University of Massachusetts Amherst

ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

Non-Travel: the role of design in the experience of contemporary travel

Jennifer K. Young
School of Visual Arts

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra

Non-Travel: the role of design in the experience of contemporary travel

Purpose of the Study

Over the last ten years, the proliferation of online media, digital applications as well as wi-fi hotspots has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the accessibility of information and tools available to travelers. The shift from analogue to digital also allows us to see the way in which these devices are changing our overall experience of travel, providing the ability to simultaneously plan, experience and share the places that we visit physically. But the way in which we define travel cannot be constrained to the physical; it should also encompass the movements of our mind. The focus of this research is on the images, objects and tools that we use to experience travel without being physically present in the place we are visiting, or what I term "non-travel."

I argue that non-travel is elicited through "devices"—the physical and digital tools that are involved in travel itself. They embody the experience of a place even if they are not involved in our physical presence in the place. The success of the device is partly due to how much we feel we have been transported to the place as opposed to seeing the place through the given medium. As digital technologies have become more advanced, the depiction of space has become more three dimensional, engaging all our senses. Through these new technologies, advanced forms of narrative emerge, using the myth of travel to elicit an experience of non-travel.

The role of technology, and specifically the effect of VR and social media on travel, form a major part of tourism studies today. Other themes that I explore, such as the flâneur, "non-places," and photography, are areas of study in their own right. However, the approach from which I will be addressing these ideas, at the intersection of *design* and travel, is new, and ripe with potential. My goal is to arrive at a definition of non-travel, which will allow us to better understand and talk about the contemporary experience of travel. Through this process, I also hope to answer the following questions: Are contemporary devices creating a new experience of travel? What is the extent of design's role in the myth-making of travel? What does it mean to "non-travel"? What turns a non-traveler into a traveler?

Literature Review

In order to understand the role of contemporary devices within the experience of travel, I touch upon the following areas of scholarship in my literature review: definitions of travel in tourism studies; the tourist as flâneur; globalization and the commodification of tourism; the image of travel, myth-making, and narrative transportation; the authenticity of travel, experience design, and (tele)presence.

Excerpt: The Myth of Travel

The experience we have of a place is a combination of what we see, read and hear about a city, and the individual filter through which we see it (the ideas, skills, desires, and expectations framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education), which create what John Urry calls "the tourist gaze." (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 2) Through this gaze, tourists consume images and objects as well as signs, becoming "amateur semioticians." (Barthes, 1972) The experience we have of a city is shaped by the "word, image and myth" that is built around that city. The objects of a city that relate to our experience of travel work within a system that create the myth of travel. How

much we believe the myth directly influences how much we feel like we are traveling, or in this case *non*-traveling.

In Dean MacCannell's chapter on *Sightseeing and Social Structure*, he defines a tourist attraction as a relationship between a tourist, a sight and a marker. (Roberson, 2001: 15) The marker is a piece of information about a sight, which can come in the form of a guidebook, informational tablet or souvenir. Without the marker, the sight would be indistinguishable from the everyday around it. Markers can also suggest a sight is more "extraordinary" than it would otherwise appear. (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 16)

> "Tourist desire is not initially hooked by the reality of tourist destinations, but by symbols associated with destinations." (MacCannell, 2011: 60)

These symbols, or markers, are what create the desire to travel to a city but they also initiate our own "anticipatory travel." (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 207-226) We create a picture in our mind of where we are planning to go and what it will feel like to be there based on what we have read or seen and our previous experiences of other places.

> "For every trip actually taken, millions are imagined." (MacCannell, 2011: 64)

Images, in the form of photographs, adverts and brochures, play an important role in this anticipatory travel; they are the "starting point of tourist destination." (Crouch et al, 2005: 7) Barthes suggests that it is the "ontological realism" of the photograph literally transports the individual back to "being there," activating an imaginative journey. (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 168) It is these modes of anticipatory and imaginative journeys that form the basic features of non-travel, but how are these journeys created within the system of the myth of travel?

The "tourist imagination" has been widely studied for its role in how we move between the physical experience of travel and the media that portrays it. (Crouch et al, 2005: 2) In order to understand the significance of design in crossing this boundary between the physical and the virtual, it is useful to also understand de Certeau's "space narratives" (the narratives that traverse, organize and create places) so that we can go on to study contemporary travel imagery. (Augé, 2008, 68) These narratives are formed using the words, images and myths that form a place, and are what initiates the journey, taking us away from the media itself to the place we create in our imagination.

Research Design

In order to understand what is involved in non-travel, this paper looks at how we perceive and enact travel today through analysis of the images and objects that we actively engage with, and which encourage or facilitate us to travel, whether that be physically, imaginatively or a mixture of both. The devices that elicit non-travel, can be loosely categorized into three typologies: *editorial* - magazines, editorials and advertising that convey the image of travel; *physical* travel tools or objects - the items that help us become a *traveler*; and interaction with *digital* technologies, which allows us to see and engage with a place remotely.

The case-studies I explore offer examples of each of these typologies, including: *Surface* (a design magazine that has recently shifted its focus from fashion to travel), travel-specific *Instagram* feeds, *MUJI to Go* (travel paraphernalia aimed at the design conscious) and VR experiences, for example *Marriott Hotel's* "VRoom Service" and "Teleporter." While they do not provide a complete study

of all the non-travel devices available, they serve as stimuli with which to study and test the concept of non-travel.

Because of the nature and variety of non-travel devices, the method of data collection and qualitative analysis has been tailored to each. Nevertheless, each have involved three common elements: *desk research* using printed and online literature and studying secondary sources; *pointed interviews* to understand the experience of users (ranging from frequent fliers to armchair travelers and staycationists), design and business decisions (of product designers and owners of travel companies) and background information on the travel industry (from travel journalists, bloggers and influencers); as well as *first-hand analysis* of designed objects, their physical, visual and digital elements, and a study of their context.

A series of different lenses, which have developed through my research to date, will be applied in this analysis in order to understand how these devices contribute to the conceptualization of non-travel. On a functional level these include how they create a travel *narrative* and leverage a travel *community,* their role as a *marketing* tool, and their use of *technology*. On a more theoretical level, I will look at their role in the *design*, *image*, *myth*, and *authenticity* of travel.

Expected Outcomes

This research will be submitted in May 2016 as a 7,500 word thesis with the following structure. It will form part of a larger portfolio of work, including an 8 minute podcast and book proposal for a travel guide to non-travel.

1. An introduction to the concept of non-travel outlining the research area and methods used.

2. A brief history of travel, potential non-travel devices, and the various characters of travel in order to define "travel(er)" in the context of this study.

3. *Where Are We Going?* will look at how the myth of travel is designed through images and narratives, in both advertising and anticipatory travel as it relates to non-travel; the focus will be on Instagram, and how we experience travel through others.

4. *What Should We Pack?* will consider the image of the traveler and how physical objects, such as the passport or MUJI products, allow us to play the part of the traveler.

5. *"Being There"* will focus on ideas of experience, authenticity, and presence as they relate to VR and travel, and whether it is indeed possible to take a virtual holiday in the digital age.

6. A synthesis of ideas, definition of non-travel and its applications in travel and design today.

References

Augé, Marc. *Non-places*. London: Verso, 2008.

Barthes, Roland, and Annette Lavers. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Baudelaire, Charles, and Jonathan Mayne. *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*. London: Phaidon, 1964.

Benjamin, Walter, and Michael William Jennings. *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006.

Benjamin, Walter, and Rolf Tiedemann. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999.

Benjamin, Walter. *One-way Street, and Other Writings*. London: NLB, 1979.

Botton, Alain De. *The Art of Travel*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2002.

Coleman, Simon, and Mike Crang. *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*. New York: Berghahn, 2002.

Coyne, Richard. "Travel Guidelines." *Reflections on Technology Media Culture*. January 1, 2011. Accessed October 31, 2015. http://richardcoyne.com/.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

Crouch, David, Rhona Jackson, and Felix Thompson. *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*. London: Routledge, 2005.

De Maistre, Xavier. *Voyage: Autour De Ma Chambre*. Torino: S. Lattes, 1937.

Debord, Guy. "Theory of the Dérive." *Les Lèvres Nues* #9. November, 1956. (Reprinted in Internationale Situationniste #2. December, 1958. Translated by Ken Knabb.)

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1977.

Devices: How Smartphones and Tablets Affect the Travel Industry. Google Travel Study. September 2012. Accessed October 31, 2015. https://ssl.gstatic.com/think/docs/think-travel-mobile-one-sheet_research-studies.pdf.

Drummond, Katie, et. al. "The Rise and Fall and Rise of Virtual Reality." *The Verge*. Accessed April 05, 2016. http://www.theverge.com/a/virtual-reality.

Duncan, James S. "Dis-Orientation: On the Shock of the Familiar in a Far-away Place." In *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, 151-63. London: Routledge, 1999.

Duncan, James S., and Derek Gregory. "Introduction." In *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, 1-13. London: Routledge, 1999.

Feifer, Maxine. *Going Places: The Ways of the Tourist from Imperial Rome to the Present Day*. London: Macmillan, 1985.

Framestore. "Merrell 'Trailscape.'" Accessed March 20, 2016. http://www.framestore.com/work/merrell-trailscape.

Fussell, Paul. "Exploration to Travel to Tourism" in *Abroad – British Literary Travelling between the Wars*, 37-50. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Geppert, Alexander C.T, "True Copies: Time and Space Travels at the British Imperial Exhibitions, 1880-1930" In *The Making of Modern Tourism.* Edited by Berghoff, Hartmut. et al. New York: Palgrave, 2002: 223-248.

Giaccardi, Chiara. "Whatever Happened to Flânerie? On Some Theoretical Implications of the Media/City Nexus." Foreword to *Media and the City: Urbanism, Technology and Communication*, Viii-Xvi. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

Guttentag, Daniel A. "Virtual Reality: Applications and Implications for Tourism." *Tourism Management* 31, no. 5 (October 2010): 637-651.

Hoffman, Colie, and Bob Offutt. *Travel Innovation and Technology Trends 2015.* Phocuswright Inc. Report. June 2015. Accessed October 31, 2015. http://www.phocuswright.com/Free-Travel-Research/Travel-Innovation-and-Technology-Trends-2015.

Hotel Vue Des Alpes. "Digital Holidays Now Available for Everyone." Accessed March 10, 2016. http://www.vuedesalpes.com/home_e.html.

Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Industry Trends Research. Digital Tourism Think Tank Report. March 2015. Accessed September 13, 2015. http://thinkdigital.travel/all-insights/dttt-trends-report.

Instagram. "Murad Osmann." Accessed April 18, 2016. https://www.instagram.com/muradosmann/?hl=en.

Kekou, Eva. "Cities in Digital Format." *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research* 11, no. 3 (2013): 263-71. Accessed October 31, 2015. Art Source, EBSCOhost.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Kittler, Friedrich A., and Anthony Enns. *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010.

Lawrence, G.C., editor. *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide*. London: Fleetly Press, 1924.

Lester, Jo-Anne, and Caroline Scarles. *Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Löfgren, Orvar. *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Long, Katherine. "How Technology in Tourism is Taking Travel to the Next Level." Trend Reports, July 11, 2012. Accessed October 31, 2015. http://www.trendreports.com/article/technology-in-tourism.

MacCannell, Dean. *The Ethics of Sightseeing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Schocken, 1976.

Marriott Travel Brilliantly. "Our Fully Immersive, 4-D Journey Transported People from London to Maui in 90 Seconds." Accessed April 5, 2016. https://travel-brilliantly.marriott.com/our-innovations/oculus-get-teleported.

Metro-Roland, Michelle M. *Tourists, Signs and the City: The Semiotics of Culture in an Urban Landscape*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

Munar, Ana María, Szilvia Gyimóthy, and Liping A. Cai. *Tourism Social Media: Transformations in Identity, Community and Culture*. Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing, 2013.

Parsons, Nicholas. *Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub., 2007.

Potts, Rolf. "Paul Theroux on Blogging, Travel Writing, and 'Three Cups of Tea'" *The Atlantic*. May 17, 2011. Accessed September 13, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/05/paul-theroux-on-blogging-travel-writing-and-three-cups-of-tea/238955/.

Psarras, Bill, Stacey Pitsillides, and Anastasios Maragiannis. "Dérive in the Digital Grid, Breaking the Search to Get Lost." In *19th International Symposium of Electronic Art. Proceedings*, Sydney, 2013. ISEA2013. Accessed October 31, 2015. http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/9475.

Qantas. "QANTAS & SAMSUNG UNVEIL INDUSTRY-FIRST VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE FOR TRAVELLERS." January 29, 2015. http://www.qantasnewsroom.com.au/media-releases/qantas-samsung-unveil-industry-first-virtual-reality-experience-for-travellers/.

Roberson, Susan L. *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Rojek, Chris, and John Urry. *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Sennett, Richard. *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*. London: Allen Lane, an Imprint of Penguin Books, 2012.

Sigala, Marianna, Evangelos Christou, and Ulrike Gretzel. Introduction. In *Social Media in Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: Theory, Practice and Cases*, 1-3. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Smith, Laurajane, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson. *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New York: Viking, 2000.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.

Steuer, Jonathan. "Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence." *Journal of Communication* 42, no. 4 (1992): 73-93.

Stiegler, Bernd. *Traveling in Place: A History of Armchair Travel*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2013.

Tester, Keith. *The Flâneur*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Theroux, Paul. "The Places in between." *Financial Times*. May 27, 2011. Accessed September 13, 2015. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/71b85180-87e5-11e0-a6de-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3liX7Qjj6.

Tosoni, Simone, and Matteo Tarantino. "Towards a New Complexity: Reasons for Media and the City." Introduction to *Media and the City: Urbanism, Technology and Communication*, Xvii-xi. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

Tussyadiah, Iis P. "Toward a Theoretical Foundation for Experience Design in Tourism." *Journal Of Travel Research* 53, no. 5 (September 2014): 543-564.

Urry, John, and Jonas Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011.

Verma, Hansa. "The 360-degree darshan: Virtual Reality finds a new use case around the Ujjain Kumbh." *The Indian Express.* April 8, 2015. http://indianexpress.com/article/technology/tech-news-technology/kumbh-ujjain-virtual-reality-google-cardboard-oculus-rift-vr-360-degree-darshan-mahakaal-temple/#ifrndnloc.

Waterton, Emma, Russell Staiff, and Garth Lean. *Travel and Imagination*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.

Wharton, Stephanie. "Guiding Consumers Through the 5 Stages of Travel on Instagram." *Curalate Blog.* March 4, 2015. Accessed October 31, 2015. blog.curalate.com/2015/03/04/help-consumers-book-vacations-on-instagram/.

Wrigley, Richard. *The Flâneur Abroad: Historical and International Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2014.

Yakob, Faris. "Memory Hacking." *Fast Company*. October 1, 2013. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://www.fastcompany.com/3019044/creative-braintrust/memory-hacking.

Yakob, Faris. *Paid Attention: Innovative Advertising for a Digital World*. Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2015.