

Generation Z talking: transformative experience in educational travel

Desmond Wee

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to position experience as an immersive process through the documentation of student reflections of place involving the intricacies of embodied learning and experiential mobilities. This study is framed through situational positionalities and placed movements of the tourist, the non-tourist and more specifically, students of Generation Z engaged in educational experiences.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This paper explores a student fieldtrip (on the island of Corfu, Greece) as a medium of expression for situated learning, involving a case study of tourism students learning critical tourism through sensual and haptic dimensions of reflection. The students “experienced” Corfu by participating in an international tourism conference, stayed on a yacht, went on various tours, met with tourism industry representatives and reflected their experiences in a collaborative photo story book.*

Findings – *Generation Z seemed to have the ability to discern the environment and decipher the role tourism plays. Their critical impressions of place in terms of infrastructure, sustainability, beauty, etc., force a rethink of traditional tourist typologies. It is necessary to reconsider the categorizations of tourism, challenging the need for tourism marketers to encapsulate experiences as both a single, yet multi-varied segment. What remains crucial is a deeper comprehension of this generation through their consumption patterns in relation to the various stakeholders of tourism.*

Originality/value – *This paper documents an engagement of self through experience as part of the “experience.” Hence, the transformative experiences of place reflections as opposed to linear post-trip representations of experience may be insightful for tourism practitioners dealing with a tourism of the future.*

Keywords *Critical reflection, Experiential learning, Generation Z, Educational tourism, Transformative experience*

Paper type *Research paper*

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Introduction

The sense of place and the multi-sensory tourist experience cannot be understated (Crouch *et al.*, 2001; Franklin and Crang, 2001; Bærenholdt *et al.*, 2004). Doreen Massey (1993, p. 146) underscores a “global sense of place” in which one “retain[s] appreciation, and an understanding of the importance, of the uniqueness, of place while insisting always on that other side of the coin, the necessary interdependence of any place with others.” The connections between place and other are a crucial characteristic of the global citizen and could consequently be seen as transformative learning.

Study abroad trips are often described as “life-transforming experiences” that increase cross-cultural understanding by immersing students in different cultures (Crabtree, 2008). In fact, “educational travel [...] can serve to create a transformative educative experience where students reconsider and reshape fundamental issues from a global perspective” (Tarrant *et al.*, 2011, p. 151). What evolves is a kind of active learning in which students develop their own “values, beliefs, behaviors, skills, insights, and particularly one’s overall disposition to critical and self-reflection” (Hanson, 2010, p. 81). The students ask transformative, larger-than-life questions to renegotiate their own identities, create their own self-understanding and belonging by reimagining a global community through encounters of diversity and struggle (Pashby, 2008; Stoner *et al.*, 2014).

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Much has been written about the cultivation of personal growth, personal development, confidence, lifelong learning, intercultural competences, life skills through experiential learning theory (Kolb *et al.*, 2001), experiential learning through fieldtrips (Peterson *et al.*, 2007) and global citizenship (Stoner *et al.*, 2014). Yet, little has been written about the transformative tourist experience of such travel through out-of-classroom experience as a “developmentally powerful experience” (Kuh, 1995, p. 141). Stoner *et al.* (2014) reiterated that experientially based, short-term educational travel programs provide a learning site for students to reflect on and reframe issues global in nature, fostering transformative experiences that may lead to a shift in perspective, awareness and worldview. This can be achieved by exposing students to new cultures, places and learning environments (Perry *et al.*, 2012), and provide at the same time, “disorienting dilemmas” necessary to trigger perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978).

Experiential travel in the form of educational travel has been embedded into the history of human traveling, notably from the Grand Tour all the way to ERASMUS university partnerships and exchanges. This paper positions experience as an immersive process that was documented through student reflections of place involving the intricacies of embodied learning through experiential mobility. If “experience” can be exemplified as method, then it can also be considered as co-creation of knowledge using multi-modal and experiential methodologies that are encapsulated in and through everyday practice.

This study is framed through situational positionalities and placed movements of the tourist, the non-tourist and more specifically, students of Generation Z engaged in holistic, educational experiences. It goes beyond the mere post-destination dissemination of experience made easily accessible by tools such as Instagram. As much as the “social” in social media is important in terms of connectivity, self-worth and reputation, what is seminal here is the engagement of self through experience and the reflection of experiences as part of the “experience.” Hence, the transformative experiences of reflection *in situ* as opposed to a linear post-trip representation of experience may be insightful for tourism practitioners dealing with a tourism of the future.

This paper explores a framework by way of a student fieldtrip as a medium of expression for situated learning, involving a case study of tourism students learning critical tourism through sensual and haptic dimensions of reflection. It documents a module entitled “Critical perspectives on tourism” at Karlshochschule International University in Germany in which a particular component was conducted as a fieldtrip in Corfu, Greece. Included as part of this fieldtrip was participation at the “5th Corfu Symposium on Marketing and Managing Places” as conference delegates, organized by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University. The students experienced Corfu by participating in an international tourism conference, stayed on a yacht, went on various tours, met with tourism industry representatives and reflected their experiences in a collaborative photo story book. The end result, rather than being a top-down, academic assessment of learning outcomes, was a shared resource of reflections fostering collaborative and transformative learning.

Framing transformative experience

The adjective “seamless” is often used to describe the modern process of travel (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015), yet little is discussed about the disruptive travel episode with Otherness, a kind of “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2000) through which a person’s existing habit of mind precipitates reflexive reformulations to become more justifiable and dependable through encounters. Hence, the actions, intentions and experiences of the traveler and actual place engagement become crucial dimensions that drive transformative learning processes. While experiences of place and encounter are indeed key components to the transformative learning that challenges a student’s views and perspectives, the experience must be coupled with integrating circumstances whereby students begin to search consciously and unconsciously for the missing pieces (Clark and Wilson, 1991).

Morgan (2010) utilized van Gennep’s (2013) very powerful metaphor of “rites of passage” as transformation through liminal encounter with Otherness and applied it to educational travel in which the traveler changes during travel from “ordinary resident” to “traveler (encountering Otherness)” and finally “transformed home comer” (p. 252). Yet, van Gennep’s original

Anthropological treatise, *Les Rites de passage*, was written in 1909, from the perspectives of a different kind of traveler on ethnographic business. While the “transformed home comer” is important to highlight transformation, what needs to be questioned is the nature of the modern-day traveler after a century; if the frequency of travel, new travel technologies, stunning mobile visualization and place marketing representation, already situate the traveler as a kind of “transformed home comer” before the commencement of any journey. The cyclical reinforcement and continual perpetuation of this otherwise sound concept need to be considered in dealing with the future of tourism. It is necessary to go beyond the widely spoken about tourist gaze (Urry, 2002) of quenching the exotic quest to reposition the more mundane, everyday elements in understanding the rituals of modern, young travelers.

Abrams (1997) referenced a “more-than-human” world of nature and landscape in facilitating transformation through engendering intimate engagement across various spaces. Educational travel employs these spaces by creating a “pedagogy of travel” with the educated traveler through observation, recording, interpreting and sharing of experiences. A qualitative study conducted by Mouton (2002) of experiential learning concluded that self-directed learning, combined with reflection and experience, led to greater meaning and transformation. The transformative potential of traveling and reflecting on the travel as part of the experience are engagements that arise as a result of critical reflection through reshaping, reforming and reimagining perspectives. Hence, what occurs between experiences and pedagogies are influenced by the theoretical underpinnings of critical reflection in which students begin to make meaning out of their experiences and adjust their frames of reference (Moore, 2005).

By engaging students in critical reflection and discussion, it becomes possible to foster a shift in perspective where students become “critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way they perceive, understand, and feel about their world” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167). What is created is transformation based on the integrative combination of educative experiences, critical reflections and sound pedagogies. Gmelch (1997) analyzed the journals of overseas students and discovered that students learned more through travel than in academic experiences. Thus, journaling and reflection constituted learning, even if they are not commonly thought of as knowledge.

Küpers and Wee (2018, p. 380) explored the idea of “refl(a)ction” as a “constructive illumination of what is experienced (embodied reflection *in* action) and reconstructively, what has been experienced (embodied reflection *on* action)” in the creation of meaning through the entanglement of practices and practitioners. What is most crucial about such entanglements in the sharing of reflections is their contribution to the learning process based on positionalities and reflexivities that could foster critical engagement and creative learning (Harris *et al.*, 2007). Disruption occurs at the real and imaginative realms, coercing different ways of thinking. Yet at the same time, it provides agency in empowering young people and creating transformative experiences in tourism as a reflexive part of everyday life.

A case of (and for) Generation Z

It is only recently that we started attributing certain characteristics to Generation Z, a cohort born in the mid-90s, such as their preferences for convenience, security and comfort, their propensity for quality and the most obvious being their technological prowess in terms of virtual connectivities (Scholz, 2014; Turner, 2015). These traits lend themselves as factors that govern consumer behavior – a paradigm shift for the tourism industry. Yet, putting these into tourism perspectives and consumer behavior is a demand that remains increasingly challenging. It is important to understand Generation Z as an intrinsic relationship embedded within our contemporary social fabric as we seek to understand new ways of tourist consumption and co-production (Sonnenburg and Wee, 2016). Rather than typologize Generation Z as a rigid, analyzable form of consumer behavior, this paper serves to locate the reflections of Generation Z that relate the experiences of tourism and self in relation to meaning-making in place through various stakeholder involvement. It is about moving beyond the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) into transformational experiences in which students recount their lived experiences in terms of tourist consumption, industry networking and academic input.

Scholz's (2014) monograph on "Generation Z" described the condition of "Ohnmacht," a kind of void based on uncertainty and powerlessness in a worldly order characterized by crises involving the political, financial, nuclear, environmental, terror and humanitarian. Largely aided by media and new technologies, there seemed to be a disjuncture between the perfect lifestyle that premised the ultimate consumption of ease and convenience (products, services, education, etc.) alongside mediated catastrophes. What needs to be understood in a deeper way is the culmination of insecurity, distrust, pessimistic world views and their relationship to travel consumption, enjoyment and quality of life. This is especially pertinent as time spent on leisure and tourism has become an essential part of the quality of life for many people in the developed world (Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003).

What has become a priority in this day and age is the rise of a group of young people who have considerable experience traveling to many places despite (or because of) their age and their thirst for exploring new destinations. Yet at the same time, this is a group which is difficult to grasp in terms of consumer culture and tourist behavior. One thing is for certain, this group of Generation Z are experienced in travel and have the propensity to travel, not only by the fact that they have traveled to many places and have a desire to do so, but they are also acquainted with tourism discourses through the distributions of experience represented in traditional tourist brochures and the proliferation of Instagram pleasures over social media. The forces of digitalization are less about the increasing use of technologies, but how they are conceptualized in place (as opposed to virtually) by a budding tourist segment.

While the "first" generation of experiences in the "90s" (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) emphasized the pleasure pursuit in fun and entertainment, the "second" generation experiences based on a rather paradoxical combination of both individuality (and individualization) and co-creation seem to have arisen, upholding values of selfhood incorporating social and cultural values of a modern existence and consumption (Boswijk *et al.*, 2005). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue for a "co-creation experience" in the "next practice" or "second generation" experience economy as the basis for value in the future of innovation. This next generational construct which they have aptly suggested seems to flow with Generation Z, allowing novel ways of consumption not in terms of products and services, but reflective, co-creational experiences. How does the co-creation of experiences fit into the making of transformative experience for the future of tourism?

Method and study design

The module "Critical Perspectives on Tourism" was designed around the idea of learning tourism through tourism by extending the space of the classroom into the world. It sought to relate business ethics alongside sustainability in tourism by looking at new economies and products of tourist consumption. This included using critical methodologies in tourism research to understand the impacts of the changing cultural, political and physical landscape. A fieldtrip was always incorporated into the content.

As a lecturer of this module, I was very fortunate to take ten Bachelor students on the fieldtrip to Corfu, and combined this with the "5th Corfu Symposium on Managing and Marketing Places" based on the thematic "Connecting places: visions of utopia or dystopia." The conference objective was to explore the connections between places and the people who use and inhabit them, through both real and virtual partnerships and networks alongside utopian and dystopian visions associated with place practices. The thematic connection between the module and the conference could not have been more in sync.

The assessment of the module comprised of what is known as a "learner's portfolio" in which students select a series of written assignments and demonstrate learning progress and level of proficiency in a particular area at a given point in time. Students assume responsibility for their own learning process and demonstrate that they have achieved the qualification objectives set out in the module description. The learner's portfolio was integrated into a series of three reflections based on "classes" that consisted of four blocks.

The first block comprised of theoretical inputs gravitating toward the thematic of sustainability and critical engagement. This was followed by the assignment of a task in which students needed to

investigate diverse tourism discourses on the island destination of Corfu, to be presented in the next class. The second block was a workshop about tourism in Greece where trends and issues in Greek tourism (e.g. seasonality, tourist tax, mature island destinations and juvenile parties) were contextualized. This was combined with collaborative inputs from the students as they presented their “secondary research” on Corfu and discussed what their aims were. This became the subject of the first reflection: a preliminary (pre-trip) research into the identification of a tourism issue.

The third block was *in situ*: a week in Corfu, pre-tourist season. The students attended the conference in the day including organized tours and networking sessions, and in the evenings, they reflected on their experiences on board two yachts in which we were fortunate enough to be sponsored. The second reflection was based directly on the experiences of the trip and its relevance to the first reflection. The students were tasked with analyzing the spaces they selected and reflected their observations. They also had to describe their favorite presentations, as well as, how some of the presentations related to their own personal research on the island.

The final block was back at the university in Germany in which learning experiences on Corfu were shared and put into perspective to reflect the learning outcomes of the module. How did experiences on Corfu contribute to tourism issues, personal research and the conference inputs in meaningful ways? The final reflection based on personal feelings, images, thoughts and insights was collected and later condensed into a volume so that all participants would have an old-school, tangible piece of memory of their university experience in the form of a photo book entitled “Once upon a tour in Corfu.”

Reflections of transformative experience

The students approached their projects through explorative and observational method, as well as, taking photographs, videos and mobile encounters by connecting with locals, tourists and official representatives. At the conference, it felt as if the students were immersed, not only through the conference, but also running alongside it, in parallel, striving to understand how the tourism academy and industry converged over various topics and issues. The following are four selected snippets (left intentionally in original, uncorrected format) documenting the students’ experience of place, with pseudonyms used instead of their real names.

JS wrote on a topic about wasps as tourist hazard that triggered a rather “dystopic” response from the conference delegates:

If (as funny as it might sound to some) there are more and more wasps coming to Corfu each year, then tourism changes [...] Change is also one reason why online reviews (I would say, another trend) become more and more powerful. Experiences are shaped accordingly to the very individual consumption of a destination’s features. Some keep their experiences to themselves, complain at the responsible person or tell their friends and families. More people tend to write online reviews to share their experiences with a wider audience. By writing online reviews, one influences the expectations of others. He/ She can even eliminate the desire of purchasing a specific product or traveling to a specific place. The travel decision-making process therefore is really facing a new area, where social media platforms and actual, same as fake reviews make an enormous difference.

Ellagee wrote on Tripadvisor: I love the Ionian Islands but do tend to avoid later in the summer due to past experiences with wasps. Getting stung several times when just snoozing on the beach and not being able to even have a drink outside ruined our “relaxing” holiday. I believe that some years are worse than others, due to weather or fruit crops? Not completely sure. If you can I’d change islands and go to one of the less green islands going south such as Rhodes, Crete and Kos etc. for September hols. the weather is better too. It might sound drastic to some but our holidays are so important and special to us. Sorry for being so honest with my response and I hope you all gave a lovely wasp free holiday.

https://en.tripadvisor.com.hk/ShowTopic-g189458-i363-k10330921-Wasps_again-Corfu_Ionian_Islands.html, retrieved 21 March, 2018

Unfortunately, I was quite frustrated when finding out that Corfu and many delegates from the conference have not yet understood this so to say trend and its impact. However, social media is so much more than just reviews. Social Media is a great way of marketing and communicating products, places and cultures. I think the world is ready for the so-called next generation to enter the job market and bring fresh knowledge and creative ideas into businesses and organizations.

JS was passionate about the wasp problem on the island and the need to address this through preventive methods. Unfortunately, she felt scoffed at by industry representatives who thought her point to be overly trivial. What they failed to realize was that it was less about the existence of wasps on Corfu, but discourses of wasps on Corfu, on social media, which called into question the representation of place, especially to a Generation Z of social media savvy people. She observed the failure of “older” generations to understand not so much the complexity of social media, but the simplicity of how simple feedback channels in the form of reviews may challenge an entire marketing paradigm.

JT contemplated another kind of critical disjuncture:

Destination Marketing of Corfu focuses on its stunning and historical buildings rather than on the opportunities of celebrating the party of your life. Nevertheless, the village of Kavos still has some major reputation problems which eventually could be addressed by changing their marketing strategy in regard to the wanted prospective British tourist. Then again, this is not as easy since it's connected to the current infrastructure and stakeholders of the place. While local families of Kavos state that they still want British tourists to come, they're referring to the older ones and not the young adults, club and bar owners are supposedly perfectly fine with the current situation since they are the ones gaining the highest profit. Also, the politicians seem to be between the fronts wanting to calm the local citizens, while enhancing the tourism figures and keeping a good relationship to entrepreneurs and Great Britain. Moreover, social issues are involved as well when Greek locals are in disdain regarding the tourists behavior during high season whereas in low season Kavos has the other extreme called emptiness. Furthermore, it is questionable how those things happening in Greece will influence the Island Tourism in the Mediterranean in general and how this will affect future processes of dealing with “misbehaving” tourists.

[...] one could also encounter utopia with a fraction of dystopia and vice versa. This is because every issue which occurs in life cannot be perceived to be either black or white, since there are so many shades of grey. Furthermore, I believe a utopic destination can transform into the embodied vision of dystopia within seconds depending on what is happening at the destination and what the individual perceives to be dystopic. Meaning, this is a question of subjectivity [...] Do tourists even consider the impact their actions have and do they actually realize the meaning of their presence at a destination at a bigger scale or on a higher level? [T]here are so many facets to this concept than just the basic perception of utopia and dystopia and I get the feeling that most tourists and people working in tourism are not aware of that.

What was crucial for JT was an active, social crisis dealing with tourist behavior as both the cause of the problems and the problem itself. This brings to mind the work of Hazel Andrews's (2005) rich ethnographic account of the construction of the British tourist subject in terms of national and gendered identities in the making of embodied experience in Mallorca. An interesting observation arose from these mature and relevant insights: the “culprits” were indeed Generation Z tourists, yet JT (also Generation Z) was in essence revealing an underlying trait in both herself and her cohort that varied in polar opposites in terms of tourist consumption. What surfaced here were contrasting ideologies, utopian visions cloaked in dystopian practices, of tourism stakeholders unable to speak a common language.

RM was interested in the “infrastructure” of the island, but specifically pertaining to waste management:

I would like to come back to my personal impressions on the spot and that for me the waste actually is a problem on Corfu. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is less a problem in terms of tourism, but much more a problem caused by the island itself, due to inadequate infrastructure. In spite of everything, it must be said that it is a general island problem and that there are places that are far worse affected by waste issues, for instance by thinking at some threshold or developing countries. In addition, it is ultimately a matter of perception and is, so to speak, in the eye of the viewer or the tourist, how the place is actually perceived.

Ultimately, the consumer decides whether it is a serious problem or not [...] In fact, it is the case that how visitors perceive the place depend on a few personal and social factors, such as “needs, desires and motives, personality, personal and economic circumstances and social and cultural influences” (Middleton *et al.*, 2009, pp. 80-2). [...] it is up to the viewer, in other words, to the tourist whether he chooses the place as a destination or return to it as destination again. With regard to the waste problem, however, the question arises in what direction the place will develop, “Utopia” or “Dystopia”.

The question is whether the place loses its value through the waste or still remains “utopian” for tourism. For this reason, place management has to be carried out by the various responsible stakeholders in order to prevent “Utopias” from becoming “Dystopias” or at least maintaining a certain balance.

RM's reference point were the bags of trash that were piled up on the sides of roads and in front of beaches. There was a system in place, evidenced by bright, blue trash bags, but somehow the disposal mechanism was short of the final stage. RM went back to the conference thematic to ponder about her case on waste management, if Utopia would disappear in the long run or was it already dystopic? Or what if one person's Utopia was really another person's Dystopia?

For many years, AR has visited her mother, working in the tourism industry on Corfu island and felt a deep connection with Corfu. Yet, she pondered over the role of the people who have always lived on the island and their relationship to tourists:

[...]one-way streets, deep holes in the roads, narrow roads and hardly no road signs show, that there has not much been made to improve the road conditions and system on the island Corfu. Even though, these roads are still being used for tourism reasons. In my opinion, driving with big buses full of tourists on roads like these and around narrow curves is like trying to make the impossible possible. Nevertheless, attending the conference also gave me another new perspective to look at the road conditions: The perspective of the locals from the island. I recognised that especially the locals are suffering from the bad established road system. They are the ones who have to handle big buses driving through their village and finally being stuck maybe directly in front of their house. For instance, while we were stuck with the bus from the conference in the small village, a local man came outside his house and tried to help the bus driver out of his helpless situation. However, we were stuck there in spring time, but how annoying must it be for locals if this happens several times in peak season in front of their houses? And how do tourists feel when they start their holidays being overwhelmed by the road conditions?

I began to ask myself about how often do locals actually get included into the planning of tourism destinations. [...] I linked this thought to one of our learning objectives and agreed to the point that we have to question socially responsible frameworks in tourism in order to consider the making of sustainable communities. We can see tourism as a social force, which is able to lead to a transformation of places. Finally, we need to think about sustainability for locals. In my opinion, the three terms: residents inclusion, city image and tourism industry; are very deeply connected. I would even say that they rely on each other for a positive outcome [...].

AR was concerned about the physical state of the island in terms of transportation infrastructure and at the same time, she saw this as a marginalization of local communities. She felt the need for a kind of social activism bearing different voices, juxtaposing her identity role, “feeling like a local” as she has been frequenting Corfu since she was a child, with her role as a “tourist” and the need to be responsible while living among the residents and finally her role as a tourism academic who was critical of tourism development on the island.

Discussion

In less than a week on Corfu (and a lot more secondary research), the students identified pertinent issues that need to be addressed. Not only did they underline the need to tackle some major challenges within the specific place, the reflections pointed to a larger question of the future: if all the stakeholders on the island may be able to find common space and time for dialogue and action. The students' disillusionment with tourism practices, tourism development and tourism policies became more evident as the trip progressed. The ideal worlds which they have read about in text books seemed to collapse as they could not comprehend the simplest of tasks in terms of tourism regulation. Indeed, there was a kind of idealism which the students expressed at first, having been to an academic conference for the first time, full of hope and energy, and later disrupted when faced with a sad realism of what the tourism academy and industry were like.

Perhaps, it had less to do with a disenchantment of the events within the trip per say, but a learning experience of being in the real world dealing with the management of expectations. After all, relationship building is based on antagonisms and disjuncture became a part of the students' experiences. “[B]y undertaking an actual journey involving a profound engagement [...], a person may experience a degree of disruption to their subjective orientation to the world (worldview or

inner consciousness) sufficient to engender transformative learning” (Morgan, 2010, p. 249). These challenges could not be accommodated within the existing worldview, leading to a situation of “cognitive dissonance” and “decentration” that stimulated the remaking of new and more adequate frames of reference; that is, a transformation of consciousness (Morgan, 2010). Hence, the “disruption” of routine contributed to the stimulation of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003) in which the “habits of the mind” (Mezirow, 2000) created reflexive reformulations that enhanced experiential travel in deep and meaningful ways.

It became apparent that the students were “[...] a kind of ‘displaced’ people informed by an everyday cultural practice through which the work of the imagination is transformed” (Loutfy *et al.*, 2019, p. 153). What emerged was a transformative experience that was not only structured alongside the “exotic” nature of experience, but everyday experiences in which the familiar was made, both contextually and experientially, unfamiliar. Woodside (2010, p. 531) reiterated, “Possibly any engagement in action – students or consumers talking about a problem, getting up, and moving toward accomplishing some objective – represents a rudimentary story that is inherently more appealing than listening to someone else talking.” What emerged was a compilation of reflections from student perspectives, creating a body of experiences. Reflections with atmosphere (Edensor, 2015) and reflections that were fragmented (Ash and Anderson, 2015) evolved and flowed as they were co-constructed across time and space. These reflections became embodied in that they not only conveyed a particular kind of feeling for the reader of the reflections, but also for the writers as well.

Conclusion

The students were transformed through the experience of reflecting as they told stories of practice. These are illustrated in a more lucid way in the next section, that provided insights that encouraged reflection, learning and reaching new thresholds of understanding (Dredge and Jenkins, 2011). The power of critical reflection in tourism education cannot be underestimated since it contributes to the co-creation of values, shared learning and co-production of future actions. Like in Michael Ende’s (1984) world, Momo walked backwards in order to go forward. It was clear that the students walked across different spaces, in different ways, through different times, even though their places of accommodation and activities were predominantly the same. They explored various phenomena and investigated actual or possible conflicts and forms of collaborations involving varying competencies in chosen arenas. Yet, they all possessed different feelings as seen from their reflections.

The students’ critical reflections of experiences were reformulated through various perspectives on social change and sustainabilities. Beyond that, they also questioned their lived experiences, exploring self through other, and maybe even the other through the self. This is aligned with Stoner *et al.* (2014, p. 159) when they emphasized that “[i]n order to truly facilitate the transformative experience necessary to cause a real and lasting reformation of social responsibility and civic engagement, students’ experiences must be married with a process of critical reflection.” What was seminal here was not so much the prevalence of transformational experiences, but how transformational experiences translated into critical reflections that could be important for tourism academia and industry in the future.

It seemed that the young people of Generation Z have the ability to discern and dissect the environment at large to decipher the role tourism plays. One cannot be sure they will emerge to become an LOHAS (a demographic defining a market segment oriented toward “Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability”) type traveler, for example, but what is certain is that the impressions, especially the first impressions, of how a place is in terms of infrastructure, sustainability, beauty, etc., do matter in a substantial way. It is no surprise that consumer behavior and the study of the tourist is what the modern business of leisure wants to ascertain. Yet the young tourists now have the ability to swop, morph, appear and disappear or in short, do what one does best in everyday life while being connected to real and virtual communities and networks. Perhaps, the biggest insight gained from this paper is that people research needs to replace the focus on consumer behavior and move into understanding people’s values, needs and desires instead. Hence, Generation Z is not utilized here for the sake of creating typologies, but to demonstrate the

current existence of a new, hard-to-pinpoint consumer group that is an upcoming force in tourism, with a focus on experiencing spaces incorporating everyday elements.

The dichotomies of tourism and tourist typologies (Cohen, 1979; Wickens, 2002; McKercher and Du Cros, 2003; Uriely, 2005) need to be revisited because what seems to be here to stay is a hotchpotch of varying roles during a tourist journey. It is necessary to consider the blurring of categorizations, of what constitutes XYZ-tourism, because cultural tourism, dark tourism, gastronomic tourism, beach tourism and educational tourism may all be a part of the same trip. How could tourism marketers encapsulate these as a single, yet multi-varied segment? Better still, what might be some combined core values embodied by Generation Z that might contribute to understanding their preferences for tourism consumption? That being said, as much as it is important to comprehend some characteristics of this generation, what is more crucial is to understand their consumption patterns in relation to the various stakeholders of tourism, or more succinctly, the direct relationship between the young tourists of today, tourism providers and local communities, and their implications toward a tourism of tomorrow.

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