Clawing Away at the Authenticity Crisis
and the Complex Web of Tourism Relations

A Case Study of the State of Maine’s Lobster Tourism Industry

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Abstract: The three most important roles in tourism studies are the tourist, the tourism facility operator, and the local community member. While each of these roles has been considered separately, what has yet to be studied is how each might in fact be a dynamic entity that interacts with others in their role sets both within and outside of the basic triangle of tourism relations. Using the state of Maine’s lobster tourism industry as a case study, this paper attempts to make sense of, and build on, the current theory in tourism studies by asking what new insights can be gained into tourism experiences when examining the relationships, and not just the distinct roles, of these three primary actors. Participant observation aboard a lobster boat tour in Portland, Maine, and ethnographic interviews with tourists, lobstermen guides, and commercial lobstermen suggest that by moving beyond a focus on just tourists to the triangle of tourism relations in a Western tourism setting, the importance of authenticity (the supposed goal of modern tourists’ travels) is confirmed in developed modern tourism contexts, that theory is grounded in an approach that supplies it with both philosophical and pragmatic clarity, and the three primary tourism roles are shown to be dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are highly fluid and keep a complex network of relationships. This paper demonstrates that studying the interactions among and beyond tourism roles can be beneficial in building theory in tourism studies.

Key words: authenticity, exchange theory, globalization, leisure, social roles, structural functionalism, tourism.

As communities around the globe are increasingly becoming linked through travel, communications, and commerce, tourism has become a nearly universal phenomenon among the middle classes (Harkin 1995). While globalization forces have contributed to this emergence by compressing both time and space and consequently creating the sense of a closer world (Harvey 1990), they have simultaneously encouraged tourism efforts by introducing a number of rational systems into modern society that generate irrationalities (e.g., disenchantment and dehumanization) (Ritzer 2007, 2008) and which therefore drive individuals from their home places in search of something else. As a result of these processes, according to IBIS World’s (2013) most recent “Global Tourism Market Research Report,” the

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1 Honor Code: I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.
estimated total worth of the global tourism industry was at $1.4 trillion as of August 2013. Given the sheer number of people traveling and the immense amount of money generated from tourism, many places around the world have been easily persuaded by the chance to stimulate their economies and have resultanty divided their spaces between marked attractions and the unmarked landscape. The relationship between hosts and guests that ensues in these tourism places has become an increasingly important one in economic, political, cultural, and social terms. So why is it important to understand tourism? Because it has seemingly pervaded nearly every identifiable aspect of social life in both modern and non-modern societies, and thus nearly every person in the world will be affected by its developments in some way.

In modern tourism contexts, the three most important roles are the tourist, the tourism facility operator, and the local community member. Tourists search for authentic social forms in their travels to replenish the components of their lives that have been drained by modernity’s irrationalities; tourism facility operators stock destinations with activities and experiences that cater to tourists’ quests; and local community members attempt to preserve aspects of their cultures in tourism facilities for the consumption of locals and tourists alike, while also being subjected to both beneficial and detrimental effects that tourists’ visits generate. Much of the contemporary literature in tourism studies that attempts to explain and make sense of the nature of modern tourism, including the behaviors and interactions of these three primary roles, relies on several assumptions. Perhaps first and foremost is the assumption that modern tourists only travel to distant, non-Western, and less developed lands where they value exoticism, primitivism, purism, and historical stagnation as forms of authenticity. This discussion on tourists and their quests for authenticity is by far the most popular topic in tourism studies. But what about modern tourists who travel within less-rationalized modern societies – can they discern authentic social forms in those settings, too?

When conversations about tourism facility operators and local community members develop they almost always do so as consequences of talking about tourists and the question of authenticity, which therefore causes the importance of their roles in tourism contexts to seem secondary or less significant. These conversations usually take the form of sociologists and anthropologists positing that if the three roles collaborate to conceive authentic social forms in modern tourism places then the authenticity crisis in those places will be resolved. However, since no research has yet described how that negotiation is conducted, or if it is even conducted at all, the theoretical proposal adds to the belief that the three roles are confined to rigid conceptualizations carefully defined by a set of normative expectations of behaviors and accomplishments. And the individuals who assume a certain role’s functions and responsibilities are never simultaneously considered actors in other different social roles (either within or outside of the basic triangle of tourism relations). In other words, theorists and researchers have largely assumed that the three primary tourism roles are fixed entities: individuals’ performances in tourism contexts are bounded by a
single tourism role and the associated norms it manages. The number of social roles individuals within a tourism context can make and take for themselves, then, is restricted to one. What is more is that the discipline assumes that individuals fixed in a single tourism role engage in minimal interactions with others in their role sets (both within and outside of the basic triangle of tourism relations). So not only are individuals in a tourism context supposedly limited in the number of social roles they can take on, but they are also restricted from keeping a complex network of relationships. But is this really the case?

To determine whether these assumptions about tourism roles are supported or challenged empirically, I drew on ethnographic research methods to investigate the state of Maine’s lobster tourism industry as a case study. Not its lobster shacks or lobster-themed souvenir shops, but its lobster boat tour experiences. Over the past few decades, lobster boat tours have developed into what has been called “[a] tourism trend toward ‘authentic experiences,’” whereby the hands-on excursion guides tourists through the daily routines of a true Maine lobsterman for approximately 90 minutes (MacLean 2013). Although the lobster boat tours are not a traditional tourist attraction in the state, given the long partnership of Maine’s tourism and lobster industries, the sheer number of people traveling nowadays, the incredible amount of money generated from tourism facilities, and “the growing clamor from the prophets of authenticity” (Boyle 2003:269), it makes sense that many commercial lobstermen along the coast have decided to invest their resources into creating this kind of charter business.

This study began by asking what new insights could be gained into tourism experiences by examining the relationships, and not just the distinct roles, of the three primary actors in tourism studies. I argue that by moving beyond a focus on just tourists to the triangle of tourism relations in a Western tourism setting, this study not only confirms the importance of authenticity in developed modern tourism contexts, and adds both philosophical and pragmatic clarity to that theory, but it also demonstrates how the three primary tourism roles are dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are highly fluid and maintain a complex network of relationships. By supporting this argument with empirical evidence from my case study, I will in effect question many of the preceding assumptions surrounding the nature of modern tourism. To begin, the following section is a review of contemporary literature in tourism studies, which highlights and details some of the aforementioned assumptions. I will then provide an overview of the state of Maine’s tourism and lobster industries to show how the two have been inseparable over the years, before turning to the contents of my case study – the methods I used, the findings I discovered, and a discussion of those findings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following three main subsections in this review of literature correspond with the three primary tourism roles in tourism studies: tourists, tourism facility operators, and local community
members. The first section on tourists will address the factors leading to their preoccupations with quests for authenticity; next, tourism facility operators and their motivations for creating tourism spaces and (re)inventing place-marketing strategies consistent with tourists’ quests for authenticity will be discussed; and finally, local community members’ roles in tourism contexts will be examined, specifically looking at the benefits and detriments they experience when tourism developments are introduced in their communities’ spaces. The review of literature is divided in this way is to reflect the assumption in tourism studies that considers each of the actors as a separate entity disconnected from one another in daily tourism affairs.

MODERN TOURISTS AND QUESTS FOR AUTHENTICITY

What ties together anthropological and sociological discourses on tourism is the richly developed theoretical understanding that modern tourists embark on quests for experience beyond their own life spaces to encounter the cultures, social lives, and natural environments of others. At odds with the alienation and irrationalities that have plagued their modern everyday existences, theorists posit that tourists search for more profound appreciations of the symbolic other in distant lands in hopes of discovering authentic, non-rationalized life forms. Thus tourists’ quests for experience are coupled with, and even synonymous with, their quests for authenticity. However, this theory is not only threatened by a lack of conceptual clarity, but it also suffers from a scarcity of empirical substance. Though a number of researchers have attempted to fill this gap over the past decade, most of their work has been centered in distant, non-Western, or less-developed societies where tourists value exoticism, primitivism, purism, and historical stagnation as forms of authenticity (Azarya 2004; Cohen 2010; Johnson 2007; Lawson and Jaworski 2007). Yet according to theorists, ‘authentic’ values do not necessarily have to be attributed only in distant, non-Western, or less developed lands (Gisolf 2010; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999). In what follows, I highlight this tension between theory and data in tourism studies.

Modern Tourists and the Rationalization of Society

Historically speaking, the traveler’s quest for experience was a strenuous search, often involving journeys to faraway lands as parts of pilgrimages for religious purposes, convoys for colonial conquests, or in escape from oppression or imprisonment (Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Redfoot 1984), while the tourist’s quest for experience was more of a leisure activity and pleasure trip (Boorstin 1961; MacCannell 1973; Redfoot 1984). However, as modernity has transformed tourism and the quest for experience, the roles of tourist and traveler have increasingly become blurred in tourism studies. The tourist role has come to assume many of the characteristics the traveler was once known for. For example, the general motivation for traveling as either a ‘traveler’ or a ‘modern tourist’ is that there is some experience
available ‘out there’ that cannot be found within the confines of one’s own everyday life space (Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Cohen 1996; MacCannell 1973; Olsen 2002). According to Dean MacCannell (1973), one of the first sociologists to study tourism, modern tourism is based on the desire to go beyond typical ‘tourist’ experiences to more profound appreciations of society and culture; it is founded on renewed interests in encountering and understanding the cultures, social lives and natural environments of others (Cohen 1996; MacCannell 1973). Modern tourists need something else. They need to be able to see things happening to real people and to take part emotionally in those real spectacles. They need to be “at the heart of the carnival, rather than just on the sidelines looking in like couch potatoes” (Boyle 2003:132). Vacationers in the modern world, then, are thought to be at once travelers and tourists. What is it exactly about modern society that has produced this mix? The rationalization of society.

In the wake of the industrial revolution in the early twentieth century, modern society was characterized not only by its advanced urbanization and geographic and economic mobility, but also by its rationalized arrangements and environments. Max Weber (1930) described the modern Western world as an ‘iron cage,’ recognizing that its systems and structures were increasingly becoming rationalized – “that is, dominated by efficiency, predictability, calculability, and nonhuman technologies that control people” (Ritzer 2008:24-5). But despite their efficient, predictable, calculable, and nonhuman assets, rational systems suffered from the irrationality of rationality. One of these generated irrationalities is the detached and meaningless existences workers are forced to endure in the highly specialized capitalist division of labor (Braverman 1974; Marx [1867] 1990; Weber 1930). Although production has been greatly improved by this new labor process, the cost of its rationality places many individuals in menial positions that prevent them from exerting creativity in their tasks and consequently from fulfilling their natural species being. In other words, individuals are drastically alienated from nearly every identifiable aspect of their work, carrying out tasks solely for purposes of productivity. Braverman ([1867] 1990), like Marx (1974:126), like Marx, considers this “separation of hand and brain [as] the most decisive step in the division of labor taken by the capitalist mode of production.” Weber (1930) argued that these irrational rational systems – forms of disenchantment and dehumanization associated with the rise of capitalism and modernity – would trap people and deny them their basic humanity.

Since Weber’s (1930) writing, the United States has shifted from a primarily production-based economy to a dual economy consisting of both production and service sectors and, as a result, the irrationalities of rational systems have changed. Dalton Conley (2009) has labeled the service sector in the U.S.’s new dual economy the ‘Elsewhere Society.’ The intangibility of this new service sector has caused many of the industry’s professionals – Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere – to feel as though they have never really produced a single, actual thing. Consequently they are often left asking themselves: “what was my value added?” (Conley 2009:27). Furthermore, because of the rise of technology and its increased use in the
service economy, Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere find it nearly impossible to escape from the pervasiveness of email and voicemail. This inescapable connection to technology and work-related tasks at all hours of the day have caused Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere to not only feel dislocated from their work responsibilities (like Marx and Braverman’s sense of alienation) but also from their home responsibilities. Once separate spheres have collided, creating a sense of elsewhere at all times: work feels like home and home feels like work. As a result, Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere have become intraviduals – individuals whose physical, emotional and familial attentions have been fragmented and dispersed (Conley 2009). Yet strangely enough, Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere tolerate this ‘elsewhere alienation’ as it allows them to continue their pursuit for economic opportunities which in turn allow them to make even more money. So for the first time in history, the more people are paid the more hours they work because since “the rewards for working are so great, they make the ‘opportunity cost’ of not working all the greater.” Perhaps now more than ever, both the capitalist laborer of the production sector and Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere of the service sector are trapped in modernity’s iron cage.

Leisure and Motivations for Travel in Modern Society

Despite the views on leisure that differ depending on whether one considers individuals working in a production-based economy, a service-based economy, or a dual economy, it is agreed in tourism studies that an escape from modernity’s iron cage is the ultimate goal of the capitalist laborer’s and Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere’s leisure time. In other words, tourists travel to escape from the reality of modern society and its irrational rational systems (Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Cohen 1996; MacCannell 1973; Olsen 2002). To achieve this escape, theorists have posited that tourists often travel in one of two ways. The first motive for travelling is to be amused or entertained. These tourists’ quests for experience involve searching for destinations that are pleasurable and aesthetically beautiful outside of their own life spaces. More often than not these tourists’ trips are a temporary escape, meaning they might not even be concerned with recovering the humanity that they has been denied by modernity’s alienating effects (either capitalistic alienation or elsewhere alienation). Yet even if they are concerned, they might not have an adequate amount of time in their travels to reestablish what has been severed (Berger 2004; Redfoot 1984).

However, tourists who wish to travel for more profound, life-changing purposes may choose to embark on quests for experience that provide opportunities to fully replenish the components of their lives that have been drained by modernity’s alienating effects (either capitalistic alienation or elsewhere alienation). According to Scott Cohen (2010), these tourists can do so by incorporating their traveling experiences into their own conceptions of self-identity. In his field research among the Maasai in East Africa, Victor Azarya (2004) discovered that tourists’ interests in travelling are in part rooted in their desires to distinguish the differences between their own ‘civilized’ selves and the ‘primitive’ selves of the
locals. Azarya (2004) argued that individuals are able to regain faith in the world by recognizing an alternative, simpler lifestyle to the one they experience at home, one which has not yet been completely saturated by rational systems. This subsequently allows them to restore their existences by piecing together their severed identities and by reflecting on their inner or relational selves. This motivation of tourism is therefore aimed at reconstructing the fragmentation of one’s self by actualizing, realizing, transforming, finding, and/or developing one’s self in light of their new experiences and renewed interests in the cultures, social lives, and natural environments of others (Azarya 2004; Berger 2004; Cohen 2010; Redfoot 1984).

Ultimately, though, whether the tourist’s mode of escape is a simple pleasure trip or a quest for self, tourism studies overwhelmingly identify modern tourists’ goals in travelling as experiencing things, phenomena, and activities typical of certain time periods and/or unique to particular geographic spaces (Boyle 2003). In other words, modern tourists travel with the desire to experience something real. Modern tourists seek out authenticity (Azarya 2004; Cohen 1995; Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988, 1996; Gisolf 2010; Golomb 1995; Gotham 2002, 2007; Harkin 1995; Jamal and Hill 2002; Johnson 2007; Kneafsey 2000; Lawson and Jaworski 2007; MacCannell 1973; Olsen 2002; Vannini and Franzese 2008; Wang 1999).

Modern Tourists’ Quests for Authenticity

In tourism studies, modern tourists’ quests for experience are often coupled with, and even synonymous with, their quests for authenticity. As MacCannell (1973:14) notes, “[t]he rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of the importance of authenticity in the relationships between tourists and what they see.” Based on his case study of work productions, which are exhibits or tours of a culture’s different work tasks, in Paris, France, MacCannell (1973) also postulates that these ‘authentic’ experiences can only be found and realized ‘out there’ by tourists who are willing to break the bonds of their everyday existences in search for them. Kjell Olsen (2002) perhaps frames the question of authenticity best when he holds it responsible as the main feature, and struggle, of the modern condition. For these theorists, authenticity is the ultimate triumph of modern tourists’ pursuits to escape from the alienation and rationalization that exists in their daily lives. Since, for some reason, encountering or participating in authentic experiences is believed to allow tourists to replenish what has been drained by modernity and to therefore return to their everyday lives in such elevated states of mind that empowers them to endure the irrationalities of modern society’s rational systems until it is time for their next trip.

Most sociological and anthropological work on tourism has largely been centered in distant, non-Western, or less-developed societies where tourists value exoticism, primitivism, purism, and historical stagnation as forms of authenticity. For instance, Azarya’s (2004) study of the Maasai in East Africa;
Ballerino Cohen’s (1995) field research in the British Virgin Islands; Scott Cohen’s (2010) concentration in northern India and southern Thailand; Farver’s (1984) and Lawson and Jaworski’s (2007) research in The Gambia; Ghimire’s (2001) exploration of native tourism in third-world countries; Johnson’s (2007) study of hill-tribe tourism and sex tourism in Thailand; and Mansperger’s (1995) case studies in Kenya, the Upper-Amazon, and Yap Island. However, although authenticity is indeed a feature of Western-Man’s modern condition, theorists suggest its values do not necessarily have to be attributed only in distant, non-Western, or less-developed lands (Gisolf 2010; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999).

If that is the case, and if the concept of authenticity in tourism studies is data deprived, then maybe we can start by first determining what exactly authenticity means. Unfortunately, scholars have used the concept in so many ways and in so many contexts that its meaning has become ambiguous. And, according to Vannini and Franzese (2008), without empirical substance the concept will continue to lack conceptual clarity. Jamal and Hill (2002) agree, believing that the reason why authenticity is often elusive is because (1) the term is used freely without clarifying whether it is an object or an experience that is the source of the authenticity, and (2) there is a lack of philosophical clarity in terms of the underlying assumptions of the term. These theorists argue that before drawing on ‘authenticity’ to describe tourism experiences, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of its use in different contexts. This following section has therefore been designed to carefully present a number of the current sociological and anthropological theories of authenticity. It should be stressed that there is little, if any, empirical evidence that supports their models aside from the abstract examples I will highlight in this section and the next.

The most popular framework of authenticity divides the concept into three key dimensions: (1) **object-related (or objective) authenticity,** (2) **symbol-related (or constructive-related; or constructed) authenticity:** and (3) **activity-related (or existential; or personal) authenticity** (Gisolf 2010; Jamal and Hill 2002; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999). **Object-related authenticity** refers to any objective property or fact in the world that is original and genuine (Bruner 1994; Gisolf 2010, Jamal and Hill 2002; Wang 1999), and which is assessed of its originality and genuineness according to absolute and objective criterion established by an “authority or power which authorizes, certifies, and legally validates the authenticity in question” (Bruner 1994:400). Bruner (1994) clarifies how no reproduction of an original could be authentic under this conceptualization since object-related authenticity restricts its designation of ‘authenticity’ to facts and phenomena in their original states. The tourist who visits the Liberty Bell Center at the Independence National Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to observe the original Liberty Bell would experience object-related authenticity.

**Symbol-related authenticity** is a dynamic, socially constructed conception of authenticity assessed and established by tourists in their travels. Here, authenticity is contextually defined and ideologically projected on the basis of tourists’ beliefs, expectations, fantasies, perspectives, and powers, and is
therefore not objective in evaluation (Schwandt 1994; Wang 1999). It is based on the idea that there are many possible versions and interpretations of authenticity, where how ‘real’ an object is is directly related to how real tourists’ experiences are with that object. If locals put on traditional costumes only for tourists’ delight, thereby converting themselves into a superficial tourist attraction, and tourists nevertheless feels as though they are witnessing a genuine local tradition, this would be an example of symbol-related authenticity. However, if the locals wore those dresses anyway, with or without tourists’ presence, then that would be an example of object-related authenticity (Gisolf 2010).

The final dimension, activity-related authenticity, refers to the authentic state of being as a person, involving the production of intra-personal and/or inter-personal authentic feelings, which can be enhanced through performative tourism experiences. It is that “alienation-smashing feeling” (Wang 1999:359) that places tourists in a dynamic existential engagement with experience and meaning in the cultures, social lives, or natural environments of the Other(s) (Golomb 1995; Heidegger 1962; Jamal and Hill 2002; Wang 1999). According to Wang (1999:358), activity-related authenticity “denotes a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counterdose to the loss of ‘true self’” in modern society. Similarly, Heidegger (1962) says to ask about the meaning of Being is to look for the meaning of authenticity. Therefore, in this view it is not the authenticity of a fact or phenomenon that matters, but the authentic feeling of being at home in the world that arises as a result of tourists’ reflective comparisons between their selves and the Other(s) which takes place in active experiences. This feeling of authenticity can arrive either intra-personally and/or inter-personally (Gisolf 2010; Wang 1999; Olsen 2002). While intra-personal authenticity involves the production of bodily feelings including pleasure, relaxation and control through personal self-making (Wang 1999; Olsen 2002), inter-personal authenticity involves the feeling of achievement of a sense of togetherness (perhaps with other tourists) (Wang 1999; Olsen 2002). Any type of New Age Tourism experience, such as participating in organic agriculture and self-sufficiency practices in unfamiliar cultures, would likely qualify as activity-related authenticity (Gisolf 2010).

As I mentioned earlier, this particular framework of authenticity is perhaps the most popular among sociologists and anthropologists in contemporary tourism studies. However, these three forms are not the only conceptions of authenticity (Jamal and Hill 2002; Gisolf 2010; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999). Olsen’s (2002) active-constructivist theory of authenticity extends the symbol-related position to embrace non-object related experiences such as the active experiences endorsed by the activity-related position. That way, tourists can subjectively evaluate the authenticity of social and cultural experiences, and not just facts and phenomena, without having to undergo total self-realization and self-growth. Say locals put on a traditional dance for when tourists arrive, thereby converting their traditions into a superficial tourist attraction. If tourists are invited to participate in that ritual, and they feel as though they are taking part in
an authentic experience despite its obvious fabrication, and that experience is not tied to any existential feelings, then that would be an example of active-constructivist authenticity.

In addition to these major conceptions there are countless others. For example, Boyle’s (2003) emphasis of ‘it’ experiences that are ‘real’ and ‘rooted’ in destinations, and Berger’s (2004) focus on placing individuals in a setting where they can see and participate in life ‘as it is really lived.’ What is more, Wang (1999) points out that “authenticity is an ever-changing concept.” So what might seem ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ to somebody today may no longer feel ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ a few months from now to that same person, and perhaps may never feel ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ to anyone else either today or ever (Boyle 2003; Gisolf 2010; Harkin 1995; Jamal and Hill 2002; Wang 1999). “Therefore, the current ‘reality movement’ [quest for authenticity] is not totally coherent. There’s a growing sense that people want things they feel are real… but everyone defines their search for the ‘real’ [the authentic] differently” (Boyle 2003:149).

**Typology of Tourist Realities and Modes of Tourism**

According to Donald Redfoot (1984), there are different tourist types – a typology of “tourist realities” – where each of the ascending types represents a progressively more intense search for reality, and thus a more intense search for authentic experiences, through traveling. The first-order tourist, who Redfoot (1984:293) labels ‘the true tourist,’ travels to be amused or entertained by recreational modes of tourism experiences (e.g. the cinema, the theater, toured events or activities), the expectations for which have been framed by travel agencies and the media. As a result, these tourists’ experiences are often predictable and may even be explicitly marked as ‘authentic,’ ‘real,’ or ‘genuine,’ which indicate that the events and activities may be of object-related authenticity. Yet symbol-related authenticity is still possible depending on the tourists’ interpretations. Furthermore, first-order tourists may even try to avoid intimate contact with their destinations’ cultures, societies, and environments, and instead opt to capture their experiences and sights by sightseeing or by taking photographs. By doing so, first-order tourists often surrender the present (their experiences at hand) to the past (the preformed complexes of expectations molded by travel agencies and the media) and to the future (the anticipated ‘reliving’ of the experiences through the photos of what has been seen). In fact, the quest for authenticity may not even be of great concern to first-order tourists – if they happen to stumble upon such social forms then it simply becomes an added bonus to their trips. In that sense, first-order tourists resemble post-modern theorists’ (Berger 2004; Gotham 2002, 2007; Urry 1990; Urry and Larson 2011; Wang 1999) conception of post-modern tourists for whom quests for authenticity are of no great interest. At any rate, first-order tourists’ pleasure trips endow them with a sense of well being, both physically and mentally, and provide them with at least a temporary escape from the irrationalities of modern society.
The second-order tourist, who Redfoot (1984:296) labels ‘the angst-ridden tourist,’ tries “to go beyond the other ‘mere’ tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture.” These tourists deliberately seek out authentic social forms in their travels and therefore intentionally set out on quests for authenticity. They may even travel off-season to avoid other tourists during their trips and to delve into local destinations that “only the locals know about” (Redfoot 1984:296). And, although they may still use a camera to capture their experiences and sights, taking photos comes secondary to their primary focus on the present. Furthermore, Redfoot (1984) argues that the goal of second-order tourists is not to ‘go native’ or to adopt the ways of their destinations’ cultures as permanent lifestyles, but to simply feel the ‘ecstasy of experience’ – the tension that lies between participating in an authentic event or activity and remaining outsiders.

MacCannell (1973) says that tourists like the second-order tourist typically visit cultural productions – representations of aspects of life assembled from available cultural items – since “[p]articipation in cultural productions,” he (1973:23) says, “can carry the individual to the frontiers of his being.” One cultural production that MacCannell (1973:34) spends a considerable amount of time discussing is the work display, a “museumization” of work and work relations. At work displays, tourists are able to see, and perhaps even engage in, the behind-the-scenes functions and routines of the modern workplace (those associated with both the production-sector and the service-sector). MacCannell (1973) draws on his case study in Paris when he gives examples of the guided tours of the stock exchange, the Supreme Court, the tobacco industry, and the slaughterhouse as common work displays. He suggests that second-order tourists visit work displays not only to see how various components of society function but also to perceive the distance between them and what they are seeing in order to reflect upon their own conditions in the modern world and transcend it by reestablishing their self-identities in the symbolic presence of the Other(s).

Another mode of experiential tourism that second-order tourists are likely to seek out is what Jelincic (2008) calls creative tourism. Such industries allow second-order tourists to learn and develop creative skills (e.g. molding, pottery, painting) that are specific to the culture being visited by participating in local activities and events. These tourists are able to intimately interact with locals while also learning about, and making objects that originated in, the local culture. Regardless of the certain mode of experiential tourism – MacCannell’s (1973) cultural productions or Jelincic’s creative tourism – the point is that they embody experiences that are educational in terms of how other people live. Furthermore, experiential modes of tourism allow us to “make sense of things in our everyday lives, by putting everything into a set of relationships and determining what something is by seeing what it isn’t” (Berger 2004:15).
Finally, the third-order tourist, Redfoot’s (1984) ‘spiritual tourists,’ overcomes second-order tourists’ inabilities to appropriate the authenticity of the life of the others for themselves by going native in existential modes of tourism experiences – an engagement reflecting such a tourist’s explicit rejection of modern society and his full commitment to (re)discovering self. Third-order tourists are not simply interested in the “officially authenticated sites” that first-order tourists experience (Redfoot 1984:302) or the temporary, non-appropriating, subjective-distancing events and activities that second-order tourists experience (Redfoot 1984). Instead, they are “committed to getting behind the ‘veil of illusion’ to absolute reality” (Redfoot 1984:302) by switching worlds (Cohen 1996). However, this idea of ‘going native’ and ‘switching worlds’ need not be permanent. According to Erik Cohen (1996), third-order tourists can choose to live in both the world of their everyday modern lives, which for them is alienating and irrational, as well as their newfound spiritual world, to which they depart on a regular basis for purposes of self-reflection and self-realization.

What Redfoot (1984) has attempted to demonstrate with his typology of tourist realities is the fact that experiences differ not only according to tourists’ motivations for travelling but also according to the intensity with which they search for reality and authentic experiences. Whether one is a first-, second-, or third-order tourist, their searches for authentic experiences can be found in a number of different forms of tourism including, but not limited to: Eco-Tourism – the experience of natural environments while doing little to no harm to them; Ethno-Tourism – the experience of how other people live; Adventure Tourism – the experience of remote, often difficult to travel to, environments; Niche Tourism – the experience of specific interests, e.g., sex tourism, foodie tourism, wine tourism; Creative Tourism – the experience of learning a skill that is part of the culture being visited; and New-Age Tourism – the experience of self-development and self-realization (Ritzer 2010; Jelincic 2008; Stronza 2001; Gisolf 2010).

Unfortunately, though, for second- and third-order tourists – inner-directed persons who want to escape the cacophony of modern life and reach reality and authenticity elsewhere (Boyle 2003) – many sociologists and anthropologists believe that there is no way for them to attain authenticity in their travels so long as they continue their ‘quests for authenticity.’ According to Boyle (2003:40), as well as many other scholars of tourism, “[t]he closer you get to the ideal – be it freedom or values or authenticity – the more likely you are to veer off suddenly in the opposite direction” toward the illusory, pseudo, or inauthentic. George Ritzer’s (2007, 2008) theory of McDonaldization suggests that the development of irrational rational systems around the world inevitably leads to the inauthenticity of spaces’ social forms – what he calls the death of the pure local. As a result of this deprivation of distinctive content that characterizes places, people, things and services (Ritzer 2007:193), and the spawning of rational systems in their places, irrationalities and pseudo-events are beginning to dominate and saturate our existences and experiences with images and representations rather than with real objects, phenomena, and experiences.
Likewise, Olsen (2002) argues that the quest for authenticity is doomed precisely due to the fact that similar forms of alienation and rationalization exist in the lands that tourists travel to, thus forming inauthentic experiences. What is expected in tourists’ travels (authenticity) is therefore often contradicted by what is actually discovered in their experiences (inauthenticity) (Wang 1999). So it could be said that tourism represents the rationalization of travel.

**Overcoming The Consumption of Inauthenticity**

The upshot of the previous line of reasoning is that as the capitalist laborer or Mr. and Mrs. Elsewhere – the embodiments of the Modern Man – are driven even further beyond their life spaces in their quests for authenticity to places where non-rationalized social forms are thought to exist, they either (1) find that the same rationalization and alienation they were attempting to escape from in their own life spaces also exist in the lands they have traveled to, or (2) that globalization efforts are impatiently waiting to rationalize those social forms once they show interest in the particular objects, phenomena, or experiences. Yet despite the prevalence of irrational rational systems and their inevitable production of the inauthenticity of places, things, persons and services in modern society, some sociologists and anthropologists remain optimistic about modern tourists’ quests for authenticity. For them, the quest for authenticity must become, like the 1996 *New York Times* headline suggests, “America’s Quiet Rebellion Against McDonaldization” (Boyle 2003:88). In other words, if tourists want to achieve authenticity in their quests they must step outside of their ‘tourist’ role (Harkin 1995; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Olsen 2002).

Michael Harkin (1995) suggests that tourists can transcend their tourist role simply by thinking of themselves not as tourists. But if they are not tourists, and yet they still travel to consume authentic social forms, than what exactly are they? According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) the tourist role must be considered as a social construct. Many tourists are increasingly traveling to forms of tourism that supply objects and experiences that no longer require, and perhaps even forbid, the traditional ‘tourist’ role. “The aim [of these new modes of tourism experiences] is rather to incorporate the tourist in the context by providing new roles that are not associated with the in-authentic hallmark of the tourist. The tourist no longer experiences the distance that is the crucial feature in the traditional role of the tourist” (Olsen 2002:169). Olsen (2002) gives the example of the Hardanger Fartøyvernsenter (the Hardanger Boat Conservation Centre) in Norway to clarify the idea behind this new tourist role and mode of tourism experience.

Hardanger Fartøyvernsenter was founded by a group of native Norwegians that shared an interest in restoring old local wooden ships. The institution soon became a form of cultural reorientation, inviting outsiders to overcome the irrational and alienating forces of modernity by recreating a traditional way of
living through the restoration of the ships. However, the very introduction of the tourists to the centre’s work made the founding and local boat builders aware of the inauthentic side effects of the institution’s potential transformation into a tourist experience: the workers’ own roles could have been museumized and their aim for reestablishing authenticity could have instead generated inauthenticity. So Hardanger Fartøyvernssenter altered the tourist role. There, tourists must become subject to a hierarchy in order to become a part of the team that gets to experience the actual restoration of the ships (Olsen 2002:173). Tourist must no longer think of themselves as ‘tourists’ but as temporary local community members working side-by-side with the founding and local skilled workers.

To summarize, Vike (1993:110) postulates that transcending the tourist role involves a social milieu “that has closeness, warmth, mutual commitment, and communitas as ideals, but which are basically grounded on a social transaction [e.g. tourism] that emphasize distance, formality, and without moral depth.” What many theorists (Boyle 2003; Harkin 1995; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Olsen 2002; Vike 1993) imply, then, is that if tourists do not choose to act inside this social milieu they will not achieve authenticity in their travels. In order to gain access to experiences affording authenticity, tourists have to be something more than just what the typical tourist role permits in the social contexts of their travels. Otherwise tourists will be doomed to experience the inauthenticity of pseudo-events and thus remain feeling alienated by modern society’s iron cage.

TOURISM FACILITY OPERATORS AND BUILDING TOURISM PLACES

Without the development of appropriate tourism facilities – that is, specific destinations stocked with activities, attractions, events and other services such as accommodations and restaurants that cater to tourists’ needs – the second- and third-order tourist roles that have been described thus far are essentially devoid of purpose (Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Ghimire 2001; Gisolf 2010; MacCannell 1973; Nash 1981; Refoot 1984; Stronza 2001). If, in fact, these types of tourists seek authentic experiences in their travels then there must correspondingly exist tourism experiences that support some form of authenticity (Boyle 2003; Gladstone 1998; Gotham 2002, 2007; Jamal and Hill 2002; Urry 1990, 2011; Watson 1994). Given the sheer number of people traveling and the immense amount of money generated from tourism facilities, many places around the world have been easily persuaded by the chance to stimulate and develop their economies and have resultantly transformed their spaces into serving a tourist population (Azarya 2004; Gotham 2002, 2007; Judd 1995; Judd and Simpson 2003; Kneafsey 2000; Nash 1981; Stronza 2001; Wilson 1996). This section considers why many places around the world decide to

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IBIS World’s (2013) most recent “Global Tourism Market Research Report” estimates the total worth of the global tourism industry at $1.4 trillion as of August 2013, with revenue rising at an annualized 2.5% over the past five years.
integrate their spaces into the global tourism market, and then in turn must deal with tourists’ demands for authentic tourism facilities.

**Motivations for Assembling Tourism Facilities**

Since tourism can be one of the major carriers of economic growth (Judd 1995; Judd and Simpson 2003; Richards 2011:1227), locals are often convinced to transform and convert aspects of their cultures, social lives and natural environments into commodified forms in order to obtain the economic advantages and additional sources of income tourism can generate (Azarya 2004; Hoffman 2003; Judd and Simpson 2003; Kneafsey 2000). Ritzer (2007, 2008) might even say this transformation is inevitable given the pervasiveness of McDonaldization and the rationalization of travel. Moya Kneafsey (2000), who studied tourism developments in Europe, called this conversion of cultural features into marketable goods and services ‘cultural commodification.’ For many of the less developed societies tourists travel to, cultural commodification and the introduction of a culture economy is a strategic undertaking since, despite such places’ appealing landscapes, exciting experiences, and traditional lures, many are still attempting to garner enough capital and influence to overcome earlier economic setbacks and difficulties (Azarya 2004; Farver 1984; Hoffman 2003; Kneafsey 2000). These less developed societies therefore use the money they earn from tourism to sustain their local economies (Azarya 2004; Kneafsey 2000; Wilson 1996). For example, Azarya (2004) studied the way that various tourism entrepreneurs approached the Maasai of East Africa with the chance to package elements of their culture in exhibits for tourists’ consumption (Azarya 2004:961). After weighing the pros and cons of the proposition, the Maasai eventually consented, deciding to display simplified versions of their ‘traditional culture’ so they could buy cattle land for traditional purposes as well as modern amenities with the money generated from their tourism facilities (Azarya 2004:962).

However, as Judd (1995) and Judd and Simpson (2003) explain in their research on city marketing motivations in the United States, tourism is often used as a strategy for stimulating economic activity in more developed areas of the world as well. The Reagan Administration in the 1980s reduced federal aid to cities and encouraged them to stimulate their economies by creating destinations attractive to tourists and locals. As a result, cities throughout the U.S. have rebuilt their environments with hotels, restaurants, and entertainment facilities (e.g. casinos, convention centers, malls, professional sport teams) in order to raise revenues, reduce debts, and revitalize their places in an effort to reverse the trend of economic decline that threatened many of their local economies prior to 1980 (Judd 1995; Judd and Simpson 2003).

Kevin Gotham (2002, 2007) describes this strategy of using themes, images, and facilities to develop a tourism industry aimed at revitalizing a city’s economy as ‘place marketing.’ In his study of
place marketing strategies, Gotham (2002) looks at the city of New Orleans, which, prior to the mid-twentieth century struggled to make ends meet with its shipbuilding and oil industries. Paired with financial and social crises, New Orleans not only was an economic disaster but it was also in environmental ruins. Consequently, the city’s appeal as a place for leisure, entertainment, and play was a marketing nightmare. To overcome these difficulties, the city’s realities of social deprivation and poverty were overlooked, and themes of romanticism and nostalgia were manufactured – New Orleans became “involved in adapting, reshaping, and manipulating (i.e. simulating) images of the place to be desirable to the targeted consumer (Gotham 2002:1743). Thus, marketing was focused on New Orleans’ tradition of Mardi Gras. Shortly thereafter, what was once an indigenous festival for locals became an exotic-like spectacle “aimed at promoting desire and fantasy” for tourists worldwide (Gotham 2002:1744). What began as a device to enhance a failing economy, New Orleans’ tourism industry soon became one of the most well known destinations in the global tourism market. Other notable place-marketing transformations have occurred in Chicago, Illinois (Judd and Simpson 2003), Commana, Brittany and Foxford, Ireland (Kneafsey 2000).

While societies may initially become involved in the global tourism industry for economic advantages, many are increasingly identifying the role tourism can also play in helping to preserve indigenous traditions and the ever-shrinking remnants of non-rationalized social forms at the local level (Kneafsey 2000; Nash 1981; Ritzer 2007; Stronza 2001). By recreating and/or safeguarding local phenomena through tourism, destination managers (those in charge of many destinations’ place marketing strategies) help local persons maintain their sense of identity, as well as promote social cohesion, in the midst of a rapidly changing McDonaldized world. Consider Foxford, Ireland (Kneafsey 2005) where tourism facilities embraced the town’s rich history and heritage, and New Orleans (Gotham 2002) where the city reinvented its Mardi Gras tradition into a spectacle for tourists. Although Ritzer (2007, 2008) warns that societies around the world will inevitably be drawn into the global tourism industry and thus be affected by the tourists it receives due to the pervasiveness of McDonaldization, Nash (1981:462) suggests that local spaces may be able to play a significant role in determining the kind of tourists it receives and the form of tourism they practice by developing tourism facilities that preserve their local traditions and phenomena.

Therefore, because tourism is “[t]he largest scale movement of goods, services, and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen” (Greenwood 1989:171), it carries with it both economic and preservation motivations for its adoption and implementation in local spaces. But for destination managers and advertisers to successfully stimulate local economies and preserve local traditions via tourism facilities, they must simultaneously deal with the issue of authenticity. That is, they must (re)design their destinations’ place-marketing strategies – themes, images, and facilities – in ways that
appear authentic to the first-, second-, and third-order tourists. To do so, they often turn to advertising, the main instrument of cultural commodification (Watson 1994:650). Cultures are transformed into commodities to be bought and sold on the market, and advertising makes those commodities publically known so this transaction can occur. Advertising is a kind of master script that actually invents the place-marketing strategies used to promote destinations’ tourism facilities in ways that are attractive to tourists who search for authentic social forms in their travels so that the tourism places’ local economies are stimulated and their local traditions and phenomena are preserved (Gotham 2002, 2007; Judd 1995; Judd and Simpson 2003; Kneafsey 2000; Nash 1981; Stronza 2001). In short, Tim Edensor (2001:73) writes how advertisements are designed to serve as guidebooks to drive tourists’ quests in the direction of ‘authentic’ realities.

LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS

In tourism studies, the local and the local’s community are often overlooked as entities worth studying (Nash 1981; Stronza 2001). For some reason, we tend to bundle the local and the local’s community into the same category as the tourism facility operator and tourism facilities. But as we will soon find out, the two are different subjects in tourism studies. The majority of the work done thus far on locals involves their interactions with tourists and the ensuing cultural, economic, and environmental benefits and detriments that are produced in their communities because of that very relationship (Berger 2004; Cohen 1979; Evans-Pritchard 1989; Farver 1984; Hoffman 2003; Mansperger 1995; Nash 1981; Shepherd 2002; Simmel 1950; Stronza 2001). Another important theme of this literature on the local, which is similarly thin in substance, is the idea that locals must have an integral role in designing their communities’ place-marketing strategies for the tourism space to truly be considered ‘authentic’ (Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005; Gisolf 2010; Gotham 2002, 2007; Kavartatzis and Hatch 2013; Kneafsey 2000; Thurot and Thurot 1983; Urbain 1989; Urry 1990; Urry and Larsen 2011). However, only an in-depth discussion of the former section of literature is truly important for the purposes of this paper. It is sufficient to say that in tourism studies locals’ perspectives on authenticity (the kind of social forms in their communities that they evaluate as authentic) are considered crucial elements to take into account in order to effectively deal with the authenticity crisis in modern society. For that reason, this last section of literature review plans to outline some of the more recent work on tourists’ interactions with and impact on locals and their communities.

Benefits and Detriments of Tourism Developments in Local Host Communities

According to Arthur Asa Berger (2004), tourists’ interactions with locals involve a relationship similar to the one Georg Simmel’s (1950) stranger experiences with native members of a group. Simmel
(1950) describes the stranger as someone who is at once far away and close to the society he visits. He is far away because he comes from a different culture and is occupied differently than the natives. Yet he is also close because this very lack of connection between him and the society he frequents allows him to see, think, and decide without being influenced by the opinion of the natives. It is this freedom and objectivity that equips the stranger with a fresh outlook. He is fascinated by experiences and phenomena that may not draw the attention of the natives and/or may even be invisible to the natives’ regard since the customs and traditions he encounters in his travels that are new and unfamiliar to him are part and parcel in the life of the society he visits. Thus the stranger’s mix of intimacy and distance bears a peculiar and valuable position in the community he comes across since he is able to make the natives aware of some of their society’s rites and rituals that are appealing and meaningful and that therefore should not be forgotten or overlooked.

Keeping in mind Berger’s (2004) comparison of the tourist role to Simmel’s (1950) stranger social type, both Nash (1981) and Stronza (2001) believe that tourists’ presences often beneficially affect the host societies they visit due to their unique perspective that provokes a revitalized interest and passion in locals to preserve certain traditions and phenomena in their communities. This preservation simultaneously serves as a way for locals to package certain elements of their cultures for tourists’ consumption. Even if Ritzer (2007, 2008) is correct, and the rationalization of travel is indeed inevitable, this preservational packaging allows locals to have a say in determining some of the forms of tourism that are developed in their communities’ spaces and thus the kind of tourists their communities receive. As Stronza (2001:265-66) remarks: “Tourism can serve as a unifying force in modern societies, bringing people together to define collectively the places, events, and symbols that are deemed important and somehow meaningful.” In that sense, Nash (1981) and Stronza (2001) are correct to posit that tourism can be beneficial to host societies since locals’ preservation of traditions and phenomena functions as an empowering vehicle of self-realization. Doing so replenishes meaning to locals’ spatial, placial, and temporal – personal and collective – identities.

However, Robert Shepherd (2002) argues that the concurrent process of preserving and packaging traditions via tourism facilities for the tourist’s consumption often causes those very traditions to lose their symbolic meanings to locals. In other words, Shepherd (2002) views cultural commodification as a catalyst for reductions to cultural experiences and phenomena. In his opinion, every culture is given a ‘cultural value,’ an assessment based on the perceived authenticity of a culture. But once a culture enters the market, and interacts with other commodities’ exchange values, its cultural value takes on its commodified form and is thought to lose any authenticity it might have once possessed. To be authentic, then, according to Shepherd (2002), cultural traditions must be reproduced outside of market
relations. If locals wish to preserve pieces of their communities, this preservation must remain un-commodified and un-commercialized, and thus unpackaged and removed from tourism relations.

Consider Lily Hoffman’s (2003) case study of the tourism industry in Harlem, New York, where she noticed that the very packaging of local customs and traditions in tourism facilities led to their distortion and devastation of cultural value. Since the dawn of the twentieth century, Harlem has been known for its ‘Black America’ culture and its music and entertainment traditions. This, of course, dates back to the days of the Roaring 20s and Prohibition. However, not since the beginning of the Depression had Harlem attracted a steady flow of tourists. When poverty levels reached 20% in the early 1990s, city leaders looked to develop the city’s once-booming tourism industry through a process they called “economic ghettoization” (Hoffman 2003:289). Marketers sought to build on Harlem’s already well-known connections to music and entertainment, as well as its unique cultural and historical attractions, in order to develop a form of tourism that would work toward preserving the destination’s heritage. The aim, according to one Harlemite, was to “get into our own neighborhoods and develop the ethnic products we have overlooked” (Hoffman 2003:293). Unfortunately, though, what began as a movement to rally local spirit and open small businesses turned into rapid development by outside investors looking to transform Harlem into an “urban entertainment destination” (Hoffman 2003:292). Consequently, this issue of ‘sharing Harlem’ led the neighborhood to become what some consider a homogeneous space within the urban entrepreneurial regime, no longer retaining any of its true cultural origins (Hoffman 2003). Or, as Shepherd (2002) may contend, Harlem’s heritage lost its authenticity.

Stronza (2001:271) believes that the symbolic meaning of a host society’s products and experiences can also be lost if host communities begin to act and think like the tourists they serve, whom they may perceive as superior. That is, locals’ inferiority complexes may give tourists the opportunity to wield power over local communities with their anticipation of authenticity. Such expectations of how locals should appear and behave may ultimately cause them to begin mirroring such expectations in their rituals and presentations to appease the tourists’ demands in their quests for authenticity. Deirdre Evans-Pritchard (1989:97), in her article titled “How ‘they’ see ‘us’: Native American images of tourists,” wrote of a Native American woman who felt as though she had to “look ‘Indian’ in order to be accepted as authentic by the tourists on whose dollars she depends.” This fits Erik Cohen’s (1979:18) expression, “playing the natives,” to describe locals who try to live up to tourists’ expectations and images.

In addition to the ramifications it has on host societies’ cultures and cultural values, the development of tourism facilities has both beneficial and detrimental affects on their local economies as well. Tourism can be one of the major carriers of economic development, growth, and independence. The fact that it is a trillion-dollar industry is why economists often advise places with failing economies to draw on tourism strategies to revitalize their conditions. Plus, the attractions and services needed to
accommodate the continuous influx of tourists often offer new jobs and sources of income to unemployed locals. However, early attempts to construct tourism facilities for economic purposes may not pan out as neatly as economists suggest. For example, in many host societies the development of a tourism industry leads to increased wealth stratification, which, as Mark Mansperger (1995) discovered in his field research in Kenya, the Upper-Amazon, and Yap Island where tourism projects were developing, creates conflict among locals. In Azarya’s (2004) study of the Maasai in Kenya, entry of international currency led community members to depend on the outside world rather than on their own resources, disrupting the group’s traditional economic and subsistence methods and therefore causing a rift in the ethnic-group’s feelings toward tourism practices. Jo Ann Farver (1984) has also reported similar findings of the destructive impact tourism can have on host communities’ local economies in The Gambia, where the government was actually forced to request the services of the Indigenous Business Advisory Service (IBAS), an association funded by the UN that aids countries’ industries with small loans and technical assistances, to repair the damages caused by its creative tourism industry.

In his study of non-industrialized societies developing tourism industries, Mansperger (1995) notes one final benefit he sees the introduction of tourism having on local communities: the establishment of educational contacts. Eco-Tourism, for example, not only emphasizes an appreciation of natural and cultural resources in local areas but also directs tourists’ attentions to local conservation efforts of elements of indigenous culture and/or precious local environmental resources. This form of tourism can have a low impact on local environments while also yielding high economic payoff, specifically via the education about local conservation practices that tourists can then pass on to others to perhaps prompt similar efforts in their own lands. Stronza (2001) points out that the only issue with Eco-Tourism is that if its development goes unregulated then its proliferation could spoil many natural areas it seeks to preserve by disturbing both wildlife and people in their natural habitats.

So although tourism development can indeed be beneficial to local host communities on cultural, economic, and environmental levels, it can also be detrimental on the same cultural, economic, and environmental levels (Berger 2004; Cohen 1979; Evans-Pritchard 1989; Farver 1984; Hoffman 2003; Mansperger 1995; Nash 1981; Shepherd 2002; Stronza 2001). If we accept the consequences of Ritzer’s (2007, 2008) theory of rationalization, that tourism facilities will inevitably develop in societies throughout the world, then host communities will have to learn to deal with both the advantages and the disadvantages that are attached to the introduction of a tourism industry.

A CASE STUDY: THE STATE OF MAINE’S TOURISM AND LOBSTER INDUSTRIES

For Mainers and non-Mainers alike, tourism and lobstering define the state of Maine. What is more is that the two mainstays in Mainer culture go hand in hand. Locals often say lobster tourism
unofficially began in the area as early as 1614 when John Smith led an expedition from England to the Gulf of Maine. Claiming “[o]f all the four parts of the world that I have seen not inhabited, I would rather live here than anywhere,” as well as encouraging settlers to inhabit the territory’s coast to take advantage of the Gulf’s bounty of lobster and fish stock, Smith put the fishery and land that would later become a part of Maine on the map to outsiders (Woodard 2004). Officially, though, tourism in the state did not begin until a few decades preceding the Civil War. At the time, leisure was still an activity for a select crowd of wealthier descendants of the Puritan migration and a rare opportunity for people of ordinary means (Woodard 2004). Consequently, the state’s tourism facilities were still extremely modest along the coast then.

With the onset of the Civil War, Maine’s fishing industry collapsed almost as quickly as it had boomed just years before. The prosperous Triangular Fish Trade was interrupted then halted, and the duties placed on goods during the war sent hundreds of the state’s fishing firms into bankruptcy. Up to this point, trying to make a living by catching lobster had never crossed anyone’s mind (Woodard 2004). In fact, catching lobster was seen as something a small boy could do just by wading in shallow water and gaffing at one as it appeared just beneath the water’s surface. If anything, lobstering was a game or a hobby, not a form of commerce and a means of income (DMR 2009; Gulf of Maine Research Institute 2012; Woodard 2004). Furthermore, lobster was nowhere near as commercially valuable as cod, mackerel, or heron. In colonial times, lobsters were even considered poverty food and were served to children, women, and indentured servants. Some of those indentured servants in Massachusetts’s District of Maine even rebelled against having to eat lobster, demanding to only be fed the creature no more than three times a week (DMR 2009; Gulf of Maine Research Institute 2012). But, with the rest of the fishing industry in ruins by changes in law, markets, and technology triggered by the Civil War, fishermen hesitantly turned to lobstering to survive.

In these same decades following the Civil War, ‘rusticators’ were just beginning to populate Maine’s summer months to see the actual places many renown artists, such as Samuel Triscott, George Bellow, and Eric Hudson (Woodward 2004), had painted during their stays in Maine. Either intentionally or not, these “artists discovered beautiful places [in Maine] and, in painting them, put them on the maps consulted by the East Coast’s summering classes” (Woodard 2004:20). Upon realizing that the state was fixed in a simpler time, like when the rest of New England was still rural, agrarian, and Protestant, rusticators found refuge there from the Industrial Age’s noise, pollution, and influx of immigrants that had come to overwhelm larger urban areas elsewhere. In Maine, rusticators could recharge their batteries by rusticating among Yankee folk and God. As this class of summer people inundated the state more and more during the summer months, local Mainers quickly transformed the coast to accommodate them. New hotels were constructed all along the coast’s beaches and around Mount Desert Island’s mountains,
and railroad lines created a network among towns from Southern Maine to Downeast Maine for tourists’ pleasure and consumption.

While local Mainers celebrated the development of tourism facilities as a way to regain the economic privileges and opportunities their parents and grandparents had enjoyed before the Civil War, the summer people, mainly the rusticators, hoped to preserve coastal Maine and its rural landscapes. These competing visions of Maine life caused locals and summer people, though dependent on one another, to turn against each other (Woodard 2004). In Bar Harbor during the early 1900s, for example, rusticators fought with local Mainers’ attempts to modernize their town. The cottagers’ Village Improvement Association blocked the construction of a trolley line, petitioned against utility poles, and barred the possession or use of cars in the town until 1913. Charles W. Eliot, one of the many notable rusticators involved in fighting local modernization efforts, once said: “[w]hat needs to be forever excluded from [Mount Desert Island] is the squalor of the city, with all its inevitable bustle, dirt and ugliness” (Woodard 2004:198).

Although local Mainers were dependent on the tourist trade, the opposition they faced by the summer people drained their patience. As Colin Woodard (2004:198) notes in his book, The Lobster Coast, “Mainers felt their cherished independence slipping away.” For the previous few centuries, generations of local Mainers had undergone a peculiar historical experience: six Indian Wars (1675-1763), including King Phillip’s War (1675-1678) and the French-Indian War (1754-1763), the American Revolution (1775-1783), and the War of 1812. During this tumultuous period, the locals’ land had been transformed from one of England’s federal preserves, to a colony of a colony (Massachusetts’ District of Maine), and finally to an independent state. When the territory was admitted to the Union in 1820, local Mainers pledged that they would never again lose their land to outsiders who wished to seize control of the coast’s land, economy, and political decisions. As a result, Mainers became resistant to the tourists’ attempt to control them, their ways of life, and their means of survival. Many summer families have noted over the years that they have been taken aback by the locals’ insistence to be treated with respect (Woodward 2004).

However, local Mainers learned to deal with these tourists due to the many economic options they brought to Maine communities during the summer months. One of these options was in the way that rusticators tended to eat lots of seafood, especially lobsters, during their stays in Maine and, in doing so, provided a much-needed boost to the state’s new division of inshore lobstermen (DMR 2009; Gulf of Maine Research Institute 2012; Woodard 2004). In fact, in the early 1880s, rusticators and other summer people became so crazed for lobster that lobstermen could be sure to sell every lobster they harvested. With this increase in demand for lobster, a number of things happened to Maine’s newly developed lobster industry. First, the number of lobstermen expanded from only a few dozen in 1840 to nearly 2,000
in 1880. Secondly, innovations in lobster distribution allowed lobsters to be transported across the country first via canning methods and then via smack vessels and tanks (DMR 2009; Woodard 2004). And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it became increasingly clear that the lobsters being caught were shrinking both in individual size and in total population. Blaming the lobster canneries for consuming millions of juvenile lobsters before they could spawn, Maine’s lobstermen set in motion a number of conservation measures (e.g., forbidding the catch of egg-bearing females and undersized lobsters) to save the industry (DMR 2009; Gulf of Maine Research Institute 2012; Woodard 2004). Yet despite these efforts, the lobster population continued to show signs of distress. By the 1920s, the annual catch was down to about 5 million pounds per year (Woodard 2004).

Convinced that violating the conservation laws they had established years ago was probably doing more damage than was previously thought (DMR 2009; Woodward 2004:191), Maine’s lobster industry set in motion even stricter conservation measures following the stock market crash. In addition to the measures that were already in place, the industry banned lobstermen from keeping all lobsters whose carapace measured less than 3 1/16 inches and more than 4 ¾ inches (DMR 2009; Woodard 2004).

Furthermore, biologists and conservationists began studying the Gulf of Maine’s coast during the late 1930s to determine the viability of the state’s future fishing industry (Woodard 2004). While they found that the Gulf’s fishing stock was not infinite, as a number of fish populations already appeared to be shrinking, its lobsters seemed to be repopulating and prospering due to the conservation efforts. Between 1980 and today, as the number of traps in Maine waters has increased, the number of landings has exploded exponentially each year. In 1991, the total lobster harvests amounted to 30.8 million pounds; in 2002, 62.3 million pounds; and in 2012, 127 million pounds (Woodard 2004). Scientists and lobstermen alike have been dumbfounded by these figures, uncertain as to how these landings have been able to persist despite signs of climate change and disease active in the Gulf of Maine (Associated Press 2013; DMR 2009; Foster 2013; Woodard 2004). Whether it involves the movement of the ocean currents, the type of bottom lobsters prefer, or a consequence of global warming, scientists have yet to fully understand the reasons behind the state’s expanding landings.

While some may believe the increase in lobster landings is beneficial to Maine’s lobster industry, it has actually hurt it more than it has done any good. When there is a glut of supply that lacks a comparable glut of demand, dock prices for lobster decline dramatically (Austen 2013; Bidgood 2013; Canfield 2013; Tranfaglia 2013; Wee 2013). Looking at the total lobster dock value in 2012, $338 million seems like a lot of money (Wee 2013). But, with 127 million pounds of harvested lobster in 2012, this breaks down to as little as $2.20 per pound (Wee 2013) – nearly a 40% drop from 2007 (Canfield 2013) – going directly to local lobstermen (Austen 2013; Bidgood 2013; Murrell 2013). In some areas of Maine, prices in the summer of 2012 were even as low as $1.20 per pound since dock prices can vary from one
port to the next (Austen 2013). In either case, the point to take away is that lobster prices have tanked to a 40-year low (Bidgood 2013). After taking into consideration the necessary supplies (bait, fuel, traps, navigation devices, etc.) that lobstermen need to actually go out and haul lobster, which costs nearly $500 per outing, there is little profit to be made for lobstermen at the end of the day (Wee 2013). However, these recent difficulties have not seemed to correlate with a decrease in tourists’ cravings of lobster. Restaurant prices for Maine lobster locally and elsewhere still remain at a premium (Murphy 2012). It may just be the case that while 60-80 million pounds of lobster is enough to satisfy tourists’ demands, the remaining 40-60 million pounds is just too much.

As a result, lobstermen have done everything in their power to try to curb these supply and demand issues. Conservation efforts, for instance, have once again become even stricter, now banning lobstermen from keeping all lobsters whose carapace measures less than 3 ¼ inches and more than 5 inches; making mandatory the V-shaped notching in the flippers of egg-bearing females as a badge of ‘motherhood’; limiting the number of traps that lobstermen can set to 800; and requiring a 1-2 year apprenticeship for entrance into the industry (DMR 2009; Gulf of Maine Research Institute). However, since even these strategies, which are now almost a decade old, have yet to lower the total landings in order to deal with the economic and ecological issues at hand, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (formerly known as the Maine Lobster Promotion Council) has decided to increase its annual marketing budget for lobsters more than six fold over the next three years to a total of $2.4 million. The law, which took effect in October of 2013, will augment the current lobster-marketing budget to $750,000 for the current 2013-2014 fiscal year, $1.5 million for 2014-2015, and $2.4 million for 2015-2016 (Austen 2013; Bidgood 2013; Canfield 2013; Murrell 2013; Tranfaglia 2013).

The Marketing Collaborative, whose mission is to promote the sale of Maine lobster to customers worldwide, hopes its new marketing budget will transform the glut of supply the industry faces into a glut of demand (Canfield 2013). In addition to pushing for the state of Maine to drop its dependence on Canadian processing plants (where Maine lobsters are currently stamped with “Made in Canada” labels before being distributed around the world) and become self-sufficient in lobster processing within the next three years (between 2014 and 2016) (Austen 2013; Bidgood 2013; Murrell 2013; Tranfaglia 2013), the Marketing Collaborative will aim to market Maine’s soft-shell lobsters in a way that shows how its product is different, and perhaps even better, than Canada’s hard-shell lobsters, thereby hopefully spurring greater demand (Austen 2013; Bidgood 2013; Murrell 2013; Tranfaglia 2013).

Yet even with the Marketing Collaborative’s promises, lobstermen are reluctant to place their trust in an organization that has supposedly been trying to market Maine lobster for decades. And lobstermen are equally reluctant to entrust their well being to the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, an organization that represents 1,200 fishermen along the East Coast by working to sustain both the state’s
lobster industry and its resources by supposedly providing a voice for the lobstersmen on a number of issues that affect them (Tranfaglia 2013). Many lobstersmen believe that, if profits have consistently been lost over the past few decades to a number of outsider parties involved in the lobster trade, both the Marketing Collaborative (previously the Promotion Council) and the Maine Lobstersmen’s Association should have already addressed those issues instead of having allowed them to proliferate out of control as they are now. To overcome this wariness and to personally strive toward a higher dock price, many lobstersmen have already met with, and some have even joined, the Maine Lobstersmen Union, a local organization of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (Bidgood 2013). This partnership has shocked many in the industry, including the Maine Lobstersmen’s Association, who view lobstersmen’s involvement in a union at odds with the very integrity, strength, and independence lobstersmen enjoy and have historically been known for. As Patrice McCarron, the executive director of the Maine Lobstersmen’s Association, said in a recent interview with the New York Times: “[t]o put lobstersmen in the role of a laborer, rather than a business owner, I don’t think is a healthy way to characterize this fleet of lobstersmen” (Bidgood 2013). McCarron has doubts as to how effective the union can be to actually help resolve the issues lobstersmen face. Since lobstersmen are not dependent employees, the union cannot even bring their complaints to the National Labor Relations Board like other union members’ grievances (Bidgood 2013).

Despite all of this turmoil within Maine’s lobster industry, and the imbalanced power dynamic that summer people continue to maintain in their interactions with the locals (Sambides 2011a,b; Tobias 2011), people from all over the country and across the world still come to visit Maine in search of Vacationland – a sanctuary from the modern world’s problems, where they can replenish what has been drained by society’s rational systems and connect with a quaint and unspoiled rural Yankee landscape – but also to eat homarus americanus, the seemingly indestructible and enduring icon in the state of Maine. Today, lobster shacks up and down the coast are some of the most popular restaurants tourists can frequent (Murphy 2012). However, even if they dislike the taste of lobster, tourists can still get their fill of the state’s icon since lobster-themed items are one of the top selling souvenirs in Maine (Woodard 2004). Stop by Ogunquit Trading Post, for example, and you will undoubtedly come across lobster-themed mugs, magnets, slippers, jewelry, soap, nightlights, stuffed animals, clothes, hats and more. According to one witty Mainer saying, “there are no tourist traps in the state, only lobster traps.”

Within the past few decades, a new kind of ‘lobster trap’ has exploded onto Maine’s tourism scene: lobster boat tours. According to ten different lobster boat tour companies’ websites (Maine Lobster 2013), lobster boat tours are interactive experiences that transform tourists into local lobstersmen for 90 minutes. Before the boat even leaves the boatyard, tourists are issued rubber coveralls and gloves to make them look and feel like lobstersmen. Then, led by active lobstersmen in the industry, the tourists are shown
some of the ins and outs of lobstering by experiencing a sample of the life and work of the Maine lobsterman. The hands-on excursion allows tourists to see exactly how lobsters are caught by encouraging them to participate in hauling, baiting, and setting the traps. The lobstermen guides also teach the tourists about the history of lobstering in Maine, the anatomy of the lobster, and the different conservation efforts lobstermen must be aware of in their daily routines. It is this form of lobster tourism that I have used as a case study to develop new insights into tourism experiences by examining the relationships, and not just the distinct roles, of the three primary tourism roles in tourism studies.

METHODOLOGY

From mid-September of 2013 until mid-March of 2014, I explored the lobster tourism industry in the state of Maine – namely, its lobster boat tour experiences – with one major goal in mind: to make sense of, and to build on, the current theory in tourism studies that largely considers the roles of tourist, tourism facility operator, and local community member as fixed and separate entities. Since this research began as an exploratory study, I used qualitative methods to develop a thorough understanding of the set of relationships involved in tourism studies. That research design will be discussed in the following section.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To enhance my understanding of tourism relations while studying the lobster boat tour industry in Maine, I used an ethnographic research design that combined ethnographic interviews with participant observation. I conducted participant observation on October 14, 2013 when I traveled to Portland, Maine to participate in one of Downeast Boat Tour’s lobster boat tours. During my trip I was able to take pictures and videos of my experience as well as audio recordings of some of the information conveyed by the lobstermen guides. Following the tour, with the help of these note-taking devices, I recorded detailed notes of my experience just as the events happened. Even though I was unable to actually interview the lobstermen guides that conducted my lobster boat tour, my participant observation experience provides valuable insight into Downeast’s tourism facility operator role and its relationship with tourists and local community members.

The preliminary process of selecting observations for conducting ethnographic interviews with each of the three primary tourism roles was based on purposive sampling methods. I restricted my observations to include only those people that were theoretically relevant for the purposes of my research, i.e. people that matched the three tourism roles. That purposive sample was then supplemented with a methods to select individuals from within each of those roles. In each of the interviews I conducted, I used interview guides that I had pre-designed specifically for each of the tourism roles (See appendix I).
So the tourists were asked a similar set of questions that were different from the set of questions I asked the tourism facility operators, and those sets of questions were different from the set of questions I asked the local community members. Furthermore, after receiving each of the participants’ verbal consent, I audio-recorded our conversations via a note-taking application on my iPad so I could easily transcribe the interviews at a later time.

Some of the first people I conducted ethnographic interviews with were lobster boat tourists. On the tour I participated in, I established a relationship, and exchanged contact information, with four of the ten tourists, thus generating a kind of convenience sample. Between October 14 and November 15 of 2013, I was able to get in touch with, and interview, three of those four tourists. Two of the three tourists (both of whom were from out of state) were interviewed over the phone, while the third tourist (a local) was interviewed in person. Then, in an effort to obtain a greater sample of tourists, I placed an advertisement in a local college’s ‘student digest’ from February 3 to February 8 of 2014, which offered a $10 incentive to students who had experienced a lobster boat tour in Maine sometime in the past to participate in my study. From this kind of convenience sample, three students, all of whom reside in Maine while they are not in school, responded to this advertisement and agreed to be interviewed. Overall, I conducted a total of six ethnographic interviews with lobster boat tourists.

To interview individuals from the tourism facility operator role, I drew on the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative’s webpage on lobster boat tours, which lists all of the official lobster boat tour companies in the state, as a sampling frame for convenience sampling. Of the fifteen lobster boat tour companies listed on the site, I was able to get in contact with, and interview over the phone, three lobstermen guides from three separate lobster boat tour companies between January 1 and February 1 of 2014.

As for the local community members, I defined this role to include only the local commercial lobstermen not affiliated with the lobster tourism industry. This narrow conceptualization aimed to fit the local role described in the literature – that is, the local whose economic, cultural, and environmental circumstances are most likely to be affected either beneficially or detrimentally through their direct or indirect encounters with lobster boat tour companies and visiting tourists. Although I now realize that local tourists who participate in lobster boat tours are indeed locals who may be impacted by their experiences, I originally thought that their interests in lobster tourism better aligned with the interests of visiting out-of-state tourists. From personal experience of being a local aboard a lobster boat tour, I knew how difficult it was to retain a local identity while also performing a tourist role. In fact, although I have grown up around the lobster industry in Maine my entire life, because the lobster boat tour experience was so engaging I found myself behaving more like a tourist than a local during the tour. For that reason, I decided to categorize local tourists under the general tourist role. Later I will discuss the implications of
this decision. As for the other potential locals – the permanent residents of Maine – because many of them may have never heard of lobster boat tours, and/or may have never simultaneously interacted with lobster boat tourists and lobstermen guides in the lobster tourism industry, I chose to totally exclude them from the sampling population of local community members. In short, not all of those locals match the local role currently described in tourism studies. With that being said, I was able to conduct phone interviews with a total of five commercial lobstermen between October of 2013 and February of 2014. This group of locals was located through snowball sampling.

When using ethnographic research strategies, there are a number of ethical issues that can arise. For example, the difficulty with using ethnographic interview formats is that they almost always require participants to provide information that could harm or embarrass them if the information they give were to go public. That is why I read a verbal consent form to each of the participants before I interviewed them. If the participants felt uncomfortable with whatever I was asking, they had the right to pass the question or to stop the interview altogether. However, the questions I did ask, as well as the methods of participant observation I used, which have been reviewed and accepted by the Institutional Review Board, were not particularly probing and thus did not pose any foreseeable physical, psychological, or social dangers to the participants. Even so, the participants’ answers and behaviors have been, and will continue to be, kept completely confidential. To make sure of this, I have used pseudonyms to conceal the participants’ true identities – e.g. Tourist Don, Lobsterman Jim, Guide Stan. Furthermore, my notes from participant observation as well as each of the audio recordings of the interviews are stored in a locked file on my iPad, and each of the transcriptions to those recordings is stored in a concealed folder on my laptop. In the following section, I will discuss the themes that emerged from my qualitative analysis of these observations and transcriptions.

FINDINGS

In many ways, the findings from my case study of Maine’s lobster tourism industry match the current theory in tourism studies. In addition to confirming tourists’ quests for authenticity (which I will discuss in greater detail shortly), the lobstermen guides I spoke with revealed that they were influenced to transform and convert aspects of their commercial lobster businesses into charter businesses due to the economic advantages (e.g., additional sources of income) that tourism can generate when commercial lobstering might be unproductive. Furthermore, I found that commercial lobstermen appreciate the lobstermen guides’ enthusiasm to (a) educate tourists about the lobster industry and the common struggles commercial lobstermen face, and (b) excite tourists to buy the product they harvest. By promoting lobstering and Maine lobster, many commercial lobstermen feel as though the lobstermen guides and their
lobster boat tour companies are preserving a local tradition and way of life in the state that has recently been threatened by a mix of economic and political factors.

Indeed, all of this fits in nicely with the current conversation in tourism studies. However, what I wish to discuss in depth is not what other scholars of tourism studies have already observed theoretically and empirically. Instead, I will use the following sections to talk about new insights that have emerged from my research of Maine’s lobster tourism industry, which I believe not only make better sense of, but also build on, the discipline’s existing theory and data. Since ‘authenticity’ is perhaps the richest ongoing conversation in tourism studies, I will begin by discussing the different forms that appear aboard lobster boat tour experiences. Then I will shift my focus to illuminate the fluidity and complexity of tourism roles evident in my data.

AUTHENTICITY

All of the tourists I spoke with, whether they were locals or not, decided to participate aboard a lobster boat tour to temporarily escape from the constraints of their daily routines and to encounter and understand the cultures, social lives, and natural environments of others, which in this case were those of commercial lobstermen living and working in the state of Maine. Tourist Pete, an avid traveler from Utah, wanted to “check out a culture that [he] hadn’t stumbled across before,” and Tourist Sally, a local from a coastal community in Maine, mentioned how she wanted to experience an aspect of Maine that she had grown up around but did not know much about. Accordingly, with the exception of Tourist Don, each of the tourists considered themselves authenticity seekers. Consuming authenticity was the ultimate goal of the tourists’ travels to the lobster boat tour experiences despite some of the tours’ obvious inauthenticities. In the following subsections, I will describe the specific forms of authenticity these tourists sought out in their travels to Maine’s lobster tourism industry. Furthermore, as the review of literature suggests, tourism facility operators often attempt to (re)invent place-marketing strategies embodying a certain form of authenticity in order to attract authenticity-seeking tourists, and locals may even try to shape those manufactured forms of authenticity and their corresponding place-marketing strategies by urging the development of tourism facilities that help preserve their local traditions. Those efforts, and how they arise in Maine’s lobster boat tour experiences, will also be discussed in the following subsections.

“Ticketed Lobstermen and Lobsterwomen”

In recent news reports, lobster boat tour companies, like Downeast Boat Tours, have been called “a tourism trend toward ‘authentic experiences’” (MacLean 2013). Several times a day during the summer and early-fall months, lobstermen guides take tourists out on active commercial lobster boats so they can sample the life and work of a typical Maine lobsterman. In this form of lobster tourism tourists’ supposed quests for authenticity are thought to be satisfied by the chance to interactively take part in a
true Maine lobstering experience. When I flew home to Maine on October 14, 2013 to participate in one of Downeast’s final lobster boat tours of the season, I was able to discern the company’s attempt to provide a service to tourists that was an accurate portrayal of the state’s commercial lobster industry.

Our (my and the rest of the tourists’) official “initiation” into the lobster industry was marked when Stephanie, a lobsterwoman and helper to Captain Gary, jumped on top of the wharf’s railing and summoned “all ticketed lobstermen and lobsterwomen” to congregate near the boat ramp leading to where Downeast’s lobster boat was docked. Then, before entering the very standard-looking, 37-foot lobster boat, Lobsterwoman Stephanie, as she liked to be called, demonstrated how “real” lobstermen climb on board: you sit outward on the boat’s starboard railing near the cabin, lift your feet, and pivot your bottom 180 degrees clockwise until you are facing the port side of the boat. Once everyone had followed this three-step entrance, Lobsterwoman Stephanie distributed the classic Maine lobsterman attire: orange rubber coveralls (aprons) and orange rubber gloves. Even before we had left the boatyard I was already beginning to look and feel like a true Maine lobsterman. My identity as tourist was fading.

When we finally arrived at our first buoy, Lobsterwoman Stephanie and Captain Gary demonstrated, then encouraged us to help them perform, the routine procedure of hauling, baiting, and setting the lobster traps. First, Captain Gary revealed how, with the help of an engine pulley with a drive belt that ran a winch to a mechanical lift, he could easily haul in from the water the buoy and the two traps connected by a pot line (rope). Once the pot line was coiled on the boat’s floor, the traps had to be manually lifted into the boat and set in place, one beside the other, on the starboard railing. Before dumping the traps back into the water, Lobsterwoman Stephanie taught us how to bait bags with heron and how to fix one of those bags in each of the two lobster traps. When both of the traps had been installed with new bait bags, their doors were shut and fastened with a bungee cord. Captain Gary then instructed us to push the lobster traps back into the water on his orders.

This procedure of hauling, baiting, and setting repeated another five times during our trip. During that time we caught six lobsters, three of which were keepers – an average landing for the time and effort put in to the outing. As lobsters appeared in our traps, there were several things we had to do to make sure they were legal to keep due to a number of conservation efforts and catching regulations that Maine lobstermen must follow by law. First, we had to check the lobsters’ sex. To do so, we examined each of the lobsters’ swimmerets, the flap-like appendage structures located underneath their tails. If the lobsters were female (indicated by soft and feathery swimmerets), we also had to check whether they were berried – that is, whether they were carrying eggs beneath their tails. In our trip we never came across any berried females, but if we had we would have had to notch those females’ second tail flippers from the right with V-shape incisions so that other lobstermen would know of those lobsters’ “motherhoods.” By doing this, Lobsterwoman Stephanie says lobstermen are preserving a healthy and fertile breeding pool of lobsters so
the Gulf of Maine’s lobster population can withstand high volume fishing efforts. Next, for those lobsters that were not berried, we had to measure their carapaces (the part of lobsters’ shells that extends from their eyes to where their back meets their tail) with a gauge to make sure they were the proper size to keep. Maine law maintains that a lobster’s carapace must be at least 3 ¼ inches and no more than 5 inches in length. If measurements either fall short of or exceed those requirements, such lobsters must be thrown back into the ocean until they mature to the appropriate dimensions.

Downeast Boat Tours is not the only lobster boat tour company that attempts to provide this true Maine lobsterman experience. When I asked another lobstermen guide, Guide Stan, who runs his charter business out of a different coastal town, whether he had heard of the use of authenticity in tourism contexts, he replied by saying “I think my company is as authentic as it comes…everything is exactly the same when I go charter fishing as if I were to go out commercial fishing for the day.” In fact, Guide Stan even advertises his lobster boat tour company as “an experience aboard a real working Maine lobster boat.” The only differences in preparing the boat between when Guide Stan goes charter fishing and when he goes commercial fishing is that when he takes out tourists he puts two four-foot benches against the port and stern sides of the boat so the tourists can sit down, and he removes the tank from the main deck since he does not retail his lobsters to his tourists. Furthermore, Guide Stan says that he travels a bit slower through the harbor when he has tourists with him so they will not get sea sick, which consequently limits the number of traps he can haul per hour. But other than those “minor differences,” he claims to conduct his charter business in such a way that closely resembles his commercial business. When one tourist asked him about his boat’s rather loud engine, he retorted: “sure the exhaust engine is loud, but that’s just part of the ambiance that you’re offering here [on a working lobster boat].”

With Downeast Boat Tours, which might also be the case with Guide Stan’s company, I felt as if Lobsterwoman Stephanie and Captain Gary were trying to carefully maintain a similar resemblance between commercial lobstering and charter lobstering. After hauling, baiting, and setting the traps, as well as learning about all of the conservation efforts and the necessary procedures to obey them, I truly believed that I had temporarily experienced a sample of the life and work of a typical Maine lobsterman. For 90 minutes my tourist role had seemingly dissolved and I had harnessed the identity of an honorary, or “ticketed,” lobsterman. I could tell some of the other tourists on board felt the same way. For example, at the end of the tour one older man got off the boat before realizing he was still donning his rubber coveralls and rubber gloves; and one woman asked where she could “sign up to become a lobsterwoman like Stephanie.”

One of the tourists on my tour whom I interviewed, Tourist Pete, who came to Maine with the objective of consuming a piece of Mainer culture, was one of these tourists who had been totally captivated by his role as a “ticketed” lobsterman. At the time of our interview, he had already visited
nearly every country in North America, Europe, and Asia in search of seeing different landscapes, meeting different people, and experiencing different cultures. “We always like to check out cultures that we haven’t stumbled across before,” he told me. “We really like to immerse ourselves in whatever culture we visit and try out new things that are special to that setting and society.” Being able to participate in baiting the bags, hauling the traps, and measuring the lobsters made Tourist Pete feel like a real lobsterman because, as he reasoned, “[w]e experienced it. We went out on a charter boat and we did what they [commercial lobstermen] do.” Accordingly, when I asked him if he could note any perceived differences between what lobstermen guides do on their boat tours and what commercial lobstermen might do in their daily routines, he could not readily think of any.

As much as I felt like an honorary lobsterman during the tour, I was not blind to some of the tour’s components that could render the experience inauthentic to some tourists. That is, I could easily discern the reality that Downeast’s lobster boat tour was a service crafted for the tourist’s consumption despite the illusion it had created that indeed made me feel as if I were more than just a tourist. Right after we had tied our aprons and slipped on our gloves, for example, I was quickly reminded of my tourist role once Lobsterwoman Stephanie began riffling through a number of safety procedures. We were encouraged to get up, walk around, and participate in the hauling, baiting, and setting of the traps, but advised to be apprehensive of our sea legs since we “might not be accustomed to being out on a boat as often as [she] and Captain Gary.” As she was speaking, I looked around the boat and noted six of the ten tourists snapping pictures of Portland’s working waterfront, visiting cruise ships, and dockside restaurants. I was again reminded that I was not an actual lobsterman. Rather, like Lobsterwoman Stephanie had clearly addressed us, I was only a “ticketed” lobsterman.

Furthermore, during the ten minutes or so that it took us to get past the commotion of the wharf where ships were docking to load and unload passengers and cargo, Lobsterwoman Stephanie briefly informed us about the history of lobstering in Maine, shared a few anecdotes of her experiences in the industry, and pointed out notable cottages, lighthouses, and landmarks on the distant shore. Certainly commercial lobstermen would not self-tour their outings. Meanwhile, the tourists, myself included, continued to snap pictures and record videos of anything and everything we saw, trying to consume every last bit of the harbor and of our experiences. When we finally began tending the traps, another inauthentic instance in addition to all of the scripted demonstrations came when one woman refused to participate in baiting a trap because she was too busy trying to Instagram her husband loading a bag with heron. Another woman even interrupted one of Lobsterwoman Stephanie’s demonstrations to ask for a family photo. Finally, what seemed to be the conclusive check back into my tourist role was at the end of the tour when Lobsterwoman Stephanie and Captain Gary offered each of us tourists the chance to buy one or two of the lobsters they stored in a smack located in the back of the cabin. I bought two.
Although he came to Maine with the intention of consuming a piece of Mainer culture like Tourist Pete had, Tourist Roger was also skeptical about the total authentic package of the lobster boat tour. While he noted that the lobster boat tour experience indeed attempted to position tourists in the lobsterman role by carrying out more or less the same procedures that an actual lobsterman might perform (i.e. “the process of pulling up the lobster traps and baiting them and seeing the lobster we caught”), he also emphasized the differences between the experience of lobstering with Downeast’s lobster boat tours and what he imagined might be the experience of lobstering with a commercial lobsterman. “A person [one who fishes commercially] who operates one of those boats is probably actually hauling in hundreds of those traps a day instead of, you know, 5 or 8 or however many we checked. And I can imagine that the conditions the farther you go out are a lot different…You know, it was a nice day, the seas seemed to be calm [on our tour], and I’m just guessing that it’s not like that everyday.”

This feeling of doubt was also true for Tourists Megan, Henry, and Sally, self-proclaimed authenticity-seeking local tourists who participated in lobster boat tour experiences roughly six to eight years ago. Tourist Megan remembers her time on the water as relaxing and easygoing; Tourist Henry called his experience less grueling and more scenic than the kind of commercial lobstering that many of his friends and family members are involved in; and Tourist Sally, who currently works for a boat tour company that docks its schooner next to the lobster boat tour she experienced, mentioned how lobster boat tours are at best “watered-down versions” of what goes on in the “real commercial fishing industry.” Both Tourist Megan and Tourist Henry noted that if lobster boat tour companies wanted to truly create accurate representations of the commercial industry then they would have to, for example, operate their boat tours at the same early hours that commercial lobstermen operate so that tourists could see the genuine inner workings of the industry. However, since “no one would ever go on tours that early” (Tourist Megan), Tourist Sally says how “we [tourists] must realize that the tours are not exact to the inner workings of the industry – there are major discrepancies between the two.”

Although Lobsterman Jim had never heard of ‘authenticity’ to describe tourism experiences, when asked to try to define what it might mean in terms of lobster boat tours he guessed “it might have something to do with the fact that it’s exactly what we do…So in that case it is a pretty authentic experience.” Lobsterman Freddie would have agreed with this statement. He noted that “whether you’re in lobster tourism or in the commercial lobster industry, there’s only one way you can catch that lobster.” But unlike Lobsterman Freddie, Lobsterman Jim later rescinded his original response, making very clear the differences between the “polished version” of lobstering that tourists experience with lobster boat tours and the kind of “hard-core” lobstering he and his fellow commercial lobstermen practice on a daily basis. “It’s not easy, it’s a tough duty. But the boat tours are pretty laid back. If you spent a day with me today you’d be like ‘holy shit!’ It’s really rough.” It is that same kind of feeling that Lobstermen Paul,
Michael, and Harry all shared: while the lobster boat tours might indeed be authentic tourist experiences, they are not really accurate representations of the true commercial lobster industry. Not only is the pace that lobster boat tours take to navigate through the harbor slower than the average pace taken by commercial lobstermen, which consequently limits harvest production, but also, as Lobsterman Michael mentions, “the lobster boat tours kind of just make a lot of people think of lobstering as easy and fun.” According to Lobstermen Harry, which echoes Lobsterman Jim’s concerns, “the authentic experience [of commercial lobstering] took place last Saturday afternoon when a Nor’easter was covering my face full of snow while I was pounding through a four foot wall of fog and precipitation as I tried to finish hauling up my traps for the day – now that’s authentic.” But unfortunately, due to the obvious safety hazards of such conditions, tourists are unable to participate in what four of the five commercial lobstermen consider to be an authentic representation of commercial lobstering.

“*It’s All About Educating*”

Despite the fact that many of the tourists I interviewed were able to discern the discrepancies between charter fishing and commercial fishing, thereby indicating that the lobster boat tours might not exactly be authentic experiences in terms of being accurate portrayals of commercial lobstering, each of those tourists mentioned how the lobster boat tours were nonetheless educational contacts. Of course lobstermen guides are not going to take out tourists at 4 AM or during inclement weather. So in that sense the lobster boat tours are indeed polished versions of commercial lobstering. But the information that the lobstermen guides convey during their tours is accurate. As Tourist Megan noted, “what the captain [guide] was teaching us about what a lobster needs to do in terms of meeting certain regulations and all that in order for lobstermen to keep them, especially the sizing, the quota of lobsters allowed per outing per year, and all of the other logistics, is true to the real lobster industry. I mean, why would they tell us something and then not actually do it, right?” Tourist Henry reiterates this idea when he said that “because you can never really duplicate what [commercial lobstermen] actually do, the tours would have to be as informative as possible to get a glimpse of an idea of what lobstering is like.”

Unlike Downeast Boat Tours and Guide Stan’s company that primarily attempt to make tourists feel like “ticketed lobstermen or lobsterwomen,” Guide Ken, who runs his boat tour company out of major port, actually advertises his tours as “educational authentic experiences.” In fact, Guide Ken acknowledges that it might very well be impossible for lobster boat tours to accurately represent commercial lobstering due to the sheer level of intensity that commercial lobstermen must maintain when they go out on the water. According to him, the very procedure of hauling, baiting, and setting the traps is completely different when lobstermen are charter fishing compared to when they are commercial fishing. The pace is a lot slower so that tourists can actually understand the steps taken to haul, bait, and set the
traps, which reduces the number of traps that can be hauled, baited, a set per hour and thus the number of potential lobsters that can be caught in a single outing. Furthermore, although lobstermen do check and measure the lobsters they catch, Guide Ken mentioned how they do not do this as conscientiously as they would if they had to demonstrate to tourists the importance of conservation efforts and catching regulations. Commercial lobstermen know by heart those efforts and regulations, and so measuring the lobsters’ carapaces, checking for berried females, and notching those females’ flippers is done quickly, mindlessly, and basically in one fluid motion. What is more is that Guide Ken understands that when tourists go out on a lobster boat, their attention will be divided between wanting to learn more about lobstering and wanting to take in all of the beautiful sights around them. So his lobster boat tour company, like Downeast’s, also takes time to inform the tourists about the history of lobstering in Maine as well as to point out notable cottages, lighthouses, and landmarks on the distant shore. Guide Ken says that “[o]n the lobster boat tour, it’s all about educating; and when you’re out there fishing, it’s all about fishing.” Fittingly, when I asked him what authenticity in a tourism context meant to him, Guide Ken replied: “It’s all about the quality of the narration and the material you present.” Providing an educational contact to tourists therefore involves lobstermen guides presenting thorough demonstrations of hauling, baiting, and setting traps, as well as giving quality narrations about the history and ins-and-outs of the state’s commercial industry. And for the most part, the commercial lobstermen that I interviewed agreed: while the lobster boat tours might not really be accurate representations to the commercial lobster industry, they do provide a valuable educational experience that presents the same kind of material and information that they practice and abide by day in and day out.

“Everything Was Good Back Then”

Unlike the other tourists I interviewed, Tourist Don, a local tourist, was not particularly enthralled by his title as a “ticketed” lobsterman and the form of authenticity generated by taking part in a true Maine lobstering experience. In fact, not only had he never heard of the use of ‘authenticity’ in the context of tourism before, but even after I explained what it might suggest he emphatically told me that he did not consider himself as someone who sought out authenticity in his travels. Instead, Tourist Don was nostalgic. He yearned to return to an idealized way of life that once existed in Portland. Thus it was not the authenticity of the lobster tourism experience that he was concerned with, but the authenticity of local life – to re-enter a time when Portland’s working waterfront, economy, and local experience was 100% invested in its fish and lobster industries.

Tourist Don’s desire to return to such a way of life was evident in the way that he made a point to express his grief over the changing atmosphere on Commercial Street in Portland in his answers to nearly every question I asked, regardless of its relevance. “I think the city has a vision of what they want to see
down on the waterfront and their vision is not seeing the fishermen and the lobstersmen down there…eventually I find it hard to believe that there will be a fishing industry down there in 20 years like there is today.” Tourist Don predicted that Commercial Street will choose to modernize its harbor, mainly for economic purposes, with even more high rises accommodating condominiums and businesses that will have nothing to do with the fish or lobster industries, chain restaurants that will replace local fish markets, and cruise ship facilities that will force out smaller boat tour companies operated by self-employed fishermen.

Even though Tourist Don is in his early fifties, has lived in Portland his entire life, and has therefore witnessed many of the changes in Portland that he wishes to revert, Tourist Henry, who moved to Kennebunk when he was ten years old and is now only 19 years old, expressed a similar nostalgic emotion when talking about his town and its relationship with the tourism industry. At the moment, the town of Kennebunk is involved in a place-marketing effort that would bundle its space along with Kennebunkport’s space into what would be called ‘The Kennebunks.’ Tourist Henry wishes that his town would remain its own unique tourism space (although it and Kennebunkport have long been considered indistinguishable to locals and tourists alike) since “it just makes a lot of people in the town not angry necessarily, but just as if the tourism industry is trying to make us into the Hamptons or something like that. And we’re not. And we don’t want to be.” What Tourist Henry’s frustration indicates is that nostalgia for displaced place(s) transcends, or ignores, age: persons of all ages can experience a longing to (re)position their personal and collective identities within the place(s) that they can no longer reenter.

Each of the commercial lobstersmen I interviewed shared a similar hope as Tourist Don and Tourist Henry. For the most part, each of these lobstersmen expressed both annoyance and disappointment with the way things are heading in the state’s lobster industry. Above all, their frustrations stemmed from a concern that if the lobster industry continues to tolerate poor dock prices then they might not be able to survive economically for much longer. “We can’t sell our lobsters for, say, $2 bucks per pound,” Lobsterman Jim told me. “It just doesn’t work for us.” Accordingly, each of the commercial lobstersmen look forward to when the commercial lobster industry returns to the days of yesteryear – “back in the old days” (Lobsterman Michael), “once upon a time” (Lobsterman Harry) – when harbors up and down the coast were not crowded with as many lobstersmen, when dock prices for lobsters could support the current costs of living, and when the economy was stable. “What’s happened is that where once upon a time a guy could fish hard for nine months with 600 traps and make a years worth of income and still be able to deal with all his expenses, nowadays full timers are finding themselves 15 miles off shore out of Portland steaming 7 hours to get to their traps, and even then they aren’t sure what they’re going to find and if whatever’s there is going to be enough to live on” (Lobsterman Harry). According to Lobsterman Jim, “everything was good back then.”
Guide Ted, who actually advertises his lobster boat tour company from a “nostalgic-historic perspective,” provides another angle on the longing to return to the days of yesteryear: his lobster boat tour offers a kind of trip back in time to show how Maine lobstermen lobstered 200 years ago. Sailing with a wooden Friendship Sloop, the type of lobster boat lobstermen would have used in the late 1800s, Guide Ted says he has intentionally taken the boat “back to what she was originally built to do – and that’s lobstering.” What is more is that he uses many of the same tools and materials to haul, bait, and set the traps that lobstermen would have used during that period. So instead of using an engine pulley with a drive belt that runs a winch to a mechanical lift to haul the traps, he hauls the traps by hand. And those traps, instead of being made out of either wire or steel, are 100% wooden. So for Guide Ted, his lobster boat tours accurately represent lobstering of the olden days. He told me how many of the commercial lobstermen in the area will often pass by where he docks his Friendship Sloop to appreciate and admire the boat’s charm and deeper meaning to Maine’s lobstering culture: “It’s a kind of nostalgia thing for them” (Guide Ted).

What is interesting when you consider the different approaches of returning to a time and place when “everything was good” is that the point in time, and the specific place(s), that each of these individuals are trying to get back to and reenter are different. For Tourist Don it might be a version of Commercial Street in the 1980s; for Tourist Henry it is Kennebunk five or so years ago; for the commercial lobstermen it is any point in time when their respective working waterfronts were prosperous; and for Guide Ted it is 200 years ago when Friendship Sloops were Maine’s most recognized lobster boat hull. This form of authenticity therefore appears to embody an undefined moving target of re-implacement.

MOVING BEYOND TOURISTS AND QUESTS FOR AUTHENTICITY: ROLE FLUIDITY AND ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

As the previous conversation and the review of literature suggests, each of the three primary tourism roles contributes to modernity’s authenticity crisis. Even in Maine’s lobster tourism industry, tourists demand to find and consume authenticity in various forms; lobstermen guides want to advertise and market their companies in ways that reflect a particular form of authenticity that will attract, and appear genuine to, tourists in their quests; and many commercial lobstermen and local tourists’ longing to be re-implaced in a certain prior way of life might indicate a desire to preserve aspects of their local traditions in tourism facilities, which would also result in the creation of a form of authenticity to be consumed by locals and tourists alike. According to sociologists and anthropologists of tourism studies, one of the most effective ways to deal with this crisis is to construct authentic social forms in tourism spaces that satisfy each of the roles’ interests. This, they say, could be accomplished by taking into
consideration the perspective on authenticity held by each actor. So when tourism facility operators are (re)designing their destinations’ place-marketing strategies to appear authentic to tourists, they should actually consult those tourists to determine what themes, images, and facilities engender the forms of authenticity they seek out in their travels (Berger 2004; Boorstin 1961; Boyle 2003; Ghimire 2001; Gisolf 2010; Gladstone 1998; Gotham 2002, 2007; Jamal and Hill 2002; MacCannell 1973; Nash 1981; Stronza 2001; Urry 1990; Urry and Larsen 2011; Watson 1994). Furthermore, those tourism facility operators should also include local community members in this process since it is thought that tourism spaces can only truly be considered ‘authentic’ if locals have an integral role in deciding the form(s) of authenticity their spaces embody (Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005; Gisolf 2010; Gotham 2002, 2007; Kavartatzis and Hatch 2013; Kneafsey 2000; Thurot and Thurot 1983; Urbain 1989; Urry 1990; Urry and Larsen 2011).

Unfortunately, though, no research as of yet has carefully described how this collaboration and negotiation among tourism roles is actually conducted, or if it is even conducted at all. This proposal is therefore merely theoretical, and consequently perpetuates the belief that each of the three primary tourism roles is a fixed entity engaged in minimal interactions with others. The findings from my study neither confirm nor disprove this hypothesis with respect to the authenticity crisis. However, what my study’s findings do suggest is that if tourism studies moves beyond a focus on just tourists and their quests for authenticity to examining the triangle of tourism relations and the three primary tourism roles’ other endeavors, it becomes evident that such roles are indeed dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are not only highly fluid but they also keep a complex network of relationships.

_Jacks-of-All-Trades_

I first realized that tourism roles might in fact be fluid, not drawn with absolute boundaries after all, upon recognizing that Tourist Don (a local Mainer) and Lobsterman Jim shared a common idealized vision of local life in Portland. Both individuals expressed how they wanted to return to a time when Portland’s working waterfront, economy, and local experience was 100% invested in its fish and lobster industries; to “back in the day” (Tourist Don) when “everything was good” (Lobsterman Jim). Furthermore, each of the lobstermen guides I spoke with told me how just under 50% of the total visitors they welcome aboard their lobster boat tours are local Mainers, many of whom are looking to experience an aspect of Mainer culture they are less knowledgeable about. Based on these two observations, it became evident that tourists often simultaneously negotiate their local roles in tourism contexts, and vice-versa: local Mainers can be at once local community members sharing many of the same nostalgic feelings as commercial lobstermen as well as tourists participating aboard lobster boat tours.

Once my mind had been primed by this discovery, I began to notice all sorts of instances of this kind of dynamism. For example, each of the lobstersmen guides that I spoke with is also an active
commercial lobsterman. For Guide Stan, “the closer we get to Labor Day, when the tourism begins to dry up, is when we start getting our fall run of lobsters and so that’s when I start focusing more on the commercial end of it and not so much on the chartering end.” Both Guide Ken and Guide Ted do the same, fishing commercially following the tourism season. And Guide Ted, in addition to being a lobstermen guide and commercial lobsterman depending on the season, is also a full-time professional researcher for the Marine Biology Department’s Lobster Institute at the University of Maine at Orono where he works “on projects that will help promote Maine lobster.” Furthermore, each of the lobstermen guides is also a local Mainer, and thus embodies another kind of local community member.

Adding to this, commercial lobstermen are also often thought to be more than just lobster harvesters. According to Tourist Megan, “commercial lobstermen have to have a number of jobs in addition to just lobstering in order to fix their traps, do maintenance on the boat, and all that. So they have to know how the boat works, [and] how the lobsters work… And so they’re like marine biologists, and carpenters, and surveyors. They are very multifaceted persons. [Commercial lobstering] is like a number of businesses all in one.” While commercial lobstermen probably would not mind being labeled jacks-of-all-trades in the way that Tourist Megan describes them as, they tend to dislike when people think that their responsibilities as harvesters extend into dealing, retailing, and marketing spheres. Although some commercial lobstermen (like Lobstermen Jim and Harry, Guides Stan and Ken) also served as zone representatives for the Maine Lobster Promotion Council, working to protect commercial lobstermen’s collective interests in their respective zones, for the most part “[h]ere’s what you have to understand” according to Lobsterman Michael: “I am a lobster catcher. And that is a full time job… I don’t want to have to think about how the lobster is being promoted or sold or transported or retailed. It’s my job to catch [lobsters] and deliver them to the dock in the best condition possible. That’s it.” In that sense, there appears to be a conflict within the role that commercial lobstermen are expected to take (Tourist Megan) and the role which they actually make for themselves (Lobsterman Michael). Fittingly, Lobsterman Michael also revealed that he had never even been on a vacation before; he has never taken on his tourist role. In fact, of the five commercial lobstermen I spoke with, only Lobstermen Freddie had been a tourist before. In one of his outings, he had even participated aboard a lobster boat tour. “Of course I’ve been subjected to the work before so I knew everything about it already,” he told me, “but it’s still nice to see others see all the work lobstermen put in.” When I asked Lobsterman Harry whether he had ever experienced a lobster boat tour, he exclaimed: “I think they would probably throw me overboard!”

What these findings suggest is that the three primary tourism roles might in fact be more fluid than the current theory in tourism studies hints at: the tourist, tourism facility operator, and local community member do not appear to be completely separate entities stuck in fixed positions. In the state of Maine’s lobster tourism industry, tourists often simultaneously negotiate their local role, and vice-
versa; lobstermen guides switch between their tourism facility operator role and their local community member role (as both commercial lobstermen and local Mainers) depending on the season; and commercial lobstermen navigate between their roles as harvesters, bureaucrats, tourists, and jacks-of-all-trades. Perhaps, then, the seemingly bounded tourism roles are in fact blurred, allowing persons who fill the roles to make and take multiple functions and responsibilities. What is interesting to consider now that this fluidity of tourism roles has been revealed in the data is how individuals managing a multitude of roles interact with and perceive other actors in their role sets both within and outside of the basic triangle of tourism relations.

“Trying to Get a Piece of the Cake”

In Maine’s lobster industry – both its commercial and tourism sectors – there is a complex network of relations that extend well beyond the basic triangle of relations involving tourists, tourism facility operators, and local community members. While these three roles are indeed by far the most discussed roles in tourism studies, it is important to also note the other sets of relationships that exist outside of this triangle in order to demonstrate why the relations within the triangle are so interesting.

To begin, I came across a few examples in my data that demonstrate the occurrence of conflict in the sets of relationships within the basic triangle of tourism relations. I found that local tourists were much more appreciative of the work performed by commercial lobstermen than were tourists who were not from Maine. Although Tourist Pete, an out-of-state tourist, was someone who professed an avid interest in the settings and societies of the cultures he visits, he did not seem to express an appreciation or respect for the kind of work lobstermen do and the struggles they have recently faced. “To me,” he observed, “lobstermen are just ordinary people who are out there to make a living by catching lobster and selling them.” This view differed drastically from the impression given by Tourist Don, a local tourist: “I think, if anything, going out on that tour today you respect a lobstermen a lot more than you thought. Jeez, you know, what a perfect day we had but they go out every day of the week and I know that there are days when the seas are rough and the winds are blowing with the rain, and so they work hard to earn their money. So you respect that industry.” Furthermore, each of the three lobstermen guides I interviewed mentioned how they thought the commercial lobstermen in their areas were probably jealous of their lobster boat tour companies. As Guide Stan speculated: “I think they’re [commercial lobstermen] envious. Mostly for economic purposes.” While commercial lobstermen have to figure out alternative ways to put food on their dinner tables during drought periods, guides can feel secure in their abilities to earn a living even when they are not hauling in lobsters during their charter outings so long as they can attract a boat full of tourists at $20 per head. As for the commercial lobstermen, it is a no brainer that
there are times during the summer and early-fall months that they rather not have to deal with inattentively meandering tourists.

But, for the most part, the relationships among tourists, commercial lobstermen, and lobstermen guides were positive. The tourists enjoyed the lobster boat tours because they provided awareness of the conservation efforts in the industry, and therefore of commercial lobstermen’s attempts to make Maine lobsters a renewable and sustainable resource. This was a major point that many of the tourists mentioned, especially given the current health-conscious, healthy-eating trend. As a result, the lobster boat tours essentially encouraged the tourists to buy locally harvested lobsters at either a local fish market or at a local restaurant following their tours. As Tourist Megan noted, “lobster boat tours give people more of an appreciation of buying local.” For that reason, all six tourists agreed that commercial lobstermen ought to be thankful for the lobster boat tours’ promotions since they are stimulating the purchase of local lobsters.

The commercial lobstermen that I interviewed were indeed thankful. Each of them respected how the lobster boat tour companies “spread the word” (Lobsterman Paul) and encourage tourists to buy their product. Lobsterman Jim believed the tours can also help spread awareness of the industry’s recent suffering and incite an appreciation for the industry that might lead to increased interest in Maine lobster that would return the industry to the “good life in the 90s.” “I think they’re great and people love it,” Lobsterman Freddie told me. “I think it’s great for our economy.” Moreover, they all noted how the lobstermen guides fish in such a way that essentially has little to no impact on those who are fishing commercially. The guides haul, bait, and set a limited number of traps, and those traps are usually far out of the way of where the “hotspots” (Lobstermen Jim and Paul) are located in any given harbor. In fact, the lobstermen guides even make a conscious effort to make sure that they are not intruding on any of the commercial lobstermen’s territories. Since many of the guides were once, or still are, commercial lobstermen, they know the ins and outs of the industry and “what pisses everybody off” (Guide Ken). That is why each of the three lobstermen guides that I spoke with approached some of the commercial lobstermen in their areas before officially establishing their charter businesses. As Guide Ted told me, “we don’t want to compete with some of the other guys who are actually trying to make a living by pulling the lobsters up. That’s not our gig… So we consciously approach the bait suppliers and the harvesters and retailers. We approached them to make sure that they knew what we were doing with our lobster boat tours. We said to them that we’re not trying to get a piece of the cake, so don’t worry about us.” If anything, then, there is a kind of mutual respect among lobstermen guides and commercial lobstermen across harbors. But at the end of the day, once everyone knows everyone else’s intentions, Lobsterman Michael says his relationship with lobstermen guides in the area is “irrelevant” – “we couldn’t give a shit about what [they’re] doing. They do their thing and we do ours.”
As for their relationships with the tourists, Lobsterman Michael again bluntly noted that “[w]e look at tourists as essential. You know, because somebody has to eat these fucking things. The tourists come to Maine to eat fresh lobster, we hope, so we kind of look forward to them coming to consume our product... So the tourists are not a big issue.” Lobsterman Freddie even said that most of the commercial lobstermen he knows actually “pride themselves on the tourists” because tourists help move their product by accelerating the sale of Maine lobster. Furthermore, because it is so difficult to obtain a license to lobster in the state of Maine, each of the commercial lobstermen told me how they do not feel threatened by tourists who might think lobstering is their calling in life upon participating aboard one of the lobster boat tours: “I’m not too worried about a lot of people getting into the lobster industry because it’s just such a process nowadays with the huge waiting lines to even apply for an apprenticeship” (Lobsterman Jim). On the whole, then, each of the commercial lobstermen agreed that tourists are neither intrusive nor bothersome. If anything they are welcomed to explore the lobster industry’s inner workings (so long as they eventually make their ways to buy local lobster).

Where relations start to get a bit more contentious is when you start to delve into the relationships that each of the three main tourism roles are involved in outside of the basic triangle of relations that I have addressed. For tourists, their relationships with locals can often be antagonistic. This should come as no surprise: locals and tourists have long embraced a kind of love-hate relationship, especially in the state of Maine. Tourist Henry remarked how even though he is often a local tourist, he still gets frustrated when he has to wait in line at a local restaurant because tourists are “in the way.” But at the same time, both he and Tourist Don commented on how both local and out-of-state tourists are beneficial to the community’s economy. Without their presence, many local businesses would fail.

Lobstermen guides often share a similar kind of ‘touchy’ relationship with the other boat tour companies that share their dock space, like deep-sea fishing excursions, schooner and sloop sailing tours, and cruises. Tourist Sally, a local tourist who works for a tour company that docks its schooner beside a lobster boat tour company’s boat, told me how there is actually a lot of tension within the marine tourism industry in the coastal community where she is from. There, the inter-captain dynamics of different boat tours is especially tense in the sense that, since there are many boat tours operating from the same dock there is a bit of competition among the boat tour companies to attract the most tourists. After all, any business in the tourism industry knows that tourists bring in money. It is important to note, though, that this finding observed by Tourist Sally was not mentioned by any of the lobstermen guides that I spoke with.

Commercial lobstermen perhaps have the most complex web of relationships. Each of the commercial lobstermen mentioned how they wished the industry would restrict and reduce the number of people who have the right to go out and harvest lobsters. By doing so, those remaining commercial
lobstermen would be able to set more traps and therefore gain a greater opportunity to catch more lobster and thus make more money. But also, as Lobsterman Michael put it, reductions would “put the power back into the hands of lobstermen over the wholesalers.” At the moment, commercial lobstermen consider dealers to be the “gatekeepers” (Lobsterman Harry) of the lobster industry. So long as there are disproportionately more commercial lobstermen than there are dealers in the industry, dealers will have the power to pass up a lobsterman’s product if that lobsterman refuses the price he receives. So, according to Lobsterman Harry, “I think that unfortunately what is taking place has been a kind of improper relationship between harvesters and dealers. A real disconnect.” Lobsterman Paul expounded on this by saying that “when you come in with a fishing boat and try to sell your product, you get screwed so many times. You don’t get a price that you want…You get paid whatever [dealers] feel like paying you on a particular day.” That is why so many commercial lobstermen had such high hopes for the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. With the news that the Marketing Collaborative would extend its annual marketing budget nearly six-fold between 2013 and 2016 to promote Maine lobster worldwide, many commercial lobstermen thought that by stimulating sales the budget might also help increase dock prices. But unfortunately what these lobstermen have realized is that they are going to be the people responsible for financing the new budget. During the first five months of the marketing plan’s implementation, the organization has already increased lobstering license fees and trap and tag costs in an effort to raise their marketing monies. Each of the lobstermen I interviewed feared that the lobster industry was being undermined by these kind of bureaucratic organizations like the Marketing Collaborative and the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, which they believe hold competing visions regarding the future of Maine’s lobster industry. If some of these issues – crowded harbors, powerless relationships with dealers, and the burden of financing a new marketing budget – are not curbed in the near future, Lobstermen Jim, Freddie, Paul, Michael, and Harry all worry they might have to give up working in an industry they seemingly love more than life itself. When asked what direction he saw the industry heading in, Lobsterman Michael replied: “down the tubes” due to the “political and economic issues the industry is now facing.”

DISCUSSION

In this next section, I will address how my research builds on existing theory in tourism studies. Each of the findings I have presented in the previous section will be grounded in a broader theoretical framework. In the section on “Authenticity,” I will develop conceptualizations of authenticity specifically grounded in my data, and explain how those approaches are an improvement of the existing theory. Then, in the section on “Grounding Role Fluidity and Role Relationships in a Theoretical Framework,” I will propose a theoretical framework which combines structural functionalism’s social role theory and exchange theory’s distributive justice and positive/negative imbalance of benefits to explain my findings.
that tourism roles are highly fluid and maintain a complex network of relationships. Building theory to explain my data is important since the rest of tourism studies’ empirical substance is already theoretically rooted.

AUTHENTICITY

When I began my research on lobster boat tours in the state of Maine, I tried to keep an open mind about the “‘authentic experiences’” (MacLean 2013) that supposedly embody this new tourism trend, as well as the possibility that authentic social forms might not even be discerned upon participating aboard the tours. However, since the authenticity crisis is considered the main feature, and struggle, of Western tourists’ modern conditions, I assumed the latter issue would not be the case – some lobster boat tourists would certainly consider the tours ‘authentic’ in some form even though the tours are based in a Western setting. And I was right. I described those observed manifestations of authenticity in the previous section as having to do with (1) the feeling associated with becoming “ticketed lobstermen or lobsterwomen,” (2) the educational experience of learning about the ins-and-outs of Maine’s commercial lobster industry, and (3) the yearning to return to a prior way of life.

Instead of trying to match my discoveries with the existing theory, I have chosen to develop conceptualizations specifically grounded in my data. First, the authentic feeling associated with becoming “ticketed lobstermen and lobsterwomen” arises as a result of lobstermen guides’ attempts to provide charter services that are accurate portrayals of the state’s commercial lobster industry to tourists who are seeking to interactively take part in a true Maine lobstering experience. Most of the tourists who visit these kinds of combined “cultural productions” (MacCannell 1973:23) and creative tourism experiences (Jelincic 2008) are examples of Redfoot’s (1984) second-order tourist (with the exception of tourists like Tourist Don, who are more representative of the first-order tourist). For that reason, since tourists are able to see, as well as engage in, the behind-the-scenes functions and routines of an aspect of life dear to Mainer culture (commercial lobstering), I call this form of authenticity representational authenticity. Unlike this accuracy of representation, other lobstermen guides may attempt to construct and uphold an accuracy of information in their tours. Acknowledging that it might very well be impossible for lobster boat tours to perfectly represent commercial lobstering due to a number of factors, these lobstermen guides instead provide thorough demonstrations and quality narratives about the ins-and-outs of lobstering in the state. The main take away for tourists who participate in these tours is an educational contact. So, as Guide Ken actually advertises his company, I will identify this form of authenticity as educational authenticity. And finally, the form of authenticity attached to the yearning to return to a prior way of life, which is sought out by both locals and lobstermen guides, is rooted in nostalgic emotion and therefore embodies a desired undefined moving target of re-implacement in a time and/or place when
and/or where “everything was good back then” (Lobsterman Jim). Inspired by Guide Ted’s place-marketing strategy, I will label this last approach historical-nostalgic authenticity.

By introducing these three new categories of authenticity, one might easily believe that I am actually perpetuating the ambiguity and lack of conceptual clarity of ‘authenticity’ that already plagues the existing theory in tourism studies. And maybe I am. However, unlike many sociologists and anthropologists in tourism studies, I have centered my research in a Western and developed society where tourism has long been a staple of the local community. By considering tourism places that are not located in distant, non-Western, or less-developed lands (where most people around the globe actually travel – think the Las Vegas Strip, the London Eye, and Disney World), perhaps the attribution of authenticity in such settings values more than just the exotic, primitive, pure, and historically stagnant social forms that tourism studies consider. Maybe it is inevitable that new conceptualizations of authenticity will emerge when the discourse on authenticity is grounded in fresh empirical substance from analysis in the West.

The forms of authenticity that the framework (Jamal and Hill 2002; Gisolf 2010; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999), as well as other independent conceptualizations (Berger 2004; Boyle 2003; Olsen 2002), have offered to describe tourism experiences are thin and poorly conceived. If I were to describe the lobster boat tour experiences based on the common experiential forms of authenticity in tourism studies, I would have to choose between (a) activity-related authenticity, which refers to the authentic (existential) state of being as a person (Gisolf 2010; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999) or (b) active-constructivist authenticity, which allows tourists to subjectively evaluate the authenticity of social and cultural experiences, and not just objects, without having to undergo self-development (as is the case in (a)) (Olsen 2002). Of course (b) would be my best choice since lobster boat tours are not existential experiences. However, by saying the lobster boat tour experiences embody a kind of active-constructivist authenticity, I will have failed to explain what about the lobster boat tours actually make the experiences ‘authentic.’

The three approaches that I have proposed not only allow tourists to subjectively evaluate the authenticity of their experiences like the active-constructivist theory does, but they also clarify what characteristics and qualities tourists, tourism facility operators, and local community members are considering when each of the roles evaluate experiences as authentic: (a) the accuracy of the representational value, representational authenticity; (b) the accuracy of the educational value, educational authenticity; or (c) the accuracy of the historical-nostalgic value, historical-nostalgic authenticity. In addition to expanding on the active-constructivist theory, my approach also provides more practical models than the abstract ones currently offered. For that reason, my conceptualizations of authenticity improve on the existing theoretical framework by supplying philosophical and pragmatic clarity in terms of the underlying assumptions of what authenticity truly means, as well as how it can be applied, in experiential modes of tourism like the lobster boat tour experiences.
GROUNDING ROLE FLUIDITY AND ROLE RELATIONSHIPS IN A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM AND EXCHANGE THEORY

Earlier I mentioned how tourism studies overwhelmingly consider the three most common tourism roles – the tourist, the tourism facility operator, and the local community member – as fixed entities engaged in minimal interactions with others. By moving beyond a focus on just tourists and their quests for authenticity to examining the triangle of tourism relations and the three primary tourism roles’ other endeavors and interests, it quickly becomes evident that such roles are dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are not only highly fluid but they also maintain a complex network of relationships. Since this insight is only now being introduced to tourism studies, it has yet to be grounded in theory like the rest of the discipline’s empirical substance. In this section, I argue that the combined efforts of structural functionalism’s (specifically Parsonian thinking’s) social role theory and exchange theory’s distributive justice and positive/negative imbalance of benefits provide a theoretical framework that can make sense of this finding.

Structural functionalism’s social role theory maintains that individuals are situated in certain social roles so that the stability and cohesion of a society will endure over time (Appelrouth and Edles 2008:350-363; Parsons 1961; Parsons and Shils 1951). According to Talcott Parsons, an American structural functionalist, every individual is expected to conform to the norms managing, and associated with, the roles he/she fulfills (Parsons 1961; Parson and Shils 1951). Such norms often involve a set of behaviors and/or accomplishments. Tourist Megan, for example, assumed that commercial lobstermen had to be jacks-of-all-trades to conduct their commercial businesses; she expected them to be harvesters, biologists, carpenters, surveyors, etc. But as Parsons (1961) makes clear, there will never be a perfect correspondence between expected norms and performed behaviors since a society’s value system is seldom agreed upon by all its members. Hence Lobsterman Michael’s refusal to perform any other task but harvest lobsters in his role as commercial lobsterman. Lobsterman Michael’s resolution to be known only as a lobster catcher despite outside influences pressuring him to adopt additional responsibilities illustrates the idea behind “role bargaining.” This idea explains how individuals, once situated in certain roles, can create then institutionalize a set of norms and values that will guide further expected action of those roles (Parsons 1961; Parsons and Shils 1951).

In addition to bargaining a single social role, individuals also assume other social roles that they can similarly bargain (Parsons and Shils 1951:190). Take Lobsterman Harry, for example, who was once a commercial lobsterman (which he also bargains as a lobster catcher), a bureaucrat (as a zone representative for the Maine Lobster Promotion Council), and a local community member (a local Mainer) at the same time; or Lobsterman Freddie who is currently a commercial lobsterman, a lobster
retailer, a tourist (a local tourist), and a local community member (local Mainer). This process of making and taking multiple functions and responsibilities is also true for lobstermen guides who are not only tourism facility operators but often commercial lobstersmen, researchers, and locals, as well as for tourists who are often locals and, in some cases, commercial lobstersmen. This is what Parsons and Shils (1951:190) meant when they said any given individual could represent a “composition” of many social roles. Accordingly, they wrote how there is no limit to the number of roles individuals can maintain so long as those individuals behave and accomplish the expected norms for each of the social roles they assume, or if they bargain those roles’ duties and responsibilities to fit their own sets of expectations (Parsons 1961; Parsons and Shils 1951).

These processes of role-taking and role-making make sense of the social role fluidity found in the state of Maine’s lobster tourism industry. What is more is that Parsons and Shils (1951) also suggest that the status of a role is dynamic and interactive not only because an individual can take on a multitude of social roles at any given time but also because any one of an individual’s roles has a particular role set: “that complement of interdependent social relationships in which persons are involved simply because they occupy a particular social status” (Appelrouth and Edles 2008:352). Parsons (1961:43-4) even defined a social role as the normatively-regulated participation of “a person in a concrete process of social interaction with specific, concrete role partners.” In other words, each social role that an individual maintains keeps a complex network of relationships. Again, this understanding fits my data: each of the three primary tourism roles in Maine’s lobster tourism industry maintain relationships not only with the roles within the triangle of tourism relations but also with roles outside of that triangle. What I recognized in those relationships was that if someone was receiving some kind of advantage in a relationship then they were likely to be happy in that relationship, and if someone was receiving some kind of disadvantage in a relationship then they were likely to be unhappy in that relationship. What this observation seems to suggest is that a cost-benefit analysis could be used to determine the status of the three tourism roles’ relationships with other actors in their role sets. To once again ground this trend in a broader framework, exchange theory will be drawn on.

The origins of exchange theory go at least as far back as the year 1776 when Adam Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations* how individuals would be forced to develop relationships with others to procure the goods and services that would satisfy their intrinsic self-interested natures. But since Smith (1776), exchange theory has grown to encompass not only economic transactions but political, social, and cultural ones as well (Appelrouth and Edles 2008; Blau 1964; Homans 1958; Zafirovski 2003). In what is now often referred to as social exchange theory, it is posited that behavior in social interactions is guided by the rational calculation of an exchange of rewards and punishments regardless of whether one is swapping wealth (economic capital), power (political capital), prestige and/or resources (social capital), or
knowledge of culture (cultural capital) (Blau 1964; Zafirovski 2003). In other words, nearly all human
relationships are thought to be products of subjective cost-benefit analyses (Appelrouth and Edles 2008;
processes each party will rationally calculate the rewards and punishments for both them and their
exchange partner(s); that is, they will evaluate whether their and the other involved parties’ profits are fair
and just. Thus the norm of reciprocity (or mutualism) is expected (Blau 1964; Homans 1958; Polanyi
2001:47-51). It is like the idiom: ‘I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine.’ Distributive justice is the
term used by exchange theorists to describe exchange processes in which a balance of profits among
parties occurs (Blau 1964; Zafirovski 2003).

In my case study of Maine’s lobster tourism industry, I found that a kind of distributive justice takes place within the triangle of tourism relations – that is, in the relationships among the tourists, the
lobstermen guides, and the commercial lobstermen. In each of these relationships, actors believe both
they and the other actors with whom they are interacting are profiting fairly. Lobster boat tourists receive
a healthy-eating option from commercial lobstermen (social capital), and commercial lobstermen “pride
themselves” (Lobsterman Freddie) on those tourists who help move their product (economic capital).
Tourists benefit from lobstermen guides’ lobster boat tours that furnish them with knowledge about
Maine’s lobster industry (cultural capital), and lobstermen guides welcome those tourists to the industry
because they represent potential clients (economic capital). And lobstermen guides support commercial
lobstermen not only because they themselves might be commercial lobstermen but also because without a
commercial business their charter businesses would not even exist (economic capital), and commercial
lobstermen support lobstermen guides because they often establish an educational contact for tourists
(cultural capital), instill in tourists a deeper appreciation of the work of commercial lobstermen (political
capital, social capital), and encourage tourists to purchase local product (economic capital). Thus balance
is established in each of these tourism relationships via reciprocal exchange, whereby actors in each of the
roles are able to maximize the rewards and minimize the costs for both themselves and their exchange
partners. And these exchange relations result in various contingencies, where the actors modify their
resources (forms of capital) to each other’s expectations and needs.

However, as Peter Blau (1964:464) recognized in Exchange and Power in Social Life, not all
social interactions and exchanges maintain a distributive justice. Often times, imbalances of rewards and
costs pervade exchange relations. So while there is indeed altruism in all exchanges in the sense that
individuals wish “to benefit one another and to reciprocate for the benefits they receive” (Blau 1964:465),
there is also a permeating undertone of egoism whereby “the tendency to help others is frequently
motivated by the expectation that doing so will bring social rewards” (Blau 1964:465) disproportionately
in their favor. When reciprocity is broken, and an imbalance in exchange relations arises, power dynamics
are often introduced to those very interactions (Blau 1964; Zafirovski 2003). For example, if individuals cannot supply any, or a sufficient amount of, rewards in exchange for a transaction to be considered mutual, they may find themselves assuming subordinate positions in their relationships with the other (Blau 1964:467). Two types of exchange processes can result from this power dynamic: (1) positive imbalance of benefits – a kind of imbalanced version of distributive justice, when the other exercises power fairly over the subordinate who in turn approves of and legitimates the superior’s authority (Blau 1964:472); and (2) negative imbalance of benefits – when the other exercises power unfairly (e.g., by “arousing feelings of exploitation [in the subordinate(s)] for having to render more compliance than the rewards received justify”) over the subordinate who in turn disapproves of and renounces the superior’s authority (Blau 1964:468-472). In the latter case, collective disapproval of power often engenders opposition – e.g., union organization – or, if subordinates (a) do not have the resources to create a union, and/or (b) there are no better options available out there than their costly relationship, they might have to endure their exploitative exchange relations.

In Maine’s lobster tourism industry, exchange relations embodying mostly negative imbalance of benefits were primarily evident outside of the triangle of tourism relations – that is, in the relationships that some of the tourism roles maintain with other actors in their role sets. From what I observed, many individuals within tourism roles feel as though they are receiving some kind of disadvantage in their relationships outside of the triangle, and that disadvantage boils down to imbalanced exchange relations with those other roles. For example, according to Tourist Sally, some lobstermen guides experience antagonistic relationships with other boat tour guides who share their dock space. In this case, the two roles are not engaged in an exchange relation that has any kind of rewards attached; rather, their relationship is built on constant competition that generates costs for both parties – namely, the loss of clients to the other parties involved. Yet despite the costliness of this relationship, both parties remain involved in the very tourism industry that engenders it. When tourists choose one guide’s boat tour over the other guides’ tours, that guide considers such a reward (economic capital) valuable enough to offset his negative interactions with the other guides. Commercial lobstermen, on the other hand, have actually recently taken the initiative to do something about the negative imbalance of benefits they receive in their interactions with others. In response to dealers and bureaucrats in the commercial industry wielding power over them by making the satisfaction of their needs (e.g., receiving dock prices that correspond with current living wages) contingent on their compliance to a number of conditions and stipulations (which has involved them conceding the judgment of dock prices to dealers, as well as them being forced into financing a large portion of the Marketing Collaborative’s new marketing budget), some commercial lobstermen have recently joined the newly-organized Maine Lobstermen Union, a local organization of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (Bidgood 2013).
In terms of exchange theory, we could therefore say that, for the most part, individuals within each of the three tourism roles share exchange relations embodying distributive justice inside of the triangle of tourism relations, and some share exchange relations embodying a negative imbalance of benefits with actors in their role sets outside of this triangle. While the former processes uphold reciprocity in terms of maximizing rewards and minimizing costs for both parties involved in the transaction, the latter processes are imbalanced, ultimately causing power dynamics to ensue whereby one party receives greater rewards and fewer costs than the other parties involved. The exception to this observed trend is tourists’ exchange relations with locals, a relationship within the triangle of tourism relations characteristic of a negative imbalance of benefits. Some of the tourists I interviewed, like Tourist Roger, feel as though, despite supporting the economy of the community they are visiting by participating aboard lobster boat tours and purchasing Maine lobster, the locals treat them poorly by considering them nuisances. So while these tourists are supplying economic capital to the locals’ communities, those locals are not reciprocating the gesture by providing resources that meet the tourists’ expectations and needs. Yet because the tourism spaces the locals construct are so inviting and pleasurable, those tourists nonetheless continue to visit Maine’s lobster tourism industry.

Therefore, what I find interesting about the relationships that each of the three main tourism roles share within and outside the basic triangle of relations is that, for the most part, how each of the roles perceives a certain relationship is determined by the economic (wealth), political (power), social (prestige, resources), and cultural (knowledge of culture) consequences attached. When it all comes down to it, these four types of consequences seem to dictate the status of the roles’ relationships with others in their role sets. In general, the observed pattern goes something like: if you are receiving some kind of advantage in a relationship then you are likely to be happy in that relationship, and if you are receiving some kind of disadvantage in a relationship then you are likely to be unhappy in that relationship. But as Tourist Sally told me when I alluded to this finding in our conversation, these multifarious interactions among tourism roles largely depend on the town and area in which these interactions actually take place. So what I have tended to call “advantageous” and “disadvantageous” relationships may differ by locality.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to problematize a few of the assumptions that much of the contemporary literature in tourism studies relies on to explain and make sense of the nature of modern tourism, including the behaviors and interactions of its three primary tourism roles (the tourist, the tourism facility operator, and the local community member), by illustrating some of the insights that can be gained into tourism experiences by examining the relationships, and not just the distinct roles, of those three actors. In my case study of the state of Maine’s lobster tourism industry, I have found that moving beyond a focus
on just tourists to the triangle of tourism relations in a Western tourism setting not only confirms the importance of authenticity in developed modern tourism contexts, and adds both philosophical and pragmatic clarity to that theory, but it also demonstrates how the three primary tourism roles are dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are highly fluid and maintain a complex network of relationships.

I began this endeavor by discussing those assumptions in the review of literature. For one, despite theorists’ caution that authenticity need not only be valued in distant, non-Western, or less-developed lands, researchers have largely centered their work in such societies, thereby perpetuating the belief that quests for authentic social forms cannot be satisfied in nearby, Western, or developed societies. Furthermore, in analyzing this question of authenticity, sociologists and anthropologists have posited that if the three tourism roles collaborate to conceive authentic social forms in modern tourism places, thereby satisfying their respective interests, then the authenticity crisis in those places will successfully be resolved. However, since no research has yet described how that negotiation is conducted, or if it is even conducted at all, the theoretical proposal actually keeps alive the belief that each of the three primary tourism roles is a fixed entity engaged in minimal interactions with others.

What I hope this paper demonstrates is the possibility that each of these assumptions is false. In my case study of Maine’s lobster tourism industry, a mode of experiential tourism based in a developed and Western setting, I not only observed that tourists (locals and out-of-staters) were seeking authentic social forms (representational, educational, and historical-nostalgic forms of authenticity) aboard lobster boat tours, but also that the three primary tourism roles in that tourism context – the lobster boat tourists, the lobstermen guides, and the commercial lobstermen – are dynamic and interactive in the sense that they are not bounded by a single social role and they do not interact minimally with others. Lobstermen guides, for example, are indeed tourism facility operators, and they conform to or bargain the norms managing that role. But they may simultaneously represent compositions of many other different social roles such as commercial lobstermen, researchers, and local Mainers, and accordingly behave and accomplish the specific sets of expected norms for each of those roles. And the complex set of relationships that those individuals engage in will vary depending on the particular social role they are performing at a certain moment and the role set that role maintains.

Certainly all of these findings question the aforementioned assumptions surrounding the nature of modern tourism. However, the reason why I have said that I hope this paper demonstrates the “possibility” that each of these assumptions is false is because my sample size of individuals within the three tourism roles is much too small for the data to be considered generalizable by social scientific standards. For all I know, once I begin interviewing more lobster boat tourists, lobstermen guides, and commercial lobstermen, the observations I have presented might fade away and other insights, which could actually confirm the discussed assumptions, might emerge. For example, perhaps there are other
forms of authenticity that can be discerned aboard lobster boat tours that coincide with some of the forms tourists value in distant, non-Western, and less-developed lands. To correct this limitation, then, more extensive research in Maine’s lobster tourism industry, and specifically with its lobster boat tour experiences, should be completed. This would involve collecting a much larger sample size of individuals within each of the three tourism roles, then interviewing those individuals with similar interview guides (see Appendix I) used in this study’s research. However, what makes me optimistic that my findings on the structure of tourism roles in Maine’s lobster tourism industry are not insignificant despite a small sample size is Tourist Sally’s comment that the degree of role fluidity and the complexity of role relationships largely depends on the tourism context – the towns and areas supporting lobster tourism efforts – being studied. So maybe there is no such thing as generalizable findings when dealing with the dynamism of tourism roles in Maine’s lobster tourism industry. In my opinion, that peculiarity is what makes it even more important for tourism studies to consider the novel findings raised in this paper and the proposed theoretical framework that grounds their insights.

I introduced this paper by mentioning how tourism has become a nearly universal phenomenon among the middle classes, how the economic advantages attached to serving a tourist population has persuaded many places around the world into dividing their spaces between marked attractions and the unmarked landscape, and how the host-guest relationships that arise in those new tourism places are important in economic, political, cultural, and social terms. All of this has been confirmed in this paper. I then concluded by saying that tourism is important to understand because it has pervaded nearly every identifiable aspect of social life in both modern and non-modern societies, and thus nearly every person in the world will be affected by its developments in some way. That is one of the main take-aways of this paper: whether individuals assume their roles as tourist, tourism facility operator, or local community member, they will inevitably (a) have to deal with the authenticity crisis in a particular tourism place, and/or (b) interact with others in their role sets that belong to one of the three primary tourism roles. In that case, it is important that individuals be aware of some of the literature in tourism studies that they will undoubtedly be able to identify with and which they can use to better understand their positions and meanings in the world.

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