Image Based Social Media and The Tourist Gaze

A Phenomenological Approach

by

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of social media in concert with improved camera and cell phone technologies has helped usher in an age of unprecedented visual communication which has radically changed the tourism industry worldwide. Serving as an important pillar of tourism and leisure studies, the concept of the tourist gaze has been left relatively unexamined within the context of this new visual world and more specifically image based social media. This phenomenological inquiry sought to explore how image based social media impacts the concept of the tourist gaze and furthermore to discover how the democratization of the gaze in concert with specific features of image based social media applications impacts the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze.

This in-depth analysis of the user experience within the context of travel consisted of 19 semi-structured photo elicitation interviews and incorporated 57 participant generated photos. Six salient themes emerged from the study of this phenomenon; 1) sphere of influence, 2) exchange of information, 3) connections manifested, 4) impression management and content curation, 5) replicated travel photography, and 6) expectations. Analysis of these themes in conjunction with examples from the lived user experience demonstrate that the tourist gaze is being accelerated and expanded by image based social media in a rapid manner.

Furthermore, democratization of the gaze as enabled by technological developments and specialized social media platforms is actively shifting the power role away from a small number of mass media influencers towards a larger number of branded individuals and social media influencers. Results of this inquiry support the theoretical assertions that the tourist gaze adapts to social and technological developments and

demonstrates that the concept of the tourist gaze is increasingly important within tourism studies. Practical implications regarding the prevalence of real-time information, site visitation, and "taking only pictures" as sustainable touristic behavior are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is presented under the following sections: (1) Introduction of The

Tourist Gaze (2) The Research Gap (3) Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Introduction of The Tourist Gaze

Urry's concept of the tourist gaze is an important pillar in leisure and tourism

studies. The tourist gaze attempts to explain the way in which tourism experiences

materialize from a preconceived expectation and are subsequently visually consumed by

the tourist through a lens or 'gaze.' The gaze is simultaneously created and perpetuated in

a hermeneutic circle mediated through the visual, particularly photographs.

The way in which we "see" or gaze upon the world is not simply a reflection of

the physical as embodied through the optical sensors we possess, known as eyes. What

we "see" is an interpretation of light refraction, framed by socio-cultural lenses

influenced by everything from our nationality, age, and gender seen through a filter of

paradigms, skills, expectations, etc. (Berger, 1972). Jenks (1995) contests that the world

is not simply there to be consumed by our eyes, to be gazed upon. It is through the act of

gazing which we assign order, classification, and meaning to the objects we look upon.

Culture, history, technology, media, memories, and power all influence what is "seen,"

what is beautiful and desirable (Urry & Larsen, 2011). It is through these uniquely

individualized social constructs which we see the world around us, and thus control our

gaze. The tourist gaze is simply an extension of the gaze whereby we see, interpret, and

consume the sites we visit as tourists. In this way there is no universal, static tourist gaze.

The tourist gaze is ever changing.

The Research Gap

This research seeks to pick up where Urry and Larsen left off in The Tourist Gaze 3.0 (2011) and examines the impacts of Web 2.0 and social media on the tourist gaze. As a newly emerging area of inquiry, several key attributes of image based social media have been left unexamined within the literature. I seek to discover if real-time application features such as instant posting of images, geotagging, and the video "story" features are potentially leading to the amplification and acceleration (thus perpetuating the hermeneutic circle) of the tourist gaze. Furthermore, understanding how this digital immediacy which conveys not only the sentiment of "I was here'; but 'I am here, right now, having this experience in real time, and here is the evidence that is the case" (Bell & Lyall, 2005, p. 136) impacts visitation to destinations and the consumption of wild places.

While the goal of this research is not to study a particular brand of social media, Instagram proves the premier study site from which to conduct this research. With over one billion monthly users and one hundred million photos and videos uploaded each day on Instagram alone (Instagram, Sept. 17, 2018), this rapidly growing social media platform is photocentric and enables all users to act as photographers displaying their visualization of landscapes and destinations (Fatanai & Suyadnya, 2015). Additionally, the application is hermeneutic in nature where understanding of a phenomenon is achieved through a cycle of generating questions, consuming information, engagement, reflection, and interpretation. Instagram users engage with the visual as both content generators and content consumers and seek to consume the world through the visual,

engage with their audience and content, reflect on the consumed images and create interpretations which may or may not impact behavior.

This area of inquiry is also very timely given the rise in image based social media where users aim to capture sites from unique and edgier angles, increasing risks and site impacts. Recent articles in both the L.A. Times and the BBC chronical the recent death of a "travel obsessed" couple from a fall atop an iconic cliff in Yosemite National Park. The couple were notorious lifestyle bloggers and Instagramers who had recently pondered the "daredevilry" of taking photos from dangerous locations (BBC, 2018). Although fatal falls at Yosemite and other wilderness parks have always been a danger, experts suggest that social media is adding another layer of danger as visitors become distracted in their quest for the perfect picture (LA Times, 2018).

Site visitation to visually stunning and frequently photographed places once considered remote and relatively unvisited such as Horseshoe Bend and The Wave near Page, Arizona have experienced sharp increases in visitor numbers in recent years (National Park Service, 2018). This shows a continued trend for consumption of the "romantic gaze" associated with desolate and awe-inspiring landscapes discussed early on by Urry (1990). However, the specific and detailed impacts to these sites from Instagram inspired visitors is unknown as there are no published studies within the literature specific to this newly developing phenomenon. Understanding this phenomenon more fully has not only conceptual implications but also practical implications for land management agencies.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

This phenomenological inquiry seeks to discover how image based social media impacts the tourist gaze. Furthermore, I aim to document how the democratization of the gaze in concert with specific features of Instagram impact the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze. The three primary research questions this study addressed are:

1) How is image based social media impacting the tourist gaze?
2) Are social media users compelled to obtain and post similar images seen on Instagram, thus perpetuating the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze?
3) Is the democratization of the gaze through user generated data changing who controls the tourist gaze?

Utilizing semi-structured photo elicitation interviews, this research was an in-depth exploration of how individuals utilized and applied Instagram application features including image selection, video stories, hashtags, geotags, photo editing, and access to real-time user generated data, and how consuming edited and curated content on social media impacted site impression. I sought to understand if social media users were influenced to visit sites based off of their social media networks and if they felt social pressure to travel. Through this research, I sought to understand if users of social media felt an enhanced sense of self-image after posting travel photos.

The findings of this study will contribute to the growing discourse and literature on how social media is changing the concept of the tourist gaze. Using a social constructivist lens, this phenomenological research will focus on the participant experience of using Instagram as an extension of touristic performance and behavior as elicited through semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature related to this study is reported in this chapter. For organizational purposes, the literature is presented under the following topics: (1) The Tourist Gaze (2) Social Media and the Tourist Gaze, (3) Instagram, and (4) Instagram and the Tourist Gaze.

The Tourist Gaze

The tourist gaze as a construct was developed by John Urry and first published in 1990. At the time, leisure studies were a relatively new branch of the social sciences and Urry contested there was "relatively little substance to the sociology of tourism" and that "making theoretical sense of 'fun, pleasure and entertainment' has proven a difficult task for social scientists" (Urry, 1990, p. 7). Much has changed since then as leisure studies as an academic branch of the social sciences have grown considerably. I will begin with a description of the concept as developed followed by critiques and new developments within the literature.

The concept of the tourist gaze at its core aims to explain how tourism experiences materialize in a preconceived expectation and are consumed visually by the tourist. Influenced by media and social connections, tourists formulate a picture in their minds of what it is that they desire to see, they invest resources to journey to the site where they gaze upon the site, capture evidence, usually in the form of a photograph, to take back home whereupon we share and display these visual objectifications of place. Urry's tourist gaze is built upon a baseline of nine characteristics of tourism as set forth in his original publication (1992);

1. Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organized work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organized as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies. Indeed, acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being 'modern' and is bound up with major transformations in paid work. This has come to be organized within particular places and to occur for regularized periods of time.

2. Tourist relationships arise from a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations. This necessarily involves some movement through space, that is the journey, and a period of stay in a new place or places.

3. The journey and stay are to, and in, sites which are outside the normal places of residence and work. Periods of residence elsewhere are of a short-term and temporary nature. There is a clear intention to return 'home' within a relatively short period of time.

4. The places gazed upon are for purposes which are not directly connected with paid work and normally they offer some distinctive contrasts with work (both paid and unpaid).

5. A substantial proportion of the population of modern societies engages in such tourist practices; new socialized forms of provision are developed in order to cope with mass character of the gaze of tourists (as opposed to the individual character of 'travel').

6. Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different

scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such
anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist
practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which
construct and reinforce that gaze.

7. The tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which
separate them off from everyday experiences. Such aspects are viewed
because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of
such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a
much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than is
normally found in everyday life. People linger over such a gaze which is then
normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards,
films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and
recaptured.

8. The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of
signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture is the
gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris'. When a small village in England is seen,
what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England'. As Culler argues; 'the tourist
is interested in everything as a sign of itself. All over the world the unsung
armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of the signs of
Frenchness, typical Italian behavior, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical
American thruways, traditional English pubs' (1981: 127).

9. An array of tourist professionals develop and attempt to reproduce ever-new
objects of the tourist gaze. These objects are located in a complex and

7

changing hierarchy. This depends upon the interplay between, on the one hand

competition between interests involved in the provision of such objects and,

on the other hand, changing class, gender, generational distinctions of taste

within the potential population of visitors.

Urry's tourist gaze attempts to describe the way in which we see and visually

consume tourist sites through a gaze and further explains how that gaze is simultaneously

created and perpetuated through the use of the visual, particularly photographs. The

interconnectedness of photography and tourism is deeply rooted in Urry's concept of the

gaze (Urry, 1992) as well as in tourism generally (Chalfen, 1979; MacCannell, 1976). In

her book, On Photography, Sontag famously states "photography develops in tandem

with one of the most characteristic of modern activities: tourism...It seems positively

unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along...Travel becomes a strategy

for accumulating photographs...Most tourists feel compelled to put a camera between

themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter" (1977, pp. 9-10). In essence,

photography has led to the democratization of the tourist gaze, where everyone has access

and can participate. In Urry's opinion, it is the visual which is significant and ultimately

what makes a site a sight (1992).

In concert with the mobilization of the middle class, this democratization of the

tourist gaze through the practice of photography has altered tourism in that much of

tourism is a strategy for the collection of photographs (Urry, 1992). Wilson (1992)

proclaims that travel photography itself may convert nature into a place for leisure, which

has led to the development of tourism in undeveloped landscapes. Urry (2002) contends

that photography has effectively increased the contradictions in the relationships between

tourism and environment whereas tourism photography increases not only the demand of wild places and thus drives conservation of such places, yet the act of tourism itself degrades the resources through increased numbers and concentration of visitors. Horseshoe Bend in Page, Arizona is a prime example of this phenomenon. Furthermore, Urry suspects that images of place always disappoint but that doesn't stop, and perhaps even drives people to be ever seeking new places to visit and capture (Urry, 2002). This cycle driven by the need to capture nature, effectively creates a hermeneutic circle which leads to increased visitation to areas where visitors seek to capture a photograph from similar points of view.

In 1992, in response to growing environmental concerns related to tourism, Urry published a paper focused on the tourist gaze specific to its relation to the environment. He argued that the combination of a growing middle class, the democratization of photography, and the growth of the 'romantic gaze' fueled by traveler's desire to see untrammeled, wild places is contributing to environmental degradation worldwide. In some cases, the very perception of unchanged nature is what is found to be remarkable and becomes a sign to be interpreted and consumed (Urry, 1992).

This 'romantic tourist gaze' where people seek not only the visual consumption of the environment, but are also searching for "solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the environment (Urry, 1992 p.7) is a very westernized viewpoint. Urry uses the example of an apparently unending desert, that which is unchanged and has become an iconic symbol of freedom and wildness, particularly in the American west. Many sites, including the parkways of the National Parks, are now designed to be consumed through a frame; the car window. These "landscapes of leisure"

as discussed by Wilson (1992) have iconic defenders of the western notion of solitude and wilderness, like Edward Abbey, rolling in his grave.

The Western concept of landscape has developed over the years from an original technical term meaning natural inland scenery and evolved into a particular site as seen from a specific point of view, as if it were a picture. Today the term landscape has been appropriated by the arts and serves as a social and cultural construct where the natural scenery is an important part of leisure and pleasure (Urry, 1992). The increased integration of tourism, visual consumption of landscapes, and photography as both art and tourism performance is important in the development of the tourist gaze as a concept and can be demonstrated through the growth in tourism to these visually stunning natural scenic areas and iconic landscapes. In fact, the landscape as subject is so engrained in the development of the gaze, it is one of the nine primary characteristics as outlined by Urry. For this reason, landscapes were selected as the subject matter for the photo elicitation interviews within this research design.

Since its inception, the tourist gaze as a theoretical concept has been deeply analyzed, developed, and tested many times over enabling theoretical developments and an ever-expanding body of literature within the field of leisure and tourism studies. Stone and Nyaupane's (2018) research on the domestic vs. international gaze not only challenged Urry's westernized notion of tourism focused on landscapes and aesthetics, but also laid to rest the notion of a universal gaze. This research is paramount given how many sites are developed to suit a particular international gaze and in fact may alienate or at a minimum fail to attract local and domestic visitors.

It is well established within the literature that much of tourism is centered around the visual consumption of the physical environment through the accumulation of images (Urry, 2002) or mental souvenirs and as technologies change, so do the types of things to be photographed. Researchers have begun to probe this area of the gaze in their challenges to Urry and Larsen's (2011) illusion of conceptual irrelevance and looking into how Web 2.0 and the development of new technologies are impacting the tourist gaze.

For example, virtual reality (VR) attempts to provide alternative viewpoints to the gaze (flying over a waterfall vs. standing at a viewpoint). Leotta and Ross (2018) attest that VR's ocular and audio foci does begin to push the boundaries of the traditional gaze in its attempt to provide a full sensory experience yet fails to reconstruct the baseline concept of 'world as a picture' which exists to be visually consumed. Furthermore, they found that VR in many cases actually reinforced the established gender, cultural, and postcolonial power dynamics at play within the tourist gaze. Vanninni and Stewart (2017) attempt to transcend Urry's definition of the gaze within the context of work vs. leisure with their take on leisure professional's use of the GoPro as a visual medium of experience. I see this as a development of the gaze as adapting to the ever-blurring lines between work and non-work.

One of the most compelling challenges to the gaze as a concept in recent years arises from the notable technological advancements of smartphone and front facing camera technologies. Dinhopl and Gretzel (2015) assert that the smartphone and the front facing camera have actually shifted the direction of the gaze, reversing and turning it upon the gazer as subject, as evident in the "selfie" culture.

As Urry and Larsen's latest iteration of the tourist gaze (2011) was developed on the cusp of the proliferation of social media and the advent of Web 2.0, there was uncertainty in how this new information channel and subsequent globalization would transform social life (Urry and Larson, 2011). Reflecting on these social and technological changes in The Tourist Gaze 3.0, Urry and Larsen (2012) adapt and reconfigure the concept of the gaze to the modern, highly mobile 'liquid modernity' which has overtaken society and specifically the tourism industry. They attest that the tourist gaze is not fixed; however, it is intrinsically fixed to contemporary experiences (p.97) and those experiences are changing therefore shifting the gaze. The authors acknowledge that the new world order brought about by the proliferation of the Internet is rapid, ever changing, and temporary causing the gaze to be fluid and ever changing in response to society.

Although emergent technologies such as GoPro and Virtual Reality and their mediation of the gaze has played a central role in the developing tourist gazing literature, the impacts of social media have been relatively unexplored until recently. One study did investigated Instagram as a tool for tourism destination brands, Fatanai and Suyadnya (2015) found that a new destination image was not created through the use of Instagram but instead the already established image were repeated, although somewhat individualized through the editing features of the application. Despite the availability and use of these editing tools, researchers determined that the gaze remained largely the same. This phenomenon of replicated images is the hermeneutic circle in action and can be seen on the Instagram handle @insta_repeat which curates similar images from the social media site and displays them as a collection in an ironic and humorous way.

Despite this presence, very little empirical research has examined the impacts of Instagram as an image based social networking site on the tourist gaze.

Where Urry and Larson's analysis leaves off is at the precipitous rise of Web 2.0 and the revolutionary shift in how the internet is used (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Web 2.0 can be characterized as a shift in ideology where the Internet user shifts from a primarily consumer role to participant (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Urry and Larsen's lack of social media analysis is due to the fact that Web 2.0 was simply emerging at the time of publishing; however, the authors do pontificate at how these increasingly participatory, collaborative, and open Internet platforms would impact the gaze (2011, p. 59). The authors predict that as the boundaries between tourism and everyday life are blurred, compounded by globalization and the fall of mass media which gave rise to social media, the concept of the tourist gaze will eventually become irrelevant (Urry and Larsen, 2011).

This research attempts to pick up where Urry and Larsen left off and porter the construct of the gaze deep into Web 2.0, examine how the tourist gaze is impacted by the proliferation of image based social media. But first, a brief overview of visual data and communication.

Social Media and Tourism

Social media has become a powerful force integrated within social and economic realms worldwide. These online platforms enable peer to peer communication and form online communities where information is shared (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). As social media has rapidly evolved so too have the definitions and meanings. For the purposes of this research, a definition of social media from the literature will be used; "Social Media

is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

The term social media refers to the "tools" which are used to enable "social networking" and includes social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat), consumer review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp, etc.), *wikis,* communication forums (Hangouts, Messenger, WhatsApp), and location based social media (Nextdoor, Foursquare) (Zeng &Gerritsen, 2014). With an estimated seven-in-ten Americans utilizing at least one form of social media to connect, share and be entertained, Facebook is the most widely used general platform (Pew Research Center, 2018). Other platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn are widely used each offering differing applications, services and features thus serving a unique niche of the social media user market (Obar and Wildman, 2015).

As it pertains to tourism, social media, or Web 2.0, is a mega trend which has significantly impacted the industry and has fundamentally changed the way in which travel is planned and consumed (Leung, Law, Vah Hoof and Buhalis, 2013; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Hudson and Thal, 2013). Some have even gone as far as to reference this new era of tourism as Travel 2.0 (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Everything from how consumers source information (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010) to mediating tourism experiences pre and post travel (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009) has been affected.

The nexus of social media and tourism is also an emerging and rapidly growing research topic with the literature becoming richer every day (Leung et al, 2013; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Plenty of emphasis has been placed on motivations (Whiting and

14

Williams, 2013; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Oelderf-Hirsch and Sundar, 2016; Sheldon, Rauschnabel, Antony and Car, 2017, Chen, 2015), user gratification (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen, 2016), creating expectations (Narangajavana et al., 2017) and behavior changes (Chung and Han, 2016) to its resourcefulness in natural resource management and land use policy (Barry, 2014; Augustine, 2016, Heikenheimo et al., 2017; Tenkanen et. al, 2017; Fisher et al., 2018; Walden-Schreiner, Rossi, Barros and Pickering, 2018) and big data collection (Levin, Kark and Crandall, 2015; Mancini and Lusseau, 2018; Li, Xu, Tang, Wang and Li, 2018).

Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of research on travel and social media has been on social media's role in the trip planning process and very little has been conducted on the differences among travelers and their use of social media, let alone social networking sites, for travel purposes (Amaro, Duarte and Henriques, 2016).

One can't look at the tourist gaze as it pertains to Web 2.0 without first acknowledging a parallel body of literature which suggests that tourism photography is a performance of tourism (Urry and Larsen, 2011) and can even be used to form and reinforce identity (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, Urry and Edensor, 2006; Belk and Yeh, 2011). A particularly interesting outcome of photography as performance as it pertains to social media and smartphone technologies is the focus on impression management (Lo and McKercher, 2015; Belk and Yeh, 2011) and the phenomenon known as the "selfie" where the object of the gaze is turned upon itself and is both subject and performance (Dinholp and Gretzel, 2015). This self-directed gaze is one of the most notable shifts in the tourist gaze and proliferate across social media applications and platforms.

Instagram

While it is not my intention to conduct this research on a particular brand of social media, Instagram proved to be the ideal platform from which to conduct this visually focused research due to several factors including its emphasis on the visual as mediated through photography sharing.

Launched in 2010, Instagram is one of the most prominent photo sharing social media platforms with over one billion monthly users worldwide and over one hundred million photos and videos uploaded each day (Instagram, Sept. 17, 2018). Despite this, the application is under represented within the literature with over half of social media research having been conducted on Facebook (Stoycheff, Liu and Wibowo, 2017). With over 50 billion photos uploaded to date (Aslam, 2018), Instagram has become the second most popular social networking site used worldwide, with 20% of users coming from America. In total, 77.6 million Americans are active users which is equal to one out of every three American adults (Pew Research Center, 2018). Females are more prone to using Instagram with 68% of the global usership being female and in America, 31% of all women and 24% of all men use Instagram.

Shockingly, 72% of all teenagers have active Instagram accounts (Aslam, 2018), and a recent study conducted on social media preferences found that an overwhelming majority of college students preferred Instagram over other social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter due in part to its visual affordances (Shane-Simpson, Manago, Gaggi and Gillespie-Lynch, 2018). The researchers further pontificate that loyalty to one particular application, due to specific features, could foster site-specific culture and create a self-perpetuating cycle which further differentiates platforms from one another while attracting additional users with similar interests.

The popularity of visually based social networking sites may lie in part to the fact that visual communication is vastly different from verbal communication through the multisensory impact of viewing images. (Bell & Davidson, 2013) which Instagram facilitates. Other favorable characteristics of Instagram include its simplicity, privacy, trust, and social connections (Shane-Simpson, Manago, Gaggi and Gillespie-Lynch, 2018).

At its core, Instagram is a platform for posting pictures. Photographers have always undergone a process of visual resource management to select, enhance, edit and even to disorganize hide, or screen out inappropriate technologies and social pollution (Urry, 2002; Thayer, 1990) portraying an altered version of reality. This process is easily accessible within the photo editing tools available to Instagram users and offered as a suite of options before every image is posted.

Other notable application features such as #hashtags are assigned to photos within their descriptions serve several purposes including conveying emotion and sentiments in addition to the functionality of grouping it with other photos utilizing the same hashtag. The newly added feature of video 'stories' is a relatively unexplored feature of Instagram and may prove to be an important area of inquiry within the context of the tourist gaze and the amplification of the hermeneutic circle.

This rapidly growing social media platform proved to be the ideal virtual study location for this research due to its photocentric nature which enables users to act as photographers displaying their visualization of landscapes and destinations (Fatanai & Suyadnya, 2015). Furthermore, hermeneutics involves the understanding of a phenomenon through a cycle of generating questions, consuming information,

engagement, reflection, and interpretation. Instagram as an application is characteristically hermeneutic in that users engage with the visual as both content generators and content consumers and seek to consume the world through the visual, engage with their audience and content, reflect on the consumed images and create interpretations which may impact behavior.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology that will be used to answer the proposed research questions. This chapter is presented in three sections: (1) Research Design including Rational for Research Methods, Participant Selection and Participant Recruitment, (2) Data Collection Procedures, Photo Elicitation and Semi-Structured Interviews (3) Data Analysis.

Research Design

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative design employing a phenomenological inquiry approach through a social constructivist worldview is proposed. This method positions the researcher as a key instrument in data collection, utilizing semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation methods to elicit subjective meanings of the user's experiences of image based social media and how it impacts the tourist gaze. Social constructivism is rooted in understanding the situation through the experience, views and interpretation of the participant (Creswell, 2013) and therefore the reason for utilizing a qualitative design employing semi-structured interviews with open ended questions.

This approach allows for not only the user's experience to be documented and understood but also allows for the interactions and social construction of meaning which is built through the collective use of image based social media to be interpreted. Therefore, this research will utilize semi-structured interviews in concert with photo elicitation methods to explore the research topic through the views of image based social media participants and to unpack the impact this new platform has on the tourist gaze. Photo elicitation will be incorporated to not only provide context for the interviews

through the extraction of the internal narrative, but to also elicit a deeper dive into the consciousness which word interviews alone cannot provide (Harper, 2000).

A protocol for photo interviewing, as set forth by Dempsey and Tucker (1994) will be incorporated into the semi-structured interviews. Data collected and analyzed for the purposes of this study will identify emergent themes of social media's impact on the tourist gaze and help to develop the literature and future empirical research.

Rational for Research Methods

Due to the relatively unexamined topic of image based social media's impact on the visual culture in tourism and how it is redefining the tourist gaze, a qualitative research approach was chosen to afford a better understanding of the breadth and depth of this emerging research topic and phenomenon. Although Urry never actually defines his philosophical analysis as a phenomenology, his description of the tourist gaze as a subjective approach to relating to the world fits within this research design. Drawn from philosophy and psychology, phenomenological research seeks to understand and describe a lived experience or phenomenon through the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

One of the primary criticisms of phenomenological research as it pertains to tourism is the lack of theoretic and methodological rigor this type of research approach offers (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Where Urry acknowledges that the tourist experience is subjective and dependent on the individual, what he fails to recognize is that the tourist experience as examined by a researcher is a co-created interpretation of the experience as seen through a lens of pre-understanding on both the part of the researcher and subject.

Therefore, this research adopts Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understanding experience. Hermeneutics is essentially understanding the lived experience through the art of interpretation applied scientifically (Scholz, 2015). This approach is fitting in that it does not claim to develop verifiable factual descriptions of a phenomenon but focuses instead on the interpretive qualities of being, where the way in which we understand and interpret information shapes our experiences (Heidegger, 1996). This type of research is empowered from the perspective and understanding that truth is not something that is to be discovered nor is the act of describing the truth an objective endeavor (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Furthermore, conclusions elicited from this approach to research are not awaiting verification because it would be futile to find 'fact' out of an individual lived experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology accepts that the 'truth' is an interpretive construct which is co-created.

A combination of data collection strategies were utilized to elicit the user's lived experience, where photo elicitation methods were incorporated within the semi-structured interviews. As the tourist gaze is centered around photograph taking, incorporating the use of participant's photographs as data was an important component of this research. Photo elicitation as a visual research method is a powerful tool to extract, analyze, and interpret the user's subjective representation of reality (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2007). The meanings of photographs are inherently ambiguous and arbitrary when standing alone, however analyzing photographs in concert with the participant interviews was imperative in understanding and interpreting meaning from the images. Additionally, photographs served as visual 'evidence' of the user experience and elicited deeper reflection and responses which oral interviews alone could not arise.

The semi-structured interviews served to understand how the participant's used Instagram and its features, how they viewed other's content, as well as their individual views and opinions of Instagram and how it impacts the tourist gaze. The interviews in concert with photo elicitation methods allowed for deeper understanding of how certain features of the application were utilized, user's motivations for taking and posting images, intended audience, and how information was exchanged between users on the platform.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

A combination of virtual (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) and traditional snowball sampling as well as purposive sampling techniques were utilized to recruit interview participants via word of mouth as well as online via social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram. Social media has become a normalized form of communication in everyday life (Lunnay et al., 2015) and its usefulness in research has been well acknowledged in the literature. Ethical issues of utilizing social media for research purposes including the blurring of private and public information, accessibility and digital literacy have been addressed within the literature (Crow, 2012; Lunnay et al., 2015; Nind, Wiles, & Bengry-Howell, 2013) however as this research aims to analyze active users of social media, issues of accessibility and digital literacy self-select out.

Similar studies conducted on social media within the literature cited difficulties in separating the researcher's personal account and information exchanged with research participants. For this reason, prior to data collection, a public Instagram account dedicated to the purposes of data collection for this research study was created, @asutravelresearch. The researcher's personal account was used initially for recruitment

purposes as the newly created research account did not have an audience to announce to. At the conclusion of the research, the account was closed by the researcher as way to finalize data collection.

A total of two recruitment announcements were posted on the researcher's personal Facebook account as well as the research Instagram account (for participant validation purposes) to identify interested participants. "Friends" of the researcher were asked to share the original recruitment post to obtain interested participants outside of the researcher's own social media networks utilizing virtual snowball sampling (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Lastly, purposive sampling techniques were deployed to ensure a diverse range of participants regarding age, gender, ethnicity and social media usage. A total of 32 individuals expressed interest in participating.

As interested participants were identified, a master list was created, and participants were asked to meet the following criteria;

1) Consent to the research process

2) Utilize at least one personal Instagram account

3) Provide an email address for communication purposes and their active Instagram handle for analysis. If the user's account is set to private, the user will need to approve a "follow request" from the researcher's Instagram account.

4) Have traveled within the previous three months and posted three landscape style photos on Instagram from their recent travels

Preliminary data was gathered from the user's account to ensure that all participant criteria were met, and the researcher selected three photos from each participant's account to facilitate in-depth exploratory photo elicitation research to be used as discussion material for the interviews. The three photos were subsequently e-mailed along with the consent form to each interested participant. Phone and video conferencing interviews were scheduled once consent had been received. Of the 32 interested participants, 26 met the pre-established criteria and were queued up for the interview process.

Participants included six friends and acquaintances of the author to 13 individuals previously unknown to the author. The author recognizes the potential bias that can be introduced through this sampling technique however given the exploratory nature of the research and similar studies drawn from the literature, this technique was deemed to be appropriate (Lo and McKercher, 2015).

Data Collection Procedures

Preliminary Data Collection

Participant Instagram accounts were accessed through the dedicated research Instagram account, @asutravelresearch. Participants were sent a "follow" request if their accounts were set to private. Public accounts were immediately accessible. The researcher verified that the participants met the pre-established participation criteria.

Photo Elicitation

Once the criteria had been verified the participant's Instagram handle, privacy setting, account description, numbers of followers and accounts followed was

documented. The researcher then selected three landscape style images from the

participant's account, starting in reverse chronological order beginning with the most

recent post. The researcher designed a photo selection protocol where the three most

recently posted landscape style photos in the gallery with or without a human or object

subjects were selected. Human subjects or other objects could not take up more than 1/3

of the photo composition and the photo had to be from recent travels posted within the

past three months. Photos which were similar in location or content to a previously

selected photo were passed over and the next most recent travel photo which met the

criteria was selected.

In total, three photos from each participant account were selected to be part of the

interview process to help guide the conversation and elicit information which may have

not come up otherwise. Photo details including comments and number of "likes" were

documented.

Interested participants were then emailed a research overview and consent

information as well as the three photos selected by the researcher to be discussed during

the interview. A photo consent form adopted from Lunnay et al. (2015) allowed users to

approve different levels of use;

     (a) not for display/background analysis only,

     (b) display in thesis materials, or

     (c) display in academic articles and presentations.

Participant maintain ownership of their photographs and the potential risk of

unauthorized publication is avoided using this release form. Photo consent was

documented on the research master list. All photos used for the photo analysis can be found in Figure 1 and corresponding photo descriptions are provided in Table 1.

Semi-structured Interviews

The purpose of the interview is to understand how the participant uses Instagram and its features, how they view other's content, as well as their individual views and opinions of Instagram and how all of these factors impact the tourist gaze. An interview protocol (Appendix A) was designed, consisting of four primary questions and probing questions to elicit additional and depth of information as needed. The questions were adapted slightly over the course of the study to accommodate newly emergent themes from prior interviews. The interview protocol was pre-tested on two individuals prior to the research interviews to test for fluidity, continuity, and substance.

Participants were offered interviews in person, over the telephone, WhatsApp, or on a video platform of their choosing. Subsequently, all interviews were conducted over the phone, WhatsApp, or on a video messaging platform. Considering the potential global reach the call for participants had, facilitating flexible interview platforms enabled participants from all over the world including Belgium, Colombia, Guam, The United States of America, and Saudi Arabia to participate in this research.

Interviews were conducted in English and audio recorded over the course of one week until the point of saturation was achieved. The idea of saturation is rooted in grounded theory (Creswell, 2013) where interviews are conducted until the emergence of salient themes cease or reaches a point of saturation (Charmaz, 2006).

Participants had been emailed the three photos prior to the interview but were not made aware of the interview questions previously. Interviews were free flowing, and participants were encouraged to expand as little or as much as they liked. Probing questions were set up to help participants recount information about their travel experiences, photographic practices, and sharing behavior. Interviewees were encouraged to lead the conversation and expand as much as they wanted; however, specific questions relative to emerging themes were often asked in subsequent interviews. Four primary interview questions were used to guide the process with many probing questions to extract information from the participants.

> Q1: Can you give me a quick bio of yourself; who you are, what you like, how you would describe yourself to a stranger.
>
> Q2: Why do you use Instagram?
>
> Q3: PHOTO DESCRIPTION: Tell me about photo X (repeat these questions for each photo 1, 2 and 3).
>
> Q4: How does seeing other's travel posts on Instagram impact/influence you? Does Instagram inspire/encourage you to travel? Think back to any travels before Instagram; how has Instagram changed the way you travel?

The first question was used as an ice breaker and to gather information about how individuals identified themselves. Question 2 was used to understand participants' usage of Instagram, what they like/dislike, how much time they spend on the application per day, what content they look at, the purpose of their account, and whether followers were important to them. Question 3 consisted of the bulk of the interview and focused on the three pre-selected photos. Participants were asked to describe each photo in depth including, where it was taken, why this subject was chosen, any editing processes, geotags and captions applied, pre-trip site research, travel motivations for the site,

27

impressions of site, and feedback received. These questions were asked about all three pre-selected photos and used to gain a general understanding of posting behavior, travel motivation, use of Instagram for site research purposes, influence of others on site visitation, etc. Question 4 was used to gather information about how the participant saw the impact of Instagram on their own travels, behavior in other travelers, and level of influence.

Data Analysis

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, data analysis was conducted simultaneously to data collection. Data analysis followed a multi-stage procedure as outlined by Creswell (2013) where raw data was collected through interviews and images, interviews were transcribed, organized and prepared, analyzed for content, winnowed, hand coded, themed and aggregated, and lastly interpreted (Creswell, 2013). The process of hand coding interviews allowed for the data to emerge during the analysis phase.

Audio files of the interviews were uploaded to a transcription service and hand corrected by the author to ensure accuracy. Interview transcripts were read twice to immerse the researcher into the data, memos were created and then the data was hand coded with each line of data given a descriptive code which was recorded in a codebook during the process. The transcripts were then re-read and statements which were not important or relevant to the participant experience were winnowed from the data.

Codes were compared for likeness and similarities and clustered to identify salient themes. This process was repeated several times until the six emergent themes

representative of the user experience were identified. Transcripts were read one final time to ensure that final themes were consistent with the participant's words and overall essence of their experience. These themes are discussed within this text.

Reliability and Validity of Data

Several techniques were utilized to ensure the reliability of the data including recording of notes and memos taken during the interview process, audio recording of the interviews and corroboration of transcripts with audio files.

As the coding process was conducted by the author alone, a potential bias exists and is acknowledged. As an Instagram user with over 5,000 posts on her personal account, a photographer with a preference for landscape as subject, and coming from a cultural and socio-economic status which affords several international trips per year, the researcher acknowledges the potential for inherent bias in this research. On the other hand, the researcher's familiarity with Instagram as a social media platform as well as the features and characteristics entailed is akin to having spent a prolonged time in the field where an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study lends credibility to the research.

To verify the validity of the data proved by the participants, triangulation techniques were employed where data collected from the participant's Instagram account was verified with information collected within the semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation interviews. For example, answers to questions such as "do you use hashtags" were verified by examining photos posted on the participant's Instagram account. Given that the purpose of the study was to identify the ways in which image based social media

is impacting the tourist gaze, the researcher presented all data as it emerged, even that

which may have been negative or indicated there was no impact to the gaze at all.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the interviews and photo elicitation as conducted and is divided into two sections; 1) Participant Profiles and 2) Emergent Themes.

Participant Profiles

In total, 19 interviews were conducted with participants located in countries around the world including Belgium, Colombia, Guam, Saudi Arabia, and throughout the United States of America. The point of saturation was achieved at interview number sixteen with three additional interviews conducted to ensure saturation. The interviews lasted between 24 minutes and one hour. In total, 738 minutes of interviews were conducted, resulting in 12 hours and 31 minutes of data collection.

Participants included 15 women and four men ranging in age between 25 to 65 years old with three participants between 20-29, eight participants between 30-39, four participants between 40-49, two participants between 50-59, and two that were 60 or over. Ten participants had their accounts set to public and nine were set to private. The total number of participant account followers was 14,417 with accounts ranging from 23 to 6,549; with two accounts having less than 100, seven accounts having between 100-200 followers, three accounts having between 201-300, zero accounts having between 301-400, two accounts having between 401-500, one having between 501-600, and three having over 1,000 followers.

To gain a better understanding of how the participants viewed themselves, participants were asked how they would describe themselves to a stranger. The purpose

of this ice breaking question was two-fold; 1) to get participants comfortable with talking openly with the researcher, and 2) to see if participant descriptions of self was consistent with the subject matter posted on their Instagram pages. Participants commonly used descriptors related to their profession, marital status, geographic origination, and most commonly as travelers and active outdoor adventurers. Other descriptors volunteered included dog lover, inspirational, enjoys being social and hanging out with friends, sports enthusiast, music lover, and political. These descriptors were not only largely consistent with the types of content participants followed on their Instagram feed (dog lovers tended to follow certain breeds of dogs, travelers followed travel related content, etc.), but also aligned with their own posted content, perhaps as a means of reinforcing favorable characteristics of self. This observation later emerged as a prominent theme of the phenomenon and is discussed in depth further.

Participants acknowledged spending a fair amount of time using Instagram and estimated that they spent anywhere from less than 10 minutes a day up to five hours a day, with one hour being the mode. Several participants referred to Instagram as a "black hole" or "time suck" where they were engrossed in the content for longer than they had anticipated.

Emergent Themes

Through the course of the in-depth interviews, six salient themes emerged from the data; 1) sphere of influence, 2) connections manifested, 3) exchange of information, 4) impression management and content curation, 5) replication of travel photography, and 6) expectations. These themes are discussed at length with quotes presented throughout

the results section as a means of using the lived language of the phenomenon. Randomly assigned participant numbers are used to protect the identity of the participants.

An important concept which emerged from this study that proved foundational to understanding this phenomenon, showed that all participants posted photos of their travels for an audience, whether that consisted of their friends and family, their followers, or themselves. This may seem somewhat obvious, but it demonstrates that the act of posting a photograph has the intended purpose of being seen by an audience.

> "Well you know you want people to like your picture if I'm being honest…Yeah, it's important to me that people see the pictures. I mean, I don't put them up there for nothing." (Participant 12)

Additionally, throughout the analysis it was important to keep in mind that the nature of social media and Web 2.0 creates a duality of usage where participants are simultaneously content generators and consumers. In essence, this replaces the one-way road information traveled down from mass media producers to consumers with a two-way street of inputs and outputs.

Sphere of Influence

One of the first themes to emerge was that of the sphere of influence which encompasses the role of the participant as providing inspiration to others through their own posts as well as being influenced by other's travel related content on Instagram. The sphere of influence awknowleges the duality imbedded within the very nature of social media where users have the potential to be simultaneously a source of inspiration through the content which they provide as well as the potential to be influenced by the content

which they consume. Given this duality, during the interviews and subsequent analysis, it was important to differentiate between how users perceived their impact to other's as content producers and additionally, how they were influenced by consuming content from others.

Inspiring others was a common intention of several participants. Individuals reflected on sharing their travel experiences on social media as a service to others who may not be as "lucky" or "fortunate" as they were to visit these destinations. Participants reflected on how travel had changed them, given them new perspectives, and how they wished to provide inspiration to others through their posts. This was a common theme expressed by several participants.

> "Well I hope to inspire anyone and everyone…But I do hope that my photos do inspire travel in others, yes." (Participant 11)

> "I want to see it for myself, but I also want to show other people that I know will never get there." (Participant 12)

> "I just hope what I can do, is get to people to tell them hey, traveling is important because it all starts with one step and it can change your life forever. And I learned that." (Participant 9)

The aspiration to inspire others through sharing personal travel experiences even led one participant to create an entirely separate Instagram and Facebook account dedicated solely to sharing her travel experiences publicly. Participant 6 described how sharing her travel experiences with a terminally ill child allowed the child and his family to travel vicariously through her, to destinations he would never get to see in person.

"…ultimately, that's what started me doing the pictures was just that one little picture knowing he would never have the opportunity to go there." (Participant 6)

Participants also reflected on how consumption of other' travel content on Instagram inspired them to gather additional site information, effectively building anticipation and a preconceived notion of what the site would be like, ultimately influenced their decision to travel to those specific locations. This is the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze in action and a common characteristic of the phenomenon under study. After viewing landscape images on Instagram, Participant 12 added a newly discovered location to his road trip itinerary with the sole purpose of replicating an image of that site.

"There was a spot that we went to on this last trip that I didn't know anything about until I saw it on Instagram. It's called Valley of Fire in Nevada. And I had never heard of it, never seen it before but I just kind of ran across this crazy looking picture on Instagram and I thought oh my god, what is that? And […] I found the spot where I'd seen the picture on Instagram and got it and was really, really, happy with it and it's just a beautiful picture! But yeah that Instagram right there inspired me to find that park and visit it and it was great, it was a good thing." (Participant 12)

Similarly, participant 19 boldly stated that Instagram is her primary source for identifying all new travel destinations demonstrating that the content other's posted had a direct impact on her travel decisions, effectively completing the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze.

"Oh, I definitely think it inspires me. In terms of all my adventuring and stuff, everywhere that I find for the first time is going to be on [Instagram] or sent to me by somebody who's on there. So, it's definitely where I get my inspiration for travel and adventure." (Participant 19)

In addition to being directly inspired by content on Instagram, several participants discussed how seeing other's content not only made them want to travel to that location but also had the impact of minimizing their own similar travel experiences as somewhat inferior in comparison.

> "Like when I moved to Switzerland and meet friends there that had Instagram or Facebook and they're posting pictures from their trips around Europe and even though I just did a really cool hike on the weekend, I was like oh that's so boring compared to that, I want to go there instead!" (Participant 14)

However, for some participants the inspiration wasn't always direct, and the participants were not entirely aware of the impacts other's posts had on them. Participants talked about trips which they'd been dreaming about for years where Instagram did not play a role in their destination choice. However, further probing revealed that although the inspiration may not have come from Instagram directly, the application was a useful tool which inspired detailed conversations and information exchanges afforded by seeing friends' recent travels posted on the application.

> "I had just seen her photos from the south of France and so I like talked to her about some of the places there on San Tropez. So in that sense, yes, it actually has influenced a conversation I wouldn't have otherwise necessarily had, knowing that she was just in the south of France." (Participant 2)

Not only did participants talk about the pre-trip information exchange afforded by Instagram, users also reflected on the real-time exchange of information capabilities of the application which allowed other users to provide destination information in-situ through direct messages and comments at some point during the trip.

> "…things we had no idea that existed that morning, you know, and then we get a message and a few hours later we are in it." (Participant 15)

These exchanges of information as afforded by the application became a prominent theme of this research and are discussed further in later under the theme of exchange of information sections.

The sphere of influence was a prominent theme in this research asserting that Instagram users post photographs for an intended audience and play dual roles of content providers and content consumers. Similarly, the exchange of information afforded by the social media application was bi-directional, both as provider and consumer on information. Furthermore, the data revealed that the sphere of influence was not subject to existing solely within the virtual realm, also led to the emergence of a new unexpected theme where connections between users extended beyond the virtual realm into reality.

Connections Manifested

Social media is at its essence designed to create connections between individuals inside a virtual community. However, one important theme to emerge early on in the interview process highlighted that the sphere of influence not only existed inside the virtual realm of social media connections but extended outside the virtual realm into reality. This was important to note because it demonstrates how a crossover exists between engagement within the virtual realm of social media and behavior in reality. This was a theme which underlaid the foundation of this research where I sought to understand how content in the virtual realm influenced and impacted tourist behavior in the real world.

A majority of participants reported that one of the most liked features of Instagram was that it enabled them to stay connected with the lives of their friends and

families, near and far. Users also reported feeling connected to strangers through virtual

communities of likeminded individuals and those with similar interests. Interestingly,

several participants reflected on how sharing their experiences on social media actually

led to the development of long lasting and meaningful relationships outside of the virtual

realm, into real life. One participant revealed that she had met her fiancé while on an

Instagram hiking meetup. The manifestation of real-life relationships from virtual

connections was an unexpected finding of this research.

> "What I like about it is that I've met some of my closest friends that I spend time
> in the outdoors with. I've made lifelong friends that we backpack with and we
> hike with and we go to local breweries with." (Participant 19)

These virtual connections which manifested into reality were especially important

to those that were actively traveling. Two separate participants were interviewed while

actively traveling on pro-longed road trips and they both reported using Instagram as a

means of connecting with, and meeting up with, other travelers in similar situations to

themselves, effectively creating a new community in-situ.

> "I look for a lot of other travelers. There is a like a subset of over-landers that
> have their handles on the side of their vehicles and we like find other travelling
> couples or people travelling single and they have their blog and their kind of over-
> landing identity. And you can connect with each other through Instagram because
> you'll be around the same places." (Participant 4)

> "I started following that [hashtag] and it shows, um you know, couples who are
> just sort of doing the same thing we are right now and actually we met a few
> couples along the way from that so it's just kind of cool to meet people that are in
> the same boat we are in." (Participant 15)

These connections also served as a means for the exchange of information,

whether that be from fellow travelers who were in the same area, or others within the

participants sphere of influence.

Exchange of Information

Exchange of information between users emerged as a prominent theme of this research and focused on the way in which travel information was shared on Instagram. Participants discussed the way in which they used Instagram as a resource to obtain travel information as well as an opportunity to provide or withhold information as they saw appropriate, through their posts. The enormous amount of real-time information available through millions of daily posts as well as the newly added story feature was revealed to be an important aspect of information exchanges on the application and one that was highly valued by users.

As previously mentioned, information sharing motivations were related to the sphere of influence theme discussed earlier, particularly around inspiring others to travel to a site. Several participants who acclaimed to inspire others talked about providing information to their audience through the use of geotags and hashtags as a means of providing location information and a starting point for further site research.

> "…I knew I was going to get a lot of "where is this?' questions and I wanted it to be out there, that I was still in Arizona and then people could Google it based on that geotag." (Participant 16)

> "I like to geotag them a) so that a place that I feel is as moving as that was, people can identify it, look at it and maybe they can plan it on their next vacation and b) it may be a place that, like myself, nobody's ever heard of." (Participant 9)

However not all users felt positively about the prevalence of information available on Instagram, particularly location information afforded by the use of geotags and hashtags. Several users reflected on the downsides of sharing information especially

related to the potential visitor impacts. As a travel industry professional, Participant 7

reflected on the juxtaposition of sharing site location information and the potential

negative impacts to site visitation. Additionally, he seemed to have a bias towards

individuals whom were only there to take a picture as opposed to those who were there to

appreciate the wholeness of the location.

> "…it's not because they appreciate like the natural phenomenon or the location itself it's so they can say they got a picture there […] it's like every travel show right, like Anthony Bourdain anywhere he went, the whole point was getting off the beaten path and finding the small hole in the wall places but as soon as he finds them and makes a TV show about them they are no longer that." (Participant 7)

The antithesis to information sharing, purposeful beta withholding, was directly

addressed by several of the savvier users whom discussed the potential negative aspects

of sharing location information on Instagram. They talked about intentionally refraining

from using any hashtags and geotags which would identify location in certain contexts.

These users seemed to understand the potential impacts their sphere of influence could

have on site visitation and thus altered their application of these features.

> "a lot of times I intentionally don't because I don't want to give away a prime location or something." (Participant 13)

These participants who demonstrated a propensity to withhold site location

information were probed to gather more insight into this phenomenon. Several users

applied personal values and judgements along with a personal protocol to explain when

and where they would or would not identify a photo's location. Notably, these last two quotes came from the interview participants whom had thousands of followers each.

> "…if it's somewhere that has like a very clearly defined trail, I'm going to geotag it. I would tag most places in the Superstitions, I would geotag any mountain in town, I would geotag Humphrey's Peak, I would geotag Sedona, I would geotag really popular hikes in Payson. But if it's a less popular place or one I think has been protected from people and doesn't have a lot of people going then I will not geotag it. There are certain waterholes in Payson that not everybody knows about and like, I'm very protective of waterhole tagging because I feel like for some reason waterholes are kind of what brings out like the partiers and the people who are just going out there in summer time and who want an easy hike." (Participant 19)

Participant 17 reflected on why she changed her previous behavior of tagging site locations as a means of providing information, towards a more sustainable approach as guided by Leave No Trace principles. She expressed careful consideration when taking into account the impact her large sphere of influence could have on the site, not only through her ability to inspire a large number of potential visitors but also that inexperienced individuals might be lulled into a false sense of safety and accessibility.

> "I used to tag specific locations because it was a way to help my followers know where it was, and I realized that that brings too many people. I feel like if someone really wants to see something if they put the and time effort to searching for that place perhaps, they will gain knowledge in the process of how to properly go there and how to properly prepare." (Participant 17)

This research also showed that information gathering of place on Instagram was varied in method and purpose. At a minimum, most participants used the application as a tool for macro-scale analysis of destination including using hashtags and geotags to identify destination pictures and get a sense for destinations they might someday want to visit. Further inquiry lead to seeking more detailed destination information on other

sources such as TripAdvisor and Google. These types of users were discussed previously within the sphere of influence as having been inspired to go to a place.

> "Yep. it's like one of the first things I did which is to look it up" (Participant 15)

> "…sometimes we see what they post and we go "oh my god, we have to go there!" and we'll mark it on the map to remember." (Participant 4)

Others used the application in a more sophisticated and intentional manner to get a pulse for the location and gather information at the micro-scale. Participants sought out information using hashtags and geotags about local restaurants and coffee shops to get a sense for the food they could expect to eat, how people dressed, what types of activities they engaged in at the location, etc. These types of behaviors help to set the gaze, build anticipation and expectations for what they would experience at the site.

> "I just really wanted to like get sense of what's the scene like in London and Copenhagen. I've been to both places before but not in a really long time. I follow certain people so I can kind of see like how they're living, what places are they going to, how do they dress, what matters to them." (Participant 18)

> "I did go onto Instagram and try to search some of Italy and some of the terrain, some of the foods […] I now follow some of those restaurants in those locations because you know the interest was there and I did want to learn about the country somewhat before I went out." (Participant 11)

One participant stated that part of her strategy for collecting site information was to make a post prior to her travels as a means of crowdsourcing destination information from people who had already been there.

> "I tried to post in advance where I'm going so if anybody wants to say oh yeah, I've been there you know you should try this, or you should go here." (Participant 6)

Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of the data which emerged from this research was found within the context of real time information accessibility, with particular emphasis on hashtags and the 'story' feature of Instagram. The story feature allows users to post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours, whereas images and videos posted on the gallery are more permanent by design. This is a newer feature to the platform utilized by the more proficient Instagram participants. Those who were not as proficient on Instagram were less likely to use this feature across the board and often didn't know how to or were not even aware of this feature.

Several participants utilized this story feature in a sophisticated manner, to gather real-time information on destinations which would then be utilized to make travel decisions. For example, one participant was vacationing at The Cosmopolitan Resort in Las Vegas and wanted to know what each of the resort's pools were like, to see what the scene was like, to decide on which cabana she wanted to rent for the day. First, she followed the resort's Instagram page and then viewed their stories to see in real-time which pool had more of a party scene versus a laid-back scene. She used this real-time information to inform a decision about which cabana to rent for the day, as they were looking for a more relaxing experience.

> "...we tried to use the story to see, to get a feel of where the cabana was located in relation to the pool and then how loud it was going be there and stuff like that." (Participant 13)

Similarly, another participant talked about using the real-time information available through posts and stories to get specific, up-to-date weather and water conditions for different hiking locations.

"I even used it to research trips. I used it to research the weather, so I know I want to go somewhere and I'm not sure what the weather's been like there what the waters looking then I will look up photos with either that hashtag that geotag in the last couple days, look at their stories. I might even DM [direct message] people on there to be like, were you just there? What was the weather like? What was the trail like? So, I definitely use it for all my research and travel planning" (Participant 19)

Additionally, this participant's use of the story feature allowed her to gather in-situ information from other Instagram users about the destination she was at. This type of real-time information exchange is unprecedented within the travel industry and highlights a potential shift in how destination marketers might be more effective in disseminating travel information in an era when people are seeking local's input.

"I had posted on my story that I was going there, and this guy actually reached out to me like "oh I suggest you try these places." And then I started messaging him a lot more to ask him questions. I would say that it's pretty common for us to try to even look for an Instagrammer in that area and try to ask them questions about their recommendation" (Participant 19)

Overall, the exchange of site information on Instagram was an important resource utilized by most participants either at the macro or micro-level and thus a primary theme to emerge from this research. This is consistent with the purpose of social media and not a particularly unexpected theme, however the nuance which emerged from the data was important. The real-time site information collected by the more sophisticated users as a means of gathering site information through hashtags, geotags, and the story feature to inform their decisions to travel to and prepare for the conditions at the location was important. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the user's awareness of audience and sphere of influence assisted in decision-making regarding the types of site-specific

information and content to share. This deliberate content curation leads into another important theme to emerge from the data.

Impression Management and Content Curation

Much of the participant's Instagram experience as content generator centered around impression management and content curation. Impression management involves the curation of one's image as it is portrayed on social media, through the content which they provide to the audience to be consumed, even if the intended audience is the self. This process of developing and reinforcing a narrative of self through images posted on the user's account became one of the primary themes of this research.

Excerpts from the interviews and photo elicitations methods show that users posted images with full awareness of their audience in mind, posted content which portrayed the subject matter and themselves in a positive light and added credibility to their image, and excluded content which was inconsistent with their personal brand, image, or purpose. Furthermore, analysis of the participant's photo content showed a propensity to post images which were consistent with how they described themselves to others.

Table 1

Photograph Descriptions Used in Photo Elicitation Interviews

Photograph	Participant	Photo Description
1	1	Sunset in Guam with participant as subject
2		Looking up into the canopy at Muir Woods Redwood Forest
3		Participant looking across vineyard
4	2	Participant selfie at Viaduc de Millau

5		Moon from the bridge deck of a cruise ship
6		Women on beach at Lipari Yacht Harbor
7	3	Lifeguard tower at Laguna Beach, California
8		Beach at Huntington Beach, California
9		Doe Bay from deck on Orcas Island, Washington
10	4	View from windscreen of car while driving through the mountains of Colombia
11		Village of Mongui, Colombia
12		El Cocuy National Park, Colombia
13	5	Participant standing in an aspen grove near Flagstaff, Arizona
14		Forest near Flagstaff, Arizona
15		Soccer goal in Mexico at sunset
16	6	Coastal walk in Bondi Beach, Australia
17		Sydney Opera House in Sydney, Australia
18		Sunset in Western Fiji
19	7	Coastal landscape at Block Island
20		View of Driftwood Point, Lake Erie, Ohio
21		Cityscape of downtown Cleveland, Ohio
22	8	Collage of Milan, Italy
23		Tram Depot in Milan, Italy
24		Canal in Navigli, Milan, Italy
25	9	Rosedown Plantation in Louisiana, USA
26		Mar Hall Golf and Spa Resort, Scotland
27		Canal in Central Amsterdam, Netherlands
28	10	Olympic National Park, Washington, USA
29		Panorama video of mountains at North Cascades National Park, Washington, USA
30		Water view at Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, Canada
31	11	View from boat on waters outside of Venice, Italy
32		Panorama of The Colosseum, Rome, Italy
33		Person at Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy
34	12	Salvation Mountain, Slab City, California, USA
35		Slot canyon at Lower Antelope Canyon, Page, Arizona, USA
36		The Mittens, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, Arizona, USA

37	13	Garden Roses in Portland, Oregon, USA
38		The Bellagio Fountains and cityscape of Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
39		Secret camping location in the Olympic National Forest, Washington, USA
40	14	Bixby Bridge, Big Sur, California, USA
41		Participant's son with the Golden Gate Bridge in background, San Francisco, California, USA (no photo release)
42		Participant and son's feet in a hammock, White Mountains Arizona, USA (no photo release)
43	15	View of trail Angel's Landing Zion National Park, Utah, USA
44		Participant inside a slot canyon Buckskin Gulch, Utah, USA
45		Landscape of Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, USA
46	16	Silhouette of man at sunset, Costa Rica
47		Grand Falls, Navajo Nation, Arizona, USA
48		Monkey Head rock in Pacific Ocean, Costa Rica
49	17	Little Navajo Falls, Havasupai, Arizona, USA
50		Participant in dancer pose outside of Sedona, Arizona, USA
51		Participant in aspen grove outside of Flagstaff, Arizona, USA
52	18	Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen, Kingdom of Denmark
53		Cityscape of North Yorkshire, England
54		Buildings along the bay in Kastellet, Copenhagen, Kingdom of Denmark
55	19	Subject looking out from the top of Humphry's Peak, Arizona
56		Participant and fiancé standing beneath Ribbon Falls, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, USA
57		Tensile hammock over waterfall, Havasupai, Arizona, USA

Figure 1

Photographs Used for Photo Elicitation Interviews

Photo 1	Photo 2	Photo 3

Photo 4	Photo 5	Photo 6

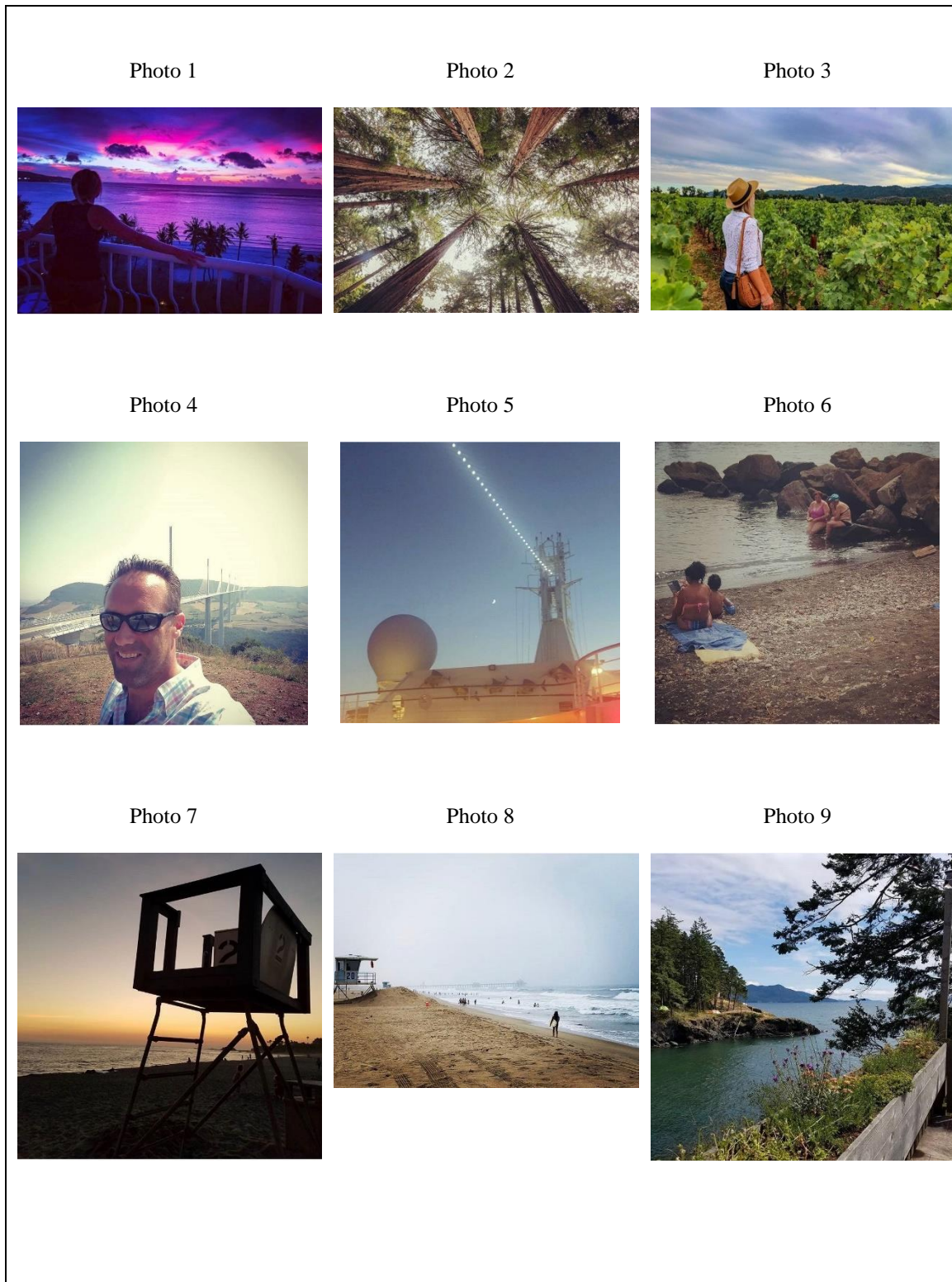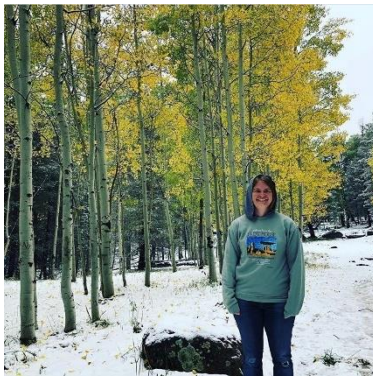| Photo 7	Photo 8	Photo 9

Photo 10

Photo 11

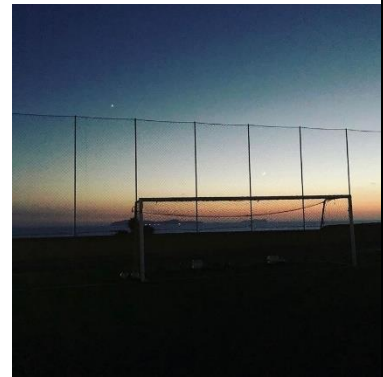Photo 12

Photo 13
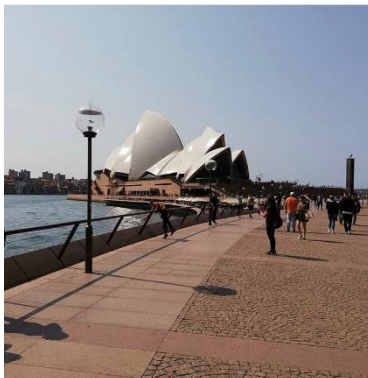
Photo 14

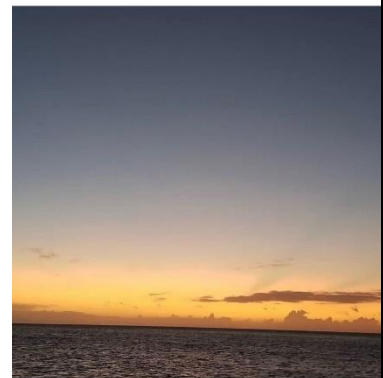Photo 15

Photo 16

Photo 17

Photo 18

Photo 19

Photo 20

Photo 21

Photo 22

Photo 23

Photo 24

Photo 25

Photo 26

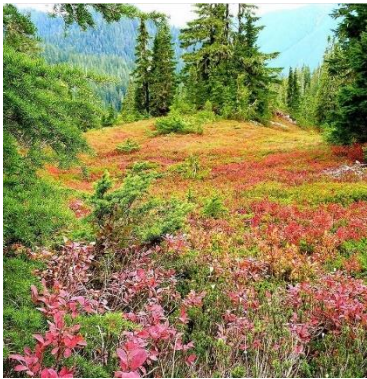Photo 27

Photo 28

Photo 29

Photo 30

Photo 31

Photo 32

Photo 33

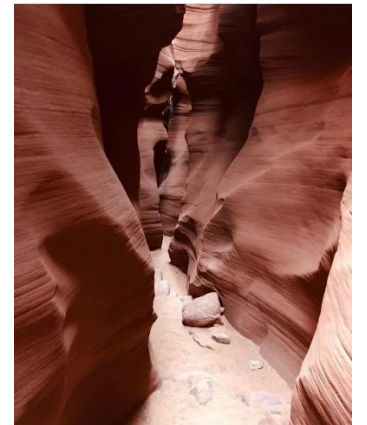Photo 34

Photo 35

Photo 36

Photo 37

Photo 38

Photo 39

Photo 40

Photo 41

Consent allowed for analysis

only

Photo 42

Consent allowed for analysis

only

Photo 43

Photo 44

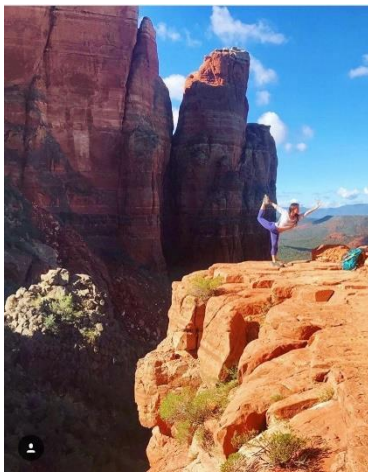Photo 45

Photo 46

Photo 47

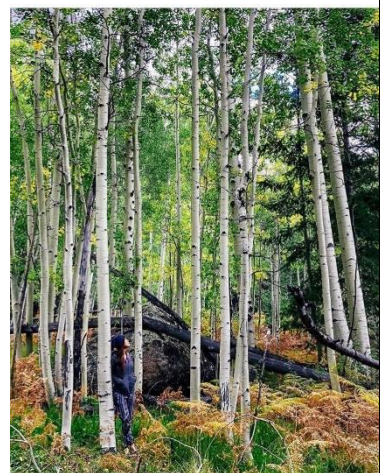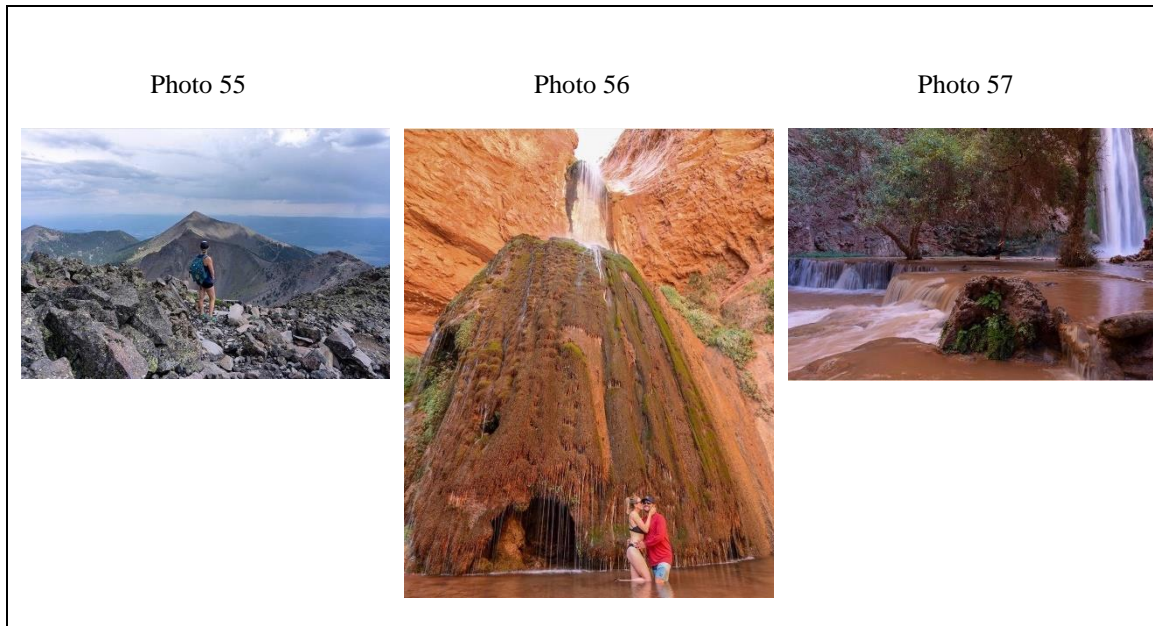Photo 48

Photo 49

Photo 50

Photo 51

Photo 52

Photo 53

Photo 54

Photo 55   Photo 56   Photo 57

When asked to describe themselves, participants used descriptors such as outdoorsman, adventurer, traveler, mother, political, etc. which was consistent with the content provided to their audiences. For example, participant 19 described herself as an Arizonan who enjoys outdoor activities and the three photos selected to be used within her interview depicted similar subject matter including photo 55, hiking at Humphry's Peak, Arizona; photo 56, participant and fiancé at a waterfall located inside Grand Canyon National Park, and photo 57 a picture of Navajo Falls, Havasupai, Arizona.

> "Okay I guess I'm native to Arizona and I really enjoy anything outdoors in Arizona whether that be hiking, trail running, horseback riding, going to the lake, or kayaking [.]" (Participant 19)

Participant 9 described himself as a well-travelled enlisted Naval Officer and a "simple minded, low maintenance, history buff" who throughout the photo elicitation part of the interview, often described his photos as "quintessential" or "classic" representations of place where the audience could image themselves being transported to these very locations, while gazing at his images. The three photos used within participant

9's analysis included; photo 25, a "quintessential" southern plantation, photo 26 a "classic" photo of the Scotland countryside, and photo 27 a "quintessential" photo of a canal in Amsterdam.

> "I've been to over 30 different countries, in the Navy been on submarines aircraft carriers from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Bahrain to Belgium." (Participant 9)

Similarly, Participant 14 framed her identity within the context of being a mother of a toddler and two of the photos, 41 and 42, contained her son as subject (photos are not displayed per consent). Furthermore, she asserted that the only purpose of her Instagram account was to serve as an archive for her son.

> "I am a very, very tired middle-aged mother of a toddler and spend my days doing peacekeeping by bureaucracy in an office that I would prefer not to be at." (Participant 14)

In addition to posting content that was consistent with their descriptions of self, many participants were intentionally or unintentionally curating their content to portray themselves in a certain way, very much catering their posted content to satisfy their perceived audiences. Additionally, several participants had separate Instagram accounts for different types of content, several of which were dedicated solely to travel. When prompted to explain the motivation for posting photo 49, participant 17 described how the content of the photo gave her credibility as an outdoorswoman and ambassador for an outdoor organization aimed at inspiring women to become more active.

> "Because it gives me credibility that I have visited places in Arizona because, like people do look to, maybe not me but to #womenwhohike, as a tool to find things to do in Arizona and so yes it was important for me to have a photo out there that I went there." (Participant 17)

The exclusion of certain types of content was also intentional. Participant 19 described a very intentional rational for omitting certain types of content from her gallery, recognizing that her potential audience were children and the impact their interpretation could have on her reputation as a counselor.

> "It is how I want to portray myself. […] So, for me, I'm a counselor and I know for a fact that the children that I counsel get on my Instagram and look at it because they've told me that, and so that does highly influence what I will post and why I will post and what I'll say about it." (Participant 19)

Other participants felt strongly about being mindful when selecting images and curating their content. When asked to reflect upon the type of content and intentional curation of his account, participant 9 talked about the importance of staying consistent in his messaging, similar to how marketers discuss branding. This was compelling for several reasons, but perhaps most importantly was the intention of keeping his audience from being underwhelmed by ordinary and mundane aspects of daily life.

> "I think that over saturates the message. Not that I guess I really have a certain message per say but people post "oh my god I just went to the store and bought milk" or "oh look, here's me at the bus," It gets underwhelming to where you're not impressed, whereas if I can send a single post with a significant photo and message, that has more value added to me and I think to the person seeing it." (Participant 9)

Not only did participants want to engage their audiences in compelling content, but they wanted to keep the content mostly positive. Several participants spoke to their inclination to post mostly positive content and content which reflected a positive experience as a courtesy to their followers. This is discussed more in-depth under the expectation theme; however, it was worth noting here within the context of curation because it shows the effect of a positive gaze.

"I try to be honest, but I know it's really hard to be posting, like, I had a real, real bad day. […] I don't think people want to hear like "Hey, today was really boring and I fought with my husband." (Participant 4)

One participant spoke about purposefully omitting negative aspects of a site, even though the negative gaze was a memorable part of the experience. After a trip to Havasupai, she reflected on feeling saddened by the condition of the village and the extreme poverty she saw in the village adjacent to the falls. When asked why she chose to post a picture of the waterfall instead of the village, she stated that her audience wanted to see pretty pictures on Instagram and furthermore that it wasn't her place to highlight or share perceived negative aspects of the reality for fear of exposing or placing judgement on the residents. Furthermore, this demonstrates how positive aspects of place are highlighted perpetuating the hermeneutic circle of the positive gaze.

"Well when you go on Instagram you want to see pretty things and if someone were to share that [negative content] they risk people not looking at their account or not looking at their photos and […] I wouldn't take a picture of people in town just because I know it's not appropriate. But when you have conversations with people and they're like 'Oh yeah I saw that too', it's like you didn't say anything and I didn't say anything you know, no one says anything because it's like, I don't know, it's like it's not our business to share how all the people are living or what they're doing there." (Participant 17)

The last few sentences of the quote really emphasizes the hermeneutic circle of the gaze in action where the user posts content for her audience's consumption which fits the established positive gaze for the site and doing otherwise would negatively impact her personal brand. This was consistent throughout the interviews, where participants described how they curated content for their accounts through the photos which they posted online. This content was posted with forethought of who the audience was, even if

57

the intended audience was themselves. Additionally, participants spoke of maintaining multiple accounts dedicated to differing subject matter, for the purposes of providing cohesive and consistent messaging to their audiences. For several of the participants, this branding of one's self through carefully curated Instagram content was acknowledged and intentional whereas others did not express purposiveness.

Replicated Travel Photography

An important component of the tourist gaze is the capture of the visual at a particular site through photography, resulting in the replication of images. To understand if users of image based social media engaged in the replication of travel photography, participants were asked directly if their photos were intentional replications of an image previously seen on Instagram or elsewhere. In total, 29 of the 57 photos analyzed for this research were determined to be either outright replications of iconic places or less obvious interpretations; ten of the analyzed photos were intentional replications of a known site, five photos were of iconic places but taken with an individual twist or a "unique" or uncommon angle, and twelve photos were referred to as being "quintessential" captures of place, "iconic" locations, "nostalgic" representations of personal importance, or "symbolic" of place. In two separate cases, participants stated that their photos were not direct replications however further probing revealed that the photos were taken from permanent viewpoints which facilitated replication of the photo from a fixed angle. This is further evidence of how the tourist gaze is not only crafted by media influences but can also be guided by permanent infrastructure at the site.

Several participants spoke of the desire to exactly replicate an image they had previously seen on Instagram or elsewhere, with ten of the 57 analyzed photos being

direct replications of a distinct place. This desire to travel to a site with the intended

purpose of capturing a specific image is consistent with the tourist gaze and was

prevalent in this research.

> "I say to myself, I want to take that picture. I want to go there I want to see this, and I want to capture it as best I can." (Participant 12)

> "And I was a hundred percent going for that typical the waves coming in and then going out boomerang that my friend had been posting. I wanted that really good sunset photo that you could put an inspirational quote over because my friend had been doing that with like bible verses and I wanted to copy her experience so bad." (Participant 5)

> "Yes. This is going to sound silly but one of the first things that I knew about Monument Valley was the Forrest Gump movie and the long road shot into Monument Valley when he's jogging across the country multiple times […] And that was one of the photos I wanted and yes, just you know, it's just one of these spots I just wanted to see and take a picture of." (Participant 12)

In some instances, participants described how despite not wanting to engage in

the performance of picture taking, once there, they actually felt compelled to take a photo

of the iconic site. They felt like taking a picture was an act that was so engrained in the

experience, they were compelled to engage in the performance despite their previous

inclinations to not.

> "I mean to be honest I really don't want to take a picture because I know everybody does, but it is so pretty. So, I couldn't resist." (Participant 18)

This was an unexpended finding of this research and evidence of a strengthening

connection between photography and travel. Not only did Participant 18 originally not

want to take the photo, but she ended up posting that iconic image to her Instagram

account as evidence of being there. One has to wonder if the increased accessibility of

hand-held mobile technologies and image based social media causes users to engage in

the act of photo taking despite wanting to enjoy the moment without a camera. What has compelled them to act otherwise?

> "It's like automatic. You just feel like you can't not, like you have to take a picture. I definitely noticed that on the trip and since my husband does like really good photography, I tried to be like, OK I'm going to put my phone away and experience the moment and then he's going to take pictures. But that's really hard." (Participant 4)

Participants not only engaged in outright travel photography replication, but they also captured images of iconic sites through individual photographic twists and unique variations of subject matter. This was a less obvious attempt at capturing iconic images of place and participants either spoke directly to the intentionality of wanting to capture a place through their own unique perspective or it was inferred by the researcher upon analysis. This desire to photograph sites from multiple, unique angles effectively leads to comprehensive mapping of the site, where every aspect of the site becomes the extraordinary which is captured visually. Participant photos of iconic locations which were captured in a unique or individualized manner included Sydney Opera House, Havasupai, Muir Woods, the Colosseum in Rome, and a collage of photos from Milan, Italy were all examples of this phenomenon. When talking about the Sydney Opera House, Participant 6 reflected on how mundane she anticipated the photographic experience would be until she saw it from her own unique perspective.

> "And I thought, oh you know, it's just another, it's just another building it's just you know no big deal. But it really takes your breath away especially from the unique angle that I was at." (Participant 6)

Another participant purposely selected a photo to display on her Instagram gallery in an effort to differentiate herself from other visitor's photographic content captured at a popularly visited and photographed location in Arizona.

> "And that was an image that I took, and I selected it because it was very different from all the images that were floating around of Havasupai. Everyone always thinks of this giant grand waterfall, either Havasupai Falls or Mooney Falls and I had this which is the Little Navajo, which it's a piece of Havasupai that I feel a lot of people don't share and that's why I decided to share that photo. Because it was the same destination but a different perspective and a different viewpoint." (Participant 17)

An important aspect of the tourist gaze which emerged from this research as being prevalent in the participant's experience was their interpretation and capture of signs and signifiers within the landscape. Participants acted as semioticians, often capturing preestablished notions or signs of place and spoke of their visual captures as being symbolic, iconic and quintessential of place.

> "Yeah definitely. Like capturing the iconic arrival. You know that fountain kind of bursts off right when we go out there and open the curtains and it said, "oh yay!" you know, yeah definitely like an iconic capture for sure." (Participant 13)

> "…and it was taken, it was the iconic bridge on the way to Big Sur and […] I took it because I just wanted to capture the place and the beauty of the area." (Participant 14)

Several of the photographs were not of obviously distinct sites, however they were clearly symbolic of place and capturing that essence of place was just as important as capturing a specific site. This is also an important aspect of the tourist gaze where the essence of place is captured through the visual and everyday subject matter becomes the extraordinary. Several examples of this emerged from the data and highlight how seemingly mundane landscapes become symbols of time and place. Photograph 25 is a good example of this where the image was taken from the front porch of a historic

plantation in Louisiana looking down an old gravel road flanked by majestic trees draped

in Spanish Moss. For Participant 9, that image was symbolic of the Civil War era and

captured the essence of what it was to be in the South.

> "…it hit me as like wow that's like seeing the North and the South and like Gone with the Wind. I was like, this is my photo, I have to take this photo" (Participant 9)

> Similarly, he reflected on a photograph taken in Scotland and how the image of

green rolling hills, shrouded in a blanket of grey fog captured all that it was to be in

Scotland;

> "…you hear about Scotland and the haze and the grey at you know their love of the natural beauty. Then at the same time in the background of watching the mist roll in I can hear the bagpipes play and I was just like whoa, snap […] short of throwing in a piece of haggis and a kilt I mean if you look at Scotland's natural beauty, yeah that is Scotland; beautiful greens and always a fog or a mist." (Participant 9)

As well as the canals of Amsterdam;

> "…the canals play such an important part in Amsterdam's history to this day. So you can always go of course and go see a weed shop and the red light district and all that other bullshit but AMSTERDAM, AMSTERDAM is gonna be life about the canal." (Participant 9)

> Similarly, Participant 12 reflected on image 34, Salvation Mountain, and his

intention to capture the essence of what it was to be Californian, which in his eyes was,

weird.

> "…it just seemed to fit, you know, Southern Californian. When people think about, or at least the people I know, when you think about Southern California I think it's kind of a little weirder down there than Ohio and that just seemed to fit, capture that weirdness." (Participant 12)

In addition to the iconic and symbolic images, participants also posted travel

photos which represented nostalgic or sentimental captures of place. For example, photo

10 was described as being a beautiful canal in the Milanese neighborhood where the

participant grew up. She posted this photo as a representation of the nostalgia she felt

while walking through this area on a visit home to see her family. So, for her, this canal

represented a nostalgic symbol of her childhood. Similarly, photo 21 is an image of

several buildings in downtown Cleveland, Ohio which may look very ordinary however

to Participant 7, they hold a lot of sentimental value and are therefore extraordinary.

> "…so it holds a lot of sentimental value for me. So that picture was taken in
> Public Square, you know one of the iconic statues and buildings in the city. I just
> took it while I was walking around and kind of sharing this city with my wife this
> summer." (Participant 7)

Lastly, participants also described several photos as being symbolic of

themselves, or as signifying certain characteristics of their personalities. In this way,

these images are not only symbolic images, they also play an important role in

impression management and the branding of oneself to portray themselves in a certain

way. One participant waxed rather poetically about the boldness of the location and how

that image captured not only her photographic style but also her personality.

> "I think it shows the type of photographer that I am […] I just think it's a really
> bold photo and, in some ways, I think I can be too." (Participant 11)

Participant 13 felt that photograph 37 spoke to her mindfulness as a person,

literally and figuratively taking time to 'stop and smell the roses' and demonstrated her

propensity for appreciating the less obvious aspects of life.

"You know, I'd like to think that that photo really shows that not only was I there for obvious reasons, roses […] but that I would take time to smell the roses obviously, that's what you're supposed to do there." (Participant 13)

Whereas Participant 12 felt that a photo of himself (photo 4) standing at the Millau Viaduct in Southern France was a proclamation to his friends and family about accomplishing a long-anticipated goal.

"So, I guess that's what it was like. Yeah, it was a proclamation announcement, I made it finally to the god damn viaduct!" (Participant 12).

Replicated travel photos demonstrate the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze in action, however of the 57 photos used within the analysis 28 were not considered to be replications by either the participant or researcher and mostly consisted of simple landscape photos from their travels. So how do these non-replicated photos fit into Urry's concept of the tourist gaze? Although my research does not directly answer this question, it is consistent with Urry's concept which states that the gaze is fluid and ever changing. Perhaps these non-replicated photos are the tourist gaze under construction and depending on the user's sphere of influence, the simple act of posting images may inspire replication by their audience further perpetuating the hermeneutic circle. This highlights a possible direction for future inquiries by researchers.

What this research does show is that participants replicated travel photography in several different ways which were consistent with the tourist gaze including explicit replication, unique or individualistic variations, symbolically, and from fixed locations established by existing infrastructure. Capturing these images was an important part of

the travel experience and in some cases, individuals felt as though they were compelled to photograph extraordinary sites despite reluctance to engage in the expected performance.

Expectations

Urry's tourist gaze emphasizes that the desire to replicate travel photography begins in the stages prior to travel, where individuals build up expectations of what the site will be like. This research sought to understand not only how image based social media impacts the replication of travel photography but also to understand how image based social media impacted the development of expectations of place. A primary theme to emerge from the data was participant expectations. Participants reflected on how social media enhanced their desire to travel, how the exchange of site specific information was enabled at the macro and micro levels, and on the expanded sphere of influence users were subject to. Additionally, this research sought to understand how the consumption of impression management and curated content impacted site expectations and perpetuated the hermeneutic circle of a positive gaze.

Throughout the interviews, participants reflected on how their travels were different prior to social media and how the use of Instagram has impacted their expectation for travel sites and locations. Several participants felt that the shear amount of information available on a particular site left little to be discovered in person, ultimately leaving them with feelings of disappointment and longing for the days prior to social media when traveling was about discovering the unexpected in a new place.

> "I think things were more surprising or exciting before you saw pictures of a place. I can think of going to Egypt in 2010 and other than the Pyramids of Giza I

didn't really know what I was going to go see. Everything was like "wow this is cool, I had no idea this would be here." Now I have an idea of what things look like before I go there." (Participant 4)

Participants also talked about how photo editing portrays an altered, and perhaps dishonest perception of what the site is like in reality leaving participants feeling a twinge of disappointment and perpetuating the hermeneutic circle of the positive gaze. Despite this, most participants admitted to altering their own travel photographs either within the application itself or in another editing application prior to uploading the photos to Instagram. Participants described editing their photos with enhancement as the intended goal but also wanted the photograph to be a believable representation of the site and disliked photos which appeared too edited. This juxtaposition of enhancing photos for audience consumption but also wanting to consume realistic photos of place for which to base their own travel expectations on effectively creates an airbrushed and enhanced expectation of reality. This feeling of disappointment and unmet expectations was especially prevalent with regards to social pollution and crowding.

> "I mean it wasn't what I expected. It was different. And the color photos and the edit do make them look so much more colorful but like for example the photo you see there of the Leaning Tower of Pisa you would see just that tower. I had no idea there was a Basilica […] and a few other buildings right next to it. Just by looking at the Instagram account that's all you see […] just the Pisa Tower […] They make it look just so, but it's not always that way. And I would say that I expected it to be less crowded. It was very crowded." (Participant 11)

For one participant, the social pollution and crowding at an iconic landscape was so unexpected it angered him and threatened to ruin this highly anticipated photographic experience.

> "I had looked at a whole bunch of pictures on Instagram of the road leading into the Monument Valley […] And I got there in the spot that was where I wanted to be, and it was just full of people down the road! You know […] it was just, it was really crowded, and nobody spoke English […] It was just you know they had

taken over this area and it just pissed me off, so I did the best I could. I could have sat there and waited for 15-20 minutes or a half hour but it's out there in the middle of nowhere and I was trying to get to a destination you know." (Participant 12)

These examples highlight feelings of disappointment at the site as a result of their

preconceived expectations. However, it is important to note that not all of the participants

expressed disappointment as a result of images seen on social media. Many participants

felt satisfied that their experiences matched their expectations and at times even exceeded

those expectations.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study explored the phenomenon of image based social media use and travel through the experiences of 19 participants as interpreted through interviews, photo elicitation, and researcher interpretation. This chapter will present a 1) summary of major findings with a comparison to recent literature, 2) contributions and future research, and 3) conclusions.

Summary of Major Findings

The primary goal of this research was to examine participant experiences of image based social media and tourism, document the phenomenon and determine how it was impacting the concept of the tourist gaze. Phenomenology was selected as the chosen methodology for this study as it allowed for a deeper understanding of the subjective experience of photography and social media use within the context of travel. The structure of this research allowed for thematic analysis of 19 interviews, transcripts, photo elicitation, and field notes to understand how image based social media is impacting the tourist gaze.

As an emerging topic of inquiry, the generally accepted consensus is that research on social media and tourism is still in its infancy and deserving of further research. This is particularly true for image based social media and the tourist gaze. Several of the themes which emerged from this research have been previously examined within social media literature to varying degrees, however several of the findings were new, unexpected, and previously unapplied to the theoretical concept and hermeneutic nature of the tourist gaze collectively contributing to this growing body of literature.

Explorations with Instagram users revealed complex interactions between user as content generator, user as consumer, the audience, and the tourist gaze. Participants framed their experiences through a network of values, motivations, perceived image of self, travel history, familial roles, and technology. The researcher interpreted participant experiences through her own framework of values, experiences, and potential inherent biases and through interview interactions, a co-constructed interpretation of the phenomenon was developed.

Consistent with the literature (Shane-Simpson, Manago, Gaggi and Gillespie-Lynch, 2018), participants expressed a general enjoyment of Instagram primarily for the ability to keep in touch with their friends and family, view photographs, archive, organize, and document their experiences in a virtual diary. Participants seemed to generally have a positive gaze related to travel and wanted to show their travels in positive light with the hopes of inspiring others.

Social media and cell phone technology have radically changed the way in which information is exchanged and are important sources of travel information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Social media creates a platform where tourists can create and share their experiences with their audience on repeat in a manner which was previously reserved for in-person conversations with close acquaintances over dinner or a cup of coffee. With those days far behind us, user generated content on social media is now perceived to be as trust worthy as word of mouth recommendations from friends, family, and other like-minded individuals (Wang et al., 2002; Yoo, Lee, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009).

Due in large part to the advent of Web 2.0, our sphere of influence has expanded to include not only close friends, family, and acquaintances but also people we just met,

people we barely know, and total strangers whom we frequently exchange information with. This expanded sphere of influence emerged as a prominent theme in this research in two primary ways; 1) where users of Instagram posted photographs for an intended audience and played dual roles as content providers and content consumers, and 2) it affords a wider audience for the posted content to be consumed. In this way, individual's photographic content is published online and available for millions to see and be influenced by. This transition of the individual as influencer, whereas before mass-media was the primary influencer, became a very important finding of this research as evidence of the amplification of the tourist gaze in addition to the shift in power of whom controls the gaze. Furthermore, this expanding audience and growing sphere of influence allows the individual to be more influential through the content they post and perhaps reinforcing an established gaze or developing a new gaze, depending on the type of content they posted.

The data also revealed that the sphere of influence was not simply subject to existing solely within the virtual realm, but also led to the emergence of a new unexpected phenomenon where connections manifested between users not only in the virtual realm but also into reality. Several studies have concluded that a primary motivation for using social media is for socialization and creating relationships (Narangajavana et al., 2017) and Paris (2012) highlighted how the convergence of information technology and physical traveling amongst tech savvy backpackers, or 'flashpackers' as they are termed, did help travelers to overcome feelings of isolation through their social networks but often led to less interaction with travelers in-situ. Instead of interacting with other backpackers to gather destination information,

flashpackers were more likely to engage with their mobile devices gathering information from the virtual source. This study demonstrates that both sources are valuable to travelers and may depend on the type of travels the individual is engaged in. Over-landers and others engaged in lengthy travels may feel a sense of isolation which drives them to seek out in-person connections whereas individuals on shorter trips may be more driven to seek site information than forming relationships.

In image based social media, users not only share knowledge, but they also share experiences. Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2016) research on the social and technological motivations for online photo sharing strongly supported the notion that people used photography primarily for social purposes and increasingly utilized online platforms to communicate and build relationships. Qu and Lee (2011) further assert that increased activity in online travel communities increases a sense of belonging which may result in increased knowledge sharing.

The exchange of visual based information related to travel was an important feature of Instagram utilized by most participants, either at the macro or micro-level with the purposes of updating audiences as well as gathering site information. Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar's research had similar results where seeking and showcasing experiences and reaching out were primary motivating factors for posting content online (2016). As previously mentioned, the exchange of information is a core function of social media and therefore not a particularly unexpected theme to emerge from the user experience, however the nuance related to this exchange, in real-time, was important. Theoretically, the larger the individual's sphere of influence, the more information they exchanged with their audience.

Recent literature shows that social media plays a significant role in information search and decision-making behaviors however most of this research does not differentiate between the types of sites considered to be social media. This is important because these different sites specialize in vastly different types of information. Furthermore, the exchange of information is a two-way street where information travels in two directions; away from the user in the form of shared content and towards the user as consumer of content. Most of the published literature approaches the sharing of knowledge from the user as consumer (Lo and McKercher, 2015) and despite the growing enthusiasm, empirical research shows that user generated content is not a primary source of travel information (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014), yet.

This is somewhat consistent with the results of this research, where participants tended to be inspired by other's posts of travels but would then exit out of their sphere of influence to seek a secondary source of information, such as TripAdvisor or Google. However, the advent of real-time features including stories and direct messaging, the exchange of information on Instagram as the primary source of information was present in the savvier users. Again, this demonstrates the hermeneutic nature of the application where it is plausible that as users become more savvy to the application, these real-time features will become more utilized for in the exchange of information.

The literature has begun to approach the exchange the sub theme of real-time information, however only within the context of maintaining relationships through email, short message services (SMS), and posting on internet sites while away on holiday (White & White, 2007). The discovery that the savvier Instagram users sought out real-time destination imagery to inform travel decisions, prepare for site conditions, and built

72

expectations of tourist destinations has not only theoretical implications for the amplification and acceleration of the tourist gaze but also practical implications for site managers.

Many of the participant's Instagram experience as content generator centered around impression management and content curation. This process of developing and reinforcing a narrative of self through images posted on the user's account became one of the primary themes of this research and echoed findings from the literature where social media was used as a tool of impression management (Lo and McKercher, 2015; Belk and Yeh, 2011) to form and reinforce identity (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, Urry and Edensor, 2006; Belk and Yeh, 2011). Lo and McKercher (2015) discussed the process which tourists use to post photos online and how the use of impression management as photographic performance was enabled by the virtual stage social media platforms provide. They found that users of image based social media engaged in a performative nature, were aware of audience and went through a five-stage process of photo selection and impression management which carefully crafted the ideal self into an enhanced, or more extraordinary version for audience consumption, as if creating a brand. This is consistent with the findings of this research where the extraordinary is no longer the sole subject of the gaze. The self, the mundane, and daily activities are being re-branded, curated, and consumed as enhanced, extraordinary content. This spiraling up of ever improving content has theoretic implications for the tourist gaze and the hermeneutic nature of image based social media.

A prime example of the self becoming the subject of the gaze and how that is changing tourism culture can be found in the visual practice of selfie-taking. This

73

phenomenon studied by Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) looked at this type of photographic performance in terms of the tourist gaze where the tourist becomes the object of the self-directed gaze. Rather than consuming the extraordinary site, tourists sought to capture the extraordinary within themselves, prompting one to ask what is the importance of the site in a selfie obsessed world? Furthermore, how will this new visual practice shift how tourists participate in tourism? The phenomenon of the self as subject were purposely avoided within the context of this research due to the many psychological and philosophical complexities and power dynamics which come into play when analyzing this type of photo content although that would be an insightful area of future inquiry.

Previous research conducted by Fatanai & Suyadnya (2015) found that a new destination image was not created through the use of Instagram but instead that already established images were repeated, although somewhat individualized through the editing features of the application. Although they didn't explicitly describe this as the hermeneutic circle in action, their findings demonstrate this phenomenon however fail to recognize that non-replicated images may lead to the development of a new gaze which would ultimately create new destination hotspots. Additionally, Fatanai & Suyadnya's findings were somewhat consistent with the findings of this research at the macro-level however additional research is needed to tease out the nuance, especially when considering how photographs were not only being replicated and slightly enhanced, but the subject matter was being captured from every available angle effectively amplifying the gaze.

By design, this research was specifically focused on the user's Instagram content as it pertained to traveling and the tourist gaze. Photo analysis conducted on 57 user

images showed that the hermeneutic circle of travel photography was present as participants had a propensity to replicate travel photography and post it as content representative of their travels. This research shows that participants replicated travel photography in several different ways which were consistent with the tourist gaze including explicit replication, unique or individualistic variations, and symbolically.

Participants also felt that capturing these images of place was an important part of the travel experience and in some cases, individuals even felt as though they were compelled to photograph extraordinary sites despite reluctance to engage in the expected performance of picture taking. Similar reports where made by Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2016) where 85% of digital camera owners felt that it was important to share photos online and 55% actually felt guilty if they did not share. This propensity of tourists to capture a photograph of a destination, followed by sharing that image online through an ever-expanding sphere of influence is perpetuating the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze. Additionally, this research demonstrates not only that the hermeneutic circle of the established gaze is being perpetuated through the replication of travel photography but also that users with a large sphere of influence can develop and help to establish a new gaze through the content which they post for their audiences to consume.

Lastly, participants reflected on how social media enhanced their desire to travel and the prevalence of visual based information available on social media enabled them to build comprehensive preconceived notions and expectations of place at the macro and micro levels, prior to and during their travels. This is consistent with Narangajavana et al., study (2017) which found that potential tourists generate trust in consumed information and then formulate site expectations based on that content.

The extent to which tourists are satisfied is largely dependent on whether or not their expectations were met. Narangajavana et al. (2017) was the first study conducted on user generated content and expectations. Their study showed that when users received information from social media, they created expectations about the destination which was based on trust in the content. Users therefore expected to have experiences in the destination which were the same as the content which they had consumed. Furthermore, a positive gaze lead to the generation of positive content thus eliciting a positive expectation about the destination and often times led to disappointment when it wasn't met (Narangajavana et al., 2017).

For some participants of this study, the combination of a positively focused gaze, carefully curated content along with the prevalence of photo editing led to enhanced expectations which were unrealized at the site. Conversely, the savvier users utilized available real-time information to help set realistic expectations for the site including crowding and weather conditions. This availability of real-time information may ultimately lead to less visitor disappointment. However, the vast amount of information available on each location left some participants feeling as if there was little to be discovered and took away the surprise factor of travel.

Three primary research questions guided this phenomenological inquiry as I sought to discover how image based social media impacts the tourist gaze and furthermore, document how the democratization of the gaze in concert with specific features of Instagram impact the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze. The three primary research questions this study addressed were:

1) How is image based social media impacting the tourist gaze?

2) Are social media users compelled to obtain and post similar images seen on Instagram, thus perpetuating the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze?

3) Is the democratization of the gaze through user generated data changing who controls the tourist gaze?

Image Based Social Media and the Tourist Gaze

Participants in this research demonstrated that replication of photography was a travel performance which they often engaged in, either intentional or unintentionally. Photographing iconic landmarks, capturing the quintessential essence of place, and documenting nostalgia through symbolic representation of the visual experience from new and unique angles was important to their travel experience. Furthermore, participants not only took photos with the intention of sharing on social media but they also reflected on the increased number of photos digital handheld cell phone camera technology enabled them to take. Lastly, participants described how they were more inclined to photograph and share their experiences on social media with their audiences in a manner that was akin to a public travel diary.

This expansion of photo content, within the context of traveling to a place, leads to an ever expanding gaze, where no longer is the site the extraordinary, the lone subject of the gaze, but where every aspect of the experience is documented and gazed upon; the journey, the experience, the surroundings, and the ambient sounds are all readily available to be consumed visually by the audience. Furthermore, participants described how food has even become subject to their gaze, causing them to follow restaurants and post live stories and pictures of their dinner and their Italian gelato, ready to be consumed not only in-situ but also virtually by their audiences. This imagery is ultimately replicated

77

and regurgitated until gelato has become a visual symbol of Italy, to be captured and consumed on repeat. This is the hermeneutic circle on steroids where in essence, the extraordinary has been renegotiated and redefined to include that which was once considered mundane, and not subject to the gaze.

This research shows that the real-time aspect of social media through the exchange of information including photos, hashtags, stories, and direct messaging is accelerating the gaze. Participants described how they use social connections on Instagram to obtain up to date site information regarding the weather, water conditions, and even the best BBQ to be found in Austin, Texas. This compression of time and space allows for travel decisions and destination information to be shared in real-time, subsequently impacting site visitation.

The Tourist Gaze and the Hermeneutic Circle

Participants described photographing iconic sites from "unique" and "individual" angles enabling a 360-degree gaze. This drive to not only obtain the classic shots associated with a location but to also document the experience from multiple subjects from every angle, in an effort to brand themselves as creative and unique and provide compelling content, is further expanding the traditional sense of the gaze.

Urry and Larsen's (2011) prediction that Web 2.0 and this new era of tourism photography would be less focused on capturing the extraordinary and more on fostering social relationships is perhaps not as black and white as they assert. This research shows that the trend is not shifting from the extraordinary towards a social relationship, rather the extraordinary is being amplified, captured, and virtually mapped from all angles while

the ordinary is becoming the extraordinary, all of which is being exchanged as information through social networks.

This research shows that the replication of travel photography as it pertains to the tourist gaze is still very prevalent and through the ever expanding and acceleration of the tourist gaze, in concert with enhanced photo technologies and social media applications, this primary pillar of the tourist gaze is growing as a result of image based social media.

Control of the Tourist Gaze

Given that image based social media consists of user generated content the answer to who is now controlling the gaze seems to lead to an obvious answer; that the tourist gaze as once controlled by mass media will shift towards a gaze controlled by the average social media user. However, this research does not lead me to the conclusion that a gaze controlled by the mass media has dissipated. On the contrary, my research shows that iconic tourist destinations such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Colosseum and Sydney Opera House are still highly visited sites which are regularly photographed and retain significant meaning to the visitor. Additionally, these sites are still heavily promoted by tourism destination marketers and tourism boards to great effect.

What my research does show is that the curation of content and impression management enables users to brand themselves as credible travelers, experts if you will. This expertise can lead to a broader sphere of influence, increased exchange of information, and influence. Through this modern fluidity, the user becomes an influencer whose travel content inspires others, essentially fueling the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze. This process is ultimately shifting control of the tourist gaze away from

primarily mass media sources towards an increasing number of social media influencers, whom are often paid to promote certain content.

This exact phenomenon was explained in-depth by Participant 3 when she reflected on the profound, and "frightening" influence image based social media was having on her 13-year-old daughter whom sought to mimic paid influencers. This pervasive and subtle social media marketing is present every time you open your Instagram feed, side by side with actual product ads and mixed in with your friend's and family's content. One participant described the content of her feed as "constant ads for clothing that I could care less about."

**Conclusion and Implications for Future Research**

This phenomenological inquiry sought to explore how image based social media impacts the tourist gaze and how the democratization of the gaze in concert with specific features of Instagram impact the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze. In-depth semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation methods were used to identify major themes underlying this phenomenon. Six salient themes emerged from the data; 1) impression management and content curation, 2) sphere of influence, 3) connections manifested, 4) replicated travel photography, 5) expectations, and 6) exchange of information.

The primary findings of this study show that an expansion of photographic content within the context of traveling, leads to an ever-expanding gaze where no longer is the extraordinary site the lone subject of the gaze but instead, every aspect of the experience is gazed upon. This is the amplification of the gaze. Secondly, this research shows that the real-time aspect of social media through the exchange of photos, stories,

and direct messaging is accelerating the gaze where individuals are able to seek out real-time information to inform their travel decisions and create more realistic expectations of the site. See Figure 2.

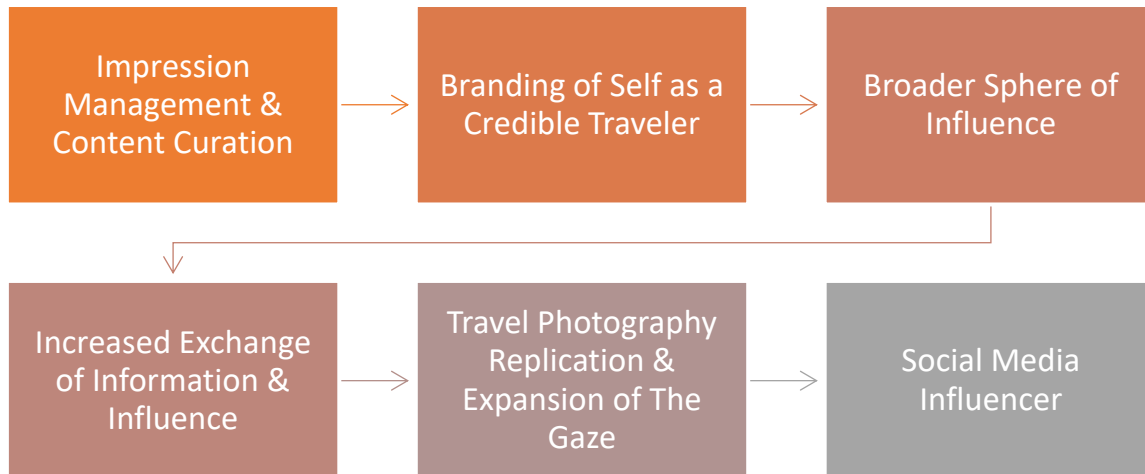Figure 2

The Tourist Gaze and the Hermeneutic Circle
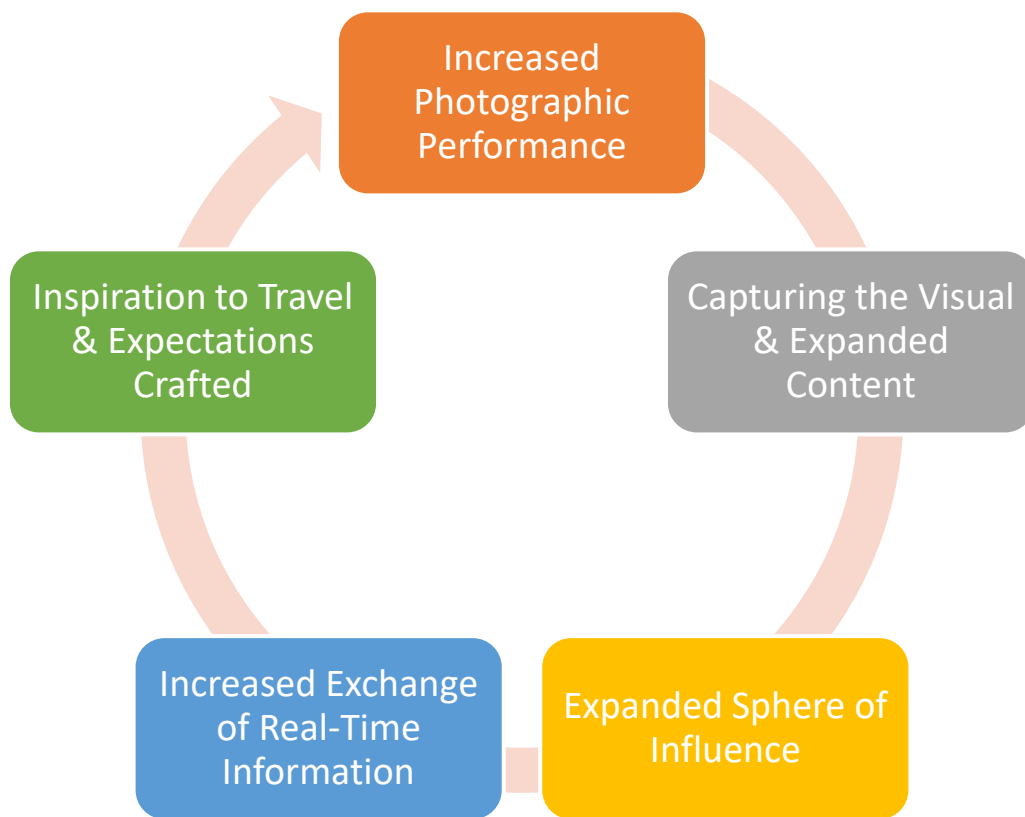
Lastly, this research shows that impression management acts as a branding tool for the user which in concert with a broader sphere of influence encourages the expansion and replication of travel photography. This combined with an increased exchange of

information, effectively shifts the primary control of the gaze away from mass media and towards a larger number of social media influencers. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

Control of the Tourist Gaze

Impression Management & Content Curation	→	Branding of Self as a Credible Traveler	→	Broader Sphere of Influence
Increased Exchange of Information & Influence	→	Travel Photography Replication & Expansion of The Gaze	→	Social Media Influencer

Results of this study show consistency with several emerging areas of empirical research within the general context of social media however the literature focused on the impacts of image based social media and the tourist gaze is very limited. This research looked broadly at the phenomenon of image based social media within the context of travel to identify ways in which the tourist gaze was impacted.

The theoretical implications of these results, whereby the tourist gaze is being amplified and accelerated through the use of image based social media, does back up Urry and Larson's assertion that the gaze will shift in response to the prevailing technological and social developments. However, Urry and Larsen's (2011) prediction that Web 2.0 and this new era of tourism photography would be less focused on capturing

the extraordinary and more on fostering social relationships is perhaps not as black and white as they assert. This research shows that the trend is not shifting from the extraordinary towards a social relationship, rather the extraordinary is being amplified, captured, and virtually mapped from all angles while the ordinary is becoming the extraordinary, all of which is being exchanged as information through social networks.

Additionally, this research provides an opportunity for future practical application of this knowledge where site managers, tourism professionals, and destination marketers can understand how an amplified and accelerated gaze impacts travel behavior, expectations, information gathering, and perhaps more importantly site visitation. Understanding both the negative and positive impacts this increased visitation of sites is necessary to adequately plan for site needs and mitigate any potential degradation to the site/resource. Lastly, current sustainability guidelines encourage visitors to sensitive areas to "take only pictures and leave only footprints" implying that these are low impact behaviors with little to no ramifications. This research calls into question the impactful implications of taking only pictures as sustainable tourism behavior.

Further empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, is necessary to fully understand how image based social media is impacting the tourist gaze and site visitation. Additional exploratory analysis to probe deeper into the themes and subthemes identified in this research would create a more robust understanding of this timely and impactful phenomenon. As this area is currently understudied, there are countless directions future research should go. Perhaps most importantly, research should take a localized approach and focus on highly visited sites and the local communities to determine the range of positive and negative socio-economic and cultural impacts which are driven by image

based social media. Additionally, this body of knowledge would further benefit from a better understanding of how the use of real-time visual data, features such as hashtags and geotagging behaviors impact site visitation, user expectations and satisfaction of site visits.

Lastly, it is acknowledged that the tourist gaze is largely a Western concept and furthermore this research was conducted through a westernized lens where participants and researchers came from developed western countries. Further analysis of this phenomenon conducted from a non-western perspective would be highly insightful.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date & Time	Interview Platform/Location	Interviewer	Interviewee

Interviewee Information:

IG Handle	Privacy Setting	Account Description (140 characters)	# of followers	# of accounts following	Age Group	Gender	Ethnicity

I. Introduction

☐ Research Overview

☐ Review of Interviewee Information

☐ Consent to Record

☐ Any Questions?

II. Interview Questions & Probes

(Q1) Can you give me a quick bio of yourself; who you are, what you like, how you would describe yourself to a stranger.

(Q2) Why do you use Instagram?

- What do you like about it? What do you dislike?
- What do you look at on Instagram?
- How much time do you think you spend on Instagram per day?
- Are number of followers important to you? Why/why not?

(Q3) Let's take a look at the three photos I selected from your Instagram account. (Repeat for photos 1, 2 and 3)

- PHOTO DESCRIPTION: Tell me about photo X (repeat these questions for each photo 1,2 and 3).
  - Where was it taken?
  - Who or what is the subject in this photo? (if it is the participant, who took the photos?)
  - Why did you select this photo to post on your account?
  - Did any preparation or planning go into obtaining this photo beforehand (clothing, lighting, time of day, etc.)
  - Did you post it immediately at the site or did you wait to post it?
  - Did you use any of the editing tools to change this photo such as a filter or adjust the saturation level? Why/why not?
  - Did you geotag this photo? Why/why not?

- Tell me about the caption.
- Did you use hashtags? If so, how did you come up with them?
- Did you cross post to another social media platform such as Facebook or Twitter or Tumblr?
- Did you post a video "story" in real time? Why did you post some photos as "stories" as opposed to photos?
- TRAVEL MOTIVATION: Why did you go to this site?
    - How far from your home is this location?
    - What elements inspired you to travel to this place?
    - Had you seen this photos or video "stories" on someone else's page? Did that entice you to go there yourself?
    - What steps did you take to research the location in preparation for your travels there?
    - What, if any, kinds of information did you gather about the place as a destination?
    - Did you look at geotags or hashtags?
    - Did you travel there alone or with someone?
- IMPRESSION: What did you think when you got there?
    - Was it what you had expected or was it different from what you'd seen in other photos?
    - What did you do when you got there?
    - Was obtaining and posting a photo of the site important to your experience?
- RESPONSES: Who was your intended audience?
    - What, if anything, does this photo say about you?
    - What will you do with this photo now that it has been posted? Will you print it, share it with others, reflect on it?
    - Did you get any feedback or responses to your photo?

(Q4) How does seeing other's travel posts on Instagram impact/influence you? Does Instagram inspire/encourage you to travel? Think back to any travels before Instagram; how has Instagram changed the way you travel?

III. Wrap-up & thank you

Thank you so much for your time. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Gyan Nyaupane

Community Resources and Development, School of

602/496-0166

Gyan.Nyaupane@asu.edu

Dear Gyan Nyaupane:

On 10/11/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Image Based Social Media and The Tourist Gaze: A Phenomenological Approach
Investigator:	Gyan Nyaupane
IRB ID:	STUDY00009019
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Form-Social-Behavioral-Protocol.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Interview Protocol.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Consent Form (1).pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Recruitment Statement.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/11/2018.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Brenda Campbell

         Brenda Campbell