



## RETHINKING AUTHENTICITY IN TOURISM EXPERIENCE

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at a conceptual clarification of the meanings of authenticity in tourist experiences. Three approaches are discussed, objectivism, constructivism, and post-modernism, and the limits of “object-related authenticity” are also exposed. It is suggested that existential authenticity is an alternative source in tourism, regardless of whether the toured objects are authentic. This concept is further classified into two different dimensions: intra-personal and inter-personal. This demonstrates that existential authenticity can explain a greater variety of tourist experiences, and hence helps enhance the explanatory power of the “authenticity-seeking” model in tourism. **Keywords:** authenticity, existential authenticity, tourism, tourist experiences © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Résumé:** Pour repenser l'authenticité dans les expériences du tourisme. Cet article vise à une clarification conceptuelle des significations de l'authenticité dans les expériences du tourisme. On discute de trois façons d'aborder le sujet: objectivisme, constructivisme et postmodernisme, en examinant au même temps les limites de “l'authenticité liée aux choses”. On suggère que l'authenticité est une source alternative en tourisme sans considérer si les objets visités sont authentiques. Ce concept est classifié en encore deux dimensions: interpersonnelle et intra-personnelle. Ceci démontre que l'authenticité peut expliquer un plus grand nombre d'expériences des touristes, ce qui aide à rehausser le pouvoir explicatif du modèle du “chercheur d'authenticité” du tourisme. **Mots-clés:** authenticité, authenticité existentielle, tourisme, expériences du tourisme. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

### INTRODUCTION

MacCannell (1973, 1976) introduced the concept of authenticity to sociological studies of tourist motivations and experiences two decades ago. Since then, the subject has become an agenda for tourism study (Brown 1996; Bruner 1989, 1994; Cohen 1979a, 1988; Daniel 1996; Ehrentraut 1993; Harkin 1995; Hughes 1995; Littrell, Anderson and Brown 1993; Moscardo and Pearce 1986; Pearce and Moscardo 1985, 1986; Redfoot 1984; Salamone 1997; Selwyn, 1996a, Shenhav-Keller 1993; Silver 1993; Turner and Manning 1988; Wang 1997a). However, with the concept of authenticity being widely used, its ambiguity and limitations have been increasingly exposed. Critics question its usefulness and validity because many tourist motivations or experiences cannot be explained in terms of the conventional concept of authenticity. Phenomena such as visiting friends and relatives, beach holidays, ocean cruising, nature tourism, visiting Disneyland, personal

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hobbies such as shopping, fishing, hunting, or sports, and so on, have nothing to do with authenticity in MacCannell's sense (Schudson 1979; Stephen 1990; Urry 1990). According to Urry, "the 'search for authenticity' is too simple a foundation for explaining contemporary tourism." (1991:51). But still authenticity is relevant to some kinds of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, which involve the representation of the Other or of the past. However, if the concept is of limited applicability, then how can it be of central importance in tourism studies? Can one continue to use it while ignoring the difficulties relating to it, discard it altogether, or alternatively, redefine its meaning in order to justify and enhance its explanatory power?

This paper concentrates on the third choice: rethinking the meanings of authenticity in terms of existential philosophers' usage of the idea. While the two conventional meanings in the literature (namely, objective and constructive authenticity) are discussed, its third usage (existential authenticity) will be suggested as an alternative. This paper has two aims. First, the three different approaches—objectivism, constructivism, and postmodernism—are reviewed and analyzed. As a result, three different types of authenticity (objective authenticity, constructive or symbolic authenticity, and existential authenticity) will be clarified. Second, the paper will suggest that, in postmodern conditions, both objective and constructive authenticity, as object-related notions, can only explain a limited range of tourist experiences, whereas existential authenticity, as activity-related situation, is germane to the explanation of a greater variety of tourist experiences. Existential authenticity is further classified into two different dimensions: intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity.

#### AUTHENTICITY IN TOURISM EXPERIENCE

Authenticity is a term grown ambiguous from varied usages and contexts (Golomb 1995:7). According to Trilling, the original usage was in the museum,

where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is asked for them—or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they are being given (1972:93).

This term was also borrowed to refer to human existence and "the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existence" (Trilling 1972:93). For example, Rousseau used the word authenticity to refer to the existential condition of being, and he regarded society as the major cause that destroyed it.

However, it is mainly its museum-linked usage which has been extended to tourism. For example, products of tourism such as works of art, festivals, rituals, cuisine, dress, housing, and so on are usually described as "authentic" or "inauthentic" in terms of the criterion of whether they are made or enacted "by local people according to custom or tradition". [And in this sense], "authenticity connotes traditional culture and origin, a sense of the genuine, the real or the

unique” (Sharpley 1994:130). However, the extension of this museum-linked usage to tourism simplifies the complex nature of authenticity in tourist experiences. First of all, the issue of authenticity in tourism can be differentiated into two separate issues: that of tourist *experiences* (or authentic *experiences*) and that of *toured objects*. While these are two separate aspects of authenticity, they are often confused as one. Handler and Saxton (1988:243) notice this distinction when they point out that “An authentic experience . . . is one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with a ‘real’ world and with their ‘real’ selves” (1988:243). Selwyn (1996a) goes one step further to link the experience of a “real” world to “authenticity as knowledge”—namely, “cool” authenticity—and to relate the experience of a “real” self to “authenticity as feeling”—namely, “hot” authenticity. However, it would be wrong to propose that the *emotional* experience of the “real” self (“hot authenticity”) necessarily entails, coincides with, or results from the epistemological experience of a “real” world out there (“cool authenticity”), as if the latter is the sole cause of the former (effect). As will be shown, this differentiation of “the authenticity of experiences” from “the authenticity of toured objects” is crucial for introducing “existential authenticity” as an alternative source of authentic experiences. Certain toured objects, such as nature, are in a strict sense irrelevant to authenticity in MacCannell’s sense. However, nature tourism is surely one of the major ways of experiencing a “real” self. That is to say, what nature tourism involves is an existential authenticity rather than the authenticity of objects.

Second, the complex nature of authenticity in tourism is exhibited in the fact that it can be further classified into objective, constructive, and existential authenticity (Table 1). Objective authenticity involves a museum-linked usage of the authenticity of the originals that are also the toured objects to be perceived by tourists. It follows that the authentic experience is caused by the recognition of the toured objects as authentic. As such, there is an absolute and objective criterion used to measure authenticity. Thus, even though the tourists themselves think they have gained authentic experiences, this can, however, still be judged as inauthentic, if the toured objects are “in fact” false, contrived, or what MacCannell (1973) calls “staged authenticity”. By constructive authenticity it is meant the result of social construction, not an objectively measurable quality of what is being visited. Things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers. This notion is thus relative, negotiable (Cohen 1988), contextually determined (Salamone 1997), and even ideological (Silver 1993). It can be the projection of one’s dreams, stereotyped images, and expectations onto toured objects (Bruner 1991; Silver 1993). In this sense, what the tourist quests for is *symbolic* authenticity (Culler 1981). Here a big distinction arises. Unlike both objective and constructive (or symbolic) authenticities which involve whether and how the toured objects are authentic, existential experience involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities. In such a liminal experience, people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely

**Table 1. Three Types of Authenticity in Tourist Experiences**

Object-Related Authenticity in Tourism	Activity-Related Authenticity in Tourism
Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of originals. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are equated to an epistemological experience (i.e., cognition) of the authenticity of originals.	Existential authenticity refers to a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are to achieve this activated existential state of Being within the liminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects.
Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc. There are various versions of authenticities regarding the same objects. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another. In this sense, the authenticity of toured objects is in fact symbolic authenticity.	

self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily. Thus, analytically speaking, in addition to objective and constructive authenticities, the existential authenticity is a distinctive source of authentic experiences in tourism. Unlike the object-related case which is the attribute, or the projected attribute, of objects, existential authenticity is a potential existential state of Being which is to be activated by tourist activities. In this sense, the existential version can also be understood as a kind of what Brown (1996) calls an “authentically good time”. This, as activity-related authenticity, is thus logically distinguishable from the object-related case (Table 1).

#### *The Approach of Objectivism*

In his nostalgic critique of mass tourism in terms of heroic travel in the past, Boorstin (1964) condemned mass tourism as “pseudo-events”, which were brought about by the commoditization of culture and the associated homogenization and standardization of tourist experiences. For Boorstin, under commoditization, not only are tourist attractions contrived scenes or pseudo-events, but also the “tourist seldom likes the authentic . . . product of the foreign culture; he prefers his own provincial expectations” (1964:106). The tourist is thus gullible; “he is prepared to be ruled by the law of pseudo-events, by

which the image, the well-contrived imitation, outshines the *original*" (1964:107; the emphasis added). Obviously, Boorstin's concept of "pseudo-events" implies a concept of objective authenticity. This is thus the authenticity of the "*original*", and tourist experiences are kinds of pseudo-events because tourists are seldom able to see through the inauthenticity of contrived attractions (for a similar view see Dovey 1985; Fussell 1980).

Whereas Boorstin scorns mass tourism and mass tourists, his critics such as MacCannell restore the sacredness and quasi-pilgrimage significance of the motivation. Based on Goffman's (1959) differentiation of the "front region" from the "back region", MacCannell points out that the "concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society" (1973:589–590). It is thus justified for tourists to "search for authenticity of experience" (1973:589). However, according to MacCannell, there is increasingly a contradiction between the tourist's demand for authenticity (related to a back region) *and* the *staged* authenticity in tourist space. "It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation" (1973:597).

As Selwyn indicates, MacCannell uses authenticity in two different senses: authenticity as feeling and as knowledge (1996a:6–7). Indeed, when MacCannell points out that the tourism involves "the search for authenticity of experience" or for "authentic experience", his tourists are concerned with the state of authentic feelings. However, when he refers to "staged authenticity", then his tourists turn to quest for the authenticity of originals and consequently become the victims of staged authenticity. Thus, their experiences can not be counted as authentic even if the tourists themselves might think they have achieved such experiences. What is implied here is a conception of objective authenticity (similar view on "staged authenticity" can also be found in Duncan 1978).

Both Boorstin and MacCannell insist on a museum-linked and objectivist conception of authenticity when pseudo-events or staged authenticity is referred to. Touristic search for authentic experiences is thus no more than an epistemological experience of toured objects which are found to be authentic. The key point at issue is, however, that authenticity is not a matter of black or white, but rather involves a much wider spectrum, rich in ambiguous colors. That which is judged as inauthentic or staged authenticity by experts, intellectuals, or elite may be experienced as authentic and real from an emic perspective—this may be the very way that mass tourists experience authenticity. Thus, a revisionist position occurs in response to the complex and constructive nature of authenticity, that is, constructivism.

#### *Constructivism Approach*

To view authenticity as the original or the attribute of the original is too simple to capture its complexity. Thus, authenticity in Mac-

Cannell's sense has been questioned by many commentators (Bruner 1989:113; Cohen 1988:378; Handler and Linnekin 1984:286; Lanfant 1989:188; Spooner 1986:220–221; Wood 1993:58). According to Bruner (1994), authenticity has four different meanings. First, it refers to the "historical verisimilitude" of representation. This is the authentic reproduction which resembles the original and thus look credible and convincing. For instance, the 1990s New Salem resembles the 1830s New Salem where Abraham Lincoln lived. Second, authenticity means genuine, historically accurate, and immaculate simulation. In both the first and the second sense it involves the nature of a copy or reproduction rather than the original. Museum professionals use authenticity primarily in the first sense, but sometimes in the second. Third, authenticity "means originals, as opposed to a copy; but in this sense, no reproduction could be authentic, by definition" (Bruner 1994:400). Four, the term refers to authority or power which authorizes, certifies, and legally validates authenticity. For example,

New Salem is authentic, as it is the authoritative reproduction of New Salem, the one legitimized by the state of Illinois. There is only one officially reconstructed New Salem, the one approved by the state government (Bruner 1994:400).

Thus, as authenticity involves a range of different meanings, to confine it to the originals is oversimplistic. As a response and revision, the disciples of constructivism treat it as social construction.

Constructivism is not a coherent doctrine. It is sometimes used interchangeably with "constructionism". Despite their similarities, the latter stresses the social or intersubjective process in construction of knowledge and reality, and is often used in conjunction with social—i.e., "social constructionism" (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1971; Gergen 1985; Gergen and Gergen 1991). For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion below, this will be seen as a sub-perspective of constructivism. There is no space here to rehearse the history of constructivism and its variants. However, certain basic characteristics of constructivism can be identified (for a detailed discussion, see Schwandt 1994). Its ontological assumption is that "there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language" (J. Bruner 1986; quoted in Schwandt 1994:125). Reality is rather best seen as the results of the versions of our interpretations and constructions. It is thus pluralistic and plastic. Further, constructivists hold a pluralistic and relativist epistemology and methodology. It is claimed that the validity of knowledge is not to be found in the relationship of correspondence to an independently existing world. On the contrary, "what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind" (Schwandt 1994:125). For constructivists, multiple and plural meanings of and about the same things can be constructed from different perspectives, and people may adopt different constructed meanings dependent on the particular contextual situation or intersubjective setting.

This general constructivist perspective is applied by E. Bruner (1994), Cohen (1988), Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983), and others,

to the issue of authenticity. E. Bruner (1994:407) clearly labels his treatment of authenticity as “constructivist perspective”. Although there may be differences among the holders of constructivism, a few common viewpoints on authenticity in tourism can be noted. One, there is no absolute and static original or origin on which the absolute authenticity of originals relies. “We all enter society in the middle, and culture is always in process” (E. Bruner 1994:407). Two, as the approach of the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983) shows, origins or traditions are themselves invented and constructed in terms of the contexts where one is and in terms of the needs of the present. Furthermore, the construction of traditions or origins involves power and hence a social process. As Bruner puts it, “No longer is authenticity a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time; it is seen as a struggle, a social process, in which competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history” (1994:408). Three, authenticity or inauthenticity is a result of how one sees things and of his/her perspectives and interpretations. Thus, the experience of authenticity is pluralistic, relative to each tourist type who may have their own way of definition, experience, and interpretation of authenticity (cf. Littrell *et al* 1993; Pearce and Moscardo 1985, 1986; Redfoot 1984). In this sense, if mass tourists empathically experience the toured objects as authentic, then, their viewpoints are real in their own right, no matter whether experts may propose an opposite view from an objective perspective (Cohen 1988).

Four, with respect to different cultures or peoples that are to be toured, authenticity is a label attached to the visited cultures in terms of stereotyped images and expectations held by the members of tourist-sending society. Culler demonstrates this from a semiotic perspective. For example, what is the real Japaneseness is what has been marked; however, what is located in Japan without being marked is in a sense not the real Japaneseness and hence not worth seeing (Culler 1981:133). Authenticity is thus a *projection* of tourists’ own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, and consciousness onto toured objects, particularly onto toured Others (Adams 1984; Bruner 1991; Duncan 1978; Laxson 1991; Silver 1993). As Bruner puts it, tourists’ authentic experiences are not based on any real assessment of the natives such as New Guineans, but rather “a projection from Western consciousness”. According to him, “Western tourists are not paying thousands of dollars to see children die in Ethiopia; they are paying to see the noble savage, a figment of their imagination” (Bruner 1991:243,241). Five, even though something can initially be “inauthentic” or “artificial”, it may subsequently become “emergent authenticity” with the passage of time. Such is the case of Disneyland or Disney World (Cohen 1988:380). Infinite retreat of “now” will eventually make anything that happens authentic. This is thus an emerging process. In addition, authenticity is also context-bound. Through an examination of the two San Angel Inns, the original in Mexico City and its “daughter” inn at Disney World, Florida, Salamone (1997) claims that both versions of the San Angel Inn are authentic, each in its own way, and each makes sense against its own context.

In effect, for constructivists, tourists are indeed in search of authenticity; however, what they quest for is not objective authenticity (i.e., authenticity as originals) but *symbolic* authenticity which is the result of social construction. The toured objects or others are experienced as authentic not because they are originals or reality, but because they are perceived as the signs or symbols of authenticity (Culler 1981). Symbolic authenticity has little to do with reality out there. It is more often than not a projection of certain stereotyped images held and circulated within tourist-sending societies, particularly within the mass media and tourism marketing documents of Western societies (Britton 1979; Silver 1993).

#### *Postmodernism Approaches*

Postmodernism is not a single, unified, and well-integrated approach. Rather, it is conceivable that a diversity of postmodern views or approaches exist (Hollinshead 1997). However, with regard to the issue of authenticity in tourism, the approaches of postmodernism seem to be characterized by deconstruction of authenticity. While modernist researchers such as Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973, 1976) were concerned with pseudo-events or staged authenticity in the tourist space, postmodernist researchers do not consider inauthenticity a problem.

Umberto Eco's (1986) writing on "hyperreality" represents a typical postmodernist position in regard to the issue of authenticity in tourism. Indeed, Eco totally deconstructs the conception of authenticity through deconstructing the boundaries between the copy and the original, or between sign and reality (boundaries on which the whole issue of Boorstin's and MacCannell's objective authenticity relies). For Eco, the most typical model of hyperreality can be illustrated by the example of Disneyland or Disney World, for they are born out of fantasy and imagination. Thus, it is irrelevant whether it is "either real or false", since there is no original that can be used as a reference.

Based on Eco's idea of hyperreality, the French postmodernist writer Baudrillard (1983) borrows the concept "simulacrum" from Plato to explain different cultural orders in history. According to Baudrillard (1983:83), there are three historical "orders of simulacra" which refer to different relationships between simulacra and "the real". The first order emerges in the period from the Renaissance to the beginning of the industrial revolution. The dominant simulacrum of this period is "counterfeit" which indicates the emergence of representation. The "production" as the second order appeared in the industrial era, which indicates the potential for infinite exact technical reproduction and reproducibility of the same object. The third is simulation, which refers to the contemporary condition. In this world, according to Baudrillard, one "live[s] by the mode of referendum precisely because there is no longer any referential". This "contradictory process of true and false, of real and the imaginary, is abolished...". Today's world is a simulation which admits no originals, no origins, no "real" referent but the "metaphysic of the code" (Baudrillard 1983:116,122,103). Like Eco, Baudrillard also uses Disneyland as a chief example of simulation.



In a discussion of the culture of Disney, Fjellman argues:

The concepts of real and fake, however, are too blunt to capture the subtleties of Disney simulations. At WDW things are not just real or fake but real real, fake real, real fake, and fake fake (1992:255).

Therefore, in WDW, there is no absolute boundary between the real and the fake. The real may turn into the fake and vice versa. The “Disney plan is to juxtapose the real and the fake”, and the “lines between the real and the fake are systematically blurred” (Fjellman 1992:255).

Implied in the approach of postmodernism is the justification of the contrived, the copy, and imitation. One of the most interesting responses to this postmodern cultural condition is Cohen’s recent justification of “contrived” attractions in tourism. According to him, postmodern tourists have become less concerned with the authenticity of the original. Cohen identifies two reasons. First, if the cultural sanction of modern tourists has been the “quest for authenticity”, then the cultural sanction of the postmodern tourist is that of a ‘playful search for enjoyment’ or an “aesthetic enjoyment of surfaces”. Second, the postmodern tourist becomes more reflexive on the impact of tourism upon fragile host community. “Staged authenticity” thus helps to protect a fragile toured culture and community from being disturbed because it acts as a “substitute” for the “original” and hence keeps tourists out of fragile toured culture and community (Cohen 1995:16,21,17). Actually, modern technology can make the inauthentic look more authentic (Fjellman 1992). For example, the tapes which recorded bird singing can be played in tape recorders repeatedly and in a certain frequency desired by park managers. This can make bird singing sound more authentic than the actual bird singing since the latter is influenced by the uncertainty of when they are present and might sing. As McCrone, Morris and Kiely put it,

Authenticity and originality are, above all, matters of technique... What is interesting to postmodernists about heritage is that reality depends on how convincing the presentation is, how well the “staged authenticity” works... The more “authentic” the representation, the more “real” it is” (1995:46).

Thus, the quest for the “genuine fakes” (Brown 1996) or inauthenticity is justifiable in postmodern conditions. In Ritzer and Liska’s terms,

Accustomed to the simulated dining experience at MacDonald’s, the tourist is generally not apt to want to scabble for food at the campfire, or to survive on nuts and berries picked on a walk through the woods. The latter may be “authentic”, but they are awfully difficult, uncomfortable, and unpredictable in comparison to a meal at a local fast-food restaurant or in the dining room of a hotel that is part of an international chain. Most products of a postmodern world might be willing to eat at the campfire, as long as it is a simulated one on the lawn of the hotel.

Thus, we would argue, in contrast to MacCannell, that many tourists today are in search of inauthenticity (1997:107).

Both constructivists and postmodernists reveal the crisis of the authenticity of the original (objective authenticity). However, the latter are much more radical than the former. Constructivists are reluctant to dig a tomb for “authenticity” and they try to rescue the term by revising its meanings; postmodernists have buried it. Indeed, with the accelerating globalization under postmodern conditions, it is increasingly difficult for the authenticity of the original such as the marginal ethnic culture to remain immutable. For postmodernists, gone is the “authenticity of the original”. Thus, it is no wonder that they abandon the concept of authenticity altogether. Moreover, they justify the inauthenticity in tourist space. However, a postmodernist deconstruction of the authenticity of the original implicitly paves the way to define existential authenticity as an alternative experience in tourism, despite that postmodernists themselves refuse to explore this possibility.

### *Existential Authenticity*

There has been a long tradition of ontological conception of existential authenticity (Berger 1973; Berman 1970; Golomb 1995; Heidegger 1962; Taylor 1991; Trilling 1972), ranging from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, to Camus (Golomb 1995). Existential authenticity has also been a long-term political concern, which dates back to Montesquieu and Rousseau (Berman 1970; Trilling 1972). In common sense terms, existential authenticity denotes a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counterdose to the loss of “true self” in public roles and public spheres in modern Western society (Berger 1973). According to Heidegger (1962), to ask about the meaning of Being is to look for the meaning of authenticity. Indeed, there are a number of researchers who have discussed the relevance of such an existential authenticity to tourist experiences. For example, Turner and Manning criticize the view that “authenticity is a thing-like social fact, at once a property or characteristic of both actors and settings”. To them,

authenticity is only possible once the taken-for-granted world and the security it offers are called into question. This is dependent on a specific mood—*anxiety*—which, in subjecting everydayness to questioning, reveals the groundlessness of human existence (1988:137).

Turner and Manning clearly show the suitability of applying existential philosophers’, such as Heidegger’s, ontological notion of authenticity to tourist experiences. However, they fail to take a further step to develop it. After questioning the validity of the conventional concept of authenticity, Hughes also suggests that “authenticity must be rethought”, and that “one must turn to a qualified existential perspective to recover authenticity in late modernism” (Hughes 1995:790,796). Neumann (1992) hints at an existential authenticity in his case study of tourist experiences in the Cannon Valley in the United States:

Travel often provides situations and contexts where people confront alternative possibilities for belonging to the world and others that differ from everyday life. Indeed, part of the promise of travel is to live and know the self in other ways (1992:183).

As already noted, Selwyn (1996a) draws a groundbreaking distinction between “hot authenticity” and “cool authenticity”. His “hot authenticity”, in relation to myths of the authentic self, is a specific expression of existential version. This becomes more evident when he refers to authenticity as the “alienation-smashing feeling”. Similarly, what Brown (1996) calls “authentically... hedonistic... good time” illustrates the temporal characteristic of existential authenticity.

Thus, existential authenticity, unlike object-related version, can often have nothing to do with the issue of whether toured objects are real. In search of tourist experience which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied with an *existential state of Being* activated by certain tourist activities. To put it another way, existential experience is the authenticity of *Being* which, as a potential, is to be subjectively or intersubjectively sampled by tourists as the process of tourism unfolds. Daniel’s (1996) dance performance can be used to exemplify existential authenticity. Linked to tourism dance performance, such as rumba in Cuba, it is derived from tourists’ participation in the event rather than from merely being spectators of it.

Many tourists are drawn into participation by the amiable feelings, sociability, and the musical and kinesthetic elements of dance performance. Often, not knowing the rules, they do not wait to be invited to dance, but spontaneously join in. They explore their rhythmic, harmonic, and physical potential and arrive at sensations of well being, pleasure, joy, or fun, and at times, frustration as well.

As tourists associate these sentiments with dancing, the dance performance transforms their reality. For many tourists, the dance becomes their entire world at that particular moment. Time and tensions are suspended. The discrepancies of the real world are postponed. As performing dancers, tourists access the magical world of liminality which offers spiritual and aesthetic nourishment. Tourism, in moments of dance performance, opens the door to a liminal world that gives relief from day-to-day, ordinary tensions, and, for Cuban dancers and dancing tourists particularly, permits indulgence in near-ecstatic experiences (1996:789).

Here, if rumba is treated only as a toured object (spectacle), then it involves objective authenticity in MacCannell’s sense; that is, its authenticity lies in the fact of whether it is a *re-enactment* of the traditional rumba. However, once it is turned into a kind of tourist *activity*, it constitutes an alternative source of authenticity (i.e., existential authenticity) which has nothing to do with the issues of whether this dance is the exact re-enactment of the traditional dance. In reality, as Daniel found out, the new elements, that is, creativity, are always integrated into the old rumba. Thus, even though this may be inauthentic or contrived in MacCannell’s sense, it generates a sense of existential authenticity due to its creative and cathartic nature.

However, a question arises with regard to existential authenticity. As mentioned above, the notion in its common sense refers to “one is

true to oneself". This may seem a little odd at first glance, because "being true or false" is usually an epistemological issue, which is a criterion used to judge the nature of utterance, statements, theories, or knowledge. How can the self also be related to the issue of "being true or false"? Surely, the justification cannot be made in epistemological terms. Rather, one can make sense of the quest for authentic self only in terms of the ideal of authenticity arising within modern societies. This is formulated in response to the ambivalence of the existential conditions of modernity. It emerges as a reaction to "the disintegration of sincerity" or pretension, and its occurrence is closely related to the feeling of a loss of "real self" in public roles (Berger 1973:82). The ideal of authenticity can be characterized by either nostalgia or romanticism. It is nostalgic because it idealizes the ways of life in which people are supposed as freer, more innocent, more spontaneous, purer, and truer to themselves than usual (such ways of life are usually supposed to exist in the past or in childhood). People are nostalgic about these ways of life because they want to re-live them in the form of tourism at least temporally, empathically, and symbolically. It is also romantic because it accents the naturalness, sentiments, and feelings in response to the increasing self-constraints by reason and rationality in modernity. Therefore, as a contrast to the everyday roles, the tourist role is linked to the ideal of authenticity. Tourism is thus regarded as a simpler, freer, more spontaneous, more authentic, or less serious, less utilitarian, and romantic, lifestyle which enables people to keep a distance from, or transcend, daily lives. The examples include camping, picnicking, campfires, mountaineering, walk-about, wilderness solitude, or adventures. In these activities they do not literally concern themselves about the *authenticity* of toured objects at all. They are rather in search of their authentic selves with the aid of activities or toured objects.

However, some may still argue that tourism is no more than another kind of constraint (such as the constraint of schedules, itineraries, queuing, finances, etc.) and social control exerted by its many businesses or organizations, and that the so-called freedom is—if there is any—only a fantasy and illusion (Dann 1996:73–79). Is such a case, is this existential authenticity only an illusion or fantasy, and hence inaccessible in reality? The point is that the emic perspective, rather than external perspective, is more germane to answer this question. Surely, the experience involves its own constraints. However, such constraints are seen by tourists as the necessary cost of authentic experiences, far from being an obstacle to existential authenticity. Indeed this in tourism may be a fantasy. But such a fantasy is a real one—it is a fantastic feeling. Despite being a subjective (or intersubjective) feeling, it is *real* to a tourist and thus accessible to him or her in tourism. This fantastic feeling is the very feeling characterizing existential authenticity.

A sense of "authentic self" involves a balance between two parts of one's Being: reason and emotion, self-constraint and spontaneity, Logos and Eros, or what Freud calls the "reality principle" and the "pleasure principle" (Wang 1996). To risk oversimplicity, to live a life in terms of the dictates of emotions, feelings, spontaneity, or Eros

rather than reason or self-constraints may be characteristic of a relatively large part of primitive or pre-civilized forms of life. Freud argues that the opposite is the case of civilized or modern times. However, a sense of inauthentic self arises when the balance between these two parts of being is broken down in such a way that rational factors over-control non-rational factors (emotion, bodily feeling, and spontaneity, etc.) and leave too little space for satisfaction of the latter. This is the situation characterizing the ambivalence of the mainstream institutional realms of modernity, in which the factors of Logos rein and the factors of Eros are more or less constrained (Wang 1996, 1997b). For example, Hochschild's (1983) empirical study of how American flight attendants are "forced" to present a smile to customers typically illustrates how they lose their authentic selves in the service industry.

Thus, under the condition of modernity, the authentic self emerges as an ideal that acts to resist or invert the dominant rational order of the mainstream institutions in modernity. To resist the inauthenticity stemming from the mainstream order, the authentic self is often thought to be more easily realized or fulfilled in the space outside the dominant institutions, a space with its cultural and symbolic boundaries which demarcate the profane from the sacred (Graburn 1989), responsibilities from freedom, work from leisure, and the inauthentic public role from the authentic self. As a result, nature, for example, is seen as typical of such a space. Tourism, and nature tourism in particular, is thus an effective way used in search of authentic self. Of course, such a self is only achieved in relative terms. It is experienced only within a "liminal zone" (Graburn 1989; Turner 1973), where one keeps a distance from societal constraints (prescriptions, obligations, work ethic, etc.) and inverts, suspends, or alters routine order and norms (Gottlieb 1982; Lett 1983; Shields 1991). However, in so doing, one does not go far enough to abandon Logos (reason), social order, and social responsibilities altogether, moreover, one is ready to come home and adapt to home society again.

Analytically speaking, existential authenticity can be divided into two different dimensions. One is *intra*-personal and the other is *inter*-personal authenticity. Either dimension can be achieved by means of tourism.

*Intra-Personal Authenticity: Bodily Feelings.* Obviously, the intra-personal dimension of existential authenticity involves the bodily feelings. The body or the bodily concern has recently attracted wide academic attention, partly as a reaction to the dominance and longevity of the Cartesian-Kantian tradition which enhances the status of mind at the expense of body. The bodily concern is also thought of as an important aspect of tourism (Veijola and Jokinen 1994). Relaxation, rehabilitation, diversion, recreation, entertainment, refreshment, sensation-seeking, sensual pleasures, excitement, play, and so on are all touristic contents (Cohen 1979b, 1985; Lett 1983; Mergen 1986). Search for such bodily pleasure also exhibits the features of a ritual, the re-creation ritual (Graburn 1983:15). Roughly speaking, the bodily concern consists of two aspects: sensual and symbolic. Whereas the latter involves the culture or sign-system of the body (Featherstone,

Hepworth and Turner 1991), the former involves bodily feelings. On the one hand, in relation to the culture of the body, the body becomes a “display” of personal identity, including health, naturalness, youth, vigour, vitality, fitness, movement, beauty, energy, leisure class, taste, distinction, romance, etc. (Bourdieu 1984; Featherstone 1991; Rojek 1993). On the other hand, the body is the primary organ of sensibility or feeling. Thus, it is the inner source of feelings and sensual pleasure. As such, the body is not merely a corporate substance, but also a “body-subject” or the “feeling-subject” (Seamon 1979).

The body is a battlefield. The control and manipulation of it gives rise to power (Foucault 1977). Part of the power that modernity has over the body comes from the surveillance of the population (Giddens 1990). Another aspect derives from time-space structures relating to work and the division of labor (Lefebvre 1991). Its commodification entails the disciplines of labour and the regular presence of the body (its bearer) in certain structured spatio-temporal areas (workdays and workspace). In both situations, self-control of bodily drives and impulses are necessitated.

The power derived from the control over the body in the latter case results in a sense of existential *inauthenticity*. In other words, existential inauthenticity or alienation is both spiritual and bodily. Therefore, a concern over bodily feeling is in fact a concern over the bodily, or intra-personal, source of the authentic self. There is no better place than the beach to illustrate the bodily concern. On the one hand, in this setting, the body shows that it is relaxed and not limited by bodily control or self-control imposed by social structures or the superego. On the other hand, the body alters its routine existence and enters an alternative, yet intensified, experiential state: recreation, diversion, entertainment, spontaneity, playfulness, or in short, authenticity in the existential sense. Lefebvre’s description of the body on the beach is worth quoting at length here:

The beach is the only place of enjoyment that the human species has discovered in nature. Thanks to its sensory organs, from the sense of smell and from sexuality to sight (without any special emphasis being placed on the visual sphere), the body tends to behave as a *differential field*. It behaves, in other words, as a *total* body, breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labor, to the division of labor, to the localizing of work and the specialization of places. In its tendency, the body asserts itself more (and better) as “subject” and as “object” than as “subjectivity” (in the classical philosophical sense) and as “objectivity” (fragmented in every way, distorted by the visual, by images, etc.) (1991:384).

Thus, a beach holiday illustrates the bodily source of the authentic self. Whereas in labor and the division of labor the body is the object of self-control, self-constraint, and organizational manipulation, in tourism the body becomes “subject” in its own right. That is to say, tourism involves a bodily experience of personal authenticity. In tourism, sensual pleasures, feelings, and other bodily impulses are to a relatively large extent released and consumed and the bodily desires (for natural amenities, sexual freedom, and spontaneity) are gratified intensively. In short, all these aspects of tourism constitute an onto-

logical manifesto for personal authenticity. However, such bodily sources of authentic self can only be explored for a relatively short period of time, and also be realized as peak experiences with certain bodily constraints relating to journey as a necessary cost. They exist as the attractiveness of holidaymaking just because of their nonordinary nature. In turn, this situation serves to restore the order of everyday life that the mainstream institutions of modernity entail.

*Intra-Personal Authenticity: Self-Making.* The touristic experiences of intra-personal authenticity involve “self-making” or self-identity. Self-making is an implicit dimension underlying the motivation for tourism, particularly for traveling off the beaten track (e.g., adventure). For many individuals, work and everyday roles impose constraining and monotonous routine in which individuals find it difficult to pursue their self-realization. Lasch claims modernity has rationalized almost all human activities, and this action

leave[s] little room for the spirit of arbitrary invention or the disposition to leave things to chance. Risk, daring, and uncertainty—important components of play—have no place in industry or in activities infiltrated by industrial standards, which seek precisely to predict and control the future and to eliminate risk (1979:102).

Consequently, such routinization and over-predictability gives rise to the “feeling of loss” (Giddens 1990:98). Thus, if those individuals cannot realize their authentic selves in everyday life, then they are liable to turn to tourism or its adventure form in order to reach this goal (of course this does not imply that nobody can realize self-fulfilment in work or routine life). For example, mountaineers find their alternative selves by challenging the mountains they climb and matching these with their abilities. These challenges, rare in everyday life, lead to the trial of the self. Thus, through overcoming these challenges a new self is made, which is exhibited in the “flow” experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1975) stemming from mountain-climbing (Mitchell 1988). A similar experience is also exemplified by ocean cruising in which cruisers “forsake the security and safety of land-based life for the formidable challenges of ocean and weather” (Macbeth 1988:214), and thus attempt self-creation through seeking suitable challenges found in nature and from adventures (Macbeth 1988). Indeed, many individuals are dissatisfied with the mundane quality of their everyday life and thus seek extra-mundane experiences from adventures (Vester 1987). As a result, adventure becomes “a form of leisure” (Vester 1987). Adventure “plays a significant part in providing an opportunity to compensate for the boredom and lack of authenticity felt in ordinary life”. It is a “sensual transcendence” of routine life (Vester 1987:238, 239).

Tourists also quest for inter-personal authenticity. Tönnies’s thesis that the “association” replaces “community” implies the end of “social authenticity” (Fornäs 1995) or “natural sociality” (Maffesoli 1996:80) which is seen as a characteristic of the traditional or emotional community. In other words, in modernity, the structural areas such as the state and market put an end to “social authenticity”.

Indeed, various modern cultural practices aiming at intimacy, friendship, or sociality can be regarded as actions against the inauthenticity of institutional modernity and as a quest for inter-personal authenticity. For example, Maffesoli (1996) has described how various contemporary cultural “tribes” are searching for the experiences of the “emotional community” (i.e., a kind of existential authenticity involved in the dimension of inter-human relationships). Tourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the *Other*. They also search for the authenticity of, and between, *themselves*. The toured objects or tourism can be just a means or medium by which tourists are called together, and then, an authentic inter-personal relationship between themselves is experienced subsequently.

*Inter-Personal Authenticity: Family Ties.* Family tourism is a typical example of experiencing inter-personal authenticity. If for Berger (1973:87) family is a major private sphere for modern individuals to experience their “true selves”, then family tourism is a peak and ritual experience of such existentially authentic relationships. From most tourists’ personal point of view, tourism or a holiday is itself a chance for the primary tourist group, such as a family, to achieve or reinforce a sense of authentic togetherness and an authentic “we-relationship”. As Rousseau pointed out, the relationship between mother and child is most authentic. For many families, holiday is to a significant extent taken for the joy of children, or is “determined by the whims and emergencies of the children” (Stephen 1990:152). It is thus a ritual celebrating this authentic family relationship. In recreational tourism one not only gains pleasant experiences from seeing sights, events, or performances, but also simultaneously experiences intensely authentic, natural and emotional bonds, and a real intimacy in the family relationship.

*Inter-Personal Authenticity: Touristic Communitas.* Tourism also gives access to authentically experienced “communitas” in a Turnerian sense. According to Turner (1973), when pilgrims make their journey they are looking for the center that is endowed with most sacred values and charged with high emotions. They simultaneously enter communitas. Communitas is characterized by “liminality” which refers to “any condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life” (Turner 1974:47), that is, any condition that is not concerned with obligatory tasks (e.g., economic, political tasks) of everyday life. Communitas occurs as an unmediated, “pure” inter-personal relationship among pilgrims who confront one another as social equals based on their common humanity. In communitas, structures fall apart, and differences arising out of the institutionalized socioeconomic and sociopolitical positions, roles, and status disappear. Instead, a pilgrim experiences “a spontaneous generated relationship between leveled and equal total and individuated, human beings, stripped of structural attributes”, and “knows only harmonies and no disharmonies or conflict” (Turner 1973:216,221). According to him, what is said about the pilgrim is to a large extent applicable to the tourist, for the tourists’ journey can, in a sense, be regarded as a form of rite of passage, as a



quasi-pilgrimage (Turner and Turner 1978) (for a similar view see Graburn 1983, 1989; MacCannell 1973). Such an experience of *communitas* in tourism is exemplified by Lett's (1983) ethnographic study of charter yacht tourism in the Caribbean:

Charter yacht tourists rarely make reference to their social or occupational status at home. They typically introduce themselves to their fellow tourists by their first names only. Titles of address are seldom used. The charter yacht tourists have left behind most of the possessions that they customarily use to indicate their social and economic status, including automobiles, houses, clothing, and jewellery. In the British Virgin Islands, most of the charter yacht tourists maintain equivalent levels of consumption. They rent similar yachts, wear similar bathing suits, shop in the same provisioning stores, and buy fuel at the same marinas (1983:47–48).

In such an ambience, tourists can ease themselves of the pressures stemming from inauthentic social hierarchy and status distinctions. Rather they approach one another in a natural, friendly, and authentic way. Lett continues,

The charter yacht tourists exhibit none of the reluctance to approach and greet strangers that is commonly associated with middle-class U.S. society. Instead, charter yacht tourists are unguarded, open, and even aggressively friendly towards one another (1983:48).

To the extent that tourism supplies possibilities for *communitas*, tourism makes it relatively easy for people to make new friends. In his ethnographic study of American tourists visiting Indonesia, Bruner observes that to experience friendships of a tour group is “one of the most important things about the entire experience” (1995: 230). Thus, even after returning home from the package tour, many members of the tour group continued to keep in touch with each other and maintain their friendships. Indeed, a package tour supplies a relaxed ambience and relatively concentrated period of time for intensive sociality and emotional interaction. This not only brings about the pleasure of seeing exotic sights, but also brings about pleasure in seeing these sights *in the context of the tour group* (Bruner 1995) or *in the company of others* (Urry 1990). In other words, the pleasure of tourism exists not only in seeing exotic things, but also in sharing and communicating this pleasure with other tourists who are seeing the same sights together.

## CONCLUSION

While objectivists, constructivists, and posmodernists argue about whether and how toured objects are experienced as real, this paper suggests that, even if toured objects are totally inauthentic, seeking otherwise is still possible, because tourists can quest for an alternative, namely, existential authenticity to be activated by tourist experience. In addition to conventional objective and constructive authenticity, an existential version is a justifiable alternative source for authentic experiences in tourism. In a number of tourism types such as nature, landscape, beach, ocean cruising, adventures, family, visiting friends and relatives, and so on, what tourists seek are their own authentic

selves and intersubjective authenticity, and the issue of whether the toured objects are authentic is irrelevant or less relevant. Since the concept of existential authenticity can explain a wider spectrum of tourist phenomena than the conventional concept of authenticity, it therefore opens up broad prospects for rejustification of authenticity-seeking as the foundation of tourist motivations.

The arguments presented in this paper are not conclusive but rather suggestive. Further research along a few other directions are in order. First, empirical research can test and confirm the arguments put forward in this paper. For instance, reviews and analyses of tourist marketing documents (e.g., tourist brochures) help to make clear how the industry markets its products in terms subsumed remain the same existential authenticity. Second, in this paper the limits of objective and constructive authenticities are exposed. However, their relevance to tourism is not negated altogether. Further efforts may discover empirically how objective, constructive (or symbolic), and existential authenticities are distributed among tourists and why certain tourists prefer one kind of authenticity to others. Third, to deepen the debate about authenticity in tourism, a reflection on the limits of the historicist conception of authenticity will be of great help (Bhabha 1994). From a historicist perspective, it is usually assumed that authenticity is equated to an origin in time. This then implies that subsequent alteration, creativity, transformation, and emerging attributes are inauthentic in terms of this origin. However, the problem is that there is no absolute point of origin, nor is anything static; rather, change is constant (E. Bruner 1994). As mentioned before, the difficulty of this historicist conception of authenticity lies in the fact that the restless and infinite retreat of now will eventually make anything that has taken place in the world authentic. Thus, this concept needs to be transcended, and this awaits more thoughts. ■

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