Theorizing the concept of alienation in tourism studies

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ABSTRACT

The concept of alienation has been extensively analyzed outside tourism studies to understand human existence within society. Unlike the notion of authenticity–a complementary yet distinct term—alienation has been scarcely researched within tourism studies. Yet, as is argued in this paper, alienation adds theoretical depth to the sociological study of tourism and it also resituates discussions on authenticity within the context of capitalist relations of production, consumerism, and existentialism. The goal of this conceptual paper is two-fold. First, it discusses the evolution of the concept of alienation within sociology and cognate disciplines. Second, it addresses the applicability of the concept to tourism studies and proposes a working model to guide future examinations of the nexus between alienation and tourism.

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Introduction

The introduction of the terms authenticity and alienation in tourism studies is attributed to Mac-Cannell (1976)'s work, specifically, his seminal text *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Mac-Cannell notes that modern societies are based on cultural productions, which give rise to "a modern form of alienation of individuals interested only in the model [brought about by the cultural production] or the life-style, not in the life it represents" (p. 32). Applying this to tourism studies, he argues that tourists' constant search for authenticity is attributable to their need to escape the alienation they experience in their home/work environs. At the same time, MacCannell is skeptical about the possibility that tourists can find real authenticity in touristic experiences and consequently be free from *alienation.* In fact, he notes that failure to achieve authentic touristic experiences can indeed lead to the genesis of a new (post-industrial) form of *alienation.* In his view, "the alienation of the worker stops

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where the alienation of the sightseer begins" and from this perspective he regards *alienation* as both a cause and a consequence of tourism (MacCannell, 1976, p. 6).

The relative absence of scholarly engagements with the concept of alienation within tourism studies is unparalleled in cognate disciplines, particularly sociology wherein the term has been extensively debated (Musto, 2010). Despite prevalence in the social sciences and humanities, ebbs and flows characterize the term's academic history. Offering a rationale for this historical trend, Dahms (2006) states that:

> [a]s alienation became prevalent, it also became submerged, and less accessible and visible. In the social sciences, many specific tools developed and employed can be explained in terms of the increasing prevalence of alienation, the effort to foster enlightenment while advancing unenlightenment, and the development of the social sciences as progressive concealment of alienation (p. 36).

Researchers have generally adopted the term to facilitate critical interrogations on human existence within society. According to Yuill (2011), investigations that focus on the concept of alienation offer "considerable insight into a wide range of subjective experiences and structural conditions" that characterize modern day society (p. 105). Articulating the importance of the term, Seeman (1959), a predominant figure known for his studies on alienation, quoted Kahler (1957, p. 43) by stating that "the history of [hu]man[s] could very well be written as a history of the alienation of [hu]man[s]."

Of importance and particular relevance for tourism studies is the fact that from its inception the concept of alienation was discussed in relation to the notion of authenticity, which is central to tourism research. Various scholars within and outside the field of tourism studies address the concept's connection to authenticity (see Ballard, 1990; Cohen, 1988; Heidegger, 1962; MacCannell, 1976; Rae, 2010; Schmid, 2005). For these scholars, alienation is regarded as "constitutively tied to, and underpinned by, a specific conception of the authentic self" (Rae, 2010, p. 22). Indeed, the concepts of alienation and authenticity are complementary however they are neither equivalent nor interchangeable. Furthermore, as will be explained in the subsequent section, alienation embodies a self-emancipatory vantage point and an intellectual pedigree that authenticity lacks. Despite the mutually supportive link between alienation and authenticity, theorizations of alienation in tourism that move beyond evanescent accounts have remained scarce.

Perhaps the dearth, to date, of theorizations that link alienation to tourism studies can be attributed to the field's 'truncation' in theoretical discussions on authenticity (a notable exception to the rule is Belhassen, Caton, and Stewart (2008) work). In a recent article, Cohen and Cohen (2012) discuss the evolution of sociological theories within tourism studies and they indicate that:

> [t]he twin argument that moderns seek authenticity outside of modernity, and that locals stage it for them, appeared to have the potential to become the basis of a paradigm for the sociological study of tourism. Towards the end of the last century, however, the sociological study of tourism moved largely away from the problematique of authenticity...and fractured into a plethora of sub-types (p. 2179).

The emphasis on disaggregating authenticity into different types allowed for a singular focus on certain meanings but we argue that it also prevented the emergence of new theoretical linkages with germane concepts (*i.e.*, alienation) that would have provided a broader theoretical basis from which to further explore tourism as a complex social phenomenon.

We propose that new interrogations into the concept of alienation can offer valuable insights into the nexus between human experiences (of alienation) and the various forms of tourism structures that characterize modern day society. For instance, further theorizations of alienation, in conjunction with authenticity, can result in nascent paradigms that can be instrumental in the continual development of the sociological study of tourism (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). We also propose that discussions on alienation can contribute to critical tourism studies by complementing the predominant focus on "culture, discourse and representation" (*e.g.*, the case of authenticity) with analyses of "the structures and relations of power associated with globalization and neo-liberal capitalism" (Bianchi, 2009, p. 487). Critical tourism studies deals with, amongst other things, issues of social justice and advocacy orientation (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2007; Cohen & Cohen, 2012). These issues are in many ways linked to the emancipatory component of the concept of alienation.

Given the current hiatus in tourism literature, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to investigate the evolution of the concept of alienation and to reflect on its applicability for critical approaches to

tourism research. This paper is located within a "subjectivist/interpretivist paradigm" and it is a quintessential example of what Xin, Tribe, and Chambers (2013) refer to as "[p]ure conceptual research" which by definition focuses entirely on "the analysis of concept(s)" that can be integrated into new areas of study or applied in new ways to extant fields of study (p. 70, 73). This paper is divided into three sections, which are commensurate with Xin et al.'s typology of themes in conceptual research. The first section defines alienation and traces the historical development of alienation in social sciences. It also identifies three lenses, of pertinence to tourism, through which alienation has been discussed, namely, production, consumption, and existentialism. The second section discusses the applicability of the concept of alienation to tourism scholarship. This section also critiques extant interpretations of the notion of existential authenticity within tourism. Examples are provided to illustrate trajectories within extant research that can benefit from further theorizations of alienation. By so doing this section maps alienation by focusing on "what is associated with the concept, what is included, the range of the concept, [and] what is excluded" (Xin et al., 2013, p. 78). The third section proposes a working model that situates the diverse processes of alienation involved in a particular tourism situation. This section inevitably extends the concept "to new contexts of application" (Xin, et al., p. 79) in order to augment existing knowledge.

Theories of alienation

The history of the term alienation can be traced back to early theological writings (Calvin, 1854; Luther, 1908), which described alienation as a state of separation from God. In the period of Enlightenment, social-contract theorists such as Grotius ([1625]1953) and Rousseau ([1762]1947) defined alienation, or its Latin form *alienatio*, as the transfer of sovereign authority from oneself to others, be they individuals or the mass populous. The concept was later redefined by Hegel ([1807]1949) who, from a philosophical standpoint, argued that alienation is manifest amongst social beings as an unintended but conscious experience of separation or as deliberate surrender of personal interests. The aforementioned scholarly work informed Marx's detailed re-conceptualization of alienation in connection to (the division of) labor and intricately linked to the capitalist mode of production.

While Marx's conceptualization is the fulcrum on which popular articulations of alienation are based, it is important to note that Marxian thought is simply depictive of one of many schools of thought that theorize alienation. In fact, as discussed in the latter part of this paper, during the second half of the twentieth century, alienation was reinterpreted as the outcome of consumption as well as from an existential perspective. Thus, in this paper we classify extant literature on alienation as broadly characterized by three distinct yet related approaches/lenses, namely, *production, consumption*, and *existentialism* (see Table 1). These three lenses bare relevance to tourism studies, specifically, as relates to understanding the production and consumption of touristic experiences but also the existential condition of tourists.

Table 1
Three conceptual lenses related to theorizations of alienation.

Theoretical lenses	Genesis	Drivers	Unit of analysis	Interpretation
Production	Capitalist society	Capitalist relations of production	Capitalist relations of production	Humans are alienated from the products of their labor and their creative powers when capital controls their acts of production
Consumption			Consumerist culture	Alienation results from consuming meaningless and unnecessary packaged goods and experiences that become signs of social worth and status
Existentialism	Individuals	Psychological processes	Individuals' existential dilemmas	Alienation refers to the relations that one has with oneself, others and the world when the opinions of others are prioritized over oneself

Alienation from the lens of production relations

Alienation, according to Karl Marx, was an inevitable consequence of capitalist industrialization. He regarded alienation as existing in the relations of production wherein workers sell their creative power in the labor market and they consequently lose control of the products and the acts of production (see Table 1), but also their relationships with self and others (Marx, 1978). From this perspective, alienation is a logical consequence of "private property" over the means of production whereby the "worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities" (Marx, 1978, p. 70). O'Leary (2007) explains Marx's thesis vis-à-vis the example of a cobbler who makes shoes and a worker in a shoe factory. The former derives motivation and pride making shoes and interacting with consumers as well as his/her fellow workers. The latter, however is stationed on a conveyor belt: where his/her creativity is neither recognized nor utilized; where s/he has neither ownership nor pride over the end product of his/her labor; and where s/he is isolated from others as well as his/her own self (O'Leary, 2007).

From Marx's perspective, working in a factory is akin to ensconcing oneself within the capitalist machine. Creativity that emerges from, for example, the workmanship of a cobbler was regarded by scholars like Veblen (1934) as the fruit from which advancements in civilization are born and as the prey on which the predatory instincts of the factory owner are nourished. In the same vein, Mills (1951) argued that industrial production and private property had successfully transformed the United States from a nation of small capitalists into a nation of hired employees. According to Mills, this transformation turned modern white-collar workers into automatic machines and alienated them from the world they had helped to create. More generally, Trilling (1972) linked the alienation of modern beings to other spheres of human production, such as the production of culture via art or literary texts. Like many scholars after him, he critiqued the mass production of culture.

In addition to the aforementioned seminal theoretical contributions, Seeman (1959), Seeman (1967, Seeman (1975) pioneered the empirical operationalizations of alienation in his work on social psychological frameworks. Seeman (1959) identified six manifestations of alienation, namely: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, self-estrangement, and social isolation. A plethora of subsequent studies have been conducted to test the alienating work and living conditions of workers and underprivileged groups in society, primarily using quantitative analyses (Yuill, 2011). With the aid of various scales, dimensions of alienation as experienced by different professionals such as blue-collar workers and white-collar workers have been examined (Aiken & Hage, 1966; Blauner, 1964; Clark, 1959; Dean, 1961; Seeman, 1967).

The abovementioned studies offer insights into the various ways in which the structures that govern the labor market impact the workers. Similar parallels regarding the tourism worker can be drawn in tourism studies and indeed some scholars have advanced knowledge on the condition of tourism laborers (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012; Ross, 2006; Sharpley & Forster, 2003). This knowledge provides a platform from which to promote alienation research from a production lens. Indeed, all the three lenses adopted in this paper illustrate additional opportunities through which to engage with the vast body of sociological and philosophical research pertaining to alienation.

Alienation from the lens of consumption relations

From the 1950's onwards, critiques of capitalism and modern society shifted from a focus on poor working environments and conflict between property-owning classes and proletariats, to the syndrome of rampant consumerism that characterizes modernity. Social scientists led by Marcuse (1964), Lukács (1971), Baudrillard (1998), and Adorno (1991) observed the fundamental changes that Western society was experiencing after the Second World War and they proposed that the prevalence of consumption over production was one of the key emergent drivers of alienation. Their work inspired a flurry of interest in scholarly work focusing on the alienated behavior of consumers, commodity fetishism, as well as other characteristics of consumerism. For instance, Lukács (1971) proposed the term *reification* to describe the *objectification* of a world dominated by extensive selling and advertising, in which alienated consumers were easily manipulated and deceived to unceasingly consume meaningless and unnecessary products (see Table 1).

Baudrillard (1981) emphasized the importance of signs and symbols as key factors in explicating consumption with the advertising industry as a catalyst in creating, for instance, "leisure wants, wants capable of being met only through buying particular goods or services" (Stebbins, 2009, p. 63). Baudrillard's (1981) thesis on semiology is related with Veblen's (1934) notion of conspicuous consumption, a phenomenon which during the end of the 19th century resulted in another form of alienation whereby members of lower classes were controlled by the ever-changing fashion and consumer culture determined by members of the dominant upper classes. Besides, alienation is more significant in the increasing amount of packaged goods that has led to a stage of less autonomy and less creative consumption (Bocock, 1993). This aspect of alienation can be applied to the consumption of, for instance, packaged vacations. In fact, as illustrated in the latter part of this paper, tourism scholarship has contributed to this topic.

Consumption theorists argue that even the seemingly autonomous and individualized choice made by consumers, as well as the innate desires, needs, and wants that drive consumers (Bauman, 1992) are rather fantasies and illusions manipulated by a mature capitalist consumer society within which people actively engage and integrate themselves into the hegemony of consumption (Comor, 2011). Baudrillard (1998) aptly states that "the consumer is sovereign in a jungle of ugliness where freedom of choice has been forced upon him" (p. 72). Hence, the idea of consumption from this lens is a site of social control where the individual, through incessant pursuit and acquisition of commodities, constantly engages all of his/her capacities for consumption (McIntyre, 1992).

Alienation from an existentialist lens

Existentialist philosophy emphasized the intrinsic existence of alienation in daily life and advocated the possibility of pursuing authenticity to alleviate the degree of alienation (de Beauvoir, 1989; Heidegger, 1962; Kierkegaard, 1941). Existentialists generally believed that alienation is a basic form of individual human existence or otherwise put, a normal mode of the human condition (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sartre, 1992). In this sense, existentialists differed, from political economists and cultural studies scholars (production and consumption lenses respectively), in that they articulate alienation as an unhistorical and context-free condition. This vantage point is in fact in contrast to the Marxist school of thought wherein alienation was conceptualized as an historical outcome that can only be overcome through social change.

Existential thinkers such as Sartre (1992) described alienation as: "certain type of relations that man has with himself, with others and with the world, where he posits the ontological priority of the 'Other'" (p. 382). That is, people in the world are always in encounter with others, and the devastating consequence of this fact is that people are not merely a function of their own projects, but rather a matter of how others see those projects (see Table 1). Existentialists highlighted the pursuit of *authenticity* as the cure for *alienation* (Heidegger, 1962). According to this school of thought, authenticity is achieved when a person realizes that s/he is "in essential possession of what essentially belongs to being a [hu]man" (Kierkegaard, 1941, p. 318–319). Being authentic is the means to recover oneself from the alienation involved in allowing one's own life to be dictated by the world (as a function of the roles one finds oneself in). Otherwise put, existential authenticity is attained when a person is cognizant of the mindless conformity that characterizes society and transcends this condition by *choosing* (in the Sartrian sense) to pursue projects that grant him/her meaning in life (be they leisure or work related). Therefore, for existentialists, alienation and authenticity are two sides of the same coin (Baxter, 1982; Rae, 2010).

In summation and as indicated in Table 1, alienation is an influential concept within diverse schools of thought. Even though the general meanings attributed to the term alienation remain the same across the three previously mentioned approaches/lenses, the application and implication of the term are indeed dissimilar. For Marxists and consumption cultural studies scholars, alienation is pertinent to capitalist society and has changed from a focus on production to one on consumption as Western society transitioned towards Fordism and Post-Fordism. Thus, alienation is often regarded by some as a concept associated with social and economic relations of capitalism (see Table 1). However, for existentialists, alienation acquires psychological and spiritual connotations and it is regarded as a malaise that is pervasive in modern society but not specific to it.

Theoretical consideration on alienation for tourism studies

In this section, we will connect the concept of alienation with tourism as a social phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, theoretical discussions on alienation are largely absent in tourism scholarship; however, evanescent references to the term are not rare (see Akama, 1996; Cohen, 1988; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). We argue that the three previously discussed lenses, namely production, consumption and existentialism, through which alienation has been discussed in sociology and cognate disciplines, bring to light issues that are crucial for tourism studies. For instance, the production lens can revitalize political economy approaches on the impacts of tourism development on tourism workers; particularly, a focus on tourism-related nascent labor markets that emerge across the world. The consumption lens may bring about new perspectives for cultural and postmodern approaches to critical tourism studies, for example, by highlighting the various dimensions of alienation associated with different forms of tourism consumption. Lastly, the existentialist lens can challenge discussions on authenticity, and existential authenticity in particular. Although presented separately, when applied to tourism settings, the combination of the three lenses can further illuminate our understanding of the ways in which human beings impact and are impacted by the forces of social structure.

Alienation and tourism production

Extant tourism scholarship that draws on the production lens has generally focused on the production of destinations for mass tourism consumption and it has emphasized the role enacted by tourism in introducing western capitalist social relations in remote areas and the consequences in terms of reshaping the social structure of local communities. The critique championed by this collective group of studies is one that regards tourism as a tool that deprives local residents of the means of production (Britton, 1982; Harrison, 2001). Critical studies on tourism development point to the ubiquity of exploitative working conditions and poor living situations evident within varied tourism destinations, particularly in the global south (Akama, 2002; Daher, 1999). Recent studies that adopt the production perspective frame tourism development as both cause and result of economic globalization (Hjalager, 2007). This body of work also points to the increasing internationalization of the tourism workforce and the informal labor force, as well as the growing emergence of voluntary labor markets associated with humanitarian or environmental projects (Hjalager, 2007).

Despite the wealth of research on tourism production, empirical studies linked to alienation of workers in the tourism sector are still scarce. DiPietro and Pizam's (2008) work is an exception to the rule that measures feelings of alienation as experienced by 595 US based employees working for the Quick Service Restaurant Industry. The authors concluded that alienation of employees was unequally distributed among the restaurants that comprise the corporate chain in question. The managerial styles and practices in each restaurant were the major factors influencing employees' feeling of alienation. Indeed, the accommodation sector is a key tourism sector for scholars to interrogate employee related alienation, the intensity of which is, for example, contingent upon different forms of ownership such as the case of a commercial home (Bread and Breakfast) versus a multinational hotel chain.

Extant research on commercial homes indicates that commercial homeowners and those who work for them tend to espouse a value system that prioritizes quality of life, personal creativity, meaningful human interactions, and personal values over economic gain (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; McIntosh, Lynch, & Sweeney, 2011). Research on the multinational hotel workplace reveals that human interactions within this setting, between employee and tourist, are hierarchical and are regulated by a set of behavioral standards that demand a positive and constant emotional response from the employee – a form of emotional labor (Kingsbury, 2011). Examining the concept of alienation within the aforementioned two contexts of the accommodation sector can augment knowledge the social and psychological dimensions associated with tourism labor environs.

Further inquiry into alienation and the production of labor can be extended to incorporate the signs and symbols related to portrayals of tourism related workscapes. In fact, research on the bio-politics of workforce management in tourism enclaves offers a strong foundation on which to build future

studies. For instance, Minca's (2009) work on the capitalist production of leisure reveals a predominance of depictions of employees as continuously having fun and it unveils a taming and managing of bodies so as to reduce contact between tourists and workers. Similarly, Kingsbury's, 2011 work on the discursive management strategies deployed at Sandals Resorts in Jamaica illustrates management's efforts to portray the workplace as a site of enjoyment. The adopted imagery renders employees' long work hours, physical toil, feigned happiness, and alienation obsolete.

The condition of alienation is not solely applicable to employees but also to other members of their family. For instance, Buzinde and Manuel-Navarrete's (2013) work investigates children's perceptions of their socio-spatial surroundings in a tourism enclave in the Mexican Caribbean. The authors indicate that the labor relations in tourism enclaves affect the organization of space and range of activities engaged in by employees and their children. Examinations of tourism related workscapes should also involve managers and tourism developers because they are key actors in the spread and execution of capitalist modes of production. For instance, in the case of tourism developers, alienation research can explore developers' level of personal involvement and meaningful engagement with the development process and the extent to which this engagement is hindered by the increasing internationalization of the tourism industry. For instance, focusing on tourism developers in the Mexican Caribbean, Manuel-Navarrete (2012) illustrates that alienation can also be pervasive amongst developers given that their autonomy is often limited by structural and ideological constraints.

Another promising line is associated with recent sociological inquiry that explores new forms of alienation created by new technologies, new forms of labor organization and the knowledge economy in the context of globalization (Berardi, 2009; Lindio-McGovern, 2004). These new forms of labor are also reshaping the production of tourism (*e.g.*, India-based tele-service representatives employed by a Western airline; medical tourism workers in South nations working in technological advanced medical centers that provide services not extended to locals; Pakistani migrant workers employed in the extravagant hotels in United Arab Emirates). In addition, tourism development has the particularity of often taking place in remote parts of the global South wherein local populations are still not fully integrated into the capitalistic relations of production and wage labor. Political economy approaches have pointed to the role of tourism as a means for spreading proletarianization out to the last, most-hidden corners of the globe (Britton, 1982; Harrison, 2001). Consequently, impacting previously secluded and new (immigrant) communities that are exposed to the establishment of the tourism industry and the arrival of foreign tourists. In such cases, tourism affects host communities by introducing alienation, through capitalist modes of production, where none existed.

There is little research on alienation experienced by communities whose members are enlisted in the industry's payroll system. Accordingly, there are a number of questions of enduring interest, for instance: How does cultural performativity, as a central part of producing touristic experiences and as enacted by resident populations in the Global South, create new and different forms of alienation amongst these populations? More generally, how do the emergent forms of alienation as related to resident populations, highlight elements of neocolonialism, neoliberalism, sustainability, and social inequality? Making these connections would allow tourism scholars to engage in broader social scientific discussions that attempt to offer remedies for contemporary global complex challenges. Given the above discussion related to the various types of alienation that can be linked to the production of tourism, we propose that there is need for more tourism scholarship that deals with the nexus between production and alienation. Such scholarly endeavors are necessary because tourism, as any other capitalistic activity, involves a form of alienation that has enduring impacts (that can be attenuated through alternative forms of tourism development) on resident populations engaged in tourism labor.

Alienation and tourism consumption

Tourism scholarship has long focused on the development of mass consumption of tourism and its link to new forms of consumerism/consumerist culture. In his earlier work, Urry (1990, p. 14) diagnosed what he referred to as a "productivist bias" in the literature and he consequently called for a focus on the increasing segmentation, flexibility, and customization of tourism consumption; a trend reflecting the shift from Fordism, organized capitalism and mass consumption to Post-Fordism, disorganized capitalism and increasingly individuated patterns of consumption. Urry's (1990) call was

recently echoed with a multiplication of post-structural and cultural studies approaches to tourism, and more generally the so-called "critical turn" in tourism studies (Ateljevic et al., 2007).

In line with Bourdieu's (1984) notion of *cultural capital* and Bauman's (1992) account of *postmodern consumerism*, tourism scholars have asserted the centrality of cultural commodification in the constitution of tourism systems and they have focused on consumer culture and the role of mass consumption in the reification of consciousness (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Urry, 1990; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Accordingly, tourism has been reframed as both a cause and consequence of the reconfiguration of social relations along increasingly individualized and consumerist societies (Franklin, 2007). However an unanswered question of enduring interest is: what influence does tourism consumption, and different forms of tourism consumption, have on consumers' level of alienation?

From the consumption lens, tourism, as any other economic activity, needs to be explored in relation to global processes of commodification and contemporary consumer culture (Shepherd, 2002; Tremblay, 2001). In discussing commodification in relation to alienation Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) stated that:

> While modern tourists typically hanker for leisure as a respite from deeply alienating, routine work, and presumably as an effective counterbalance to the pressures of work, in the very nature of the commodification of modern tourism, the sense of alienation seems to follow the travelers into their touristic adventures. The alienation takes the form of restricted choices framed by a 'staged' consumption pattern–a fetishism if you will–in which the singular theme of possession and display takes priority over all other social behavior. (p. 649).

Arguably, restricted choice is most evident in the buying and selling of standard travel experiences through vacation packages (often, but not only, associated with large resorts and fabricated destinations). On the one hand, the pre-packaged vacation constrains the individuality and autonomy of tourists in their itinerary choices and selection of tourism activities. On the other hand, by only including the most symbolic and 'must-see' tourism destinations, the pre-packaged vacation confines tourists to fictitious and alienated tourist spaces and prevents them from exploring the different but real world.

The critique of tourism as a capitalist social relation can be traced back to mainstream sociology and leisure studies. Notably, the idea of the existence of a cultural industry set the foundation for a general critique of leisure and free time put forth by the Frankfort school (Adorno, 1991; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1971). For instance, Baudrillard (1998) argued that leisure, which ought to be a chance of modern people to break free from capitalist relations, actually turns out to be one more expression of these relations. For him, alienation in 'free' time or leisure is even more profound than in work time. Similarly, Seligman (1965) maintained that leisure, which ought to be a liberating activity, had instead been corrupted by "the technology of industrialism and thereby converted into unfree engagements" (p. 356). In this vein, as a specific form of leisure activity, tourism "becomes more and more dislodged from the spontaneity and free choice that is regularly assumed to define the tourist and tourism experience" (Watson and Kopachevsky, 1994, p. 645).

Even under Post-Fordism, where consumers are believed to be empowered and autonomous in making choices, there are significant social forces and norms at play that can influence choices and behavior. For instance, in examining the tourist gaze, Urry (1990) noticed that tourists' preferences and tastes are heavily structured by the information they repeatedly received from guidebooks, television, or postcards. Similarly, photography during travel has been described as reproduction and recirculation of stereotypical photographic representations over which tourists appear to have little control (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Along the same lines, Bourdieu (1996) states that:

> "Although the field of the photographable may broaden, photographic practice does not become any more free, since one may only photograph what one must photograph, and since there are photographs which one must 'take' just as there are sites and monuments which one must 'do'" (p. 37).

The discussion of the frames used in photography is related to the sensationalism that characterizes tourism marketing imagery, which more often than not promotes spectacular landscapes and exotic Others. The promoted symbols display fragmented views of a destination and thus alienate tourists from experiencing the real landscapes of tourist destinations. Moreover, the static portrayals

of tourismscapes ignore the fact that the portrayed landscapes are in constant evolution environmentally, due to climate change (Buzinde, Manuel-Navarrete, Yoo, & Morais, 2010), or culturally sometimes owing to the very exposure of local cultures to tourism (Buzinde, Santos, & Smith, 2006).

Despite the significance of alienation in tourism consumption, we argue that there is a need to further examine alienation within each form of tourism because different forms might result in distinctive intensities of alienation. For instance, tourists consuming mass tourism and pre-packaged vacations might feel more alienated than tourists consuming responsible tourism experiences, because the latter require higher ethical standards and are thus more conscious about their choices and activities. Such claims must also be weighed against the backdrop of tourists' increasing ability to obtain feedback provided by fellow consumers on websites such as TripAdvisor and the irruption of new forms of communication such as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and Social Networking Sites (SNS), all of which may alleviate dependence on vacation packages and contribute to less alienating consumption.

Alienation, existentialism and tourism

Tourism research from an existential lens can commence by considering MacCannell's (1976) claim that tourists search for authenticity to reduce a feeling of *alienation* that modernity creates in their lives. Following MacCannell's (1976) seminal work, authenticity became a hotly debated issue in tourism literature. At the most fundamental level, the debate centered on whether tourists are disappointed when exposed to staged authenticity or whether they are content with inauthentic experiences. For some authors tourists definitely appear to seek authenticity, but in varying degrees of intensity, perhaps depending on each tourists' degree of alienation (Cohen, 1979; Cohen, 1988; Dann, 1977). Yet, the question remains as to whether tourists' longing for authenticity and wholeness can actually be fulfilled by merely escaping the day-to-day routine of work and daily chores through tourism.

The debate on authenticity has had an existentialist thrust since Wang (1999) introduced the distinction between object-related and existential authenticity. Prior to the introduction of the concept of existential authenticity, objective and constructive authenticity were the main forms of authenticity detectable in tourism scholarship. Objective authenticity denotes a feature and condition of the toured object (be it a piece of art, a traditional dance, or an entire destination) that has to be real and original in order to be perceived as authentic. Constructive (or symbolic) authenticity acknowledges that there is no absolute origin within the dynamism of culture and that social construction plays a key role in the (re)construction of new meanings through the projection of idealized images, expectations, preferences, or beliefs about the toured objects (Wang, 1999).

Wang (1999) differentiated existential authenticity from the other two forms by defining it as a novel form of authenticity that can be experienced by tourists even in the absence of 'authentic' tourism settings. Implicit in this conceptualization is the idea that tourism can satisfy the search for freedom and the need to (temporarily) escape alienation (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006) but also the fact that overcoming alienation is an individual rather than an historical achievement. Based on Wang's definition of existential authenticity, a tourist can offset alienation in any form of tourism and at any type of tourism destination, as long as the touristic location (be it through (in)authentic set-ups) helps the tourist to reconnect with his/her authentic being through displacement from alienating daily routines.

In fact, Wang uses the beach holiday to illustrate the bodily source of the authentic self:

> On the one hand, in this setting, the body shows that it is relaxed and not limited by bodily control or self-control imposed by social structures or the superego. On the other hand, the body alters its routine existence and enters an alternative, yet intensified, experiential state: recreation, diversion, entertainment, spontaneity, playfulness, or in short, authenticity in the existential sense (Wang, 1999, p. 362).

As described by Wang (1999), existential authenticity counteracts the loss of autonomy that results from our involvement in the modern roles of Western society. Furthermore, in contrast to the alienated feelings activated through engagement in utilitarian everyday roles, Wang (1999) characterizes

non-ordinary tourism activities as having the inherent ability to trigger a feeling of freedom from the constraints of daily routine. Notably, however, the existentialist alienation lens that we present in this paper challenges Wang's direct relation between escaping routine and being authentic.

As discussed earlier in this paper, existentialism postulates that the alienation caused by daily routine can only be offset by one's engagement in a project as one's own, and never when one engages out of duty or because such engagement is what is expected from him/her by others. In this view, engaging in tourism can only yield existential authenticity if it is one's own project. Wang (1999) did not make this distinction. Rather, he interpreted alienation as a condition of modernity arising from engagement in dominant modern institutions (a position more consistent with a consumption lens), instead of arising form individuals' unreflective engagement (mindless conformity) with a certain practice (Sartre, 1992). Thus, Wang (1999) conceived of 'existential' authenticity as automatically attained by merely engaging with any activity realized or fulfilled, at least partly (*i.e.*, liminally), outside dominant institutions.

However, judged from the existentialist lens presented in this paper, existential authenticity can potentially be achieved even through engagement in dominant institutions (*e.g.*, labor) as far as it is the outcome of one's own autonomous decision, or as far as it becomes one's own concern. It is therefore important to note that from an existentialist lens, authenticity is not contingent on the characteristics of any specific project (tourism, labor or otherwise). Instead, it is about the manner in which someone engages in such projects either as one's own or, on the contrary, as what one does because s/he feels compelled by others to do (Crowell, 2010). As a corollary, tourism research on alienation, from an existentialist lens, needs to take issue with Wang's conceptualization and focus on the authenticity of the process of choosing to engage in tourism.

Further inquiry into this matter can nudge scholarship away from the overtly uncritical and optimistic approach to leisure that often underpins the existential tourism perspective. Additionally, the above-suggested avenues can help tourism scholars to veer away from Graburn's (1983) portrayals of tourism as the "epitome of freedom and personal choice characteristic of Western individualism" (p. 13). From an existential lens tourism is not a sufficient, or even a necessary, condition of authenticity. As argued by Cohen (1979:186) vacations may "heal the body and soothe the spirit", and yet not "reestablish adherence to a meaningful center", thus only making "alienation endurable" (Cohen, 1979). Furthermore, not all forms of tourism should be expected to activate existential authenticity. Some forms of tourism, including mass tourism and business tourism, are not designed to evoke individuals' autonomous feelings and conscious engagement. Lastly, alienation and authenticity are the products of structural coupling between specific projects and particular individuals, and are thus dependent on the particular needs of each person at any specific moment. As a consequence, each individual will feel differently alienated in his or her own engagement with any specific leisure-based activity.

As a result of our reinterpretation of existential authenticity, questions of enduring interest are: In what degree is alienation dependent on the types of tourism one engages in? Can more existentially authentic forms of engagement in leisure be designed and offered by the tourism industry? Equally relevant is the nexus between tourism, alienation and the burgeoning literature on individual happiness and community well-being. Countries, like the nation of Bhutan, are increasingly adopting measures of development and well-being that move away from econometric indices like gross domestic product (GDP) to measures of happiness that account for autonomous feelings and values (linked to the area of positive psychology). Similar examples are being replicated in cities like Seattle, Washington. However, the connection between individual well-being (as relates to tourists or locals) and the forms of autonomy proposed from an existential lens are rarely incorporated into happiness-related metrics. More importantly, very little is known about the role played by tourism in the reduction of social tensions and personal unhappiness associated with alienation in modern society.

Researching alienation in tourism

The discussion thus far proposes that analyses of the phenomenon of alienation/authenticity in tourism can be tackled vis-à-vis three different lenses. In this section we propose a *general* model that can guide future analyses of alienation/authenticity related to any specific tourism activity, event or

destination. The model, as shown in Fig. 1, is based on the assumption that any production and consumption of a destination will involve tourist, tourism worker, and tourism corporation/developer. The production lens focuses on the interaction between workers and corporations (see Fig. 1). From this lens, tourism research on alienation can explore the labor conditions imposed by corporations as well as workers' level of control in the labor context, including their autonomy to decide the ways in which they interact with tourists. For instance, in the case of all-inclusive resorts, as illustrated by Minca (2009), Kingsbury (2011), tourism research can examine the effects of alienation induced by the representation strategies deployed by corporate managers that mediate interaction between workers and tourists. In the case of commercial homeowners (B&Bs), the worker may have a relatively high level of control to establish labor conditions, but also to exhibit creativity in the production of the space and performance of hospitality. Furthermore, from a broader community perspective tourism may reduce the alienation of local populations by improving socio-economic opportunities and community ownership, deepening habitants' co-dependence with their socio-ecological environments, as well as enhancing the pride for one's own culture.

The consumption lens focuses on the interaction between tourists and corporations (see Fig. 1). From this lens, tourism research on alienation can explore the autonomy of the tourist to shape the activities performed in a destination and the ways in which s/he engages in these activities. The issue at hand that future tourism scholarship can elaborate on is tourists' level of control over the design of the itinerary and tourists' ability to deviate from the pre-planned activities once at the destination. Suffice to say that tourism corporations need to be responsive to consumer preferences/needs. However, as mentioned earlier on this paper, corporations actively shape the needs and preferences of consumers through advertising and other means of communication. Tourism scholars can examine alienation from a consumption lens by focusing on the dissonance that may emerge between consumers' authentic preferences/needs and the ones that arise from exposure to the advertising of undifferentiated, fake, and inauthentic objects and experiences. Given the increasing multiplication of different forms of tourism under the umbrella of post-modernism (Kim & Jamal, 2007), it is important to analyze the opportunities that consumers may have to develop new forms of influencing and controlling the design process. For instance, as consumers become further knowledgeable about the authentic implications of sustainability they can demand less inaccurate or ill-defined labeling of 'sustainable' products.

The existential lens focuses on the interactions that tourists, workers, and developers have with themselves (see Fig. 1), as they decide to engage in vacation, labor, and/or tourism development projects. As discussed earlier, existential authenticity is an individual achievement independent of
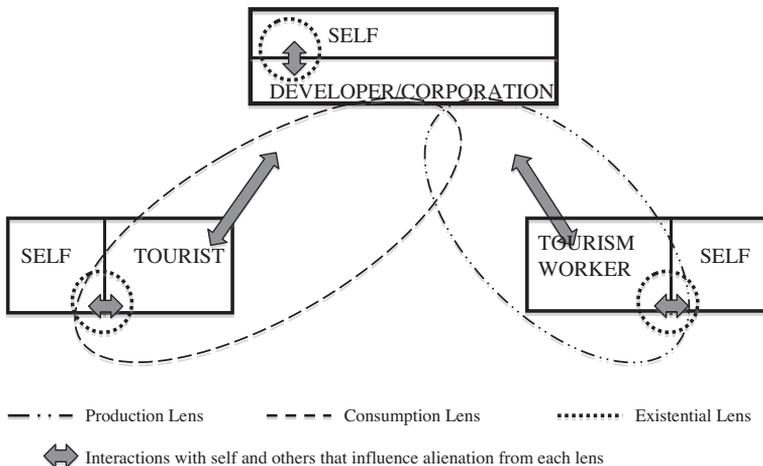

Fig. 1. Multi-lens model to analyze alienation in tourism destinations.

specific activities. So the question here is whether an inner, self-directed process of searching for authenticity guides their engagements. A unit of analysis informed by this lens is the personal process of deciding how to engage in tourism. In the case of tourists' engagement in a vacation, one can distinguish between decisions that are highly conditioned by social expectations, and those that arise from internal processes of self-reflection regarding the reasons for engagement. For instance, one could explore similarities and differences in the psychological patterns involved in one person's or multiple individuals' decision to engage in a summer vacation versus a religious pilgrimage.

In the case of the tourism workers, the existential lens can inform research on the motivations of, for instance, migrant workers originating from rural settings who choose to engage in tourism work. The question of alienation in this case is centered on the level of conscious choice-making related to labor options and the extent to which the worker is able to partake in self-reflection regarding his/her situation. Similarly, in the case of tourism developers, alienation research can explore developers' level of personal involvement and meaningful engagement with the development process and the extent to which this engagement is hindered by the increasing internationalization of the tourism industry.

The above discussion suggests that, when alienation in tourism is approached from an existential, consumption and production multi-perspective, there is no definite answer as to whether tourism leads to eradication, maintenance, or increase of alienation. Indeed, touristic experiences and tourism development are diverse and differentiated; tourism can be viewed as generating varied contexts within which alienation is created, promoted or reduced. Therefore, the main theoretical question is not whether tourism development and operations intrinsically generate alienation or de-alienation. Rather, the key question is what types of tourism activities will, in different contexts, increase or decrease alienation of tourists, workers and other related populations. The combination of the three lenses on alienation introduced in this paper provides a framework through which to discuss how different types of tourism development impact the subjectivities of the diverse actors involved.

Conclusion

Sociological theory has played a key role in tourism studies, especially in terms of conceptual and theoretical formulations. Numerous scholars (Jafar Jafari, Dean MacCannell, Erik Cohen, John Urry, to mention a few) have adapted insights from mainstream social sciences to the study of tourism. However, along with the maturity of tourism studies, is the need for the field to further build its own theories. As a field, the permeability of tourism's scholarly boundaries necessitates an inclusive and flexible approach to theory development (Tribe, 2010). Indeed, borrowing knowledge from other disciplines can only be of benefit to tourism studies by broadening and deepening scholarship. Following the steps of aforementioned pioneers, the purpose of this article was to examine the concept of alienation in sociology and cognate disciplines and to discuss the theoretical implications of the term in tourism studies. By so doing, this paper draws on the concept of alienation to provide what Xin et al. (2013, p. 68) refer to as "novel juxtapositions of ideas" that can further contribute to our understanding of tourism as a social phenomenon.

In this paper, the authors divide the colossal body of knowledge on alienation, as discussed by philosophers and social scientists, into three lenses, namely, production, consumption, and existentialist. The goal is to make this cryptic concept more accessible to tourism scholars by linking alienation perspectives to three prominent theoretical areas of discussion in tourism studies: political economy approaches (production lens); the critical and cultural turns in tourism studies (consumption lens); and existential authenticity (existentialist lens). The study of alienation in tourism can contribute to these three generally disconnected theoretical areas. For instance, insights from studies on existential authenticity, which consider the possibility of realizing de-alienation through tourism, can be discussed vis-à-vis the critiques of production and consumption that regard tourism as embedded within capitalist forms of social relations and argue that tourism development may foster alienation in both resident populations and tourists.

In light of the debate on whether tourism can create or eliminate alienation, this paper proposes that, given the variety of contemporary forms of tourism activities, there is no correct answer to the question and the key issue lies in the fact that different types of tourism can result in different

alienation conditions of tourists and/or resident populations. The production lens links the process of tourism development to the encounter between the tourism industry and local populations and it highlights the problems of capitalist production relations. The consumption lens considers tourism as an extension of alienating consumerist society. The existentialist lens assists a better understanding of existential authenticity by invoking a more nuanced exploration of the interaction between tourists' alienated status and the achievement of authenticity through personalized forms of engaging in travel. With the assistance of the three aforementioned lenses, the connection and discrepancy between alienation and authenticity is revealed and uncovered, adding more variety and complexity to the ongoing discussion of authenticity and the understanding of self in society.

Acknowledgement

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