TRAVEL AND LEARNING: A NEGLECTED TOURISM RESEARCH AREA

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Abstract: This conceptual paper explores the nexus between travel and learning; an area of investigation long neglected by tourism researchers. Using Aristotle's concepts of *phronesis*, *techne* and *episteme* a framework for the major areas of literature dealing with touristic learning are considered and opportunities and challenges for expanding the boundaries of knowledge are explored. Key proposals are: learning resulting from tourist experiences is likely to be highly personal and strongly tied to individual interests, motivations and prior knowledge; the nature of learning from a tourist experience only emerges over space and time; and long-term meanings created by tourists are likely to be strongly influenced by their perceptions of how these experiences satisfy identity-related needs and expectations. **Keywords:** travel, learning, education, free-choice learning, phronesis. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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INTRODUCTION

It is now widely acknowledged that learning extends well beyond formal education and that learning which occurs in less structured contexts may make an equally important contribution to the development of individuals (Broomhall, Pitman, Majocha, & McEwan, 2010). According to Watson (2003, p. viii), lifelong learning has four distinguishing features: the recognition of both informal and formal learning; the importance of self-motivated learning; an emphasis on self-funded learning; and the idea that participation in learning should be universal.

While there are many avenues for lifelong learning, Broomhall et al. (2010) highlighted that travel provides one of the most obvious contexts to which lifelong learning frameworks might be applied. Kuh (1995) has noted that travel is a powerful contributor to generic skill development for some learners. Similarly, Werry (2008) argued that travel offers one of the few contemporary opportunities outside of the education industry where explicitly designated, non-vocational learning about other times, places, and peoples takes place. She goes on to note that ''the immediacy of embodied presence and sensuous immersion, the auratic charge of 'being there', makes for a vividly memorable experience endowed with great personal value by its participants. Tourism's concentrated, 'first-person' engagement with the culturally unfamiliar lends its subjects a mantle of cosmopolite authority that years of classroom instruction rarely approach'' (Werry, 2008, p. 18).

Despite this rather obvious relationship, the nexus between learning and travel remains a relatively under-researched field. While there is a growing body of work examining visitor interpretation and some recent interest in 'education tourism', the topic has not received much direct attention in the tourism literature. Subtle notions of learning and education are grounded in the academic discourse dealing with motivation, serious leisure, visitor experiences, situated learning and sustainable tourism but more overt investigations of learning and travel are not as numerous as scholarly work grounded in the other areas of social science.

This paper adopts a holistic approach and sets forth some perspectives, principles and frameworks for considering the relationship between travel and learning. It is argued that tourism managers and researchers need to better understand the nature of learning in tourism and leisure contexts; explore ways in which learning can be incorporated in tourism and leisure experiences; and develop methods to measure the educational impact of such experiences. In doing so, some of the major areas of literature dealing with touristic learning are considered and opportunities for expanding the boundaries of knowledge in this area are explored.

THE EVOLUTION OF LEARNING AND TRAVEL

Although the early origins of travel were associated with a desire for learning experiences, they were mostly restricted to the wealthy. For example, Towner (1985) provides an excellent analysis of the Grand Tour as a popular mechanism for the European aristocracy to enhance

their educations in the 17th and 18th centuries. The industrial revolution and the advent of mass tourism in the late 19th and 20th centuries provided opportunities in Western societies for the middle classes to participate in leisure travel—increasingly leisure and tourism were seen as mechanisms for escaping from the physical and sometimes mental exhaustion of work. Classic ''supply'' responses to tourists' needs for diversion and relaxation at this time were the growth of European and United Kingdom seaside resorts, the development and worldwide proliferation of tropical resorts, and the proliferation of amusement parks and later theme parks in the United Kingdom and North America. As a result of these developments mid-20th century travel consisted largely of passive experiences with a strong hedonistic focus.

By the end of the 20th century, however, Western travel and leisure patterns were changing and tourists were increasingly seeking tourism experiences that intellectually engaged them through immersion in new ideas, spaces and activities. General increases in leisure time and disposable income coupled with relative decreases in the cost of travel have given many more people an opportunity to engage in intellectual improvement through vacation travel (Bodger, 1998). Concomitant developments in media, internet and communications technologies have also widened individual interest in and appreciation of cultures. Furthermore, Uriely (2005) argues that postmodern tourism blurs the distinctions between everyday life and tourism. In contrast with the clear boundaries between work and leisure in the 20th century (cf. Aguiar & Hurst, 2006; de Grazia, 1962; Pearson, 1977; Roberts, 1999) work, learning, consumption and leisure have become increasingly interwoven.

Increasing numbers of people in Western society, particularly those with the discretionary income to spend on tourist experiences, appear to have a growing appetite for life-long learning (Falk & Dierking, 2002). Whereas the archetype of the 20th century Western model of tourism and leisure might be lying on a secluded beach under a palm tree or riding on a miniature train through a recreated historic town, the archetype of the emerging new model of tourism and leisure involves learning about people and places. The former model has not disappeared, but its dominance is clearly waning as result of changing travel and leisure patterns.

As a result of these developments, tourism and leisure settings have become an important medium through which people can acquire knowledge, develop ideas and construct new visions for themselves and their society. Indeed, for many people, ''the information they encounter while at leisure may offer the only opportunity to learn about their bonds to the environment, or to their history and culture''(Moscardo, 1998, p. 4).

LEARNING AND TRAVEL IN THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

While the influence of social sciences such as geography, economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology is immediately evident in the discourse of leading tourism journals, only a handful of papers have

examined travel through the lens of learning and education. In addressing this apparent discrepancy, Ritchie, Carr, and Cooper (2003, p. 9) have argued that ''the concept of travel for education and learning is a broad and complicated area, which explains why tourism academics and industry have to date largely ignored this field''. Werry (2008, p. 15) adds another useful perspective that may explain the lack of learning research in tourism:

> …learning is popularly coded (in Euro-America, at least) as inherently displeasurable: it is experienced as labor, as opposed to leisure, as discipline rather than liberation. For the tourism provider, catering to this tourist-manquè demographic is, once again, an exercise in paradox: how can an attraction conceal its touristic nature and heighten its pedagogical qualities, even while catering to tourist desires (for fun, service, value, ease, predictability, and so on)? How can it be (in that peculiarly antinomous catch-cry) ''entertaining and informative?''

From the perspectives outlined above, affecting a positive educational impact through a tourist experience turns out to be a non-trivial undertaking. Despite the fact that almost every textbook on ecotourism, wildlife and cultural tourism includes visitor learning as a critical component of such experiences, many do not describe what this learning might actually look like and how it might be designed for tourists. The tourism literature provides few answers to questions such as: what are travellers learning; who is learning; and when, where, why and how do travellers learn? In practice, learning and education turn out to be just as complicated and challenging to accomplish as turning a profit or insuring protection of fragile sites.

Nearly twenty years ago attempts were made to document the learning benefits of tourism and leisure experiences (cf. Roggenbuck, Loomis, & Dagostino, 1990; Weiler & Hall, 1992), but such efforts were few and limited in scope. More recently, a small number of tourism researchers have attempted to directly address the more complex outcomes of heritage tourism and ecotourism (cf. Chronis, 2005; Mitchell, 1998; Palmer, 2005; Richards, 1996; Richards, 2002; Urry, 1996) and still others, educational tourist experiences such as study abroad programs (e.g., Brown, 2009; Caton & Santos, 2008, 2009; Laubscher, 1994). While these studies have been explicitly focused on learning and tourism, the academic discourse dealing with motivation, serious leisure, visitor experiences, educational tourism, studying abroad, situated learning and sustainable tourism provides many subtle references to the importance of education and learning in travel.

The large body of literature dealing with tourist motivation provides a useful starting point for exploring the importance of learning as part of the travel experience. There is considerable evidence to support the importance of learning as a pervasive motive for travel. Crompton (1979) was one of the first tourism researchers to identify the importance of learning when identifying education as one of two pull factors. He also noted that exploration and evaluation of self was an important push motive. Iso-Ahola (1982) extended this work by proposing a two dimensional framework of motivation. According to Iso-Ahola, leisure

participants seek out activities that provide escape from their daily routine as well as psychological (intrinsic) rewards. A sense of mastery, learning and exploration are explicitly identified amongst these personal rewards. In a tourism context, this means that the psychological benefits of recreational travel emanate from the interplay of two forces: escaping of routine and stressful environments and seeking of opportunities for psychological rewards such as learning.

Pearce (1988) built on this work as well as the work of Maslow (1943) to develop a framework of motives using the concept of a 'travel career'. The most recent conceptualisation of Pearce's travel career model identifies fourteen core motivational factors which were empirically confirmed across large international studies (Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005). The travel career pattern asserts that travellers will have different configurations of needs due to previous travel experiences and life stages (Hsu & Huang, 2008). The model identifies a core set of motives that are the primary drivers for all travellers regardless of travel experience or life cycle variables. These motives are escape and relaxation, experiencing novelty and building relationships. Other motives are structured into a middle and outer layer of importance. Learning and education are implicit in motives such as self-development through involvement with hosts or the site, personal self-development and self-actualisation (getting a new life perspective), which are positioned in the middle layer of the model. Pearce and Lee (2005) found that in western contexts the middle layer of motives (including self-development) were more important than the outer layer for more experienced travellers and for travellers in the later stages of the life cycle. The substantial empirical evidence supporting this patterned approach to motives suggests that although learning is not a core motivational force, travellers who are in the later stages of their life cycle are likely to have more travel experience and are therefore more likely to seek out experiences that incorporate an element of learning.

There are some interesting parallels between Pearce's travel career concept and Stebbins' (1982) notion of 'serious leisure'. Serious leisure describes leisure activities that are actively pursued to support the accumulation of experience and development of skills and knowledge. As with much motivational research, learning is an implied dimension of serious leisure for without learning there is little scope for the development of skills and knowledge. Jones and Symon (2001) suggest a reciprocal relationship between lifelong learning and serious leisure. Increasing numbers of western people now view leisure and tourism as opportunities for self-development and learning, and seek experiences that expand their understanding of themselves and their world (Freysinger & Kelly, 2004; Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). Lifelong learning through serious leisure provides individual freedom for self-actualisation and self-expression in an activity which is often freely chosen and which satisfies a quest for excitement (Jones & Symon, 2001).

The growing corpus of literature dealing with tourist experiences also provides further insights into the role of learning in travel and leisure. Pine and Gilmore (1999) proposed that experiences are a new economic offering, distinct from, and often more highly valued than

goods and services. They suggest that people want an experience that is engaging, personal, sensation-rich and memorable, an experience that changes them, alters their view of the world, boosts their personal capabilities, or instils a sense of wonder, beauty and appreciation. Pine and Gilmore (1999) identified four experience realms: education, esthetics, entertainment and escape. These realms are positioned on a two dimensional framework anchored by active versus passive and absorption versus immersion. Education is seen as a critical element in providing active and absorbing experiences.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING LEARNING IN TRAVEL CONTEXTS

If learning represents an important outcome of the tourist experience, tourism providers and researchers need to have an understanding of the fundamentals of human learning. Learning is such a profoundly human experience that all of us assume we have some basic understanding of what it is and how it occurs, yet few human processes are so poorly understood. Our lack of understanding is not because scientists, philosophers and psychologists have never tried to understand learning, quite the contrary. It has been a topic of inquiry for well over 2500 years. The reason it has been so difficult to understand is that learning is an extremely complex process, involving many counter-intuitive components and activities. What then is learning and how does it relate to the development of tourist experiences?

Learning is a Life-Long and Life-Wide Process

Although commonly used as synonyms, the words learning, education and schooling do not refer to the same things. Learning is a biological process with deep evolutionary roots. All animals, particularly primates like humans, actively engage in learning. Education is the process by which learning is supported by other individuals. An increasing body of research shows that most learning now takes place outside of schools, universities and other places of formal education (Falk & Dierking, 2010; Falk, Storksdieck & Dierking, 2007). In fact, the percentage of the public's learning deriving from self-directed experiences on the internet or as part of leisure experiences has increased exponentially over the past two decades (Estabrook, Witt, & Rainey, 2007; National Science Board, 2010). The vast majority of this non-school-based learning is 'free-choice' learning, learning characterized by a reasonable amount of choice and control over what, where, when, with whom and why they learn (Falk & Dierking, 2000, 2002).

Learning is Both a Process and a Product

Learning is not, as it is often envisioned, merely a product, a collected store of knowledge in our heads, but is simultaneously also a process—in fact a never-ending process. Although many non-Western

peoples have intuitively appreciated the holistic nature of learning, Western science has only recently begun to fully embrace the idea that learning is a whole series of complex processes interwoven together, which in turn are intertwined with nearly all other parts of our being (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Wenger, 1998). It is because of this very complexity that learning, more than virtually any other life activity, has been slow to reveal its underlying secrets.

The Outcomes of Learning are Highly Individual

For most of the 20th century the prevailing view was that learning was a totally generalizable, linear and predictable accumulation of knowledge. Everyone learned in the same way; as long as the same information was presented, everyone would learn the same things. However, despite the fact that the general process of learning is comparable in all humans, the products of learning are anything but comparable. Learning is a uniquely individual, idiosyncratic event; no two people learn exactly the same thing in quite the same way (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). The essence of learning is the ability to combine past experience with the present moment in order to meaningfully understand and, to a degree, predict and control the future.

Learning is a Process of Constructing Meaning

Learning researchers have come to appreciate that the human mind uniquely ''constructs meaning'' (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Knowledge is not stored like a collection of widgets in the brain, each on its particular shelf. Rather, all knowledge and experience are stored in bits and pieces, and the bits and pieces are distributed throughout our brains (Gazzaniga, Ivry, & Mangun, 2002). These bits and pieces of ''memory'' are assembled, on an as-needed basis, to quite literally *construct* a memory or an idea as we need it (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Pope & Gilbert, 1983). It thus cannot be assumed that tourists' learning will focus on those things that are ''presented'' or ''taught'' to them.

Learning is Dependent on Context

The knowledge of the world an individual constructs is almost always tightly connected to the unique and specific social, cultural and physical context in which it is constructed (Clark, 1998; Engle, 1999). It is thus very context-specific and only poorly generalisable beyond the situation in which it was learned (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

Learning is a Cumulative Process

Learning is rarely an instantaneous event, but rather an unfolding, cumulative process (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Typically,

individuals acquire an understanding of the world through a continuous accumulation of experiences, deriving from many different sources at many different times (Anderson, Lucas, Ginns, & Dierking, 2000; Brotman, Mensah, & Lesko, 2011; Caillot & Nguyen-Xuan, 1995; Korpan, Bisanz, Boehme, & Lynch, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miller, 2010). Thus, year by year, event by event, over a lifetime individuals construct their knowledge about the world from not one, but literally hundreds if not thousands of experiences.

Learning can be Fun

Beyond expanding our view of what constitutes learning, another major step towards reconceptualising the role of learning in tourism is to overcome the longstanding assumption that entertainment and education are antithetical. Packer and Ballantyne (2004) provide evidence to suggest that these two constructs are not perceived by the public as mutually exclusive, contradictory attributes of leisure. In general, across a range of measures, the educational and entertainment aspects of a learning-oriented tourist setting were found to be not only complementary, but synergistic, that is, their combined action or cooperation produced greater effectiveness than the sum of their individual effects. Packer (2006) took this a step further, arguing that in some tourism and leisure contexts, people engage in learning experiences not for any instrumental reasons, but because they value and enjoy the process of learning itself. Learning experiences can thus be seen as autotelic or intrinsically rewarding, where the experience itself is its own reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

To summarise, learning is a uniquely personal, contextual experience. It is rarely linear and is almost always highly idiosyncratic. Learning is strongly influenced by the inside world of our past experiences, but equally by the outside world. The outside world has two important dimensions: the outside world as dictated and interpreted by other humans in our lives (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003); and the sights, sounds, tastes and sensation of that world as perceived directly through our own senses and framed by the lenses of our evolutionary (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1995) and personal-social (Wertsch, 1985) history. Tourism experiences offer a vast range of new and different sights, sounds, tastes and sensations, as well as exposure to new and different human cultures. It is not surprising then that learning has become an integral and satisfying part of the tourist experience.

CONCEPTUALISING LEARNING IN TRAVEL CONTEXTS

The opportunities for travel and leisure to foster free-choice learning were noted over two thousand years ago by Cicero, who wrote: ''If the soul has food for study and learning, nothing is more delightful than an old age of leisure . . . Leisure consists in all those virtuous activities by which a man grows morally, intellectually, and spiritually''. This per-

spective is very much linked with Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), which provides a useful framework for understanding the role of travel in supporting visitors' learning.

Aristotle argues that wisdom is associated with three kinds of competencies: *episteme, techne* and *phronesis. Episteme* (theoretical knowledge) is concerned with knowledge that is systematic and universal across particular contexts. *Techne* (practical skill) refers to the skills, routines and techniques associated with making, creating and doing. *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) is about the development and application of experiential knowledge to specific contexts. The distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* is important. *Phronesis* is not just about doing the right thing, but acting in the right way, for the right reasons and at the right time (Saugstad, 2005). *Phronesis* extends beyond skills and technique to include reflexivity. *Phronesis* is not an inert quality but rather is cultivated through experience, practice and repetition (Jamal, 2004). *Praxis,* or the practice of *phronesis* occurs when individuals live and perform social and ethical actions which become a part of living a good and virtuous life.

The work of Aristotle provides a useful conceptual framework for considering how travel contributes to the learning experiences of travellers. However, it is important to acknowledge at this point that learning through travel is sometimes deliberate and premeditated, while on other occasions it may be an incidental or even unintentional outcome of the travel experience (Mitchell, 1998). These distinctions are analogous to the constructs of serious vs. casual leisure (Stebbins, 1982; Stebbins, 1997) and specialists vs. generalists (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; Pearce, 2005) discussed by other authors in the leisure and tourism literature. In conceptualising how travel contributes to learning it is therefore useful to contemplate both the active and passive acquisition of knowledge and skills. Although we tend to view learning as an active process, neuroscience research confirms that considerable learning occurs passively and unconsciously, frequently driven by emotion (Turner, 2000).

Table 1 incorporates these distinctions with the conceptualisations provided by Aristotle to provide a framework for considering the full spectrum of learning opportunities resulting from travel. This framework is also useful for interrogating the academic literature in tourism to identify gaps in our understanding of learning and travel.

Research examining the passive development of practical skills (*techne*) through travel is limited. In one exception to this observation, Pearce and Foster (2007) raised the question of whether travel experiences contribute to the growth or development of generic skills. Their study of backpackers found that travel can be useful in developing generic skills such as problem solving, adaptability, social and cultural awareness, management of resources and self-awareness. While studies of this nature are limited in the tourism literature, the work of Pearce and Foster (2007) echo a large adjacent body of work dealing with educational travel and the study abroad experiences of students (cf. Black & Duhon, 2006; Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1993; Brown, 2009; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Gmelch, 1997; Inkson & Myers, 2003; Kinginger, 2008; Kitsantas, 2004).

Table 1. Conceptualising How Travel Contributes to Learning

	Passive	Active
Practical skills (*techne*)	Incidental development of generic skills and technique (e.g. communication, organisation, problem solving, navigation)	Active quest for control and mastery of physical or cognitive skills (e.g. golfing, sailing, photography)
Knowledge (*episteme*)	Serendipitous and spontaneous acquisition of knowledge (e.g. incidental learning about sites, settings and species)	Deliberate search for knowledge and understanding (e.g. intentional learning about sites, settings and species)
Practical wisdom (*phronesis*)	Accumulating 'life experience' through exposure to varied situations and settings (e.g. self-awareness, social and cultural awareness)	Active pursuit of a good and virtuous life (e.g. consciously learning about sustainable and ethical behaviours and cultural perspectives)

The work on educational travel and study abroad experiences demonstrate that student travel can foster intellectual and personal growth, intercultural awareness, foreign language acquisition and professional development. The recognition that international travel can also encourage reflexive traits such as self-awareness, global citizenship and a sense of identity (Dolby, 2004, 2005; Lewin, 2009; Talburt & Stewart, 1999) extends beyond the acquisition and refinement of skills and technique and epitomises the notion of *phronesis*. While largely concerned with formal education, research into educational travel and studying abroad make a useful contribution and offer a starting point for understanding the passive development of skills and practical wisdom across different travel markets and contexts.

There is also a paucity of research exploring the active enhancement of physical and cognitive skills through travel. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow provides one avenue for better understanding the relationship between travel, skills and learning but the framework has rarely been applied in this context. There is an opportunity to explore the active development of skills in a range of tourism contexts, including participation in activities as diverse as triathlons, bird watching, fishing, hunting, golfing, sailing and photography. While the focus in this instance is on the development of skills the distinction between skills and knowledge is not always clear and it is acknowledged that the development of knowledge and skills can be closely intertwined. For example, a bird watcher might visit a new site to develop their bird watching skills but may also acquire knowledge of new species and their behaviour.

Research examining the development of knowledge (*episteme*) through travel is somewhat better developed. The literature on interpretation and visitor education often relates to knowledge about sites, settings and species (Knudson, Cable, & Beck, 1995; Moscardo, 1998). Much of this research is concerned with how travellers actively engage

with interpretation and the outcomes of this interpretation. Recent work has focussed on the co-constructed nature of interpretive experiences and the recognition that both consumers and producers are involved in shaping the learning experience (Chronis, 2005). The study of 'mindfulness' provides a useful theoretical framework for learning from interpretive material (Moscardo, 1996). Derived from the work Chanowitz and Langer (1980) and Langer (1990) in the social cognition field, this framework attempts to understand the way people think and learn in everyday settings. Moscardo (1996) argues that mindful visitor experiences in tourist settings fosters a greater understanding of the wider environment. However, the framework provided by Aristotle highlights that the learning outcomes of travel cannot be adequately described by merely understanding the 'content' of the tourism site being visited or the design of the educational offerings presented.

Learning while travelling is often perceived as being 'good' and non-problematic as it can lead to an increase in visitor knowledge, understanding and tolerance of others. However, it should be acknowledged that this is not always the case—there may be a darker side to learning while travelling. Research has, for instance, indicated that tourists' learning experiences may in many instances be based upon misconceptions leading to the reinforcement of colonialist racial and cultural stereotypes that privilege some groups at the expense of less dominant others (Caton & Santos, 2008, 2009). According to Buzinde, Santos, and Smith (2006, p. 707), ''images used to market tourism rely heavily on ethnic/racial pictorial symbols in order to attract tourists to particular destinations'' and may be based upon misleading media representations of destination images resulting in what Santos (quoting Hall, 1995) says is a reflection of dominant ideologies that ''provide us with the means of making sense of social relations and our place in them'' (Santos, 2006, p. 625). This process of 'dark' learning is aided by the marketing of tourism destinations using travel brochure images and text based on stereotypes of peoples and place (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Santos, 2006). In this way, media can project false stereotypical images that influence visitors' preconceived knowledge and attitudes regarding destinations and peoples that may not be based upon real experience. Given the constructed nature of learning, it is not surprising that tourists often 'see what they believe' rather than 'believe what they see'.

It is clear from above, that the learning that visitors derive from their tourism experiences requires a deeper, more synthetic analysis that builds on the growing understandings of the cognitive and learning sciences. For example, such an approach has been used to investigate visitor learning focussed on the enhancement of pro-environment behaviours such as energy conservation, anti-littering and safe practices (Moscardo, 1999; Pearce, 2005). This emphasis moves the research focus to the development of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Jamal (2004) observed that developing practical wisdom in the tourism domain is particularly challenging because the situations are often embedded in a complex mix of environmental, social, cultural, economic and political factors.

Consistent with Aristotle's view of *phronesis,* many ecotourism, wildlife and sustainable tourism operators argue that they exist to serve their community, to support public understanding and potentially to influence visitors to live a good and virtuous life by behaving in an ethical and environmentally sustainable manner. However, many of these organisations simply provide access to their resource, accompanied by a presentation from a knowledgeable expert. These attempts may enhance knowledge (*episteme*) but recent research suggests that this kind of minimal exposure cultivates *phronesis* only occasionally and only for some visitors (Ballantyne & Packer, 2005, 2011; Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2011; Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2007; Broomhall et al., 2010; Falk, Heimlich, & Bronnenkant, 2008; Hughes, Packer, & Ballantyne, 2011). Recently, Ballantyne et al. (2011) identified those predispositional factors and on-site experiences that are most important in facilitating visitor long-term environmental learning outcomes (knowledge, attitudes and adoption of environmentally sustainable behaviours). They found that although the impact of a wildlife tourism experience was strongly influenced by visitors' pre-visit environmental orientations and learning motivations, aspects of the on-site experience also contributed to visitors' long-term learning outcomes. In particular, it was found that reflective engagement, which involved both cognitive and affective processing of the experience, was more strongly associated with learning outcomes than the immediate but fleeting excitement of seeing the animals, although this excitement was instrumental in eliciting a reflective response. These findings highlight the importance of the cumulative nature of learning—it does not begin and end on-site, but is influenced by both previous and subsequent experiences.

It could be argued that many tourism sites have overly simplified the educational challenge by framing the problem as one of overcoming visitors' knowledge deficits. This is based on the faulty assumptions that visitors lack knowledge; and true learning can only begin when this knowledge is acquired. A better approach, described by some as asset-based rather than deficit-based, suggests that personal growth and learning only happen when individuals build from their existing interests, knowledge and skills (Brotman et al., 2011; Falk, 2009; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Roth & Lee, 2002). This approach recognises that learning outcomes often represent a unique and individual combination of what is seen, read, heard, felt or reflectively considered rather than a simple transfer of information (Ballantyne, Packer, & Sutherland, 2010). Recent conceptualisations of the tourist experience thus focus attention on the tourist as a co-creator of meaning rather than on the displayed objects provided by the industry (Uriely, 2005).

Building on these ideas, Falk and his colleagues (Falk, 2009; Falk et al., 2008; Falk & Storksdieck, 2010) explicitly framed leisure and tourism experiences within an identity framework and defined a series of identity-related categories to describe the motivations of the majority of visitors to a range of tourism destinations. These identity-related categories provide a degree of predictive power in understanding the nature of the learning that occurs in these settings. Identity-related motivations, like the desire to satisfy personal curiosity or facilitate

social-bonding, have proved to not only be powerful indicators of why individuals participate in tourism experiences, but also strongly shape what memories are formed.

According to this approach, a visitor's overall satisfaction with a tourist experience is directly related to whether or not that individual can successfully situate the new ideas and experiences within their existing cognitive repertoire. The greater the meaning-making, the greater the satisfaction; and meaning-making is ultimately directly connected to issues related to personal identity (Falk, 2009). Similar findings have been documented in other investigations of tourism (del Bosque & Martin, 2008; del Bosque, Martin, & Collado, 2006; Lee & Shafer, 2002; Lee, Shafer, & Kang, 2005).

Falk (2004, 2009) further argues that the actual time spent engaged in a travel experience comprises only a small fraction of what is needed for understanding the learning outcomes that emerge from the experience. For most people, most of the time, the tourism experience is not life, but a small slice of life; just one of many experiences in a lifetime filled with experiences. Although it is convenient to frame the tourist experience within the context of the tourist moment, for the individual who engages in such experiences these are often neither readily delineated or necessarily even seen as singular events. Ultimately, it is important to frame the tourist learning experience within the broader context of an individual's life; to see each experience as nested within a large set of experiences and travel career patterns.

Extending on these findings, Ballantyne and Packer (2011) argued that the tourism industry has the responsibility to engage visitors in powerful and transformative learning experiences, both during and after their visit. They suggested that the long-term impact of a tourism experience can be significantly increased by using technology and social networking to maintain contact with visitors after they leave the site, encouraging them to further process their experience both cognitively and affectively in order to develop new concepts, ideas, identities, and actions that become part of their everyday lives.

In summary, the learning experiences offered as part of tourism and leisure activities can be a natural and enjoyable part of the total experience. Learning experiences are by nature personal, memorable and transformative, and thus are likely to contribute both to visitors' satisfaction with their experience, and their general quality of life. Experiences that enable visitors to engage deeply and make personal meaning are likely to have the greatest impact. Learning experiences that are designed with the specific needs, motivations and expectations of visitors in mind could be expected to be the most satisfying.

MEASURING THE LEARNING IMPACT OF TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

In measuring the impact of tourism and leisure experiences, researchers have traditionally focused on customer satisfaction and financial dimensions and more recently, the ecological and social dimensions. Customer satisfaction remains an important outcome of

the tourism experience, but what is needed is a broader understanding of what satisfaction entails. Increasingly, measures must include and distinguish between satisfaction of creature comforts and satisfaction of intellectual and spiritual growth.

It is not a bold prediction to say that tourism organisations will increasingly be required to measure their impact on visitor learning and personal growth. Historically, tourism sites have been able to get away with making unsubstantiated claims of educational impact. However, as operators increasingly seek to supplement their revenues through support from local, regional and national governments as well as private foundations, procedures for assessing and tracking visitor learning outcomes will need to become standard practice. Examples of learning outcomes include definable changes in the skills (*techne*) and knowledge (*episteme*) of visitors, or evidence of longer-term practical changes in visitor behaviour or other expressions of practical wisdom (*phronesis*).This includes being able to provide evidence regarding the impact of tourism on the quality of people's lives (Falk & Sheppard, 2006).

While the suggestion that commercial operators should be held accountable for demonstrating learning outcomes might seem somewhat revolutionary, accountability measures for non-profit organisations have been accepted practice for over a decade. The idea that cultural institutions should enhance the social good has been discussed previously (Lawley, 2003; Sandell, 2003), as has the requirement that institutions document their contributions to these areas (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004). In the United Kingdom this has become a serious issue for publicly funded tourism venues such as museums, science centres, galleries and archives, with funding tied to successful evidence of impact (Frontier Economics, 2009; Selwood, 2001), and accordingly considerable energy has been invested in defining and measuring impact (MLA, 2004, 2006; Moussouri, 2002). The results of these efforts have much to contribute to the development of outcome metrics for travel experiences.

The changing nature of tourism demands an increasing focus on understanding the ways in which tourism experiences are supporting the public good, and in particular the impact they are having on tourist learning outcomes. The benefits of such an approach transcend issues of accountability, and include the ability to customise experiences to the needs, interests and motivations of tourists at different stages of their travel careers, to craft marketing messages that appeal to the individual needs and desires of visitors, and ultimately to insure that tourists perceive the experience as having been significant and valuable.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has drawn together many disparate references to learning and education in the tourism literature in order to make a number of conceptual contributions. First, the paper argues that learning has been a much neglected social science lens for tourism research but

that the time is ripe to explore the nexus between learning and travel. As the 21st century progresses, more and more people will acquire sufficient affluence to engage in leisure and tourism. The focus of these individuals will continue to inexorably shift from the workplace to leisure, from strivings for survival to searching for personal development and understanding, from enjoyment and novelty to learning and cultural engagement, from goods and services to customised, transformative experiences. Accordingly, it is expected that tourism will become ever more centred upon a quest for something larger, something more personally fulfilling. It is argued that the quest for knowledge and understanding, enacted through travel, will continue to be a dominant theme of the new century.

The paper has also highlighted that learning within the travel context transcends the traditional school-based construct of knowledge transfer. Although individuals engaged in a tourist experience often do come away with an enhanced understanding of facts and concepts, these are rarely the main or even the most salient learning outcomes of the experience. Individuals go whale watching in order to see one of the wonders of the natural world and broaden their sense of connection to the planet; in addition it is hoped that they will also feel a greater commitment to preserving species like whales and protecting natural resources. Adults visit an aquarium in order to learn more about marine life but equally if not more frequently they visit so that their children can have experiences that will enrich their lives. Retirees visit a foreign country to see and discover new sights, but at the same time they develop an understanding of and personal connection with people from another culture. In these ways, the travel experience can contribute personal benefits to the individual visitor, to society, and the planet; benefits that long outlive the temporal boundaries of the experience itself.

Drawing on the ideas of Aristotle, the paper provides a framework for describing how travel might foster the development of skills (*techne*), knowledge (*episteme*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Although it is a relatively under-researched scholarly field, establishing a theoretical framework for learning and travel can assist in clarifying research opportunities and in illuminating our understanding of more incidental forms of learning. A theoretical framework may also be useful for developing travel experiences that better fulfil the needs of visitors as well as the objectives of tourism providers. Furthermore, a better understanding of learning processes may provide new insights into why people are motivated to travel (Mitchell, 1998).

The paper also identifies some of the challenges of developing better mechanisms for researching, conceptualising, delivering and measuring free-choice learning experiences. It is particularly in the latter area that tourism researchers might draw upon the lessons learned by the non-profit sector, particularly investigations conducted at museums, zoos, aquariums, natural area parks and community organisations. While there are no easy or clear answers on how to measure free-choice learning in tourist contexts it is possible to identify a number of challenges for researchers. Firstly, how can research on tourism learning

account for the impact that pre-visit characteristics such as prior knowledge, experiences and motivations have on learning outcomes? Secondly, how can future research address the challenges of delayed data collection and the cumulative nature of learning, given that the true nature of what a visitor learns is likely to only emerge over time? Finally, how can investigations of travel learning experiences be framed in ways that accommodate the visitors' personal identity-related needs and expectations that shape the way they construct their experience and understand its meaning?

Researchers will need to find solutions to these challenges before tackling some of the broader questions about how travel might foster the development of skills, knowledge and wisdom. It is hoped that the perspectives offered here will act as a stimulus for future research in this regard. The real potential, however, lies in the cross-fertilisation that is likely to occur as the historically separate realms of learning and educational research and leisure and tourism research are brought together. ▲

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