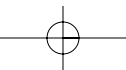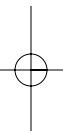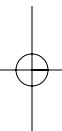# PART 1

TOURIST SELVES

2

The Tourist Experience

Much of the theorizing about tourism has sought to understand why people travel and to explain the centrality of travel (as a complex set of social and cultural practices) to contemporary society and the contribution it makes to the economies of cities and nations around the world. In particular, different approaches to understanding travel and the tourist experience have recognized that tourism encompasses a diverse range of sometimes contradictory activities and experiences. In this chapter, we trace some of the key developments in seeking to understand tourism in terms of the tourist experience. Our focus is directed first towards the foundational works that have been most relevant and influential, particularly those that situate the tourist as 'subject' at the centre of analysis. We explore the relatively recent shift in conceptualizations of tourism from a primarily consumption-based approach to the view that the tourist is the active creator of his/her travel experience.

In considering the tourism experience, it is necessary first to understand the role that tourism plays in contemporary society, the nature of tourism as consumption, and the political and economic struggles that may be waged over those spaces and experiences that have become particularly valued as commodities. The chapter commences with a discussion of conceptualizations of tourism in terms of typologies of activity which gives a context for understanding the different perspectives that have shaped academic knowledge of the tourism and the tourist experience, and which provide the foundations for understanding the traveller self. The chapter concludes by suggesting that an approach to the study of tourism that recognizes the role of subjectivity allows for an exploration of tourists as active creators and producers of the travel experience.

Functions and Formulations

There is still much contention and debate over the meaning of the term tourism (Rowe and Stevenson, 1994), which indicates, in part, that tourism is a field of study that is constantly changing. Indeed, just as tourism is undergoing a range of transformations in scale and type (Fieffer, 1986; Levenstein, 1998; Löfgren, 1999; Meethan, 2001), so too is its definitional theorization (Franklin and Crang, 2001; Hollinshead, 2000). Meethan (2001) proposes that the most obvious of these shifts has been the simultaneous development of mass consumption forms of tourism on the one hand, and of niche and alternative forms of tourism on the other (discussed below). Tourism now encompasses markets located within national boundaries as well as those that are organized on a global scale. Indeed, as is demonstrated in the chapters to follow, the 'placelessness' of the mass tourist experience is increasingly being countered (at least rhetorically) by an emphasis on the identity of place and the local (Stevenson, 2000).

The study of tourism has been the concern of a number of traditional academic disciplines. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify two broad disciplinary approaches or categories of study as significant. First, there is research that has focused on the business of tourism, including tourism management, marketing and policy, which aims in particular to assess (measure) the economic significance (benefits) of tourism on destination cities and regions. These studies generally acknowledge and promote the economic importance of tourism and attempt to quantify its value to host economies and count tourist movements. In this sense, tourism is viewed as an industry – as a business or enterprise that is of economic importance and has significant (positive) outcomes. Second, there is research within humanities and social science disciplines, including sociology, geography and cultural studies, which identifies the limitations of those analyses that emphasize only economic implications and statistical measurement. It is argued that approaches that only consider tourism in terms of economic activity and impact fail to recognize that tourism is a significant social and cultural practice that has considerable positive and negative effects on peoples and places around the world.

The starting point for these often qualitative studies is to accept that economic analyses provide 'crucial information for understanding the phenomenon' but to argue that this knowledge is somewhat limited in that it 'tell[s] us very little about the diverse qualities of tourist experience' (Rojek and Urry, 1997: 2). A social science approach to studying tourism is concerned with providing a broader and more

critical understanding of tourism as a social phenomenon. Tourism research from a social and cultural perspective is more concerned with 'conceptualising the forces which impact on tourism and, through an analysis of these forces, providing a broader context for understanding tourism' (Mowforth and Munt, 1998: 3). Needless to say, the approach we take here in considering tourist cultures and experiences is not one that is concerned with economics, marketing and management, although we would argue that approaches to travel and tourism that put the social and cultural first are more likely to produce insights that will lead to tourism that is also economically sustainable.

Wearing argues that it is possible to identify 'two major themes' in sociologically informed studies of travel and the traveller self:

> First, there has been an emphasis on tourism as a means of escape from everyday life, even if such escape is temporary. Secondly, travel has been constructed as a means of self-development, a way to broaden the mind, experience the new and different and return in some way enriched. (2002: 244)

The topic of the tourist experience has been addressed in a number of academic works conducted within social science disciplines since the 1960s (Uriely, 2005), and while much contemporary research regarding the tourist experience corresponds with the so-called postmodern turn in the social sciences and with the postmodernization of society more generally, the majority of tourism studies carried out in the 1960s and 1970s was underpinned by theories which positioned leisure and tourism as being instrumental to the functioning of societies and economies of the West (Wearing and Wearing, 2001).

Early developments in the study of the tourist experience focused on 'identifying and defining the nature of the experience of tourists. … [T]heorists tended to define these experiences in broad relation, or opposition, to other types of experience' (McCabe, 2005: 88). For instance, some conceptualizations of the tourism experience accentuate 'its distinctiveness from everyday life' (Uriely, 2005: 203). This distinction is evident in definitions of tourism proffered by Cohen (1972, 1979), Graburn (1989) MacCannell (1989), Smith (1989) and Turner and Ash (1975). From this perspective, the tourism space was presented as being distinct in both spatial and symbolic terms – as a place set apart from the world of work, as well as an actual location or destination (Böröcz, 1996; Hall and Page, 1999; MacCannell, 1989, 1992; Urry, 2002; Wang, 2000).

Narrow conceptualizations of tourism that focused on time or activity were in many ways significant factors limiting the development of tourism theory and its ability to address the complexity of the tourist experience. A consumption-based approach to understanding tourism regards the tourist as a subject who consumes products and experiences that have been provided for them by the leisure and tourism industries. According to Cohen (1979), tourism, as an industry in mid-twentieth-century postwar Western society, was regarded as being functional both for the smooth running of society and for the mental and physical health of individuals (particularly workers) within it. In this schema, tourism is regarded as an institution, the chief function of which is escape. But this view also incorporates and reinforces shared social values and assists in integrating various types of action, such as cultural interactions. For example, in the mid-twentieth century (when industry in the West boomed), summer holidays became an important annual ritual for many families in Western countries who typically visited the same holiday resort each year. Holidays at these resorts (invariably located on the coast, by lakes or in the mountains) provided an escape from the stresses and strains of working life. At the same time, holidays at these locations involved participation in a range of activities that were said to promote socialization and reinforce shared cultural values (Bammell and Bammell, 1992; Deegan, 1998).

From a functionalist perspective, tourism and tourism destinations were seen as instruments (among others) that supported social equilibrium and the status quo. Tourism was regarded as good for society as well as a reward for hard work; it was a chance for workers to escape and regenerate so that they would be able to function as active and engaged citizens and workers who maintained high levels of productivity (Farina, 1980). Tourism thus was seen as reinforcing the norms and values of the society. Specifically, that escape from work provides time for activities that generally contribute to the harmony and stability of society as well as providing benefits to individual citizens (Cohen, 1968). This view also reinforced and confirmed established gender roles and the gender division of labour that was prevalent at the time.

Functionalist assumptions concerning tourism as time and activity, therefore, are rigid. They allow for a very limited range of interpretations because of the two-dimensional nature of their constructs. As a result, those studies of tourism that were informed by functionalism were unable to deal with issues of power, conflicts of interests, inequalities of access for communities at destination areas, the experience of

tourism, the social construction and meaning of destinations, the control and subordination of various groups through tourism (including host communities), and social justice. They were also unable to examine the fluidity of tourist experiences. One form of explanation of tourism that can be attributed to functionalism is the development of tourist typologies which were designed to classify and categorize tourists into types based on certain tourism characteristics and travel motivations, activities and experiences (for example, Cohen, 1972, 1974, 1979; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Hamilton-Smith, 1987; Krippendorf, 1987; Pearce, 1982; Plog, 1987; Sharpley, 1994; Smith 1989). In other words, these studies have set out to identify the 'types' of tourist that exist, the 'types' of experience that they seek, and to categorize these experiences and traveller 'types'. It is thus important to outline the contribution of such typologies to contemporary understandings of the tourist experience, particularly in relation to the interactions of tourists with places, peoples and cultures.

Typologies of Experience

The seminal works of the sociologist Erik Cohen (1972, 1974, 1979) provided an initial framework for developing a social theory of tourism and for understanding tourist types. Cohen, according to Urry (2002: 8), challenged the idea of a single tourist gaze, maintaining that 'there is no single tourist as such but a variety of tourist types or modes of tourist experience'. In his early writings on the topic, Cohen (1972) argued that tourism is a manifestation of people's desire to visit other places in order to experience the cultural, social and environmental differences that exist in the world. While some tourists desire the experience of difference or strangeness, this desire is not consistent for all types of tourist, with some desiring and seeking the familiar or, as many have suggested, seeking encounters with difference from within the security of the known and the predictable. Graburn (1983) argues that the search for experiences of difference is dependent on the level of cultural confidence that the individual possesses. Cohen (1972) suggested four tourist types – the organized mass tourist, the individualized mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter. The experiences of tourists were differentiated primarily by the extent of their containment within the 'tourist bubble'. The main distinction Cohen made was that mass tourists are content to enjoy the comforts of 'environmental bubbles' while explorers and drifters wished to immerse themselves in host cultures.

Cohen (1979) later proposed a phenomenological typology of tourist experiences that identified five modes of tourist type, with a quest for pleasure at one end and a quest for meaning at the other. Cohen argued that tourist experiences could be located on a continuum, with a desire for mere pleasure at one end of the spectrum and a search for meaningful experiences at the other. He defined these tourist categories as 'recreational', 'diversionary', 'experiential', 'experimental' and 'existential', and argued that each holds different worldviews predicated on a relationship with the 'centre' of their own societies and the centre of 'other' societies (Cohen, 1979). Within this fivefold phenomenology of tourist experiences:

> Tourism is then the leisure/recreational experience par excellence in that it enables a temporary escape from the centre, which nevertheless remains of peripheral significance. Tourism was conceived as a reversal of everyday activities but in itself is devoid of meaning. (McCabe, 2005: 88)

Perhaps recognizing the theoretical limitations inherent in an overly simplified typology of tourists, Cohen (2004: 32) recently noted that the schema he was developing was of 'ideal [tourist] types' and acknowledged the 'fuzzy' nature of tourism as a concept (2004: 9). Significantly, however, Cohen's approach to understanding tourists highlights the diversity and plurality of tourist experiences (Uriely, 2005), and other scholars have increasingly added to his conceptualizations (for example, Hamilton-Smith, 1987; Jiang et al., 2000; Mo et al., 1993; Pearce, 1982; Smith, 1989; Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992).

Indeed, a global industry has developed to satisfy the perceived needs and expectations of tourists and tourism as types. For instance, tourism marketers have sought to 'group tourists together on the basis of their preference for particular vacation experiences in terms of: destinations, activities while on holiday, [and] independent travel vs package holidays' (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999: 91). Thus, the development of tourist typologies has been useful in assisting marketing strategies and providing a basis for economic measurement and forecasts. The tourist experience is presented as a form of activity which is converted to a typology, where the individual tourist is presented as electing to pursue – in their free time – a particular type of tourism (Lyons, 2003; Weaver, 1998, 2000; Wickens, 2002). However, critics of tourist typologies have asserted that such groupings are overly descriptive, demonstrate an ignorance of certain (often important)

market segments, and are the products of author value judgements, methodological flaws and an absence of empirical research (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). Tourist typologies have also been found to be based on generalizations that are not sensitive to issues relating to gender or cultural diversity (Chan, 2006; Uriely, 2005). They also neglect the voices and perspectives of the tourist (Wearing and Wearing, 2001; Wickens, 2002). Ultimately, typologies position the tourist experience as being 'shaped by the industry and carried out by passive consumers' (Uriely, 2005: 206). Thus, there is little doubt that the work carried out on typologies is insufficient to provide a sound analysis of tourists and their experiences, and that attempts to understand tourism purely as an activity (or set of activities) that fits a typology creates theoretical problems. Tourist typologies are philosophically based on unfashionable functionalist theories and, although they were very important in putting the study of tourism on the academic agenda, they soon came to be regarded as outdated and culturally specific.

A typology always 'leaves many kinds of tourists outside its scope … each individual trip does not always reflect the innermost needs and aspirations of people … "one's purpose as a traveller varies from one locale to another"' (Suvantola, 2002: 63, as per Riley, 1988: 323). In other words, allocating one tourist to one typology for one trip came to be regarded as problematic. No typology can ever effectively provide the basis for the analysis of tourism experiences since the tourist themselves will move in and out of being a certain type of tourist as they progress through a trip (Lyons, 2005; Steiner and Reisinger, 2006; Uriely et al., 2002). Tourist 'types' do not simply fall into one of several clearly defined and conceptually discrete categories but, rather, take up a position along a continuum dependent on their actual lived experiences, which are themselves a product of the interaction of their desires with the possibilities of the destination. Therefore, a more sophisticated utilization of Cohen's tourist 'types' identifies characteristics of practices and experiences, rather than qualities attributed to individuals. Indeed, Cohen (2004) himself has noted that individuals are capable of shifting position along this continuum. Also shifting are the points of recognizable differentiation – under continual pressure from capitalist commodification – that mark various 'types' of tourist experience.

Tourist typologies, while useful initially, are overly simplistic; they are based on stereotypes that 'cannot hope to encompass the complex patterns of behaviour we see in the real world' (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999: 92). The diversity and plurality of tourist experiences

need to be understood within the complex and dynamic phenomenon of tourism:

> As the tour group, the host community and the natural environment, to varying degrees, are interdependent components of any tourist experience, there is a need to move beyond simplistic typologies towards a more analytically flexible conceptualization that allows for the exploration of the assumptions implicit in the 'tourist gaze', the tourist 'destination', the marketing 'image', the 'visit', in suggesting other modes of analysis that may better account for the significant range and diversity of tourist experiences. (Wearing and Wearing, 2001: 151)

While typologies can provide a language for describing/categorizing tourism activities, insufficient elements of the tourism phenomenon are explored if analyses are limited to this approach. In contrast, conceptualizing tourism as experience can incorporate such elements of activity at the same time as going further to introduce and develop a more nuanced understanding of a range of other factors, such as, who can be considered a tourist and what are the limitations placed on the tourist experience by the global nature of contemporary tourism. This is particularly relevant as tourism is now increasingly understood 'as one kind of a cultural discourse of the world … considered as part of the production and consumption of tourist destinations and attractions' (Suvantola, 2002: 2–3). In other words, focusing attention on the quality of the experience rather than the activity will make it possible to discover more about tourism and what makes travel meaningful to tourists. In a recent review of conceptual advancements in tourist experience research, Uriely identifies four key developments that he describes as:

> [A] reconsideration of the distinctiveness of tourism from of everyday life experiences; a shift from homogenizing portrayals of the tourist as a general type to pluralizing depictions that capture the multiplicity of the experience; a shifted focus from the displayed objects provided by the industry to the subjective negotiation of meanings as a determinant of the experience; and a movement from contradictory and decisive academic discourse, which conceptualizes the experience in terms of absolute truths, toward relative and complementary interpretations. (2005: 200)

Thus, it came to be regarded as being valuable to establish how and why an activity was chosen in the first place and to understand how

the tourist actually experienced the activity and made sense of it in terms of their traveller identity. These are the concerns of Chapter 6, which examines tourist cultures and associated traveller identities in the context of the forms of tourism which have, in many ways, evolved from the tourist desire for authenticity within their travels. It is important, however, first to examine the significance of the notion of authenticity to tourism studies and its explanatory value in providing a way of understanding tourism and the traveller experience.

Authenticities and Alternatives

With the discussion of this book leading us towards a conceptualization of the tourist that places interaction as central to the experience, and the construction of self and identity as its outcome, it is appropriate to now explore authenticity and, in particular, existential authenticity which are at the centre of attempts to understand tourist cultures (Harrison, 2003; Steiner and Reisinger, 2006; Taylor, 2001; Wang, 2000). Wang (1999: 360 and 364) identifies existential authenticity as emanating from those 'activities' that allow tourists 'to keep a distance from, or transcend, daily lives' and to find their 'true selves'. The pursuit of authenticity as a primary motivation of tourists has informed many theoretical discussions, and the notion that tourism is a search for authenticity is one of the most well-known and well-established theoretical debates in the study of tourism. Put very simply, travel is understood as being a relentless search for the 'authentic' – a quest for encounters with the 'real thing' (Mowforth and Munt, 1998: 55). The foundational works on authenticity and tourism are briefly outlined below.

Debates about authenticity in tourism commenced with the writings of Boorstin (1987), who provided one of the first social critiques of mass tourism. Boorstin argued that contemporary tourism had become nothing more than a superficial and trivial activity. He was convinced that certain key aspects of travel (adventure, hardship and struggle) had disappeared and been replaced by the superficial and fabricated simulacra of tourism – an approximation of the 'real'. Boorstin believed that tourists were no more than hedonists unable to experience reality directly, thriving on and finding pleasure only in the inauthentic and, therefore, taking pleasure in contrived experiences, attractions and 'pseudo-events'. According to Boorstin, tourists had become no more than passive onlookers who are either unable or unwilling to experience directly the travel reality:

The tourist is passive; he [*sic*] expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing'. … He expects everything to be done to him and for him. … Thus foreign travel ceased to be an activity – an experience, an undertaking – and instead became a commodity. (1987: 85)

In contrast to Boorstin's scathing and somewhat elitist critique of contemporary tourism and tourists as celebrators of the inauthentic, MacCannell (1973, 1989) viewed the tourist as a modern secular pilgrim motivated to travel by a desire to encounter authenticity in other places and other cultures. He argued that tourism was a search for an authenticity that could no longer be found or experienced within an alienated modern world (see also Mies, 1993). However, according to MacCannell (1973), this quest is ultimately doomed as it is hindered by locals and by the tourism industry. As a result, tourists are only usually able to access the spaces of 'staged authenticity'. So, although tourists wish to experience the 'real' lives of others in authentic 'back regions', they are usually unable to penetrate and move beyond the 'front' regions.

However, as discussed above, tourism cannot be explained in terms of only one type of motivation or set of activities. Rather, tourism consists of a range of contemporary travel practices and various types of tourist. Cohen (1979) argued that the discussions of authenticity by both Boorstin and MacCannell were limited since both had assumed a homogeneous view of the tourist; they had suggested that all tourists behaved in a similar manner and had similar motivations for travel. Indeed, this limitation was the starting point for Cohen's (1979) argument that there are a range of tourist types, each holding different worldviews predicated on their relationship towards the 'centre' of their own and 'other' societies. Cohen (1979) positioned these travellers along a continuum of tourist types seeking varying degrees of authenticity in their travels (Cohen, 1979). The idea of a universal tourist in search of authenticity was further challenged by Cohen (1988), who argues that while some tourists may be motivated by the desire to escape and to engage with the authentic, this is clearly not the case for all tourists.

These foundational works on tourism and authenticity have continued to influence debates within the sociology of tourism and, over the past forty years or so, have been reformulated and applied to various academic discussions of tourism and the tourist experience. Wang (1999, 2000) recently outlined the theoretical formulation and shifting

interpretations of the authenticity perspective within tourism analyses. He contends that explanations of authenticity within tourism studies have been oversimplified into two separate overarching concerns – the authenticity of tourist experiences and the authenticity of toured objects (Wang, 2000: 48). Wang (1999, 2000) goes on to assert from this, that it is actually possible to identify three dominant and different approaches to understanding authenticity – 'objective', 'constructed' and 'existential', the first two of which he claims are 'object-related' and the third is 'activity-related'.

Using MacCannell's 'staged authenticity' thesis as a point of departure, Wang explores the concept of 'objective' authenticity, which refers to the authenticity of toured objects as being 'original' and, therefore, genuine and authentic. In this light, authenticity is thought to be measurable and definable. This externalized view of the concept leads to the second approach to authenticity as 'constructed', whereby the focus is on tourist perceptions of authenticity and refers to the authenticity that is 'projected onto toured objects' (Wang, 2000: 49). In other words, authenticity is the product of social construction. Tourists are seeking 'signs of authenticity or *symbolic* authenticity' (Wang, 2000: 49) at the same time as objects are constructed to appear authentic through images, stereotypes, expectations and power.

In contrast to these object-related forms of authenticities, Wang also speaks of 'existential authenticity', which is grounded in the tourism experience. In this sense, 'authenticity comprises personal or intersubjective feelings that are activated by the liminal process of tourist behaviors' (Wang, 2000: 49). In other words, the nature of toured objects is comparatively less relevant. Instead, authenticity is a subjectively interpreted and 'existential state of Being' that describes a particular kind of relationship with the self, and in some instances with others (hence the notion of interpersonal authenticity), and which is potentially 'activated' and achieved through tourism activities that are perceived as existing outside the constraints of everyday life (Wang, 2000: 49). Wang (1999) emphasizes existential authenticity because it represents people in the process of self-creation through the construction of personalized narratives; an idea that has much to be recommended here because it makes it possible to suggest that the social, cultural and environmental interaction that the tourist experiences in the tourist space is what contributes most to an enhanced and enlarged sense of traveller self. Yet, it should be noted that some commentators have questioned whether the search for the 'real' and 'authentic' in travel is motivated by personal or existential fulfilment, or is an

expression of cultural capital (Desforges, 1998; Meethan, 2001; Mowforth and Munt, 1998).

Importantly, Wang (2000: 46) points out that 'many tourist motivations or experiences cannot be explained solely in terms of the conventional concept of authenticity'. Similarly, Steiner and Reisinger observe that existential authenticity is conceived 'moment to moment' and that:

> Because existential authenticity is experience-oriented, the existential self is transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type … a person is not authentic or inauthentic all the time. There is no authentic self. One can only momentarily be authentic in different situations. Thus, there are no authentic and inauthentic tourists, as much as researchers might like there to be such handy categories. At their most extreme, some tourists might prefer to be authentic most of the time while some prefer being inauthentic most of the time. (2006: 303)

Particular types of tourist interaction and travel activity have been situated as being more authentic than others. Tourism has become increasingly fragmented and numerous niche tourism opportunities and experiences have developed as alternatives to the much criticized mass tourism. For instance, environmental tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism and volunteer tourism (to name but a few) are packaged by the tourism industry for consumption by increasingly differentiated market segments (Stevenson, 2000). Each of these alternatives seemingly offers more authentic experiences than those provided by contemporary mass tourism, and has ostensibly developed in ideological opposition to mass tourism (Young, 2008). Cohen (1987: 13) states that the 'idea of alternative tourism has its source in two contemporary ideological preoccupations: one is the countercultural rejection of modern mass consumerism, and the other the concern for the impact of the modern industrial world on Third World societies'. Similarly, Eadington and Smith state that:

> Disillusionment with 'mass' tourism and the many problems it has triggered has led many observers and researchers to criticize vociferously the past methods and directions of tourism development and to offer instead the hope of 'alternative tourism', broadly defined as forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experience. (1992: 3)

The changing desires of tourists, and the emergence of tourism forms that are the antithesis of commercial, mainstream mass tourism, are often theoretically positioned within discussions of postmodernism or globalization (Buhalis, 2001). In the alternative tourist's search for experiences, there is an increased interest in seeking authentic cultural contact as well as achieving existential authenticity (Young, 2008). Butcher notes that (what he terms) the new tourist:

> seeks selfhood through experiencing other cultures. … The new [or alternative] tourist is often seen as intent on gaining an understanding of the host society's culture, and through this, discovering something about themselves. (2000: 45)

Self-development through tourism and an interest in lifelong educational pursuits have become increasingly powerful motivators of travel experiences and have resulted in an increased interest in, and provision of, educational tourism experiences, including ecotourism, cultural tourism and heritage tourism. Cultural tourism, for instance, has been an identifiable sector of the international tourism industry since the 1970s. Cultural tourism is a specific form of alternative tourism that has cultural sites, events and experiences as its primary focus (Stevenson, 2000), with tourist experiences based in 'contact between visitors and locals through experiencing local customs and ways of life' (Craik, 1998: 125). Craik (1997: 119) suggests that a 'broad comparison' can be made between the Grand Tour – that is, the view of travel as educational and enlightening – and modern cultural tourism. She notes:

> By returning to the quest for educational, authentic, experiential and communicative aspects of tourist encounters, advocates and the industry are positioning culture as a central part of the phenomenon. In one sense, this is a return to the primary motivations of the Grand Tour … it taps into the desire for alternative, special interest and off-the-beaten-track kinds of travel experiences. (Craik, 2001: 104)

Cultural tourism can no longer be considered a 'niche' or 'special-interest' form of tourism and is better understood as an 'umbrella term for a range of tourism typologies and diverse activities which have a cultural focus' (Smith, 2003: 29). Cultural tourists actively seek personal, 'authentic' and 'sincere' experiences in destinations and their interactions with host cultures and communities (Harrison, 2003; Taylor, 2001). According to Smith (2003: 35), 'most cultural tourists

are likely to be on some kind of quest for authenticity, either in terms of self-improvement or in terms of the sites, communities and activities that they engage with or in' (Smith, 2003: 35). The experiences, activities and desires of tourists in relation to seeking cultural interaction indicate that the travel experience is about more than merely sightseeing – it is about participating, experiencing and learning. As Stevenson observes:

> Most commentators agree that cultural tourism is not just about looking; rather, it is about participation and experience … this means coming into contact with what is perceived (or packaged) as 'authentic' in order to learn about a culture or a particular set of cultural practices or productions through the encounter. (2000: 130)

The experiential perspective evident in the above description of cultural tourism underpins our reconceptualization of tourism. The threads of an interactive person-centred approach are being woven together to emphasize the importance of encounters – personal, social, cultural and environmental – in the tourist experience, as well as the significance of participation and learning. Clearly, 'attention' has 'shifted from the displayed objects provided by the industry to the tourist subjective negotiation of meanings as a determinant of the experience' (Uriely, 2005: 206). To be a tourist is to find experiences that are based on being mobile and transient and involved, even if only superficially, in spaces, places and the lived worlds of others (Crouch, 2000; Hall, 2004; Jack and Phipps, 2005; Meethan, 2003). This experience is based on the idea of 'travelling cultures' to describe how tourists move; following others, this term is used here to explain tourist cultures as created and shaped by travel (Clifford, 1992, 1997; Friedman, 1994; Robertson et al., 1994; Rojek and Urry, 1997).

The focus on tourist cultures as being created and shaped by travel and mobility takes us back to our central premise: that tourism experiences are complex, and that tourism is a multidimensional experience. As discussed in Chapter 1, the focus on the gaze of the *flâneur* can be seen as a partial view of tourism, while conceptualizing the tourist as *choraster* provides a more open framework for engaging with the complexity and serendipity of the travel experience. By moving away from an understanding of tourism based on typology or activity to one that foregrounds experience, makes it possible to come up with a conceptualization of tourist cultures that is dynamic. As we explore in Chapter 4, traditional notions of tourism are too limited

and inflexible to explain tourism from an experiential perspective, and they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships that exist between hosts and guests in the travel space. Conceptualizing tourist cultures as dynamic involves a view that both control and freedom are integral to the tourism experience. This argument is similar to that raised by Wang (2000) in his discussion of *eros* and *logos*, and the recent work of Matthews (2008b, forthcoming 2009) in her discussion of authenticity and freedom and the ways by which these dialectics structure the tourism experience.

The challenge here is to find a language for talking about the tourist experience that accounts for the various social, cultural and spatial spheres within which it occurs. Tourism as time and type is an objective perspective, whereas tourism as an attitude is subjective. Increasingly, tourism researchers are arguing for a more person- or subject-oriented view of the tourist and tourist experiences. Thus, we see various concepts and metaphors drawn on to discuss the tourist experience, including performance (Edensor, 1998), encounter (Crouch, 1999), embodiment (Crouch, 2000) and mobility (Urry, 2000). Central to these developments is a 'strong interest in *the subject* and in what people themselves make of their lives' (Crouch, 2000: 63). The practice of tourism is multi-sensory (Crouch, 1999; Dann and Jacobson, 2003), and it demands 'new metaphors based more on "being, doing, touching *and* seeing" rather than just "seeing"' (Cloke and Perkins, 1998: 189). Indeed, the tourism experience is 'not only an occular one, but truly corporeal … the embodiment of the tourist experience [is] strong and palpable' (Markwell, 2001: 55).

Some authors argue that the relatively recent shifts in thinking about the tourist experience – from simplified and reductionist typologies to more nuanced understandings of the complexity of tourist experiences – are underpinned by postmodernist thought (for example, Jack and Phipps, 2005; McCabe, 2005; Uriely, 2005). The breaking down of tourism typologies, the acknowledgment that tourists are not passive consumers, the focus on existential authenticity, and the recognition that tourism is a multi-sensory and embodied experience are, in many ways, evidence of the shift to a person-centred approach to understanding the tourist experience. According to McCabe: 'Postmodernists emphasize subjective and negotiated characteristics over more reductionist and rigid notions, tending to focus more deeply on the nature of tourist roles, experiences, meanings and attitudes' (2005: 91).

The emphasis on tourism as consumption, discussed above, means that the tourist experience has often been evaluated with reference to their consumption of signs, products and event travel itself (Wearing and

Wearing, 2001). This narrow view of tourist-as-consumer emerged as a result of the commodification processes that occurred as a consequence of globalization and mass consumption (Paterson, 2006). The tourism industry is increasingly structured, with creators of tourist spaces attempting to pre-programme a common tourist experience (Edensor, 2001). However, according to Crouch (1999: 6), while '[p]eople may consume … they make their own sense and value, their own knowledge, albeit negotiated with a myriad of influences'. Such influences may include encounters with other people, material objects, imagination, emotions, memory and space (Crouch, 2001). The focus here is on the tourist as an individual rather than the travel experience as a whole, and suggests that no two experiences are alike because tourists value, use and negotiate space in different ways. Thus, tourism should be viewed as an interactive space in which tourist experiences involve both hosts and guests and the spaces and places within which these encounters occur.

Conclusion

A profusion of tourist experiences have been identified and categorized for the purposes of theorizing, analysing and marketing the products and experiences of tourism. Many authors have proposed typologies based on the nature of the tourist activity and/or the characteristics, motivations and behaviour of the tourists. Yet as conceptualizations of tourism have changed, and with the development of more sophisticated analytical lenses, the raft of tourism typologies that often masquerade as tourism theory have been broken down in favour of more nuanced conceptualizations. In particular, it is now widely accepted that the typological approach to tourism fails to address a range of important social, cultural and environmental considerations. These neglected issues include a lack of acknowledgement of the existence of power differences within tourism, conflicts of interest, and inequalities of access for many communities at destination areas. Also ignored are the experience of the tourist, the social construction and meaning of destinations, and the control and subordination of various groups through the processes of tourism. It was argued in this chapter that conceptualizations of authenticity, in particular those focused on existential authenticity, provide an important starting point for developing a more nuanced analysis.

The recent shift towards more critical approaches to tourism in late (or post-) modernity has promoted increasing recognition of the individualized and subjective nature of the tourist experience. Such

conceptualizations recognize tourism as a source of meaning around which many individual lives are being structured. Tourism interactions and serendipitous encounters play a significant role in the construction of the traveller self; indeed, the tourist experience is marked by serendipity (Hom Cary, 2004). The idea of tourism as an experience is presented in this chapter as the starting point for a broader understanding of tourism. Such an approach makes it possible to consider both the limitations and freedoms inherent in tourism and the interactive tourism space. This conceptualization underpins our original discussion of the *flâneur* and *choraster* in Chapter 1. An understanding of tourism in these terms requires an engagement with the ways in which identity frames, and is framed by, the travel experience. It is to an examination of these issues that attention will now turn.