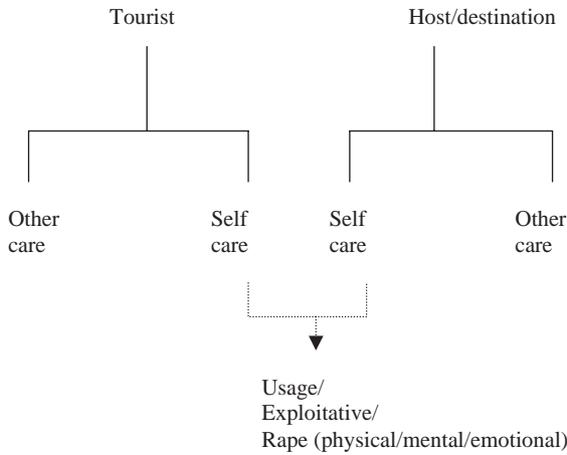


Fig. 6. Self-centred/exploitative tourist-place/host relationship.

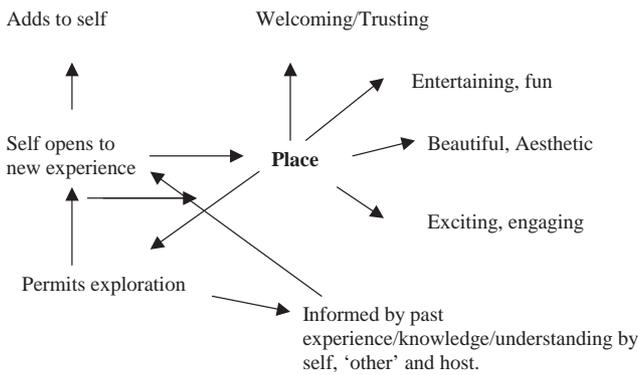


Fig. 7. The individual and intimacy of place.

Hayllar, Griffin and Huyskens (2003). In their study of ‘The Rocks’ region of Sydney they concluded that a visitor experience comprised the attributes of intimacy (by which was meant that the place was on a human scale), authenticity and a sense of place or belonging. They write:

The more ‘human scale’ of the area provides a situational and social counterpoint to the nearby city. Here the pace of life is slowed. People browse without extrinsic direction, the pace of movement is determined by the rhythms of the day. Laneways provide access to small ‘out of the way’ spaces. There is an escape, albeit for a short time, from modernity; form and function are reconfigured. Space is created for self.

Within the framework of this paper it can be argued that the ‘other to other’ relationships that arises from places like ‘The Rocks’ is one where there is respect for people and place, the establishment of a mutual reciprocity, it is self-sustaining, eco-friendly, a commitment evolves to place and people and loyalty and repeat visitation results, which visitation is based on memories of past interactions with people at that place.

9. Discussion

Nature traditionally has been hailed as a “holy temple”, as the place for intimacy with notions of wildness, originality, virginity, and romantic ideals (Hull, 2000). Tourism has institutionalised this romanticism, not only within the context of undisturbed nature, but also by marketing a desire for passion, for ‘time out’, a time without ‘normality’, a time with no need for responsibility, a time of ‘happiness’, even if that means only that of liminal existence.

However, the thesis being presented implies that intimate and hence fulfilling tourism experiences emerge from visitors having open minds, hearts and senses toward place, their hosts and their travelling partners. Equally, as Boniface (2000:2) comments, ‘Tourism belongs to our *free* time. We travel as tourists by our own choice. Such travel can be said, therefore, to reflect our personal essence.’ For a commentator such as Boniface the world is changing whereby personal, emotional and spiritual values are becoming more important and the industry must recognise these if it is to remain successful. She argues that the changes to be engaged upon are ones that should stress spirituality and peace, processes of change and knowledge acquisition, that there is a need for tourism product to emphasize the intimate. For his part, in a review of her work, *Dynamic Tourism* Ryan (2003) argued that in her appeal to tourism to adopt a Zen Buddhist approach, she was adopting an unrealistic stance, ignoring the fact that the conventional mass packaged holiday still conveyed large numbers of people seeking hedonistic experiences, while it might also be argued that various ‘reality’ holiday television shows such as *Ibiza Uncovered* portrayed a truth that large numbers of people are motivated by simply ‘having a good time’ that involves, ‘birds and booze’. Yet arguably such a search for ‘birds and booze’ is in itself an indication of a need for intimacy, for a human relationship and freedom that might be thought lacking in daily life. It is not a new thought to argue that the nature of tourism products that emerge are both a reflection of and escape from the nature of ‘daily society’, and dominant family and work patterns. In 1987, Krippendorf in *The Holidaymakers* argued from a perspective derived from Durkheim that anomic societies produce an uncaring form of tourism. For Durkheim economic affluence was in itself a danger because it deceives people into a belief that they can depend upon themselves. This belief, coupled with a strong urge toward individualism in the western world, has arguably generated a situation wherein commercialised, globalised product offers ‘personal experiences’, carefully commodified to meet escape/hedonistic needs. The paradox thus stands that the commodified experience reinforces the normlessness of a state of anomie, for ultimately it denies the fulfilling intimacy of

other centredness as envisaged above. It is difficult in today's world, because of time constraints and hence inhibitions on a movement from situational to enduring involvement, for any tourist to fully engage in intimacy with place or host, and thus if tourism is indeed to be the recreating, self sustaining activity its proponents argue it can be, then the authors would argue that more attention ought to be given to the dynamics not only of tourism structures as Boniface (2000) would suggest, but to the dynamics of travelling partnerships, whether they are of friends, families, spouses or indeed lovers. Holidays are indeed commercial products, but what is perhaps really being purchased is not 'a place', but rather time for togetherness with significant others. In their attention to place, the marketing of physically based attributes, the concepts of 'critical incidents' and service quality, and the economics of tourism, possibly tourism academics have overlooked a fundamental issue, and that is that the quality of the holiday experience depends upon the degrees of intimacy that exist between travellers. It is that which makes the holiday, it is that which permits openness to the nature of the place and the travelled to.

A final word, in preparing this text a very wide literature search was undertaken, including even delving into the literature of artificial intelligence, given that sciences increasing ability to mimic human emotion. One article was found, entitled, 'You know you're Alive when you have ... synthetic emotions' (Elliot, 1997). This referred to the ALIVE project (Artificial Life Interactive Video Environment) at Media Lab (see Blumberg, Todd, & Maes, 1996) where users are able to interact with virtual creatures that appear to operate autonomously. These are the type of competing 'human' experiences that science increasingly makes possible, and thus it is not perhaps too far fetched to argue that human to human intimacy on holidays is indeed an important and essential necessity for the health of the human psyche.

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