Travel Bloggers and the Serious Leisure Perspective:

Who Do They Think They Are?

by

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Abstract

The Web 2.0 environment has altered North American society immeasurably as producers and consumers have merged into one, the prosumer. This new type of individual is visible in the blogosphere, in particular when examining travel blogs. The creators of travel blogs spend a considerable amount of their leisure and work creating and maintaining these travelogues, but little research has queried them about these efforts. The online contributions travel bloggers make potentially places their leisure choices within the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP), more specifically within the sub-category of serious leisure. By engaging travel bloggers through a qualitative based questionnaire about their travel blogs, this research identified motivations and benefits of blogging. Recommendations for further research about online pursuits and serious leisure are suggested and the ways prosumers are linked to and have formed relationships with the mainstream travel industry are discussed. This research provides insight into travel bloggers' perceptions of their contributions to the Web 2.0 environment, to the Serious Leisure Perspective, and to the travel industry.

TRAVEL BLOGS (BATES)

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What does one ever feel, visiting a city for the first time, but transference?
Am I seeing Venice, or my own phantoms?
- Wayne Koestenbaum

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Travel, the movement of people from one geographical location to another has existed for centuries, and the purposes or motivations for travel have varied as often as the destinations themselves (Wynn, 2007). The changes in society from the 1800s onward altered North American class structure, culture, production and consumption. As a middle class grew out of the Industrial Revolution, these individuals with additional disposable income began to travel en mass at the turn of the 19th century (Urry & Larsen, 2011; Veblen, 1973). Throughout the 19th century, with increased disposable income for the middle and upper classes, the costs of travel and tourism reduced and travel became more accessible to a larger number of people (Lew & Prideaux, 2008). During the 20th century the travel industry grew to become the largest service sector industry in the world (Lew & Prideaux, 2008). Travel continues to be a major industry. For example, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) publicized that tourist arrivals in 2011 grew to 980 million people worldwide, and would reach the one billion mark by the end of 2012. Travelers spend over $1 trillion USD per year ($1,030 billion USD), and the travel industry employs approximately 235 million people around the world (Hospitality, 2010; UNWTO, 2012; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). The size of this industry makes tourism a provocative and important academic subject to research.

As travel and the tourism industry has grown, the tools used to communicate before, during and after travel have changed (Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2008). In particular, the 'information revolution' increased the availability of information and communication technology (ICT), such as the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), has changed how people access information about tourism and has altered how people exchange information and ideas about travel. People

now share more information, in shorter periods of time, across far greater geographical distances than ever before. This "has significantly changed the landscape of the tourism industry" (Mack et al., 2008, p. 133; Wegner, 2008; Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006). In particular, people have altered the ways in which they share stories and information about their travel experiences. Travel experiences and stories were traditionally documented in travel journals, novels, photos and film. More recently however, virtual digital photo albums, social media posts and mobile updates, virtual maps, apps, websites, eBooks, web blogs (blogs), and video blogs (vblogs) have become common methods for sharing these experiences. These changes have provided travelers with opportunities to become self-published contributors to the WWW and experience a high degree of interconnectedness with other individuals around the globe (Hewitt, 2005; Volo, 2010).

These technological shifts have altered how we share tourism experiences, which are often valued leisure experiences (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Mokhtarian, Salomon, & Handy, 2006; Urry & Larsen, 2011). The changes in how we experience leisure, and tourism in particular, may be better understood by using frameworks such as the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP). The SLP describes leisure participants based on their degree of commitment and other essential qualities. This theoretical perspective was developed thirty years ago by sociologist Robert Stebbins (1977; 2007) and has repeatedly demonstrated that "knowledge, training, skill[s]…high level[s] of achievement…[and] experience" (Stebbins, 1998, p. 21) can be developed while participating in leisure and recreation activities. The SLP research has revealed that novice and amateur participants, on occasion, transform their leisure pursuits into professions (Stebbins, 1992). This perspective's classification framework provides researchers with a starting point to better understand recreation choices, to learn more about the influences

and motivations of travel as a leisure activity, to understand how leisure and work are connected, and to contribute to our understanding of the role leisure and work play in people's lives (Stebbins & Hartel, 2011; Worthington, 2006).

The preseent research uses the SLP to understand how travel and tourism experiences are shared with others by using current technology. Since the early 21st century people have created and maintained a communication tool on the WWW called a web log, or blog. This is a space where people share their ideas via text, pictures, and video. An increasing number of tourists have adopted this technology to share their stories and travel experiences with others, and this activity provides an opportunity to study the interplay of leisure, work and the changing travel industry.

Purpose of the Research

Research in the field of tourism and online non-traditional media has focused on many topics, including the influence of online tourism marketing (Huang, Yung, & Yang, 2011; Litvin et al., 2008; Pan, MacLaurin, & Crotts, 2007), travel weblog consumers (Cheyne, Downes, & Legg, 2006; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Sharda & Ponnada, 2008), researching travel websites (Wenger, 2008; Qu & Lee, 2011), and future travel plan projections (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Research examining travelers who have added their stories, photographs, videos, ideas and experiences to the WWW, however, is less common. This research examined why tourists spend their time, energy, skills and talents posting online as part of their work and/or leisure. The purpose of this research study was to understand the influences and motivations that encourage travel bloggers to contribute to the WWW. SLP framework was used as the conceptual framework to further understand the travel blogger's experience, and qualitative methods were used to provide a deeper understanding of this research area. This research is

timely and relevant to the tourism discourse because it offers some insight into a relatively new aspect of the tourism experience and provides connections to the SLP (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnack, 2002; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Stebbins, 2007; Tracy, 2010). As well, this research provides information that will optimistically assist travel bloggers, the mainstream travel industry, and the readers of travel blogs.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research:

    A. Why do travel bloggers create and maintain travel blogs?

    B. How do travel bloggers see their travel blogging experiences with regards to their leisure and work?

Definition of Key Terms

       To provide a common vernacular, several key terms require a definition. *Travel* refers to an individual who "moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration" (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, n.d., para. 29). *Tourism* is often identified as a "subset of *travel*" (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, n.d. par. 28), and includes "the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2010, par. 2). A *traveler* is a participant who "moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration [and a] visitor is a particular type of traveller [*sic*]" (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, n.d. par. 28). While these operational definitions are useful for classifying activities and individuals within the tourism industry, this study does not require such rigid definitions and therefore *tourism* and *travel*, as well as *traveler* and *visitor* will be used synonymously and interchangeably.

Technological terms that require a definition include *Internet* and *Word Wide Web* (WWW). The *Internet* is a network that connects millions of computers all around the world, each computer as an individual host or stand-alone device. Various businesses provide computer users access to the Internet which is used to exchange information, news, data and opinions around the world (Webopedia, 2010). The *World Wide Web* (WWW) is an enormous collection of formatted documents that are created using a Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) that links these documents together, as well as audio clips, video files, graphics, and photographs (Webopedia, 2010). All WWW documents are part of the Internet, but not all services on the Internet are part of the WWW (Webopedia, 2010). Despite these terms often being used synonymously, for the purposes of this research they will not be used interchangeably.

The final term that requires definition is *travelogue*. Since the early 1900's this term has been used to refer to any travel related face-to-face lecture, brochure, slide show, video/motion picture, or photo album. In the case of contemporary WWW language, an online space where people share and receive information and stories is called a *weblog* or *blog*. More specifically, in virtual spaces where tourists and travelers share their experiences, ideas, and thoughts about travel, the term weblog has morphed into the term *travel blog*, *travelogue* or *travelog* (Travel Journal, 2012). In this study, the words travel blog are typically used, but the term travelogue (spelled with the additional 'e') is used synonymously.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The distinctions between work and leisure time, travel and being at home, and amateur and professional pursuits have become blurred (Brown Jr., 2008; Mokhtarian et al., 2006; Stebbins, 1998; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Worthington, 2006; Yeoman, Munro & McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Technological developments, including the World Wide Web (WWW), have further affected our understanding of time, leisure, and travel. The rapid change in the role of communication technology in our lives has altered the speed of information exchange, the interconnectedness of people, and the virtual activities they can perform (Brown Jr., 2008). This includes the interconnectedness of people who travel and share their travel experiences online. These individuals, called travel bloggers, have adapted to these technological shifts and have influenced the consumption and production of travel experiences. The Serious Leisure Perspective provides an effective method for understanding the motivations and reasons for the online efforts of these individuals.

Technology and the Prosumer

The development of the computer, Internet and WWW revolutionized society, work, recreation, communications, information and social interactions in the 20th Century (Leiner et al., 2011). Both the Internet and WWW have left their mark across continents and cultures, and have revolutionized almost every aspect of our world. While the early years of computer and Internet technology provided people and businesses with greater access to information, the development of the WWW by Tim Berners-Lee improved interconnectivity and communications. Berners-Lee's specific contribution was the development and enhancement of hyperlinks and hypertext (Lonnquist, 2011; Peter, 2007). The creation of search engines such as Netscape, Microsoft's

Internet Explorer, and Google, in combination with hyper linking technologies, caused the use of

the WWW to explode as an open-access, commodity service (Leiner et al., 2011). These

developments continued into the early 2000's when the WWW evolved again to become Web

2.0, a space not only for posting information, sending emails, and sharing documents, but also a

place where people can both consume and produce information simultaneously. As Tapscott

(2009) stated:

> The Internet transforms itself from a platform of presenting information to a place
>
> where you can collaborate and where individuals can organize themselves into
>
> communities. In the Web 2.0, new communities are being formed in social
>
> network[s]…and these communities are starting to go into production. People are
>
> making things together. So prosumption was an idea waiting to happen, waiting for a
>
> generation who had a natural instinct to collaborate and co-innovate. (p. 90)

Rather than WWW users merely consuming information and commodities within this space,

each person who contributes to the WWW becomes a 'prosumer' participating in 'prosumption'

(Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Tapscott, 2009; Toffler, 1980). While the concept of prosumption

existed before the emergence of the Web 2.0 and there appears to be no one definition of

prosumption, specific characteristics of digital prosumers have been identified:

> (i) the production and sharing of content on Web 2.0;
>
> (ii) the abundance of produced and published content;
>
> (iii) the unpaid work of those who produce the content; and
>
> (iv) the online spread of a culture of free content. (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013, p. 25)

This describes the integration of consumption and production as simultaneous experiences, as

people create, consume and re-create ideas and objects often using free content (Paltrinieri &

Esposti, 2013; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Toffler, 1980). The 'prosumption' phenomenon is in

part due to the ease and speed of multi-directional communication via the WWW (Schmallegger

& Carson, 2008; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

The continued development of these new media structures within the Web 2.0 framework

has affected mainstream media. For example, the need to seek the approval of editors and other

gatekeepers of culture does not exist on-line in the same way it has existed with traditional media

(Feldmann & Zerdick, 2005; Hewitt, 2005; Ringmar, 2007). Instead Web 2.0 has helped create

an environment that has blurred the lines between gatekeepers, producers, and consumers with

opportunities and online contributions such as user generated content (UGC) and electronic word

of mouth (eWOM). New social media such as wikis, social networking sites, chat sites,

interactive consumer websites, weblogs (blogs), video blogs (vblogs), and mobile phone

blogging (moblogging) have also contributed to the blurring of producer and consumer

behaviour (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008;

Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012). The critical mass of people

who have used these forms of communication have become production-consumption-

collaborationists who use the "web as a commons" (Brown Jr., 2008, p. 396; Barlow, 2008;

Tapscott, 2009; Toffler, 1980). This commons also provides a traveler the opportunity to share

his/her stories and experiences online without the need to pursue approval from traditional print

and media sources.

Web 2.0 and weblogs. Weblogging, or blogging, became possible as a result of the

merging of people's desire to share personal and/or professional information via the Internet and

the Web 2.0 environment. The term weblog or blog is a combination of two words, web and log

which is then shortened to blog, and refers to a person or group who have created a public diary

of their ideas, experiences and thoughts (Karlsson, 2006). Jorn Barger coined the term 'blog' in the mid 1990's on his Internet site 'Robot Wisdom', and created the term in reference to the process of 'logging the web' or culling the WWW for information, links, and sites of interest (Hewitt, 2005; Kahney, 2003; Lonnquist, 2011; Rodzvilla, 2002). Early bloggers such as Rebecca Blood (Rebecca's Pocket) and Cameron Barrett (CamWorld) posted new entries on their respective blogs almost daily, often including "links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays" (Rodzvilla, 2002, p. 8; Blood, 2000). In 1999, individual bloggers met each other virtually and created one of the smaller components of the WWW, a networked mini-community of approximately 50 blogs. In 2002 and 2003 the industry changed and new technologies that could host user-friendly blogs were created (i.e. Blogger, WordPress, etc.). Five years later the number of blogs had proliferated to such a vast extent that only a worldwide estimate was possible. It is believed that by the mid-2000s between 2.4 to 4.1 million blogs existed online, but due to the vastness of the WWW, the number of blogs that exist is constantly in flux (Karlsson, 2006; Lonnquist, 2011; Rodzvilla, 2002). Even so, the spread of this medium has not slowed. Two prominent blog portal sites, Technorati and BlogPulse, have suggested that between 126 and 133 million blogs have been created since 2002, thus securing the blog's position as "a mainstream communication and interaction medium" (Wong, 2010, p. 1).

In its construction, a blog begins with the writer's most recent experience, thought or piece, and continues in reverse chronological order. A blog is a public record but access maybe granted to only a select few or to all WWW readers. Blogs can include pictures, art, hypertext, video or audio clips. Blogs can be individual, collaborative (multiple authors), corporate (created by a business or organization), or a traditional media blog (current news within a particular industry) (Thevenot, 2007). As a blog takes shape over months and years, it becomes

a large accumulation of personal and professional information amassed by its creator, and is a

cultural artifact contributing to the building of knowledge.

Blogs were first compared to a diary, a written record of what has happened and what is

occurring in the writer's life. Over time blogs have been redefined in a number of ways,

including: as an act of journalism; a form of publication; a political, economic or social

contextualization of our world; a critique of modern society; a webpage; or an online

conversation (Barlow, 2008; Feldmann & Zerdick, 2005; Pedersen, 2010; Ringmar, 2007).

Others have identified blogging as one tool in the process of communication capitalism where

"democratic ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation are realized in and through

expansions and intensifications of global…networks" (Dean, 2010, p. 4). Key differences

between a diary and a blog are the public performance space, faster speed of publication, and a

greater depth of information that is shared (Barlow, 2008; Jones & Alony, 2008; Pedersen,

2010). Access to this type of medium "permits people of almost any skill level to create a blog"

(Jones & Alony, 2008, p. 435), and has provided researchers the opportunity to uncover ways in

which the blog has affected many different types of individuals, the community, media, and our

culture.

The number of blogs created by people, corporations, and organizations continue to

increase and online communities have continued to form (Barlow, 2008; Rak, 2005). The first

travelogue appeared in 1993-1994, documenting a worldwide journey by Jeff Greenwald, a

renowned eco-tourist (Butler, 2006; Greenwald, n.d.; Travel Journal, 2012). Over time, other

bloggers created travel communities online using different types of blogs. Individuals with

similar interests formed blog subgroups and "position[ed] themselves in communit[ies]…their

sidebar an affirmation of the tribe to which they wish to belong" (Blood, 2000, par. 12). These

types of blogs included:

- individual blog sites (Globe Trotting Mama http://globetrottingmama.com; Hole in the

  Donut Cultural Travel http://holeinthedonut.com);

- hosted blog sites (TravelPod http://www.travelpod.com; Gadling

  http://www.gadling.com);

- collaborative blog sites (Viator http://www.viator.com; In The Know Traveler

  http://www.intheknowtraveler.com);

- corporate sites (Jaunted http://www.jaunted.com; Adventures for Singles

  https://www.adventuresforsinglesinc.com); and

- destination marketing organizations' (DMO's) blog sites (Winnipeg Insider's blog

  http://www.tourismwinnipeg.com/pegcity-lounge/winnipeg-insiders-blog; British

  Columbia blog http://www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/blog.aspx)

These various blog communities have created an online space called the blogosphere, a space

that has altered diary writing, journalism, publishing and community creation, becoming an

integral part of media and social networks (Gill, 2004; Jones & Alony, 2008).

   Profile of a blogger. While there are a wide variety of types of bloggers, research has

revealed some characteristics of general topic bloggers. Combining the data from sites such as

Technorati (which performs yearly surveys of its members), in conjunction with academic data

and industry studies it is possible to gain insight into bloggers (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Pedersen,

2010; Ringmar, 2007).

   In 2006, half of all American bloggers surveyed were in the age range of 25 to 44, only

one third of bloggers were over 44 years old, and even fewer were in the 50 plus category

(Ringmar, 2007; State Of The Blogosphere, 2011). In the United States, 28% of teens that were online had created a blog, and teenage girls were one of the fastest growing blog communities (Dean, 2010). Sixty percent of bloggers were Caucasian as compared to 74% of general Internet users who were Caucasian, and the largest number of bloggers came from the United States, Europe, and Oceania followed closely by the rest of North America (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Ringmar, 2007; State Of The Blogosphere, 2011). Just over half of bloggers lived in the suburbs, while only 13% lived in rural areas (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Forty-three percent of bloggers have graduate degrees, approximately 28% received an undergraduate degree, and fewer than 3% of bloggers listed high school graduation as their highest level of formal education (Gill, 2004; State Of The Blogosphere, 2011). Forty-five percent of Technorati respondents earned $50,000 USD per year or more (State Of The Blogosphere, 2011). Between 65% to 70% of survey Technorati respondents were married or in common-law relationships, and almost half were parents (State Of The Blogosphere, 2011). Finally, one-third of Technorati respondents blogged for two to four years, and 48% blogged for four or more years and had at least two blogs that were updated on a regular basis (State Of The Blogosphere, 2011).

Table 1

Profile of a Blogger

Blogosphere	• 33% have bloggers for 2 to 4 years • 48% have blogged for 4 plus years • bloggers have two blogs on average • highest number of bloggers is United States, Europe, Oceania • 60% bloggers Caucasian • 28% teens online have blogs • teenage girls largest growing blog market
Lifestyle	• 50% of American bloggers are 25 to 44 years old • 33% are 44 plus years old • 50% live in suburbs • 13% live in rural areas • 65-70% married or common-law • 50% parents
Education & Earnings	• 43% graduate degrees • 28% undergraduate degrees • 45% earn $50,000 plus USD yearly

As this data and Table 1 suggests, there have been many different types of bloggers who have consumed and produced information as contributors to the blogosphere. The many different types of online communities that exist provide a space for many of these individuals to contribute. Each contribution has been made for different reasons and/or has been prompted by different motivations.

Leisure motivation. Motivation is a fundamental predictor of leisure behaviour, which is linked to a person's goals, desired outcomes, and benefits experienced through participation (Iso-Ahola, 1989). Initially leisure motivation researchers studied the types of activities people

chose hoping that future behaviour could be predicted based on past behaviour in order to plan

and program for recreation with some accuracy (Horna, 1994; Iso-Ahola, 1989). Research

demonstrated that leisure behaviour was actually influenced by "a motive [which] is an internal

factor that arouses and directs human behavior" (Iso-Ahola, 1989, p. 248). This led to the

behaviour approach to recreation, which is a psychological theory that identified the underlying

motivations for leisure participation as being goal oriented, addressing a need, or obtaining

satisfaction (Manning, 2011). Various scales of motivation were developed using the behaviour

approach, including Kraus (1998) who identified leisure motivation to include social and

affiliation needs, excitement and physical challenges, hedonistic urges, and nostalgic

experiences. In turn, McLean, Hurd, and Rogers (2005) identified that motivation fits into four

motivation categories: physical, social, psychological, and emotional (including intellectual and

spiritual). The various scales that have been developed vary but they provide the structure

through which leisure motivations have been studied. While there have been criticisms of the

theory concerning people's recreation choices not being as linear and logical as suggested, the

idea that leisure motivation and choice is driven by complex psychological and social-

psychological motivators continues to be supported (Horna, 1994; Kraus, 1998; Manning, 2011;

McLean et al., 2005).

        Leisure and motivation research was also influenced by Neulinger (1974) who suggested

that "leisure has one and only one essential criterion, and that is the condition of perceived

freedom…being engaged in an activity as a free agent and of one's own choices" (p. 15). This

concept is important because people are motivated as they experience varying levels of perceived

freedom, including intrinsic, extrinsic, or a mix of intrinsic/extrinsic motivations (Dattilo, 1999;

Iso-Ahola, 1989). Intrinsic motivation is defined as participation in an activity because by itself

it is rewarding, pleasurable, and satisfying (McLean & Hurd, 2012; Vallerand, 2007). Extrinsic

motivation is the influence of an external drive or reward that causes an individual to complete a

task (McLean & Hurd, 2012). In combination, perceived freedom and intrinsic/extrinsic

motivation create four broad categories of leisure experience that assist researchers in

understanding the meaning of leisure in people's lives. These categories are pure leisure (high

freedom and intrinsic motivation), leisure-job (high freedom and extrinsic motivation), pure

work (constrained freedom and intrinsic motivation), and pure job (constrained freedom and

extrinsic motivation) (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). It is important for people to experience and

perceive intrinsic motivation connected to leisure choice because the results or benefits of such

choices can increase an individual's feelings of competence, self-determination, and self-concept

(Dattilo, 1999). These benefits, experienced psychologically, physically, emotionally, or

economically, are important as people are then motivated to continue to participate in a particular

leisure activity, and with the investment of energy and time, people develop life long skills and

long term leisure pursuits (Dattilo, 1999; Mannell & Stynes, 1991; Stebbins, 2007).

   Motivation to blog. The blogosphere has been a subject of academic research and was

initially researched to categorize types of blog, blog topic(s), purpose of blogs, and the writer's

motivation for blogging (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Gill, 2004; Jones & Alony, 2008; Karlsson,

2006; Litvin et al., 2008; Pedersen, 2010; Puhringer & Taylor, 2008; Volo, 2010). Over time,

researchers realized that more people were using recreation and work time to create these virtual

spaces. Recognizing the influence of bloggers in society, researchers began to ask bloggers why

they were motivated to participate in this medium. Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz

(2004) for example, asked bloggers why they blog. Results from their study included: a

documentation of a life, as a personal or political commentary, as a cathartic experience, as a

muse (express inner thoughts through writing), and as a community forum. Pedersen (2010) asked 120 British and American bloggers, "Do you see blogging as a form of ____?" (p. 24). Responses included creative writing, publishing, journalism, diary and other (including a place to share, personal knowledge development, specialist newspaper, and for marketing purposes). Other bloggers have suggested that their reasons include, "find[ing] friends, to stay in touch with friends and family, for emotional support, to explore their inner psyche or sexuality, to vent their anger, to make their opinions and their writing skills known more widely or even to make money" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 134). Additional research suggests that bloggers are fulfilling needs such as the need for self-expression, recognition, social contact, introspection, documentation, artistic activity, and academic knowledge (Jones & Alony, 2008). Another reason given for blogging includes being part of or creating a social community of people with similar interests (Karlsson, 2006; Myers, 2010; Rodzvilla, 2002). Lastly, there are bloggers who did not trust traditional media and information gatekeepers, choosing to write and inform through the narrative of blogs to help create meaning and frame the world through real-life experiences (Hewitt, 2005; Jones & Alony, 2008; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Rak, 2005; Rojek, 1995; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008; Yeoman et al., 2006). As is represented in Table 2, researchers have identified a wide range of motivations that have driven bloggers. It is important to acknowledge that bloggers have been identified as multi-motivational participants, as "few bloggers had only one motivation" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 134). Reasons given for blogging also change over time, and include internal and external motivations (Bosangit, Dulnuan, & Mena, 2012).

Table 2

Blog Motivations for General Topic Bloggers

Authors	Blogging Motivations
Nardi et al (2004)	a. Updating others on activities and whereabouts b. Expressing opinions to influence others c. Seeking others' opinions and feedback d. "thinking by writing" e. Releasing emotional tension
Papacharisi (2005)	a. Making money b. Entertainment c. Professional advancement d. Supporting a cause e. Completing course works
Lenhart and Fox (2006)	a. Sharing practical knowledge or skills to others b. Motivating other people to action c. Networking and meeting new people d. Storing important resources and information
Huang et al (2007)	a. Self-expression b. Life-documenting c. Commenting d. Community forum participation e. Information seeking
Hsu and Lin (2008)	a. Altruism b. Expected/reciprocal benefit c. Reputation d. Trust e. Expected relationships

Note. Reprinted from "Understanding consumption experiences: A discourse analysis of travel blogs" by Bosangit, C., 2012, *PhD Dissertation*, University of Nottingham, p. 156. Copyright by C. Bosangit and the University of Nottingham.

Motivation to travel blog. There has been little academic research that differentiated the motivations between the general topic blogger and the travel blogger. In 2007, an estimated 40% to 60% of all blog posts were related to travel, highlighting the importance of this differentiation (Thevenot, 2007). To date, academic research that has examined blogs within the tourism industry has focused on the consumption, business and marketing aspects of blogging. This

research includes: the effects of travel blogs on consumers (Cheyne et al., 2006; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Sharda & Ponnada, 2008; Volo, 2010; Zehrer, Crotts, & Magnini, 2011); how to decipher and analyze bloggers' interpretation of a tourist visit (Crotts, Mason, & Davis, 2009; Pan et al., 2007); the use and credibility of blogs within tourism (Mack et al., 2008); studying electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and digital-word-of-mouth (dWOM) as a tourism tool (Litvin et al., 2008; Pan et al., 2007); the effects of Web 2.0 on prosumer tourists, tourists sights, and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) (Puhriger & Taylor, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008); how DMOs can use blogs and bloggers for promotional and research advantage (Carson, 2008; Lin & Huang, 2006; Huang et al., 2011; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008); researching conglomerate travel websites (Wenger, 2008; Qu & Lee, 2011); how blogs create and re-create travel images and mediascapes (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Rak, 2005; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009); projections of future travel planning procedures (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006); and discourse analysis of blogs to probe media and memoryscapes of travel (Bosangit et al., 2012). This collection of research has contributed many additional concepts and ideas about blogging to academic literature.

There are several examples of motivation and prosumption research in the academic literature. Bosangit (2012) reported that travel bloggers as tourists were motivated to blog online for the following reasons:

> Expressing oneself by writing, keeping a record of travel, networking with others, finding out information about new places, updating family and friends about one's whereabouts, keeping in touch with friends who are also blogging, for entertainment, passing the time, and earning money. (p. 209-210)

This research affirmed that a number of motivations general topic bloggers experience are present in travel bloggers as well.

In another study, researchers affirmed that college age participants used social network sites (SNS; including travelogues) for personal online travel research for functional reasons: to obtain travel information, to share travel information, and as personal documentation (Huang, Basu, & Hsu, 2010). These same participants expressed less motivation to access or share online travel information for social and psychological reasons: friendships, social experiences, increase personal status, or for recreation. This was the sum of research to date linking motivations and prosumptive blogging.

Travel blog research has explored many facets of blogging, its affect on the individual and the tourism industry, and the development of tourism tools to promote travel. The motivation to travel, the prosumption behavior of travel bloggers, and connections between leisure and blogging were less well-studied topics. This research endeavoured to provide further understanding of travel bloggers and their online efforts, using the Serious Leisure Perspective as a research framework.

Serious Leisure Perspective

This research studied travel blogging and the motivations behind these online efforts to gain insight into the perceptions of travel bloggers. The Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) was used a framework to further understand the connections between travel blogs, motivation, leisure and work.

The term serious leisure was developed by Robert Stebbins (1977, 2007) based on research he completed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Stebbins examined musicians who, as adults, brought innumerable skills to their pursuit and who approached music very seriously.

He realized during the process of his research that there was no academic discipline that had

defined or identified the criteria of an amateur (Stebbins, 1992, 2007). Stebbins' focus turned to

gathering data about the qualities found in people who pursued a field of recreation intently in

order to define and create amateur criteria. Stebbins (1992) learned that amateurs can exist in the

arts, sciences, sport, and entertainment fields, and that professionals in the same field were

connected to amateurs. Through further research, he and other academics began to identify

amateur criteria, relationships between amateurs, professionals and novices, as well as identify

different types of leisure (Stebbins, 2007; Stebbins & Hartel, 2011). This combined research has

produced a broad framework called the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP), part of which is

identified in Figure 1. In its entirety the SLP is comprised of three forms of leisure, "*serious*

leisure, casual leisure, and *project-based leisure*" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 1; Stebbins & Hartel, 2011;

see Appendix A for the SLP Diagram). Researchers have examined various recreation and

leisure activities to assist in defining the three main types of serious leisure, clarifying the

features of each type, and identifying subtypes, all with the intent of "showing at once their

distinct features, their similarities and their interrelationships" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 3).

Casual leisure. Casual leisure is distinguished from other types by its short-lived nature,

its immediate rewards, and the need for few specialized skills or training (Stebbins, 2007;

Stebbins & Hartel, 2011). Some casual leisure activity options include play, relaxation, passive

entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory stimulation (Rojek, 1997;

Stebbins & Hartel, 2011). As can be observed, few of these activities require specialized, long-

term acquisition of knowledge or skills, but this type of recreation can contribute to a healthy and

productive leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2007).

Figure 1. The Serious Leisure Perspective, Main Types of Leisure. As identified, casual, project-based and serious pursuits combine to form the three main categories of leisure within the SLP. Subsets of serious pursuits are devotee work and serious leisure, the latter being the focus of this research (version February 2013). For the full SLP Diagram see Appendix A.
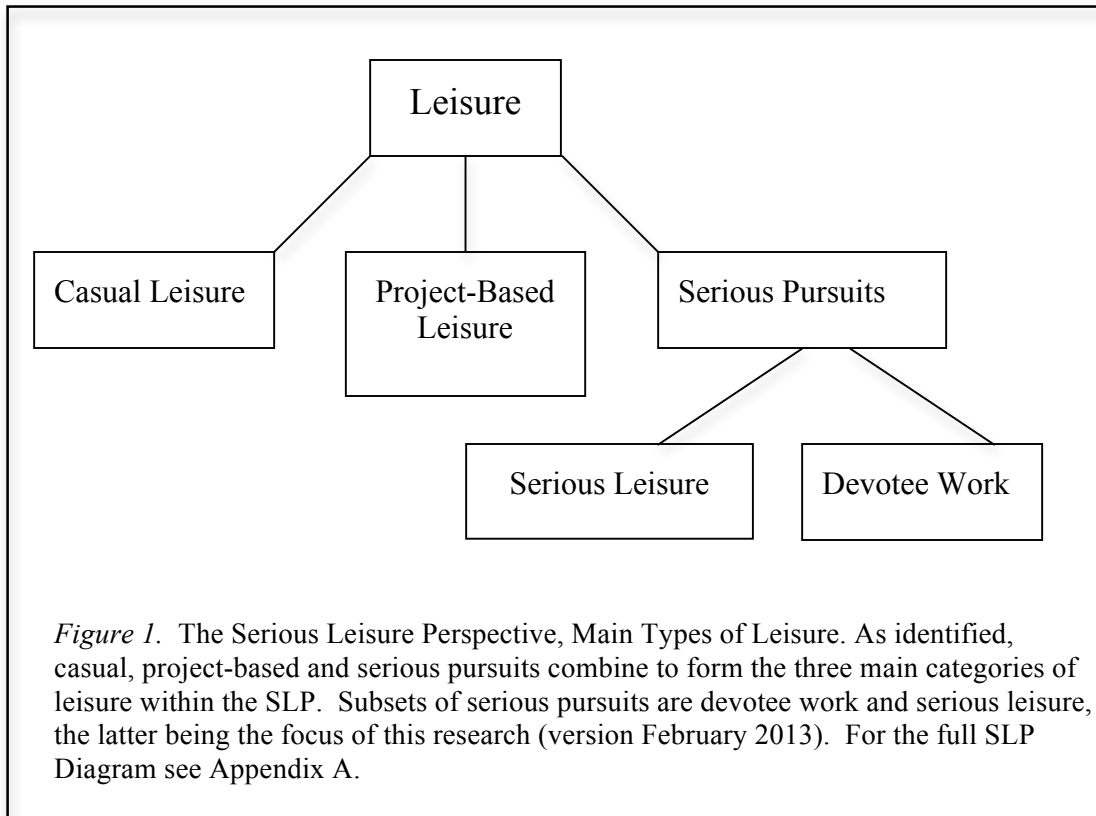
Project-based leisure. The second type of recreation in the SLP is project-based leisure. These are often one-time leisure events or occasional projects during which individual talents and skills, or newly acquired skills, are used. These projects resemble hobbies found in serious leisure (e.g., building a fence, assembling kits, planning a destination wedding), as well as volunteer work (e.g., planning a workplace special event, volunteering at a festival, supporting recovery efforts after a natural disaster), but are within project-based leisure because the duration of an individual's participation is short and infrequent (Stebbins, 2008; see Appendix A).

Serious leisure. Serious leisure is as:

The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly

substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a

(leisure) career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills,

knowledge, and experience. (Stebbins, 1992, p.3; Stebbins, 2007, p.5)

Serious leisure can be used as a way to view leisure as a phenomenon, to understand how people use their free time, and serious leisure can be used to compare various forms of leisure. There are three subtypes of recreation embedded within the concept of serious leisure, as can be observed in Figure 2. First the amateur, whose activities can be found in the arts, sciences, sports and entertainment, linked to that of professional within a similar genre of leisure, and connected to members of the general public. The second type of serious leisure is the volunteer who is involved in formal or informal, un-coerced, un-paid work. Third, the hobbyist represents people who participate in five different categories of leisure: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants (noncompetitive, rule-based pursuits), players of sports or games (competitive, rule-based activities without professional affiliation), and enthusiasts of liberal arts pursuits (Stebbins & Hartel, 2011). These three types of leisure combine to form serious leisure. The amateur leisure category is the focus of this research with travel related links to the liberal arts hobbyist.

Amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers demonstrate six important qualities or characteristics that differentiate their participation in a chosen pursuit from the other two forms of leisure in the SLP framework (Hannam & Knox, 2010). These qualities include perseverance, leisure career (the development of skills, knowledge and abilities), significant effort, durable individual outcomes (costs and benefits of leisure lifestyle; personal enrichment), unique ethos (social world or community of pursuit), and a strong identification with one's chosen pursuit (Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008; Stebbins, 2007).

Figure 2. Three Types of Serious Leisure. The three types of leisure that combine to make up serious leisure are amateur, volunteer, and hobbyist. Examples of each type are listed as well. Reprinted from *The Serious Leisure Perspective Website, www.seriousleisure.net.* (February 2013 version)
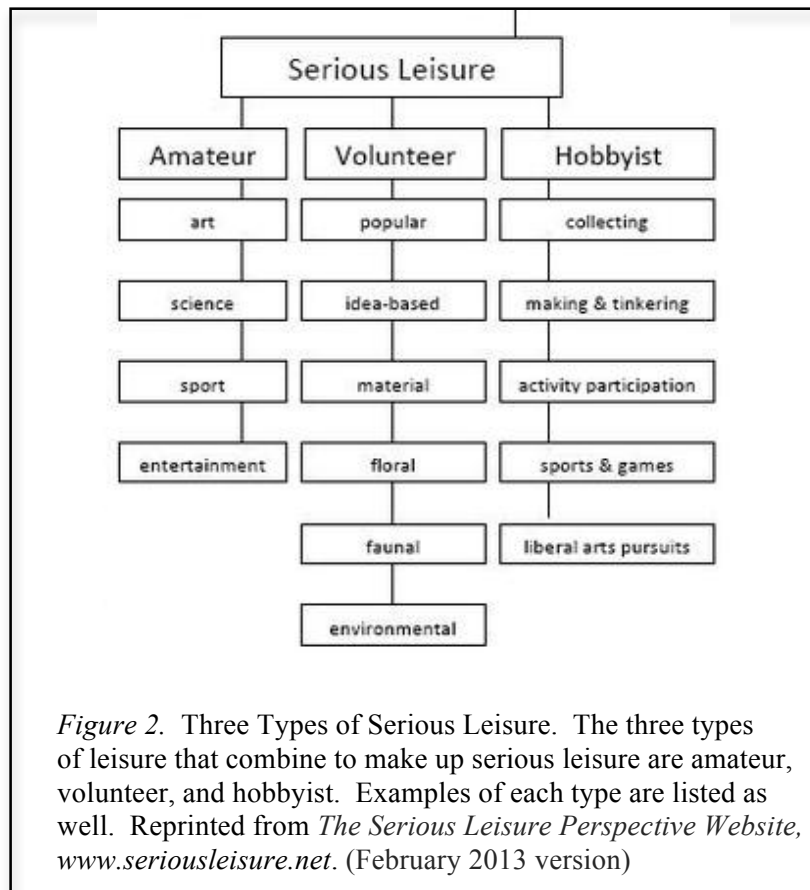
There are ten durable individual outcomes that gauge the cost-benefit of a particular leisure choice and its contribution to a rich leisure lifestyle. Of the ten, seven are personal outcomes and three are social outcomes. The seven personal outcomes include: enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, enhanced self-image, self-gratification, re-creation, and financial benefits (Gould et al., 2008; Stebbins, 2007). Social outcomes include sense of group attraction, group accomplishment and group maintenance, which are connections that stem from informal communities that have their unique norms, beliefs and values (Gould et al., 2008; Green & Jones, 2005). These qualities and outcomes of serious leisure, summarized in Figure 3, are

manifest across the broad spectrum of leisure choices and have helped researchers understand

people's leisure experiences (Gibson et al., 2002; Gould et al., 2008; Hannam & Knox, 2010).

Recent research has indicated that each type, amateur, hobbyist and volunteer, is less

mutually exclusive than first thought and so combinations of these types were identified in the

early 2000s and include mixed serious leisure and hybrid leisure. Stebbins (2001; 2007) explains

that the mixed perspective describes a leisure participant who takes on one leisure role, such as a

musician in a civic orchestra (amateur artist), and then is elected president of the same

organization (volunteer), thus participating in two different roles within the same type of leisure

activity. Harrington, Cuskelly, and Auld (2001) present hybrid leisure as a leisure choice that

includes a person who volunteers in a sporting organization (volunteer), who participates in the

sport (amateur), who is a commodity agent for this sport promoting the organization, and who

sells sporting equipment (devotee work/publics). This blend of leisure roles provides additional

understanding that the categories within serious leisure continue to evolve.

Combined, casual, project-based and serious leisure make up a trio that represent the

framework which Stebbins (2007) and others have developed, called the Serious Leisure

Perspective, a theory and a framework that has carved a research niche within recreation and

leisure studies. Although it has been demonstrated that the three serious forms of leisure

(amateur, hobbyist and volunteer) can become hybrids, as a group they are distinct from casual

leisure and project-based leisure. The SLP has been used to deepen our understanding of the

leisure experience and its role within people's lives. In particular, the professional-amateur-

publics model provides insight into the relation between serious leisure and work.

1. Perseverance
2. Leisure career
3. Significant effort
4. Unique ethos
5. Strong identification with pursuit
6. Durable individual outcomes
      A. Personal outcomes
          - Enrichment
          - Self-actualization
          - Self-expression
          - Enhanced self-image
          - Self-gratification
          - Re-creation
          - Financial benefits
      B. Social outcomes
          - Group attraction
          - Group accomplishment
          - Group maintenance

Figure 3. Serious Leisure Qualities. These qualities are present as part of the experience of the pursuit of serious leisure by participants.

Professional-amateur-publics model. The roles of the amateur and professional, as part of the professional-amateur-publics model (P-A-P), provide greater understanding of the distinction between work and leisure in our lives (Stebbins, 1977). While professionals, amateurs and publics are interconnected and are dependent on each other, there are distinctions, as illustrated in Figure 4 (Stebbins & Hartel, 2011).

The publics are groups of people that are clients but also "sets of people with a common interest; people not served by, but rather informed, enlightened, or entertained by professionals and amateurs, or both, and who make active demands upon them" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 59).

Figure 4. The Professional-Amateur-Publics model (P-A-P model). This model demonstrates the interdependence of all three of the groups on each other.
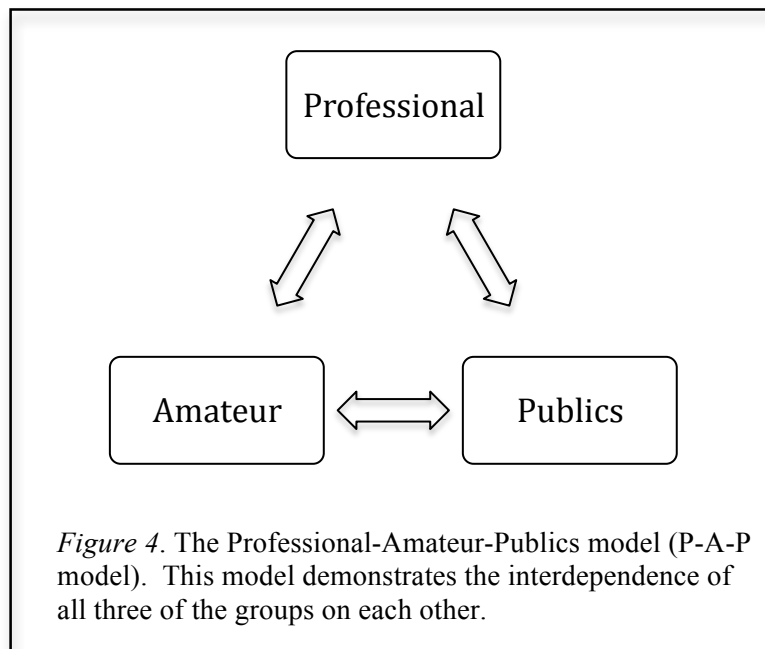
These active demands and considerable support occur in five different ways: financial support, feedback (positive and negative), support or lack of support for the amateur or professional through feedback, public participation (in arts and entertainment only), and take into consideration the opinions of the public when "composing, constructing, or producing works" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 60). It is important to note that amateurs and professionals can be a part of each other's publics as they support their colleagues (Stebbins, 1992). The publics, as an interdependent group within the P-A-P model, is an essential part.

The professional is at the heart of the model and represents a group of people who have developed expertise and skill over many hours of persistent exertion (Gladwell, 2008). Stebbins (1977; 1992) identified nine key points that help to differentiate professionals from their counterparts:

(1) they turn out an unstandardized product,

(2) they hold a wide knowledge of a specialized technique;

(3) they have a sense of identity with their colleagues;

(4) they have mastered a generalized cultural tradition;

(5) they use institutionalized means of validating adequacy of training and competence of

trained individuals;

(6) they emphasize standards and service rather than material rewards;

(7) they are recognized by their clients for their professional authority based on

knowledge and technique;

(8) professional services and products provide an avenue for attainment of certain

important social values, and;

(9) professional work is self-regulated or autonomous. (1-7 Stebbins, 1977, p. 585; 8-9

Stebbins, 1992, p. 23)

As Stebbins (1977) pointed out, any professionals who fall outside these nine criteria may be

referred to as professionals by the general population, but do not meet the sociological definition

of a professional within the P-A-P model. Recently researchers created an additional economic

definition of a professional, which simply put is any person "who is dependent on the income

from any activity that other people pursue with little or no remuneration as leisure" (Stebbins,

2007, p. 6). Whether this financial compensation was from one source or many, dependence on

remuneration based on one's professional work was one of several essential qualities for defining

this cohort.

Few researchers have responded to the summons to further explore the definition of the

amateur as part of the P-A-P model, and thus the definition of amateur remains complex and less

succinct. The work that has been published suggests that amateurs and professionals participate

in leisure and work in a parallel environment and are connected (Stebbins, 1977; Stebbins,

2007). Amateurs have access to the expertise of professionals, developing similar skills, and

both have served the publics in a comparable ways (Stebbins, 1977; Stebbins, 2007). There are

two key differences, however, as amateurs earned less than 50% of their income from the chosen

pursuit, and they invested less time in the activity than professionals (Stebbins, 1977). The

additional qualities that differentiate the role of the amateur include:

- amateurs project less confidence than their professional counterparts and question their

  own skills and abilities;

- amateurs persevere in a pursuit but can be more selective in work that is offered as

  one's financial well-being is not dependent on each offer of paid labour;

- the level of commitment based on value (ratio of costs to benefits);

- continuance (keeping one's social identity related to leisure pursuit) is taken into

  account but amateurs have more freedom with regards to the level of commitment;

- amateurs show less preparedness than professionals to perform leisure activity at any

  time and place; and

- amateurs see themselves as equal in self-concept to their professional counterparts in

  terms of overall excellence in their chosen pursuit. (Stebbins, 1992)

The economic and perceived differences between amateurs and professionals are important

distinctions, as were the amateurs' level of confidence, perseverance, commitment, preparedness

and self-concept, all of which provide further understanding of the differences and similarities

between the two groups.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Professional-Amateur-Publics Model  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
              ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
              │ Professional │   │   Amateur    │   │   Publics    │
              └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
```

Un-standard Product	Income (< 50%)	Financial Support
Specialized Technique	Time	Feedback
Sense of Identity	Confidence	Role Support
Cultural Traditions	Perseverance	Public Participation
Training	Commitment	Public Opinions
Standards and Service	Preparedness	
Authority	Self-Concept	
Social Values		
Autonomous		
Income (> 50%)		

Figure 5. Professional-Amateur-Publics Model Attributes. Each of the three groups that form the P-A-P Model carry unique characteristics that have helped contribute to this interdependent leisure based model.

As illustrated in Figure 5, there are distinct attributes or qualities that differentiate each of the three groups, professional, amateur, and publics, from each other. Even through the identification of these dissimilarities, each group is dependent on the other two to create a leisure experience that fulfills individual participant needs. Together they combine to form the P-A-P model as part of the Serious Leisure Perspective.

Criticisms of serious leisure and the SLP. While the SLP has been used as a research framework for over thirty-five years, there remain issues that have arisen as the framework has developed over time. Some researchers have suggested that the distinctions between hobbyist,

amateur, professional, and volunteer remain conceptual and are not yet distinct or clear enough

to categorize leisure participation (Spurgin, 2008; Wilks, 2013). This lack of clarity leaves

concepts such as amateur and professional difficult to categorize and connect to SLP categories

(Spurgin, 2008). This leads to another criticism of the SLP, the suggestion that any activity can

be turned into a career, therefore the SLP should not be a categorized list of leisure activities but

could be based on social identity or one's leisure experience (Gallant, Arai, & Smale, 2013;

Spurgin, 2008). The SLP examines leisure through a predominantly Western, middle-class lens,

and ignores important issues such as access to diverse forms of leisure by some individuals and

groups (e.g., women, people of lower socio-economic status) (Raisborough, 2006; Spurgin,

2008). Some SLP research labels particular forms of leisure as deviant (e.g., alternative

religions, witchcraft, alcohol consumption), when people who participate in such leisure identify

their pursuits as a normal part of life and suggest that SLP research adapt accordingly (Spurgin,

2008). Finally, there is not enough research linking serious leisure and the SLP to tourism and it

is "equally valuable and imperative to understand a form of serious leisure occurring outside the

realm of everyday life" (Kim, 2004, p. 25). Further research has suggested that the divisions

between categories such as hobbyist, amateur and professional don't need to be so definitive, and

that research connecting tourism and the SLP has increased over a number of years. Further

research will shed light on both issues.

Serious leisure and tourism. Tourism, as a serious leisure topic, has been studied since

the 1990's, and included subjects such as sport tourism, event management, festivals, and

volunteer tourism (Bailey & Russell, 2010; Getz, 2008; Getz & McConnell, 2011; Green &

Jones, 2005; Leonard & Onyx, 2009; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Stebbins & Hartel, 2011).

Several tourism-based studies have helped to further develop the concept of serious leisure to

tourism through the liberal arts hobbyist category, through experience-based leisure, and through the study of social groups.

Tourists have been considered liberal arts hobbyists, as indicated in Figure 6, if they actively, "systematically and fervently seek knowledge for its own sake" (Stebbins, 1994, p. 174). They participate in tourism to gain knowledge about other places, spaces and people, "including how to interact with local people and attend to everyday needs in unfamiliar settings" (Stebbins, 1996, p. 949), with the goal of understanding "local arts, folkways, lifestyles, and histories" (Stebbins, 2001, p. 78). This type of tourist is described as a committed and educated person, whose travel experiences highlight the interplay between tourist consumer (publics) and professional/amateur producer. More recent research has provided a broader understanding of how tourists and tourism fit within the SLP.

Research demonstrated that tourists acquired skills that moved across the casual/serious leisure divide, which suggested a more permeable division within the SLP framework than first identified (Beedie, 2008; Gallant, Arai, & Smale, 2013). Recent research suggests that each recreation *activity* should not be studied through a serious leisure lens, but that each recreation *experience* should be studied in order to "draw attention to the quality and nature of serious leisure and to the process through which it is experienced" (Gallant et al., 2013, p. 94). These experiences occurred most often for the individual through a process of community connection. These social group experiences created a sense of identity and social training for the participant that led them through five stages of serious leisure participation: pre-socialization, recruitment, socialization, acceptance, and decline (Levine & Moreland, 1995; Stebbins, 2001).

Figure 6. Tourists as Liberal Arts Hobbyists. As part of the serious leisure perspective, the liberal arts pursuits has been identified as an area in which some tourists fit.
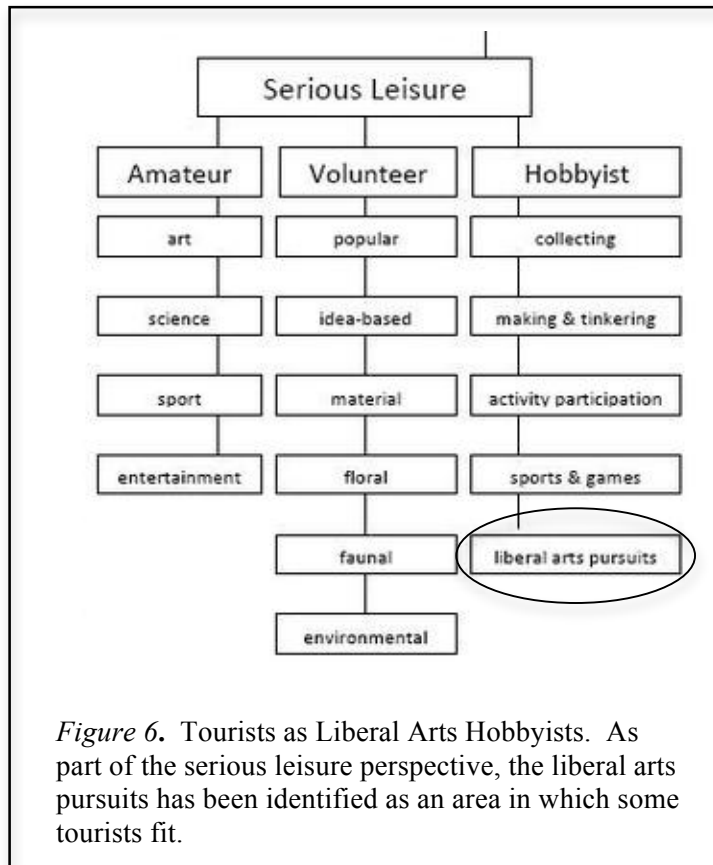
At the height of these five stages, repetitive leisure experiences helped the individual develop serious leisure qualities, which reinforced increased participation in the experiences through additional travel. For example, in one study, the positive experiences of travel sport tourism increased serious leisure qualities, and these increased qualities and social connections through serious leisure participation led to increased sport tourism (Levine & Moreland, 1995). This reciprocal relationship based on experience-focused leisure, provided broader connections between tourism and serious leisure due to community connections, skill development, and mutual reinforcement.

Experience based leisure is significant to tourism, as tourism itself is experience-based (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). Producers of tourism spaces and

products have been motivated to move to experience-centered tourism, in part, due to demand

from consumers, advanced technology, diffusion of information, and increased speed of

communication (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001; Stamboulis &

Skayannis, 2003). These changes to tourism, technology, consumption and production have

provided strong rationales to engage in research focused on experienced-based tourism online, in

particular the contributions of the travel blogger.

> **Bloggers as serious leisure participants.** Gibson et al. (2002) stated:
>
> Unrah (1980) postulated that many social worlds are characterized by mediated
>
> interaction using television, radio, newsletters, and the like to communicate. Following
>
> this line of thinking, Stebbins (1999) predicted that contact via the Internet would become
>
> increasingly more prevalent among devotees of a serious leisure activity. (p. 414)

The use of the Internet as part of serious leisure activity was evident as market and online

research assessed the opinions of bloggers about their hobbyist (or amateur) and professional

efforts online (Bonsangit, 2012; State of the Blogosphere, 2011). One such survey was

administered by Technorati, whose definitions fit within the economic parameters of an amateur

and professional, and included:

> 1) hobbyist bloggers report no current income from their blog and contribute online for
>
> fun;
>
> 2) professional part-time bloggers receive compensation but do not consider blogging
>
> their full-time employment, only a way to supplement their income; and,
>
> 3) professional full-time bloggers are independent and consider blogging their full-time
>
> employment. (State of the Blogosphere, 2011)

An additional survey asked, "What does your blog mean to you?" (Lenhart & Fox, 2006, p. 7), and most of the respondents stated it was something they did for fun, did not spend a lot of time on, but did enjoy blogging as a hobby. No further definition of hobby was provided. In this same report, only 8% of respondents stated they made any income from their blogs. While these ideas or definitions for hobbyist/amateur and professional within these reports and surveys were more akin to the economic definitions, the information in the report and survey did include descriptions of a built social world, perseverance, significant effort, and the development of skills, knowledge, and abilities; references to the more sociological definition used within serious leisure. This suggests that the online survey and other research documents can provide a preliminary understanding of bloggers as serious leisure participants through an economic and sociological lens.

Based on the afore mentioned reports and surveys, 40% to 60% of blog respondents identified themselves as hobbyists, which by their definition means they spent less than three to five hours blogging each week, and have had a blog to express personal opinions for fun (Bosangit, 2012; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; State of the Blogosphere, 2011). Sixty-nine percent (69%) received personal satisfaction from blogging, most have not made money from their blog efforts, and many occasionally received free products from companies in exchange for a blog review (the more well-known bloggers received two offers per week; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; State of the Blogosphere, 2011). Forty-two percent (42%) of hobbyist blogs received approximately 1,000 visitors to their blog per month (Bosangit, 2012; State of the Blogosphere, 2011). Table 3 provides a summary of the commitment to blogging made by hobbyists and professionals.

Professional bloggers have spent 10 hours or more per week blogging, 70% complete their work in order to share expertise and experience with others, and 37% earn income from

blogging. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of part-time professionals and 66% of full-time professionals

were approached to review products approximately 10 times per week (State of the Blogosphere,

2011). Professional full-time bloggers have over 10,000 people visiting their sites per month and

have updated their blogs at least three times per day. They have spent 44% more time on their

blogs now than they did when their blog was first launched (State of the Blogosphere, 2011).

These statistics have demonstrated a strong commitment by professional bloggers who have

knowledge, authority and expertise as evidenced by the number of organizations who have

sought their professional input (Stebbins, 2007). There appears to be evidence of serious leisure

qualities and of the P-A-P model within the blogosphere when reviewing the contributions of

online hobbyists and professional bloggers, which may also be evident in the travel blogosphere.

These assessments were similar to the economic and sociological definitions found within the P-

A-P model.

Table 3

Comparison Between General Topic Hobby and Professional Bloggers

Blogger Efforts	Hobby (Amateur)	Professional
Hours Per Week on Blog	3	10
Expressed Opinions for…	fun	share expertise
Monetary Reward	none to a small amount	37% of income
Gratis Opportunities	0-1 per week	10 per week (approx.)
Blog Visits per Month	1,000	10,000
Personal Satisfaction	69% said yes	unknown

Note. Information summarized from three sources. See references including: Bosangit, 2012; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; State of the Blogosphere, 2011.

Conclusion

While initial research has suggested that bloggers exhibit some characteristics of serious leisure participants and the P-A-P model may be relevant in this context, little research exists that has examined travel bloggers through the Serious Leisure Perspective lens. In using this lens, this research sheds light on the online prosumption of travel bloggers, and how they influenced the online travel industry. While this research has optimistically given a voice to travel bloggers and the efforts they make online as both consumers and producers of travel knowledge, it is hoped that it has also been relevant, timely and interesting (Tracy, 2010).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Purpose of Research and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to understand travel bloggers' perceptions of their online efforts in the creation and maintenance of their blogs, and the way these efforts fit within their leisure and work. Researchers in academic fields such as information studies, communications, marketing, computer science, media studies and even biology have examined blogs and their far-reaching influence (Bosangit, 2012; Nardi et al., 2004; Pedersen, 2010). Even though the prominence of travel blogs within the Web 2.0 environment is evident, few researchers have asked travel bloggers why they have created and contributed their ideas, words, pictures and experiences to the online environment (Bosangit, 2012; State of the Blogosphere, 2011; Thevenot, 2007). This research was concerned with asking travel bloggers about their online contributions, but this research did not query travel bloggers about their travels to various destinations. The decision to focus on travel blogging was specifically made in order to further understand the level of commitment and dedication travel bloggers made to the pursuit of creating blog posts and generating an online presence. This research was therefore focused on the act of travel blogging as an experience, leisure, work or otherwise. By talking with bloggers about their travel blogs, this research provides insight into travel bloggers' perceptions about their contributions to the Web 2.0 environment, the travel industry and their blogging experiences as work and/or leisure.

To address the purpose of this study, two over-arching research questions were explored:

A. Why do travel bloggers create and maintain travel blogs?

B. How do travel bloggers see their travel blogging experiences with regards to their

leisure and work?

Research Design

This qualitative research study used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding

of travel bloggers perspectives. Interviews were conducted using a text-based format (i.e. email)

or a verbal format (i.e. live internet chat, telephone). A semi-structured interview protocol was

used because, as Singleton and Straits (1999) stated a, "semi-structured interview would have

specific objectives, but the interviewer would be permitted some freedom in meeting them. The

scope of the interview would be limited to certain subtopics, and key questions probably would

be developed in advance" (p. 242). This technique was appropriate for this study as the semi-

structured interview allowed the researcher to address the specific research questions guiding the

study and simultaneously remain open to participants' perspectives and ideas, which was

important given the exploratory nature of the research. This interview protocol was designed

with opening questions that eased the participants into the interview, followed by a series of

questions that generated detailed data, and a final question that provided the research participants

with the opportunity to share any final thoughts (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This format was used

to provide a relaxed environment in which the participant felt at ease to share information, while

at the same time generating rich thoughtful data, related to the purpose of the study.

The following open-ended semi-structured qualitative interview questions guided the

research:

1. Please provide the name(s) of your travelogue(s).

2. Please explain the type of blog you have created and maintain.

3. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and discuss why you feel they are important.

6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other activities?

8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work, neither or both? Why?

9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal, social, professional and / or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals, communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these interactions to you?

13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Participant Recruitment

To address the research questions and to serve the purpose of the research, this study

involved interviewing travel bloggers about their experiences travel blogging. Purposive

sampling was undertaken to identify interview subjects that had experience travel blogging

(Bernard, 2011). Before identifying individuals to interview, travel blogs were selected and then

the authors were contacted. Online searches for travel blogs were undertaken using sites

including Google, Technorati, Million Short, and Facebook. The three search engines and one

social media site were used to provide a diverse range of travel blogs to select from, as each of

these sites prioritizes their search results using different criteria. Google ranks their search

results by the identification of relevant content, websites and blogs based on the popularity of the

page and its posted links (The Internet Presence LLC, n.d.). Technorati is a website where blogs

are registered for free by the creator, and each blogger tags or attaches short descriptor words

that are used to identify relevant blogs during a search (Technorati, n.d.). Million Short is a new

type of search engine that dismisses the first million web pages (including blogs) to present a

collection of lesser-known websites (Young, 2012). Travel bloggers have organized several

community groups on Facebook and these groups were used to identify and verify active travel

blogs by noting their contributions on Facebook, then previewing their online blog for recent

posts and activity. Due to the use of several search engines a diverse collection of travelogues

provided the researcher with broad and varied blog creators to ensure a robust data set.

When searching the Internet, the terms "travel blog" and "travelogue" were used to find

travel blogs. Once a list of travel blogs appeared, one was selected by looking at every third blog

and ensuring it met the following parameters. The 'About Me' portion of the blog was reviewed

for the following information: travel blogs were selected if they were in English (researcher

limitation), the author identified the blog specifically as a travel blog, and the blog had been

updated in the last six months. It was also important for the travel blogger to be an active

traveler and to have at least one travel experience planned during 2012 or 2013. Finally, the

blogger had to be eighteen years or older.

A sample of between 20 to 30 respondents was desired and this was seen as appropriate

as researchers who have completed similar qualitative studies were able to generate sufficient

data using this number of participants (Nardi et al., 2004; Mason, 2010). Data saturation is

achieved "when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under

investigation" (Mason, 2010, par 2; Creswell, 1998), and for these reasons the number of

participants sought for this research was 25 travel bloggers.

Data Collection

Each potential participant was sent a personalized email invitation and was asked to

respond within a two-week time frame (see Appendix D). As it was anticipated that 20 to 30

participants were needed, 50 e-mails were initially distributed. The email introduced the

researcher and briefly summarized the project. It also included an informed consent form and

asked the blogger if s/he preferred to participate through email, through an on-line call via

Skype, or by telephone. Those who did not respond to the first email were contacted again after

two weeks with a second email requesting their participation (see Appendix E). No further

reminders were sent to non-respondents after the second email. An additional 42 travel bloggers

were contacted two weeks later as 25 of the original sample either did not respond or did not

agree to participate (see Appendix D). The intent was to contact an additional 50 potential travel

blog participants, but after an additional 42 invitations were emailed, as can be viewed in Figure

7, 39 potential participants were identified.

Once a travel blogger agreed to participate they were contacted using their preferred format (e-mail, Skype, telephone). Thirty-four participants were emailed the list of questions and were asked to provide in-depth responses, of which 23 travel bloggers returned a completed questionnaire (see Appendix H). The e-mail participants were asked to indicate in their reply whether the researcher could contact them again to ask further questions about their responses. The five travel bloggers who participated by telephone or Skype were contacted individually on a date and time they had indicated was convenient (see Appendix I). The participants were asked if the conversation could be recorded (see Appendix J). Once the interview began the participant was asked to discuss each of the open-ended questions in-depth and at the end of their interview they were asked about their willingness to participate in a follow-up conversation. Follow-up conversations/e-mails were only considered necessary if there was information that required clarification further explanation after the interviews were completed. No additional areas of questioning were identified as a result of the interviews and therefore no follow-up interviews were scheduled.

Figure 7. Travel Blog Recruitment Numbers. Identifies the number of participants contacted, the number of travel bloggers who received emails to participate, and the number of actual participants who corresponded with the researcher.
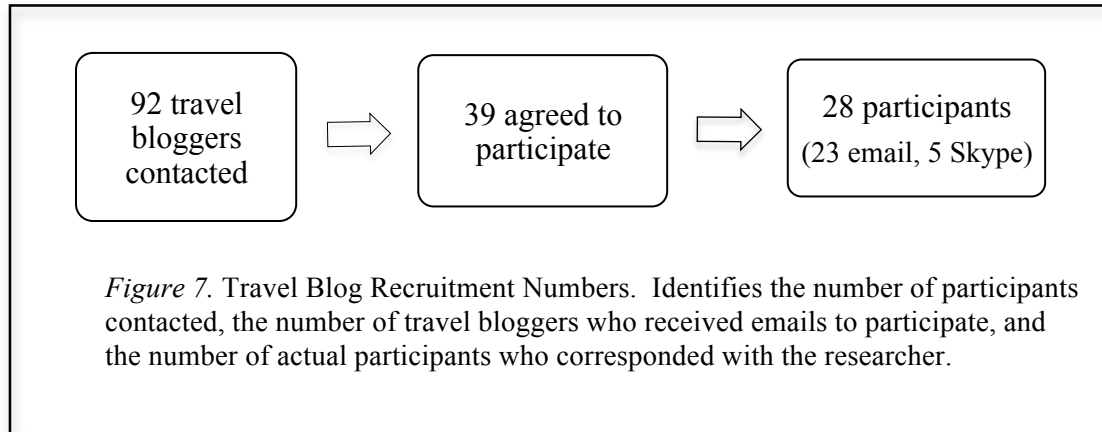
Informed consent. An informed consent form was sent to all potential participants by the researcher as a portable document file (pdf) attachment in both the first and second emails (see Appendix G). Each individual was encouraged to add an electronic signature, or print out, sign and mail or scan and email the completed form. In the case a participant was unable to access technologies required to sign a hard copy (i.e. printer, electronic signature, etc.), the participant indicated in the reply email that they had read the informed consent form and agreed to participate in the research. If verbal consent was provided, it was recorded before the research conversation began, and later, transcribed and a hard copy attached to a consent form (see Appendix J).

Participant confidentiality. The data that was collected included personal, social and professional information shared by travel bloggers about their travelogues. A Google email address (Gmail) was specifically established for this research to contact potential participants. The name of the individual and their travel blog was not connected to their email responses or interview notes. All information collected (informed consent, email correspondence, audio recording) was stored on a password protected personal computer and backed-up on a password

protected external hard drive. Sections of this data were also printed as hard copies and were stored in a locked container. The audio recordings of conversations were recorded on the password protected computer, transcribed by the researcher, and when printed, were treated in the same manner as the text-based emails.

Throughout the research, participants were contacted using the name that the participant chose to provide from their blog or in email correspondence. All phone conversations occurred in private spaces to ensure the confidentiality of participants, and all names (of bloggers and travelogues) that appear in this document were replaced using fictitious blogger and travel blog names. The risks for research participants were considered minimal, as pseudonyms and fictitious blog names were used in the place of actual names. There is a chance that a reader could identify the travelogue and connect it to the writer, which could be problematic if a travel blogger preferred to remain anonymous, but the possibility was minimized in three ways: first, the use of pseudonyms; second, the vastness of the World Wide Web; and thirdly, the number of blogs and travelogues in existence.

Research Participants

Participants for this research were recruited between December 2012 and February 2013. Initially, the number of participants identified for this research was set at 25 participants, but due to the number of completed responses, 28 travel bloggers participated in this research. Demographic characteristics were not considered or requested as interview information but many bloggers volunteered this information during the interview (see Table 4). Of the twenty-eight bloggers who offered demographic information, nineteen were solo travelers and bloggers (ten female, nine male), six traveled and blogged as couples (four heterosexual, one lesbian couple), two additional couples traveled with their children, and one gay single man traveled and blogged

with his son. Several of the research participants indicated they live location-free (able to move freely between towns, cities and locations around the world). Five participants revealed they were Canadian born, eleven identified themselves as American, one couple consisted of an American and a German, three were British with one blogger currently residing in Senegal, one blogger was Irish, one couple was from New Zealand, one was a German blogger residing in Britain, and one was an Italian blogger residing in Egypt. Four bloggers did not divulge their nationalities. Of note is the predominance of North American bloggers. This may have occurred because the researcher required that communication transpire in English, due to the sampling techniques, or the large number of blogs created and maintained by Americans (Ringmar, 2007; State of the Blogosphere, 2011). Overall, these 28 participants answered the research questions and were able to contribute diverse ideas to this academic inquiry.

Table 4

Travel Blog Research Participants

Blogger Number	Blogger Pseudonym	Blog Name as Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Details of Travel
1	Alicia	Travel is Delicious	Canada	Full-time business blogger.
2	Chelsea	Purposeful Adventures	Canada	Expatriate blog. Travels with partner Lester.
3	Sabrina	Off A Bit Travels	USA	Full-time business.
4	Trent and Jamie	We Two Travel	Canada	High-level income DIY travel.
5	Cheri	Crazy Tourism Guide	Ireland	Blogs for entertainment and humour.
6	Ezra	Me and My Camera	Undisclosed	Casual blogger.
7	Tim	Long Road Ahead	England	Winter ski blog.
8	Nathaniel	Adventures in the Southern Hemisphere	England, now in Senegal	Creating a location destination with blog.
9	Audra	Treats and Travel	USA	Cultural focus and full-time blog business.
10	Kenneth and Anneliese	Wandering Nomads	Canada	Travel, technology, family and fun blog. Travel with two children.
11	Stewart and Senya	Our Motor home in Europe	England	Motor home travel through Europe.
12	Wilamina	American Exploring Europe	USA	Travel for women and African American community.
13	Dominique	Canada's Big Beautiful Guide	Canada	Eastern Canadian blog.
14	Theresa and Samara	Moving About the Globe	USA and Germany	Long-term travel blog. Lesbian couple.
15	Zachary	Nomads Take on the World	USA	Global lifestyle guide. Include videos on blog.
16	Gabriel	The End of the Road	Undisclosed	DIY travel. Focus on writing and photography.
17	Andrew	Live Your Dreams	USA	Single gay man traveling with adopted son.
18	Greg	Dude Who Travels the World	USA	Hobby turned full-time blog.
19	Marcia and Art	Respectful Voyages	Undisclosed	Round-the-world trip blog. Include videos on blog.
20	Lurene	All My Stories	USA	Part time business blogger.
21	Charise	Dance Around the Globe	USA	Expatriate and USA travel blog.
22	Teague	We Just Keep Moving	German, now in England	Blog to lead to storytelling consultancy work.

Blogger Number	Blogger Pseudonym	Blog Name as Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Details of Travel
23	Doral and Wyora	Have Flip Flops, Will Travel	New Zealand	Adventure blog. Changed from part to full-time blogger.
24	Kalina	Extended Nomadic Adventures	USA	Full-time blogger. Travels on occasion with partner.
25	Lloyd	Authentic Global Trekking	Undisclosed	Blog as freedom from 9 to 5 lifestyle.
26	Wyona	Teach and Travel the World	USA	Full-time international teacher, and part-time travel blogger.
27	Ivan	Small Book Travel Guide	USA	Part-time travel blogger. Other full-time work in online travel industry.
28	Zoe	My Adventures with a Camera	Italy, now in Egypt	Focus on solo female travel and Middle East travel.

Note. This table provides the blogger number, travel blogger name (pseudonym), blog name (pseudonym), country of origin (if available), and a few details about the type of travel and travel blogger that participated in this research.

Data Analysis

The open-ended questions posed to research participants were analyzed using content analysis. This technique was selected because it is useful for understanding, classifying, organizing, and describing data (Creswell, 1998). In using content analysis to organize the data, the goal was to reduce the amount of material collected, and to ensure during this process that "a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic" was revealed through crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). This method allows for the rigor of science to meet the creative arts (such as writing and photography) to ensure that each voice within the research is heard and honoured, and that ideas and themes are examined from all sides (Johnson, 2010; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). This may produce data that is partial and subjective to only these participants, but is still relevant in contributing to the academic information about the experiences of people who travel blog.

In undertaking the content analysis, the researcher began by reading through the data several times looking for general themes and ideas "getting a sense of the whole [data and]…immersing…in the data trying to get a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts" (Creswell, 1998, p. 143). The data was then organized in two ways to look for and collapse important themes and categories, as indicated in Figure 8 (Burnard, 1991; Creswell, 1998; Flick, 2002). The data was organized first in a non-cross-sectional format 'to identify overall structures within each case or interview" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 203), and to observe and identify any patterns and relationships. Next, the data was organized by question to compare and contrast the cross-sectional data between participant responses, one question at a time (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). During each of the processes, the data was reviewed multiple times to identify themes and categories, and to collapse repetitive categories into more manageable numbers, as well as pay attention to the marginal or outlying data that was identified as unique, yet equally important within the data set (Burnard, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Sjorstrom & Dahlgren, 2002). Several additional reviews of both organized data sets revealed patterns and relationships that indicated meaningful connections between the travel bloggers and the Serious Leisure Perspective.

Figure 8. Investigation of Data Using Content Analysis. This table represents the ways in which data was analyzed as part of this research using content analysis.
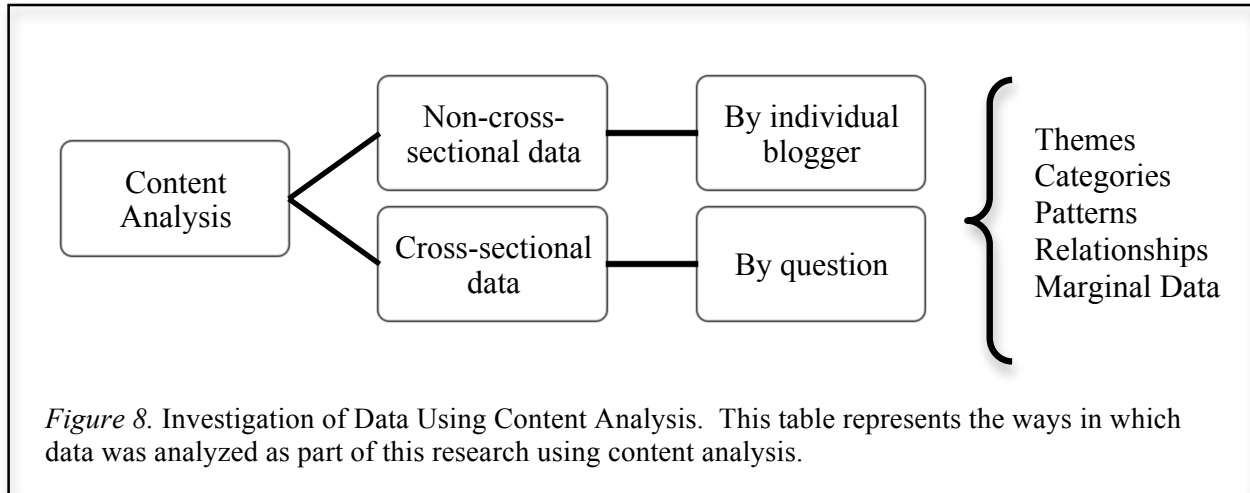
Lastly, a further review of the data elicited descriptive patterns and elements, which led to more detailed descriptions of amateur and professional travel bloggers and how they developed their leisure and professional careers, as well as additional important topics related to tourism, leisure and travel blogging (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The data and findings in this research were identified using the rigor of qualitative research techniques, and interpreted through the lens of the researcher. This researcher's lens includes eighteen years of travel through a middle-upper class expatriate lifestyle, and an additional twenty years of tourism experiences. The research acknowledges that these experiences influence the way the data collected is interpreted and worked to present the data as transparently as possible.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Research Questions

To address the research question and serve the purpose of this study the results are presented in two sections; the first section addresses why the travel bloggers created and maintained travel blogs. The second section focuses on the information elicited from the data about how the travel bloggers viewed their blog experiences in relation to their leisure and/or work. The research participants were identified online, the data analyzed using content analysis, and the discussions developed from the themes, relationships, patterns, and categories identified within the data.

Reasons for Creating and Maintaining Travel Blogs

The data presented in this section addressed the first research question:

(A) Why do travel bloggers create and maintain travel blogs?

The interview questions included to address this research question were:

1. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

2. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

3. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and discuss why you feel they are important.

4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and discuss why you feel they are important.

The data elicited from these questions resulted in three themes related to motivations for travel blogging. These themes include altruistic, personal, and public/social. In all there were thirteen

sub-themes identified, as can be seen in Table 5. Descriptions of the themes and sub-themes are

as follows.

Theme 1: Altruistic Motivations

One of the themes present in the data included travel bloggers who blogged to aid other

individuals with little regard for personal acknowledgement or reward. These altruistic

behaviours, indentified in Table 5, include contact with family and friends, a desire to inspire

others to follow their dreams, offer an educational tool, share the humour of travel, and to give

back to the WWW.

Contact with family and friends. Several research participants planned extended travel

excursions leaving family and friends. Before departing on their excursions many of the

research participants created email lists or travel blogs to maintain contact with family and

friends (blogger 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24). The motivation to create a blog for

family and friends occurred for two reasons: to share travel experiences, and to maintain

continues contact with others as a safety precaution.

Several travelers were motivated to blog to remain in contact with family and friends.

Nathaniel (8), for example, "started…a travel blog, to update friends and family whilst living

abroad and to tell my travel stories [and] daily anecdotes" (question 2, para. 2). Over time, many

of the bloggers who kept in contact with family and friends through email moved to a blog

format, most often to replace long emails to a more centralized online space.

Table 5

Motivations to Create and Maintain Travel Blogs

Theme	Sub-Theme
Altruism	• Contact with family and friends • Educational tools • Inspire others • Share humour of travel • Give back to the World Wide Web
Personal	• Develop knowledge, skills and abilities • Strong connections to blog • Alleviate Boredom • Natural high • Documentation of travel
Public/Social	• Connect to readership • Social connections • Professional exposure

This included Kenneth and Anneliese (10), who travel with their two children, and shared why

they began to blog:

> After years of maintaining email lists of people that wanted to keep up to date on where
>
> we were and what we were up to we decided it would be far easier to create an online
>
> journal and they could check it as their time permitted. I always hated the feeling that I
>
> was spamming my own family with our travels. I also wanted to lessen the chance of
>
> having that awkward moment where a close family member wanted to be taken off the
>
> list. With the site they can check as often or as few times as they wanted. (question 3,
>
> para 3)

Sharing information through a travel blog was a solution for several research participants who wanted to stay in contact with family and friends, but also who wanted to do so in a non-intrusive way (blogger 2, 8, 9, 10).

Other research participants had family and friends who were not supportive of their decision to travel, and the creation of a blog to communicate one's location and health was a helpful way to keep family informed. Audra (9) shared the following:

I closed [up my house], put on a backpack…and I did a round-the-world ticket for six months. And my family was understandably upset about this, now you are walking away from a job to pursue something you don't know you can even make a success…I owned a bunch of properties, and I just decided it was time for me and whatever was gonna happen, was gonna happen. And I went out there and to keep them a little happier I started the blog so they could see where I was and what I was doing everyday. (question 3, para. 5)

These research participants found blogs a beneficial way to keep very concerned or less supportive family and friends informed, and to ensure that others knew the traveler was safe (blogger 9, 11, 12, 17, 21, 24). Due to the time and effort invested in the maintenance of a blog, these efforts to remain in regular contact with family and friends shows the altruistic character of travel bloggers.

Educational tools. Travel bloggers used their blog to assist their readers to learn about travel. Some travel bloggers encouraged readers to broaden their travel experiences, while others created educational blogs with specific travel information focusing on skill development.

Research participants used blogs to help their readers learn about other people and places around the world, particularly several bloggers who strongly identified as off-the-beaten track

and do-it-yourself (DIY) travelers. These individuals used their blogs to try to persuade their

readers to broaden their travel experiences, including to create their own travel itineraries and as

part of these plans, explore new places and meet local people in order to dispel fears or

preconceived notions they may have about the world and its inhabitants (blogger 4, 6, 12, 15, 19,

23, 26). Trent and Jamie (4) are a couple who felt their blog filled a special niche as it focuses

on "educating a primarily North American audience about places they've never heard of; getting

them to think about the benefits of travelling independently, slowly, and respectfully" (question

13, para. 13). Similarly, Marcia and Art (19), a young couple taking a year to travel the world,

wanted to show people how:

> To leave their comfort zone and discover there is a lot more out there than you think you
>
> know. It is important to learn about different cultures and to realize we are not so
>
> different from each other no matter where you are from. (question 5, para. 5)

As well, Zachary (15) believed that "if we are exposed to other cultures and their way of living it

will open our views and allow us to develop a broader scope on life" (question 3, para. 3). Even

for those people who are unable to travel, Wyona (26), who travels both as a teacher and blogger,

suggested, "'cyber travel' offered by travel blogs provides important global education and can

even dispel stereotypes" (question 13, para. 14). These bloggers see travel as a way for people to

overcome fears, abandon stereotypes, and learn about the benefits of travel. Some research

participants even use DIY travel to create in situ educational experiences while on the road so

that each adventurer can gain an understanding of "how beautiful the world and its people are"

(blogger 19, question 4, para. 4; blogger 8, 12, 14, 17, 19, 24, 25).

   Some bloggers wanted to provide information in their blog posts about specific skill

development while traveling. For example, Sabrina (3), embarked on her extended travels in

2008 and realized the information on blogs for solo female travelers planning extended trips was insufficient. She began her blog because she had the technical skills and "I wanted to know what to pack…as I would be gone for a year and I can't replace certain things" (question 4, para. 5). Sabrina (3) started her travel blog as an educational tool to assist other women to decide how much luggage to take, what to pack, and what belongings can be replaced while on the road. Five years later, her blog is even larger than she had planned it would become. Through feedback from readers, these travel bloggers know that they have consistently educated others by providing information, stories, and visual images on their blogs. Whether a broad education or specific skill development was shared in blog posts, travel bloggers were motivated to use their knowledge to benefit others by educating their readers.

Inspire others. Several bloggers shared deep personal reasons for travel blogging. This included building a high quality of life through the pursuit of travel related aspirations, and the desire to inspire others to chase their dreams, travel related or otherwise (blogger 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28). Chelsea (2), a Canadian who travels with her partner Lester, stated that the "most important reason for me [in creating my blog] is to inspire others to travel. Anyone can do this; that the fear is normal, [the] world is filled with people just like them, and travel isn't that hard" (question 5, para. 5; blogger 12). Theresa and Samara (14), a German-American couple, identified that "by documenting our own experiences through visually stimulating and creative editorial[s] we inspire others to travel" (question 5, para. 5). These bloggers, as well as others, have received feedback from their readership stating, as Ivan (27) pointed out, "someone commenting and saying you're an inspiration…or your blog is interesting…encourages me to continue to blog as it affects people and inspires them to travel" (question 5, para. 5). Travel blogs thus have become a two-way motivator, for readers to identify and begin living their

dreams, and for travel bloggers to continue traveling and sharing their experiences that influence

and inspire others. These motivations develop altruistic behaviors in travel bloggers as they

continue to grow their blogs over time.

Several bloggers had more specific ideas about whom they were trying to inspire and

where they wanted their readers to travel. Wilamina (12), a young African American woman

living in Denmark, wished "to encourage young black women to travel as I don't often see

women like me traveling" (question 5, para. 5). A British-born blogger now living in Senegal,

Nathaniel (8), wanted to "attract people to visit so I can share and experience this amazing

country with friends, family and like minded people" (question 5, para. 12). These specific goals

suggest a great desire and effort to inspire their blog readers to travel.

Two separate bloggers, Audra (9) and Andrew (17) commenced traveling and blogging

after having recovered from life threatening illnesses. Their respective travel blogs are a

meaningful part of their new lives as full-time travelers and bloggers. They share their blog

stories, anecdotes, and photography to inspire others to live their dreams right now rather than

waiting for a life threatening illness to be a motivator. Inspiring others has a reciprocal affect as

Andrew (17) stated, "my life has been enriched because of blogging. Blogging has caused me to

meet more people and has expanded my world" (question 14, para. 30). Taking the time to

inspire others through travel blogs is an altruistic behaviour demonstrated by many of these

research participants.

Share humour of travel. Several bloggers began their blogs in order to share the funny

and interesting experiences they were having while traveling. Cheri (5) discloses, "when I

started traveling I wrote emails to friends and family. They said they were really funny and that I

should publish them. The first few posts are made up of the emails I wrote home" (question 3,

para. 3). Another blogger, Dominique (13) also has used her blog to "track my travels, tell funny stories, and keep people entertained" (question 4, para. 4). This group of bloggers used their blogs to share their humorous travel experiences in a public forum because these stories entertained and demonstrated the funny experiences that can happen during travel (blogger 5, 13, 21, 24). For the bloggers, sharing humorous stories was a strong motivator to begin and continue travel blogging.

Give back to the World Wide Web. Another couple shared that their blog posts helped them feel like contributors to the Web 2.0 environment. Stewart and Senya (11), a British couple traveling through Europe in a motor home, created a blog in part "to give something back, we've always taken from the internet, now it's our chance to add to it" (question 4, para. 4). This desire to contribute to the Web 2.0 environment demonstrates the selfless time and effort it takes to create and contribute to the WWW, motivated by the desire to contribute to a space that has helped and supported this couple, and others, a great deal.

As can be reviewed in Table 5, whether travel bloggers have maintained contact with family and friends, inspired others to follow their dreams, blogged for the purposes of education, shared the humour of travel, or contributed to the WWW, each of these research participants demonstrated altruistic behaviours as an online contributor.

Theme 2: Personal Motivations

Travel bloggers were motivated to create travel blogs for personal reasons including: to develop knowledge, skills and abilities, a strong connection to the travel blog, alleviate boredom, natural high, and documenting travel.

Develop knowledge, skills and abilities. Improving one's knowledge, skills and abilities was a frequently noted motivator.   By using the travel blog as a creative outlet, writing and

photography/videography skills were nurtured (blogger 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 21, 22, 24, 28). As

Charise (21) shared, "the most important reason [for blogging is] to develop my writing and my

writing voice" (question 5, para. 5). Kalina (24) shared "I love to write and I would be writing

regardless if people were reading" (question 5, para. 8). These sentiments were echoed by

Sabrina (3), "it's my creative outlet; it's where I spend hours tweaking my photographs and

doing my narrative story telling…really getting into the art of writing" (question 5, para. 6).

Kenneth and Anneliese (10) agreed, and identified their blog as a place to "unleash our

creativity" (question 5, para. 5). The ability for a travel blog to provide its creators with

knowledge and skill development was a strong motivator for some research participants.

 Strong connection to the travel blog. When asked how stopping travel blogging would

impact their lives, several travel bloggers shared that they had developed a strong bond or

connection to their blogs (blogger 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26, 28). Several of these travel bloggers

indicated strong feelings that including, Chelsea (2) who would "miss it terribly if I had to stop

[blogging]" (question 10, para. 10: blogger 2, 4, 5, 13); and Trent and Jamie (4) who stated that

their blog was "of utmost importance – so much so that I can't even imagine stopping" (question

4, para. 10); as well, Zachary (15) asserted, "if I had to stop it would be a huge adjustment period

for me to figure out what to do" (question 10, para. 10). Wyona (26) and Zoe (28) were even

more emotional. Wyona (26) exclaimed, "[my blog is] VERY important. My sites are HUGE

expression[s] of who I am, my creativity, and my connection with humanity" (question 10, para.

10). Zoe (28) affirmed that not only is she dedicated to photography but also to her travel blog

as a life long commitment:

  I think everyone should ask themselves 'what do I like to do in life?' and when an answer

  is found, then that should be the goal. In my case, travel was the answer, and my blog

and photography together with it. No matter what I do, I don't want to give up on the time

I dedicate to this, because it's what my life really is about. (question 5, para. 5)

Additionally, Marcia and Art (19) suggested that the only way they would stop travel blogging is

if they had decided to take a different path in life, indicating an entire upheaval of their current

lives. While not all research participants shared these feelings of connection and commitment to

their blogs, it was a powerful motivator for many research participants.

Alleviate boredom. Three bloggers, Wilamina (12), Greg (18) and Tim (7), confided that

the inspiration for each of their blogs was to alleviate boredom or to find new forms of

recreation. Wilamina (12) began blogging while bored one day at her full-time job:

I was bored because it took me literally an hour to finish my work, and like I had four

hours to kill and I don't have a book to read, so that's when I started my blog…honestly

if I had had a book to read that day, the blog probably would have never gotten

started…it's probably the most slacker way for a blog to start. It wasn't like, any like

deep conviction, it was literally boredom and that's how my blog got started. (question

14, para 15)

Greg (18) remarked, "I started it as a New Year's resolution in 2011 because I was bored and

needed a hobby" (question 3, para. 3; blogger 12, 18). Tim (7), was working in a central

Canadian city and "grew bored of the stifled way of living and working…I love to travel and

write so the obvious seemed to be to move to the mountains where I can ski and write all day"

(question 3, para. 3). Tim's (7) initial motivation to move and travel blog was boredom and

since this time his blog has played a central role in combining what he enjoyed into a better life:

travel, writing, and winter sports. All three of these participants began their blogs with a shared

motivation, to alleviate boredom, and have found travel blogging successfully addresses this need.

   Natural high. Several bloggers mentioned that the attention and semi-famous online status they experienced felt like a natural "*high* that comes from putting passion and love into articles which are read and responded to by a large global audience" (blogger 26, question 5, para. 6; blogger 21, 23). In particular, Wyona (26) felt this high when she received a large amount of positive online praise and her social media follower numbers increased. Teague (22), a German blogger, also experienced a 'high' when one of his posts went viral:

   I've had a few posts go 'viral' - particularly a wry post about boredom I wrote back in

   April 2012 that, thanks to social media, has now reached over half a million people. All

   that said, my blog is still a minor affair and I'm under no illusions about any 'celebrity

   status' on my part (I hope!). (question 13, para. 15)

These examples revealed feelings akin to a natural high fed by responses received from readers and the brief notoriety that came with a post going viral. This high was a positive motivator identified by research participants.

   Documentation of travel. Several research participants have used their travel blog to leave a historical imprint of their lives to enrich the world for their descendants and others (blogger 8, 11, 15, 17). The blog allowed for long-term documentation of travel experiences as these bloggers created posts of their travel experiences on the WWW about the places they had been and the people they had met (blogger 1, 3, 6, 10, 11, 20, 23, 25, 27, 28). Stewart and Senya (11) wanted to keep "a historic record of our travels" (question 4, para. 4); Nathaniel (8) had "a lot of old stories and anecdotes that I also wanted to record" (question 3, para. 3); and Andrew (17), who travels with his ten-year-old son, says that their travel blog will be full of long-term

benefits for his son, which he can use to reminisce later in life. The motivation to blog and leave

documentation of one's travels was an ongoing motivator for several research participants.

Personal motivations or sub-themes, as found in Table 5, that travel bloggers identified

included the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities; a strong connection to the travel

blog; alleviate boredom; natural high; and a documentation of travel. These motivations

included reasons why travel bloggers began and continue to blog.

Theme 3: Public/Social Motivations

An additional theme that was evident in the data was the desire for travel bloggers to

connect with the public, readers, and other social groups through their blogs. This occurred in

the following ways: through readership, social community connections, and professional

exposure.

Connect to readership. There were several research participants who began traveling

and blogging long-term. As these travelers returned from their initial trips, they noticed a larger

blog readership beyond family and friends, and it was due in part to these followers that long-

term blogging commitments were made (blogger 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 21, 23, 24, 26,

27, 28). Audra (9) recalled, "I had 1,200 readers each month" (question 3, para. 5), most of

whom she did not know. She was not alone as travel bloggers Doral and Wyora (23), "realized

that other people were reading our blog. This led us [to] research further how we could turn this

into a better resource for the general public" (question 4, para. 4). Kalina (24) admitted, "I did

not intend it to become a new career or anything lasting; it was a personal site for fun" (question

3, para. 4). These research participants began blogging for family and friends and were now

being followed by a larger readership via their travelogues. Readers requested additional travel

information and answers to specific questions. Readers told the bloggers their online stories had

"helped [them] get over their fear of travel" (blogger 24, question 5, para. 8). To delve even

further, Ivan (27) suggested there was an additional layer of connection, "people are not only

using [a travel blog] as an expression of themselves but for that connection, while they are

traveling, back to friends and family, its gets all back to their personal life" (question 14, para.

15). These connections to family, friends, and readership helped travel bloggers realize the

influence of their blogs and embarked on the task of improving their travel blogs to connect with

more people. In sum, a portion of the motivation to continue blogging after the first experiences

travel blogging was because of the connection with a large and extensive readership.

        Social connections. For some bloggers they maintained their blogs to make virtual and

real life social connections, including the organization of face-to-face and online meet-ups with

readers and other travel bloggers (blogger 8, 11, 22, 24, 25, 27). Bloggers, such as Sabrina (3),

stated that blogging connections included their "partnerships, friendships and relationships [now]

enmeshed [with their] new life rooted in people [they've] met through travel blogging"

(questions 4, para. 11; blogger 3, 16). Teague (22) mentioned that one of his more important

reasons for blogging was "connecting with people who know more than I do, and establishing a

dialogue with them" (question 5, para. 5). Lloyd (25) affirmed the importance of making social

connections when he disclosed, "I love being involved with the travel blogging community and

meeting like minded individuals from all over the world" (question 4, para. 4). The

developments of one's social connections as a blogger, either with readership or within a travel

blog community, were powerful motivations to travel blog.

        Professional Exposure. While some of the more seasoned bloggers began blogging as

they planned extended travels, some of the newer travel bloggers observed the business benefits

of blogging and maintain a blog in order to receive professional exposure. For a number of

participants, blogging was pursued to showcase their skills and creativity to a larger online audience in order to obtain an income or professional contracts through WWW exposure (blogger 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 16, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27). The ability to self-publish on the WWW was the basis for a "marriage [that] came quite naturally" (blogger 16, question 3, para. 3) between one's current leisure/work as a creative writer, photographer or videographer, and one's blog as an online curriculum vitae (blogger 9, 16, 20).

Ezra (6), a semi-retired American man who worked in the corporate world for more than twenty years, was one such blogger and confirmed that he "was exploring the use of blogging to generate an alternate stream of income after having attended a seminar on this [process]" (question 4, para. 4). His work paralleled that of Nathaniel's (8), who is "in the process of building a lodge/tourist business and creating a new life of which [his new] blog is an integral part" (question 7, para. 14). As well, Lurene (20) stated:

> In addition to sharing my travel experiences, I wanted to gain the attention of those in the travel community. I hoped to get sponsored trips and more travel opportunity. I also hoped to get tax benefits from having a travel related business. (question 4, para. 4)

The travel blog was often identified as a marketing and networking tool by a number of bloggers, in particular Lloyd (25), a single full-time traveler, who "treat[s] travel blogging as a small startup business, and it's most important for me at the moment to build an income I can live off [of]" (question 5, para. 5). These bloggers have resolutely used their creative and business skills to leverage their blogs to generate sources of income and make online connections.

Travel bloggers identified that connections to readers, developing social connections, and professional exposure are all motivations to create and maintain a travel blog. These public/social motivations can be reviewed in Tables 4.

Conclusion

Travel bloggers explain the creation and maintenance of their travel blogs as multi-motivational, and this research revealed three main motivation categories or themes: altruism, personal, and public/social. Thirteen sub-themes were elicited from the data and demonstrate a breadth of motivations from inspiring others, to a strong connection to the travel blog, to sharing humour, and professional exposure. While each participant shared their motivations for creating and maintaining travel blogs, Teague (22) reminds bloggers, "the people who are doing well with their blogs are the ones who have rigorously interrogated the 'why' at the heart of what they're doing. It's worryingly easy to run with the pack and forget to chase what YOU want from it all" (question 11, para. 13). Whether the blogger began as a novice enthusiast trying to keep in touch with family and friends, or as an amateur who wanted to share their travel stories to educate and inform, or as a professional who wanted to leverage the online power of the blog, each blogger has individual and multiple motivations that encouraged them to create and maintain travel blogs that are sought out in varying degrees by readers and MTI.

Travel Blogs and the Serious Leisure Perspective

The data presented in the following section sheds light on the second research question:

   (B) How do travel bloggers see their travel blogging experiences with regards to

   their leisure and work?

The analyzed data has been elicited from the following questions:

   6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

   7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and

   maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other

   activities?

8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work, neither or both? Why?

9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal, social, professional and / or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals, communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these interactions to you?

13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Overall, there were a variety of activities that used varying amounts of time spent on travel blogging. It was also evident that blogs played a varying role in the recreation and work of each travel blogger, ranging from an enjoyable part-time hobby to an integral part of one's lifestyle. The travel bloggers also identified a series of benefits they received from travel blogging, including: professional, financial, personal, and social benefits. In all, the information shared by travel bloggers contributes further ideas to the overall understanding of travel bloggers experiences with regards to their leisure and work.

Activities and time spent on travel blogs. The types of activities and amount of time travel bloggers reported performing for and in conjunction with their blog varied, and the self-

reports were not intended to be a meticulous accounting of either but rather a general report. As

can be viewed in Table 6, this data was organized into four groups of bloggers: pleasure

bloggers, part-time bloggers, dedicated bloggers, and lifestyle bloggers. These four groups

dedicated different amounts of time to their blogs, becoming involved in an increasing number of

activities, which also increased the amount of time dedicated to blogging.

   Pleasure bloggers. The least number of activities and amount of time spent blogging was

reported by Marcia and Art (19), who noted that they "blog twice per month" (question 6, para.

6). This couple dedicated less time specifically to their blog, but they indicated in their responses

that they spent far more time having performed supportive blog activities. Many bloggers

reported spending seven hours per week on their blog, which amounted to, at maximum, one

hour per day (blogger 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 17, 19, 21, 27). Blogging activities included "thinking

about topics, writing, uploading information, choosing everything to put on the blog post"

(blogger 12, question 6, para. 6), as well as editing text and photography, and blog post

promotion through social media. Individuals in this group identified their blog as part of their

leisure as they "do this in [their] free time. On and off and sometimes in burst-mode, especially

after a trip" (blogger 6, question 6, para. 6). Even though blogging was identified as a free time

activity, the participants felt it was meaningful and important as part of their leisure (blogger 6,

12, 21; see Table 6).

Table 6

Activities and Time Spent on Travel Blog

Group	Amount of Time	Activities
Pleasure Bloggers	2 - 7 hours per week	▪ Write and post text ▪ Edit and post photos/video ▪ Social media promotion
Part-Time Bloggers	8 – 14 hours per week	▪ Write and post text ▪ Edit and post photos/video ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, bloggers)
Dedicated Bloggers	16 - 30 hours per week	▪ Write and post text ▪ Edit and post photos/video ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, bloggers, MTI)
Lifestyle Bloggers	35 – 45 hours per week	▪ Write and post text ▪ Edit and post photos/video ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, bloggers, MTI) ▪ Brand management ▪ Promotion as travel expert ▪ Travel and blog as part of lifestyle

Note. Travel blog groups based on the time spent maintaining a travel blog and activities performed as part of these efforts.

Part-time bloggers. Several bloggers identified that they spent from eight to fourteen hours per week updating their blogs (blogger 2, 11, 22). These bloggers focused on the creation of interesting posts, the creation of networks with readers and other bloggers, and the promotion of their blogs via social media to update their travel blogs' online presence (blogger 22). Chelsea (2) was an example of a part-time blogger who created two posts per week, each taking forty-five minutes to three hours in total. Teague (22) admitted that he did not spend enough time on his blog, "committing myself to a couple of hours a weekday or at least 10 hours per

week" (question 6, para. 6). These bloggers enjoyed updating their travel blogs, but have spent

more time traveling than blogging, or have used their blogs as part of a business strategy rather

than a focused online entity (blogger 2, 11, 22). Even so, these part-time bloggers demonstrated

that their travel blog was an enjoyable part of their leisure and work.

  Dedicated bloggers. Another group of bloggers included those participants who had

committed to travel as either part or full-time employment and used blogging for self-promotion

and an opportunity to increase their online visibility (bloggers 1, 8, 10, 16, 20, 23, 26, 28). These

participants spent a significant amount of time on their blogs, often three to six hours per day, or

sixteen hours per week to thirty hours per week. As Lurene (20) pointed out, "this includes

writing and formatting posts, researching information, responding to comments keeping an

active presence on social media sites" (question 6, para. 6). In addition to these efforts,

dedicated bloggers worked with tourism boards to promote travel destinations, and collaborated

"with the travel community to have exclusive and/or sponsored opportunities" (blogger 20,

question 5, para. 5). These dedicated bloggers used their blogs not just to build networks with

readers and other bloggers via the WWW, but also to create relationships with the mainstream

travel industry (MTI) for the purposes of increased travel and to build a reputation.

  Lifestyle bloggers. The final group had made the transition to travel and blogging as full-

time employment and their lifestyles were completely adapted to reflect this dedication (blogger

3, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 25). This means that the actual amount of time spent on each blog

included four to twelve hours per day, 35 – 45 hours per week, or as several bloggers stated, they

rarely took a day off and, as noted here, blogged "all my waking hours" (blogger 4, question 6,

para. 6). Lifestyle bloggers were considered travel experts by readers and MTI, promoted as a

brand, and often entered into contracts with MTI. Theresa and Samara, (14) shared that "this is a

full time job, so we spend about 7 hours per day 5 days a week on the site" (question 6, para. 6),

and Kalina (24) admitted that "posts customarily take me a full day, with photo editing separate.

It is quite a lot of work" (question 6, para. 6). This group chose to be lifestyle bloggers but often

found certain tasks difficult and arduous. For example, Greg shared (18):

> I spend about 8 to 10 hours a day on my blog…one blog post typically takes from 4 to 6
>
> hours depending on how many photos there are. Most of the other time is spent on social
>
> media, commenting on other sites…it's a lot of work. (question 6, para. 6)

Even with this amount of dedication, there also appeared to be pressure to increase one's time

commitment to a blog, as Zachary (15) who already spent hours creating webisodes for his blog,

wanted to increase his commitment to writing as part of his "global lifestyle guide" (question 6,

para. 2). These added pressures, time commitment, and the full integration of one's blog into

one's daily life was what has made these people lifestyle bloggers.

Supportive blog activities. Many of the research participants identified the amount of

time they spent on their travel blogs. It was more difficult to list a series of activities they

performed in connection to the blog and disentangle these efforts from a blog post in order to

observe the amount of time spent on supportive blog activities. Not all participants were able to

do so, but enough were able to share types of activities and approximate times to position them

within Table 7 that identifies the four-blog types: pleasure bloggers, part-time bloggers,

dedicated bloggers, and lifestyle bloggers. While particular bloggers were included in a certain

group when assessing the activities and time dedicated to their blog as the focus, some bloggers

transitioned between groups when assessing the activities and time involved in related supportive

activities.

Table 7

Supportive Travel Blog Activities

Group	Amount of Time	Activities
Pleasure Bloggers	Brief unidentified amounts of time	▪ Reader emails ▪ Review blog statistics ▪ Learn about WWW
Part-Time Bloggers	2 – 7 hours per week	▪ Reader emails ▪ Review blog statistics ▪ Learn about WWW ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, blogger, MTI) ▪ Travel meet-ups
Dedicated Bloggers	10 – 30 hours per week	▪ Reader emails ▪ Review blog statistics ▪ Learn about WWW ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, blogger, MTI) ▪ Travel meet-ups ▪ Attend conferences ▪ Build community ▪ Actively seek MTI work
Lifestyle Bloggers	35 – 45 hours per week	▪ Reader emails ▪ Review blog statistics ▪ Learn about WWW ▪ Social media promotion ▪ Networking (readers, blogger, MTI) ▪ Travel meet-ups ▪ Attend conferences ▪ Build community ▪ Consistent work with MTI ▪ Always 'on' including time collecting ideas, stories, photos and video footage

Note. Travel blog groups based on the time spent completing work that supports maintaining and promoting a travel blog.

Pleasure bloggers. The first group identified their blogs as something that they worked on in their free time or that they were able to take time away from due to other commitments (blogger 5, 6). Small amounts of time were identified for activities that supported the blog, including Ezra's (6) time commitment:

> [Five] to 10 minutes each day to review 'sitemeter' statistics, a tool I used to tracked [*sic*] visits to my blog…I spent about 5 to 10 minutes a month (average) to answer queries from email and also comments posted on my blog. Also spent a few days occasionally each quarter to check out other blogs for ideas, check out new blogging tools to improve my blog and hit-rates. (question 7, para. 7)

As Table 9 points out, these bloggers noted brief amounts of time spent on supportive blog activities that were useful, but largely insignificant when comparing the amount of time spent on writing and processing images to post on their blogs.

Part-time bloggers. The second group participated in more activities related to their blog and stated that they spent between two to seven hours per week completing supportive blog activities (blogger 11, 12, 13, 17, 21, 27). This included Charise (21) who shared, "I probably spend at least an hour everyday doing blog-related stuff -- including promoting posts on Twitter and Facebook, responding to comments, responding to emails from readers, etc" (question 7, para. 7). Activities identified included responding to blog readers' comments and emails, taking photographs and videos, promoting self and blog through social media, researching special spotlight posts, contact with MTI and current clients, reading and researching places to visit, and meet-ups with readers or other travel bloggers. All of these activities supported the efforts of the travel blogger to maintain and promote their blogs.

Dedicated bloggers. The third group consisted of people who spent between ten to thirty hours per week completing tasks that supported their blog (blogger 2, 3, 8, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28). Many of the tasks performed by this group were similar to other groups and included activities like social media, contact with readers and MTI, and networking. In addition, these individuals attended travel blog conferences (one to four per year), maintained a presence in online blogging communities (through social media), and actively sought out opportunities for contract work with MTI "to support their livelihood" (blogger 18, question 7, para. 5). A large portion of dedicated bloggers worked full-time (at least forty hours per week) on their blog and associated activities combined.

Several bloggers mentioned that while they were able to quantify the amount of time spent on their blog, it was difficult to quantify the time spent gathering ideas, suggestions, photos, and stories for their blog. Nathaniel (8) noted that:

> I now consider all of my experiences as potential stories [for my blog], meaning I'm always 'on' when it comes to collecting material. That my sound a bit sad, but I think of it like my photography. I usually carry my camera and I'm always on the look out for images, textures, colours, and so on. Rather than simply viewing life through a lens, I notice the beauty in the ordinary and pay more attention to what's going on. The same goes for my writing, so it makes me more aware (question 6, para. 13).

This constant awareness of good blog material extended the amount of time travel bloggers spent on their blogs, but for the purposes of actual maintenance and updates to one's blog, this group worked longer hours on their blog's upkeep (see Table 9). As Nathaniel (8) stated, it is difficult to identify specific time required to gather content for a post then promote this post. These

combined efforts were identified as a means to an end, increased travel and building reputation or brand.

Lifestyle bloggers. The final group spent the most time participating in activities that supported their blogs and spent at least the same amount of time as a traditional full-time employee (blogger 1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 19, 24, 25). These participants stated that they spent between thirty-five to forty-five hours per week completing activities that supported their blogs, which means several bloggers worked sixty to seventy hours per week on their blog and supportive activities combined (blogger 1, 4, 10, 15, 16, 25). To capture the sense of commitment, Lloyd (25) shared, "I rarely take a day off blogging, especially when you include social media output, and it's not uncommon for me to spend 12 hours straight in front of my laptop" (question 7, para. 6).

These full-time bloggers reported pursuing the same types of activities as the other blog groups. In addition, these bloggers worked regularly with the mainstream media in and outside of the travel industry. For example, Marcia and Art (19), who only blog once per month, shared "we are constantly filming and collecting footage…sometimes a video will take up to 10 hours of editing before it is finished" (question 7, para. 7-8). Add to this the text and still photography and what appeared to be a small amount of effort has become a far more significant level of exertion. Similarly, Audra (9) communicated:

Well keep in mind that everything I do when I'm traveling is part of the business. So when I'm on an airplane going somewhere, I'm working. If I am hiking the Himalayas, that's part of my job…when I'm visiting a theme park or some other attraction in the area, that is all part of my business. So I spend my days doing that when I'm traveling and I spend about 2 days a week, wherever I am because the road is my office, in the

hostel room or wherever I am staying in a guesthouse, just working. I will go out for a

day, spend all day visiting places and people. I'll come back with 200-300 photos, which

is my average for the day. I have to go through all the photos, label them, catalogue

them, download them to the laptop, download them to a backup drive, select the ones I

want, crop them to the right size for the blog, and do all the social media…by then it's

one o'clock in the morning and I have not written a word [of text for the blog post].

(question 7, para. 11)

While bloggers identified these time commitments vary while traveling, it is important to

acknowledge the commitment these participants have demonstrated to travel and their blogs,

including the many activities that they juggle in order to produce travel blogs. In summary, the

time they spent on supportive blog activities, and the types of activities they perform are

presented in Table 7, which gives an indication of the level of dedication and commitment made

by various travel bloggers.

Travel Blog as Leisure, Work or Combination

As part of this research, many bloggers stated that they had never considered assessing

their travel blog efforts as leisure, work, or both. Several stated that they pondered the question

for some time and even then they were unable to provide concrete answers. For example, Ivan

(27) said that this was a hard question, Gabriel (16) said this was a challenge, and Charise (21)

added, "I don't really consider it work as I don't get paid to do it. But I also don't consider it

leisure as it requires way too much effort" (question 8, para. 9). While the travel bloggers may

not have compartmentalized or systematically assessed their travel blogging as work or leisure

previously, after some thought, they shared aspects of their blogging efforts and peripheral

activities they perceived as leisure, work, or both. This information was categorized into three

sections: leisure, work, and combination. Each theme has two subcategories that provided

further understanding about the relationship between leisure and work. These subcategories are

shared in Figure 9 and include leisure (leisure pursuit, hobby), work (a passion, part of a

business), and combination (important part of life, lifestyle).

      Leisure. Ezra (6), Wilamina (12) and Wyona (26), classified their travel blogging as one

of their leisure pursuits or a hobby (blogger 5, 6, 11, 12, 22, 26). Ezra (6) states, "I do this in my

free time" (question 8, para. 6), and Wyona (26) shared that "travel blogging gives me so much

happiness that I consider it a great deal leisure" (question 8, para. 9), and lastly from Wilamina

(12), "[my blog is] leisure, for me it is still my hobby, definitely leisure. Not something I get

paid for, it's not something that I dislike doing, it is something that I enjoy doing" (question 8,

para. 8). From Wilamina's (12) perspective, blogging was not something that she was paid for

but something she enjoyed. Another couple, Stewart and Senya (11), shared that their travel and

blogging was a way to build a community while in transit and they considered it a part of their

leisure. For research participants who had full-time employment not related to travel blogging,

or who took a break from full-time employment to travel and blog, these individuals perceived

blogging as a free-time activity or hobby (bloggers 12, 22). Therefore, for some research

participants, travel blogging was identified as a hobby or as part of leisure, an activity that has

brought them happiness, enjoyment, a sense of community, and for which they may receive

small monetary rewards but not financially significant.

Figure 9. Travel Blog as Leisure, Work, or Both. When analyzing the travel blog data that identified blogging efforts as leisure, work or both, travel bloggers answers were organized into the following seven different categories.
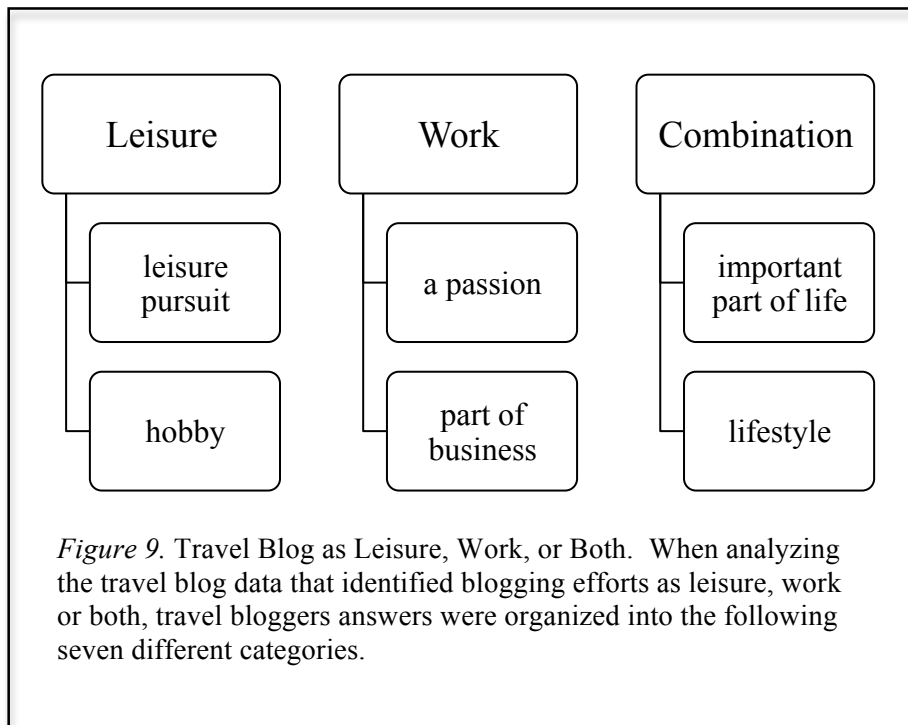
Work. There were research participants who saw travel blogging as their work with a caveat, "it's work. A lot of work" but I am "working in field I'm passionate about" (blogger 4, question 7, para. 4 and 8; blogger 1, 4, 9, 14, 19, 20, 24). This theme, the blog as freely chosen enjoyable and hard work, was repeated by many travel bloggers. For example, Trent and Jamie (4) shared "the blog is to create a career based on something I'm passionate about, the most important reasons are to generate income through self-employment in a field that I'm passionate about" (question 5, para. 5), and from Kalina (24), "it's work (in that my 'career' now is not being a lawyer, but being a travel writer) but it is enjoyable" (question 8, para. 11). These research participants identified their online contributions as a great deal of work, but the passion and inner drive described suggests elements of leisure. While some bloggers may have seen their blog as work, they also identified the quality of life and enjoyment they received from their travel blogs as an enjoyable passion.

For those bloggers who rely on their blog as part of their business, "it is crucial to making a living" (blogger 1, question 9, para. 9; blogger 2, 4, 5, 9, 17, 18, 20, 24, 25) and an important part of their work. It was not necessarily a crucial part of their leisure, "in terms of my leisure, I could certainly do without the blog. I could travel and still see these things without the blog" (blogger 9, question 9, para. 14), but for those who relied on their blog for exposure to the MTI through showcasing their writing, photography and other skills, the blog was vital to their business. Statements by Lurene (20) and Greg (18), such as "my travelogue is very important as part of my work" (blogger 20, question 9, para. 9), and "it's the most important thing in my life right now (other than my partner of course) since I make my living at it" (blogger 18, question 9, para. 9) highlighted the idea that blogs were essential to some bloggers' work as their blogs were necessary for their travel and free-lance employment opportunities.

Combination. Lloyd (25), one of several bloggers who wanted to move away from a nine-to-five lifestyle and toward location independent work, suggested that he would "consider it all part of my leisure if it wasn't so tedious getting my content online!" (question 8, para. 8; blogger 5, 10). He further clarified that he "love[s] taking photo and video, and I like writing about my experiences but I spend way too long keeping my website up and running and actually putting content together once I have it recorded (e.g. formatting posts w/ pictures, editing pictures, editing video is especially time consuming!)" (blogger 25, question 8, para. 8). While Lloyd (25) suggested the experience of travel and the creation of online content was leisure, the completion of tedious tasks moved his travel blog efforts to a more leisure / work mix.

Lloyd (25) was not the only participant who experienced blogging as both leisure and work. Some research participants experienced a change over time of their blog, from supplemental income and leisure to the blog as a main source of income and part of a travel

career (blogger 2, 3, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 23, 24, 25, 28). Eastern Canadian blogger, Dominique

(13), pointed out that her blog is "both. It started out as a hobby, and has turned into part of my

career as a writer" (question 8, para. 8). Another blog couple, Doral and Wyora (23), recently

made the transition from the blog as a hobby to the blog as part of full-time location independent

work:

> It has been amazing to watch it evolve over the last 18 months from a hobby into my full
>
> time work. I [Doral] went through a stage very recently where I absolutely loathed
>
> writing because it had become a chore. Now I have managed to find a balance and I am
>
> back to loving writing articles. (question 8, para. 8)

For these travel bloggers, the line between work and leisure had definitely blurred based on the

individual experiences they had while creating content for their blogs. Each effort was

categorized as leisure or work depending on the desires and emotions felt during each activity.

As Nathaniel (8) suggested, it was still difficult to differentiate between work as leisure as these

tasks were completed and both were seen "vital for my work...[and] equally important for my

leisure" (question 9, para. 16: blogger 8, 10).

　　　Work and leisure entwined. Additional research participants saw travel blogging as an

important part of their work and leisure, but also suggested that their professional and personal

lives were inextricably entwined with their identity as bloggers (blogger 3, 14, 19, 23, 26).

Sabrina (3) shared:

> My blog is my focus and the people I know from my blog are some of my best
>
> friends, and potential partnerships with other bloggers, relationships and friendships are
>
> enmeshed. My new life is rooted in the people I've met through travel blogging.
>
> (question 9, para. 11)

Theresa and Samara (14) reiterated the connection between blog as work, leisure and social influence:

> It serves as our income, but also as a branding platform and endless opportunity to create meaningful dialogue about world travel. In terms of how it affects our social lives, having a travel blog has opened countless doors to new friendships around the world. (question 9, para. 9)

Doral and Wyora (23) affirmed the importance of their blog that transcended a work and leisure divide, "100% important to maintaining both [our] work and leisure lifestyle. [Our blog has] basically become a part of every aspect of [our] life" (question 9, para. 9). These travel bloggers described their personal and professional blogging experiences as a combination of both leisure and work, and an important part of their lives.

   Lifestyle. Finally, some participants did not refer to their blogs as work or leisure but identified blogs as essential to their lives and lifestyle (blogger 15, 16, 28). Zachary (15), a new blogger, who was always shooting footage or taking pictures while traveling, identified travel and his blog as his lifestyle. Another blogger Gabriel (16) stated that his blog "is the foundation of my life" (question 9, para. 9). Zoe (28) stated that her blog is "definitely the most important thing I have" (question 9, para. 9). These bloggers didn't identify their efforts as leisure or work; instead, they considered blogging an integral part of their lifestyle.

   The various ways in which these travel bloggers identified their blog as part of their leisure and work lives are listed in Figure 9. It can be observed that research participants see their travel blogs as a part of their leisure, work or both, which is consistent with the different experiences people have while participating in serious leisure. Some bloggers differentiated between leisure and work and pointed out that leisure is fun, enjoyable and not related to earning

a living, whereas work is difficult, arduous, and a process from which people may derive income. There are some participants who noted the interplay between leisure and work, not demarcating between the two as they travel blog, which suggests that some people don't see leisure and work as dichotomous concepts but experience leisure and work as intertwined. Further discussion about the relations between leisure and work will occur later in this thesis.

Benefits of Travel Blogging

Every research participant identified numerous professional, financial, personal, and social benefits that they have received as a result of their travel blogging activities. While those who were more experienced and who had turned blogging into a lifestyle or career identified more professional benefits, all research participants shared a list of benefits that included a range of professional, financial, personal, and social outcomes. These themes and outcomes are listed in Table 8, which provides the array of benefits travel blogger received from their online efforts as part of this research.

Professional benefits. There were several professional benefits that the travel bloggers identified in conjunction with their online efforts. These included: building relationships and networking, employment opportunities, and professional recognition. While not all these benefits were virtual, they were initiated on the WWW through travel blogs or in relation to the blogs.

Build relationships and network. A number of the travel bloggers shared various facets of the relationships they created with MTI, including writing magazine articles, press trip related travel, tourism board contacts, and having appeared on television broadcasts as travel specialists (blogger 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 27).

Table 8

Benefits of Travel Blogging

Type of Benefit	Identified Benefits
Professional	• Build relationships and network • Employment opportunities • Professional recognition
Financial	• Income • Gratis opportunities • Alternative forms of income
Personal	• Improved quality of life • Location independent lives • Creative outlet
Social	• Support of family and friends • Build relationships • Relationships of trust • Community • Mentorship

Note. The benefits that bloggers identified as a result of their online efforts.

These net-literate (or neterate) bloggers were savvy prosumers and many of them were able to

travel for extended periods on the wages and gratis opportunities offered by MTI. For example,

Theresa and Samara (14) relied on the professional contacts that allowed them to "earn our

income from [travel blogging]. We are able to better our product knowledge in the travel

industry" (question 11, para. 11), and gained sufficient business contacts that afforded them the

ability to maintain a nomadic lifestyle. Zachary (15) was also able to grow his travel brand:

> [As] I contribute my adventure travel web series to Mensfitness.com…I was
>
> commissioned by Wikia.com to produce content about the London Olympics and Ford

and Essence.com for a web series showing viewers around [an American city]. These

outcomes are important because they are building blocks to help me maintain my

travelogue as a career. (question 11, para. 11)

MTI and travel bloggers entered into symbiotic freelance relationships such as these, and travel

bloggers received financial and professional benefits from them (blogger 8, 15, 20, 22, 24, 26).

Travel bloggers create professional communities in order to interact with other travel

bloggers, and to communicate with and obtain work from MTI. Travel blog communities are

member-only websites that provide novice, amateurs and professional travel bloggers the

opportunity to meet each other and discuss the benefits and challenges of travel blogging. These

online community groups include:

- Travel Bloggers Unite (TBU; http://www.travelbloggersunite.com)

- Travel Blog Exchange (TBEX; http://tbexcon.com)

- Global Bloggers Network (https://www.facebook.com/groups/globalbloggersnetwork/)

- Travel Bloggers (https://www.facebook.com/groups/travelbloggers/) (blogger 9, 18).

Several of these online groups also host yearly conferences that many of the research participants

have attended (i.e. TBU, TBEX; blogger 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28).

The conferences are used to network and create relationships with other travel bloggers and MTI.

These interactions are important as Lloyd (25) stated, "when I attend a conference or a press trip,

I am 100% there to network and have a good time with my peers. I also take the opportunity to

network with the PR / marketing /small business side of any events" (question 12, para. 12).

There were even opportunities for travel bloggers to speed date with industry professionals to

ensure a proper traveler / destination / MTI fit (Travel Blog Exchange, 2012). Opportunities to

create networks with MTI and other travel bloggers are important professional blogging benefits.

Employment Opportunities. Once the relationships were established between travel

bloggers and the travel industry, there were offers of freelance and professional employment for

the travel bloggers (blogger 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26). Nathaniel (8)

shared that "I've been commissioned to submit articles to various magazines and newspapers"

(question 11, para. 18). As well, Kenneth and Anneliese (10) explained:

> We've met a lot of people that are in the travel business, we've made money, had free
>
> stays and gotten numerous free perks, we've gotten our names and identities out there and
>
> who knows where those contacts can lead to in the future. (question 11, para. 12)

In addition, Wyona (26) commented, she had "opportunities to guest post on prestigious other

sites, write-ups on prestigious other publications (print and digital), verbal praise, and ever-

increasing numbers of social media followers" (question 11, 12) which confirmed the strong

relationship some travel bloggers made with MTI through professional employment

opportunities.

Professional recognition. Travel bloggers contributed to MTI in many different ways,

enhancing their reputation as 'experts' in the tourism industry (blogger 13, 21, 24). For example,

Kalina (24) has been on the road since 2008, and has established herself as a well-respected

international travel blogger. She has had over 120 different freelance travel work assignments

commissioned by MTI, blog conference organizers, and the travel and mainstream press. As

well, she worked as a brand ambassador for one of the most well-known and well-respected

Internet travel sites. The site assists 100,000 people each year with their travel plans (g-

adventures, 2013). All of these travel and presentation experiences were developed from her

efforts as an online travel blogger (blogger 3, 24). Dominique (13) mentioned that her travel

blog has "given me recognition as a [Eastern Canadian] travel expert. Because of this, I've

worked closely with the province's tourism board and have made other great contacts as well"

(question 11, para. 11). Charise (21) mentioned the she had received "awards and other

accolades…through [my blog]" (question 11, para. 11) from the blog community and the online

travel industry. These three bloggers demonstrate the way that MTI and expert travel bloggers

have developed relationships that have extended beyond financial reward into recognition as a

blog and travel professional.

The professional benefits of travel blogging (see Table 8) include relationships and

network development, employment opportunities, and recognition for one's professional work.

The benefits demonstrate the relationships built between travel blogger, reader, and MTI,

relationships that may continue to develop in the years to come.

Financial benefits. The financial benefits that travel bloggers identified as part of this

research included income, gratis opportunities, and alternative forms of income. These financial

benefits assist in developing relationships between travel bloggers and MTI.

Income. Research participants reported varying financial benefits received from

blogging. Several bloggers, such as Alicia (1), mentioned that their travel blog funded their

lifestyle and is "crucial to making a living" (question 9, para. 9; blogger 10, 14, 15, 17, 23, 24,

25). Others bloggers, like Sabrina (3), suggested that "blogging does not pay the bills" (question

11, para. 13), and that "financial outcomes are minimal (less than 5 Euro's per day)" (blogger 11,

question 11, para. 10), but combined with other revenue streams, travel blogging contributed to a

viable lifestyle (blogger 3, 9, 11, 13, 18, 22, 27). Several bloggers, such as Lurene (20), stated

that their dependence on blog revenue was a benefit as it is "a residual income" (question 12,

para. 12), but that financial revenue was not a focus for their blogging efforts at this time

(blogger 6, 8, 20). Additionally, some participants were just beginning to leverage the financial

possibilities of blog based revenue generation. Greg (18) humorously shared that "financially [blogging is] starting to pay off as well, with the past few months bringing in enough so I don't have to worry about starving" (question 11, para. 11; blogger 6, 16, 18, 22, 25, 28). No matter the level of financial impact, many travel bloggers spoke to the importance of monetary remuneration from their travel blogs.

Gratis opportunities. Money was not the only form of compensation travel bloggers received as financial benefits. Free trips, hotel stays, travel equipment, and other perks helped to support blogging and sustain the bloggers' travels (blogger 10, 18, 23, 27, 28). Greg (18) shared that "I've been invited on a few press trips so far (Orlando, Mazatlan) and even had to turn down a few because of timing (Hawaii, Cancun, Edmonton)" (question 11, para. 11). Ivan (27) agreed when he stated he was able to participate in press trips to Mexico and Thailand and described these as "indirect financial benefits [from the blog], sure I wouldn't have gone on those trips otherwise" (question 11, para. 10). This opportunity to travel, receive free accommodations, as well as other perks was beneficial to bloggers who spoke to the importance of monetary and additional compensation in order to continue their travel based lifestyles.

Alternative forms of income. An additional and interesting point was made by three long time bloggers, Sabrina (3), Lurene (20), and Audra (9), who suggested that the market has become saturated and the pay and free gifts associated with travel blog work has decreased, which has affected the online travel blog business. The amount of money received by a blogger per contract has plummeted from about $1,000 USD per piece to about $50 USD per piece, which has led many bloggers to develop extremely creative and innovative ways to offset the costs of their travels in order to rely on blogging as a financial buttress (blogger 3). Creative ideas included sponsored posts, link back articles to MTI websites, the travel speaking circuit,

creating Apps, working full-time online as part of MTI industry, and becoming an Internet security expert (blogger 3, 9, 27). As Lurene (20) suggested, these changes have left her with the following outlook: "it has been the inspiration, support, and desire to create a sustainable form of income that has motivated me to continue blogging" (question 11, para. 13), and she continues to show her commitment to blogging, as do many of the other research participants.

The financial benefits that travel bloggers identified as part of this research are summarized in Table 8. These benefits include income, gratis opportunities, and creative alternative forms of income. These benefits enable dedicated bloggers to continue to live the lifestyles they have created as travel bloggers.

Personal benefits. In additional to the professional and financial benefits that result from blogging, research participants identified personal benefits that resulted from their online efforts. These included improved quality of life, location independent lives, and blogging as a creative outlet.

Improved quality of life. Gabriel (16) spoke for several travel bloggers who discussed their quality of life in relation to travel and their blogs when he proclaimed, "I am able to do what I love - travel, write and take pictures. It's living the dream and the dream is great!" (question 11, para. 11; blogger 14, 17, 20, 25). Audra (9) mentioned that "it is a quality of life issue and it is a much better quality of life than I have had before…[and that for the] first time in my life I have a job, if you will, that allows me to say I love what I do" (question 11, para. 17). Andrew (17) added, "my life has been enriched because of [travel blogging]. I've been connected with a lot more people than I would have been otherwise if I had not been blogging. It's expanded my world, definitely" (question 14, para. 30). These experiences have enriched research participants' lives resulting in a positive lifestyle shift to develop a better quality of life.

Location independent lives. Several bloggers saw their quality of life as improved because they lived as world nomads experiencing location independent lives (blogger 13, 14, 23). These experienced full-time travel bloggers created an alternative lifestyle, and Dominique (13) has found support in this choice when she shared, "the travel blogging community is fantastic!...Most of us believe in living alternative lifestyles, and so we support one another in our endeavors" (question 12, para. 12). Doral and Wyora (23) share this desire to live independently, as "we also maintain the site now because it is [Doral's] sole source of income and allows him to work independently and remotely anywhere in the world. This gives us more freedom to follow our travel and adventure passions" (question 4, para. 4). Within the blogging community and for some of the travel bloggers, this idea of living a life that is location independent and unique is a noteworthy personal benefit.

Creative outlet. Additionally, several bloggers mentioned that this is their way to develop and contribute creatively to the world. Kenneth and Anneliese (10) shared that it was a way to "unleash our creativity" (question 5, para. 5). Zoe (28) added that her visual arts skills were developed as, "my photography, as my goal, is to convey feelings through them" (question 11, para. 11). Sabrina (3) shared that her blog, "[is] my creative outlet, it's where I spend hours tweaking my photographs and doing my narrative story telling…really getting into the art of writing" (question 5, para. 6). Andrew (17) was even reticent to embrace the term travel blogger as in his mind as he felt it minimized his work as creative writer and photographer. Blogging to share creative work and contribute artistically to the world through stories, writing, photography, or video was identified as a personal benefit by several research participants (blogger 3, 10, 14, 17, 24, 27, 28).

Travel bloggers identified the personal benefits as part of this research as an improved quality of life, location independent lives, and as a creative outlet. These benefits are summarized in Table 8.

Social benefits. Consistently, bloggers stated they have made valuable social connections and "met a ton of like-minded souls due to my social media [and varied] interactions with the blog [community]" (blogger 18, question 11, para. 11). These relationships are part of a vibrant social world and have included opportunities such as continued support from family and friends, relationship building, the creation of trusted relationships, connection to community, and mentorship.

Support of family and friends. Some bloggers still identified their family and friends as some of their most ardent readers and fans of their blogs (blogger 10, 23). Kenneth and Anneliese (10) suggested "on a personal [and social] level we get validation from our friends, family and peers that what we're doing is of value, we get the satisfaction of creating something of worth" (question 11, para. 12). This suggests that although a blogger may have produced a blog for a larger audience, the support of family and friends remained an important part of travel blogging.

Build relationships. Many travel bloggers mentioned that the opportunity to meet and converse with blog readers and fellow blog writers on and offline was a social benefit (blogger 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 17, 21, 24). Blog writers, such as Kenneth and Anneliese (10), saw the influence they have on readers and travelers through their blog as "hundreds of people that have commented or sent us an email saying how much they enjoyed reading one of our posts or the fact we gave them the inspiration they needed for their next journey" (question 13, para. 16). As blog readership increased some of these online exchanges turned into face-to-face meet-ups

around the globe (blogger 8, 10, 11, 12, 18, 21, 26, 27). For example Charise (21) stated "I've

met a lot of people through blogging – especially while I was traveling and living overseas.

People in the area who read my blog would often contact me, and we'd meet up" (question 11,

para. 11). One couple, Stewart and Senya (11), mentioned that their blog "has made us more

sociable – where we would previously not go and talk to other people in motorhomes [*sic*]

parked nearby, we'll now go and say hello – as we never know, they might have been reading

our site" (question 14, para. 13). The opportunity for bloggers to meet their readers has resulted

in social connections and relationships recognized as important to travel bloggers, as Wyona (26)

has shared, these readers and their support "are essential to making the work worthwhile and

enjoyable" (blogger 26, question 11, para. 12). The relationships built between travel bloggers

and others are an important social benefit for many of the research participants.

>	***Relationships of trust.*** Not only were relationships built between the blogger and the

reader, but also trust has been developed over time. Trent and Jamie (4) shared their opinion

about the travel blogger and reader relationship:

>	People increasingly make decisions based on online research and recommendations from

>	their peers. Because their friends haven't all traveled to the places they want to travel,

>	they turn to peer review sites like Trip Advisor. However, they are paying less and less

>	attention to these sites because they perceive many of the reviews to be fake and/or aren't

>	sure that the reviewers share their same interests and travel style. That's where bloggers

>	come in. Over time, we become a surrogate friend. They know our travel style because

>	they see what we like to do and what we think is important. That primes us to become

>	major influencers in their travel decisions. (question 13, para. 13).

Chelsea (2) also observed the trust that developed between travel blogger and reader, "first person, narrative, travel blogs are becoming more trusted as resources; more honest, more real, and more accessible to real people" (question 13, para. 13). Doral and Wyora (23) perceived the trust with their readers, which grew over social media, "we also get emails, tweets etc asking for specific advice. That means people do trust our advice and travel tips" (question 13, para. 13). The relationship between travel blogger and reader was not only about sharing travel information but more deeply about the trust that developed as information was shared.

Community. Travel bloggers spend a large amount of time involved in interactions with each other whether online or face-to-face, as blogs "are places for the individual in community, not for the individual alone" (Barlow, 2008, p. 30; blogger 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22). While online, Chelsea (2) and her partner Lester emphasized these connections by stating "I [spend] a majority of my time online interacting with people who have become friends because of blogging. For example I have nearly 1000 Facebook friends, I am sure 60% of them are bloggers" (question 12, para. 12). Gabriel (16) shared that he was "regularly in touch with over 100 other travel bloggers, though my network expands well beyond 800+ and growing daily" (question 12, para. 13). Andrew (17) added "part of inspirational piece is our true sense of community, [we] spend time…actually building community through social media" (question 7, para. 8). Not only are travel bloggers in touch with each other online, they have created communities through which travel bloggers experience meaningful interactions. Lurene (20) articulated "I have met tons of folks that I'm building relationships with due to my travel blog. It has impacted my life in ways that I hadn't originally imagined" (question 11, para. 11). Trent and Jamie (4) echoed these sentiments as they make "personal connections…from meeting people on blog trips. Some of these people have actually turned into friends, and I find the

connections very meaningful" (question 12, para. 12). Marcia and Art (19), round-the-world

travelers, noted a more idealized experience with fellow travel bloggers, "we have met a lot of

other travel bloggers while on the road…these are important to us because you can meet like

minded people who want to help change the world through travel" (question 12, para. 12). The

importance of the travel blog community is further highlighted by Theresa and Samara (14) who

commented that, "at some point, we started to have more in common with people from the online

travel blogging world than friends and family in our personal lives. We are a tribe a diaspora

without a home country" (question 12, para. 12; blogger 3, 9, 17). Community building occurred

as travel bloggers interacted and shared their travel and blogging experiences online and face-to-

face.

Mentorship. Travel blog communities presented the opportunity for the more seasoned

bloggers to mentor people new to blogging. Audra (9) was a mentor who identified herself as an

'old-timer' and "feel[s] like I am fairly well respected in industry, I feel like I am one of the

people that others turn to for advice and I want to help people if possible" (question 11, para. 17;

blogger 24). Several bloggers accessed the knowledge of more experienced travel bloggers,

including Chelsea (2) who noted that, "it's pretty amazing to be able to talk with a whole

community of people who have been where I am going and can guide me personally" (question

11, para. 11). Doral and Wyora (23) emphasized the need for strong connections between

bloggers, as:

> Blogging is one of those activities where you NEED the other bloggers in your industry.
>
> Even if you write the best content, or take the greatest photos on earth, if these are not
>
> shared by your peers then no one will ever read or see them. (question 12, para. 12)

These ideas point to the pleasure of finding a community and the need to work with each other to create a group whose work is noticed by outside individuals and groups.

The support of family and friends, building relationships, relationships of trust, creating community, and being a mentor all added to the social benefits of travel bloggers, and are summarized in Table 8. Combined, all of these professional, financial, personal, and social benefits create an extensive list of fourteen advantages travel bloggers experience as they contribute to the Web 2.0.

Conclusion

The motivations travel bloggers enumerated for their online efforts included three themes: altruistic, personal, public/social, and fourteen subthemes. These motivations provided an understanding as to why participants began travel blogging, and the benefits identified in this research suggested reasons why travel bloggers continued blogging. There are four categories of benefits (professional, financial, personal, social) with fourteen types of identified benefits. Added to the motivations and benefits of travel blogging, research participants also shared their views on travel blogging as leisure, work or both. Combined, this information is discussed further in the next section to elicit how this data informs the Serious Leisure Perspective, the P-A-P model, and ultimately provide some answers as to why travel bloggers create and maintain travel blogs.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

From the data gathered through this research, themes and ideas are identified that add to

our knowledge of travel blogs and their creators, and generate answers to the two research

questions that guide this study. The motivations and benefits of travel blogging are essential to

further understand the first research question, why research participants create and maintain

travel blogs. Reviewing the connections between travel blogging and the SLP is relevant to

answering the second research question, identifying one's online efforts as leisure, work or both.

Travel Blog Motivations and Benefits

The motivations and benefits of blogging are central to understanding the reasons why

some people create and maintain travel blogs. This research reaffirms previously identified

motivations to blog, has identified additional motivations, as well as added benefits of blogging.

This research points to the importance of connecting travel motivations and benefits, building

relationships within the mainstream travel industry (MTI), and identifying connections between

travel blogging and the SLP.

Motivation to blog. Previous research suggests that blog creation and maintenance are

multi-motivational and change over time (Bosangit, 2012; Karlsson, 2006; Lenhart & Fox, 2006;

Nardi et al, 2004). This research concurs with previous research as participants demonstrated

that they are motivated to blog for a variety of reasons and these motivations change over time.

In addition, motivations identified in this research can be placed into themes, such as altruism,

personal, and public/social motivation. The theme of altruism has already been identified as a

motivation, as Hsu and Lin (2008) suggested that "people actively participated in a blog to

increase the welfare of others…people participating in blogs were motivated intrinsically to

contribute knowledge to others because they enjoy helping each other" (p. 72). Personal and

social subthemes are similar to leisure motivation categories that have been previously identified,

including social, psychological, and emotional motivations (McLean, Hurd, & Rogers, 2005).

This research includes additional blog motivations, such as: give back to the WWW, strong

connections to blog, alleviate boredom, share the humour of travel, inspire others, and to

experience a natural high. Only one of these motivations is specific to the travel component of

travel blogging - share the humour of travel. The remaining motives could be experienced by

any type of blogger, including: give back to the WWW, strong connection to blog, alleviate

boredom, inspire others, and natural high. This research contributes to existing travel blog

research as it supports the idea that many motivations for general topic bloggers are similar to

motivations of travel bloggers, and that these motivations are complex. Even more interesting

are the connections made between motivation and benefits, which warrants further discussion.

       Motivation and benefits. Findings from this research suggest that motivation and

benefits are both important to understand, and combined, add further insight into why people

travel blog. In particular, there are links that can be made which have bearing on this research.

One such link is the subcategories identified as motivations to blog that are mirrored in the

benefits of blogging. Examples include social connections (motivation) and building

relationships/networking (benefit), professional exposure (motivation) and professional

recognition (benefit), and contact with family and friends (motivation) and support of family and

friends (benefit). These repeat subthemes and subcategories suggest links between motivation

and benefits, the former the reason to choose an activity (i.e. professional exposure), the latter

the result of a sense of satisfaction, a gain or a goal attained (i.e. professional recognition)

(Ajzen, 1991; Guinn, 1999; Neulinger, 1974). Motivation research suggests that people choose

an activity for complex psychological reasons but "the reasons for choosing one activity rather than another are not at all self-evident, and the choice may be closely related to the benefits people derive, or believe they derive, from engaging in a particular leisure behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 412). This means the choice can be reinforced as a positive decision based on the satisfaction experienced and benefit(s) derived from an achieved goal. This creates a cyclical path or series of connections between motivation, satisfaction, benefits, and leisure goals. For example, travel bloggers are motivated to form relationships with readership and other bloggers (motivation and goal) and experience satisfaction as they develop these connections (benefit). A community forms (goal and benefit) that encourages further associations through meet-ups, blog posts, and social media (motivation), which can foster even deeper connections and motivation to blog (benefit). As evident in this research, combining the study of motivation and the benefits of a leisure activity can lead researchers to further understand why people choose a particular recreation activity and the satisfactions they derive from these activities (Guinn, 1999). This research supports previous studies that link motivation and benefits, which are important leisure relationships (Ajzen, 1991; Guinn, 1999; Neulinger, 1974).

Understanding and connecting the motivations and benefits travel bloggers experience in their decisions to create and maintain blogs has several implications for community relationships. There is an "anti-trust movement associated with a distrust of officialdom" (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006, p. 282), which extends to the mainstream travel industry as consumers often consider MTI an extension of government or corporations (Rojek, 1995; Yeoman et al., 2006). For several reasons consumers, or potential travelers, trust travel bloggers who have become mediators between potential travelers and MTI. Potential travelers perceive travel bloggers as fellow consumers (increased trust), and perceive MTI as an extension of a

corporation or government organizations that are attempting to sell tourism products (decrease in trust) (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2007; Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Travel bloggers also create online spaces through which travel experiences are shared, and "personal recommendations and stories have a higher value compared to printed material and official information" (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006, p. 286). Travel bloggers are also seen as opinion leaders, who are "active user[s] who interpret the meaning of media message content for others, i.e. opinion seekers" (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2007, p. 459). Thus travel bloggers are able to influence and mediate between the reader (potential traveler) and message originator (MTI) as travel bloggers share their travel experiences via electronic word-of-mouth and word-of-mouth (eWOM/WOM). In part for these reasons MTI and potential travelers have been motivated to build relationships with travel bloggers, and travel bloggers have in turn been motivated and have experienced the benefits of these relationships that provide them further incentive to continue travel blogging.

An additional implication of the results enables the online efforts of travel bloggers to be connected to the SLP. The decision to repeat recreation behaviours due to one's motivation and perceived benefits is an important part of becoming a serious leisure participant. In order for a person to experience serious leisure they must systematically pursue a leisure or recreation activity and invest time and energy, which results in the development of lifelong skills and knowledge, not evident in less dedicated recreation participants (Gladwell, 2008; Haworth & Lewis, 2005; Stebbins 1992, 2007). As serious participants are identified within additional leisure and recreation activities, there is an opportunity to develop and expand the framework (Stebbins, 2007). As previously stated, the Internet and WWW have had an effect on recreation pursuits and serious leisure, and this research has identified a new group of individuals, travel

bloggers, who are part of the WWW but who are not yet connected to the SLP. In reviewing the

reasons why travel bloggers create and maintain travel blogs, associations have been identified

that connect travel bloggers as online prosumers to the serious leisure experience.

This research identified new motivations and benefits of blogging and re-affirmed

previous blog, travel blog and leisure motivations. Through these motivations and benefits this

research supports previous research that identified a cyclical relationship between motivation,

benefit, and goal achievement as part of leisure choice. As well, motivation and benefits extend

their influence to include supporting the development of relationships between travel blog

readers, MTI, and travel bloggers. Finally, important connections can be made between travel

blogging and the SLP.

Travel Bloggers and the Serious Leisure Perspective

Findings from this research support the view that travel blogging can be considered

leisure, work or both. Through the characteristics identified as part of the P-A-P model, and

serious leisure, connections are evident between the SLP and travel blogging. Due to travel

bloggers efforts, additional acknowledgement of this online space is suggested as part of serious

leisure. As well, travel bloggers and their leisure experiences can assist in understanding

lifestyles that are built around blended leisure and work. This information will aid in

understanding whether travel bloggers see their blogging experiences as leisure, work or both.

P-A-P model and travel blogging. When first introduced, the P-A-P model was

intended to present a set of interdependent relationships that pointed out the complex

relationships amateurs have as serious leisure participants (Stebbins, 1992, 2002, 2007). Through

research the P-A-P model was developed to further understand these complexities (see Figure 5).

While Stebbins provided the foundation of skills and connections that could be found in the P-A-

P model, few researchers have used this sociological based definition to further study the

relationships between publics, amateurs, and professionals. Instead, most researchers have used

the economic definition to differentiate between amateur and professional, a professional

identified as "someone who is dependent on the income from an activity that other people pursue

with little or no remuneration as leisure" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 6). This means that amateurs are

not as dependent on income from a serious leisure activity, which is evident in this research.

Even though some researchers appear to have moved to the economic definition, it is important

to review potential connections between travel bloggers and the P-A-P model through a

sociological lens.

    Professional. There is a group of travel bloggers who demonstrate most of the attributes

of a professional as conceptualized in the P-A-P model. These individuals began travel blogging

as part of long trips, created a blog to stay in touch with family and friends, then continued to

build the blog once a readership had formed and travel bloggers committed to developing their

skills (blogger 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24). Many of these travel bloggers could

be considered professionals as their online efforts mirror some of the P-A-P attributes (see Figure

5). Professional bloggers have a strong sense of identity as they have built their lives based on

travel and blogging, and social and professional connections. These individuals did state that

their professional and financial benefits, as well as some of their public/social motivations, gave

them the support they needed to build their businesses to a certain standard or level of service.

These individuals are seen as experts (mentorship, professional recognition), and provide a

differentiated product (inspire others, documentation of travel, share the humour of travel). A

travel blogosphere has been created due to connections of community, networks, and

relationships, based on blog social values and cultural traditions. They also experience

autonomy as many are free from the 9 to 5 traditional work life and others lead location independent lives. These bloggers provide unique training through the individualized education they share about travel through their blogs. As well, some of these individuals receive greater than fifty percent of their income from blogging, or receive an even larger percentage of income through gratis opportunities and alternative forms of income. While all of the qualities are evident within the group of travel bloggers who have contributed to the WWW for a number of years, not every well-known or professional travel blogger was able to identify each of the qualities as part of their travel blog experience.

Publics. The readers, family and friends, MTI, media, the general public, and those amateur and professional bloggers that support each other create the travel blog publics (see Figure 5). Some of these groups lend financial or professional support (i.e. MTI, media, family and friends), while others provide feedback, or an emotional connection (i.e. readers, media, general public, other bloggers). Still others provide role support (i.e. MTI, other travel bloggers), and the public participates and shares their opinions. As well, MTI and mainstream media act as commodity agents and play an important role in the lives of travel bloggers (Yoder, 1997). The support of people in the publics group is essential in order to build positive relationships as part of the P-A-P model.

Amateur. This research revealed two main types of amateur travel bloggers: part-time/leisure/amateur travel bloggers, and professional travel writers/photographers/travelers who are moving their professional offline business to an online environment. Many of the amateur attributes identified as part of the P-A-P model are evident in the travel bloggers who are part-time travel bloggers, or who have identified their blog as part of their long-term leisure goals (see Figure 5). The amateur qualities identified in connection with these travel bloggers include

little to no financial gain from their blogs, reduced time commitment maintaining a blog, and less

commitment than their professional counterparts. Several part-time bloggers state that they do

not take on as many opportunities to blog, with some of these bloggers indicating that they are

interested in taking on more and are simply waiting for more agreeable offers. As well, several

bloggers stated, their other non-blog related full-time work and family commitments take

precedence over travel blogging. These qualities or attributes provide evidence of the role of the

amateur travel blogger in the P-A-P model.

The second set of travel bloggers can be described as amateurs who are already

professionals in one environment (offline), but the transition to an online space requires them to

learn new skills in order to adapt to this new environment. This is what makes travel blogging a

more unique experience. A person may be a professional offline, but in order to become a

professional online this same individual must acquire a series of online skills to achieve

professional success. This suggests that not all professional skills are transferable between

environments, and the environment in which a person participates in leisure should also be taken

into account as part of their development within the P-A-P model.

Each group identified as part of the P-A-P model is present in the travel blog

environment. This research supports the understanding that "the good amateurs are better than

the mediocre professionals" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 38). This means that there are few distinct lines

that separate the professional, from the amateurs, from the publics. More often there are travel

bloggers that demonstrate attributes from several of the P-A-P categories, supporting the

understanding that P-A-P categories are not mutually exclusive. Even if the categories are not

exclusive, each is connected to travel blogging and aids in understanding how travel bloggers see

their efforts, as leisure, work or both.

Serious Leisure and Travel Blogging

Travel bloggers illustrate all six serious leisure characteristics and ten outcomes (personal and social), as can be observed in Table 9. The dedicated and lifestyle bloggers demonstrate perseverance when considering the amount of time they spend on travel blogs. Long-term bloggers demonstrate perseverance as they build relationships with readers and MTI, and maintain their blogs rather than abandoning them. The amount of time travel bloggers dedicate to their blogs points to significant effort being invested. The breadth of networks and relationships built also demonstrates effort. Travel bloggers focus on building a leisure career by gaining knowledge, skills and abilities and showing continued progress as they garner employment, income and gratis opportunities. Some travel bloggers have a strong identification with their leisure pursuit as mentioned by those research participants who have a strong connection to their blogs, receive support from family and friends, and build relationships and community. These connections demonstrate that many of research participants have the qualities or characteristics of amateurs and serious leisure participants as defined by the SLP.

As can be observed in Table 9, the personal outcomes that are part of the sociological definition of serious leisure are evident in the efforts of some travel bloggers. Travel bloggers experience enrichment, re-creation, and self-actualization through the altruistic and personal motivations and benefits of travel blogging. Examples include an improved quality of life, inspiring others, and developing knowledge, skills and abilities. Self-expression is achieved as travel bloggers use their blogs as a creative outlet, as an educational tool, to share the humour of travel, and to document their travel. Self-gratification is the pure enjoyment experienced when travel blogging and that can be observed from a natural high, giving back to the WWW, and being in contact with family, friends and readership.

Table 9

Connecting Travel Blogging and Serious Leisure

Serious Leisure Quality	Travel Blog Motivation and Benefits
Perseverance Significant effort	Time commitment Build relationships/networking Strong connection to blog
Leisure Career	Develop knowledge, skills and abilities Employment opportunities Gratis and alternative forms of income
Strong identification with leisure pursuit	Strong connection to blog Connect and support from family and friends Build relationships Travel blog community
Enrichment Re-creation Self-actualization	Improved quality of life Inspiring others Develop knowledge, skills and abilities
Self-expression	Creative outlet Educational tool Share humour of travel Document travel
Self-gratification	Natural high Giving back to WWW Contact with family and friends
Enhanced self-image	Employment opportunities Build relationships/networking Connect to readership
Financial benefits	Income Gratis opportunities Alternative forms of income Employment opportunities
Unique ethos Group attraction Group accomplishment Group maintenance	Travel blog community Social connections Mentorship Connect to readership Support family and friends

An enhanced self-image develops through the professional motivations and benefits as

employment opportunities are created, relationships and networks are expanded, and as travel

bloggers build and connect to their readership. Finally, financial benefits have been discussed

previously as part of this research and some travel bloggers enjoy these benefits.

The final serious leisure characteristics that are evident include a unique ethos and three

social outcomes (group attraction, group accomplishment, group maintenance). A unique ethos,

or subculture, has developed over time as part of the travel blogosphere. This social world

includes its own structure, values, beliefs, characteristics, and practices (Stebbins, 2002; Unruh,

1980). It has its own actors (i.e. travel bloggers, readers, friends and family), organizations (i.e.

online member websites, travel blog professional organizations, MTI), events (i.e. face-to-face

meetings, Skype conversations, travel blog conferences), and practices (i.e. answering emails,

sharing advice, mentorship, freelance contracts, etc.; Stebbins, 2002; Unruh, 1980). Combined,

these elements of a social world work together to provide the travel blogger with opportunities to

be a part of the community, feel needed, and make altruistic contributions (Stebbins, 2007).

Travel bloggers have created a large and diverse community, evidenced by the motivations and

benefits identified in this research.

In particular, these qualities and elements of a social world contribute to the idea of

tourism and travel blogging as a lifestyle. Some research participants have demonstrated that

their tourism-based lifestyles are redefining parts of tourism and creating stronger connections

between tourism and serious leisure (Worthington, 2006). For example, some research

participants do not experience a once-per-year travel event but a series of yearly travel

experiences imbued within an ongoing tourism based lifestyle. By extension, travel blogging as

a leisure pursuit is integrated into the tourism experience and shared repeatedly as part of a

lifestyle of online social and professional connections. Travel and blogging have become a

serious leisure pursuit in accordance with the new phenomenon of a tourism-based lifestyle

(Worthington, 2006).

Comparing the motivation and benefits categories identified in this research to the

qualities of an amateur serious leisure participant, there is evidence of several connections

between travel bloggers, tourism, and the SLP. Travel bloggers can be amateur serious leisure

participants, which points to an important acknowledgement that needs to be more readily

identified as part of the amateur portion of the SLP.

Virtual serious leisure pursuits. As stated previously, people's lives have been altered

by the development of the computer, Internet and WWW, and many North Americans are in

contact with these technologies multiple times each day. There are communities, jobs, and

leisure pursuits that depend on computer or smartphone-based online environments, yet few of

these virtual spaces and activities have been identified as part of the SLP. One such space is the

blogosphere, which is so large and influential that tracking its magnitude is extremely

challenging. To recognize the WWW's importance and qualities one can gain through online

pursuits, it is important to acknowledge in serious leisure research and across the SLP framework

that online pursuits are an important part of SLP categories. This acknowledgement ensures that

virtual pursuits that fit within the definition of the SLP are recognized as part of the framework

and ensures the framework continues to incorporate modern day recreation practices.

Previous research that supports connections between technology, online environments,

and leisure include research about Internet use, virtual communities, multi-user virtual

environments (MUVE), gaming, library and information science, and photography (i.e. Flickr)

(Bryce, 2001; Cox, Clough, & Marlow, 2008; Matt's Muv601 Blog, 2012; Urban, 2007). For

example, "internet use involves a certain level of skill, activity, knowledge, and experience" (Bryce, 2001, p. 9) and requires a person to adapt to a new virtual space. Virtual communities, including gaming environments, are part of a person's leisure time and provide individuals' skill development and a sense of group solidarity (Bryce, 2001). It has been suggested that library and information science professionals (LIS) could use MUVE's, such as Second Life, to share historical, cultural and educational information in virtual museums, libraries, and travel sites (Matt's Muv601 Blog, 2012; Urban, 2007). There are specialty skills involved in Flickr participation, including one's photography equipment is usually of higher quality, the capture and processing of digital photography, and the critical selection of prints uploaded onto Flickr (Cox et al., 2008). Such research supports the connections between online pursuits, skill development, and serious leisure.

As additional research connects online pursuits to the SLP, it is important to understand that as with real-time leisure activities, online leisure activities are not discrete but can be connected to several SLP categories at one time. Examples of discrete online activities include online photography and gaming, which fit into already existing amateur categories (art and entertainment respectively). Travel blogging is an example of non-discrete leisure activity that requires the art and entertainment of writing, the skills of photography and video editing, Internet and social media knowledge, and the social skills to develop networks and contribute to community, as well as real-time travel. Another example is Second Life, a virtual space where people are encouraged to create an avatar (character) through which they can live a virtual second life. While this could be considered entertainment, the ability for people to create a world is artistic and creative, a sense of community is integral to the game, people are encouraged to complete business transactions, and share their online skills and knowledge

(Linden Research Inc., 2014). Another interesting characteristic of online pursuits such as travel

blogging and Second Life is the requirement that these activities occur online, as this is the only

space in which they can exist. These unique virtual pursuits will require further exploration to

identify the potential of adding an additional category to serious leisure to acknowledge the

importance of virtual pursuits and social media in 21st century leisure.

Travel blogging as experience. As part of this research travel blog characteristics and

efforts were identified as themes and categories. These include categories such as pleasure, part-

time, dedicated, and lifestyle bloggers based on type of activity and amount of time. In addition,

categories such as leisure, work or combination were developed from travel bloggers' attitudes

towards their online efforts. It was also possible to identify amateur, professional and public

serious leisure participants. These categories organize travel bloggers' research responses based

on attitude, time commitment, type of activity, self-assessment of travel blog efforts, and can

assist in explaining the type of experience these people have while travel blogging. This is what

is at the heart of a leisure pursuit, the experience. It is difficult to place groups of travel bloggers

into one of the Neuliger's (1974) leisure paradigm quadrants (pure leisure, pure work, pure job,

or leisure-job) because a large variety of experiences were identified in this research. Possible

groupings include hobby bloggers, leisure pursuit bloggers, novice or pleasure bloggers who may

experience travel blogging most often as pure leisure. Work based travel bloggers (as part of

business or a passion), professionals, or dedicated bloggers may experience pure work and pure

job more often. For the remaining groups, lifestyle bloggers, amateurs, and people who identify

blogging as an important part of life experience blogging as a broad range of pure work, pure

job, pure leisure and leisure-job depending on the task at hand. Due to the variety of leisure

experiences, the categories and themes developed loosely connect to a particular leisure paradigm quadrant.

This could be due to the way in which travel bloggers describe their online efforts. Travel bloggers compartmentalized their online efforts into individual tasks. These individual tasks were described in reference to the task feeling like leisure or work. For example, some bloggers identified writing and taking pictures as fun (pure leisure), but the editing of blog material as arduous (more akin to pure work or pure job). Others identified writing as an amateur as enjoyable (pure leisure), but after becoming a professional writing became a chore (pure job). Travel blogging as a whole was rarely identified as completely leisure or work by travel bloggers, instead the individual tasks of travel blogging were described in relation to the experience of leisure and/or work. Therefore, travel blogging as a leisure pursuit does not come neatly packaged in separate work or leisure bundles, but these are connected and spill-over into each other and into different parts of travel bloggers lives (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Even though themes and categories created as part of this research do not fit neatly into leisure paradigm quadrants, the answer to the second research question is still evident. Travel bloggers view their online efforts as individual tasks and can have the experience of leisure and work in succession or simultaneously as part of their leisure pursuit.

A practical application of understanding the leisure and work motivations of travel bloggers concerns MTI forming relationships with travel bloggers. MTI can ensure that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are maintained in the relationship, that perceived freedom for the travel blogger is high, and that travel blogger and MTI goals for the relationship are achievable (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). In incorporating these three key aspects of leisure into a relationship, MTI assists in developing the travel blogger's feelings of competence and self-

determination. This in turn develops satisfied travel bloggers who are more apt to repeat

previous leisure choices and reengage in positive relationships (Haworth & Lewis, 2005;

Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Assisting in building up individual members of the travel blog

community also positively affects the travel blog industry, and may also improve MTI's

relationships with potential travelers.

  Travel bloggers as prosumers. As previously mentioned, there are characteristics that

prosumers demonstrate as they make online contributions:

  (i) the production and sharing of content on Web 2.0;

  (ii) the abundance of produced and published content;

  (iii) the unpaid work of those who produce the content; and

  (iv) the online spread of a culture of free content. (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013, p. 25)

The WWW has provided prosumers with the opportunity to contribute their travel experiences

and knowledge in a public arena without the approval of gatekeepers (Hewitt, 2005; Ringmar,

2007). This has flattened the hierarchy and broadened the scope of people who are able to

produce and publish travel blogs and contribute to the online travel industry. As travel bloggers

use Wi-Fi, mobile phone blogging (moblogging), tablet devices, and micro-blogging (e.g.,

Twitter, Instagram) with increased frequency, the scope of access to the WWW and the

abundance of online content also increases. The content the travel bloggers share online is done

so in the spirit of open access as free online content (Leiner et al., 2011). Travel bloggers

demonstrate three of the characteristics of a prosumer.

  The attribute of a prosumer that does not align with the findings about travel bloggers is

that prosumers are unpaid WWW contributors. In fact some travel bloggers do receive

compensation in the form of monetary compensation and gratis opportunities. For travel

bloggers who do, they have entered into business contracts that fit within the predominant

financial structure of capitalism. Researchers have identified conflicts between capitalism and

an open access spaces such as the WWW (Fuchs, 2010; Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013). While a

full debate about capitalism and the concept of open access spaces is beyond the scope of this

research, it is important to acknowledge that travel bloggers contribute their experiences and

knowledge willingly to the WWW. Some researchers may see these contributions as an

exploitation of work as travel bloggers are not salaried employees of a company and yet

companies may benefit from these contributions. Travel bloggers in this research were astute

enough to decide if they wanted to contribute to the WWW with non-monetary benefits, or if

they were interested in receiving professional and financial benefits. What may be challenging

for travel bloggers on the WWW are the changing business practices of organizations such as

Google, YouTube, and Facebook, and the laws that govern these organizations (blogger 9, 27,

28). As business practices and laws change, so to do the possibilities of garnering professional

and financial benefits from travel blogger who contribute to the WWW. As these corporations

are integral to the potential benefits of travel bloggers, further research could be completed to

understand how capitalist corporations and their online business practices, as well as government

laws, affect the leisure and work of prosumers, such as travel bloggers.

Through blogs and social media, travel bloggers are generating and sharing a large

quantity of information within the Web 2.0 environment. This content is shared with the

understanding that the WWW is based on an open access model. It is also understood that some

travel bloggers may receive financial and professional benefits from their online contributions,

and while this does stir up debate about the capitalist structures that exist online, further research

is necessary to understand how this may affect travel bloggers as prosumers.

Travel blogging as a lifestyle. One person's lifestyle reflects his/her individual

attitudes, values, and worldview (Tomlinson, 1998). This means people use cultural and class

symbols to create an identity and present it to the world as a lifestyle. People use the resources

they have available to create their lifestyles, and these resources are traditionally connected to a

person's socio-economic class (Bourdieu, 1984; Tomlinson, 1998). Within this concept of class

and lifestyle, a person's "leisure practices…become important locators of social identity"

(Tomlinson, 1998, p. 147). The athletic club a person joins, the art a person purchases, a

person's travel excursions, or the music a person listens to, are indicators of socioeconomic and

cultural status, as well as indicators of cultural consumption. Additional research has suggested

that in our post-modern society, the values and prosumption practices of people have become

more flexible and individualized (Featherstone, 1991; Wynne, 1998). This flexibility of identity

and lifestyle is a result of changes to our community structures, increased exposure to mass

media, changes to family units, and increased access to resources and consumer choices

(Featherstone, 1991; Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004; Wynne, 1998). More recent research has

suggested that while people do experience more individualized opportunities to create a unique

lifestyle, these choices remain connected to our socioeconomic status and related consumption

practices (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). In, sum, individuals can self-define their own

hallmarks of cultural prosumption to express and share their individual identities, with the

understanding that our socioeconomic status remains an influence of people's consumption

choices and development of individual identities (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004; Wynne, 1998).

Historically, much of western society has believed that work occurs first then people

participate in leisure in order to earn money needed for opportunities such as travel. The stories

of one's experiences are also shared after travel is complete as a form of cultural capital. As

suggested in this research, there are groups of travel bloggers who reject the idea of work then leisure/travel, and who are forming their own ideas about travel consumption, using new mediums to share their travel experiences (e.g., blogs, mobile phones, social media). Rather than using travel during one's holidays as a mark of one's socioeconomic status, travel bloggers are establishing a new social structure of travel, one that permeates entire lives. These travel bloggers are infusing travel into their lives and producing online content to share these lifestyle choices (e.g., work and leisure entwined, lifestyle travel blogging). It could be said that some travel bloggers use Web 2.0 and their constructed communities to legitimize and normalize their life choices (e.g., removal from 9-5 lifestyle, location independent lives). Or it could be said that "if indeed both a person's occupational status and his leisure preferences are increasingly tied up with information or knowledge…it may be expected that intellectual or cultural skills become increasingly important determinants of people's cultural and leisure pursuits" (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). Whether the identities of lifestyle bloggers are created or expected, the individual may even "modify and replace [traditional middle class hallmarks of travel] through the promotion and creation of their own [lifestyle as travel blogger]" (Wynne, 1998, p. 149). Over time these changes may alter the cultural capital gained through travel to establish less differentiation between leisure and work for a larger mass of people, and to promote a new standard of travel, a life infused with travel and blogging. Lifestyle travel bloggers identify so deeply personally, professionally, financially, and socially with their travel blogs that they present a new type of lifestyle, one of travel and blogging as indicators of cultural and social identity.

This research identified new motivations and benefits and confirmed previously identified motivations. By examining the motivations and benefits of travel bloggers we learn

why people travel blog, the relationships travel bloggers create, and the satisfaction travel

bloggers receive through these leisure and work pursuits. The connections between the SLP,

serious leisure and travel blogging are evident as previously discussed. In order to acknowledge

the important links between serious leisure and online leisure pursuits various examples of these

pursuits were identified, including travel blogging. As well, travel blogging as experience and as

a lifestyle helped further answer the research questions. Lastly, practical implications of this

research suggest that MTI ensure they take into consideration the motivations, perceived

freedom and goals of travel bloggers when developing relationship with them. In all, a greater

understanding of why travel bloggers create and maintain blogs has been discovered, and some

travel bloggers can experience their serious leisure pursuit as leisure, work or a combination of

the two.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to further understand the motivations of travel bloggers with regards to their online efforts, and to understand how these efforts were or were not reflected in the SLP. As technological developments have taken tourism down the path of computerized and interconnected virtual spaces, it is important to understand why people invest time and energy in travel blogging. In response to the question, 'why do travel bloggers create and maintain blogs?', previous academic research was supported and knowledge gained. This included identifying three themes of motivations to blog: altruism, personal, and public/social. Thirteen subthemes were also identified, and of these six of these subthemes were newly identified motivations (e.g., give back to the WWW, strong connections to blog, alleviate boredom, share the humour of travel, inspire others, to experience a natural high), researchers can more fully understand why travel bloggers contribute to the WWW.

In addition to motivations, the benefits of blogging were identified. They included four benefit categories (e.g., professional, financial, social, personal), and fourteen subcategories. This travel blog research is useful and contributes to understanding why people travel blog. Firstly, studying travel blog motivations and benefits together suggests a cyclical relationship that encourages development for the individual and the travel blog community. Secondly, understanding travel blog motivations and benefits provides information to build stronger relationships between MTI, blog readers, and travel blog prosumers. Thirdly, travel bloggers who repeatedly pursue and hone their craft are more likely to develop into serious leisure participants, which may broaden the scope of the SLP and its identification of serious leisure

pursuits. This research was able to identify the reasons why travel bloggers create and maintain

travel blogs.

In order to answer the question, 'how do travel bloggers see their experiences with

regards to their leisure and work?', several interesting connections have been suggested. The

findings in this research suggest that there are connections between the online contributions of

travel bloggers, the SLP, the P-A-P model and serious leisure. This research also generated

connections between travel blogging and the leisure experience, suggesting that the experience

of an activity can help researchers understand travel blogging as leisure, work or a combination.

Travel bloggers also demonstrated the characteristics of online prosumers who create user-

generated-content in an open access environment. Travel bloggers may or may not gain

financial and professional benefits from these contributions, even so, the qualities of prosumers

can be observed in the efforts of travel bloggers. As well, this research provided additional

understanding about travel bloggers who define themselves as lifestyle bloggers. These

individuals are able to use cultural capital and their extended travel experiences to define a new

type of traveler, the lifestyle travel blogger. The combined findings that travel bloggers as online

prosumers can experience leisure and work while contributing to the Web 2.0 suggests links to

the SLP and to serious leisure. It also suggests that travel blogging does not produce the same

experience for each person, but that each individual brings to travel blogging their motivations

and expectations, and in return must work through the less enjoyable aspects of travel blogging

in order to receive the benefits that keep them motivated to participate in their leisure pursuits

and/or work.

Future Areas of Study

     As this research was not a comprehensive look into all aspects of travel blogging or the

SLP, additional areas of study are suggested. One idea is to uncover new motivations and

benefits of travel blogging, as these motivations adapt to current blogging conditions while the

industry grows on and offline. As well, further investigation into the connections between

motivation, benefits, satisfaction and goals will help us to understand the connections in greater

depth, and for MTI and others to use this information to develop strong relationships with travel

bloggers and readers. As blogger burnout is high on the WWW, further understanding of the

links between motivation and benefits may help researchers understand the phenomenon, and

assist in developing strategies to mitigate or avoid burnout. While research regarding the SLP

often suggests an amicable relationship within and between the three P-A-P model groups, future

research could assess the state of relationship between travel bloggers and their professional

counterparts, as some people are of the opinion that old media hates new media, or that the travel

blog community includes disrespect and cattiness (blogger 3; Hewitt, 2005: Toni, 2012). To

explore the language people use when describing their experiences of leisure (e.g., fun and

enjoyable) and work (e.g., arduous) to further understand people's changing perceptions (or lack

thereof) to these experiences. Research could continue to identify virtual serious leisure pursuits

and connect them to existing serious leisure categories, in order to ascertain if a new virtual

pursuit category could be added to the SLP. In addition, research could be completed to

understand how open access environments and capitalism function as part of the WWW,

focusing on the changing business practices of online organizations and government laws and

how these affect the leisure and work of prosumers, such as travel bloggers. These suggestions

for further research extend from this travel blog and serious leisure based research. While this

research was able to highlight the efforts of travel bloggers and their connections to the SLP, there continues to be questions and further research that can expand our understanding of travel bloggers as 21st century prosumers and serious leisure participants.

Limitations of Research

This research was limited in several areas. Participants included a large number of North Americans, in particular those originating from the USA, which resulted in data and analysis through a North American perspective. The verbal conversations elicited more data and depth of data than some of the email/typed responses, and this may have influenced the quality and depth of data overall. Travel bloggers could have been provided definitions of novice, amateur and professional and asked to self-assess their level of expertise, which could have standardized their answers more readily. It is difficult to find less well-known bloggers online, therefore the top ranking or more experienced travel bloggers may have been a greater part of this research and more obscure bloggers might have had very different perspectives. As previously mentioned, the researcher responsible for this thesis has had a lifetime of travel experiences as an expatriate and as a tourist and these experiences may have coloured the interpretation of the research data.

In sum, travel bloggers contribute to the Web 2.0 environment due to multiple motivations and benefits. These motivations change over time and can be used to encourage strong community relationships and the development of travel blogging into a serious leisure pursuit. Many connections can be made between travel blogging and the SLP, in particular as part of serious leisure and the P-A-P model. The experiences of travel bloggers supported the leisure paradigm theory and provided insight into the meaning of leisure and work. The virtual nature of travel blogging is a reminder that the SLP framework could, with more specificity, identify online pursuits of a serious nature. In all, travel bloggers create and maintain blogs for

many personal, professional, financial and social reasons, and travel bloggers do have a place

within the SLP as serious leisure participants.

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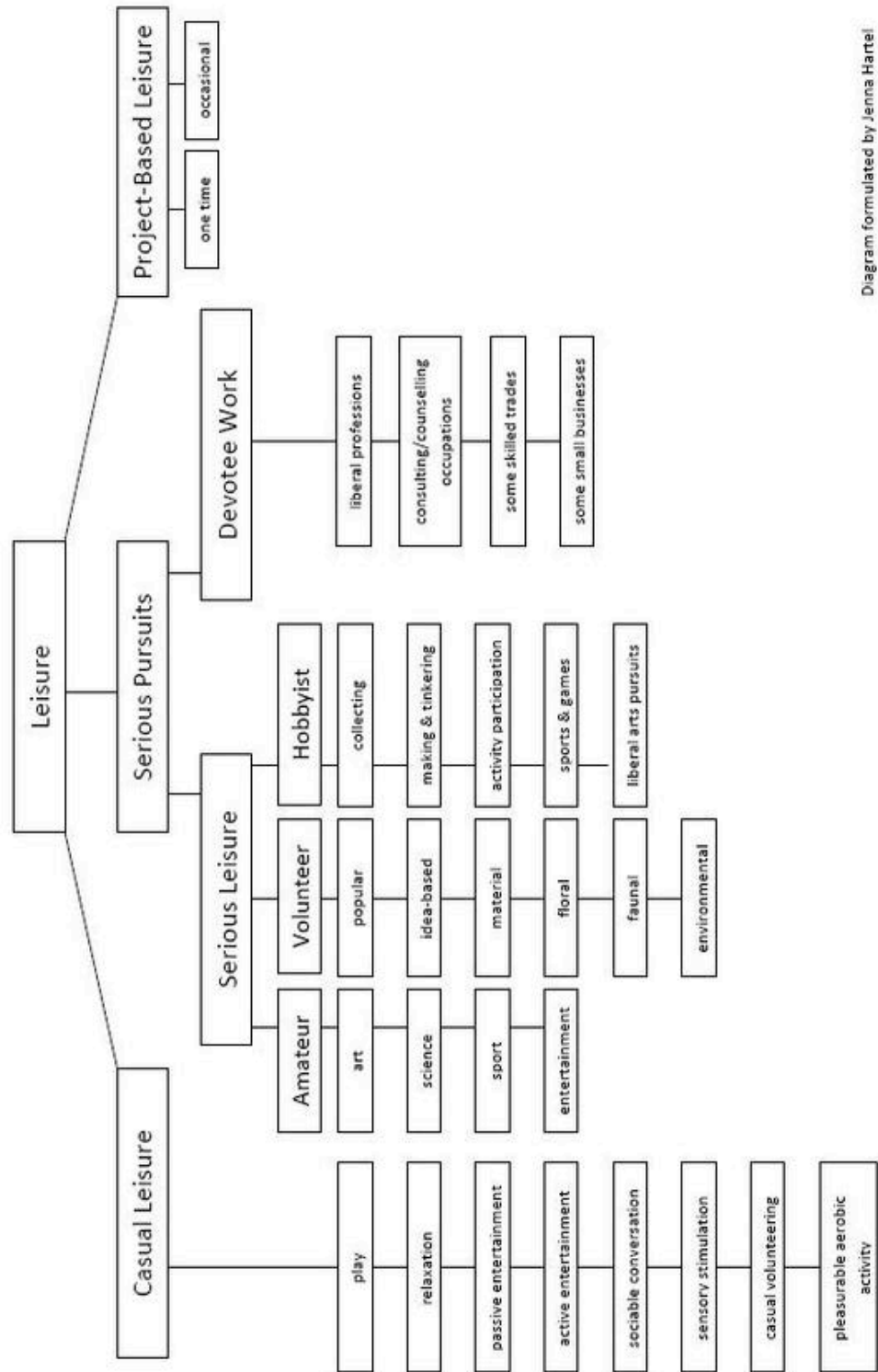Appendix A: Serious Leisure Perspective Diagram

The Serious Leisure Perspective Website, www.seriousleisure.net. (February, 2013 version)

Appendix B: Blogs and Websites Identified in Thesis

Adventures for Singles
https://www.adventuresforsinglesinc.com

Blogpulse
http://blogpulse.com
(Site significantly altered January 13, 2012.)

British Columbia Blog
http://www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/blog.aspx

CamWorld
http://camworld.org/

g-adventures
http://www.gadventures.com

Gadling
http://www.gadling.com/

Global Bloggers Network
https://www.facebook.com/groups/globalbloggersnetwork/

Globe Trotting Mama
http://globetrottingmama.com

Hole in the Donut Cultural Travel
http://holeinthedonut.com/

In The Know Traveler
http://www.intheknowtraveler.com/

Jaunted
http://www.jaunted.com/

Rebecca's Pocket
http://www.rebeccablood.net/

Technorati
http://technorati.com

Travel Blog Exchange
http://tbexcon.com

Travel Blogger Unite
http://www.travelbloggersunite.com

Travel Bloggers
https://www.facebook.com/groups/travelbloggers/

TravelPod
http://www.travelpod.com/

Viator
http://www.viator.com/

Winnipeg Insider's Blog
http://www.tourismwinnipeg.com/pegcity-lounge/winnipeg-insiders-blog

Appendix C: Qualitative Questions and Measurement Instrument

Research Questions

A. Why do travel bloggers create and maintain travelogues?

B. How do travel bloggers see their travel blogging experiences with regards to their leisure and work?

Measurement Instrument

The following open-ended semi-structured qualitative interview questions will guide the research:

1. Please provide the name(s) of your travelogue(s).

2. Please explain the type of blog you have created and maintain.

3. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and discuss why you feel they are important.

6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other activities?

8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work, neither or both? Why?

9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal, social, professional and / or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals, communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these interactions to you?

13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Appendix D: Initial Email Sent to Potential Participants

Dear *(travel blogger)*,

My name is Tonia Bates and I am graduate student at the University of Manitoba, completing my Master of Arts Degree in Recreation Management in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management. My research explores travel bloggers, why they create and maintain travel blogs, and how this relates to their leisure and work lives.

I found your blog *(title of blog)* using *(name of search engine)* and after reviewing it I would like to invite you to be part of this research. Your participation would entail answering questions about your experience as a travel blogger either by email or through a live conversation (using Skype or over the telephone). If you are interested in participating in this research, please let me know how you would like me to contact you:

E-mail:
Phone:
Skype:
(for a free Skype account visit http://www.skype.com)

If you have chosen to be contacted by email, you will receive a second email from me, including the research questions, within the next two weeks. If you would like me to contact you via Skype or telephone, please list 3 possible dates and times within the next three weeks when I may contact you:

Your Time Zone:

Option 1
Day:
Time:

Option 2
Day:
Time:

Option 3
Day:
Time:

I value your opinions and thoughts about your experience as a travel blog writer, and hope you will consider participating in this research, as it will contribute to advancing our understanding

of the role and value of travel blogs from your perspective. If you do not wish to participate in this research, nor receive further emails, please inform me via this email address.

Attached is a detailed informed consent for in pdf format (download adobe acrobat reader for free at http://www.adobe.com to read this document). This document provides a description of the research and outlines your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate you will be asked to provide a signed copy of this to me, or to indicate in an email or during our verbal conversation that you have read the form and agree to participate.

If you have any questions you can email me here, and I will gladly answer them.

Thank you so much for considering my request for your participation in this research,

Tonia Bates
Graduate Student
Master of Arts in Recreation Management
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Email: travelogueresearch@gmail.com
Skype: toniabates (in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)
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Appendix E: Second Email Sent to Potential Participants, Non-Respondents

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Dear *(travel blogger)*,

About two weeks ago I contacted you about the research I am completing as part of my Master's Degree in Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba. This research will shed light on the reasons why travel bloggers contribute their ideas and experiences to the World Wide Web. It is my hope that you will consider participating in this research project.

Your participation would entail answering questions about your experience as a travel blogger either by email or through a live conversation (using Skype or over the telephone). If you are interested in participating in this research, please let me know how you would like me to contact you:

E-mail:
Phone:
Skype:
(for a free Skype account visit http://www.skype.com)

If you have chosen to be contacted by email, you will receive an additional email from me, including the research questions, within the next two weeks. If you would like me to contact you via Skype or telephone, please list 3 possible dates and times within the next three weeks when I may contact you:

Your Time Zone:

Option 1
Day:
Time:

Option 2
Day:
Time:

Option 3
Day:
Time:

I value your opinions and thoughts about your experience as a travel blog writer, and hope you will consider participating in this research, as it will contribute to advancing our understanding

of the role and value of travel blogs from your perspective. If you do not wish to participate in this research, nor receive further emails, please inform me via this email address.

Attached is a detailed informed consent for in pdf format (download adobe acrobat reader for free at http://www.adobe.com to read this document). This document provides a description of the research and outlines your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate you will be asked to provide a signed copy of this to me, or to indicate in an email or during our verbal conversation that you have read the form and agree to participate.

If you have any questions you can email me here and I will gladly answer them.

Thank you so much for considering my request for your participation in this research,

Tonia Bates
Graduate Student
Master of Arts in Recreation Management
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Email: travelogueresearch@gmail.com
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Dr. Christine Van Winkle
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Telephone: (204) 474-8647
Email: christine.vanwinkle@ad.umanitoba.ca

Appendix F: Data Collection and Thesis Schedule

The researcher is contacting a new set of potential participants every two weeks, beginning with

contacting fifty travel bloggers with the first email. Within two weeks, the researcher is

contacting non-respondents from each group with a second email, or forwarding the interview

questions via email, or engaging in conversation with positive response research participants.

Within three weeks after the first conversation, the researcher will contact every participant who

is willing to engage in second or additional conversations. The researcher will continue to

engage with responds in additional conversations as necessary into early February 2013,

completing data analysis and the thesis document by end of February 2014, with the intended

date to defend this thesis in May 2014.

<u>Thesis Time Line</u>

November 26, 2012
Group 1 - Contact 50 potential research participants with first email.

December 10, 2012
Group 1 – Contact X non-respondent potential research participants with second email.
Group 2 - Contact 50 additional potential research participants with first email.

December 17, 2012
Group 1 - Due date to contact participants with second set of unique questions.
Group 2 - Contact X non-respondent potential research participants with second email (one week early due to holiday season).

January 2, 2013
Group 2 - Due date to contact participants with second set of unique questions (alterations to schedule due to holidays).

January 14, 2013
Group 3 - Contact X potential research participants with first email.

January 28, 2013
Group 3 – Contact X non-respondent potential research participants with second email.

March 4, 2013
Group 3 - Due date to contact participants with second set of unique questions.

December 11, 2012 – February 28, 2013
Engage with willing participants in additional email conversations, those who respond to second email request, and those who engage in interviews beyond one.

March 1, 2013 – August 30, 2013
Continue to analyze data, begin tying research to literature, write thesis.

September 1, 2013 – December 20, 2013
Final thesis revisions completed by researcher under the thesis advisor's supervision.

December 20, 2013 – February 24, 2014
Final thesis document reviewed by supervising professor.

March 25, 2014 – April 18, 2014
Any final corrections of thesis to prepare to send to committee.

April 19 – May 5 , 2014
Provide final document to thesis committee.

May 6 – May 23, 2014
Schedule and defend thesis.

May 24 – June 16, 2014
Any thesis defense changes to document.

June 30, 2014
All documentation to FGS and FKRM Faculty.

Appendix G: Consent Form

Travel Bloggers: Who Do You Think You Are?

Researcher: Tonia Bates, Graduate Student in Recreation Management, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Study Summary
The purpose of this study is to understand your leisure and work as a travel blogger from your perspective. As a participant in this study you will be asked to answer question about your experience as a travel blog writer by e-mail, telephone or Skype, and potentially respond to additional questions in subsequent conversations.

Your Participation
I am asking for your voluntary participation in this research. You are not required to participate in any part of this research that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop participating at any time.

The first stage of the research will include a series of open-ended questions that you can choose to complete independently online by e-mail, or complete during a conversation with the researcher over the telephone, or online through Skype. The questions will focus on your travelogue and how travel blogging fits into your leisure and work pursuits, and will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time.

The second stage, if you choose to continue participating, will be a second series of questions developed by the researcher based on your answers to the first series of questions. These questions will be used to delve more deeply into the subject matter and ensure that your responses have been interpreted as accurately as possible. Subsequent conversations beyond two may be necessary to further share and clarify additional information, but only if agreed to by you.

Data Collection, Analysis and Storage
Your e-mail communications, audio files and any transcribed information will be stored in a password protected computer in secure files, and any hard copy data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office located in the Human Leisure and Health Performance (HLHP) Leisure and Tourism lab at the University of Manitoba. All email correspondence will occur through a professional, secure account used only for this research. Audio recordings will only be made once you have granted permission for the conversation to be recorded, and will occur only when the researcher is in a private space, then transcribed only by the primary researcher. This data

will only be read or listened to by the researcher, and analyzed sections may be shared with the supervising professor and two research committee members. Neither your name, nor the name of your travelogue, will be attached to your questionnaire once the information has been analyzed and the final document written (pseudonyms will be used). There is a small possibility that a person reading any published work based on this research may connect a fictitiously named travelogue and writer to a participant's internet/public based blog. Risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater that those experienced in the normal conduct of your everyday life. All digital documentation and hard copy documents will be deleted or shredded at the completion of the study or within five years of data collection (whichever occurs first). Any data analysis and synthesis will be presented as a thesis document, with the potential of sharing this data at academic conferences and/or publishing academic articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the below-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Researcher's/Delegate's Signature   Date

----

Would you like to receive a summary of the results of this study?

If so, please provide your name and contact information:

Name: _____

E-Mail or Mailing Address*:
_____

*Note: your contact information will only be used to provide you with a summary of the study results.

Tonia Bates
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Master of Arts in Recreation Management
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Email: travelogueresearch@gmail.com
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Assistant Professor
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University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Telephone: (204) 474-8647
Email: christine.vanwinkle@ad.umanitoba.ca

Appendix H: Email with Interview Questions Sent to Positive Response Participants, Email
Participation

Dear *(travel blogger)*,

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research about travel blogs and your
experience as a travel blogger. Below are the questions you have agreed to answer about your
travel blog, *(name of travelogue)*. Please answer them with as much detail as possible, and share
all your thoughts and ideas related to each question. Your participation in this research is
voluntary and you are not required to answer any questions you are not comfortable responding
to. If you are unsure about a question, feel free to ask any clarifying questions in your email
reply and I will respond.

1. Please provide the name(s) of your travelogue(s).

2. Please explain the type of blog you have created and maintain.

3. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and
    discuss why you feel they are important.

6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and
    maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other
    activities?

8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work,
    neither or both? Why?

9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had
    to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal,
    social, professional and / or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If
    you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals,
    communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these
    interactions to you?

13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Thank you so much for your responses to these research questions. I am interested in engaging in further conversation with you about your responses. If you are willing to participate further by allowing me to ask you additional questions about your responses, please let me know and I will contact you within the next three weeks to continue this conversation. If you do not wish to participate in this research any further, please inform me via this email.

As a reminder, attached is a detailed informed consent for in pdf format (download adobe acrobat reader for free at http://www.adobe.com to read this document). This document provides a description of the research and outlines your rights as a research participant. If you have participated in this research, you will need to provide a signed copy of this to me, or indicate in this email that you have read the form and agree to participate.

Thank you so much for your contributions to this research,

Tonia Bates
Graduate Student
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Email: travelogueresearch@gmail.com
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Appendix I: Email with Interview Questions Sent to Positive Response Participants, Oral
Participation

Dear *(travel blogger)*,

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research about travel blogs and your
experience as a travel blogger. The questions you have agreed to answer about your travel blog,
(name of travelogue), are below. Please review them before I contact you on ____*(date)*____ at
____*(time)*____ .

Below are the questions you have agreed to answer about your travel blog, *(name of travelogue)*.
During our discussion please feel free to add as much detail as possible, and share all your
thoughts and ideas related to each question. Your participation in this research is voluntary and
you are not required to answer any questions you are not comfortable responding to during our
discussion. If you are unsure about a question, feel free to ask any clarifying questions during
our conversation.

1. Please provide the name(s) of your travelogue(s).

2. Please explain the type of blog you have created and maintain.

3. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and
    discuss why you feel they are important.

6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and
    maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other
    activities?

8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work,
    neither or both? Why?

9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had
    to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal,
    social, professional and / or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If
    you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals, communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these interactions to you?

13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research. I am interested in engaging in further conversation with you about your responses. If you are willing to participate further by allowing me to ask you additional questions about your responses, please let me know during our conversation and I will contact you within three weeks of our first conversation. If you do not wish to participate in this research any further, please inform me during our verbal conversation.

As a reminder, attached is a detailed informed consent for in pdf format (download adobe acrobat reader for free at http://www.adobe.com to read this document). This document provides a description of the research and outlines your rights as a research participant. If you have participated in this research, you will need to provide a signed copy of this to me, or indicate during our conversation that you have read the form and have agreed to participate.

Thank you so much for your contributions to this research.

I look forward to talking with you soon,

Tonia Bates
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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canad
Email: travelogueresearch@gmail.com
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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Telephone: (204) 474-8647
Email: christine.vanwinkle@ad.umanitoba.ca

Appendix J: Script for Skype and Telephone Conversations

Researcher:
Hello *(travel blogger)*. It is great to meet you, how are you doing today/this evening?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you so much for participating in this research. I am glad you agreed and hope that this conversation will shed some light on your reasons for creating and maintaining a travel blog, and how your efforts affect your leisure and work.

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Firstly, I need to let you know that your participation in this research is voluntary and you can stop participating at any time. Secondly, your responses will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used in my final thesis and all other publications resulting from this work. Thirdly, I need to ask you if it is OK that I record this conversation. Do you have any questions or concerns thus far and can I record the conversation?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Great, thank you. As well, just so you know I will be typing a few notes while we talk, so I hope you don't mind if on occasion, I take a few extra moments to document the key ideas you share with me as we converse. Is this fine with you?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
As well, I need to ask you about the participant consent form. Were you able to read through it? Did you have any questions about the form or the research?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
How would you like to share your consent about completing this research with me?
Option 1: Add signature to document and email or mail it to researcher.
Option 2: Add digital signature to document and email it to researcher.
Option 3: Send consent via email, to be printed and attached to the consent form.

Option 4: Record the verbal consent right now, transcribe it and attach it consent to the form after interview is complete.

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Ok, that sounds like a great way to provide your consent. Thank you for it / I look forward to receiving it.

Did you receive my email with the research questions in it? Excellent, shall we begin with the first question?
1. Please provide the name(s) of your travelogue(s).

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the second question:
2. Please explain the type of blog you have created and maintain.

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the third question:
3. Why did you initially start to travel blog?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the fourth question:
4. Please share all your reasons for creating and maintaining a travelogue(s).

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the fifth question:
5. From the reasons you have listed, please identify the most important reason(s) and discuss why you feel they are important.

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the sixth question:
6. How much time and energy do you invest in writing and maintaining your travelogue(s)?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the seventh question:
7. How much time and energy do you invest in other activities (besides writing and maintaining the travelogues) that support your travel blogging? What are these other activities?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the eighth question:
8. Do you consider writing and maintaining your travelogue part of your leisure, your work, neither or both? Why?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the ninth question:
9. How important are your travelogue(s) as part of your leisure and/or work?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the tenth question:
10. How important is it to you to maintain and continue writing your travel blog? If you had to stop travel blogging how would this impact your life?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the eleventh question:
11. What outcomes or results do you feel you receive from your travelogue(s) (personal, social, professional and or financial)? How important are these outcomes to you? If you no longer received these results / outcomes would you continue travel blogging?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the twelfth question:
12. What interactions, if any, do you have with other travelogue writers, individuals, communities or industries online or offline? How important / meaningful are these interactions to you??

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the thirteenth question:
13. Do you feel your travelogue is making contributions online? If yes, in what ways?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you for your response; let's move on to the fourteenth question:
14. Is there any additional information you wish to share about your travelogue and your experience travel blogging that you have not already shared?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
This has been a fantastic conversation. Thank you so much for engaging in it with me and contributing your ideas, experiences and thoughts to this research.

I will be listening to and transcribing the conversation we have had today in order to ensure that all the ideas you shared with me are documented properly. This work should be complete in the next two weeks. If I have any additional questions after having listened to this conversation again, may I contact you with these questions?

Participant:
Response from participant

Participant says yes to more conversations:

Researcher:

Would you like me to contact you using Skype/telephone again or use a different method?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:

Great, I will contact you within the next two weeks via email with additional questions. Please take the time to respond to this email with your answers, *or*, at that time we can set up another time to converse over Skype / telephone. Does that work for you?

Participant says no to additional conversations:

Researcher:
Thank you so much for this conversation. It was very interesting and will add some interesting data to the research.

One additional piece of information I need from you. Once the data has been analyzed, the thesis has been completed and defended, would you like to know the results of the research data? If yes, how would you like to receive this information, by mail or email?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Well, that is all the information that I need to communicate with you. Do you have any questions for me?

Participant:
Response from participant

Researcher:
Thank you again for your participation and I look forward to talking to you again, *or*, I really appreciate you taking the time to contribute this research.

Have a lovely evening / day!