

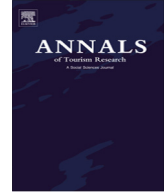


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

# Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures)



## Why Heidegger did not travel: Existential angst, authenticity, and tourist experiences



Robert J. Shepherd\*

*The George Washington University, United States*

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 26 July 2014  
Revised 7 February 2015  
Accepted 22 February 2015  
Available online 16 March 2015

**Coordinating Editor: Ning Wang**

#### Keywords:

Existential authenticity  
Martin Heidegger  
Tourist motivations  
Jean-Paul Sartre  
Traveler–tourist dichotomy

### ABSTRACT

“Authenticity” continues to be debated within tourism studies, as seen in the extensive number of articles published in ATR since 1999 on this subject. Advocates of existential authenticity have used the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger to argue that tourists seek experiences that counter the emptiness of everyday life in modern societies and provide them an opportunity to be more authentic. This is, however, based on a partial reading of Heidegger. His work implicitly questions the efficacy of travel as a means of experiencing a greater awareness of one’s own place in the world and explicitly rejects cosmopolitanism as a worldview. Rather than a new intervention, ‘existential authenticity’ is a return to a familiar travel/tourist dichotomy.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Introduction

Despite several decades of postmodernist and constructivist interventions in the field of tourism studies, the vexing concept of ‘authenticity’ continues to hover as a benchmark against which the quality of culture, experience, and life itself are measured (Cf. Crang, 1996; Daniel, 1996; Hughes, 1995; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Silver, 1993; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999; Wirth & Freestone, 2010). Indeed, although some believe the concept had been laid to rest more than a decade ago (Shepherd, 2002, 2003), authenticity continues to engage the interest of tourism researchers. For example, the *Annals of Tourism Research* has published at least twenty-five articles on this topic since

\* Address: 2110 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20052, United States.

E-mail address: [rshepher@gwu.edu](mailto:rshepher@gwu.edu)

1999, ranging from authenticity in relation to heritage (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Waitt, 2000; Zhu, 2012), sincerity (Taylor, 2001) and film (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010), to museums (Chhabra, 2008), pilgrimage (Andriotis, 2011; Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008) and festival foods (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). This continued interest in the authenticity of tourism destinations and experiences reflects, at least in part, enduring concerns about a central touristic paradox: the belief among some that tourism invariably destroys its object (Cohen, 1988; Greenwood, 1977; MacCannell, 1992). This concern links critics of cultural commodification with those who have voiced alarm at a perceived decline in civic and moral values, and a subsequent rise in cultural relativism, a situation blamed on postmodernism (Bell, 1976).

In the early years of tourism studies the primary concern for researchers interested in authenticity was not whether the concept had any relevance to their studies but rather how to determine what counted as authentic and more specifically who engaged in either the search for or the practice of authentic travel (Cf. Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973, 1976). This led to various attempts to chart and classify the experiences and practices of travelers in contrast to tourists, with the former typically framed as active seekers of meaning, the latter as passive observers of staged performances (Cf. Cohen, 1979, 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Among these researchers, Erik Cohen has been one of the most influential. In his first foray into typologies, he classified tourists as 'drifters', 'explorers', 'individual mass tourists', and 'group mass tourists' (Cohen, 1972). In his later work, he posited five categories of tourists, ranging from "recreational" and "diversionary" travelers who had no concern with authenticity to experiential, experimental and finally "existential" tourists, who, he argued, seek the most profound and deepest experiences (Cohen, 1988, p. 377). This typological approach, while quite robust, illustrates a key issue within tourism theory, namely an implicit ranking of types based on assumptions of what tourists *should* do. According to MacCannell (1976), the touristic quest is a search for one's authentic self, a quest which, according to Cohen, is a search for what has not yet been tainted by modernity (Cohen, 1988, p. 374). If so, the hierarchy implied among Cohen's five tourist types seems quite logical: from those tourists who are completely unreflective and focus solely on physical pleasure to existential travelers who are profoundly aware of the alienating effects of modernity. This division is made clear when Cohen suggests that, "those who are disposed to reflect upon their life situation are more aware of their alienation than those who do not tend to such contemplation" (Cohen, 1988, p. 376).

In other words, this perspective presumes that residents of modern societies are in fact alienated (from their selves, their surroundings, or both), and to not recognize this condition demonstrates a misunderstanding of one's own self-alienation. In form this mirrors the false consciousness argument employed by Marxists to explain why some workers in capitalist societies do not acknowledge their own exploitation. What these approaches share is a belief that some people (such as academic researchers and Marxist theorists) are privy to a realization of an underlying reality that others (such as workers and tourists) are not.

The postmodernist response to the above is that such desires exist in one's head and not in this world. Postmodernists assert that objects and places have no primordial, inherent, or underlying meaning. Instead, meaning is interpretive. Hence, the postmodernist stance on tourism: all views are equally plausible, sites can mean anything one desires and personal experience trumps knowledge. For example, Nuryanti (1996) argues that postmodern tourism is characterized by an emphasis on "individual journeys of self-discovery" (1996, p. 250), a view echoed by Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) and Collins-Kreiner (2010). According to the latter, "each person may interpret his or her own experience differently" (2010, p. 448) and consequently, "issues of 'right' and 'wrong' seem less important in the post-modern world, and may not even exist" (ibid, p. 450). In its broadest form, this approach mimics its other, namely a modernist insistence on universality. Hence Digance (2006) transforms the religious practice of pilgrimage into any journey "redolent with [personal] meaning" (2006, p. 36) because "the heartfelt desire to enter a special time and place is no more than something that is part of humankind's existence" (ibid, p. 45).

Yet, despite the theoretical gap between recalcitrant modernists who seek a genuine underlying reality and confident postmodernists who celebrate the absence of truth, they share a common nemesis when discussing authenticity and tourism: capitalism, mass consumerism, and a nebulous 'neoliberalism'. These are the culprits in a familiar story: Modernity may have provided increasing

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1007011>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1007011>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)