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What is the perceived value of authentic experiences for tourists in the face of increased tourism-led migration?

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Tourism and migration are synonymous with a global economy. They are inter-related due to the movement of people from their place of origin to a host destination (WTO, 2009). Tourist travel for various reasons and motivations, whereas others are seeking employment in order to fulfill much needed jobs within a host destination (tourism-led migration or TLM). Migration has both positive and negative implications, “real and perceived” (WTO, 2009; viii). Each tourist develops a perceived value of the experience prior to arrival, validated that perception during the experience, and judge its worth after the encounter. The total effect of TLM on a destination is still debated, especially with concern to authentic encounters (Butler, 2017).

Choi, Kim, Lee, and Hickerson (2015: 265) stress that “perceived value is a multi-dimensional concept (function, price, reputation and emotional)” in that it is a trade-off between benefits and costs. The benefit of a decision less its costs of making that decision based on tourist’s needs and wants. The decision-making process is a complex, systematic process. Decisions are based on plethora of information about products and their attributes. Perceived value pertains to potential quality and satisfaction. Future judgement of that preconceived value may be based on emotional perception and actual interaction. Perception is individualistic. Zeithaml (1988, 1996) mirrors this perspective in that judgement is more than a monetary value in that it has emotional elements.

Information, in all forms, is a major driver of the tourism system. For instance, the recent implications of the Starz's show *Outlander* has had a marked increase in Scottish Tourism. This positive change has even been labeled as the Outlander Effect. Scotland has seen a 16.9% increase in visitors and 23% increase in expenditures due to the TV show, other films and VisitScotland marketing initiatives. This trend is slated to continue (VisitScotland.org, 2018; March 4, 2019). VisitScotland's 2015/16 Visitor Survey indicated that 14% of overseas tourist stipulated that TV programs about Scotland and/or Movie/Films about Scotland were paramount in their decision to choose Scotland over other destinations (VisitScotland.org, 2107; March 4, 2019). This particular TV program and other films showcases the cultural currency--the history, the heritage, the language, the traditions, customs, and beliefs of Scotland to global audience. It paints a factual and fictitious point of reality for its viewers.

Tourist are looking for authentic experiences when immersed in the host environment. Authentic encounters illuminate in part a destination's cultural wealth, history and heritage. Tourist's perception of a destination is largely determined by the image conveyed by destination's marketing organizations or portrayed in other entities like TV/Film. Participation in host encounters either validate or not, expectations developed from exposure to information during the decision-making process. Tourist are motivated by these images, the words and sounds, to choose one destination over another. This preconceived value drives decision before, during and after use. If this value is validated during experience, competitive advantage is achieved and loyalty for the future decisions to travel strengthened (Butler, 2017). Yet, Butler argues that "previous visitors will retain an image of a destination that will in part shape their expectations of a future experience...and future tourist, proliferated with multiple sources (of

information), may develop an inaccurate or fake picture (Butler, 2017:619).” Thus, expectations may not be realized, and future travel to this destination jeopardized.

Therefore, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to begin to lay the groundwork for future research into the potential shift in meaning of authenticity and experience with regard to value. That travelers may or may not be developing new points of reality with regard to perceived value. With an increase of tourism-led migration to meet the needs of employment within tourism systems and the melding of cultures within certain destinations, does this warrant a re-examination of the definition of an authentic experience and its contribution to competitive advantage and loyalty? What is the perceived value of authentic experiences for tourists in the face of increased tourism-led migration? Is authenticity a functional part of perceived value of tourism encounters? Figure 1 represents the relationship between value, authenticity, and tourism with regard to tourism-led migration.

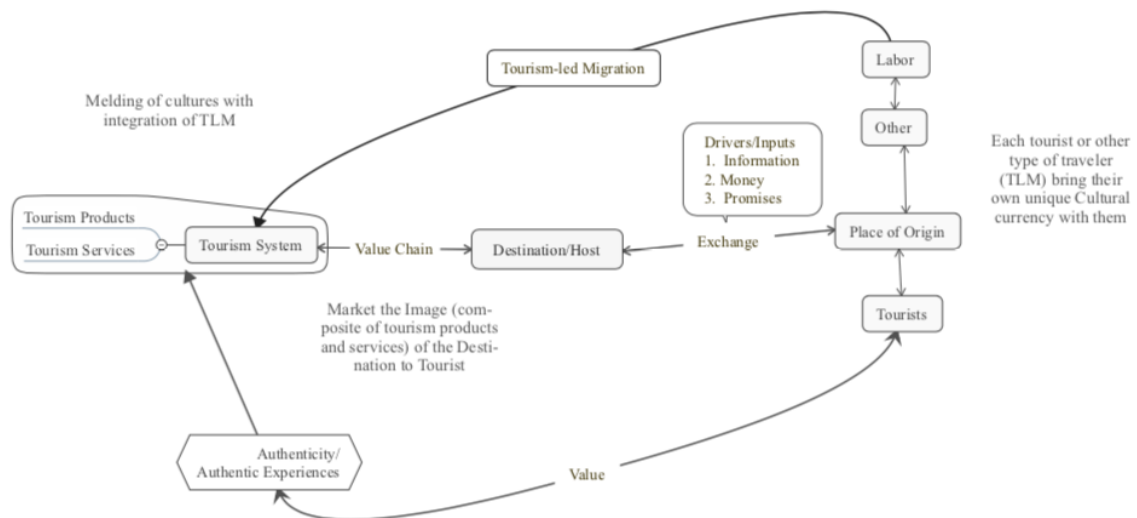


Figure 1 The relationship between value and authenticity with respect to tourism-led migration. (Based on Butler, 2017; Choi, Y. et al., 2015)

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