Narratives of Tourism Experiences: an interpretative approach to understanding tourist - brand relationships

Sheena Heather Westwood

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University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Colchester Avenue
Cardiff, CF23 9XR

Abstract

This study is a reflection of the journey that I have taken as a tourism marketing researcher. Based on emergent design, it is a two phase interpretative, autoethnographic study of the relationships between tourism consumers and brands. Through the adoption of qualitative, systematic methods and projective techniques, phase one highlights the lack of consumer brand awareness and commitment to tourism products, the diversity of contemporary tourism behaviour, and reveals the necessity to adopt a far more individualistic approach to understanding tourism consumption behaviour. Phase two thus considers tourism within the context of postmodernism, focusing on the experiences of individual tourism consumers and their functional, emotional and symbolic relationships with brands. Paramount here are the concepts of reflexivity, positionality and voice, hence I actively involved the participants throughout the research process (including during the data interpretation and presentation) and foregrounded my own involvement and experiences– aspects that all contribute significantly to the richness and depth of the study.

The study highlights the complexity of tourism consumption behaviour and influences. Tourism experiences are subjective, inconsistent and are influenced and informed by a range of relationships, narratives and discourses. Complex and individual expectations, aspirations, desires and insecurities are underpinned by a far greater awareness of time compression, a sense of self and intrinsic fulfilment. The study illustrates the participants' awareness of the fragility and temporality of their myriad micro-experiences, and highlights how tourism consumers interpret and infer meaning from brands, products, images and associations in the creation and preservation of the overall holiday experience. It supports the need to reach out and step beyond the safety zone of tried and tested, conventional research approaches and further develop ontological and epistemological perspectives that value consumer-centred, diverse, flexible, reflexive and participatory approaches – and judgement criteria – for tourism research.

Acknowledgements

I have described this study as a journey, but in actuality it is a stage in a journey that commenced in 1994 when I stepped through the doors of UWIC for the first time. The journey began largely as a matter of circumstance, and I had no inclination of the way that it would so significantly alter and enrich my life. I am glad of this opportunity to thank everyone who has given me support, encouragement and motivation since then, and in particular:

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D1.JPG – D9.JPG Dai Photographs
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E1.JPG – E5.JPG Elizabeth Photographs
Elizabeth Collage

J1.JPG – J4.JPG	Jemima/George Photographs
Jemima Collage a.JPG	
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S1.JPG – S7.JPG	Susannah Photographs
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Chapter 1

Locating the Study

1.1 Introduction

Tourism centres on people – it is essentially an experience that involves discourses between people, places, and products. Marketing is the interface between the producer and the consumer – developing, shaping, communicating and facilitating experiences. It is argued that people consume experiences - 'consumption pervades all aspects of our everyday life and can be argued to structure all of our experience' (Williams 2002:4). As marketing increasingly becomes consumer-centric, so an understanding of consumption and consumption behaviour within this context is crucial for tourism marketing in the twenty-first century – as Franklin (2003:26) asserts 'tourism *is* consumerism'. However, while there is no shortage of work that aims to understand tourist behaviour, it is primarily concerned with motivations and satisfactions, with the consumer assuming a passive role. There is a lack of focused research that considers the active involvement between consumers and goods within the context of tourism. There is also an escalating criticism of conventional approaches and theories, with many critics commenting that research and practice rooted in rational, objective, positivist, modernist perspectives which are increasingly unsuited to contemporary marketing (Brown 1995, 1997, 1999, Thomas 1997, Riley and Love 2000, Nash 2002, Williams 2002). Indeed Oh (2003:1) calls for 'innovative multidisciplinary behavioural approaches' and is heavily critical of what he terms the current 'tepid research efforts on consumer behaviour in the tourism and hospitality field'.

Increasing individuality, diversity and fragmentation of target groups and behaviour means that those traditional concepts and frameworks that were developed on the basis of scientific behavioural and economic theories of supply and demand no longer apply. All the same however, despite Cohen's (1988:30) argument that: 'The most significant and lasting contributions ... have been made by researchers who employed an often-loose qualitative methodology', the majority of tourism research still adheres to positivistic and

scientific principles and approaches. Even those studies that do adopt a more qualitative stance still predominantly conform to positivist constructs, such as objectivity and standardized frameworks for data collection and analysis (Riley and Love 2000). It is recognised that both tourism and marketing are predominated by economic factors. Indeed the very term 'tourism industry' signifies a production orientated, standardized, economically focused undertaking and that business focused, statistical and quantitative research is more easily assimilated with economic, revenue producing practices. However, as Davies (2003) argues, the eclecticism and complexity of 'tourism' renders it significantly different to conventional manufacturing industries – and arguably, other similarly variegated service industries. At a time when (according to postmodern theory) de-differentiation is leading to the blurring of boundaries between 'manufactured goods' and 'services', these generalist approaches fail to plumb the depths of understanding, of meaning and of individual behaviours that are so crucial to industries and disciplines that are essentially concerned with people (Ateljevic 2000, Jamal and Hollinshead 2001). I argue in this study that in order to move tourism research forward, it is important to break new ground, to recognise creativity and diversity and adopt a multi-faceted approach to research.

The study is interpretative. Based on emergent design it reflects the way in which my knowledge, understanding and focus has developed as a result of progressive reading and fieldwork (Belk *et al.* 1989). The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase developed as a result of my interest in tourism marketing, and particularly branding. The theory that informed this phase was primarily related to the business aspects of branding, marketing and tourism, and I adopted qualitative, systematic methods to explore the role and significance of brands in holiday decisions. The findings were of great interest from a personal, research and practitioner perspective. Throughout, this phase heightened my awareness of the individuality of tourism experiences and suggested a need to understand consumer brand relationships at a far deeper level.

As a result of these insights, the second phase developed into a very focused study of individual tourism consumers and their functional, emotional and symbolic relationships with brands within the context of their tourism experiences. The literature that informed this phase was drawn from a much wider range of disciplines and included consumer

research, sociology and tourism and leisure studies. As my interest in postmodernism developed, so the study and my approaches to it have become increasingly embedded within a postmodern context – concerned with representation and signification. I argue that today's tourism consumers are increasingly flexible and multiplicit, juxtaposing and traversing a range of different tourist experiences, to construct their individual consumption experiences – which are enriched and informed by a huge diversity of influences and aspirations including brand interaction and communication. In the fields of progressive consumer research and post-modern marketing I have drawn inspiration and direction from the work of writers such as Russell Belk, Fuat Firat, Maurice Holbrook, and Elizabeth Hirschman. Thus this phase of the study is a tourism focused 'exploration of the symbolic and talismanic relationships consumers form with that with which is consumed' (Belk *et al.* 1989:31). It is an interpretative study of tourism consumer experiences and their involvement with, relationships to and usage of brands within these experiences, which endeavours to add to the body of knowledge on choice, relationships and symbolic consumption in tourism literature. In the next sub-section I discuss briefly the key theoretical concepts and practices that inform and underpin the study.

1.2 Précis of the Foundational Literature

Described as '*the* most important phenomena of the 20th century' (Lury 1998:xi), brands have arguably become today's most effective, and certainly most visible, marketing tool. During the last two decades, branding has taken on an increasingly significant role within the wider function of marketing, and also sociologically as a force that, while not always fully understood, permeates daily life to a greater or lesser degree on a global scale (Westwood *et al.* 1999b). Brands are a key factor in contemporary society and branding now applies to virtually everything - towns, cities, countries, football teams, sports events, educational establishments, museums, charities and even people are branded. We live in a brand-saturated landscape, brands play a significant role in shaping our consumption behaviour, our experiences and indeed, our lives and lifestyles.

Historically, branding was predominantly a 'supply-sided' concept (Hanby 1999) – products were regarded as tangible commodities plus a name or symbol, with associations

of attributes such as quality, reliability and guarantees. However, some time ago, Gardener and Levy (1955) recognised that the associations and personality of the brand often outweigh the product itself, hence the reason that consumers often choose branded products for which they are prepared to pay a premium price. Despite this insight, awareness of the true power of brands is still growing, and in the past decade there has been increasing academic and practitioner focus on the development and application of branding. It is now recognised that branding goes far deeper, entering into the psyche of consumers and other company stakeholders, and that the value of brands is both rational and emotional (Gilmore 1997). Rational values include value for money, convenience, reliability, safety and functionality, while emotional values are those difficult to evaluate, intangible, 'soft' issues such as psychic benefits (Westwood *et al.* 1999b), self expression, emotional affinity, trust and commitment which should be nurtured into brand loyalty and customer retention (East 1997).

Branding therefore has its roots in the marketing application of the concepts to consumer goods and commodities, rather than services. Despite the recent upsurge in the UK service economy following the demise of its manufacturing industries, empirically based service branding research is particularly scant. There are strong indications that services are lagging behind manufacturing industries in the approaches, applications and academic research regarding branding (Ashton quoted in Gander 1999). Indeed, there is much debate over the differences between 'products' and 'services', and the implications for the marketing of services (Judd 1968, Shostack 1977, Levitt 1981, Flipo 1988, Berry & Parasuraman 1991). Nonetheless in general, the differences between services and manufactured goods are recognised as being a key factor in the application of marketing concepts. As Prager (quoted in Gander 1999:13) argues, 'there is an unhealthy tendency to compare the service sector with fmcg (fast moving consumer good) marketing, and this is not just comparing little apples with big apples; this is apples and oranges'.

The tourism industry is a huge, diverse, complex and vitally important industry – as Julier (2000:148) states, in the postindustrial economies 'currently more money is spent on leisure and tourism than on food, rent and rates'. However while there is some attention paid to branding in relation to tourism, it is primarily limited to the areas of destinations and hospitality (Nickerson and Moisey 1999, Hall 1999, Rompf 1999, Morgan *et al.* 2002).

Referring primarily to the branding of destinations, Morgan and Pritchard (1998) note the dearth of empirical research and the serious under-realisation of brand significance for destinations and other complex, composite tourism products. This is even more acute in tourism marketing where bespoke branding methods and frameworks receive little attention, except as hybrid general theories and applications. With reference to services, Lumsdon (1997) states that the essence of a brand is to add value to 'what otherwise would be a service with no name', a somewhat naive explanation serving to illustrate the low level of brand understanding in tourism studies. Similarly, Gyimothy (2000) notes that the tourism industry is not keeping pace with other industries in terms of academic and practitioner attention to marketing and service management issues.

1.3 Tourism Research, Brand Relationships and Consumption Behaviour

Marketing and consumer behaviour are inextricably linked, as a thorough understanding of consumers and their behaviour, is at the very core of marketing theory and practice. A significant area of consumer behaviour is the relationship between people and their possessions (Appadurai 1986, Belk 1987, Belk *et al.* 1988, Fournier 1998), with relationships and loyalty playing an important role in the success of a brand. Marketers of tangible goods have developed a keen understanding of the deeper issues of consumer behaviour, such as the importance of symbolic and experiential associations in marketing communications. Consumer goods have been described as 'symbols for sale' (Dittmar 1992:2) because of the increasing propensity to link branded goods with the projection of desirable images to others, expressions of social status and proclamation of personal attitudes and characteristics. As Brown (1997b) thetford argues, in order to successfully communicate with consumers, a deep understanding of symbolic meaning is essential so, as marketing develops into an increasingly consumer centred discipline, the need for consumption rather than purchase, focused research grows.

There has undoubtedly been a paradigmatic shift away from the representation of the consumer as a passive victim (of unscrupulous advertising and marketing), towards the conceptualisation of consumption as an individualised, postmodern experience. Increasingly consumers use products to construct experiences and personal identity,

communicate with, and influence the impressions of others according to individual inclination (Appadurai 1986, Chaney 1994, 1996). That consumer goods are still mass produced raises the paradoxical question of how mass produced goods can be used to create individuality and construct self? Perhaps the answer lies in the post-modern view that eclecticism, shifting, multiple identities, fragmentation and juxtaposition are key traits of the era – as Campbell (1995:101) argues:

> the contemporary consumer is pictured as the isolated individual, juggling with assorted signs as symbols in a never-ending attempt to construct and maintain identity in a fragmented and ever changing environment.

Other writers reinforce this view. Supporting Cova's (1996) and Elliott's (1997) assertions on postmodern marketing, Valentine and Gordon (2000:43) argue that today's environment is 'dynamic, chaotic' with a paradigm shift from 'predictability to unpredictability, from rigidity to flexibility, from a need for certainty to a tolerance for ambiguity'. Referring to twenty-first century consumers as 'expert and talented actors' they argue that these consumers interact with brands to construct their own social persona, concocting their own 'brand landscape' which they change according to their whims. The growing body of literature on symbolic consumption in relation to marketing indicates without doubt the importance of understanding the relationship between brands and their usage, not only as functional indicators, but as powerful social and cultural symbols. As Hirschman (1981:5) recognises, the influence of marketing in communicating lifestyle symbols is considerable:

> It is through advertising, retail store display, television shows and magazines that the consumer learns what products currently symbolise youth, prestige, sexuality and conservatism..

The marketing of tourism products is increasingly receiving acknowledgement as a fundamental element in tourism management and practices. Within the broadening sphere of 'tourism marketing', consumer behaviour is a key element, testimony to the growing recognition of the importance of understanding the underlying aspects of tourist behaviour. The study of consumption behaviour in tourism is not new, of course. Urry

noted in 1990 that leisure services and activities are increasingly considered as products to be purchased, and Veblen (1953) used leisure as the basis for his theories on social and cultural development (arguing that the consumption of leisure time was considered the major signifier of social status and distinction), and yet there remains a dearth of service - and within this leisure - focused consumer research. Tourism research on symbolic consumption is predominantly limited to generic services marketing concepts (Brown 1997a, Ryan 1997a, Gyimothy 2000). While there is some considerable focus on particular aspects of tourist behaviour, notably decision making, motivation and attitude research (Dann 1981, Johnson and Thomas 1992, Pearce 1993), this has predominantly utilised a psychology-based perspective which tends to focus on the cognitive decision process. While the importance of this is not denied, there is also recognition of the need for more experientially based research which addresses the individual relationships between tourism products and consumers at a micro level. Acknowledging the potential of symbolism and consumption focused tourism research for furthering knowledge on tourist behaviour, Brown (1992) stresses the need for a more interdisciplinary approach. He calls for a blurring of the boundaries and less research 'conducted in disparate disciplines' (Brown 1992:67). It is interesting though, that while he emphasises the importance of adopting an experiential approach to further research, his own writing and suggestions have more of a motivational than a marketing focus.

The term 'consumption' still tends to be predominantly construed as applying to tangible goods, and similarly consumer research tends to be very largely centred on the behaviour of consumers towards tangible goods. In particular these are often clothing, cars, alcoholic beverages and household furnishings (Belk *et al.*, 1982:6), rather than products with high service and experiential elements, such as tourism. In a similar vein, it is noteworthy that while tourism is quite frequently used as a context for exemplifying postmodern life, it rarely features as a research field in its own right (Bauman 1996, Firat 2001a). There is however little clear indication as to why this is the case. Perhaps tangible products are easier to understand and explore due to their substantiality and clarity, compared to variegated, multiform and unique tourism and leisure experiences. However, it is argued that there are significant similarities between the consumption of leisure and the consumption of tangible goods, and that following the route established through theories of consumption behaviour can only enrich understanding of tourism and leisure consumption

(Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Foxall 1984, Urry 1990, Dimanche and Samdahl 1994). Such writers call for a greater recognition and exploration of the symbolic importance of self within the leisure and tourism context - since as Holbrook and Hirschman (1982:134) assert, 'entertainment, arts and leisure activities encompass symbolic aspects of consumptive behaviour that make them particularly fertile grounds for research'.

1.4 Study Focus and Aims

This study is 'emergent' (Belk *et al.* 1989) and 'discovery orientated' (Wells 1993, Fournier 1998). Throughout, I draw on a range of interdisciplinary literature, and take a progressive and interpretative approach to research. I consider how brands enter the wider tourism discourse, our personal tourism dialogues and biographies, and shape our tourism experiences. In adopting a consumer–centred focus rather than a purchase process focus, I am primarily concerned with the *consumption* of tourism products, rather than with the *buying* of such products, in particular gaining insights into the experiential and symbolic aspects of tourism consumption behaviour within the context of branding (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Dimanche and Samdahl 1994).

With its focus on tourism experiences and consumption, it fits very aptly into the postmodern mode. Postmodernism is considered as a 'cultural paradigm' (Urry 2002:75) and characteristics of postmodernism include: increasing individualism, juxtaposition, the search for experience in life and self, and a belief that value is created in consumption (experience) rather than the product (as in modernist thought). Consumers are now active as opposed to passive, have a far greater consciousness of 'value' and have higher demands, even constructing identities through the ability to consume – 'a paradigm shift from hard objects to soft experiences' (Lannon, 1996:88). Tourism is part of the postmodern experience and postmodern characteristics embody the tourism experience, indeed Ryan (1997b, 2001, 2002) argues that tourism is a ludic, postmodern experience: 'post-modernism, like the individual tourist, is concerned with the minutiae of experience' (Ryan 1997b:18). Thus, in the second stage of the study I have chosen to use methods and techniques which consider the individual experience at a micro-level, involving the participants in enjoyable and pleasurable tasks which are consistent with the experiential,

ludic nature of tourism. As Firat and Schultz (1997:204) recognise: 'a better understanding of the underlying macro social forces and micro human behaviour associated with postmodernism can ultimately be leveraged by marketers to obtain competitive advantages in an increasingly dynamic, unpredictable and unstable marketplace'.

By adopting a non-positivistic, progressive approach and considering tourism consumer behaviour as a 'phenomenon to be understood' rather than a 'theory to be tested' (Thompson 1997:442), I present an emergent, interpretative study of consumers' tourism experiences (and the role of brands within these experiences) via a range of methods which includes personal narratives. In an endeavour to broaden the focus of tourism marketing and consumer behaviour research the aims are:

1. To explore the role and significance of tour operator brands in holiday decisions.

2. To explore the relationship between the holiday experience and brand associations and choice.

3. To develop understanding of consumer brand relationships within individual tourism discourses.

4. To consider contemporary tourism consumption behaviour within the context of postmodernism.

5. To further progressive and interdisciplinary approaches to tourism research.

1.5 Philosophical Perspective to the Study

In order for tourism marketing to progress and to address the issues of today's consumption focused societies, it is necessary to adopt research perspectives and methods that will enable the researcher to 'grasp the interactions of context and the multiple realities that are known through tacit understanding' (Riley and Love 2000:168). For the study I

needed to adopt an approach that reflected the flexible, emergent nature of the research, the value of the human element in research, and that integrated the perspective, the cultural consciousness and the self-awareness of myself as the researcher within the process. I needed an approach that, rather than trying to eliminate my involvement, enabled me to use it to interpret people, places and situations. There is a growing body of writers and researchers from a range of established disciplines who are taking a 'naturalistic' approach which, in acknowledging the researcher as a key instrument, recognises that individuality and creativity are paramount to the quality, depth and interest embodied in the research text and that self-disclosure is a critical element (Kreiger 1991, Sparkes 1994, 1996, 2000, 2001, Gould 1991, 1995, Mykhalovskiy 1996, Cloke 1999, Goodall 2000, Galani-Moutafi 2000).

Since beginning this PhD study, my knowledge and understanding of the subject under research and of the approaches to research has developed enormously – which is a fundamental objective of a research project. I was schooled in the conventional social science approach to academic writing – that is, within the boundaries that are set and accepted by the 'members' (Miller *et al.* 1998) of a particular discipline. When I began the project, I did not question, and indeed, had no awareness of, any other approach to writing. Therefore, I adopted the 'accepted' format – distancing myself from the work by using the passive, which as Holliday (220:127) argues 'pushes the person of the author into the background'. However, I struggled – it did not sit with the culture and the nature of my research – I could not detach and disembody myself as a multiplicit, experienced tourism consumer from myself as a researcher. Arguably, in today's Westernised world we are all inescapably tourists (Robinson (2003), and I was having increasing difficulty in trying to reconcile this detachment with my aims, which are after all concerned with meaning and gaining deeper understanding of people's behaviour.

As my understanding of the progressive nature of my work grew, so I became aware of different schools of thought on the level of subjectivity in work. Indeed, in drawing on a range of recent literature (Riessman 1994, Sparkes 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, Ellis and Bochner, 1996, 2000), I now realise that, far from having to follow the inherent constraints of 'conventional' social science writing (that is, writing objectively as a distant observer), progressive research embraces the flexible, emergent nature of the research, acknowledges

the writer voice, makes use of the first person, adopts an autobiographical style and includes personal experience. It is also important to understand however, that having a greater research presence means recognising researcher participation more than in the sense of using the first person in writing. The presence and influence of the researcher is considered a valuable and essential resource, permeating the whole study including the perspective, the development of the process and even as a data source. Holliday (2002:128) states the case for personal recognition very strongly, arguing that:

> ... there is a place for powerful, personal authorship. There is new thinking which comes from the progressive, postmodern, critical break with the naturalist, post-positivist tradition. This involves an acknowledgement that it is the agency of the researcher as writer that makes the research (Holliday 2002:128).

This has led me towards the adoption of an autoethnographic approach (Hayano 1979, Kreiger 1991, Mykhalovskiy 1996, Cloke, 1999, Goodall 2000, Sparkes 2000, 2002, Patton 2002) - that is, understanding my own culture and the reactions and responses of myself and others within that culture. There are a range of research activities which involve introspection and which are used within social science disciplines. At one level there is researcher introspection – that is, where the researcher studies her or himself and there are no other participants. This approach is gaining ground, most notably in the fields of psychology, contemporary consumer research and more recently sport science (Sparkes 2000, 2002), although it attracts a fair amount of controversy and debate (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993, Gould 1991, 1995) primarily because of the perceived difficulties in the external assessment of internal data. At another level (and one that is used in this study) there is reflexivity which is based on the concepts of self awareness and self understanding, and the recognition that as researchers, we are an integral part of the social world we are studying, and that our own socio-historical context has an influence on our work as a researcher (Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Therefore, the experiences and presence of the researcher are explicitly discussed within the relationship and rather than trying to eliminate the effects of her or his presence, the researcher actually endeavours to understand and use the experience to gain deeper understanding.

I have also used narratology in the form of personal narratives (Bochner 2001, Patton 2002, Glover 2003) which:

> ... honors people's stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of *experience* (the core of phenomenology) or analysed for connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human experience (Patton 2002:116).

Patton (2002) also recognises the linkage between autoethnography and personal narrative, in that the personal stories of the researcher become an integral part of the study. So, acknowledging that my own history and experiences are valuable in gaining insights and expanding understanding into tourism consumer behaviour, I have adopted a tripartite approach (Cloke 1999) - contextualising my self in the research (through a description of my tourism experience – as practitioner, academic and consumer); adopting auto-ethnography (by using recent experiences as a – but not the only - primary data source), and recognising and reflecting on my own influence on the interpretation of the participants' narratives.

Epistemologically, I adopt an interpretative paradigm which, as Thompson (1997:440) argues is 'highly appropriate to gaining insights into consumer experiences'. This approach holds that 'openness' is the key, rather than adherence to any pre-determined framework. Other proponents of this method of enquiry into consumption experiences include Belk *et al.* (1989), and Lutz (1989b). The latter states that:

> It signals the value of research that does *not* begin with a theory to be tested; but rather a phenomenon to be understood; research that treats consumers as *informants*, rather than subjects; research that examines consumer behaviour from the perspective of the *consumer* rather than that of the marketing manager; research that seeks *understanding* rather than causal explanation; in short, research that differs from 'traditional' consumer research on almost every dimension of performance (Lutz 1989b:1).

I have also adopted the process of 'emergent design' (Belk *et al.* 1989) where no prior assumptions are made, and where receptiveness to possibilities presented by the data leads to further desk research, which in turn leads to further fieldwork. I view the study very much as an iterative process of learning and development, succeeded by further learning and development as the project unfolds.

So far in this section I have highlighted the importance of understanding consumption behaviour for the development of marketing theory and application, and in particular the need for more research into consumption behaviour within a tourism context. It is clear that, although there are a strong body of writers within the field of consumer research who have embraced a range of progressive, interpretative methods to gain understanding of consumption behaviour, within the tourism field this is as yet under realised. I have argued strongly that use of the personal voice (as opposed to the traditional passive, third person style of much social science writing) and the recognition of the researcher as an active participant in the research is a valid and worthwhile addition to research that is aiming to gain understanding of social phenomena. Riesseman (1994:viii) recognises the growing diversity in social science writing and methodology, stating that: 'social science is entering a period of reflection: What is our relationship to those we study? How do we represent the experiences of informants? For whom are we writing and how?' Indeed, our subjective experience is part of the social world we are studying – through understanding and reflecting on our role, our experience and contextualising ourselves we are linking individual experience with social practices. I have outlined briefly the interdisciplinary, interpretative, emergent, autoethnographical approach that I have adopted, and introduced the methods. Positionality and voice became significant aspects as the study progressed, and I explain how the involvement of the participants is integral to phase two of the study in the methods, interpretation and presentation, which includes personal narratives. In accordance with the tripartite approach I have chosen, in the next sub-section I contextualise myself within the study through an account of some of my tourism related experience, gained as a consumer of leisure tourism, a consumer of business tourism, as a tourism professional and as a tourism researcher.

1.6 Contextualising (My)Self

While I am relatively new to *formalised* tourism research (my first experiences were when I began a Tourism Studies degree as a mature student in 1994) I have been a tourism consumer – and I argue also an *informal* researcher – for many years. I was fortunate as a child to have regular, annual family holidays both in the United Kingdom and overseas. From 1977 until 1992 I lived in the Middle East, accompanying my husband on various overseas postings, moving from Saudi Arabia to Abu Dhabi and then finally to Bahrain where we spent eleven years. In the Middle East as in many overseas countries, travel is given very high priority in the lives of the majority of expatriates of all nationalities. Travel is a significant part of the fabric of expatriate life – whether for business, necessity or for leisure and much social conversation is focused on various aspects of travel. This can include 'horror stories' of travel experiences that have gone wrong; tales of exotic destinations, accommodations and experiences; the merits or de-merits of the various airlines and the latest pricing strategies and initiatives. In many countries the airlines themselves form an important part of the social life – with their huge marketing budgets and high profile as the major facilitators of travel they use every opportunity to raise awareness and build loyalty, often hosting and sponsoring lavish events that create favourable public relations opportunities and generate positive word of mouth communication.

During my time in Bahrain I was fortunate to have what was once described to me as 'one of the best jobs on the island'. I worked for British Airways in a variety of roles, latterly in airport operations as a duty manager at the airport. This involved travel on business and because I had travel concessions, a significant amount of travel for leisure. British Airways is acknowledged as one of the foremost organisations in providing service to the customer. While there were considerable operational aspects, my job revolved around the customer, and understanding the behavioural characteristics of the customer was of significant importance. Through living and working in an environment where travel plays such a pivotal role I accumulated a great deal of knowledge and developed a huge interest in consumer behaviour within a travel and tourism context. Since returning to the United Kingdom I have developed this interest and knowledge within the context of my new

career, gaining a degree in Tourism Studies, becoming a lecturer in Tourism Marketing at UWIC and formalising my research interests through various research projects. Whenever and however I travel, whether for business or leisure, I am a consumer, a researcher and an observer; when I listen to and interpret peoples' consumption stories, I listen and interpret as a tourism professional, a consumer and a researcher. As Riesseman (1994:135) argues:

> We are not robots who collect pure information, but humans with emotions, values, social biographies and institutional locations. They shape the problems we choose, the ways we go about studying them, the eyes we bring to observation, and the relationships we have in the field. Locating ourselves in the work instead of pretending we're not there, helps readers evaluate the situated knowledge we produce.

1.7 Study Format

In this **first chapter** I present the rationale for the study and introduce the theories, concepts and methodological approaches that will later be discussed in greater detail. I outline the significance of branding and consumer behaviour concepts and applications, and explain why it is important to consider tourism within the context of postmodernism. I draw attention to the imbalance between branding and consumer research which is focused on tangible goods, and the branding and consumer research which is focused on tourism products. In accordance with the interpretavist, reflexive, auto-ethnographic approach I have adopted, I contextualise myself within the study, locating myself in the research process as a researcher, a tourism professional and a tourism consumer.

The **second chapter** discusses the development of marketing and tourism with particular focus on branding. I trace the development and influence of branding through the emergence of consumer society, the periods of production and then consumer orientation, before locating it as a significant socio-cultural influence within postmodernism. Alongside this, I trace the evolution of tourism, focusing on the development of mass tourism, and the package holiday. In discussing postmodernism as a context for

contemporary tourism marketing, I consider the significance of postmodern characteristics for experience and self-definition through consumption.

Tourism is essentially an experience; it is also a complex mixture of tangible and intangible elements with a high level of service provision. In **chapter three** I discuss the characteristics of services and tangible goods, the significance of branding for consumers and organisations, drawing particular attention to the relationships between consumers and brands, and the role and significance of brands in the choice of tourism products.

Among the questions that remain unanswered in terms of tourism consumption, are those that address the symbolic and emotional tourism consumer brand relationships, those that consider the way in which tourism consumers interact with brands, using them to enhance and enrich their tourism experiences and their self-concept. **Chapter four** builds on the discussion in chapters two and three, with specific focus on the symbolic and lifestyle aspects of brands. Locating consumption within the context of postmodernism, I draw on a range of interdisciplinary literature to consider the way in which consumers use brands to enhance and enrich their lives.

The **fifth chapter** contains the details and explanation of my research approach. Here I explain the interpretavist philosophy that underpins the study. I discuss my adoption of a naturalistic, emergent, reflexive and autoethnographical approach, and document the development of this dynamic and evolving study. Describing how and why the research was in two phases, I explain the methods, the techniques and the analytical styles used in each phase, and the significance of the participants' involvement in both the fieldwork and the interpretation.

In **chapter six** I revisit the theories and arguments raised in the literature review, linking them to the analysis, interpretations and discussions of the insights gained during the phase one and phase two fieldwork. The style of analysis for the first phase is quite systematic and structured through the identification of themes and patterns. Commensurate with the nature and approach of the study, in the interpretation of phase two, the presentation of personal narratives enables the individual experiences to be heard through the participants'

own voices. The chapter closes with a summary which draws together some of the key aspects of the individual narratives.

Although the study is not conclusion or decision orientated, in **chapter seven** I revisit my aims and consider how this interpretative study has contributed to tourism research and to the understanding of aspects of tourism marketing and consumption behaviour. I reflect on the study, and consider the limitations and challenges, the research processes and I consider how my involvement and that of the participants in the study has contributed to my understanding and my development as a tourism researcher and academic.

Chapter 2

Brand and Tourism Development

2.1 Introduction

While the basic premise of marketing as an exchange process remains unaltered, until the 1970s it was very much a modernist, production focused activity – driven by a mass market economy where competition was underdeveloped and demand outstripped supply. Marketing has since developed into an increasingly consumer centred discipline, and the importance of consumption - rather than purchase - focused research has grown. Just as the involvement of the consumer is integral to the concept of branding, branding has a significant influence on social and cultural development, with the social meaning of goods often being more significant than functional qualities (Levy 1981, Tomlinson 1994). In order to appreciate the complexity and endurance of branding as a concept that affects not only individual consumers and marketing professionals, but as a social influence that has a profound effect on global culture, it is necessary to understand its social and cultural context. Similarly, the evolution of tourism and leisure is a significant factor in socio-cultural development. Just as brands have entered our various discourses as language, as metaphor, as personalities and as aspirational symbols, so tourism is inextricably woven into our history, our culture, our present and our future – as memories, as experiences and as desires.

Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary literature, in this section I begin with a historical perspective, considering the sociological and cultural influences that have shaped modern marketing and branding theory. Beginning by briefly discussing the very earliest uses of branding as a differentiation and identification technique, I trace its development within the context of evolving consumer culture from the eighteenth century through to the current era of postmodernism. I then continue to consider the evolution of tourism in parallel with that of marketing and branding, tracing its development from the mid-eighteenth century, through the emergence of the holiday camps and mass package holidays of the 1950s and 1960s towards greater individuality and the 'post-tourist' (Feifer 1985, Urry 1988, 1990b, 2002).

2.2 Branding and Consumerism – The Early Years

Far from being a modern concept, the origins of branding are unknown. Throughout history identification marks and symbols have been branded on animals, pottery, works of art, buildings and even people - according to Lury (1998) the Romans branded a make of oil lamp some 2000 years ago. These links between historic and modern branding are still evident today. Knights used heraldic symbols as a means of identification for themselves and their families, and as evidence of positioning, strength and power; today car manufacturers such as Ferrari and Porsche still use similar heraldic symbols for identification and statements of their position, their strengths and their brand attributes (Jones 2000). Considering this historical and sociological grounding, it can be argued that the basic notion of branding for identification and differentiation purposes is a human tradition, with people psychologically pre-disposed to accept the concept of branding in modern marketing terms. Certainly there are indications that far from being a recent sociological development, consumerism has been an increasingly significant factor throughout history.

Corrigan (1997) notes the lack of a firm consensus among sociologists as to when consumer society actually began. He, together with other authors (Room 1998, McKendrick *et al.* 1982), argue that consumer society began in the eighteenth century as a direct consequence of the industrial revolution, while McCracken (1988) firmly asserts that consumerism actually originated in Elizabethan England. However, as Corrigan (1997) argues, this was driven largely by political motives such as the nobility jostling for notice in the glittering theatre of Elizabeth 1's court, rather than economic factors. With reference to the status and emotional benefits of consumption, Firat and Dholakia (1998:41) suggest that as early as the seventeenth century, consumption had already become a 'favourite pastime' for the wealthy and middle classes, who derived 'hedonic' pleasure and status from largely imported consumption items such as tea, coffee and silk, together with accessories such as hats, umbrellas, and household goods such as clocks and furniture. Nonetheless, the most significant surge in consumption appetites was towards the end of the industrial revolution, and is attributed to the development of mass-production processes, the increasing aspirations of the lower classes together with higher levels of

literacy and standards of living. At this time, as demand for goods (particularly domestic commodities and fashion items) grew, marketing and branding techniques began to develop and advertising began to play an increasingly critical role as a signficant force in the transition of products from mere commodities into branded objects of desire (Ogilvy 1951, Laermans 1993, Corrigan 1997, Aaker 1993).

Advertising has provoked much critical debate and controversy, primarily for its arguably negative, manipulative influences (Packard 1957, Ewen 1976, Tomlinson 1994, Morgan and Pritchard 1998). Indeed, Ewen (1976:34) while adopting a critical stance, recognises the symbolic significance of goods in his argument that advertising serves to emphasize the harshness of social scrutiny, preying on the perceived inadequacies of consumers in order to increase sales of goods as solutions:

> We are always being scrutinized, we are always being evaluated, our very being is absorbed into the ways in which others look at us: at every moment and in every way we may fail the test of the scrutinizing world. One can see how it is entirely in the interests of manufacturers to espouse this approach to social life, for it permits them to market their products as solutions to problems that arise only if this particular theory of the social world is accepted. This is much more efficient at shifting the goods than mere praising of the good itself, or appeals to entirely egocentric desires that do not include others.

The majority of writers are in agreement however, that advertising has had an inextricable influence on societal development, and the redefinition of cultural values (Lee 1993). While advertising is not the main focus of my discussion, it is important consider the symbiotic relationship between advertising and branding, which was evident even in the early stages of consumer culture development. It is widely acknowledged that through the use of verbal and non-verbal means (Batra *et al.* 1993), advertising induces awareness and influences consumer choice through the communication of brand and product attributes, emotions and attitudes. Branding perpetuates this communication through sign display, and aims to build loyalty and relationships through consistent delivery of the

communicated values and associations. As Pavitt (2000:170) asserts: 'branding and advertising together encourage us that goods are the means by which we differentiate ourselves from others and communicate a sense of personal identity'. This view is supported by McCracken (1988, 1993), who argues strongly that in addition, advertising is instrumental in the transference of cultural meaning, from the culture to the product and thus to the brand.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, advertising and sales people were increasingly used to promote goods as social status indicators, and branded products were advertised as effectors of social acceptance and advancement (Olsen 1994). In 1780 the label of an exclusive and fashionable Parisian store (Le Monde) was more coveted than the actual good itself:

> ... as with today's designer jeans, the label on his goods were more important to his customers than the products themselves (Fairchilds 1993:541).

Consequently, the notion of 'disposability' according to changing tastes and trends in fashion, was introduced into consumers' psyche (Corrigan 1997, Nava 1997) and has gathered momentum during the succeeding centuries. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the symbolic value of both the home and the person became increasingly considered as an indicator not only of status, but also of identity and of choice – indeed of lifestyle in its contemporary sense.

2.3 Consumerism – Crossing the Atlantic

Although the movement towards consumerism was evident in Europe, commentators are in agreement that a major cultural transformation first began to take place in North America (Ardorno and Horkheimer 1973, Hebdige 1988, Nava 1991, Olsen 1994, Pavitt 2000). From a North American perspective, Olsen (1994) suggests that the American Civil War was the driver of the early stages of mass production, which together with other social factors, saw the beginning of a departure from home produced commodities to branded

products – branding being used to denote a known standard of quality and enable instant recognition. This was considered to be particularly relevant at this time due to the vast amount of migration and immigration. For those moving within the USA, for example from isolated rural communities into urban industrialisation centres, and for the increasing numbers of European immigrants into the USA, the familiarity of branded, packaged goods was a welcome antidote in a confusing and anonymous social world (Olsen 1994, Ewen 1994), something that is just as applicable today in the current social environment of impermanence, change and uncertainty (Cooper 1999). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as price competition began to give way to product differentiation, legal aspects began to develop as branding provided a means of safeguarding commodities through the registration of trademarks (Olsen 1994).

Slater (1997:30) reinforces the significances of the role of marketing and advertising in shaping modern consumer culture in the mid twentieth century. Arguing that in order to embrace 'modern society' it was deemed necessary to seek material comfort through the consumption of material goods, he states that:

> the burgeoning advertising and marketing of this era were selling not just consumer goods, but consumerism itself as the shining path to modernity: they incited their publics to modernize themselves, modernize their homes, their means of transport.

The increasing level of North American influence within Britain was prompted by an increasing alliance between New World wealth and European social 'distinction' in the late nineteenth century (Nava 1991, 1997). At the beginning of the twentieth century, social and cultural change was being transformed as new modes of mass production paved the way into the Fordist era, the birth of mass consumption and the emergence of modern consumer society (Lee 1993). The production (and consumption) of goods was the focus of economic activity (Firat and Dholakia 1998), and in agreement with other writers, Lee (1993) suggests that the regime referred to as Fordism epitomises the general transformation of social life that that took place post Second World War and lasted until the early 1960s. Within the UK, the late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed ever greater awareness and interest in the political and cultural climate in the USA stimulated by the

influence of American GIs during and just after the Second World War (Nava 1991). During the Second World War, North American branded goods (cigarettes, chocolate, silk stockings and Coca-Cola in particular) were consumed and dispersed in vast quantities by U.S. troops overseas, and came to be viewed as synonymous with the image of North America as the land of plenty. Significantly, during the Second World War, and the Vietnam and Korean Wars, certain products became symbolic identifiers of homeland and national values, for example Coca-Cola not only acted as a drink, but as a symbolic remainder of home and of what the troops were fighting for (Pavitt 2001). Indeed, Coca-Cola is described by Pendergrast (1994:292) as 'the sublimated image of everything America stands for'.

The development of mass production and the means of mass distribution, such as improved transport, infrastructure and telecommunications, coupled with other factors such as affluence through real gains in wages, changing attitudes as a counteraction to war-time austerity (Walvin 1978), the application of welfare rights and principles of social and consumer democracy formed the basis for modern consumer society, and the emergence of a producer/commodity/consumer culture (Lee 1993, Olsen 1994, Firat and Dholakia 1998). Again, advertising played a role as a major driving force behind the move away from home produced commodities - depicted as being out-moded and anti-progress - to branded products, the consumption of which was promoted as the way to satisfaction. For the consumer packaged, branded goods conveyed assurances in terms of hygiene, quality and consistency, easing the burden of shopping by simplifying choice, reducing time and increasing confidence (Strasser 1989). Indeed, this is still significant – as Cooper (1999) asserts, rapid rates of change and increasing time pressures mean that consumers are continually seeking reassurance and the simplification of shopping by choosing packaged, convenience, time-saving products.

Thus branded products increasingly became symbols of social aspiration and acceptance (Lee 1993). Supporting McCracken's (1988) theory of cultural meaning transfer, Lee suggests that advertising contributed to the education of women by the communication of new familial and domestic ideologies, emphasising how the benefits of consumer goods would improve their lives and re-affirm their cultural roles within society and the household. This excerpt from an interview with an American company executive

illustrates the attitude of the time towards the power of marketing (as a motivational manipulating force) in shaping social conformity:

> Properly manipulated ('if you are not afraid of that word', he said), American housewives can be given the sense of identity, purpose, creativity, the self-realization, even the sexual joy they lack – by the buying of things (Freidan 1965:5).

As King and McDonald (1996) argue, there was increased realisation of the need for organisations to understand consumer wants - thus heralding the emergence of a much more consumer orientated marketing approach: 'As markets moved from seller to buyer, new ideas of 'marketing' were taking hold. Companies began to grasp the importance of understanding what the consumers really wanted; it could no longer be assumed to be the same as it always had' (King and McDonald 1996:7). By the beginning of the 1960s, there was increasing acceptance of the association between brand named goods and certain attributes such as quality, reliability and guarantees. The brand names of major North American organisations such as Coca Cola, Kelloggs, Ford, Frigdaire and Hoover had become familiar to British consumers, together with their attendant associations and significances (Lee 1993). Similarly, the brand names of British products such as Oxo and Cadbury's began to be recognised as the principle carrier of meaning – or 'the real thing' rather than the generic name for the good. However, despite the awareness of the symbolic significance of goods, marketing remained determinedly positivistic. Marketers continued to adopt a predominantly supply sided view of brands, the emotive power of the brand was largely unrecognised and the brand was treated as the extended product – that is, product plus name or symbol (Hanby 1999).

2.4 From Modernity to Postmodernism - Implications for Branding

Postmodernism is considered as a time of the emergence of new perspectives on life and the human condition, as Cova (1996:15) asserts, postmodernism: 'hails a radically new and different cultural movement coalescing in a broadly gauged re-conceptualization of how we experience and explain the world around us'. Certainly many of the characteristics

generally associated with postmodernism have significant implications for marketing, and indeed for any field that is dependent on an understanding of contemporary consumption behaviour. With specific reference to leisure, Firat and Venkatesh (1995) argue that within postmodernism, leisure consumption is taking the place of production as the major source of meaning in consumers lives.

There is considerable debate as to the timing of the dawning of postmodernism, and similarly a range of very complex and diverse perspectives on 'postmodernity' and the 'postmodern condition'. In particular, this has been debated within the fields of philosophy and sociology by eminent French writers such as Baudrillard, Lyotard and Foucault, and there are diverse views and interpretations on the influences and implications of postmodernism on Western culture and society across a range of disciplines. These include: consumer research (Hirschman and Holbrook 1992, Firat and Venkatesh 1993, 1995, Firat and Shultz 1997, Thompson 2000, Holt 2002), marketing (Brown 1995, 1997, Lannon 1997, Elliott 1997) management (Cova 1996) sociology (Urry 1990b, 2002) and tourism (Feifer 1985, Pretes 1995, Ritzer and Liska 1997, Ryan 2002, Hollinshead 2002).

While some writers consider 'the modern' and 'the postmodern' eras as being quite distinct, others see it as being more of a gradual transition. Lee (1993:139) argues that postmodernism is held to be a 'periodising concept' which articulates a certain contemporary cultural condition and is expressed through a 'distinctive mode of aesthetics and cultural practice'. Indeed, the 1960s was a decade of changes in art, architecture, music, film and advertising and is often considered the time of the emergence of postmodernism (Holt 2002). The 1970s saw the eventual demise of Fordism, as positivist, scientific, functional, rational and ordered modernist thinking (where production was the central focus) increasingly gave way to the 'postmodern turn' (Thompson 2000:120). Kincheloe and McLaren, (1994:142) while acknowledging the ongoing debate about the meaning of postmodernism, agree with Lee that it is a 'periodising concept following modernism'. However, other writers argue that the evolvement of postmodernism is much more gradual – and that we are still in a period of transition. Rather than considering it as a periodising time, it is argued (Cova 1996, Firat and Dholakia 1998, Firat and Schultz 2000), that we are in a transitionary period from modernity to postmodernity which is leading to very different consumption perspectives and behaviour (Firat 2002). Similarly

Urry (2002:77) suggests that postmodernism is a 'cultural paradigm' or an 'ideal type' rather than a term which is applied to a particular single activity or as the blanket term embracing the whole of society. He is in agreement with other writers (Thompson 2000, Firat 2002) in asserting that there are other, parallel cultural paradigms within society and it is possible to 'be more *or* less postmodern (US more than Sweden)' (Urry 2002:77), and that rather than being a new phenomenon, the traits and expressions attributed to postmodernism were always present during modernity, and vice versa.

Firat (2002) argues that modernity was characterised by a belief in the scientific/technological underpinning of the 'modern project' (that is, in the search for universal truth and objective knowledge), thus as human beings and 'knowing subjects' we can control what our own fate is and work towards attaining the 'good life' through adherence to economic principles. In his explanation he uses the metaphor of theatre as a construct for life, arguing that the theatre of modernity is a stage managed by a few 'conductors' who set the goals and direct the means to reach them – we are all merely detached actors on this stage who willingly follow these directions. He argues that in the transition period we are increasingly seeking liberation from market dominance through the construction of alternative theatres (or social spaces), where individuals come together as equals for a period of time and (re)create their identities through immersion in the experience, creating meaning in the present. He terms this multiplicit behaviour as multiphrenic, stating that consumers are playful with identity, and are non-committal, exhibiting fluid movement from theatre to theatre according to whim. Significantly, he also acknowledges the significance of consumption and the marketplace, for in order to become immersed in the experience, it is necessary to purchase the means with which to do so.

The prevailing characteristics of postmodern culture are suggested by many writers who recognise the rapidity of change and turbulence of this time, and its significant impacts on society (Jameson 1984a, Baudrillard 1988, Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Lee 1993, Brown 1993, Jameson (1984a), Firat and Dholakia 1998, Bauman 1998, Firat and Shultz 1997, Bauman 1998, Cooper 1999, Hollinshead 2000). These are relevant to this study and the understanding of contemporary tourism marketing and consumption behaviour. Hyperreality is considered a key signifier - that is, reality stems from visionary projections

of what is in fact imagined and unreal, which then – via communication and simulation – becomes to be believed and accepted as reality. A world where the virtual and the real merge together and are inseparable and all is represented on the surface, with no depth or substance beneath and nothing hidden behind the façade. As Firat and Schultz (2001:191) state:

> Acceptance of hyperreality, fragmentation and paradox, along with the loss of commitment to singular ways of being, for example, give the postmodern consumer a playful character, making him/her ready and able to navigate, sample and playfully construct different and multiple, be it transitory, (consumption) experiences and selves or self-images.

Hyperreality is evident in the loss of authenticity (where the inauthentic is more 'real' than the authentic) and in the focus on image, simulation, and the fantasisation of experience. Certainly, links can be drawn between this notion of hyperreality and the preoccupation with surface images, the growing desire for 'consumption experiences' (increasingly formulated and themed where reality is juxtaposed and becomes blurred with hyperreality), the sense of play, and tourism. For example themed restaurants, pubs and Disneyesque shopping malls, IMAX cinema, 'edutainment' such as living history experiences and thematized reconstructions in regenerated inner cities, all with the attendant loss of a sense of authenticity and what is 'real' (Ritzer and Liska, 1997, Poster 1988, Pavitt 2000, Julier 2000, Baker 2000, Hollinshead 2002).

Alterations in political structure and ideologies, increasingly intensified rates of communication, greater social mobility, cultural and demographic changes, geographic redefinition and new modes of consumption have resulted in a faster paced, more flexible, cosmopolitan social landscape. In the 'reversal of production and consumption' (Firat and Schultz 1997:3), the emphasis is on experiential and existential gratification, and cultural capital - modernist production orientation having given way to a culture of aspiration and instant satisfaction attainable through consumption. Jameson's (1984) pre-occupation with the immediacy, instantaneousness, pastiche and impermanence of consumption in contemporary society, alludes to fragmentation and juxtaposition and the influences of

marketing activity on consumption behaviour. This is a view that is echoed by Firat and Shultz (1997), Bauman (1998) and Jameson (1984:146), who talks of :

> ... new types of consumption ... planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and media generally to a hitherto unparalleled degree throughout society.

Similarly, Bauman (1998, 2000) observes the speed, fragmentation and 'contrary values' that characterise postmodern life. Terming it 'liquid modernity' (as distinct from fixed, static modernity) he argues that it is signified by fluidity, by a 'need' to travel widely, freely, and often, and a fear of stagnation in terms of confinement and being unable to access the pleasures (and places) that others access at will. Indeed, in his discussion on the socialisation of globalisation, he argues that technological advancement (in particular the development of the World Wide Web) has completely negated the notion of 'distance' (that is to be travelled) by information – which he now argues, 'floats independently from its carriers', thus presenting information to a world-wide audience instantaneously, resulting in a 'time/space compression' (Bauman 1998:14). In a marketing context, fragmentation is evident in the proliferation of distribution and communication channels, the breaking down of markets into increasingly smaller segments and the need for critically focused 'micro-marketing' and to understand consumers on an individual level.

Correspondingly there is an increasing lack of commitment to any grand design or idea and a propensity to consider life as a series of unrelated experiences (Cooper 1999, Firat 2002). Cooper (1999:7) states that in the search for experience, people are increasingly returning to nature, to play, and escaping into spiritualism, and that there is increasing propensity for:

> ... more spending on technology; new and different relationships via the internet; serial lives; preoccupation with self, individualism and self expression; focus on the body, play, and products that excite and delight the senses ....

Echoing Ewan's (1994) awareness of the societal cycle of the acquisition and disposal of goods and styles, Slater draws on the metaphor of a fancy dress party to highlight the juxtaposition of identity and consumption. He acknowledges the fluidity, the impermanence, the living in a perpetual present and the lack of any solid grounding in meaning which characterise postmodern consumption:

> Goods can always signify social identity, but in the fluid processes of a post-traditional society, identity seems to be more a function of consumption rather that the other, traditional, way round. The extreme version of this is found in the idea of postmodernity: society appears as a kind of fancy dress party in which identities are designed, tried on, worn for the evening and then traded for the next. Appearances – the images we construct on the surfaces of our bodies, our living spaces, our manners and our voices – become a crucial way of knowing and identifying ourselves and each other.... In the new, modern world we rely on appearances, but only in the old world did those appearances have reliable meanings, were they fixed items in a fixed code (Slater 1997:197).

It is interesting to note the way that brand names enter the postmodern dialogue, juxtaposed with adjectives to describe the role of consumption in the pursuit of postmodern goals (Thompson 2000, Holt 2002). Several writers draw on the same example of Harley Davidson; for example in his postmodern critique, Thompson (2000:131) uses this and other brands to illustrate the fragmentary and consumption driven behaviour of postmodern consumers:

> ...upper middle-class, paunchy (despite three-times a week on the Stairmaster), Viagra popping, baby-boomer executives can play Hell's Angels on the weekend with their other like-minded/ bodied top-of-the-line Harley riding cohorts ....

Consumption orientation and other characteristics of postmodernism are clearly evident as features of contemporary society. Brands have developed from mere signs of

identification to pervade the very fabric of social life – through their associations and personalities they have the power to enhance lives, to influence behaviour and even provide a measure of familiarity, stability and anchorage in an increasingly fragmented and uncertain world.

2.5 Tourism: Towards Postmodernism and the Post-Tourist

Tourism influences, and is influenced by social and cultural evolution. In the twentieth century, tourism and the consumption of holidays and leisure, has changed dramatically and in the next sub section I draw on the earlier discussion to consider tourism marketing within the context of modernism and postmodernism.

Just as the origins of branding are believed to date back several thousand years; early travel for pleasure in the form of religious festivals, pilgrimage, and visits to sites of interest can be traced back almost three thousand years to the days of the Egyptian and Greek empires. Many of the attendant facilities, amenities and accoutrements that are still associated with tourism today developed consequently, including transport and accommodation, refreshment vendors, souvenirs, guides and even advertisements (Holloway 1994, Urry 2002). However, it was the industrial revolution that sparked a major increase in travel for pleasure and education. Inglis (2000) asserts that the emergence of the consumer is coincident with that of pleasure tourism, and a direct result of industrial society and the modern political economy. The role of tourism in the definition of social standing at this time is exemplified by the quest for health and entertainment at the fashionable spas, and self-discovery through the Grand Tour of the main cultural centres of Europe (Holloway 1994, MacCannell 1999, Ingis 2000). Travelling for education and pleasure was very much the domain of the wealthy, upper classes. Travel was costly in terms of money and time, but just as lengthy educational tours throughout Europe became established as a rite of passage for young, predominantly male, members of the privileged classes; seasonal visits to exclusive and fashionable spa towns such as Bath, became an established social custom of the times.

While pleasure travel at this time remained predominantly the domain of the wealthy, in parallel with other industrialised nations, technological and social change in Britain was opening up the opportunity for affordable and accessible mass travel. In the mid-nineteenth century, the railways carried 100 million passengers, by the beginning of the twentieth century, there were 1,000 million (Ingis 2000). However, at this time, in terms of social activity, paid work was considered to be of distinct contrast to leisure – which was increasingly linked to travel away from the home domain, organized as a very specific, predictable, occasional activity. The railway companies themselves, and entrepreneurs such as Thomas Cook seized upon the opportunities offered by the growth of mass transport, and engaged in the competitive development of inclusive tour and excursion products - comprising information, transport, transfers, accommodation and guided tours – which were affordable to the working and middle classes. According to Urry (1988:37), this increasing propensity and ability to travel away from home and work for the purposes of 'leisure' typifies 'modern consumer culture'. However, it is important to note that here, the distinction between work time/place and leisure (tourism) time/place was very marked. From the mid decades of the twentieth century when holidays with pay began to become the expected 'norm', until the much later part of the century, tourism for the masses was considered very much a special, regular and regulated annual or even bi-annual family event (in terms of strict timing in the annual calendar of events – hence the annual 'wakes weeks' when whole industrialised communities closed for the same one or two week period during the summer). A key feature of the modern project, it was carefully planned, saved for, anticipated and, long after it was over, remembered and re-experienced thorough documented and preserved archival evidence such as photographs and treasured souvenirs.

2.6 Tourism Destinations, Brands and Social Distinction

Despite the developments in attitudes and behaviour in terms of travel for pleasure, social distinctions were significant differentiators between British resorts (Morgan and Pritchard 1999). Class demarcation and destination brand associations were evident in the popularity of certain resorts and destinations with different strata of society. Blackpool's planned development as a middle-class holiday resort on the Lancashire coast, and its subsequent, abiding evolvement and position as a premier working-class holiday

destination, was largely a result of geography and transport planning. The combined factors of its proximity to the mill towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the mining and industrial centres of Tyneside, Wales, the Midlands and south Scotland, the introduction of paid holidays, accessibility via an efficient rail network, and the affordability of a second class ticket all contributed to the image, and success, of Blackpool. While Urry (2002:2) argues that the 'social tone' of the destinations was attributed to factors of land ownership and scenic attributes, other resorts such as Blackpool's close neighbour Lytham St Annes, and in the south of England, resorts such as Torquay, and Hove made efforts to ensure 'exclusivity' and retain the image and associations of middle and upper class gentility. This was even at the expense of discouraging lower class visitors (Morgan and Pritchard 1999).

In the years between the two World Wars, holiday resorts began to be promoted as branded destinations. They were at pains to develop, primarily through advertising, a range of associations with attractions and amenities as the quality of the air, the length of the pier, the range of activities and so on. Skegness, for example primarily targeted the working and lower middle classes and was marketed as 'Bright, Breezy and Bracing', with advertising images of a ruddy faced fisherman frolicking on the beach against a background of sea and blue sky (Julier 2000). On the other hand, Torquay's target audience were the wealthy middle and even the upper classes, and it was positioned in competition with the fashionable resorts of the French Riviera, such as Cannes and St. Tropez. Even in this era, appeal to the emotional rather than the rational was evident through images of the exotic such as palm trees and fashionable people, coupled with the strapline 'The English Riviera' (Morgan and Pritchard 1999:115).

In response to the shortage of holiday accommodation for the working classes of the industrial centres, and social changes that heralded the paid holiday as a result of the Holidays with Pay Act (1938), Billy Butlin developed the concept of the holiday camp, the first one opening in Skegness in 1936 (Holloway 1994, Julier 2000). The precursor of the all- inclusive family holiday, the holiday camp was the epitomy of modernism (Urry 1988). First and foremost an all round experience, the concept included everything from accommodation, food, use of facilities to organised entertainment and babysitting, all for an affordable pre-paid sum. 'Butlins' and 'Pontins' branded holiday camps bundled

together all the components of a British family holiday experience in one pre-paid package. As Urry (1988:48) argues, it was 'Fordist holiday-making', and these brand names became synonymous with the 'hi di hi' cheerful commercialism of collective, organised, inclusive sea-side holidays of the 1950s and 1960s.

Consumer benefits of these early branded all inclusive holiday packages included risk reduction - in that the holiday was of a known, standard format and level of quality that was pre-paid before departure; they reduced decision making in terms of time and stress, and reduced social risk in terms of 'belonging' to a certain social class. For the organisation, the benefits of an identifiable brand included competitive advantage, presenting a barrier to new entrants and, perhaps most importantly it promoted loyalty - indeed, Pontins and Butlins relied heavily on a loyal following of repeat visitors. In fact, for many it was the perfect holiday package of the time – when as previously argued, the clearly defined and regulated annual leisure time entitlement was a highly important convention in family life, and often took on the form of 'ritual' in the way that people very often returned to the same place at the same time - this often resulted in the development of lasting friendships (with other holidaymakers and staff), and meeting up with these friends year after year became an important part of the experience.

2.7 Mass Tourism and the Emergence of the Package Holiday

The evolution of mass tourism and the subsequent emergence of the inclusive overseas package holiday can be linked to the development of mass production in manufacturing industries post-Second World War. During the period of postwar reconstruction in the 1950s, the idea of tourism as a method of helping the economy through the generation of income, employment and foreign exchange began to be adopted by the governments of developed nations. Similarly, in the 1960s developing countries also became aware of the perceived economic advantages of encouraging inward tourism. Socially, attitudes towards leisure and holidays began to change, and holidays presented an opportunity for a new kind of freedom. This can partly be attributed to the years of war-time austerity, an example being the metaphoric freedom from the confines of social and economic corsetry exemplified in the exhibition of the first bikini (named after the South Pacific atoll used for

nuclear tests) by Louis Ricard in Paris in 1946. In contrast to the previous era (when there was considerable social currency placed on the preservation of a pale complexion), the suntan increasingly became a signifier of modernity - the suntan denoted health and also social status – that is, having the financial and motivational ability to travel beyond northern shores to sunny destinations. Many people had experienced travel either directly or indirectly during the war years, and this, together with better telecommunications gave rise to heightened awareness and interest in overseas travel for recreational and leisure purposes. Coupled with this were post-war changes in labour legislation and the provision of paid holiday entitlement, prosperity, political stability and advances in technology (Poon 1993, Laws 1997). Just as these factors drove the mass manufacturing market and led to the term 'Fordism' to label the era of standardised, mass produced offerings at a fixed price to the mass market, so they drove the development of the standard, packaged, inclusive overseas air tour which was pivotal factor to the development of mass tourism.

The package holiday is an ideal example of a composite tourism product - comprised of a number of components that the tour operator bundles together into a standardised package, which is offered to consumers at a single, inclusive price. In the same way as the mass production of manufactured goods, tour operators work on the basis of economies of scale, the various components are purchased in advance, usually in bulk and the operators wield considerable buying power over suppliers. Costs can be offset against economies of scale and the resultant standardised packaged 'products' are constructed and offered to a mass market at set, affordable prices. Poon (1993) suggests some key features of mass, packaged holidays which illustrate the similarities between the typical packaged holiday and mass produced manufactured products: very rigidly packaged; totally inflexible; lack of differentiation between markets and products; produced through the mass replication of identical units, with scale economies as the driving force. The components of a package are laid down by legislation in the form of the 1991 Directive on Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours (90-314-EEC). Accordingly, a 'package' is: ' the pre-arranged combination of not fewer than two of the following when sold or offered for sale at an inclusive price and when the service covers a period of more than 24 hours or includes overnight accommodation: transport; accommodation; other tourist services not ancillary to transport or accommodation and accounting for a significant proportion of the package (Downes 1996:35).

Despite the demise of the Fordist epoch, the growth of individualism, and a very turbulent four decades for the tour operating industry, there have been few changes of significance regarding the basic nature of the package holiday. Several writers argue that factors such as growing environmental concern, improved technology and more demanding and experienced consumers are leading to more individuality in package holidays (Bywater 1992, Poon 1993, Laws 1997). Certainly operators are now offering a wider range of ostensibly 'differentiated' products – targeting demographically and lifestyle/lifestage defined populations, accordingly producing a plethora of sub-branded offerings, with a wider variety of 'value added' amenities and activities, and a far greater range of destinations. However the industry itself seems to be in a transition phase between the modernist strictures of mass produced, standardised offerings and the emergence of a more individualised and finely targeted 'postmodern' approach. Despite increased 'individuality', the basic premise is unchanged – as per their very nature, package holidays still operate on the basis of mass production - scale economy, standardised, large scale transport and accommodation, tight organisation and inflexibility, at a fixed price.

However, there have been significant changes in the behaviour of consumers relative to holiday taking and choice. In the early days of the package holiday, during the 1960s and 1970s, consumers were socio-psychologically predisposed towards mass, standardised and inflexible offerings (Poon 1993). Largely naïve and inexperienced when it came to overseas travel, it was considered exciting with quite a high level of perceived risk – and accordingly, consumers placed a significant amount of trust in the operator. Mediterranean destinations such as Spain and the Balearics were considered exotic and aspirational by a UK mass market newly introduced to overseas holidays. Ad hoc resorts were developed quickly along the coastlines of these countries, with little consideration of aesthetics or environment, merely to satisfy the demand for large scale, standardised accommodation, and amenities. The fact that holidays were 'packaged' was considered an important factor – once the decision to take a holiday was made, all the various components were organised by the operator – it was only necessary to 'turn up and take off'. There was a huge element of risk reduction – it offered a way of travelling overseas within a safe, familiar 'environmental bubble' (Cohen 1972, Farell 1979, Smith 1989, Holloway 1994). Financially, pre-payment was an important factor up until the 1970s when the £50 per person foreign currency allowance was relaxed. There was a significant

status element – a dark tan indicating not only financial prowess, but also the aura of having experienced something quite different. Until the 1980s, the annual two week summer holiday was a major life event for the majority of people, and planning for the next year's holiday would often begin soon after the return (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). The decision process was considered to be complex, involving an extensive information search and consultation with a number of individuals and groups within and outside of the decision making unit.

However, as technology has advanced, transportation costs have fallen, and consumers have become increasingly confident, the package holiday destination can be virtually anywhere in the world that is considered 'safe' and cost effective by tour operators. Analogously, patterns of holiday taking have changed considerably. Despite increased holiday entitlements, there is steadily increasing pressure on time, people work longer hours, partly as a result of increasing job insecurity and changing employment conditions. There is also a significant increase in the numbers of self-employed people who have more flexibility in their working patterns and can therefore take holidays at short notice (Mintel 2002). The indications are that the holiday has changed from being a major annual event, to one of several taken throughout the year, being considered as routine and often planned at short notice. These factors are resulting in growing propensity to take several holidays a year – giving rise to what is termed 'multi-holiday consumers' (Mintel 1998). While the numbers of people not taking holidays has remained remarkably constant, there is a significant increase of the number of holidays taken. Many people now feel a strong need for at least two satisfying, stress-relieving holidays a year, supplementing a main summer holiday with two or even three shorter breaks. Indeed, although since 9/11 there has been an increased risk in travel, generally travel is no longer considered particularly dangerous and it is a constant challenge for consumers and tour organisers to find destinations that are sufficiently 'exotic'.

There is considerable speculation over the future of independent travel, and the future of the packaged holiday. Greater consumer confidence about independent bookings, greater awareness and ease of booking facilitation due to the development of internet distribution, the success of the 'low cost' airlines and cheap seat only air transport are significant factors in the rise of multi- holidays (Mintel 1999b). Recent statistics indicate that the

proportion of package holidays taken as a percentage of all overseas holidays has remained fairly static over the past ten years. The number of inclusive tours taken as a proportion of overseas holidays has increased year on year and is currently 55 per cent - a figure that has changed little over the past decade (Mintel 2002). In 1998, the British are estimated to have taken 32 million overseas holidays, with 17.43 million overseas package holidays being sold in 1998 (Mintel 1999a), and 19.07 million in 1999 (Johnson 2002) – however Johnson predicts a proportional decrease in the numbers of package holidays in the next few years.

Despite the speculation, the package holiday currently remains the most popular form of holiday in the UK, and of the 20.05 million overseas package holidays sold in the year 2000, 75 per cent were booked via travel agents (BBC 2001). These statistics indicate that while the growth is slowing relative to the number of holidays taken, there is little evidence of significant decline in packaged holidays. Indeed, it is likely that in a society where people are under increasing pressures the demand for packaged and organised holidays offerings that reduce the organisation and minimise hardships will grow. For example, research in the field of telecommunications supports the argument that increasingly time constrained consumers are seeking convenience and ease of purchase in a 'package'. The pre-paid mobile telephone has achieved phenomenal success, despite the inferior quality of telephones, the high running costs and the inflexibility of the operating conditions. Research concluded that its success was due to the attractiveness of the 'phone in a box' – purchasing a package reduced stress and risk, cutting out complex information search and decisions; pre-payment with no contracts to sign and wide distribution through a number of high street retail outlets (Dawson 2000).

Today's consumer is multi-faceted and changes purchasing habits and products according to the time and the circumstances. It can therefore be argued, that for many, the package holiday is simply one holiday experience which offers convenience and good value – a fairly routine low involvement, low brand commitment purchase that offers an experience at a previously agreed and paid price. Price and accessibility are likely to be the primary decision factors, and therein lies the paradox – while it is widely acknowledged that consumers are seeking greater individuality and autonomy, package holidays are still popular with many different types of people. It is arguable that while the facility may

continue, the way they are used may alter. Considering the level of price competition in the market, package holidays are relatively cheap and certainly prolific. Consumers are increasingly likely to juxtapose elements of the package such as transport and accommodation with independently acquired elements, thus creating their own individualised experiences – exhibiting characteristics of postmodern consumption behaviour. Additionally, there is greater emphasis on the experiential aspects, and on self-actualisation and 'the myth of me' (Lawson and Samson 1988:432). Products are increasingly promoted as satisfying higher level needs (Maslow 1943) such as self reward and self actualisation - for example, the cosmetic firm L'Oreal's strapline 'because I'm worth it'.

The 'paperchase' effect (Featherstone 1997:18) is where those deemed to be in the higher groups of society constantly seek to acquire positional goods (Hirsch 1976) as current goods are usurped by the lower and aspiring groups. This has long been in evidence within tourism, and currently it can be seen in the ever increasing emphasis on 'exclusivity and individuality', the proliferation of designer hotels and resorts and the seeking of adventure and risk in tourism experience – indeed, a symptom of the search for out of the ordinary, individual, customised and unique experiences. Associations of status and self-actualisation are still key factors in the choice and enhancement of holiday experiences – and are increasingly linked with lifestyle images. Smith (1979:6) notes the importance of status in destination choice, when Californian middle class consumers were motivated to travel to prestigious resorts by the desire to reinforce their projected self-image - to 'keep up with the Joneses'. Today the prestige of the destination is still paramount as evidenced through the features and promotions in lifestyle magazines such as Condè Nast Traveller. The success of the low cost airlines has grown the market for overseas travel at short notice and at whim. Here again it is likely that consumers take advantage of the low transport prices and choose to enhance the holiday experience through high quality and status accommodation, restaurants and shopping. However, there is acknowledgement that while consumers are increasingly seeking new and individual experiences, the world is running out of 'exotic' and 'exclusive' destinations. In the twenty first century, the ease and affordability of world-wide travel, have left few places that are inaccessible to the masses.

2.8 Consumption, Experience and the Postconsumer

A central tenet of postmodern society is that consumption, rather than production becomes the focus, and that objects are packaged, commodified and consumed (Pretes 1995). As Appadurai (1986) somewhat fleetingly acknowledges, services should (also) be considered as commodities, thus in this sense tourism is no different from any other good offered for sale in the marketplace. Indeed it is argued that tourism is increasingly becoming commodified (Britton 1991). Brown (1992) recognises tourism as a form of consumptive behaviour, and Calder (2001) indicates the change in attitude towards the planning and nature of tourism participation, stating that tourism products are commodities to be picked off the shelves at will. Similarly, Boorstin (1992) asserts that compared to the past, participating in tourism is now a very simple undertaking, arguing that there is little work or indeed adventure involved, and that in fact tourism has been reduced to a packaged commodity. However, tourism must be considered as far more than merely a commodity to be consumed – indeed, in the postmodern sense it is something to be played with, to be used by the consumer in an myriad of ways, to enhance life and lifestyles, and even to develop self worth and identity. Within tourism, it is essential to embrace the argument of Firat and Dholakia (1998:99), who refer to the experiential aspects of consumption, asserting that modernist understanding of 'commodity' should not be confused with postmodern consumption:

> ... consumers become producers in constructing selves, self-images, and meaningful experiences by immersing themselves into simulated processes. Consumption is not an end but just another moment in the continuous cycle of (re)production. Perhaps most important in this process is the signification and representation activities in which subjects and objects – subjects as objects, not in the modern sense of commercialisation and commodification when the object is presented to the market, but rather in the sense of constructed/produced selves – collaborate and conspire to enchant lives through the creation of experiential moments.

Increasing fragmentation is acknowledged as a key characteristic of postmodernism - as Firat and Dholakia (1998:83) state, it is 'reflected in the everyday life and being of the consumer'. Arguing that life is now almost completely dominated by products 'bought in the marketplace', consumers' lives have become fragmented, punctuated by a range of separate, independent consumption tasks (i.e. the task of consuming each product), connected only with the other tasks through such 'narratives of purpose, [such as] a healthy life, a long life, an enjoyable life, etc.' It is also argued that rather than seeking centered, unified purposes, postmodern consumers are increasingly seeking meaning and good feelings through a variety of experiences and the associated images (Firat and Dholakia 1998).

Firat (1997) applies the term 'postconsumer' to today's consumers. He argues that, whereas the modern consumer was largely concerned with the functionality of use of the products and services they possessed – consumption being rather a necessity of life rather than a goal – for the postconsumer, consumption takes on a different signification. He suggests that the search for meaning in experience is now paramount – that is, the postconsumer seeks to construct life through a process of experimentation (because of disenchantment with modernist grand ideals of what life should be) resulting in a balancing act of fragmented, different, independent but nonetheless meaningful, experiences. He asserts that the postconsumer immerses him/her self into these consumption experiences and asks 'am I finding meaning in this? Is it enjoyable? Does it construct (or allow me to construct) a life experience that I would like to experience again? (Firat 1997:84). Placing this in a tourism context, MacCannell (1976) argues that in a world dominated by global corporations and bureaucracy, all sense of individuality and reality has been lost and thus tourism is a way for people to find some meaning in life, the 'authentic experience' in a world of shallow, corporate complexity.

Jameson (1984a) uses the analogy of schizophrenia to characterize the 'postmodern subject' with the increasing tendency for juxtaposition, lack of commitment and eclecticism. However, Firat and Schultz (2001), while in total agreement as to the multiplicit, transitory and fragmentary nature of the post modern subject, nonetheless argue that the term 'schizophrenic' has pathological overtones – with the attendant implication of lack of conscience and control over the different selves. Instead, they suggest that the use

of their term 'multiphrenic' connotes conscious and acquiescent action as enhancement of experience. The overriding indication then is that the postmodern consumer is multi-faceted and dynamic, with personal lives and identities that are characterised by disjointedness and discontinuity (Firat and Venkatesh 1993). This postmodern preoccupation with consumption focus, fragmentation, signification and the experiential is equally applicable in defining the characteristics of contemporary tourism – and thus has great significance for studies of tourism consumption behaviour. The term 'post-tourists' (Feifer 1985, Urry 1988, 1990b, 2002) has been coined to describe tourists who exhibit postmodern characteristics. Post-tourists have a high awareness of themselves in their role as tourists together with tourism and all its trappings. They choose from a range of tourism offerings, accepting the hyperreality and in-authenticity of the spectacles and commodified packages, they ironically manipulate the signs, symbols and performances for their own amusement and pleasure:

> 'Post-tourists' find pleasure in the multiplicity of tourist games. They know that there is no authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played (Urry 2002:12).

Other writers also acknowledge the experiential nature of tourism consumption (Pretes 1995, Ryan 1995b, Firat 2001b). Indeed, throughout the literature on postmodern consumption, tourism metaphors and examples are used to illustrate the acknowledgement that life is constructed through multiple experiences. Bauman (1983:83) further iterates the transitory and unceasing search for meaningful experience by postmodern consumers, and he also draws an interesting parallel between tourism and postmodern society. He actually uses the metaphor of tourist and tourism for the postmodern consumer condition. Describing the postmodern consumer as a 'fun loving adventurer' he argues that consumers within a consumption society move through life as tourists within a tourism landscape – characterised by lack of permanence and commitment, constantly on the move, seeking new experiences and instant gratification and the merging of reality and virtuality. He argues that 'consumers are first and foremost gatherers of *sensations*; they are collectors of *things* only in a secondary and derivative sense'.

Thematised environments such as theme parks, destinations such as Las Vegas and 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin, 1992), are often studied and used to epitomse postmodern features such as hyperreality, pastiche, fragmentation, and juxtaposition. Based on his recent research in Las Vegas, Firat (2001) uses it to exemplify postmodern characteristics, such as the search for meaning through a variety of experiences. He notes that movement rather than arrival becomes the goal (as opposed to the modern systems when the goal was to arrive and movement was the way to reach the goal). He uses the example of 'The Strip' in Las Vegas as an experience in itself and also as a space which, rather than connecting people, moves them from one individual, unconnected experience (the attractions and hotels) to another:

> The Strip does not capture or connect the public, the crowds, but moves them; it allows the flow and the speed. On the Strip, the points of interest, the hotels, are for momentary rest and momentary experience, a fleeting gaze and immersion into experiences to be sampled along the way, in motion....These momentary experiences energize the motion. While in the modern organization of the city the plazas characterised containment of the public, representing the lull in motion as the important/essential moment, the Strip declares the triumph of the motion/flow as the enduring moment of postmodern life (Firat 2002:108).

He also considers that the hyperreal, thematized hotels and attractions such as Caesar's Palace are entering our everyday reality through the development of shopping centres and cities, and the blurring of the real and unreal – the way in which increasingly the fantasy is integral to the experience of the real. Using the volcano in front of the Mirage Hotel as an example, he states that in response to his (voiced) observation that this volcano was not real, it was repeatedly considered 'just a different experience', and quotes another who remarked that: 'I was in Hawaii not long ago and the excitement there was also grand' (Firat 2001:111).

Other consumer researchers have also used a tourism context. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) considered 'packaged' tourism experiences such as white water rafting to illustrate

the need to shed the burdens of the (unreal) daily working life, and search for the true self. Tourism environments and destinations are considered as fragmented pastiches, characterised by the surface depthlessness of entertainment, spectacle and carnival and the juxtaposition of facts and fantasy, history and present, mixed with irony and parody (Feifer 1985, MacCannell 1992, Selwyn 1990, 1996, Firat and Dholakia 1998, Firat 2001). So, we have the repeated notion of the multiphrenic postconsumer - of 'touristic' consumption as a way of constructing meaning in life, of the experiential and sensational aspects (rather than the functionality), of whim and opportunism, of fragmentation and lack of commitment, of the present and exploration of meaning in experience.

It is argued here, therefore that tourism can be considered a postmodern consumption experience. Rather than in the past, where, as discussed in the previous section, holidays and tourism were regular, long planned for, infrequent events, a number of factors have contributed to tourism becoming an eclectic, ad hoc experience which exhibits a range of postmodern characteristics, and that brands are significant within the postmodern tourism discourse and play a role in the enrichment and enhancement of the tourism experience. Feifer (1985) alludes to the ludic quality of the post-touristic experience, noting that the purchase of kitsch souvenirs is an important part of the trip, not to be taken seriously, but considered as a parody, playful reminders of the mixture of juxtaposed experiences that make up the trip:

> I am looking around my house with new eyes for the moment: South East batik covering one wall, juxtaposed with a framed page from an eighteenth-century herbal; a collage of postcards; a local straw basket for shopping hung from the doorknob. The little Eiffel Tower earrings suspended from a tiny nail like a pair of miniature bells will add a barely discernible high note, a little joke (Feifer 1985:268).

Just as the ludic, increasingly themed nature of the postmodern consumer culture and the touristic, transitory nature of consumption experiences are emphasised by writers such as Firat and Dholakia (1998) and Bauman (1983), similarly, from a tourism perspective Ryan (1995a) also supports the notion of the multiphrenic tourist. He argues that rather than

seeking a single theme, consumers seek to immerse themselves in a range of different themes and experiences (as opposed to the modernist view whereby a detached and objective stance is taken towards the observation of 'reality'), and states that:

> Tourism can be perceived as the example *par excellence* of the products of the post-industrial society. It is a conspicuous consumption of symbols, a searching for different experience based on fantasy (Ryan 1995a:8).

A growing body of writers (Brown 1995, 1997a, Thomas 1997, Baker 2002, Williams 2002) argue for the recognition of the need for new styles of marketing and of research to meet the challenge of the postmodern consumer, epitomised in this fragmentation of markets and the consumers' search for meaning through consumption experiences. However, the majority of writing is based on theoretical understanding rather than research. There is no doubt that the characteristics of postmodernism have significant implications for tourism marketing and thus it is central to this study.

2.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have charted the growth of branding within the development of marketing and advertising, and discussed how the previously dominant view of marketing as a science based activity gave way to a more relativist, consumer orientated marketing philosophy. Within the shifting sands of the modernism /postmodernism transition, growing interest from anthropological, psychological and sociological disciplines began to result in greater awareness and development of thinking based on the view that brands are far more than just inert entities comprised of hard 'add-on' product features. The interest in socio-cultural and psychological properties of brands has led to a growing body of literature which recognises the cognitive and experiential relationships of consumers with brands. Awareness has grown that consumer branding perceptions are generated over time, and brand theory covers a wide range of behavioural and psychological attributes. The discussion in this chapter demonstrates the interrelationship between branding and advertising and societal and cultural transformation, and introduces the themes of symbolic

consumption and construction of identity through consumption of goods which are critical to my study.

With reference to contemporary consumers, Firat and Schultz (1997) argue that the focus is going to be far more on the contributions of a brand to self-image and happiness (or feeling good), rather than on the product functions it provides – indeed, they go on to propound the need for far greater emphasis on a clear understanding of how consumers feel at different times - within the context of their different 'life spheres', for example, the work sphere, the domestic sphere and the recreational sphere. Throughout the discussion of postmodernism there have been references to the significance of experience, play and the juxtaposition of identities. The concept of fragmentation and multi faceted lifestyles is a characteristic of postmodern life, and it is the more difficult to evaluate, intangible, 'soft' issues such as symbolism, emotional attachment, and experience which are increasingly becoming the focus of marketers' attention. The significance of brands in expression of values through the consumption experience is inextricably woven into the fabric of any meaningful discussion on contemporary marketing. In recognition of the immediacy of consumption Brown (1995) states that consumers are 'shopping on speed' as they constantly search for goods to buy – a process that is enhanced by an unending stream of products on offer, proliferation of marketing communications and the fragmentory, disconnected lifestyles of the consumers themselves.

Alongside this I have discussed the evolution of tourism as a leisure activity, considering the development of branded destinations, the package holiday and tourism as an experience, placing it within the context of postmodernism to illustrate how tourism can be considered a postmodern consumption experience. While there has as yet been no significant decrease in the number of package holidays being taken, relative to the growth in the holiday market overall, there are indications that postmodern consumers are increasingly seeking more individual experiences. There is a need for tourism providers to reflect this within their product offerings – a move away from modernist, highly restricted 'holiday packages' towards more flexible and fragmented 'tourism experiences'.

Placing tourism within the context of postmodernity with its lack of dominant ideology and its attendant plurality of cultures, styles and perspectives, it is clear that an understanding

of the new challenges presented by postmodern influences, and of the experiential nature of consumption activities is paramount for tourism marketing in the twenty first century – an area of research that is severely under-realised. Indeed, the 'tourism experience' is not a single entity – it is comprised of micro-experiences – each which is sensitive to a range of intrinsic and extrinsic influences, perceptions and constraints, and which consumers interpret and use in the creation of their individual tourism experiences. Much of the literature on contemporary tourism consumption is theory rather than research based, and is predominantly drawn from other disciplines, rather than developing from specific tourism focused research. In the next chapter I expand the discussion on the experiential aspects of tourism, and consider brands within the contexts of tangible goods and services. In doing so I emphasise the importance of understanding the emotional and symbolic aspects of tourism consumption.

Chapter 3

Branding Services and Goods

3.1 Introduction

So far I have discussed the evolution of modern day branding concepts, and the interrelationship between brands and societal and cultural transformation. In the previous chapter I strongly emphasised the focus on the experiential aspects of consumption and indicated the increased marketing emphasis on differentiation through the symbolic and the emotional appeal of brands, rather than through discernible tangible benefits - thus highlighting the importance of taking an experiential approach to marketing in the twenty first century. As Lury (1998:4) says 'it is our perceptions - our beliefs and our feelings about a brand that are most important'. With specific reference to leisure, Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) recognise its experiential nature, arguing that a leisure product is much more than just something to be consumed, and that in fact for the consumer, it is in the symbolic nature of the product that the true value lies.

As the discussion to date indicates, within other disciplines there is a perception that the term 'consumption' with its attendant ideologies is applied to tangible products, rather than complex tourism and service products, and consequently research in this area is mainly restricted to the narrowly cognitive. Locked into the modernist mire, much tourism marketing research and theory draws heavily on positivist management theory and frameworks. Much of it fails to go beyond quite generalised, structured studies and does not address the myriad ways in which contemporary consumers understand, use and interact with goods and services. Similarly, consumer choice and decision theory within tourism is still considered as a structured process, and packaged into traditional, generic frameworks (albeit with some recognition of service characteristics tagged on). In order to gain an understanding of the acknowledged challenges facing those involved in tourism marketing, and to set the context for the study, in this chapter I examine the specific service characteristics, and discuss the relevance and significance of generic marketing frameworks and theories to tourism products. I also consider some of the accepted, modernist prescriptive models, frameworks and theories, discussing their applicability to

contemporary tourism consumption. I discuss loyalty and relationships which are key areas of focus for writers on brand development (Fournier 1998), and demonstrate their significance within the context of experiential brands. However, my discussion discloses a significant paradox. While there is currently great marketing focus on the development and sustenance of strong relationships between consumer and provider, if we consider consumer behaviour within the context of postmodernism with its attendant characteristics, then the multiphrenic, twenty first century consumer has decreasing propensity for trust and loyalty in any one product or brand. There is much discussion and interest within a range of disciplines in these interrelated areas, and there is recognition of the need for new perspectives and approaches to marketing research and practice. As Brownlie *et al.* (1999:2) assert 'we are drawing attention not merely to 'new' marketing phenomena, but to the conditions of possibility of 'new' phenomena' – certainly this is the case for tourism research that attempts to understand tourism behaviour within the context of the postmodern consumption experience. I close the chapter by emphasising the need for greater understanding of the complex symbolic and emotional relationships between consumers and brands in a tourism context, thus leading into chapter four where I focus more specifically on these significant aspects.

3.2 Branding - Understanding and Praxis

During the past decade there has been increasing academic and practitioner focus on the development and application of branding, acknowledging its social and cultural significance (Aaker 1991, 1996, King 1991, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, McLuhan 1999). As Cova (1996:6) asserts:

> Branding is of critical importance in postmodern marketing. Through branding manufacturers add value to their products, building advantages over competitors through images. Branding endows a product with a specific and more distinctive identity.

However, despite the heightened attention and awareness of the importance of branding and the development of branding research and writing, tourism discussion on branding

remains limited and is primarily reactive rather than visionary. For example, in relation to the marketing of tourism, Lumsdon (1997:169) proffers an inadequate explanation of (tourism) branding as: '... a way of differentiating the services of one supplier from another in terms of name, logo and other identifying features ...' He then emphasises the point by quoting Cooke (1996:A101), who defines branding as: '... a distinctive name of symbol which identifies a product, or set of products, and which differentiates it from its competitors'. While these are undoubtedly important properties of brands, these simple, product orientated definitions indicate the general level of confusion and lack of understanding of the depth and potential power of the concept, and the lack of recognition of the psychic elements.

The ongoing use of simplistic and basic explanations would suggest that awareness of the psychological power of brands is relatively recent, but in fact as early as the 1950s (when marketing was still an emerging, positivist discipline), social theorists were arguing that the brand concept extended far beyond the primary superficial, functional persona of product identification (Gardner and Levy 1955, Martineau 1957). At this time, however there was little to indicate that branding theory and application was concerned with anything other than tangible goods. Martineau (1957:75), writing within the context of advertising, recognised the complexity of brands, asserting that any simple functional differentiation was short lived, and that loyalty grew through the emotional and psychological associations which captivated the mind and heart of the consumer:

> Actually, in our highly competitive system, few products are able to maintain any technical superiority for long. They must be invested with overtones to individualize them; they must be endowed with richness of associations and imagery; they must have many levels of meaning, if we expect them to be top sellers; if we hope that they will achieve the emotional attachment which shows up as brand loyalty.

There are some key words here which have remarkable resonance today. 'Invested' - signifies the requisite depth and width of commitment (both organisational and financial) over time, and 'richness of associations' and 'many levels of meaning' connote the

multiplicity of messages inherent in a successful brand. The following astute definition from Gardner and Levy further demonstrates that in the 1950s, there was growing awareness and acknowledgement that branding enters into the psyche of consumers and other company stakeholders, and engendering emotional reactions such as loyalty, commitment and symbolic attachment. They argue that the associations and personality of the brand often outweigh the product itself, and therefore this is why consumers often choose branded products for which they are prepared to pay a premium price:

> A brand name is more than a label employed to differentiate among the manufacturers of a product. It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes. It informs the consumer of many things, not only by the way it sounds (and its literal meaning, if it has one), but more importantly via the body of associations that it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time. A net result is a public image, character, or personality that may be more important for the overall status (and sales) of the brand than many technical facts about the product (Gardner and Levy 1955:35).

This view of a brand as a complex set of functional, psychological and social associations is supported by Aaker (1996) who states that a brand consists of the following attributes: personality, symbols, brand-customer relationships, emotional benefits, self-expressive benefits, user imagery, country of origin, plus organisational associations.

3.3 Services and Manufactured Goods

It is generally accepted that the tourism product possesses certain special 'service' characteristics that differentiate it from tangible, manufactured products, and while virtually all products contain varying degrees of both tangible and intangible elements, the high level of 'intangibles' pose additional challenges for marketers of service centric products such as tourism (Shostack 1977, Levitt 1981, Cowell 1984, Flipo 1988, Cannon 1992, Kotler *et al.* 1996, Cooper et al 1998). In addition to being conceptualised as intangible, services have been characterised as being: processes (Lovelock 1996), performances (Grove and Fisk 1983, 1992, Goodwin 1996, Joby 1996), encounters (Joby

1996), relationships (Price and Arnould 1999) and perhaps most significantly, as experiences – that is 'the cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions associated with a specific service or event' (Padgett and Allen 1997). Indeed, Ryan (2002:26) describes the tourist as a 'seeker of experience'.

Tourism is not only a service with all the attendant characteristics, but the tourism experience is very complex, composed of a variety of micro-experiences. While it is argued by some that tourism products are increasingly considered as commodities (Boorstin 1992, Pretes 1995, Calder 2001), in fact there are some very significant factors that distinguish the tourism experience from other goods. Highlighting the importance of the intangibility element in services, Levitt (1981) suggests that, rather than referring to 'goods' and 'services', the terms 'tangibles' and 'intangibles' should be used. The relationship between these 'tangibles' and 'intangibles' is indicated by Urry (1990, 2002) and Saleh and Ryan (1992) who argue that far from being independent variables, the consumer forms an image and builds anticipation and creates expectations of the tourism product from a dynamic mix of interrelated elements – marketing messages, tangible elements, experiences and competition awareness, which, as Urry (1990, 2002) argues construct the tourist gaze. While conceding that services have differential features, Lovelock (1996) offers an extended framework, criticising the previously accepted characteristics for being too generalised and not applicable to all service products.

At this juncture it is appropriate to explain how 'tourism product' is defined for the purposes of this study. While it can be argued that a 'tourism product' in its broadest sense encompasses tangible goods such as tents, caravans and holiday homes, in this study I consider 'tourism product' in its generally accepted sense – that is as: 'a service product with distinctive features' (Vellas and Bécherel 1999:5). I have adapted Lovelock's framework to relate specifically to tourism products in order to demonstrate the influence of the various factors on the tourism experience (table 3-1):

Table 3-1: Characteristics of Generic Products and Tourism Products

Generic product characteristic	Tourism product characteristic
The nature of the product	Experiential; often a complex amalgam of tangible and intangible elements.
Level of customers' involvement in the production process	Often tourist experience is emotive, high level of consumer involvement throughout the experience
People as part of the product	Involvement and interaction with a variety of people such as service providers, other tourists, local inhabitants.
Maintaining consistent quality	Lack of homogeneity in service provision can add to or detract from the experience. Increasing levels of expectation.
Product evaluation	Unique, subjective experience, dependent on a range of largely uncontrollable factors such as weather, environment, other people, etc. Evaluation takes place simultaneously with production. Benchmark may be a previous, similar experience, or via word of mouth (experience by proxy).
Level of control	Absence of inventories results in a possible reduction in control. Heterogeneity of service provision and of experience – 'the human element'. Complexity of distribution channels and high levels of vertical integration characterise the industry.
Relative importance of time factors	Perishablility of product, seasonality factors. Increasing time compression, immediacy of gratification.
Structure and nature of distribution channels	Often involves complex distribution, rapidly changing due to development of information technology. Impacting on the nature of the whole industry, consumer decision making, booking facilitation, and patterns of holiday taking.

Adapted from Lovelock 1996: 24

While Lovelock's framework was commensurate with services, my adaptation is more appropriate to experiential tourism products, and recognises the involvement and influence of the consumer together with other factors in the experience. The generic characteristic of intangibility has been singled out by some authors as the most significant feature of services, however it is also worth linking it with the characteristic of 'temporary ownership' which I would characterise as 'possession', arguing that this notion of possession is a critical differentiator between a manufactured good and an experiential tourism product. Despite the service elements that are increasingly used to augment manufactured goods, once it is purchased it is essentially owned by the purchaser. In contrast a tourism product – whether consumed as a single element or a composite of a number of elements – is essentially an experience which cannot be owned, and therefore is denied many of the accepted brand value features. One way of demonstrating the possession of a tourism experience is through the collection of souvenirs such as (destination) branded merchandise, locally produced goods and foodstuffs and 'pilfered' small branded trophy objects such as hotel pens, toiletries, ash trays and so on. While these may be used as personal reminders of experiences they are also often used as badge products to reinforce and communicate actual and ideal self concept (Ross 1971).

There is little doubt that there are implications for marketing as a consequence of the identifiable 'differences' between predominantly tangible goods and predominantly intangible services. Indeed, this has been reflected in the adaptation of McCarthy's (1960) theoretical framework for the '4P' marketing mix. While the 4 Ps framework is one of the most abiding and dominant concepts in modern marketing, it has since been modified in various different ways by a number of writers. The extended frameworks include that by Kotler *et al.* (1996) who restated the 4 Ps as 4 Cs (table 3-2) to more accurately reflect the high element of consumer involvement and focus in services marketing. Similarly, other adaptations include an additional 3Ps of the services marketing mix – people, processes and physical evidence (table 3-3).

Table 3-2: The Modified Customer 4 Cs

Four Ps	Four Cs
Product	Customer needs and wants
Price	Costs to the customer
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

Kotler et al. 1996:97

Table 3-3: The 7 Ps Services Marketing Mix

Product
Price
Place
Promotion
People
Processes
Physical evidence

Booms and Bitner 1981:55

Other extended service frameworks include 'the 8Ps model of integrated service management' (Lovelock *et al.* 1999:20). Despite the variations, these extended 'service marketing mix' frameworks all aim to acknowledge the significance of the characteristics of services in order to provide a better experience for the consumer. This includes commitment and organisational 'buy in' from the workforce, support from effective and efficient processes and a total organisational ethos of consumer orientation and communication. Urry (1990a) recognises that the complexity of the tourist experience creates problems in the understanding of tourism consumption behaviour, particularly due to its very social nature. He argues that there are difficulties related to the social aspects,

such as the importance of the social composition of other consumers and the intangibility of the social relationship that takes place between the contributors to the experience and the consumer – in fact the dialogues and narratives that form the experience. Indeed, it is the very subjectivity and customisation of experiences that make them meaningful to contemporary consumers, thus making the endeavour to categorise behaviour and characteristics into standardised, generic frameworks highly unsatisfactory.

3.4 Brands – why bother?

It is increasingly acknowledged that the true value of bands is far more complex than early theories would indicate, offering a range of benefits for both the organisation and for the consumer, and involves a combination of rational and emotional associations. However, it has taken time for this understanding to penetrate through to mainstream marketing theory and application. As the mass market break up took hold, and product orientation gave way to consumer orientation, marketing attention focused increasingly on the consumer, but even in 1993 Restall and Gordon criticised marketers for their (then) persistent failure to recognise the power of the brand to engender a range of psychological and social reactions. Far from being the tangible article found on a supermarket shelf or on a production line, they argue that brands exist largely in the mind of the consumer – as a collection of associations and perceptions, and that consumers' position and project certain characteristics upon these brands through the activities of marketers and also through their own experience:

> A brand is simply a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer, and, most directly, the means by which consumers organise each market place in order to make purchase decisions ... they are both an individual and shared experience, each of us retaining in part, and contributing to, the jumble of impressions acquired from sensory experience of brands in use, in store on TV or some other forgotten encounter (Restall and Gordon 1993:59).

However, despite their criticism, even their definition fails to engage the complexity of brand meaning and associations for consumers that is so crucial for contemporary marketing. Brands have definite benefits that are valued by the organisation and by the consumer, whether these benefits be in terms of commercial strength, or in terms of personal satisfaction. For the organisation, the power of a successful brand extends to a range of strategic benefits such as a defence from substitutes, a barrier to new entrants, trade leverage, brand extension, competitive advantage, and as a focus for stakeholder effort. Branding also facilitates premium pricing, accurate market segmentation and consumer loyalty (Aaker 1996, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Berthion *et al.* 1999, Anholt 1999, Middleton 2001). Aaker (1996) uses the term 'brand equity' in this sense, to encompass the 'set of assets' beyond the tangible features that impart value to consumers of the product or service. Keller (1998) breaks down brand equity into two fundamental dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. Within this context, awareness is explained as the ability of a consumer to identify a brand. This is related to brand salience, that is, the premise that consumers normally have a 'bank' of brands within a certain product category for which they have high awareness (and a clear brand image), from which they will choose. This links with the theories that the multiplicit, postmodern consumer uses brands to construct identity according to whim (Slater 1997, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Falk and Campbell 1998, Firat and Dholakia 1998, Pavitt 2000, Valentine and Gordon 2000, Thompson 2000, Holt 2002, Firat 2002). Keller (1998) further breaks down the dimension of brand awareness into brand recognition (the ability of consumers to recognise a brand) and brand recall (the ability of consumers to retrieve a brand when given some cue such as a product category). He states that band image encompasses the associations that the consumer has for a certain brand, and which are retained in the memory. This is highly complex – the range of associations and values can be quite straightforward, such as Coca Cola's image associations with America, authenticity ('the real thing') and red and white, or far deeper, engendering psychological associations such as the symbolic significance of wearing a particular clothing brand.

For the consumer, the brand has a complex and interrelated range of roles. It is widely accepted in branding and marketing texts that from its early conception, for the consumer, the 'awareness' (Keller 1998) benefits of branding include traditional, basic benefits as familiarity and reassurance - simplifying choice and purchase by enabling recognition of

brands within the product category and minimising risk through purchase of a 'known' product with 'expected' standards of quality and performance (Strasser 1989, Aaker and Biel 1993, Barwise *et al.* 2000). Berthon *et al.* (1999) and Barwise *et al.* (2000), also stress the importance of brands as 'risk reducers', that is, that by choosing a particular brand the consumer may consciously or unconsciously avoid a range of 'risks'. These include: reduction of perceived functional risk - that of the purchase not meeting expectations; physical risk - that of danger to health or wellbeing (reduction through purchase – at a premium price - of known brands such as Nurofen or British Airways), financial risk – that of having a reference point in terms of 'value for money', and of search costs. These perceived risks, while being acknowledged as benefits of brands, are still somewhat purchase orientated, considering the increasing interest from marketers and from consumer researchers in the psycho/experiential aspects of brands. However, in addition, within the discussions on risk reduction, there are also the social and psychological risks involved with buying the 'wrong' product – that is, one that does not have symbolic associations that reflect aspired to or actual, social standing, self-image or self-perception.

3.5 'Framing' the Decision Process

Giddens (1991) in consensus with other writers on post-modern consumption (Brown 1995, Elliott 1997) argues that consumer choice is a way of constructing self-identity, a main part of the 'project of self-creation' and a fundamental component of day-to-day activity. Although this study is primarily consumption focused, rather than purchase focused, I consider it important to discuss the role of brands in consumer choice and decision making. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, one of the acknowledged benefits of branding for the consumer is considered to be the simplification of the decision making process through the elimination of alternatives. This view is supported by Lane (1998), who argues that consumers tend to choose brands that are familiar, have high salience and regard – which is developed through associations with its brand image and values.

Traditional consumer decision models focus primarily on the choice processes that take the consumer from needs recognition, through actual buying behaviour and on to post

purchase evaluation. However, the indication is that while modernist, rational frameworks can be of some value at a basic level, they are characteristic of a different era and crucially, these can't be applied in a postmodern context where increasingly confident, marketing literate, empowered and fickle consumers interpret and use products differently, creating their own meanings, values and experiences. As Martineau recognised as early as 1957:

> People are people. The Logical Man and the Economic Man are fictional. They don't exist. Beneath the mask of rationality that our society teaches us to wear, the consumer is a living, breathing, feeling individual. He is not a technical expert. He wants far more than bargains. And his behaviour stems more often from emotional and non-rational causes than from logic (Martineau 1957:201).

Yet, much consumer behaviour literature has not shifted from this view of 'The Logical Man and the Economic Man', something that more emancipatory writers such as Firat and Schultz (1997) recognise. They strongly argue that traditional marketing strategies and frameworks that assume rational decision behaviour, are no longer satisfactory in the face of the challenges posed by emerging market conditions and postmodern consumers. Such frameworks are also criticised by consumer researchers (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), and marketers (Thomas 1997) who argue that positivist and process centred approaches are too prescribed, and that it is necessary to adopt a far more phenomenological perspective and consider the holistic experience. Indeed, as Thomas (1997:57) asserts:

> The modernist view of the consumer is that they are rational, planned, organised, conformist and maybe moral. The postmodernist view of the consumer is that they are irrational, incoherent, inconsistent, individualistic and perhaps immoral, certainly amoral.

Within the context of leisure and tourism, Dimanch and Sahdhal (1994) are equally critical, asserting that the symbolic and expressive nature of leisure and tourism mean that traditional behaviour and decision models are inadequate in understanding motivations and decisions on leisure behaviour. Given that the majority of work largely informs psychology

based consumer behaviour (which tends to focus on the decision process), there is a need for consumption-inspired research which examines the complex nature of tourist experiences and the marketing factors that enrich and inform them. Similarly, tourism literature on consumer decision making has tended to take a very general approach based on established consumer behaviour descriptions which are derived from cognitive models of information processing (Cooper *et al.* 1998).

These do however have some (albeit limited) relevance for applications within tourism marketing (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). The following illustration of this point is based on Mathieson and Wall's (1982) sequential model of consumer decision making, which is quite typical of models of tourism decision making, and which I have expanded to include examples. Despite the increase in late booking trends, for many consumers, the holiday experience begins some months before the actual consumption of the 'product', and is considered as having three key stages - pre-consumption, consumption and post-consumption. The 'pre-consumption' stage encompasses a 'felt need or travel desire' through information and evaluation, travel decision, purchase and travel preparation. Driven by advertising to raise awareness and desire, here the main 'soft' elements would be anticipation and expectation, with the main 'hard' element being the brochure and other advertising material, which as previously mentioned, is also used to reinforce the choice and eliminate doubts (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). The consumption stage 'travel preparation and travel experience' (Mathieson and Wall 1982) could be said to begin with the journey – whether by car, or to a transport terminal or port, through the actual holiday, and including the return journey. At the post-consumption stage, as previously mentioned, the consumer is left with largely intangible, emotional elements - memories, photographs and souvenirs of the experience. 'Travel satisfaction evaluation' takes place now - appraisal and re-appraisal of the entire experience, which, as Mathieson and Wall (1982) state, has a strong influence on subsequent travel decisions - allegiance to the brand manifesting in brand loyalty, repeat purchase and recommendation to friends and colleagues.

The major criticisms of such models within a tourism context are that they fail to account for tourism specific factors, which include: the complexity of tourism decisions and the number of variables, the lack of an empirical research base; the age of the models (at least

fifteen years old – significant in light of the dynamic nature of both tourism and consumer behaviour), the increasing propensity towards last-minute spontaneous purchases of tourism products, the advances in technology resulting in the growth of direct marketing, e-commerce and the internet, the tendency to view tourists as one homogeneous group, and irrationality and inconsistency in purchasing behaviour and patterns (Horner and Swarbrooke 1999). These limitations are considered particularly prevalent in the case of composite tourism products such as package holidays. Consumer durables or fmcg's, although increasingly containing 'soft' service elements, are primarily tangible commodities where production is tightly controlled, and which can be felt, tested and seen before purchase, used and appraised afterwards, and if necessary, repaired or replaced if found faulty. However, tourism 'products' in general, are a complex and dynamic amalgam of various components over which the parent company exercises varying degrees of control, and which are often branded in their own right. From a consumer's point of view, a package holiday comprises 'hard', tangible elements such as the brochure, price, aircraft seat, hotel room and destination, and 'soft' intangible elements which include expectations, quality, attitudes, emotions and symbols - all packaged into a 'holiday experience', which by its very nature is intangible. It is a composite product, a combination of tangibles and intangibles about which the consumer forms associations through (imposed) marketing activities, and then uses to create individual experiences which are in turn influenced by their expectations, interactions and meanings. As Ryan (1991, 2002) argues – there is nothing remaining afterwards except memories evoked by souvenirs and photographs, and which are often stimulated by anticipation of the next holiday experience.

While it is generally acknowledged that there is high consumer involvement in the purchase of tourism products (Horner and Swarbrooke 1999), this needs to be re-considered in the light of the observations on postmodern culture and the changing pace of consumption and of life in general (Lee 1993). Engel *et al.* (1995) argue that in today's world, many people are too time-constrained to engage in 'extended problem solving', having neither the resources or the motivation, but instead take a more limited or habitual approach. Fill (1999) supports the role of brands in this process, stating that in this cognitive approach, brands communicate attributes which enable the consumer to make a speedier choice with minimal risk - that is through assurance of consistency, quality and

perceived value (inclusive air tours are currently embroiled in a low price culture, therefore monetary value may play a significant part in the decision).

However, as previously mentioned, it is a characteristic of many composite tourism product brands that there is very little to differentiate offerings in terms of 'hard' functional common features such as destination, transport and accommodation elements - some of which are shared by other providers. Even the 'soft' features – such as service quality, loyalty programmes and peripheral services and activities, which in the past have been used to convey points of difference are now often identical in terms of their bundled 'added value-ness'. A body of consumer psychology literature espouses the theory that when common features of a brand are similar in importance, brand differentiation will decrease and therefore the margins of consumer preferences will be reduced – that is, consumer choice is likely to be more indiscriminate (Tversky 1977, Nisbett *et al.* 1981, Chernev 1997). Chernev also argues that consumer choice is complicated by the number of similar, common features, which are deemed to be of similar importance. In this instance, consumers may be completely indifferent, and are likely to either make a choice by random methods (metaphorically sticking a pin in a list, or on the recommendation of a friend or colleague), or by focusing on one particular attribute and make a choice based on considered best value for this attribute.

Although there is valid criticism of consumer decision models (Firat and Schultz 1997, Swarbrooke and Horner 1999), the concept of 'dissonance reduction' buying behaviour can be applied with reasonable appropriateness to consumer decision making in tourism purchases. This is described as a situation where there is a relatively high level of involvement with the purchase but, because the consumer perceives only minor differences between brands, the decision is based on other factors such as word of mouth recommendation or advice from sales personnel, rather than any firm brand beliefs (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). Again this reinforces other literature (Dichter 1966, Fill 1999, Price and Arnould 1999) on the importance of word of mouth information (which often takes the form of experiential and anecdotal conversation). Purchase evaluation takes place afterwards, usually on the basis of experience of the brand.

Gardner and Levy (1955) argue that in order to succeed over the long term, a brand depends on the marketer's ability to select a brand meaning prior to market entry, operationalise the meaning in the form of an image, and maintain that image over time. The consumer understanding of the holistic brand - that is the perceptual image together with the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the organisation – is an important consideration in brand development and maintenance. However, the complexity of the product in terms of the network of providers and processes, and the predominance of 'soft' intangible characteristics adds the extra dimension to any marketing strategy involving the building of a strong, identifiable tourism brand. The difficult to evaluate, standardise and control characteristics have the potential to affect consumer experience and brand associations. For example, in the case of a package holiday (despite the fact that due to vertical integration some of the various components of the 'experience' may be owned by the same organisation, albeit branded in their own right) a tour operator uses a branded retail agency, airline, or a branded hotel chain. However if, as both academic research and industry experience suggest (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Lury 1998), the strength of a brand is in its relationship with the consumer (gained through positive attitudes towards all the brand-related activities), then in order to reinforce that relationship the brand needs to be associated with all elements of the experience. That is, from the symbols and images communicated in the advertising, through the information search process, the booking process, the holiday itself, through to the return journey, remaining in the mind of the consumer during the appraisal stage.

Brown (1997b) and Berthon *et al.* (1999) argue that successful branding reduces and simplifies the decision making process by eliminating the consideration of alternatives – supporting Keller's (1998:50) assertion that 'the key to branding is that consumers must not think that all brands in the category are the same'. Marketers of many products have taken heed of the fact that in order for a brand to be successful, consumers must discern meaningful differences between brands. However, in contrast, the current strategy of the major tour operators is to flood the market with sub-brands in the form of increasingly focused targeting, in an apparent attempt to provide differentiation when in actuality, non exists. Rather than reinforcing brand image, and simplifying decision making, this resulting proliferation of very similar brands is likely to lead to consumer confusion, and discourage customer loyalty. Indeed, Keller (1998) argues that in terms of purchase

motivation, a lack of perceived differences between brands is likely to lead to unmotivated consumers. Similarly, Sealey (1999) cites Maklan and Knox (1998) in support of his argument that the propensity towards increasing the range of brands only adds more stress and confusion for the customer 'while each new product or service might make sense on its own, the benefits get lost in the overall mix' (Sealey 1999:172). Moreover, as discussed previously, it can also be argued that certain necessary variables, and in particular the psychological bond between customer and provider are missing - that is, there is an absence of emotional attachment to any particular brand. Nonetheless, recent reports indicate strongly that, in an industry in the forefront of the e-commerce revolution, which is facing challenges presented by rapid and sweeping changes to the market and the operating environment, the establishment of a strong brand is increasingly seen as key to success (Richer 2000).

3.6 Brand Loyalty and Relationships

Customer loyalty and buyer – seller relationships have attracted considerable marketing interest, with the result that during the 1990s many writers and practitioners were in agreement that 'the holy grail' (Mitchell 1998:104) for marketers was customer loyalty (Biel 1993, Mitchell 1998, Heskett *et al.* 1997). The concept of brand loyalty is discussed here in order to briefly explore the significance of loyalty and relationships for tourism branding, and indicate the difference between short-term allegiance and emotionally based relationships. Indeed, Kardon (1992) and Firat and Venkatesh (1993) highlight the volatility and complexity of increasingly multiphrenic consumption behaviour, characterised by juxtaposition and fragmentation and markedly lacking in significant loyalty to any one brand or product. This paradox between marketing effort in attempting to secure lasting relationships between consumer and supplier, and the increasing propensity for multiphrenic behaviour is something that I explore in a tourism context in this study.

Since the 1980s academics and practitioners have increasingly focused on the role of brand loyalty and customer retention through the emotional formation of 'consumer-brand bonds' (Fournier 1998). Thus Barwise *et al.* (2000:88) argue that:

> perhaps the single most important role for brands within an organisation is their ability to spawn loyalty; this is akin to a long-term relationship between the brand and the consumer.

As a result of this conviction, the past few years have witnessed an enormous emphasis on building lasting provider – consumer relationships. 'Loyalty programmes' abound – where the consumer is 'rewarded' according to the level of 'loyalty' – i.e. the amount of expenditure – on a particular brand or in a particular retail outlet. In the tourism industry, hotels, airlines, tour operators and car rental companies are among those that offer 'frequent guest', 'frequent flyer' and 'frequent user' point collection schemes. However, while virtually every industry from airlines through to do it yourself (DIY) and grocery retailing, appear to be adhering to the basic nineties marketing principle that relationship building, as opposed to short term exchange processes are the way forward, travel agents are almost alone within the retail industry in not offering 'loyalty' schemes. It is interesting to note that, according to Dowling and Uncles (1997) it is the value proposition of the product itself, and not the incentive of a reward that is the primary consideration in high-involvement purchases such as holidays. Indeed, for many tourism products it is perhaps debatable that the offer of rewards is enough to ensure 'loyalty' in the face of the price competition that characterises many of the current tourism sectors.

However, the loose usage of the word 'loyalty' indicates a general lack of understanding as to the real meaning and depth of true loyalty and its benefits, for consumers – indeed Jones (2003:3) asserts that 'loyalty' is a shallow term, and that consumer commitment is the key to success. The plethora of somewhat superficial loyalty reward schemes have been heavily criticised (Dowling and Uncles 1997, Hewitt 1998), and despite the fact that for the organisations, the major advantage of such programmes is the value of data on consumers, there is evidence that some organisations are now opting out of such schemes, due to a combination of consumer apathy and cost implications. Certainly although initially these schemes attracted widespread consumer interest, there are signs of increasing apathy towards loyalty schemes, possibly as a result of the growth in such programmes, and increased 'loyalty fatigue' (Dowling and Uncles 1997, Cobb 1999). The short lived attraction of some of these schemes underlines the difference between superficial, instant gratification loyalty and solid, brand commitment which is developed over time through

engagement with the brand through deeper associations. Research has revealed that it is the psychological relationship between buyer and product that is important, rather than specific guarantees and rewards (Statt 1997). Brand commitment does not just 'happen', it takes time to build a brand that consistently engenders strong positive associations and consumer commitment, coupled with constant attention and effort to maintain the relationship (Gardner and Levy 1955, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). Similarly, Fournier (1998:2) argues that the true meaning of the term 'loyalty' has become diluted of late. Emphasising the high level of commitment over an extended period of time, she defines true loyalty as 'a long term, committed and affect-laden partnership'. The use of the word 'partnership' in this definition indicates the relationship aspect – that is an association between two or more parties – loyalty in return for consistent value (value in this sense refers not only to price value, but includes perceived benefits value, for example quality, performance, status, past experience and so on).

However, the tourism industry overall is highly competitive, with some sectors such as package holidays and air travel being very price-led. Recognising the negative effects of continued price cutting on brand loyalty, and product quality, Cobb (1999:3) states that the tour operating industry is now suffering the consequences of years of short term marketing tactics:

> Critical observers contend that operators have placed themselves in a situation where they have taught customers to shop for the cheapest deal – resulting in similar products, minimal brand differentiation; and loyalty; slender margins, and a rising tide of complaints against quality.

Rogers (1998a) similarly suggests that lack of brand commitment is also partly due to the industry practice of price cutting. The perishability of the product necessitates surplus capacity to be sold off at heavily discounted prices, and with increasing numbers of consumers now well practised in the art of last minute bargain hunting, the price-led nature of the product seems difficult to escape. However, perhaps more significantly, there is the issue of product parity - companies offer the same destinations, very often using the same accommodation, the same flights and, on occasion, the same transfer transportation. Within

the inclusive air tour market consumers are spoilt for choice, and there are few barriers to imitation by competitors.

This has exacerbated the trend for shopping around and the emergence of the multiphrenic consumer (Firat 2002) – something that is becoming even more prevalent due to the increase in on-line distributors. In line with other areas of industry and commerce, consumer expectations of quality and service are continually increasing, and as a result, consumers are willing to vote with their feet. While a consumer may be loyal, for example, to a particular destination, they are faced with a range of choice options for transport and accommodation. This is compounded by the experiential nature of tourism products. With reference to table 3-1, the fact that there are a range of non-tangible elements and other specific characteristics, means that if consumers are dissatisfied with some aspect of the experience, or believe that they can obtain better value from another provider, they will quickly defect. It is also possible that the level of experience is linked to brand loyalty, particularly in the case of package holidays where there is little brand differentiation - that is, less experienced consumers may reduce risk and increase their sense of security by choosing a branded product, whereas those with more experience are less likely to be influenced by brand of operator. Ryan (1995b) has argued that with older consumers, who have a longer 'tourist career', past experience has a significant bearing on holiday choice. However this no longer applies only to older consumers. Such is the propensity to travel that many younger people have also accrued a significant portfolio of holiday experiences on which to base decisions. Applying this to tourism products in general, where there is virtually nothing tangible at the time of purchase, evaluation is delayed until the experience of the simultaneous production and consumption of the product. By this time, the consumer may have selectively chosen positive information from other sources such as advertising, or friends and colleagues to support the choice and reduce any uncertainty. This is also likely to have increased expectations, leading to disappointment and disillusionment with the brand if these are not fulfilled.

It can be argued then, that the key symbiotic characteristic of branding lies in the establishment and maintenance of a relationship between buyer and seller. Barwise *et al.* (2000) recognise as one of the traits of postmodernism the speed and immediacy of consumption (Lee 1993, Cova, 1996, Bauman 1998, Cooper 1999) and argue that the

increasing fickleness of the consumer is placing more emphasis on customer loyalty. However, this is resulting in a paradoxical situation - how to develop valuable, true loyalty in consumers that are increasingly aware, confident and fickle? As the building and maintaining of valued relationships between consumer and provider has become the focus of academic and practitioner research, 'relationship marketing' theory has became the marketing buzz word of the late 1990s – a natural progression from the loyalty theories of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Price and Arnould 1999, Fournier *et al.* 1998, Bitner 1995, Gronroos 1994). As de Chernatony and McDonald (1998) state, the aim of a successful brand is develop high quality relationships which engender certain emotional and even passionate responses from consumers (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). This is a strong indication that the focus should be much more on the cognitive and experiential properties of brands, something that flies in the face of the majority of current tourism branding, apart from perhaps destination branding (Morgan *et al.* 2002).

However, perhaps one of the most significant factors in relationship building for tourism products is that of consistency. Branding literature stresses the importance of delivering consistency of quality and meeting expectations time after time (Knobil, 2001), and this is reflected in the significant body of service marketing literature that recognises that relationship building relies on the consistency and delivery of realistic promises (Berry 1983, Gronroos 1990, Bitner 1995). The complexity of multiple areas of service experiences and encounters within many tourism products, means that (in theory) there is more opportunity to build relationships and increase loyalty. In fact, due to level of dependency of service brands on the people providing the brand, the variations in both human and process elements of the experience create a strong possibility of reducing perceptions of quality, and adversely affecting trust and loyalty towards the brand. Bitner (1995), and Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) recognise the challenges presented for service providers, where single service encounters within a complex product have the potential to strengthen, or destroy (in the case of dissatisfaction), and cites the case of Disney, where a negative experience in just one of the approximately seventy four service encounters at a theme park can result in deterioration of the relationship.

3.7 Communicating Experiences

Communication and media are significant variables within marketing and branding. However while I acknowledge the relationship between consumers, brands and various elements of marketing communications, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these topic areas other than briefly. Nonetheless I consider it important to consider word of mouth communication in more depth, as not only is it a significant form of marketing communication, it is also an integral part of the tourism experience and indeed is based on experience.

Communication, like relationships, is a two way process, and word of mouth is acknowledged as one of the most effective forms of communication, providing information to influence, support and reinforce both negative and positive perceptions (Dichter 1966, Fill 1999). Whilst it has been dubbed 'probably the most powerful communication medium in existence' (Blythe 2000:109) it should be remembered that it is out of the direct control of marketers, and research has shown that consumers are very likely to discuss experiences which they found either extremely pleasurable or unpleasurable (Dichter 1966, Fill 1999, Pickton and Broderick 2001). Katz and Lazarsfeld (1995:635) cite the results of a study on food purchases, which illustrates the importance of word of mouth communication, stating that:

> Word of mouth communication was the most important form of influence in the purchase of food products and was twice as effective as radio advertising, four times as effective as personal selling, and seven times as effective as newspapers and magazines.

Referring specifically to services, Kurtz and Clow (1998:73) state that word of mouth is 'the strongest source of information used by consumers in forming expectations'. Consumers will often actively seek, or simply be told, the opinions and evaluation of others such as friends, relatives, colleagues or intermediaries such as travel agents, and are inclined to believe that this is more reliable than other forms of marketing communication. Word of mouth is very often based on experience, either actual or vicarious, and can be

either positive or negative. Indeed, it is estimated that a dissatisfied customer will tell ten or eleven people of their experience, while a satisfied customer will tell three others (Kurtz and Clow 1998). While Ryan (1995b) states that the tourist career is one of learning from past experience, it can be argued that this experience need not necessarily be actual, but that consumers could be influenced through discussion of other first hand experiences (Fill 1999) – experience by proxy. The particular importance of word of mouth for experientially natured, often high involvement, low frequency purchases such as holidays, is recognised by Barwise *et al.* (2000) who argue that consumer satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) communicated by word of mouth is one of the most trusted forms of brand benefit information. Thus, a bungy jump is pure experience (often forming a significant and memorable element of a holiday experience), and the managing director of the A.J.Hackett Bungy company rates word of mouth as their most effective form of promotional communication:

> When properly managed, bungy jumping is such a good sport that most people go away feeling elated with what they've done, and can't wait to tell others about it (van Asch, quoted in Kurtz and Clow 1998:58).

3.8 Developing Emotional Associations

As previously established, the purely functional elements of brands are becoming increasingly marginal, and therefore establishing differentiation through predominantly physical characteristics is difficult to achieve and maintain. But, as Hallberg (1995:16) argues, mere emotion is not enough, the key is to develop a strong brand that holds some unique associations in the mind of the consumer:

> While emotion has always been an important component of branding, emotion in the absence of a point of difference that can be articulated and firmly seated in the memory is arguably a recipe for consumer confusion.

As Restall and Gordon (1993) argue, it is the recognisable distinctiveness that the consumer engages with that makes, and sustains, successful, powerful brands. Within tourism, the high level of competition and the speed of technological advancement today is such that, in the case of many tourism products tangible features are easily copied with 'me too' brands. Indeed, Urry (1990a:26) argues that these tangible elements are 'often incidental to the (tourist) gaze, which may be no more than a momentary view'. Differentiation has to come from the intangible elements such as image, values, and service quality – communicated to the consumer through those associations with the brand. Arguably the characteristics described above apply to many other, successfully branded products and services and yet as Middleton (2001:132) acknowledges, branding a tourism product is often considered to be simply a case of designing a name, logo and catchy slogan, and that in many cases tourism brands are merely products 'with the brand identity system bolted on'. This is further indication of the relative lack of progress and understanding in consumption focused tourism research, which fails to reflect the growing body of work on the emotional and experiential aspects of branding.

Successful brands are those that perform other roles that extend beyond their functional features, fulfilling experiential needs such as sensory pleasure, variety and cognitive stimulation, and symbolic or existential needs such as self-concept and self-expression (Aaker and Biel 1993, Keller 1993, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). Most brands are considered to have a mixture of functional, symbolic and experiential needs in varying degrees. Park *et al.* (1986:138) propose a further framework for distinguishing the facets of branding comprising: functional needs – the basic 'externally generated' need for the solution to the problem; symbolic needs – needs that are 'internally generated' such as 'self-enhancement, role position, group membership or ego-identification', and experiential needs 'for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety and/or cognitive stimulation'. The symbolic and experiential role of brands, and the psychological relationship between consumers and brands is receiving increasing levels of attention in mainstream marketing literature. The indication is that the true value of brands lies in their relationships with consumers, developed through experiences and identification with the 'softer' properties, which evoke an extensive, rich set of associations (Lannon and Cooper 1983, Biel 1993). Thus, understanding the received and constructed meanings inherent in consumption behaviour is fundamental to contemporary tourism marketing, and brands

need to be considered not as passive entities consisting of function and benefits, but rather play an integral and interactive role in consumers' lives. The postmodern characteristics of fragmentation, multi faceted lifestyles and play with identity are recognised by Featherstone (1987) who argues for alternative ways of understanding consumption behaviour, thus emphasising the need for marketers to focus on the more difficult to evaluate, intangible, 'soft' issues such as symbolism, emotional attachment, and experience. Schmitt (1999) also stresses the importance of understanding the influences of societal change from mass consumption and conformism to postmodernism and the adoption of an experiential approach to marketing:

> [Consumers] want products, communications and campaigns that they can relate to and that they can incorporate into their lifestyles. They want products, communications and marketing campaigns to deliver an experience. The degree to which a company is able to deliver a desirable customer experience – and to use information technology, brands and integrated communications to do so – will largely determine its success in the global marketplace (Schmitt 1999:22).

Commensurate with postmodern theory on de-differentiation, the boundaries between hard tangible goods and services are blurring. To meet the expectations of the postmodern consumer, manufacturers of tangible goods are increasingly adding a service dimension to their products in order to enhance the experiential quality. Supporting this view, Pavitt (2000) and Julier (2000) also argue that, with the increasing emphasis on the 'service' element of goods, the marketing 'emphasis switches from the design of objects to the creation of experiences' (Julier 2000:149). There is no longer the same definitive demarcation between tangible goods and experiences, as increasingly leisure and retail are combining into one branded physical and temporal space.

3.9 Brand Commitment and Contemporary Consumers: The Paradox

While the previous discussion has demonstrated that for some writers, brand loyalty is the key to success, recent research on generic brands (Mintel, 1999b) supports the argument of McRae (1994), Knox (1996), Peters (1996) who all assert that the attitudes of contemporary consumer towards familiar brands is altering, and that they no longer feel the same brand commitment. Hallberg (1995) comments that this weakening of brand loyalty is manifested through increasing individualism and a desire to stand out. Certainly less commitment to any one product or brand is argued to be a postmodern characteristic. Twenty first century consumers (in a world characterised by globalisation, technological advances and fragmentation of markets and of experiences) do not adhere to any single narrative, rather their different selves are represented through the switching of products that represent images, according to particular situations (Firat and Schultz 1997, Valentine and Gordon 2000).

Indeed there are indications of contradictory behaviour and suggestions that contemporary consumers are exhibiting an apathy and scepticism towards familiar brands which is even developing into brand hostility (Southgate 1996, Klein 2000). Certainly this view of increasing brand cynicism is supported by a number of writers such as Yiannis and Lang (1995) and Lury (1998), who go so far as to claim that the brand awareness and literacy of consumers now exceeds that of marketing professionals. Southgate (1996) also argues that such is the extent of the marketing literacy of consumers, that they not only understand and accept the marketing concept of brand personality, but they treat brands just as they would people – being suspicious of brands they feel lack integrity and trusting brands that consistently live up to their promises. Research has indicated that consumers are becoming increasingly discriminating, confident and sophisticated (Poon 1993, Mintel 1999) with improvements in communication leading to wider knowledge and awareness. Pertaining to tourism products, consumer confidence and sophistication is underlined by trends which bear testimony to an increasing proclivity to exercise choice and independence. These include late booking trends and bargain hunting - both with implications for price sensitivity; independent booking - driven by emerging technology; willingness to complain - fuelled by media articles and television consumer programmes; and the search

for ever more exotic, exciting and even uncharted destinations. Emerging from this discussion are strong indications of a paradoxical situation between mainstream acknowledged branding theory and actual consumer brand perception and usage. As Baker (2001:28) asserts:

> It is undeniable that the landscape in which marketing operates is changing irrevocably. The consumer is becoming more of an abstract concept, alternating identities between the extremes of cyber-consumer and traditional buyer. Conventional tools and techniques that have worked successfully for years are seen as increasingly less effective as marketers grapple with the enigma that is the new consumer.

Here then is the paradox - on the one hand, theorists are still stressing the importance of building strong relationships; and on the other hand, there is documented evidence of an emerging twenty first century consumer with decreasing propensity for brand trust and commitment. Certainly marketers and brand managers cannot afford to be complacent, while core values should remain consistent, brands need to adapt and develop in response to the changes in the market place (Morgan and Pritchard 2001). There is considerable discussion and interest within a range of disciplines in these interrelated areas, and recognition of the need for new perspectives and styles of marketing (Brown 1993, 1995, 1997, Thomas 1997, Brownlie *et al.* 1999, Williams 2002), which Baker (2001:28) expresses as a response to 'the desire to consume an experience'.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have focused on the perceived difference between services and goods, and the applicability of various generic marketing theories to the marketing of tourism products. In particular I have discussed some of the benefits of branding for consumers and for organisations, and in doing so have recognised the shortcomings of cognitive decision making frameworks for contemporary tourism marketing. I have also highlighted the paradox between the current marketing focus on consumer loyalty and consumer-

supplier relationships, and research which indicates that postmodern consumers are increasingly fickle and multiphrenic in their behaviour. The concept of the purely functional good is diminishing, as basically tangible products are increasingly augmented by a range of service element add ons. Contemporary consumers choose from an array of goods and services to construct, inform and enrich their individual, satisfying experiences. However, tourism products are by their very nature far more complex than tangible goods, even with the 'service add-on' element. Despite the varying degrees of tangible elements, tourism products are in fact, pure experiences, and as such susceptible to a range of influences and variables.

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the area of emotionally charged relationships between consumers and brands as being a significant topic in consumer research, and yet despite this so much tourism research fails to address these deeper, symbolic issues in sufficient depth as to develop understanding of the way in which brands form part of the very fabric of tourism experiences. Paradoxically, it could be argued that in a postmodern consumer driven society that is desperately seeking the experiential, the experience which is at the core of tourism products provides them with a distinct advantage for developing strong, experience based brands. On the other hand, the lack of brand differentiation, the level of price competition in many sectors, coupled with the complexity of the product pose significant challenges, which are acknowledged but left un-confronted by tourism research. In the next chapter I expand the theme of postmodern perspectives on consumption, and consider various aspects in greater depth. In particular I discuss the emergence of 'lifestyle' concepts and consider the associations between brands and symbolic consumption, and consider how this can apply within tourism.

Chapter 4

Playing with Identity - Brands and Symbolic Consumption

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I discussed how in the 1970s, as social forces and business conditions changed, the scientific and positivist approach to marketing began to make way for a more consumer focused perspective. I have firmly established that consumption is becoming far more individualised, with increasing focus on the experiential aspects. Tourism consumption can no longer be considered as a systematic, functional process, but rather needs to be considered within the context of postmodernism, as a lifestyle and identity concept. The current environment is characterised by de-differentiation, increasing fragmentation, time/space compression, hyperreality, juxtaposition, hybrid identities and pastiche. Therefore, an understanding of the way in which tourism consumers engage and interact with brands and use them to enhance and enrich individual experience is paramount to the future of tourism marketing. In his seminal article on the 'Consumption of Tourism' Urry (1990a:23) recognises that the majority of consumption based research has been concerned with tangible goods, and points out the large gap in a sociological approach to the consumption of tourism products:

> To the extent to which there can be said to be a sociology of consumption it has been mainly concerned with the differential purchase, use and symbolic significance of material objects ... I suggest that this is an overly-restricted focus and that there are a range of alternative items of consumption, of various services, which raise particularly complex problems of interpretation and explanation.

Indeed, he argues that research into the consumption of services, and tourism products in particular, should take precedence over research into the consumption of material objects due to the increasing importance of service based products in contemporary western economies.

Tomlinson (1994:13) clearly embraces the theory that people use products and their attendant associations to create identity with his statement that: 'Our personal identity is created out of elements created by others and marketed aggressively and seductively'. Indeed, a central theme of postmodernity is changing perspectives on signification and the development of new means of orientation and identity structures (Featherstone 1997). Throughout the discussion I have alluded to the symbolism and construction of identity through consumption of goods – that is, how consumers - consciously or unconsciously - adopt, display and build relationships (Blackston 1993) with brands as part of the process of self actualisation and self expression. In this chapter I examine the notion of the consumer as a postmodern subject more closely, focusing particularly on the symbolic and lifestyle aspects of brands, and consider the way in which consumers use brands to enhance and enrich their lives and their experiences. Within a tourism context, I consider:

> How people's motives lead them to perceive meaning in the objects they encounter and how the meanings of those objects affect their motives ... how the participants in the marketplace symbolise their lives in the products and brands they consume (Levy 1987:16).

4.2 Brands and Self - Symbolic Relationships

While historically, brands were acknowledged as having symbolic and psychic benefits in additional to functional ones (Veblen 1912, Martineau 1957, Corrigan 1997, Slater 1997), it was not until the early 1970s that there was greater acknowledgement of the importance of the social meaning of goods, rather than their functional capabilities. As modernist, Fordist mass consumption began to give way to 'post-Fordist consumption' (Urry 2002:14), focus fell increasingly on the experiential and symbolic associations with brands. There is a body of literature from a range of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, marketing, and consumer research that reflects this transition (King 1973, Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Cooper 1980, Hirshman 1982, Holbrook 1986, Levy 1987, Aaker 1991, Brown 1992, Featherstone 1997, Bartley 1998). Writers argue that via the impartment of 'psychic benefits' brands have become less differentiators of functional attributes, and increasingly a focus of 'self-ness' – self-expression, self-concept, self-image, self-enhancement, self-creation, and even self-reward (Giddens 1991, Biel 1993,

Padgett and Allen 1997, Elliott 1997, Firat and Dholakia 1998, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Lane 1998, Lury 1998, Aaker 1999). As Biel (1993:68) states: 'Brands not only furnish the environment in which I live, but they also enrobe me, and by doing so, help define who I am.'

Indeed, the idea of creation of identity though the acquisition of consumer goods is not new, particularly in the field of sociology. Here it is often approached from a critical standpoint, while acknowledging the influence of goods on the creation of self-identity, it condemns consumerism as a 'manipulative force' that reduces shoppers to 'mere subjects of consumption' (Falk and Campbell 1997:3) – who actively buy identities for themselves. It is recognised by other writers (Martineau 1957, Lannon and Cooper 1983) that this is not always a conscious act - while the main motive for purchase behaviour may appear to be for functional reasons, in fact underlying this are a range of ulterior meanings and motives of which we may or may not be aware, and may or may not acknowledge. However, a significant amount of writing and research indicates that in general consumers are very marketing aware, literate, and confident (Poon, 1993, Yiannis and Lang 1995, Southgate 1996, Lury 1998). It can be argued then that the picture that emerges of the contemporary consumer is of a knowledgeable and discriminating one, where the notion of marketing as Falk and Campbell's (1997:3) 'manipulative force' barely applies, indeed the postconsumer is more likely to be the manipulator than the manipulated - interpreting, diverting and using the signs and symbols of consumption for their own amusement and satisfaction (Feifer 1985, Urry 1988, 2002, Cova 1996).

It is asserted that the brand's most complex role for the consumer, is the symbolic role (Barwise *et al.* 20001). Culturally, brands are used more and more as signs to identify and even judge people, and as a way of answering the existential questions of who we are. Similarly, from an anthropological perspective, McCracken (1993:127) also argues that the value of brands for consumers is congruent with the meaning that they construct - consumers are looking for meaning from a brand in order to be able to 'help construct, sustain, and reconstruct the social self'. There is general consensus then, that all products may, either consciously or subconsciously, carry a symbolic meaning both for their owners and for other people – enabling consumers to construct their own personal 'brandscape' in which to live – using brands to define and to project the 'self' (Gardner and Levy 1955,

Levy 1959, Sherry 1987, Biel 1993, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Valentine and Gordon 2000). Despite the range of disciplinary approaches, research and writing on symbolic consumption is almost exclusively applied to tangible goods rather than service related products. Throughout the majority of literature, a set of tangible, highly visible and therefore easily displayed, 'badge' products, such as sportswear, fragrances and cars, are used as examples. As early as 1957 Martineau wrote about goods as social indicators, using the analogy of the motorcar to represent his view of consumers' usage of brands and products to define themselves, and to signal this to an external audience:

> The conservative, in choosing and using a car, wishes to convey such ideas of dignity, reserve, maturity, seriousness ... another definite series of automotive personalities is selected by the people wanting to make known their middle of the road moderation, their being fashionable .... Further along the range of personalities are the innovators and the ultramoderns (Martineau 1957:75).

As Levy (1959:121) observed: 'symbols of social participation are among the most dramatic factors in marketing'. However, an examination of the historical development of branding in chapter two indicates that this is not a recent phenomenon, the desire to construct meanings and symbolic identity through the acquisition and display of goods was extant in the nineteenth and possibly even as early as the eighteenth century (Veblen 1925, Slater 1997). From a consumer research perspective, studies by Belk *et al.* (1982) have shown the propensity of people to infer stereotypical characteristics based on consumption cues – while Lannon and Cooper (1983) assert that all consumer behaviour is a type of expressive gesture. Ever since the eighteenth century, the symbolic significance of goods has played an increasingly significant role in consumption behaviour. In 1912, Verblen coined the term 'conspicuous consumption' in his premise that the attractiveness of consuming leisure time and goods is measured by the distance from the mundane world of every-day labours. During the 1980s the term 'conspicuous consumption' passed into common usage and was widely used to represent the perceived exclusivity of the product, combined with the opportunity to exhibit visual purchasing power so characteristic of that decade (Statt 1997, Slater 1997). Indeed, Feifer (1985) and Urry (2002) assert that within

modern society, tourism became a mark of status comparable to the possession of tangible goods such as a house or a car.

While there is evidence that these ideas were rooted in previous eras, more recent writing reinforces the significance of these traits within the context of changing consumers and changing business culture and the characteristics of postmodernism. Reinforcing the assertions of a number of writers on contemporary consumption behaviour, (Cova 1996, Elliott, 1997), Valentine and Gordon (2000:194), argue that today's environment is 'dynamic, chaotic' with a paradigmatic shift from 'predictability to unpredictability, from rigidity to flexibility, from a need for certainty to a tolerance for ambiguity'. With specific reference to brands, it is acknowledged that in postmodernism the symbolic significance of brands is playing an ever greater role. Olsen (1994:247) also refers to the complexity of the social world, interestingly referring to brands as 'our weapons in an increasingly complex social world'. Placed within a postmodern context, this indicates that brands are used to insulate and protect consumers from 'danger' or 'hostility' through construction of a (socially acceptable) identity, and implying status and power. This is supported by Barley who states that 'we need material objects to confirm our social identity ... ours is an "identity through possessions" model of the world' (Barley 1989:43). Similarly Slater (1997) supports the earlier discussion on the sign value of consumption, arguing that goods are signifiers of social identity and that consumer goods are crucial to the way in which social appearance is constructed – for example, social networks such as lifestyle, status groups and structures of social value:

> Conversely, we now secure social place and identity solely through the commodity-sign rather than through our position in social structure referents such a class. The value of goods no longer arises from their use or even from their abstract economic exchange: rather, it is their sign value that defines them (Slater 1997:199).

The importance of brands as far more than symbols of differentiation and identification in everyday life is evident. For many consumers today, the value of brands lies also in their symbolic meaning, and in today's brand cluttered environment, where the key to brand

power is: 'trust, familiarity and difference' (Barwise *et al.* 2000:78), the focus is increasingly on understanding and nurturing the symbolic relationship between consumers and brands. Indeed, it is argued by Firat and Dholakia (1998:73) amongst other writers (Martineau 1957, Lannon and Cooper 1983), that the 'hype' in marketing communications such as advertising, is transformed by individuals into reality through the adoption of particular brands of goods to symbolise power, status and so on.

Consequently, the past decade has seen an upsurge of marketing interest in behavioural and experiential aspects of brand usage. It is noteworthy however, that while some aspects of tourism (such as destination brands) seem highly interested in these concepts, tourism orientated consumer research seems to have stagnated and failed to embrace the symbolism inherent in products, thus failing to develop a sense of a holistic understanding of the relationships between brands and consumers. Barwise *et al's* (2000) argument is based on the accepted view that self-concept develops from perceptions of how we are seen by others (Mead 1934). It does seem that consumers use others as benchmarks for their own behaviour and:

> ... as an important source of knowledge about themselves and about how, why, and what to buy, use and discard in the way of goods and services (Folkes and Keisler 1991:283).

Barwise *et al.* (2000:82) assert that the 'twin roles' of symbolic consumption – inwardly focused to bolster sense of self, and outwardly focused to communicate to others – are 'the most influential factors in explaining the increasing numbers and the popularity of brands within the last two decades'. The use of branded goods to communicate 'self' to others is further recognised by Firat and Dholakia (1998:182) who assert that, as it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate social class of customers through 'casual observations of attire', service establishment staff such as waiters, doormen, hotel porters, receptionists and so on are trained to look for other clues such as watches, handbags and belts in order to distinguish 'VIPs' and offer them the service they demand. In a similar vein, Betsky (2000:110) argues that:

> The world is not just a stage, but also our shopping mall. We put together our identities by buying bits and pieces of consumer culture. We identify ourselves and others by how we dress, what music we listen to, which brands we sport.

It is noteworthy that in his article, Betsky does not mention leisure or tourism products in his examples of displays of consumerism - again an example of the way that tourism tends to be ignored by mainstream consumer researchers. Sociologists, anthropologists and consumer psychologists all recognise that consumers use branded goods to construct meaning, for others – by projection of a desirable image - and for themselves – defining identity and acquiring a sense of belonging (Belk 1978, 1987, Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Belk *et al.* 1982, Dittmar 1992, Olsen 1994, Bauman 1995, Featherstone 1997). Anthropologists Douglas and Isherwood's (1978:65) assertion that 'the most general objective of the consumer can only be to construct an intelligible universe with the goods he chooses' is illustrative of the argument that consumers use goods to locate and establish themselves within their social world. Belk *et al.* (1982), recognise the communication aspects of consumption objects, arguing that non-verbal communication takes place between people through the choice of consumption objects and its observation by others. They also state that a significant level of satisfaction is gained thorough self – expression via consumption. This satisfaction is important, as it can be related to 'value' – i.e. the level of (satisfaction) value that is gained from self-expressive and communication significance, rather than from the functional attributes.

The psychological properties of brands is recognised by organisations as well as academics and the industrialist Sir Michael Perry (then chairman of Unilever) has said that:

> In the modern world, brands are a key part of how individuals define themselves and their relationships with one another .... It's a marketing given now that the consumer defines the brand. But the brand also defines the consumer. More and more we are simply consumers ... we are what we wear, what we eat, what we drive. Each of us in this room is a walking compendium of brands. You

> chose each of those brands among many options – because they felt 'more like you'. The collection of brands we choose to assemble around us have become amongst the most direct expressions of our individuality – or to be more precise, our deep psychological need to identify ourselves with others (Perry 1994:4).

The clear indication is that the way consumers think of themselves and their social world, affects their market-place behaviour – that is, it influences their behaviour in terms of how they think of others – other consumers, the sellers of goods and deliverers of services, and it also influences the goods that they buy. The concept of self – both in terms of the ideal self (how consumers like to perceive themselves) and the social self (how the consumer presents themselves to others), (Ross 1971, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Barwise *et al.* 2000) is one of several factors which influence consumer choice behaviour. For example, Nicolson (2002:9) states that she chooses her clothes carefully from a particular up-market brand (Whistles) that she considers has 'an individuality and eccentricity of its own'. This enables her to use the perceived (by her) and projected (to others) individuality to in order to portray a certain self-image. She indicates her fear of being typecast via her style of (generic) clothing: 'I am locked in a permanent battle not to be branded as a Peter Jones woman'. This relates to the concept of brand personality – that a particular brand of good needs to 'fit' in terms of self concept and in the inference of the characteristics of other types of users, and even the characteristics of the producer and the retailer.

4.3 Brand Personality

Taking the above concept a step further, brand personality – that is, the personification of brands in the belief that brands, like people have symbolic characteristics and images - has long been recognised within the field of advertising and marketing as being a key behavioural factor (Martineau 1957, Morgan and Pritchard 2001). Aaker (1999) also gives strong support to the theory that personality traits associated with a brand personality can influence consumer attitudes, and that consumers purchase brands in part, based on the attractiveness of the brand's personality. It is interesting that while the validity of the concept of ascribing human personality traits to brands is accepted within marketing to enhance the ability to target specific groups of consumers (King 1973, Cooper 1980, Aaker

1997), it is also recognised that brand personality is not merely a marketing concept, it is also used by consumers as a language - in order to express personality, lifestyle and social identity (Martineau 1957, Lannon and Cooper 1983, McCracken 1986, Aaker 1997). Indeed, Martineau (1957:73) states that:

> it is apparent that any buying process is an interaction between the personality of the individual and the so-called 'personality' of the product itself.

However, this premise is not only confined to the field of marketing, rather it stems from work in the fields of sociology, psychology, anthropology and more recently, in consumer research (McCracken 1986, Belk *et al.* 1982, 1987, 2000). Aaker (1996) recognises the links between the projected or perceived brand personality and the expression of self-identity, citing the example of Harley Davidson with such a strong personality that people even have the brand name tattooed on their bodies, thus expressing their relationship with the brand, and its values which they adopt as their own. As he argues, the personality of the brand is affected by a range of factors:

> Just as the perceived personality of a person is affected by nearly everything associated with that person ... so too is brand personality (Aaker 1996:145).

These factors include for example, user imagery (the typical brand user, or the idealized user as portrayed in advertising) and connected activities and personalities (for example Virgin's brand image and values and Richard Branson's character portrayal are all consistent with the dynamic, successful, trustworthy but slightly maverick brand personality). The identification of consumers with these personality characteristics in order to define aspects of 'self' is well documented (Batra *et al.* 1993, Smothers 1993, Chernatony and McDonald 1998), and it is argued that consumers actively choose brands with personalities that match either their actual or their aspirational self (Batra *et al.* 1993). Again, this reinforces Martineau's (1957) strong assertions that through the goods they purchase and display, consciously or unconsciously, consumers send signals about the type of people they are, their values, their status, their reference groups and so on:

> The car or the brand that I pick out expresses what I think I am – or what I want to be. To decide anything as a choice is actually to express the self. Any person who makes a decision among alternative choices is actually stating, "this is the kind of individual I want to be. This is me" (Martineau 1957:74).

Through symbolic identification, brands can offer access to an exclusive group, however they are also vulnerable - as the power of the consumer over even the most successful brands is increasing. During the past decade, the Nike organisation capitalised on the 'status group' phenomena with training shoes, when they were adopted by various youth subcultures and used to transmit coded meaning for those within the particular groups. When their earnings fell by 69 per cent at the end of 1997 (Jones 1998), the lull in popularity was attributed primarily to the widespread emulation by 'non- group' people and the commercialisation of what began as an underground youth culture statement:

> The problem with things that are pioneered by young - usually black - people is that they inevitably become an easy option for those trying to grab stylistic credibility .... it (the trainer) must creep underground again to retain its street appeal
> (Jones 1998:38).

There is a strong indication here of the dynamics of brand management - consumers are constantly engaged in ongoing dialogues with brands which need constant monitoring and nurturing. Marketing success is dependent on the depth of understanding of the way in which postmodern consumers manipulate brands in the construction of their individual experiences.

4.4 The Brand Wardrobe

The concept of using products as aids in communicating situational self-image was developed as early as 1959 when Goffman recognised the way that people choose certain

goods and 'props' according to a particular situation – that is to aid in the communication of the 'situational self image'. Indeed, Martineau (1957) also argues that people have a range of roles which they interchange according to the particular situation – using the analogy of apparel and a drama metaphor to illustrate this, he states:

> Behaviour is put on and off like a robe as we deliberately try to make ourselves agreeable to other people. Also, we will change depending on the role we are called upon to play at a particular moment. The same mother can be a stern mother to her children, a compliant lover to her husband, an unpleasant bargain hunter to her tradesmen, an ebullient companion to her friends, and a scheming striver to her country club set (Martineau 1957:34).

Without doubt, there is a strong body of understanding which recognises that the relationship between consumer and branded goods is far more personal and significant – goods are not only consumed on a physical level, but on a symbolic level. Since the 1950s other writers have developed theories of the multiplicity of persona – that each person has a variety of roles and that they choose from a repertoire of brands according to the role and the social situation (Schenk and Holman 1980, Solomon and Assael 1987, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Aaker 1997). More recently there is literature from a variety of disciplines that takes the theme of construction of identity through chosen brands a step further - based on the concept that just as consumers have a diverse range of roles and identities in every day life, they have a 'wardrobe' of brands from which they choose in order to create the required self.

While there are varying interpretations centring on this concept, and different levels of explanation, the concept is the same. From an anthropological perspective, Sherry (1987) coined the term 'brandscape' to characterise the brand saturated environment that had emerged towards the late twentieth century. Extending this argument with specific reference to brands, de Chernatony and McDonald (1988) assert that consumers choose brands according to the image they want to project in a particular situation. In the same vein as Martineau (1957) they suggest that each consumer has a variety of different, situational roles which he or she plays - such as mother, doctor, employee, sister,

daughter, sportswoman, chef, musician, student, girlfriend and so on, linking the symbolism of the brand with the self image they wish to project. Comparable to the metaphor of the 'brand wardrobe' they refer to it as a 'repertoire of self images' (de Chernatony and McDonald 1988:124) – again, indicating that consumers have a range of brands and self images which they draw on in order to project a certain desired persona, as one writer says: 'I hesitated over my appearance, then decided on a brash, designer label look – Calvin Klein shirt, Paul Smith jeans and a chunky fake Rolex (Hodson 2001:7).

Each of these roles may be related, quite diverse or a juxtaposition of several, and each of these roles may have its own brand landscape. While this is essentially construction of identity, it is more so, in the suggestion that it is whimsical, and that in keeping with the observations of postmodern behaviour, the identity is not consistent, it changes according to the role of the consumer at the time. Giddens (1991) considers self identity as being mobile, arguing that it is constantly shaped and re-shaped through consumer decisions and choices. Other supporters of this concept include Biel (1993) who developed this idea in the suggestion that his personal 'brandspace' was comprised of branded objects, items and choices that he was confronted with and that framed his life, on a daily basis. Similarly, Restall and Gordon (1993) expressed the concept of consumers choosing brands according to need, mood or occasion, referring to it as 'needstyle' or 'mode', and 'the "Me-that-I-am-When" using, buying or experiencing a brand' (Restall and Gordon 1993:67).

The concept of 'brand wardrobe' and customisation of self for specific situations through usage of branded products is exemplified in the increasing merging of functionality and life contexts. In his discussion of globalizaton, Firat (1997) alludes to the global consumer who makes use of a range of internationally renowned brands and cultural artefacts to represent their desired persona in a particular situation, and there are examples of the recognition of this concept in current advertising. An advertisement for Design Hotels (Condè Nast Traveller 2002c) asks the question: 'will my dress go with the lobby?', likewise an advertisement for the Peninsula Hotel in New York features the same woman in three different outfits and poses with the strapline 'room for all of you' (Condè Nast Traveller 2002d). Similarly de-differentiation is demonstrated in the increasing representation of functional items as style accessories to be donned according to situation.

For example, it is conceptualised in the advertisements for two very tangible, functional, technology products - the IBM Thinkpad is depicted hanging on a coat hanger, and the Nokia 8810 mobile phone appears inside a perfume bottle, a sunglasses case and a powder compact (Pavitt 2000).

Consumption focused literature is peppered with the analogy of the 'brand wardrobe', particularly in relation to the fragmented, multiple and episodic characteristics of postmodern culture. In consumer research writing, Belk and Costa (1998:28) talk about 'consumer identities being taken on and off like garments' similarly, many other writers (Slater 1997, Falk and Campbell 1998, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998; Firat and Dholakia 1998, Pavitt 2000, Valentine and Gordon 2000) suggest that branded goods are chosen from a 'brand wardrobe', according to caprice. It is interesting that Pasi and Falk, (1998:7) also allude to the preponderance of fun and play in such construction of identity: 'the postmodern consumer "constructs and changes his/her self either to accord with others" expectations, or to distinguish him/herself from others, or possibly just for fun'. Locating the concept within a marketing context, Firat and Dholakia (1998) observe that consumers even regard themselves as consumables, or 'marketable goods' – illustrated by the growing trend for both men and women to undertake cosmetic surgery to make themselves more marketable, and the plethora of advertising which presents products for making consumers marketable in particular situations. Schenk and Holman (1980) and de Chernatony and McDonald (1988) agree that different facets of self emerge in different social situations, and while a particular brand may be consistent with one self in a particular social situation, it may not be so fitting with another self in another situation. However, they make it clear that this does not suggest that the consumers have multiple personalities, but rather that a person has more than one self concept.

Writers such as Slater (1997) and Valentine and Gordon (2000) have clearly located this concept within the postmodern context, but unlike the majority of academic writers Valentine and Gordon (2000) take a more applied, business perspective. They strongly criticise past and current marketing conceptionalisations of the myopic consumer, and emphasise the lack of understanding of the way that, within the postmodern environment, consumers interact, and use brands in a completely different way. While their criticism is of marketing generally, it is extremely applicable to tourism marketing research which is

increasingly unreflective of contemporary life, and is dominated by modernist, management constructs. Drawing on a drama metaphor, and referring to twenty first century consumers as 'expert and talented actors' they argue that in order to be effective in communicating with postmodern consumers it is necessary to deconstruct the old ways of thinking of them. Instead of thinking of them as existing in a fixed space or time, and therefore able to be targeted and segmented as homogeneous groups, it is necessary to understand both the ways in which they and the world have changed. In consensus with other writers, they argue that in the twenty first century, the consumers' relationship with brands is multi-faceted, and that the consumer is ever-changing, ambiguous and unpredictable, constructing their own 'brand landscape' which they change according to their whims:

> ... the twenty first century consumer is postmodernist to the core. She shifts identities and uses a vast wardrobe of brands to create herself into whoever she wants to be (Valentine and Gordon 2000: 204).

Certainly the body of literature surrounding this concept gives a very strong indication that postmodern lifestyles are increasingly being constructed around fashion, leisure, entertainment and information, rather than traditional social structures such as family, work and religion – the implication being that these can take the place of established social constructs (Featherstone 1987, Slater 1997). This idea is supported by Brabeck (2001) who refers to the characteristics of the postmodern in his statement that 'in technocratic and colourless times, brands bring warmth, familiarity and trust' and similarly Olins (2001:29), who argues the 'in an irreligious world, brands provide us with beliefs'. The inference here is that branded goods are no longer utilities, but social signifiers, moral and cultural symbols and definers and communicators of 'self'. As Fournier (1996:3) asserts:

> Relationships with mass brands can soothe the 'empty selves' left behind by society's abandonment of tradition and community and provide stable anchors in an otherwise changing world. The formation and

> maintenance of brand-product relationships serve many culturally-supported roles within postmodern society.

Mercer (2001) also recognises the complexity of the relationship between society, self and brands, supporting other's views (Featherstone 1987, Fournier 1996, Slater 1997) that in the postmodern world, people are increasingly using brands to construct identity, to define self, to communicate and to provide societal anchors:

> Brands if they are about anything are about people and how people use them to relate themselves as individuals to others and the world around them. In today's complex and interdependent world, brands are an ever more vital means by which people can find their place in society. Brands have in a sense evolved to become an extension of our egos, consumed to express an impression of who we are and what we stand for and thence convince our inner selves that we truly are who we would really like to be (Mercer 2001:6).

There are many examples of material goods that are used to construct identity – sometimes even being subverted by sub-culture groups and used to carry coded meanings, intelligible only to those within the group (Elliott 1994), for example, branded clothing such as Dr Martens footwear, which has along been associated with social sub-cultures. A further indication of the manufacturers of essentially functional products such as a car or a telephone communicating the assumption of a multiplicity of personae according to the symbolic association with the brand, is demonstrated in recent marketing promotions reflecting this symbolic consumption. Mont Blanc, the company that originally produced high quality, prestige pens, has now branched into other 'life-style' products and accessories such as stylish and exclusive jewellery, eyewear, watches and luxury leather goods. Their current advertising campaign promotes their range with glossy colour spreads in life-style publications showing the product with the strap line repeated consistently throughout which asks 'is that you?' (Condè Nast Traveller 2002a,b). Similarly, the strapline 'Mercedes Benz, for whoever you are' (Mercedes Benz 2001), clearly indicates the awareness of manufacturers and corresponds with Martineau's (1957) astute recognition that consumers use branded goods – in this case cars - to construct identity – at

a given moment in time. The implication of construction of self identity in consumption choices is further discussed by Slater (1997:89), who argues that there is risk involved in making consumption choices because all choices implicate the self:

> All acts of purchase of consumption, clothing, eating, tourism, entertainment "are decisions not only about how to act, but about how to be" (Warde 1994:81). The things I consume in some sense express my identity, my values, tastes, social membership and so on.

4.5 Lifestyle

Since 1987 when Featherstone acknowledged that characteristics of postmodern society include individuality, choice, tolerance of differences, lack of moral censure and legitimisation of diversity in the way the world is viewed and experienced, the term 'lifestyle' and its associations has gathered momentum and gained meaning. 'Lifestyle' is increasingly used to encompass a range of activities and goods which are chosen to reflect the way in which a person chooses to live and to be perceived. As he argues:

> ... within contemporary consumer culture (lifestyle) connotes individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness. One's body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holidays, etc. are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer (Featherstone 1987:55).

There is a link between the concept of lifestyle and brand usage. The mounting level of attention on the promotion of goods and activities that evoke lifestyle images is particularly perceptible in very 'I' focused marketing communications, designed to emphasise individuality. For example, Ericsson the mobile phone manufacturer, used their telephone as a point of differentiation between two identical women in an advertising campaign with the strapline 'make yourself heard' (Ericsson 2000), similarly, Adidas (1999) used the strapline 'Runners. Yeah we're different'.

Considerable sociological discussion centres on the subject of time-use and consumption and lifestyle preferences being associated with particular social and occupational class groups (Hirsch 1976, Bordieu and Passeron 1990, Featherstone 1987, 1997, Abramovici and Ateljevic 2003). Indeed, Featherstone (1997:19) argues that 'aspiring groups' are under constant pressure to gain knowledge and remain aware of the latest developments in consumption and lifestyle issues (utilising a range of sources such as lifestyle magazines, newspapers, books, television and radio) in order to present the 'correct' lifestyle persona and increase lifestyle capital. Certainly, 'lifestyle' has become the darling of the media during the past few years, with a plethora of consumption orientated magazines such as *'Condè Nast Traveller'* and television programmes such as *'Holiday', 'Changing Rooms'*, and *'Location, Location'* all feeding the seemingly insatiable appetite for self-improvement, self-development and lifestyle capital. Indeed, tangible, functional goods are now increasingly associated with lifestyle characteristics via advertising and promotion – for example, the Land Rover brand is now extended to encompass a diverse range of merchandise and clothing - 'Land Rover Gear' has brand values and associations with lifestyle characteristics such as 'authenticity, supremacy, adventure and guts' (Condè Nast Traveller 2002a).

Pavitt's (2000:166) reference to 'lifestyle activites' illustrates the growing use of the term, and also the way in which a wide range of unrelated activities and goods are now considered as being part of the 'fashion system', and indeed, points to the juxtaposition of branded goods, such as specialist sportswear Crew Clothing and Billabong surfwear, and their adoption by non participants to acts a vehicle for a lifestyle message:

> In Britain for example, an increasingly broad range of activities has been drawn onto what we might term the 'fashion system'. Food – both eating out and cooking at home – is now more than ever a focus of the lifestyle industry. Interior design, sports, gardening and home entertaining are popular subjects for television and print journalism … the popularity of a new or alternative sport, such as snowboarding or surfing, will result in the quick emergence of lifestyle goods, TV programmes and magazines devoted to that subject. These may even become popular with a segment of consumers who have no intention of

> taking up that particular sport, but identify with its associated media images and musical fashion preferences.

The proliferation of media and television coverage of second-hand experiences is another example of postmodernism – hyperreal experiences enjoyed by proxy – without the dangers and stresses of the authentic experiences. Similarly, 'reality' television and 'docu-soaps' de-differentiate through the presentation of situations carefully constructed, manipulated and stage managed to provide 'authentic' snapshots of 'real life' dramas. This quotation also highlights de-differentiation through a blurring of the boundaries between tangible goods such as cars and clothing as aspirational fashion and lifestyle items, and activities such as interior design and snowboarding. I would also argue that Pavitt's (2000) recognition that not all those interested in a particular activity are willing – or indeed able - to partake in it, can be very equally be applied to the magazine and the holiday TV programmes – virtual holiday taking being something that Feifer (1985) argues is a characteristic of the post-tourism. Yet again here is another strong indication that tourism is sidelined when it comes to the attention of consumer researchers. Despite the proliferation of holiday related television, radio and print media coverage, and the success of the glossy 'lifestyle' magazine '*Condè Nast Traveller*', it is surprising and disappointing to note that Pavitt (2000) does not mention holidays in the list of TV programme and print media subjects.

4.6 Tourism Brands and Symbolism

The focus on tangible goods particularly applies to tourism products which are often multi-faceted, composite offerings comprising a number of inter-related services, some of which are branded independently. Padgett and Allen (1997), have gone some way to exploring the topic from an advertising perspective, arguing that an experiential approach is necessary to understand service/brand issues. They assert that the consumption of a service is in fact, an experience which:

> involves the active construction of personally relevant meanings associated with the behaviours, thoughts, and feelings that occur

> during the consumption (not simply the production) of the service (Padgett and Allen 1997:5).

Stressing the experiential importance of the service encounter, they suggest that consumers attach symbolic meanings to services through a combination of personal experience, communication with other people, and advertising. While this offers an approach to the understanding of symbolic reactions in terms of self-actualisation, the research opportunities for further exploring meanings for identity, culture and symbolic relationships between consumers and goods within tourism experiences remain untapped - something that this study aims to redress.

With reference to leisure theory, Dimanche *et al.* (1991) and Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) acknowledge that while symbolism is often a factor in the choice of activity (that is, that in choosing a particular activity, a person may consider symbolism in terms of both self-expressive and sign value of the activity), it is sign value that has become the most prominent motive for the consumption of leisure activities. Indeed, they argue that the symbolic perspective has significant influence in leisure choice. They also argue that much of the satisfaction from the consumption of leisure is gained through its conspicuousness: 'leisure consumption needs to be conspicuous because the important attribution of traits comes only from the reaction of others through the very nature of consumption' (Dimanche and Samdahl 1994:124). The importance of symbolic meaning in the travel experience is also supported by Urry (1990a, 2002), Brown (1992) and Ryan (1995a) who, although writing largely from a tourist motivation perspective, acknowledge the importance of understanding the many symbolic aspects of tourism behaviour. However, while it is possible to argue that, for example, travellers in premium classes on airlines or cruise ships; or guests in premium hotels and restaurants may well be gaining symbolic and status meaning from the experience – and indeed, the prestige gained from premium class travel and accommodation is highly significant and even aspired to - unless undertaken on a regular basis, it is a fleeting, involvement. This relates to my earlier argument (chapter two), that the notion of possession is a major differentiator between a manufactured good and an experiential tourism product. In this context, while there is no tangible, visible symbolic evidence of the premium travel experience, there may be other self actualisation benefits to be derived from it.

In the particular case of an overseas package holiday, although it is often a relatively expensive, high involvement purchase, the question arises as to the level of sign value – that is, whether it can be classed as a 'badge product'. During the 1960s and early 1970s, during the early stages of mass market leisure travel, an overseas holiday carried a certain cachet, and some of the value of the experience was in its semiotic ability to communicate status (Urry 2002), with a deep suntan providing the visible 'badge' evidence of the experience. However, Slater (1997) argues, in a situation where the wide availability means the product ceases to be a discriminator of status, the experience is devalued – it 'cancels out the positional gains any individual consumer might have achieved by obtaining it' (Slater 1997:156). This suggests that it is a 'benefit' that is denied to marketers and consumers alike - how can one be conspicuous in the consumption of a package holiday? It is possible that widespread availability does not necessarily negate status value, but that a different way of using products has emerged. There is to date however, no tourism research that considers status and other symbolic meaning such as the concept of the brand wardrobe and the usage of brands to construct identity and lifestyles.

Within tourism literature, brands form part of the descriptive language and imagery. The following quotation from an article in *Condè Nast Traveller* (2001:123) demonstrates how branded goods enter the tourism discourse and are used to invoke powerful imagery and convey the exclusivity of a particular resort:

> On St Barts, or St. Barthèlemy, a 21sq mile island in the French West Indes, Hermès has been known to close when the cruise ships arrive. It's the place where the Smart Car is chic, the cabby wears a Rolex, everyone smokes (Gauloises, Gitanes, Cohibas) and sports a *Playboy* tan. A girl takes a morning jog across the island in a leopard-skin bikini; on the beach she changes into a Dior thong.

However, while this is reflected in tourism promotional material, throughout the body of academic literature there is virtually no reference to this concept in relation to other than tangible goods. An exception is Ryan (1995a) who compares tourism to branded tangible goods in order to illustrate his point. He argues that in the postmodern era, with the focus on the consumption of status signifying goods, tourism is indeed as much a symbol of

status and indicator of self as is a tangible product which satisfies the need for self-actualisation and enables entry to a particular social group:

> Tourism can be regarded as an example par excellence of a postmodernist world where basic wants are satisfied, and status is derived from the possession of symbols. So important is the possession of the 'right' training shoes, that it has been reported that 'street-wise' kids have mugged others to obtain them. Is the difference between a middle-class executive seeking status from possessing an experience of, say, climbing to Everest base camp, and the young mugger one of degree, but not of kind? (Ryan 1995a:10)

A further indication of the emerging recognition, but not research activity, of a deeper significance for tourism brands together with an evolving interest in the lifestyle elements of tourist destinations, and their role in shaping identity is evidenced in the following quotation. Here, with reference to a visionary report by the World Tourism Organisation (1998), Luhrman (1998:13) states that:

> The next century will mark the emergence of tourism destinations as a fashion accessory. The choice of holiday destination will help define the identity of the traveller and, in an increasingly homogeneous world, set him apart from the hordes of other tourists.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The level of acknowledgement and interest in this perspective indicates strongly that the meaning embedded in brands is highly significant and quite profound. 'Use' and 'play' are key themes in this rich vein of writing which strongly indicates the significance of experiential aspects in consumer choice, expectations and satisfaction - and that the consumer is continually constructing identities through the process of consumption. The discussion indicates that to a limited extent, marketers are recognising the symbolic associations and developing strategies and initiatives accordingly. However, despite some examples of hotel advertising, the overriding indications are that tourism marketing and

research is stuck in a time warp and there is little research to indicate how brands enter tourism dialogues or their socio-cultural significance in terms of communication and construction of identity. In order to be effective in reaching the contemporary tourism consumer, it is imperative to expand the scope of consumer focused tourism research to gain understanding of the experiences of individual tourism consumers and how knoweldge of these are shaped through brand dialogues. As Valentine and Gordon (2000:204) assert, it is vital to adopt a new and radical direction in research into the inner dynamics and socio-cultural influences that will:

> reveal the hidden ways in which consumers relate to brands, businesses, products and services in both the public and private sectors.

There is some recognition that research involving postmodern characteristics and consumption behaviour is not the exclusive preserve of tangible goods. For example, there is a growing body of literature that recognises the links between shopping and tourism (the fact that shopping is increasingly being viewed as a leisure activity is evident in the burgeoning numbers of themed shopping centres (Falk and Campbell 1998, Lehtonen and Maenpaa 1998, Cockburn-Wootten 2002). However, this research is not located in a tourism context, but rather tourism is used as a way of illustrating the application of these concepts. There is some small recognition of the construction and communication of self through brand choice from consumer researcher Pavitt (2000). For instance she states that the question 'Is that me?' is asked in relation to not only a range of goods – particularly clothing – but also to leisure and entertainment activities, such as choosing a restaurant, a film or a holiday, but here again leisure is the illustration rather than the focus of research. Indeed, Valentine and Gordon's (2000) call for research into this concept in a general sense highlights the fact that, while there is undoubted, multi-disciplinary acknowledgement of this concept, a research base is lacking. I argue that not only should consumer and marketing research recognise tourism as a valuable source of hitherto untapped knowledge, but that tourism research should be pro-active in adopting an interdisciplinary and contemporary approach to redressing the balance.

The literature that I have discussed in these first four chapters clearly indicates that there are many questions pertaining to the way in which consumer behaviour is changing which remain unanswered. The need to take an interpretative approach to understanding tourism consumption within the context of postmodernism is clear. Because tourism is ludic in nature, I have reflected this in the approach to the gathering of information. In the next chapter I discuss my philosophical and methodological approach, the methods and techniques that I have used and explain the emergent nature of the study - how my knowledge and thus the study has developed. It considers how, as each stage has emerged, the study has become far more in-depth, focusing on the minutiae of the experience of individuals, rather than taking a broader based perspective.

Chapter 5

The Research Approach

5.1 Introduction

> The science I speak of is not hard, objective, standard or dispassionate; nor is it about measurement, data, clear-cut models of behaviour, or procedures for testing. It is soft, subjective, idiosyncratic, ambivalent, conflicted, about the inner life and about experiences that cannot be measured, tested, or fully shared (Kreiger 1991:4).

In these words Kreiger recognises that in interpretative social inquiry, it is the depth of meaning that is paramount to a study rather than the methods (Schwandt 1994, Richardson 1994, Crotty 1994, Gould 1991, 1995, Thompson 1997). The significance of the methodologies and methods is in their use as ways of gaining the deepest insights, and it is recognised that there are a range of diverse methods which will enable this. Again, as Gould (1995:721) argues – 'it is not the method that counts per se, but it is the insight provided that matters'.

However, in the sense that they affect insight, in this study the methods and techniques are a key focus. In the previous chapters I have progressively reviewed a range of current, interdisciplinary literature on the branding of both manufactured goods and tourism products. As a result of this review, it is apparent that despite the interest from different disciplines in a range of brand consumption aspects, meaning focused research into the consumption of branded products in a tourism context is an area of neglect. The emergent review also highlighted the need to re-consider the consumer within the context of postmodernism – that is, from the aspect of the postmodern consumer, within postmodern society, and to adopt progressive research perspectives as a means of finding new approaches to understanding the ways that consumers interact with brands within a tourism context. A characteristic of postmodernism is openness and tolerance - an acceptance of

different styles (Firat and Schultz 1997). I have adopted a progressive stance in the collection and interpretation of data because I argue that in order to move tourism research forward, it is important to break new ground, to recognise creativity and diversity and adopt a multi-faceted approach to research. In my search for fresh and exciting insights into the nature of tourism consumption, an understanding of postmodern culture, the acceptance of marketing as a postmodern institution (Firat and Venkatesh 1993) and the adoption of progressive approaches to research and writing have been paramount to the study.

Beginning with an explanation of the qualitative approach that I have adopted, in this chapter I discuss interpretavism as my chosen philosophical paradigm, and explain the naturalistic and emergent design of the study and my involvement in the study as a tourism researcher, consumer and professional and thus my use of autoethnography. I describe my interdisciplinary and bricolage approach, arguing that commensurate with my philosophy, the use of diverse and innovative methods is fundamental to the study. Just as the theoretical framework, the methodological approach and data collection methods have developed according to the emergence of my own understanding and knowledge, so have the methods of analysis. I describe my etic approach to data collection and analysis in phase one, detailing the sampling issues, the semi-structured interviews, the focus groups and the projective techniques, and the systematic, structured use of thematic data analysis. I then discuss my adoption of a deeper and more individual approach to data collection and analysis in phase two. Building on the awareness I gained in phase one of the need to understand the complexities and subtleties of tourist behaviour, and the adoption of innovative ways of 'finding out' (Holliday 2002:31), I explain my choice and use of a small sample, and of participant led guided conversations, autodriving techniques and autoethnography for the collection of data. Subsequently I discuss the presentation of meaning and how individual narratives and participant voices are used to reveal 'salient insights into the subjective realities of our research participants' (Glover 2003:145).

It is important to understand that my work was dynamic and constantly evolving. At no time did I stop reading and enquiring as a result of the insights that emerged as a result of the research process – indeed, more often than not they raised further questions rather than provided answers. Since beginning this project, my knowledge and understanding of the

subject under research and of the approaches to research have developed enormously – which as Ryan (2001:268) asserts, is a fundamental objective of a research project. Indeed, he argues that tourism research projects are a process of discovery, resulting in increased understanding in three significant ways:

> First, hopefully, something is learned about the subject of study. Second, something is learned about the process of learning itself, or at least about the research methodology being used. Finally, albeit perhaps more slowly, something is learned about oneself.

Being 'discovery orientated' (Wells 1993, Fournier 1998), the study assumes an experiential and meaning based perspective to its investigation of brands and their role in people's tourism experiences. Thus it required an holistic approach which would offer insights into the human dimension, recognising that the influence of consumers' cultural and personal history has a bearing on their experience of consumption. An approach was required that enabled insights through consumption stories, rather than a more objective, postivist approach in which the focus tends to be on what is general, average and representative, with the fundamental assumption being that if something is 'real', then it can be measured, counted and quantified objectively (Mariampolski 1999).

5.2 A Qualitative Approach

Baker (2001) states that in the past within marketing research, quantitative approaches have been considered safer and more trustworthy due to their scientific framework, and while qualitative methods are acknowledged and accepted as being subjective (Boyatzis 1998), they still attract criticisms of validity, reliability and measurement. In contrast, Keller (1998) asserts that qualitative research has a long history in marketing – indeed, qualitative methods were used in the 1930s to explore the role of women in automobile purchase decisions (Dichter 1964), however these are not dimensions that tourism research has widely adopted. Indeed, despite Riley's (1996) acknowledgment of the influence of marketing on tourism research, and questioning of the marked lack of acceptance of qualitative methods, writers are increasingly in agreement that the bias towards

quantitative methods in marketing and tourism research remains largely un-confronted (Brown 1995, 1997a, 1999, Thomas 1997, Dann and Phillips 2000, Faulkner and Russell 2000, Riley and Love 2000, Nash 2002, Williams 2002, Glover 2003).

Despite seeming disagreement on the historical development of research approaches, both Baker (2001) and Keller (1998) support other writers such as Gordon (1999), in their acknowledgement that there is no single absolute method or technique. Baker (2001:31) argues that the metaphorical, analogous and descriptive nature of qualitative methods 'better represent the ways which brands live and die in memory', and advocates the use of a wide range of qualitative tools and techniques to access the role of brands for consumers. Similarly, Ryan (1995a) and Moutinho (1989) suggest that a less structured approach will evoke the emotion associated with the topic, thus drawing out the less conscious aspects of behaviour, and Keller (1998) asserts that the range of possible qualitative research techniques is only limited by the creativity of the marketing researcher. While numeric methods have a role in tourism research, research that aims to understand this 'highly experiential and interactive phenomenon' (Dann and Phillips 2000:249) must embrace methodological diversity and interpretative approaches (Hollinshead 1996, Ryan 1997a, 2000, Walle 1997). Indeed, in their discussion of chaos theory as a foundational context for understanding the dynamics of contemporary tourism, Dann and Phillips (2000:329) strongly criticise the continued dominance of scientific methods that 'precisely measure social behaviour and relationships in postivistic, quantitative terms'.

As this study was centred on tourism consumption behaviour, I had no doubts that a qualitative approach was by far the most appropriate and applicable. Denzin and Lincoln's (1994:3) description of qualitative research encompasses many of the key characteristics that are entirely relevant here, specifically research which is:

> ... multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal

> experience, introspective, life story, interview, observations, historical, interactional and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand.

Other writers also support the appropriateness of a qualitative approach in consumption focused studies. Thus, Gordon (1999:39) recognises that consumer focused research into brand relationships needs an approach that leads to an understanding of the meanings that consumers create with these relationships 'it is not what brands and advertising do to people, but rather what people do with brands and advertising'. Similarly, Lannon and Cooper (1983:196) advocate a qualitative, naturalistic approach to studies involving the interaction between consumers and brands which:

> … allow us to see the world as consumers experience it; from their frame of reference, with their own words, gestures and behaviour. Qualitative methods allow us to explore cultural concepts such as beauty, pain, fun, hope, play – as they are defined and experienced by real people in their everyday lives.

Qualitative research offers a variety of methods and techniques that are particularly relevant when looking at actions, behaviour, attitudes and perceptions rather than more structured, scientific approaches, used when looking at frequency and outcomes. This approach presents the opportunity to collect a great deal of rich meaningful information about relatively few people (Veal 1992), rather than quantitative methods which yield limited information concerning a larger sample of people which can then be quantified in a statistical manner, but which does not allow insight into the understanding of behavioural processes. As Patton (1980) and Maxwell (1998:84) suggest, the strength of a qualitative approach is 'an understanding of the processes by which phenomena take place'.

5.3 My Epistemological Perspective

Epistemologically, I adopted an interpretavist paradigm, that is, an approach that is based on the belief that in order to understand the world of 'lived reality and situation specific meanings' (Schwandt 1994:118) it is necessary to interpret it:

> The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies (Schwandt 1994:118).

Cockburn-Wootten's (2002) paradigm framework accurately represents the underlying philosophy of the approach I have adopted. She has illustrated the key characteristics of an interpretavist approach within the context of the four elements that define our research – ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology:

Table 5-1: The Key Concepts of the Interpretative Paradigm

Assumption	Question	Interpretative Approach Characteristics
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is subjective, multiple, holistic, dynamic and socially constructed
Epistemological	What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?	Researcher as 'insider' and subjectivity
Axiological	What is the role of values?	Value laden and biases are present
Methodological	What is the process of research?	Inductive, emerging design and usually qualitative

Cockburn-Wootten 2002:4-5

Schwandt (1994) draws an interesting distinction between the adoption of an interpretivist epistemology and approach, and the actual methods of inquiry - stressing that interpretivism is an epistemological orientation and not in itself a method. Indeed, his argument is that within this approach the methods themselves are secondary, and that too much attention to the actual methods can actually detract from the purpose of the inquiry. This is supported by other writers including Richardson (1994) and Gould (1995) who argue that meanings can be found through varying methods which are, in fact almost incidental to the inquiry itself:

> The aim of attending carefully to the details, complexity and situated meanings of the everyday life world can be achieved thorough a variety of methods. Although we may feel professionally compelled to use a special language for these procedures (e.g. participant observation, informant interviewing, archival research) at base, all interpretive inquirers watch, listen, ask, record, and examine (Schwandt 1994:119).

The understanding of meaning lies at the heart of this study, and meaning is paramount in marketing, which is essentially an exchange of meaning between marketers and consumers. Meaning does not exist inherently in goods, services or brands, rather individuals ascribe meaning to things according to a diverse range of intrinsic and extrinsic associations. Thompson (1997:439) identifies a need for consumer orientated marketing research which furthers understanding of the interpretations consumers place on their 'product/service needs and desires', advocating an interpretive approach which offers opportunities for deeper insights into consumer experiences:

> A hermeneutic approach can help marketers manage the complexities (and respond to the opportunities) posed by the plurality of consumers' meaning based relationships to products, brands, services and promotions.

Similarly, Gordon (1999) advocates explanatory and interpretive approaches in order to better recognise the meanings that people create from their relationships with objects and events within particular contexts. Thompson (1997:439) used a 'hermeneutic framework

for interpreting the stories consumers tell about their experiences of products, services, brand images, and shopping', in order to gain meaningful insights into consumer experiences through their texts, stories and narratives, stating that:

> A hermeneutic framework ... can be used to interpret consumers' consumption stories in relation to their broader narratives of self-identity and a background of historically established cultural meanings (Thompson 1997:451).

As regards what constitutes 'text', Hirschman and Holbrook (1992:55) argue that usage of the term text has developed from its original meaning as a defined narrative or themed plot, to encompass a wider context which includes culture, human action, and movie genres – 'this view of action as text has gained increasingly wide prominence in the social sciences and has helped to justify the view of social science as a act of interpretation'. Indeed, the title of their book '*Postmodern Consumer Research, the Study of Consumption as Text*' (Hirschman and Holbrook 1992) suggests that the actual act of consumption can be considered as text. Accordingly, I have assumed a broader context for the term 'text' in this study, and it encompasses entire tourism experiences including my own and the participants' narratives, stories, photographs and artefacts. Thus, I considered an inductive, qualitative approach with an interpretive orientation – that is, that the research is a series of creative and interpretive acts (Gordon 1999) - to be highly suitable. Ryan (1995b, 2000) argues that it is the experiential nature of holidays that is most important for consumers, and that in order to fully understand the nature of the experience, it is necessary to use methods that allow flexibility and the expression of subjectivity, and that tourism research should not be limited by agendas that restrict the ability of the participants to express their experiences through their own words and texts. I draw on this emphasis of the need to listen to peoples' consumption stories and narratives and also on Ryan's other observations on understanding the holiday experience (2000, 2002) in my adoption of an approach and techniques that reflect the emergent nature of the study into the individual, experiential and ludic characteristics of tourism.

5.4 Naturalistic Inquiry and Emergent Design Flexibility

The word 'naturalistic' is fundamental to this study. However, there are a range of views on what constitutes naturalistic research and the level of researcher involvement. Many writers (Guba 1978, Patton 2002) use the term 'naturalistic inquiry' to indicate an approach that is dichotomous to the constrained, controlled and manipulated scientific-realist approaches. In their consumer research studies, Belk *et al.* (1989) and Firat (2001) use two terms to describe the approach that I adopt in this study - one is that of 'emergent design', and the other 'naturalistic inquiry'. In consensus with the other writers mentioned previously, Firat (2001b:1) suggests that naturalistic inquiry involves understanding situations as they emerge. He stresses the flexibility and openness of the approach emphasising that 'it is non manipulative, non controlling; remaining open to whatever emerges with a lack of premeditated constraints on findings.' His emphasis here is echoed by Patton (2002) who contrasts the level of manipulation and control inherent in scientific research design with the lack of prior outcome constraints and minimal researcher interference in naturalistic inquiry. In summarising this distinction, he states that: 'what makes naturalistic inquiry is that real-world participants direct the change, not the researcher, as in the laboratory' (Patton 2002:43). With reference to their research project which considered the distinction between sacred and profane aspects of consumption, Belk *et al.* (1989) explored consumption practices through a combination of fieldwork (which used a range of data collection techniques) and interpretation, followed by literature reviews which prompted further fieldwork, interpretation and so on. In adopting this method they argue that they have enriched and advanced the approach to consumer research which they state, was becoming increasingly narrow in focus.

The process characterised by these terms is very unlike traditional forms of positivistic research, where there are clearly articulated arguments of cause and effect, enabling hypothesis and data collection to be clearly planned and formulated prior to the commencement of the research. Naturalistic inquiry makes no prior assumptions, thus allowing an understanding of the phenomenon to develop as it unfolds 'in situ' (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Belk *et al.* 1989, Bogdan and Knopp Biklen 1998). The process is one of iteration – initial data collected in the field forms the basis for interpretation, which

leads to further reading and new understanding, which then shapes further the data collection, interpretation and understanding and so on. Naturalistic forms of inquiry have a long history; indeed as early as 1972, Sheth recognised the increasing acceptance of inter-disciplinary approaches and qualitative methodologies, suggesting that:

> within a decade, it is very likely that other disciplines will be actively interested in buyer behaviour and consequently borrow from it a set of concepts and research tools [and] sooner or later, the hard sciences are likely to be exposed to, and interested in, buyer behaviour. When it happens it is equally inevitable that they will extensively borrow both the substantive findings and research methodology of consumer research (Sheth 1972:571).

In adopting a naturalistic, emergent design approach for this study I considered it a major advantage that, not only did the qualitative methods allow the participants to express themselves freely, it enabled me to use a range of methods which were selected and adapted to comply with the particular research aim. This allowed me the opportunity to build on and develop an understanding of issues throughout the research project, and not just from the final results – making it an 'interactive process' (Saunders *et al.* 2003:385). Bogdan and Knopp Biklen (1998) use a jigsaw metaphor to explain this inductive approach:

> you are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts ... the qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough is known to recognise important concerns before undertaking the research (Bogdan and Knopp Biklen 1998:6).

Building on these traditions, I conducted the research in two phases. The study was originally driven by my broad interest in branding within tourism, and in accordance with its emergent nature the aim of the first phase of research was to gain exploratory insights. As Patton (2002:239) states: 'in the early part of qualitative fieldwork, the evaluator is exploring – gathering data and watching for patterns to emerge'. Although qualitative, this

phase was structured and researcher led, observing conventional, 'appropriate' distance and neutrality (Saunders *et al.* 2003:258). I used a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and the analysis was inductive, based on a systematic method of pattern recognition and thematic headings. It concentrated on the role and significance of brands for holiday decisions, and the influence of the holiday experience on brand associations, using mainstream package holidays as the focus. The discoveries in this phase directed and influenced the next phase of the study in terms of the actual research question and the methodological approaches, arousing further interest in more specific areas. It directed my reading – and thus the further aims of the study - much more towards a micro-level understanding of the consumption of branded products and their usage within the tourism experience.

Thus, the second phase moved away from the post-positivistic approach (Holliday 2002), towards a progressive position, which acknowledges far more variety in the way that the research is conducted, the approach to interpreting and to writing. It is an in-depth study, directed towards understanding the way in which brands form part of the postmodern tourism discourse - as symbols, as language and as experience enhancers - enriching the consumer experience not only as functional indicators, but as powerful social and cultural symbols. In order to gain valuable insights into the meaning of tourism consumption experiences, I considered it entirely appropriate to consider less structured forms of inquiry, and adopt an approach that would offer the opportunity to deconstruct and challenge accepted theories and applications, and to gain a more in-depth understanding of tourism consumption behaviour through an exploration of the underlying meaning behind consumers' behaviour, feelings and experiences. As Firat and Dholakia (1998:74) argue, 'the postmodern sensibility is to allow difference and also to allow the experiencing of different ways of being, living, looking and acting'. Therefore the second phase of the study was participant orientated – with the active involvement of the participants being paramount. As true participants they were involved and informed from the first meeting, thus they played an active and interested role in the process. Using a variety of texts to present their thoughts and ideas, they used these representations as a framework for driving the subsequent conversations, voicing their own thoughts accordingly. This resulted in a strong sense of enjoyment, ownership and pride in the process. In the interpretation, their voices are heard through their individual narratives.

5.5 Recognising the Researcher

While writers such as Gardner and Levy acknowledged the presence of the researcher as early as 1955, for the most part academic writing in the social sciences still disowns the researcher both in terms of the relationship between her and the participant, and in the disembodiment of the writer voice. However, across a range of disciplines, there are an increasing number of researchers and writers who are calling for recognition and writing of the self into narratives and texts. Coffey (1999) argues that biography has always been implicit in fieldwork and that making it explicit opens it up to methodological and epistemological justification and relevance. Recognising the trend towards writing the self into sociological research, she suggests that it can lead to the presentation of a more realistic account: 'Placing the biographical and the narrated self at the heart of the analysis can be viewed as a mechanism for establishing authenticity' (Coffey 1999:117). She also notes the trend towards reflexive and confessional accounts which are now accepted in ethnographic research and writing. However, she takes pains to emphasise the fragility of the link between self-indulgence and reflexivity, stating that while the self is used to enrich the social side of research, it should not privilege or prioritise it.

This growing trend is also reflected by proponents and practitioners of naturalistic research (Belk *et al.* 1988, Richardson 1994, Riessman 1994, 2000, Sparkes 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, Mykhalovskiy 1996, Tooke 1999). Here the researcher is the key research instrument, and thus recognition of her individuality and creativity is paramount to the quality, depth and interest embodied in the research text. As Belk *et al.* (1988:453) recognised in the 1980s:

> In contrast to the logical positivist tradition of attempting to eliminate the impact of the researcher upon the phenomenon studied, the naturalistic inquiry demands that the researcher becomes the instrument. To a large extent, the investigator and the method are inseparable and any attempt to divorce the two is futile. Thus self consciousness in data collection (Douglas 1985, Glaser 1972) and self-disclosure in both field materials and the resultant

> published documentation is a critical dimension of naturalistic inquiry.

As my understanding of naturalistic inquiry and emergent design developed, I became increasingly aware of the lack of fit between the perspective of the researcher in my research, the nature of the research and the approaches I was adopting in the early stages of the study. I came to recognise the value of more autobiographical ethnographic writing is supported in the movement towards feminist and postmodernist approaches to research and writing (Kreiger 1991, Hirschman and Holbrook 1992, Riessman 1994, Reed-Danahay 1997). Coffey (1999:125) recognises that this is resulting in an understanding that texts are increasingly personal, emotional and complex. Referring to the positioning of the researcher, she asserts that:

> They are not research instruments, or props. Rather they are gendered, racialised, sexualised, embodied and emotional. In contrast to fieldnotes (which are often private) and the partial autobiographical accounts (which are usually orientated to the research process), ethnographic writing which locates the self as central gives analytical purchase to the autobiographical.

Despite this, as a tourism under-graduate I was schooled in the conventional social science approach to academic writing – that is, within the boundaries that are set and accepted by the 'members' (Miller *et al.* 1998) of a particular academic discipline. Despite extensive exposure to tourism and marketing literature over a number of years, when I began the project, I did not question, and indeed, had no awareness of, any other approach to writing than that of what Marcus and Cushman (1982) term the 'scientific realist' style. This style holds that in order to be authoritative it is necessary to adopt the passive, third-person authoritative voice, which distances the writer 'physically, psychologically and ideologically' (Foley 1998:110), and as Kreiger (1991:29) puts it even more forcefully: 'minimizing the self, viewing it as a contaminent, transcending it, denying it, protecting its vulnerability'.

I therefore initially adopted the 'accepted' format – distancing myself from the work by using the passive, which as Holliday (220:127) argues 'pushes the person of the author into the background'. However, it is increasingly being recognised, largely due to the influence of feminist theory, that in order to fully reflect the human element which is so important in qualitative research, the self-awareness, the perspective and the cultural consciousness of the researcher must not only be recognised but must become an integral part of the process. It is noteworthy that while Ryan (2000:266) criticises the traditional social sciences approach and recognises that 'subjectivity is equally part of the tourism experience and the research process' it is something that has not been significantly evidenced within tourism research.

As my understanding of the progressive nature of my work grew, so I also became aware of different schools of thought on the level of subjectivity in work (Kreiger 1991, Richardson 1994, Gould 1991, 1995, Mykhalovskiy 1996, Cloke 1999, Bochner and Ellis 2002). Indeed, through a range of reading, I realised that, far from having to follow the inherent constraints of 'conventional' social science writing, that is writing objectively as a distant observer – which did not sit well in my mind with the nature and culture of my research - progressivist research embraces the flexible, emergent nature of the research, the involvement of the writer in the research, and respects the statement of the person and the use of the 'I' word. It is important to understand however, that having a greater research presence means recognising researcher participation more than in the sense of using the first person in writing. The presence and influence of the researcher is considered a valuable and essential resource, permeating the whole study, including the perspective, the development of the process and even as a data source.

I have thus adopted an autoethnographical approach (Hayano 1979, Mykhalovskiy 1996, Reed-Danahay 1997, Tooke 1999, Cloke 1999, Sparkes 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, Patton 2002), arguing that I cannot separate myself as an experienced tourism consumer from myself as the researcher. It is vital for me to seek meaning in my own behaviour within this culture and this context, as well as that of the participants in order to gain a far better understanding of the topic as a whole. Holliday (2002:128) states the case for personal recognition very strongly, when she argues that:

> ... there is a place for powerful, personal authorship. There is new thinking which comes from the progressive, postmodern, critical break with the naturalist, post-positivist tradition. This involves an acknowledgement that it is the agency of the researcher as writer that makes the research (Holliday 2002:128).

She asserts that an antidote to the detachment and abstractedness of conventional academic voice is to make use of the first person, to create a balance between the theory and reference to literature by bringing in personal experience – and quoting Foley (1998:112), she advocates revealing 'interpretive perspective' in 'an autobiographical style' and reporting 'specific events and actual personal encounters rather than composite typifications' (Holliday 2001:177). Indeed, it is interesting to note that her criticisms regarding the lack of researcher presence are not limited to positivistic research, which she states is fearful of 'contamination' from any form of researcher presence. She also criticises what she calls 'post-positivistic, naturalistic, qualitative research' which remains 'untouched by the researchers fly-on-the-wall presence'. She thus takes the naturalist approach a step further into what she terms as 'a progressive qualitative research paradigm', where the presence of the researcher is considered a resource to be capitalised upon:

> The progressive break from naturalism does enable a far greater variety in procedure and scope, in which data is presented more creatively, with more openness about who the researcher is and how she spins validity through an argument. This makes it possible to devise a qualitative research approach for every conceivable scenario .... Methods can be sufficiently flexible to grow naturally from the research question, and in turn from the nature of the social setting in which research is carried out (Holliday 2002:145).

5.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity in qualitative research is based on the concept of self awareness and self understanding, the recognition of the fact that we are an integral part of the social world we are studying, and that our own socio-historical context has an influence on our work as a researcher. The researcher recognises her involvement in the cultural context that she is studying – that interaction and influence is inevitable and unavoidable - and rather than trying to eliminate the effects of her presence actually endeavours to understand and use the experience to gain deeper understanding (Holliday 2000, Patton 2002). Thus a more reflexive approach recognises the participation of the researcher and recognises that it is our capacity to observe and reflect on the happenings, our actions and behaviour in that world that enriches our research. Recognising that there is no way that we can remove ourselves from the social world in order to study it, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that the researcher may well play an instrumental role in shaping the context which then becomes central to the analysis, and that this should be recognised.

It is also recognised that participation is not limited to the researcher – all those involved in the research have different (subjective) perspectives which may have a bearing on the way they view our work – as Riessman (1993:15) argues 'meaning is ambiguous because it arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst and reader'. This interaction is recognised by other writers (Iser 1978, Hirschman and Holbrook 1992), including Eagleton (1983) who acknowledges the involvement of the reader, arguing that he or she enters into the process with some (limited) pre-knowledge. He describes the interpretive process as a continuation, an interactive process between text, researcher and reader, where interpretation of each piece of text contributes to the understanding of the next as a result of re-assessment of previous interpretations:

> The reader will bring to the work certain 'pre-understandings', a dim context of beliefs and expectations within which the work's various features will be assessed. As the reading process proceeds, however, these expectations will themselves be modified by what we learn from the text, and the hermeneutical circle will begin to

> revolve.... Striving to construct a coherent sense from the text, the reader will select and organize its elements into consistent wholes .... He or she will try to hold different perspectives within the work simultaneously, or shift from perspective to perspective in order to build up an integrated [interpretation] .... As we read, we shed assumptions, revise beliefs, make more and more complex inferences and anticipations; each sentence opens up a horizon which is confirmed, challenged or undermined by the next (Eagleton 1983:77).

Building on such traditions, I have drawn on and adapted Patton's (2002:66) diagram of a conceptual framework for the research approach (figure 5-1). It depicts the tripartite perspectives that the researcher needs to understand – the self understanding, in terms of 'what I know and how I know it', the consciousness of the cultural, political, social, linguistic and ideological perspectives of the three parties involved (self, the participants and the receiving audience), the various voices, the perspective of those involved and the influences upon it.

Reflexive Questions: triangulated inquiry

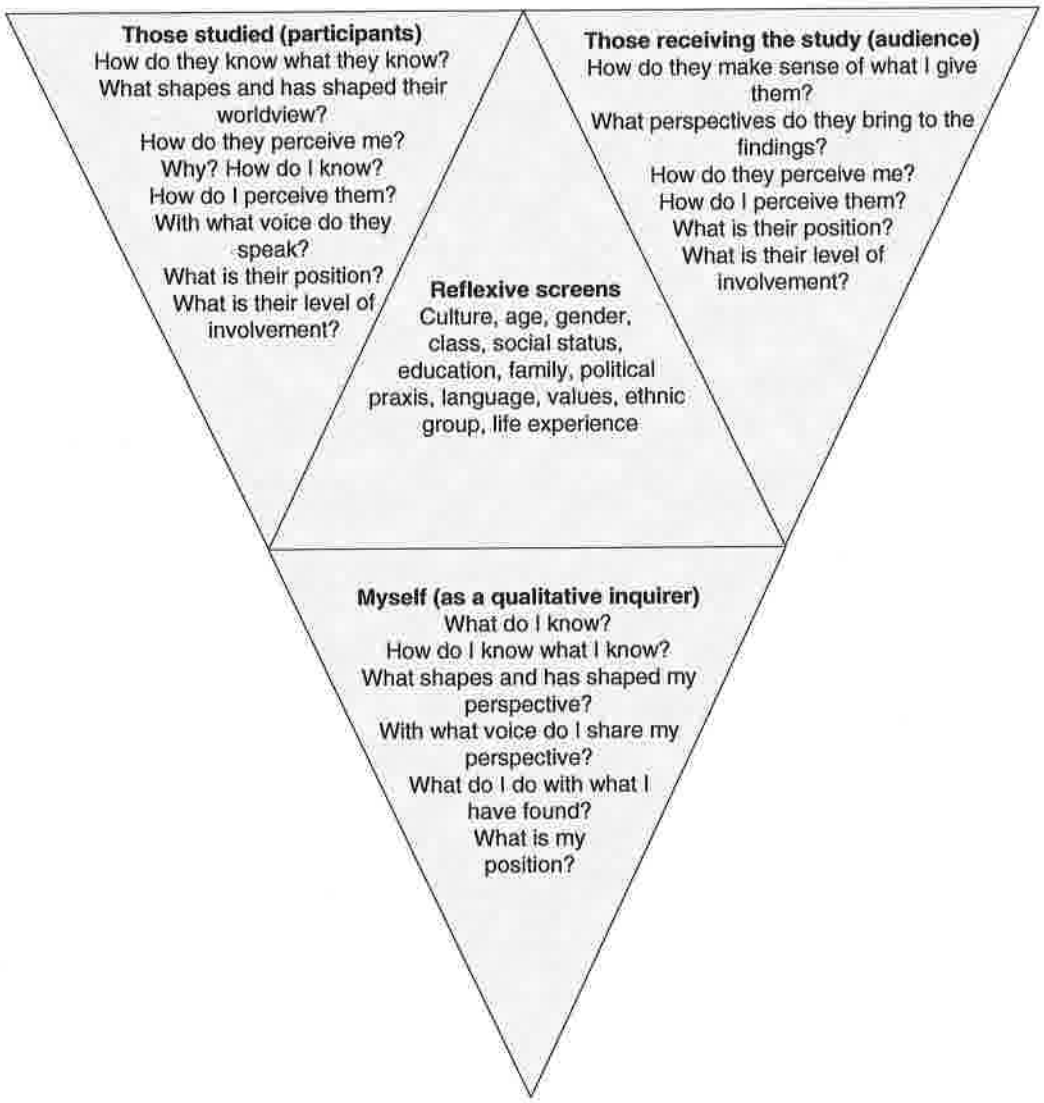


Figure 5-1
Adapted from Patton 2002:66

To Patton's diagram I have added the questions of 'voice', ' involvement' and 'position' – the level of privilege of researcher, participants and reader. Within this matrix I have also acknowledged the involvement and influence of my supervisory team. While without doubt, they are involved to some extent it is difficult to measure their influence – which, while I perceive it as being of relatively minor significance to the overall project, I cannot deny that in some way it has shaped my perspective. They are involved, yet they are not participants, they are experienced researchers and as such have provided a knowledgeable and constructive sounding board. They have guided me in terms of offering an informed and equitable voice and opinions, in terms of structure and 'making sense'. I would therefore locate them in the participatory audience – having fed back to me their understanding, their perspectives and their perceptions which in turn has enhanced my reflexivity and enabled me consider it through the eyes of (involved as opposed to uninvolved) others.

5.7 Autoethnography

At the core of autoethnography is self-awareness – recognising your own culture and your experiences within it, the textualisation of your own culture with the writer as insider (Hayano 1979). Based on an autobiographical approach to writing and research, it involves the recognition and use of your own experiences to gain a greater understanding of aspects of the culture to which you belong (Hayano 1979, Dorst 1987, Mikhalovskiy 1996, Reed-Danahay 1997, Ellis and Bochner 2000, Bochner and Ellis 2002). Denzin (1989) suggests that whereas ethnography adopts the objective stance of an outsider, autoethnography integrates elements of your own life experience with the experiences of others. However, while autoethnography is essentially as study of yourself, it is not limited to self, but rather enhances understanding of the experiences of others within the same culture. Patton (2002:86) clarifies the difference between autoethnography and ethnography, stating that:

> what distinguishes autoethnography from ethnography is self-awareness about and reporting of ones' own experiences and introspections as a primary data source.

While autoethnography is still considered somewhat new (despite Hayano's 1979 and Dorsts's 1987 seminal texts) and controversial, it is nonetheless increasingly recognised as a valid and valuable approach within various behaviour focused disciplines, including anthropology (Brandes 1982, Reed-Danahay 1997), sociology (Dorst 1989) human geography (Cloke 1999, Tooke 1999), and consumer research (Gould 1995):

> The concept of autoethnography reflects a changing conception of both the self and society in the late twentieth century (Giddens 1991, Cohen 1994). It synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question (Reed Danahay 1997:2).

Hayano (1979:101) criticises the fact that, despite the 'native vantage points' presented by autoethnography, it is not fully utilised due to the concerns of some researchers about the lack of objectivity. This emphasises the power that objective scientific measures exert over the whole research world. This includes the repeated insistence on the distancing of the researcher from the subject, and the struggle to come to terms with the value of greater researcher recognition and involvement within qualitative studies, or what Hayano (1979:103) refers to as 'the inescapable, recurrent problem of the human presence in data collection'. Very recently, in explaining his choice of an autoethnographic narrative approach in his paper on tourism research epistemologies, Botterill (2003) recognises that such an approach is open to critical scrutiny and scepticism from research traditionalists. Indeed, Mykhalovskiy (1996) and Sparkes (1994, 1996, 2000, 2002) describe their own struggles with presenting new research and writing perspectives for external scrutiny, and the (un)necessary need to defend their work against accusations of self indulgence, while Kreiger (1996) argues that academics tend to embrace convention and deny the self in writing in order to avoid possible negative judgements and to make it 'acceptable'.

Hayano (1979:101) states that autoethnographic researchers should 'possess the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as

recognized both by themselves and the people of who they are a part'. He also recognises the diversity of reporting and analytical styles among autoethnographic researchers. While there are criticisms of such an approach – that it is too subjective, that it is more akin to literary writing than social science research (Crotty 1998), there are a growing number of writers who recognise the merits of a marriage between creativity and critical inquiry (Richardson 1994, Tooke 1999, Patton 2002). While he speaks primarily from a human geography perspective, Cloke (1999:46) recognises the applicability of the approach to a whole range of subject areas – including tourism:

> Autoethnography opens up intriguing possibilities for studying, for example, our gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, sense of place and also our work, leisure, tourism and other activity geographies through the medium of our personal involvement.

Other writers (Gould 1991, Holbrook and Hirschman 1992, Sparkes 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, Mykhalovskiy 1994) have used an introspective approach to gaining a deep understanding of consumption from the view of both the consumer and the researcher. While the aim of using this approach is similar to that of autoethnography, the method is different in that it uses *only* the life experiences of the researcher. Thus Gould's research is criticised by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993), primarily for its narrowness and difficulty in achieving distance. They do however, endorse the importance of variety in research approaches and suggest that 'it seems likely that the most desirable role for researcher introspection is in combination with data collecton and analysis that study other consumers as well' (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993:353). In his response to this criticism, Gould (1995:721) strongly defends his approach and also argues for diversity in research, stating that 'it is not the method that counts per se, but it is the insight provided that matters'.

Similarly, Sparkes (1996) presents a highly personalized account of his own experiences to advance the understanding of coping with sports related injury. While this initially attracts close scrutiny and charges of self-indulgence from other researchers, he successfully defends it, arguing that diversity in research should be considered an important way of deepening understanding and stimulating discussion. In particular he stresses the need for new criteria in judging research, arguing that standard criteria are not appropriate and

asserting that autobiographical work should not be read through this 'accepted' criteria. Succeeding in persuading one of his severest critics to his viewpoint (Sparkes 2000, 2002) he emphasises the need for such approaches and asserts that: 'as autoethnographies and narratives of self become more common among social scientists, researchers will need to develop new avenues of criticism and praise for such work' (Sparkes 2000:38).

5.8 Position and Voice

Positionality is a key aspect of autoethnography and reflexive approaches to research - within autoethnography the researcher 'studies his or her own group' (Reed-Danahay 1997:8). While the term 'position' often refers to the involvement and self awareness of the researcher in relationship to the participants (Riessman 1993, Kreiger 1996, Reed-Danahay 1997, Cloke 1999) I have also used it to consider the position of the researcher and the participants in respect of their level of privilege (which corresponds with Patton's (2002) 'reflexive screens' - that is culture, gender, class, social status, education, figure 5-1). Much anthropologically and sociologically founded research (and this applies equally to tourism research), is done by the (privileged) researcher who investigates 'the other' (the less privileged) from the position of the outsider (Riessman 1993, Galani-Moutafi 2000). In the second phase of this study, the participants and myself are all privileged in the sense that we are all similar as regards the aspects mentioned previously. Regarding authenticity, Reed-Danahay (1997) states that the autoethnograpic voice (the insider) is actually considered more authentic than the ethnographic (the outsider). Similarly, Cloke (1999) recognises the danger of the Self/Other dichotomy – with the self being the more positive (valued) and the other being the 'not like me' (less valued), and he argues that reflecting on our selves helps us to avoid the urge to consider 'the others' homogenously – that is, being the same as each other in the sense that they are all those who are 'not like me'. As Kreiger (1991:6) states: 'in my view, there is no right balance between self and other in a study. There are simply different ways of expressing, or using, the self'.

While Cloke (1999:46) acknowledges that being reflexive in research is a very complex undertaking, he argues that it is very important to endeavour to break down 'detached and personally irrelevant orthodoxies', and suggests an integrated approach which combines

three practices – positionality, autoethnography and intertextuality. It is notable that he takes pains to emphasise the importance of recognising the interconnections between the powerful self and the 'subjected to other'. It is recognised that we have a variety of roles and that being a researcher is only one of several that we play (Martineau 1957, Schenk and Holman 1980, Solomon and Assael 1987, Folkes and Kiesler 1991). Our subjective experience is part of the social world we are studying, as Riessman (1994:xiv) asserts 'there is no view from nowhere, no way to see the world as it really is, separate from ourselves and language'. Through understanding and reflecting on ourselves we can avoid imposing a division between 'me' and 'others'. Table 5.2 illustrates the tripartite approach that I have developed from Cloke (1999:46-4) and which I have adopted in the study:

Table 5-2: The Tri-partite Approach

Positionality	Contextualising yourself – may involve for example, your political standpoint or social experiences which may influence the work to follow, or give added insight into particular situations.
Autoethnography	Using your own involvement to interpret people, places and situations.
Intertextuality	Seeking ways to understand your own influences as being significant while also understanding the differences that emerge from listening to others. The researcher shapes the dialogue through her own subject experience and through the questions that are asked. Interpretation of the wide variety of participant experiences will be influenced by the researcher's self positioning. The researcher's level of control is recognised, in that she will almost always retain control of the interpretations, having power over the inclusions and exclusions, the contextualisation and the story-lines that are used to shape the narratives.

Adapted from Cloke 1999:47

Firstly I have considered the participants as individuals, actively involving them in the research process and contextualising them in the research through a bio-profile. I have also reflected on my own position, locating myself in the research through a description of my past and present tourism experiences, my commercial working experience within the tourism industry and my academic experience both as a tourism student and a lecturer within the field of hospitality, tourism and leisure. Secondly I have adopted autoethnography through the consideration of my own experiences alongside those of the participants, and thirdly, while recognising that I have the ultimate control over the research, through their active involvement, the participants have also had some control over the process. Riessman (1993:16) states that research is a 'chorus of voices'. However, while she argues that as researchers we cannot 'give voice' and that representation is limited through the interpretation process which the researcher manipulates in order to 'create a particular harmony', she does argue this from the standpoint of a privileged researcher investigating the less privileged 'other', asserting that 'there are strains because most researchers are white and privileged and many women we want to include are not.' It is recognised that researchers will always make the ultimate decisions about whose voices will be heard (Riessman 1993, Coffey 1999, Patton 2002). However in this study, the participants and myself are all in a similar privileged position, and while I acknowledge my own influence on the research I have also used the voices of the participants in the narratives and interpretations. Treating stories as narratives as Riessman (2000:696) argues 'privileges positionality and subjectivity'. Here, participants' stories are presented as narratives whereby seemingly disassociated events and thoughts are connected and contextualised through the interpretation into coherent and interesting insights into consumers and the perceptions, motivations, expectations, influences and relationships which comprise their holiday experiences (Glover 2003).

5.9 The Postmodern Context

The previous sub-section explained my involvement and autoethnographical approach, which as I mentioned previously, Reed-Danahay (1997) suggests is commensurate with a postmodern context. This next sub section expands this to link the adoption of these approaches with the discussion on postmodern consumption.

Postmodernism is defined by Firat and Venkatesh (1993:227) as 'a new perspective on life and the human condition', arguing that marketing 'can be considered the ultimate social practice of postmodernity'. Thomas (1975:54) draws attention to the difference between modernist and postmodernist approaches to research, highlighting the importance of understanding meaning for contemporary marketing:

> The modernist focuses on facts; looks for causality and fundamental laws; reduces phenomena to their simplest elements; formulates hypothesis, then tests them. The postmodernist focuses on meaning, tries to understand what is happening, looks at the totality of the situation, and develops ideas through induction.

Indeed, there is a range of literature recognising that postmodernism is not merely confined to perspectives in philosophy, art, architecture, literature, history and sociology (Firat and Venkatesh 1993, Ryan 2002) but has a resonance in other disciplines and in particular, tourism and marketing. As discussed in Chapter 2, the consumption of tourism products is essentially an experience, and as Ryan (1997a:18) states 'postmodernism, like the individual tourist, is concerned with the minutiae of experience'. Characteristics of postmodernism include increasing individualism, juxtaposition, the search for experience in life and self, and a belief that value is created in consumption (experience) rather than product (as in modernist thought). Consumers are now increasingly active as opposed to passive, have a far greater consciousness of 'value' and higher demands, even constructing identities through the ability to consume – 'a paradigm shift from hard objects to soft experiences' (Lannon 1996:88). The juxtaposition which characterises postmodernism is recognised by writers such as Richardson (1994) and Holliday (2002) as influencing research contexts, not only in the way that it has infiltrated all the disciplines, but also in the way that traditional boundaries between disciplines are increasingly becoming blurred:

> Disciplinary boundaries are regularly broken. Literary studies are about sociological questions; social scientists write fiction; sculptors do performance art; choreographers do sociology; and so on (Richardson 1994:517).

Brown (1993, 1995) includes de-differentiation in his matrix of postmodern characteristics, this involves the blurring of previously defined constructs and boundaries, and can be applied very aptly to academic disciplines. Richardson (1994:517) argues that 'we are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist culture', and certainly, my focused study of tourism consumption embraces many characteristics of postmodern research. She goes on to argue that while not automatically rejecting conventional methods of knowing, postmodernism introduces the doubt that 'any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim on the 'right' or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge' (Richardson 1994:516-7). She asserts that writing is 'a method of inquiry – a way of finding out about yourself and your topic', and while recognising that this attracts criticism of accepted methods, this challenging is in fact healthy and encourages the development of alternative methods. In her endorsement of what she terms 'experimental writing', she refers to the debate of presence of self in postmodernist writing:

> Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local and situational, and that our Self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it – but only partly present, for in our writing we repress parts of ourselves too. Working from that premise, we are free to write material in a variety of ways: to tell and retell. There is no such thing as "getting it right", only "getting it" differently contoured and nuanced (Richardson 1994:521).

Similarly, Lannon and Cooper (1983) recognise the gradual coming together of previously disparate disciplines in order to increase the overall understanding of culture. This all supports the trend towards what has been termed as a bricolage approach to research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Gordon 1999). The French term 'bricolage' is translated as meaning literally 'pottering about – doing odds and ends' and 'bricoleur' as 'Jack of all trades' (Harrap 1967:29). However, in this context its meaning is more serious and is taken to mean the adoption of a holistic approach with a combination of investigative and interpretive methods drawn from different disciplines. Gordon (1999) strongly asserts that in order to fully understand the experiential nature of consumer relationships with brands, the use of such an approach is the way forward. Other writers (Levi-Strauss 1966, Denzin

and Lincoln 1994, 2000, Hollinshead 1996, Patton 2002), also define such a multiplicit approach as a 'bricolage' with the researcher as the 'bricoleur' – using a range of tools and techniques according to the setting and the phenomena being studied.

Indeed, there is consensus between writers that with a postmodern perspective, rather than practices and techniques being set out in advance as in a postitivist approach, they should be developed according to the pattern the research forms – that is following emergent design and naturalistic inquiry as discussed in the previous section:

> The qualitative researcher-*as-bricoleur* uses the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand. If new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of which tools to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2).

With specific reference to using creativity and diversity to further the understanding of tourism and symbolic consumption, Brown (1992) argues that contemporary tourism research needs the adoption of a multi-faceted approach in order to gain a more meaningful understanding into the actual consumption experiences at a micro-level:

> the traditional models that have been used to examine and predict consumer behaviour are inappropriate for the study of tourism as symbolic consumption ... there is a need to delve deeper, to adopt humanistic modes of inquiry which examine the meaning of human action with the goal of attaining understanding (Brown 1992:64).

Methods and Techniques

5.10 The Details - Phases One and Two

Crask *et al.* (1994:34) describe exploratory research as being: 'designed to further the understanding of a marketing problem or issue ... useful for exploring and explaining consumer motivations, attitudes and behaviour'. Referring to my earlier explanation of its emergent nature, the methods and techniques used in this study were developed alongside my increasing awareness of the need to adopt far more innovative and searching ways to gain the level of meaning I was seeking. In this sub-section I detail the 'workings' of the study (Holliday 2002:47) – the framework, programme and processes for each of the two phases. Tables 5-3 and 5-4 illustrate the overall programmes for phase one and phase two. I briefly introduce the methods and techniques used in phase one before presenting a more detailed discussion of those used in both phases. These include individual interviews, focus groups, projective techniques, autodriving, photoelicitation and autoethnography. I then focus on the details of each phase separately, presenting a more detailed explanation of the sample size, shape and selection and the various techniques used. This is followed by a discussion of quality assurance in qualitative research. The chapter closes with a description of the analysis of the data. After discussing the systematic, thematic analysis approach used in phase one, I explain how the depth and richness of the data in phase two led me towards narrative interpretation and the need to adopt an individual approach to presenting the findings through the voices of each participant.

Table 5-3 : Fieldwork Programme – Phase One

Stage	Method	Number	Location	Formative Outcome
1	semi-structured interviews	5	Croatia	development of framework for focus groups
1	focus groups/ projective techniques	2 (each comprising 6 participants)	Cardiff	emergence of themes influenced direction and focus for stage 2 interviews and focus groups
2	semi-structured interviews	15	Spain	emerging insights led to further reading/ literature review
2	focus groups	5 (each comprising 4-6 participants)	Spain	development of own understanding led to greater focus on experiential aspects and micro aspects of brand usage in phase 2

Table 5-4: Fieldwork Programme – Phase Two

Method	Participants	Timing	Techniques	Location	Formative Outcome
introductory meeting/ interview (researcher led)	Dai Audrey Rebecca Susannah Jemima George Mary Elizabeth Kevin	initial meetings	N/A	various within Cardiff	explanation of study & anonymity/ confidentiality, laid foundations for subsequent tasks and meetings
meeting and guided conversation (participant led)	Dai Audrey* Rebecca Susannah Jemima George Mary Elizabeth	approx. 1-2 months later -to allow time for participants to take photographs	projective/ autodriving – using participants' photographs	various within Cardiff	generation of ideas/themes for next task/ meeting
meeting and guided conversation (participant led)	Dai Audrey* Rebecca Susannah Jemima George Elizabeth	approx. 1 – 2 months later - to allow time for collage construction	projective/ autodriving – using participants' collages	various within Cardiff	interpretation and discussion

* Participants felt free to contact me during this phase, and several did so with queries, which resulted in additional meetings where appropriate. Due to time constraints and distance, the second and third meetings with Audrey were merged together.

In the first, exploratory phase I used a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Here I was seeking detailed behavioural and attitudinal information, and I needed to understand the level of brand interaction and significance throughout the decision process and the tourism experience. My reason for using the combination of focus groups and semi-structured interviews at this early stage was to assess consumer brand awareness and associations for tangible manufactured brands, and for tourism brands. In addition, the salience of tourism component brands and their significance in the decision making process was explored. The initial interviews yielded information that I then used to design the question format for the focus groups. The information from the focus groups directed further reading and this cumulative information was then used as the basis for the next series of semi-structured interviews. While the two methods are similar in the fact that they are both quite unstructured and may allow the same topics to be explored, they have certain distinctive qualities that make them different – the group context allows interviewing of several participants at once; observation of interactions and greater discussion around topics driven by the dynamics of the group; the one to one context enables a much keener focus and concentration on the path of the conversation, and the ability to probe deeper if the opportunity occurs. However, the two are compatible and provided different levels of data which were used together in subsequent phases of the research. Using the combination of the two methods also enabled me to use a wider range of techniques.

It is the nature of this emergent design study that it was constantly evolving as a result of my accrued knowledge gained from data collection and reading (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Belk *et al.* 1989, Firat 2001). The information that I gained from the first phase was in itself interesting and valuable, and also acted as a catalyst for the development of greater curiosity – and the significance of – the various insights that emerged. This led to the second phase of the research, where I used a range of other techniques to build upon the foundations of the first phase. In this stage of the study the aims centred on developing a deep understanding of the meaning in tourism consumption experiences, and particularly how people engage and interact with brands as part of their experiences. In order to gain these deeper insights, I considered it necessary to 'get inside peoples' lives' – that is, to use methods and techniques that would encourage people to tell stories about their tourism experiences and lay open their thoughts, feelings and knowledge about the goods and

services that they interact with before, during and after these experiences. I also wanted to find out about the different types of tourism situations that they may engage in, and understand if, how and why the discourse may vary according to the type of tourism situation. In this phase I used qualitative interviews together with a range of projective techniques including autodriving and photoelicitation (Belk *et al.* 1988, McCracken 1988, Heisley and Levy 1991). Commensurate with my research epistemology there was greater flexibility and involvement of myself as the researcher and of the participants. The structure of the interviews was predominantly imposed by the participants who had a high level of involvement and sense of ownership throughout. In the same vein, the pleasurable autodriving and projective activities reflected tourism's postmodern context. In the following sub-sections I discuss the methods, techniques, sample issues and fieldwork in detail.

5.11 Individual Interviews (Phases One and Two)

As the study was concerned with understanding consumers' tourism experiences I considered interviews which involved only open-ended questions (Bogdan and Knopp Biklen 1998) an appropriate choice for both phases of the study. According to Patton (2002:341):

> The purpose of interviewing then is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is on someone else's mind, to gather their stories.

Similarly, Potter and Mulkay (1985:28) state that qualitative interviews 'reveal the interpretive practices through which participants come to construct versions of their social world'. In accordance with my interpretative approach, individual interviews allowed a significant degree of flexibility for the exploration of issues as they arose in conversation. Seale (1998:202) has described the interview as 'probably the most commonly used method in social research,' enabling the researcher 'to find out about things that cannot be

seen or heard such as the interviewee's inner state - the reasoning behind their actions and their feelings.' Arguably, interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to gain 'more authentic' and 'less exploitative' accounts of experience than is perhaps offered by other methodologies and techniques (Seale 1998:202).

While texts on qualitative interview methodology agree that the level of structure varies (from being structured and researcher controlled, to more flexible and unstructured), there is a variety of terminology used to describe these levels (Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen 1998, Patton 2002, Saunders *et al.* 2003). However it is the quality of the data that is the key priority (Belk *et al.* 1988, Gould 1995) – something that is largely dependent on the ability of the researcher to put the participants at ease and elicit 'rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents perspectives' (Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen 1998:94). They also acknowledge that different degrees of structure may be appropriate at different phases of the same study, and I therefore adopted their terminology for the two types of interview in phases one and two. In phase one I used semi-structured interviews which they describe as being:

> relatively open-ended, focused around particular topics or ... guided by some general questions .... With semi-structured interviews you are confident of getting comparable data across subjects, but you lose the opportunity to understand how the subjects themselves structure the topic at hand (Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen 1998:94-5).

In phase two there was far more participant involvement, therefore I used 'guided conversations' where they recognise a greater level of participant involvement. In

> the very open-ended interview ... the researcher encourages the subject to talk in the area of interest and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues that the respondent initiates. The subject plays a stronger role in defining the content of the interview and the direction of the study in this type of interview... some call this type of interview a guided conversation (Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen 1998:95).

As Gordon (1999) acknowledges, the length of the interview is entirely dependent on the nature of the inquiry, and in this study the duration of the interviews and conversations varied. During the semi-structured interviews in phase one I adhered more closely to my interview framework and although they varied in length between 40 minutes and one hour they were much shorter than the participant led conversations in phase two.

5.12 Focus Groups (Phase One)

Developed according to the recognition that consumer decisions are usually made in a social context (Patton 2002), a major advantage of a group environment for interviewing is that it can bring the researcher into the world of the participants - giving valuable insights into people's attitudes, opinions, perceptions and behaviours (Bogdan and Knopp Biklen 1998). By bringing a number of people together to discuss a range of issues on the topic in question, a synergistic, stimulating and dynamic environment where group participants feel encouraged to speak expansively can develop:

> The intent of focus groups is not to infer but to understand, not to generalise but to determine the range, and not to make statements about the population but to provide insights about how people perceive a situation (Krueger 1988:188).

Although the roots of focus groups are in market research (Patton 2002), since the 1980s they have become increasingly recognised as an effective way to collect information, particularly in the preliminary and exploratory stages and their use is escalating (Kreuger 1988, Morgan 1993, Patton 2002). However, as the ongoing debate on the reliability and validity of 'non-scientific' research methods (Ryan 1995a) continues, the reputation of focus groups as a data collection method has been somewhat tarnished recently. This can be largely attributed to their rather limited application in politics (Gordon 1999), and other fields where focus groups are now regarded as somewhat 'sexy' and even 'glamorous' (Staley 1990), and it could be argued in these situations other considerations take precedence over depth of meaning. It is not unusual to hear or read nowadays in a news article that 'as the result of focus group research, (the government or a political party)

have concluded that ....' However, the value of focus groups is in the way that they provide balance and richness, bringing to the fore social issues, opinions and attitudes in the way that that objective, standardized quantitative methods cannot (Stacey 1990, Greenbaum 1998, Saunders *et al.* 2003). Although individual interviews allow a significant degree of flexibility for the researcher to explore issues as they arise in conversation, I used focus groups in the first, exploratory phase of the study as a complimentary dimension. As Priest (1996:109) asserts: 'the advantage which a focus group has over an individual depth interview is that the respondents or informants involved ... react to one another more naturally ... a richer picture of how information is processed and conclusions are drawn can be constructed in comparison to an interview situation.' Other advantages include cost-effectiveness, the enhancement of the quality of the data (the checks and balances provided by the interaction highlight false or extreme views), rapid assessment of the consistency or divergence of views, participant enjoyment through the sharing of ideas and perceptions resulting in valuable insights (Patton 2002).

5.13 Projective Techniques (Phases One and Two)

The range of projective techniques that I used in the phase one, stage one focus groups (1/1) proved to be very effective. I therefore refined and built on this experience and developed a range of projective techniques in phase two. Originally projective techniques had a psychoanalytical application and are based on the Freudian belief that anxiety is easily dealt with if it is externalised and projected onto a third party (Murray 1943, Branthwaite and Lunn 1985). The techniques were further developed by Murray (1940) for use in psychoanalytical diagnosis, and have been used increasingly in a wider application - particularly that of consumer research, since the 1950s (Levy 1980, 1981, 1985, Kleinman 1985, Heisley and Levy 1991). Askegaard (2001) argues that there are three barriers to investigating deeper human behaviour which are: repression and the unconscious; self-awareness and rationality and social influences. He states that these influences affect peoples' responses to questions or cues - in an individual or even a group interview situation, people often tend to say what they think they know or feel, rather than what they really know or feel. Projective techniques however, can provide pathways into the mindsets and subconscious thoughts of individuals, enabling us to express and

articulate unconscious deeper meanings and levels of thought, giving insights to personality and cultural values that otherwise would not be revealed:

> Thus, given a standard but relatively ambiguous task – such as telling a story about a picture – what a person does reflects how he structures and interprets his life situations and reacts to them (Levy 1963:4).

Similarly, Branthwaite and Lunn (1985:109) suggest that projective techniques provide the following advantages: they 'overcome self-censorship and self-consciousness; encourage expression and fantasy; change perspective; inhibit rationalisation and cognitive responses and encourage expression of personal emotion.'

5.14 Autodriving and Photoelcitation Techniques (Phase Two)

Ryan (2001:268) has described tourism as being ludic - playful, pleasurable and fun: 'Tourism is about fantasy, relaxation, the exotic if not erotic…'. Tourism is also used as a metaphor for the postmodern condition in a range of literature (Bauman 1996, Firat and Venkatesh 1993, 1995, Firat 2001a) and in the same vein, a range of postmodern literature refers to postmodernism in terms of play, parody and pastiche, for example, Ogilvy (1990:15) suggests that: 'the postmodern consumer plays with an eclectic combination of goods and services to experience a series of tentative inconsistent identities'. Similarly, Solomon (1998:38) (referring to the emphasis on the visual), considers that within postmodernism the world is viewed through a camera lens, describing it as 'a carnival of arresting images'. Building on the success of the projective techniques in the first phase, in phase two I developed the concept through the use of autodriving and photoelicitation techniques, and in doing so I considered it highly appropriate to incorporate these elements of tourism experience and postmodernism into the way that the data was collected. In keeping with these themes, the tasks (while being acknowledged methods and techniques), were thus developed to incorporate elements of play and fun – to be considered by the participants as being pleasurable (in the spirit of holiday taking) rather than mundane and onerous. In considering the balance of involvement, positionality and voice between the participants and the researcher, and referring to Patton's (2002) triangulated framework

(figure 5.1), I also considered it important to involve the participants far more in the research and the analysis, and developed phase two accordingly.

Autodriving is based on the concept of projective techniques. The term is meant to convey the concept of the participant being 'in the driving seat' – that is, the interview is driven by the participants who are – 'interviewing themselves, to provide a perspective of action' (Heisley and Levy 1991:260), as a response to some stimuli representing their own life and behaviour (Belk *et al.* 1988, Heisley and Levy 1991). In the second phase of this study I used two autodriving techniques - photoelicitation and collages – thus making the study more holistic – empowering the participant in allowing them to determine much of the agenda. The use of visual texts – such as photographs, video, artefacts, and collages - has found increasing favour among naturalistic consumer behaviour researchers and ethnographers since the 1980s (Hirschman 1986, Belk *et al.* 1988, 1989, Pink 2001, Hurworth 2003), although it is still under utilised within social science research (Pritchard and Morgan 2004). Other advantages include the quantity and the quality of the information (Schwartz 1989). Interviewees respond favourably and are more at ease when photographs are used to support interviews, resulting in a far greater and more fluent flow of information:

> Beyond the cultural inventory, the photograph as a probe and stimulus to interviewing has proven to be consistently invaluable. In tests carried out for Cornell University we compared the value of interviewing with and without photographs and discovered that the picture interviewer could continue his interrogations indefinitely, as long as he continued to bring in fresh photographs. In contrast, the exclusively verbal interviews became unproductive much more quickly (Collier 1979:281).

The use of visual text such as the photographs and collages were particularly appropriate in the context of tourism which for so long has elevated the visual above all else (Botterill and Crompton 1987, Adler 1989, Rojek 1995, Urry 1990b, 2002) – indeed Urry (2002) argues that since the mid 19th century tourism and photography have been inseparable. However while photographs and other texts have been used within research for some time

they have not always been generated by the participants. The underlying concept of autodriving - that is, self created pictures and representations as triggers in order to elicit narratives – is that people project themselves and their culture onto their pictures. In the words of McCracken (1988:24) it enables the participant to 'see familiar data in unfamiliar ways'. By looking at a visual representation that they have made of a particular life situation, it provides some distance, thus bringing a new perspective to the way they think about their everyday lives – providing a 'perspective of action' (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991, Heisley and Levy 1991:257). Thus, when they then talk about them they are able to give significant insights into their lives, values and culture, increasing their voice and authority.

I used what Heisley and Levy (1991:261) term 'a multiple iteration approach to autodriving' – that is, first asking the participants to take photographs, which were then used as stimuli in subsequent interviews, then the participants made up collages which were analysed and then followed by a further interview where the participants were shown the photographs, the collages and the interpretations which they were encouraged to comment upon. The photoelicitation involved using photographs - which in this case were taken by the participants themselves - of particular situations related to tourism activities. The collages were another type of visual representation of tourism situations, again made by the participants themselves (copies of these are presented with each individual narrative interpretation in chapter 6).

5.15 Autoethnographical Element

As I have already established, the researcher is a valuable resource in qualitative research and as a result the study also incorporated an autoethnographical element. In expressing the characteristics of autoethnographies, Hayano (1979:100) states that:

> the researchers possess the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognised both by themselves and the people of who they are a part.

As a tourism academic, and an experienced tourism consumer within the cultural and social group under study it was not possible, nor feasible in the interests of gaining understanding, to attempt to separate myself as researcher from my other Selves. As Mykhalovskiy (1996:133) argues: 'writing about the self involves, at the same time, writing about the 'other', and writing about the 'other' is also about the self of the writer'. Indeed, I argue that because the study was dynamic, was influenced by who and what I am, my life experience, and my ongoing involvement with the emerging process, it was important to consider it as an advantage to be able to use this as a significant resource. Cloke (1999) states that the concept of autoethnography is based on the interpretation of situations, people, places and so on through the perspective and personal involvement of the researcher. I therefore considered that although my own experiences were not directly transferable to those of others, my self-awareness, participation and perspective adds a significant, complimentary dimension to the study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:21) assert:

> By including our own role within the research focus, and perhaps even systematically exploiting our participation in the settings under study as researchers, we can produce accounts of the social world and justify them without placing reliance on futile appeals to empiricism, of either the positivist or naturalist varieties.

During the period of the second phase of the study I took several tourism trips. These included trips of a primarily business nature – and those of a primarily leisure nature. I use the word 'primarily' advisedly. There were overlaps within both of those situations – it is inherent in my nature to be excited by and experience curiosity, pleasure – and some leisure – when travelling on business. Just as it is not possible to dissociate myself as tourism consumer from myself as researcher, it is not possible to dissociate myself the tourism academic/researcher from myself as leisure/pleasure tourist – experiencing the previously mentioned emotions including excitement, curiosity and pleasure though the hedonistic pursuit of leisure and also through an awareness of the academic capital being gained in the 'experiencing' of the leisure tourism pursuit. I kept an informal record of these trips, sometimes written, sometimes recorded onto tape – from the time of the conception of the trip, through the actual trip and the post-trip reflections. During these

trips I took a range of photographs which demonstrate the significance of brands within tourism dialogues. In addition, I felt it important to construct a collage. This enabled me to understand the task that the participants were undertaking – a further way to dissolve the boundaries between (my) self and 'others' – something that, in relation to the influences of postmodernism on tourism research, Galani-Moutafi (2000:217) considers as 'an increasing reorientation of the ethnographer's gaze towards the self, as the appropriate place for interpreting cultural experience'. Thus the collage presented opportunities for me to reflect on the technique itself - on aspects such as the time, practicality and effort involved. It also gave me valuable insights into my own behaviours and significances of holiday experiences relative to those of the participants. This combination of textual information formed the basis for my autoethnographic interpretation (chapter 6).

5.16 Phase One – Size, Shape and Action

Phase one was structured in two stages. In the first stage (1/1) I carried out five semi-structured interviews, which were held prior to two focus groups. The data from these individual and group interviews was analysed and used to develop the next stage of this phase (1/2). There are no definitive guidelines regarding the sample sizes for naturalistic inquiry – indeed, Belk *et al.* (1988) recognise that depth of understanding is far more important than the quantity, and that often time and financial constraints are a determinant of the ultimate sample size. With specific reference to focus groups, Krueger (1994) has suggested a minimum of three, and other writers concur with Belk *et al.* (1988) that qualitative research should be continually reviewed as the research is being conducted, if additional focus groups do not add further insights, then the field work should cease (Churchill 1995). Given the logistical constraints of arranging focus groups in a non-commercial context (i.e. where no financial incentive can be offered) I considered that two focus groups which used a range of projective techniques would give insights that could be used to develop the next stage of the study. In both stages of phase one (1/1 and 1/2), the sample was chosen purposively (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Fournier 1998), which means that rather than being specified prior to the commencement of the research, the sample is chosen in accordance with the emergent nature of the research design. Patton (2002:232)

terms this 'purposeful' sampling – that is, where the concentration is on: 'selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study'.

Qualitative research involves the study of the way that respondents think and act within particular settings (Bogdan and Knopp Bicklen 1998). The setting is important to the quality of the data for, just as Belk *et al.* (1988:450) regard the interpretation of data collected in situ as being the 'hallmark of naturalistic inquiry', Ryan (1995b) comments on the suitability of carrying out fieldwork using a convenience sample of holidaymakers in a particular resort. Certainly, I found that interviewing holidaymakers in Croatia (1/1) and Spain (1/2) proved to be both appropriate to the methodological approach and ideal in terms of access and quality of the participants' response. The selection of participants was not difficult and they were relaxed and willing to respond openly, the holiday setting and atmosphere was very conducive to the expression of experiences, emotions, attitudes appertaining to the context of the study. The only 'problems' that I encountered in gaining access were in Spain (1/2). Due to the high propensity of unwelcome hawkers selling time share, initially it was a challenge for me to convince potential participants of my validity as a researcher, rather than a time share sales person. Indeed, on one occasion my confidence was dented for a short time when I was chased away from an outdoor café by the proprietor mid-interview. However, I found that in the main, once participants were sure of my intentions, they were extremely interested in the research and only too glad to spend some time talking about their experiences. The questions were 'conversations with a purpose' (Lofland and Lofland 1971), phrased according to the path of the conversation, and I used an interview guide to ensure that I remained within the loose framework of the research topics.

Throughout the study data was recorded by means of 'hard' documentation as a result of projective exercises, photographs and collages, combined with audio recordings for the verbal responses. Audio recordings were made to record all focus groups and interviews as '... the use of recorded data serves as a control on the limitations and fallibility of intuition and recollection' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:186). In response to Hirschman's (1986) fears of the intrusiveness of tape recording restricting response, Belk *et al.* (1988:450) argue that this tends to happen occasionally, and only then during the first few moments of the interview. Indeed, that somewhat conversely, the use of audio and

video can actually act as a magnet – the curiosity of passers-by being aroused and thus increasing the 'sample pool'. I would also suggest that nowadays, largely due to the general acceptance of technology as very much a part of everyday life, that using mechanical devices is a valid and necessary way of collecting data, and audio and video equipment is now widely used as a method of recording participant/researcher interactions in a range of disciplines.

In the initial stage (1/1), five semi-structured interviews were carried out in a hotel lobby and an airport lounge in Croatia, and were designed to generate ideas and provide a focus for the subsequent group sessions. The participants were varied in age, gender and partnership status, from various geographical locations within the UK, and all were on holiday with mainstream air tour operators. The two focus group sessions which followed, were based on the information generated during these interviews and my subsequent reading of the literature. Each group comprised six participants, and both took place in Cardiff. Again the geographical location was chosen on the basis of convenience due to time and financial limitations on the study, rather than for other specific reasons, and I considered the location not significant at this stage. The criteria were that they had significant influence in holiday decisions, and due to the focus of this phase being on package holidays all the participants had taken (during the past three years) or were planning, at least one mainstream (i.e. not group, tailor-made, specialist, independent or niche activity) UK air package holiday. Although age and gender were not of particular significance the demographic/lifestyle grouping was developed from Mintel 1998. There were three men and three women in each group, participants were all from socio-economic groupings B and C1, in either full or part time paid work and they varied in age (between 15 and 54) and partnership status. In contrast to the nature of covert techniques, whereby the research is disguised and kept secret, throughout the project I was open and honest about my intentions and the nature and aim of the research, in accordance with the concept of 'informed consent' (Belk *et al.* 1988:454), inviting relevant questions about myself and the project and willingly giving information. As Patton (2002:389) recognises 'the power of focus groups relies on them being focused' therefore the sessions were structured mainly by the techniques – each one providing the focus for the discussion which followed. I was guided by a loose framework of questions and the techniques that I

had developed and familiarised myself with beforehand, and which enabled me to keep control of the session (see table 5-5 and appendix Ai for focus group techniques).

Table 5-5: Focus Group Techniques

Technique	Aim	Effectiveness (rating low-high/ 1-10)
discussion on brands in general followed by word association, sentences completion and generic brand exercises	ice breaker/ insights into broad perceptions of general and tour operator brands	8
brand attributes, associations / discussion	association of attributes to range of tour operator bands	8
brand personalities	to determine personality traits ascribed to brands	10
(a) conceptual mapping (grouping companies) (b) discussion	(a) to determine brand awareness, perceived similarities; define groups as basis for discussion (b) to determine rationale/ characteristics for groupings	5

Throughout the sessions, I selected the tour operator brands used in the projective exercises according to group turnover in rank order (Mintel 1998). Some of the projective techniques were more successful than others. The predominant lesson learned from these sessions was that the tasks need to be very clear and straightforward. Complex exercises and/or unclear explanations can result in misunderstanding and feelings of inadequacy and failure among participants. The more successful exercises were word association, sentence completion,

brand personality and brand association. The conceptual mapping was less successful – due partly to my inexperience with the techniques and partly to their complexity and inappropriateness within this particular situation. In the beginning, I used a word association exercise as an 'ice-breaker' and as preparation for other techniques. Responses were elicited on attitudes to brands in general, and salience, awareness and imagery of air tour operators. I also used sentence completion during the early stages to gain insights into broad perceptions of tour operator brands.

Possibly the most revealing and successful technique was brand personality. Brand personality is a recognised and much utilised concept within branding theory (Batra *et al.* 1993, Smothers 1993, Aaker 1997, Keller 1998) and as previously discussed, is based on the understanding that just like people, brands are perceived as having personalities with which consumers can identify. As Martineau (1957:73) states ' a buying process is an interaction between the personality of the individual and the so called 'personality' of the product itself'. A 'personality' is ascribed to a brand according to certain values associated with it by the consumer (Aaker 1996:138). In support of this concept, Restall and Gordon (1993:60) argue that consumers 'see' brands in the same way that they 'see' people. They cite their own research in stating that brand personality has been shown to be one of the most effective ways of differentiating brands, particularly in service markets where there is little in the way of product or service differentiation. Christopher (1996:56) asserts that it is the brand's personality that 'makes a brand a brand', and differentiates it from the competition. I introduced this task towards the end of the session, when participants were relaxed within the group and the discussion was flowing freely. The participants were asked to think of six of the major tour operators as personalities, and to describe the type of person they were - the way they dressed, behaved, the type of house they lived in, the car they drove, and so on.

As a projective research technique, the use of brand personality is, like many other such techniques, open to criticism. However, while being aware of these criticisms, I considered that their suitability in terms of theoretical grounding through the body of academic literature on brand personality, in provoking wider, deeper feelings and thoughts, eliciting brand associations, and avoidance of 'diplomatic' responses (Ryan 1995a), would over-ride any weaknesses. Restall and Gordon (1993) support the use of brand personality

in group settings, stating that the amalgam of senses, feelings, responses and effect which make up the brands' personality can best be expressed freely in a group discussion.

The quality of the information gained in the initial interviews and focus groups guided the choice of location for the next stage (1/2). Here, I carried out a combination of fifteen interviews and five focus groups in Spain. The locations for the interviews were public spaces such as promenades, parks and the beach, together with open air cafés and on one occasion, a hotel lobby. I used the same purposive sampling criteria as in the earlier stage, and again the respondents were all on holiday with mainstream inclusive air tour operators and were varied in age, with social class ranging from A to C2. Recruitment for the focus groups was not difficult, participants were on holiday and viewed it as a social occasion that gave them the opportunity to speak about their holiday decision experiences. However finding suitable locations proved more challenging, and two were held around a hotel swimming pool and three in a hotel bar area. The background noise was obtrusive at times, and affected the quality of the recording. The informality of the focus groups proved useful in that people were willing to discuss a range of relevant issues, however, it did make the sessions more difficult to control. I did not use projective techniques in these sessions due to practical reasons and appropriateness in the informal setting. Analysis of stage one data (1/1) was very instrumental in shaping and indeed challenging my thoughts and knowledge, and the emergence of themes and discourses influenced the pattern of this subsequent stage. As a result, there was increased focus on expectations, decision making and choice criteria.

5.17 Phase Two – Size, Shape and Action

> Interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed door there is a world of secrets (Oakley 1981:41).

Although the interviews and focus groups in phase one were 'semi-structured', they were in fact led by me, and constrained by my topic focus, however, in listening to people's stories of their holiday experiences I became aware of the need to move away from a narrow focus on the influence of brands in the holiday decision process. The stories

generated a desire to adopt a less structured and systematic perspective in order to open the door to the 'secrets' of the deeper relationships between consumers and brands and the influences of the entire holiday experience. Due to the depth of information required in this phase I chose to consider a broader range of experiences for a small number of people. Interestingly Patton (2002:244-5) has stated that:

> *There are no rules for a sample size in qualitative inquiry.* Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with the time and resources .... The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size (original emphasis).

There is a significant amount of seminal research that has been carried out using very small samples (Botterill 1989, Sparkes 1994, Holliday 2002, Patton 2002), and the strength of these studies is in the concentration on small samples which are selected purposefully – that is, participants are selected because they have valuable, study specific information that they can impart:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selection *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal of central importance to the inquiry (Patton 2002:230) (original emphasis).

My aims in this phase of the study centred on gaining insights into the tourism experiences of individuals. The participants were actively involved over several months, during which time each participant carried out a number of activities and took part in several guided conversations. So while the number of participants was relatively small, it was the depth and richness of the data that was important. Serial interviews that were open and participant led, ensured that not only could issues and experiences be talked about in a relaxed fashion, but that there was opportunity for participants to reiterate and refer to a

particular topic during subsequent conversations. Indeed, after the second conversation, Elizabeth requested another interview because she had reflected on various topics and felt she had more to say.

During the fieldwork period all participants engaged in a variety of tourism experiences for business and leisure purposes. For this phase of the research, while still using purposeful sampling, I was also much more 'opportunist' in my approach (Holliday 2002:9) which simply means seizing opportunities that present themselves, while being conscious all the time of 'maintaining the principles of social science'. There is recognition that resources are often stretched and that researchers have to 'use whatever resources are available to do the best job possible' (Patton 2002:401). Patton goes on to say that in purposeful sampling, the cases that are selected should be those which 'the most can be learned from'. Due to the small number of participants, and the depth of the study, it was vital that all participants were fully committed to the programme. As the research was quite personal and could have been considered intrusive, it was important that all participants understood and were empathetic to research in general and were comfortable with the lengthy, time consuming and personal nature of the programme. I therefore chose work colleagues from various departments within the University, together with other people that I knew through personal contacts. All expressed interest in the study and understood and were supportive of research and therefore empathetic and willing to give up their time and perform the various tasks. Hoffman (1980:46-7) presents justification for using social contacts based on her own experience in the depth of response gained from unknown versus known participants, stating that the known participants gave far more 'informative and insightful data'. Having become aware of the constraints imposed by the positionality and balance of involvement between researcher and the participants in phase one (Patton 2002, figure 5-1) I considered it paramount in this phase to involve the participants as actively as possible. The interactive nature of the methods and techniques meant that there was considerable active participation in the process by the participants 'processes that support consciousness raising and researcher reflexivity' (Patton 2002:269), and which are appropriate when the aim is to 'humanize research and evaluation' (Patton 2002:175).

The participants' gender, age and family life stage all varied – while I did not consider this to be of primary importance, I felt that it would be of interest to be able to compare

responses and experiences accordingly. While gender was not a significant issue, initially I tried to recruit both men and women equally. However, while it would have been better to have had a more even distribution, once the programme was explained I found that women were far more willing and enthusiastic to take part in a prolonged programme which involved a number of activities and tasks, than men. This echoes the experience of Cockburn-Wootten (2002) who notes that men tended to be more reluctant to spend the necessary time, and were less comfortable generally about engaging with tasks associated with data collection. While I considered that six participants (together with myself) would be sufficient in number, this phase of the study initially involved nine participants as I was aware that there may be some participants who would drop out of the programme. In fact this did happen – one participant took a job in a different geographical location and felt that his new commitments did not allow him sufficient time to take part. A second participant, while being quite comfortable with the first stage of the programme and took photographs which were used for the subsequent conversation, was not at all happy with the second task – that is, the collage. When I explained the task to her, her response was: '*I cannot do that, I'm not good at that sort of thing ... I really don't want to do it.*' Due to the necessity to approach the task with enthusiasm, we therefore agreed that it would be better if she discontinued the programme. Therefore, the final number of participants was reduced to seven – five women and two men.

There were initially six women participants: Mary who just completed the first stage of the research (aged 42, married with one child aged 9), Susannah (aged 35, married with no children initially - but did however become pregnant during the course of the research), Rebecca (aged 30, in a permanent relationship with no children), Jemima (aged 59, married with two children), Elizabeth (aged 55, married with two grown children), and Audrey (aged 26, married with no children). The men were Kevin (aged 30, single) who dropped out after the first interview, Dai (aged 62, married with grown children and several grandchildren) and George (aged 61, married with grown children). Jemima and George are married to each other, and while the photographs and collage were a joint effort, the interviews were conducted separately. For reasons of confidentiality, all the participants adopted pseudonyms which they were asked to choose. Kevin, Dai, George, Mary and Susannah had no particular preference and left it up to me (I did however tell them the names I had chosen), however there was personal significance in the choice for

the other participants. Audrey chose her cat's name, Rebecca chose hers because she had always wished it was her actual name, Elizabeth's was her mother's name and Jemima chose hers because she collects ducks: '*Yes, alright I'll be Jemima because I'm into ducks you see*'.

Commensurate with the emergent design approach, rather than have a strict pre- stipulation for the number of interviews with each participant, I considered flexibility to be important and to let the programme unfold and to conduct as many (or as few) interviews as seemed necessary. While I had thought that three would be the most probable number, extra interviews were arranged in some cases when participants wanted them. The participants' photographs and collages acted as stimuli and provided a focus for the conversations – thus adding participant led structure to the proceedings. While I was entirely conversant with the aspects that I was hoping to cover, it was very important that the conversations were allowed to flow freely along with the thoughts of the participants. Although the participants were given guidelines for the photographs and collages, they were free to develop them in their own way within these guidelines (appendices ii and iii). It was highly significant to the research to minimise my involvement and control, and that the structure was developed through the production of the visual texts, and subsequently used by the participants themselves to lead the conversations, thus exerting a significant level of control over the process and agenda. As Branthwaite and Lunn (1985) argue, such techniques enable the participants to structure and impose meaning into the task.

The first meeting was primarily to introduce myself in my role as the researcher, to explain the research project and the concept behind the techniques we would use, and to gain some background information about the participants. In the spirit of involvement, control and 'informed consent' (Patton 2002:407) I provided each participant with a written statement of purpose, written clearly and simply, setting out the aim of the research, details of the programme and a confidentiality statement. The first task involved the participants taking photographs prior to and during a planned tourism trip. These photographs would be used in the subsequent interviews as stimulus for the conversation about their tourism experiences. I gave each of the participants a disposable camera, and a verbal and written guide to the situations and contexts for the photographs (appendix Aii). A disposable camera was chosen rather than the supply of a film and processing for the participants'

own cameras for several reasons. Commensurate with the study's postmodern approach and tourism's ludic nature (Ryan 2002), I wanted the task to be considered fun and pleasurable, as well as being simple to undertake. The photographs therefore needed to be spontaneous and ad hoc, and the disposable camera had some novelty value which I considered would be more likely to make the task fun and distinct from other photograph taking. There were also logistical advantages, as it was already neatly packaged. The cameras and the task were well received by all the participants.

This meeting was followed approximately one to two months later (according to the participants' individual holiday plans) by a guided conversation with each participant where the photographs were used to stimulate the discussion. This interview was also used to generate ideas which I then used to develop a guide for the next meeting which involved another autodriving technique – the making of the collages. One of the key findings from this activity in terms of significance for the collages, was the different constraints that influenced holidays – which included choices of destination, accommodation, activities, and also enjoyment levels. This was quite a surprising finding, while I was aware that everyone has constraints that affect and restrict behaviour, I hadn't considered it such a significant factor in shaping the individual experience. As the first interviews progressed the significance of the various constraints (financial, family, time and psychological) led me to consider their hypothetical removal might be a way to get closer to people's inner feelings, perceptions, aspirations and behaviour. Again, in accordance with the elements of fun, fantasy and pleasure that are associated with holiday taking, I considered that if the photographs were representative of the *actual* experience within the various constraints, then it may be more revealing of the deeper feelings and meanings if the constraints were removed – in effect by representing a '*what if?*' situation, then the participants would really extend their imaginations and emotions. I therefore used projective techniques that created a situation – albeit imaginary – where all constraints were removed, to let the participants' minds run free and build a picture of their imagined 'ideal' tourism experience. To this end, the participants were asked to project their minds – to imagine that all these constraints had disappeared, to let their minds run free – to daydream and really express themselves through the way that they constructed their collages (appendix Aiii). As Branthwaite and Lunn (1985:101) acknowledge: 'what these [projective]

techniques have in common is that the task is highly ambiguous, novel and sometimes even bizarre'.

I asked the participants to stick, paste or draw those things that illustrated the trip or trips - the places, the accommodation, the transport, the people that would accompany them and the things that they would take with them. We negotiated a time - one to two months - to complete this task, depending on their own time constraints and schedules, after which time I collected the collages from them. The aim of the collages was as stimuli for the conversations to follow – with the participants using the pictures and representations to navigate the conversations according to their underlying desires, influences and motives. Thus, rather than attempting a detailed content analysis I made notes on various aspects which I had intended to use as a conversation guide, however such was the enthusiasm and involvement of the participants that they were hardly ever needed.

The conversations were again audio taped and took place in a range of locations. These were mainly decided in terms of convenience for the participants, I considered it important that the participants were as comfortable with their surroundings as possible. Some took place in locations in their work environments – this worked well and all participants in these locations were very relaxed and comfortable. However, it was interesting that when I conducted the first interviews with Elizabeth in her own home, she was far less comfortable than those conducted in a more neutral setting. I had thought that Elizabeth's home environment would be ideal, however, she was initially quite nervous about the interview in general, and being in her home location she was very conscious of her role as the 'hostess' and mine as the 'guest'. She was therefore conscious of my presence and felt she had a duty to ensure my comfort which I felt led to a lack of ease on her part and also on mine. She requested another interview and for this and the final one I invited her to my home, and made every attempt to ensure that the setting was as relaxed and comfortable as possible. This worked well and the interviews were very successful. Based on the success of this location, I then used my own home for the long interview with Audrey and the subsequent interviews with Dai, and again this proved very satisfactory.

Although I considered that using autodriving techniques such as photoelicitation and the collages would enrich the interviews, my understanding was largely based on the accounts

of such techniques by other researchers (Hirschman 1986, Belk *et al.* 1988, 1989, Pink 2001, Askegaard 2001). Other than these supportive accounts, I had little idea of the level of success, however, the autodriving techniques that I used proved to be highly successful in gaining much deeper insights and also in providing a pleasurable experience for the participants. While there was one participant who was not prepared to participate in the collage making, all the other participants put an impressive effort into it and produced some very rich visuals. They made favourable comments about this task, stating how much they had enjoyed it, with several remarking that it had enabled them to gain interesting insights into their own behaviour. Although that produced by Jemima and George was a combined effort they did in fact use both sides of the paper – so produced two collages; Dai's was 'interactive' in that he had fold out sections:

> *It's been good fun and I found it self-revelatory too I suppose. Looking at what I put in the collage there was a mixture of OK, I'm going to look for photographs that express this, but then some of them are ... I highly reacted to them, you weren't looking for them specifically and you come to it and you think oh, that's me or that's what I fancy doing. So it was driven by what I was looking for and the reaction to what was available.*

Similarly, Audrey and Elizabeth both found it enjoyable and thought provoking:

Audrey:

> *Yes, but I really enjoyed it actually, it was fun and it made me think about what I do on holiday and what I think about holidays so that was interesting actually.*

Elizabeth:

> *It was a pleasure. When I got the time to actually sit down and do it. I kept having little thoughts about it, but actually doing it, I loved doing it. I could sit down and dream all day long.*

Rebecca also said how much more relaxed she felt during the interviews, and that she had felt much more in control, in as much as she was not waiting for me to ask her a question. She controlled the interview by deciding which picture she talked about, which gave her the freedom to follow her train of thought and go back to pictures whenever she felt it relevant:

> *it was good – I felt I was in control – I could find my own way around it, I wasn't always waiting for you to ask me questions, and – you know, trying to concentrate - think of answers – much less stressful and yes, I had the control, and could just talk ... and go back to things if I'd forgotten something.*

Certainly from my point of view, I was surprised at how little I actually needed to prompt, and how few questions I needed to ask. In general the conversations flowed very freely and easily and while I was able to pick up on various comments to probe more deeply, on the whole the questions I was framing in my mind were often answered in the natural course of the conversation. This strongly supports other researchers such as Collier (1979) and Askegaard (2001) who have argued that the use of projective stimuli gives a far greater depth of insight, together with enhancing the quality and quantity of relevant information.

5.18 Ensuring Quality in Qualitative Research

It has been argued that validity and reliability are positivist constructs and thus are not applicable per se to interpretative, progressive, qualitative studies (Pritchard and Morgan 2004). Indeed a number of writers such as Janesick (1994) and Holliday (2002) have criticised the transference of positivist constructs such as validity into postpositivistic qualitative research. Many qualitative explanations and definitions of 'validity and reliability' use positivist terminology, and even when others are not so explicit they still advocate absolute framework constraints, rather than flexibility – for example the following definition by Bilton *et al.* (1996:106) uses the term 'measurement' within clearly pre-defined boundaries: 'validity refers to the quality of the data that you secure: you need to ensure that the data collection techniques capture the data you need, what you intend to measure and not something else'. Reliability refers to the replication of results in the same

circumstances: 'will the measure yield the same results on different occasions? And will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?' (Saunders 1999:100). Kumar (1992:140) states that: 'if a research tool is consistent and stable and hence predictable and accurate, it is said to be reliable'. Yet, terms such as consistent, predictable, accurate cannot be applied to interpretative methods, the very strength of which lies in their flexibility, unpredictability and idiosyncrasies (Kreiger 1991).

Indeed, just as Sparkes (2000, 2002) advocates a different set of criteria for judging contemporary qualitative research, it is vital to recognise the implications of the difference between traditional and modernist, scientifically based qualitative inquiry and more contemporary, inductive approaches for making judgements of credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985), Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Pritchard and Morgan 2004). These writers argue that perspectives such as interpretavism and naturalistic inquiry demand other judgement criteria which are empathetic to the nature of the research philosophy. They advocate that judgement should be based on dependability (presenting a clearly articulated pattern of inquiry and interpretation) and authenticity (reflexive awareness of yourself as the researcher, and appreciation and understanding of the position and perspective of others – the researched, the participants and the reader). Wolcott (2001:33) equates the term 'analysis' with positivist, standardised, systematic procedures, asserting that the reliability stems from this standardisation rather than from the appropriateness of the procedures, supporting other writers in recognising the influence of diverse perspectives on the received interpretations. Describing interpretation as a 'freewheeling activity' he states that:

> Interpretation, by contrast, is not derived from rigorous, agreed-upon, carefully selected procedures, but from our efforts at sensemaking, a human activity that includes intuition, past experience, emotion – personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly but neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of all. Interpretation invites the examination, the "pondering", of data in terms of what people make of it.

In reference to the use of narratives, Glover (2003) asserts that while those of a positivist and post-postitivist persuasion may argue that the very nature of 'story telling' is based on exaggeration and recall, and thus query its validity, he is supported by other writers (Riessman, 1993, 1994, 2000, Padgett and Allen 1997, Bochner 2001) in highlighting that while the 'truths' in the stories are not necessarily objective truths, they contribute significantly to the understanding of human behaviour and reasoning. Similarly Padgett and Allen (1997:7) recognise that there is no 'correct' interpretation:

> The stories are evaluated on the basis of a relaxed form of causal probability. The narrative mode seeks a lifelike or plausible explanation for events, and does not necessarily seek to identify the best explanation because the idea of a correct interpretation has no meaning.

Yin (1989) has stated that the data should be documented so that another person could follow the chain of inquiry through to the report. Similarly, Belk *et al.* (1988), Patton (2002) and Holliday (2002) all advocate openness and transparency throughout the research project as a way of ensuring dependability and 'trustworthiness'. In the same vein Holliday (2002:47) emphasises the importance of 'showing the workings':

> At a minimum, this disclosure must include a rigorous description of the conditions under which data are collected such that readers of the interpretations provided by the researchers can evaluate the adequacy and appropriateness of the method used for arriving at these interpretations (Belk *et al.* 1988:453).

Throughout the study I have been consistent, clear and explicit, articulating my foundational philosophy, discussing the methodological options and issues, justifying and explaining the approaches and procedures. The previously discussed issues of participant control and voice address issues of 'validity' and 'reliability' but in a way that is commensurate with the nature of the research rather than with those proposed by a more scientific approach (Lincoln and Guba 1986, Sparkes 2000, 2002, Pritchard and Morgan 2004). The level of rapport with the participants combined with their activity and

involvement in the process presented a two way feedback loop. In addition, the participants were given the opportunity to read and comment on the analysis before it was finally presented. It gave them a sense of control over the process and the conversations, and gave them and myself the opportunity to reflect on what they had said, to reiterate and seek clarification and expansion of topics if deemed necessary. Photoelicitation techniques are also acknowledged to provide additional validity to the research (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Suchar 1988, Heisley and Levy 1991) through the level of increased voice and authority: 'photoelicitation may also provide a check on the validity of researchers' findings (Heisley and Levy 1991:260). My own participation through my experiences, observations and visual texts provided an additional dimension in terms of insights and understanding of the perspectives, positionality and voices of myself, the participants, and the receiving audience (Patton 2002, Pritchard and Morgan 2004). Thus it has helped me to anticipate the reactions of the audiences and develop the study and my intentions accordingly.

5.19 What Do I Do with What I've Found? Analysis and Interpretation

The qualitative versus quantitative debate (Walle 1997) infiltrates the literature on analysis. While in quantitative analysis the focus is on control, replication and consistency, it is agreed that essentially the process of examining qualitative data relies heavily on intuition and interpretation – something that Holliday (2002:5) argues is the essence of qualitative research, and which develops understanding through (interpreted) insights into instances of complex phenomena:

> [qualitative research] maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. This places less of a burden of proof on qualitative research, which instead builds gradual pictures. The pictures are themselves only interpretations – approximations – basic attempts to present what is in fact a much more complex reality – paintings that represent our own impressions, rather than photographs of what is 'really' there.

I have presented the study as an emergent, flexible and reflexive process. As such it was inductive – that is, it was an ongoing, iterative process where data were collected and analysed throughout the process, developing insights which guided reading and developed the theoretical body which led to further data collection and so on – without making prior assumptions about what the outcomes may be. This is in contrast to a scientific, deductive approach where existing theory is used to develop premises and hypotheses which lead to highly structured research and analysis frameworks (Yin 1994, Patton 2002, Saunders *et al.* 2003). Patton (2002:56) states that:

> Qualitative inquiry is particularly orientated towards exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. Inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds towards general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated.

A number of writers agree that when data is collected it is already one (or more) steps away from social reality – that is, it is a representation of reality rather than actual social reality (Geertz 1993). Holliday (2002) acknowledges that in this case, it may seem that data is best presented as it is - in its raw form, however she stresses that this cannot happen – that while it is important to recognise that the data is different from the reality, it is vital to take it through a process of organisation, of interpretation, of development and presentation of topics of significance to the study. However there are no clearly prescribed ways of analysing particular types of data. It is argued that due to the diversity and complexity of qualitative methods and the individual perspectives of the people involved, there is no one formula for analysis (Bernstein, 1985, Wolcott 2001). Patton (2002:433) states that all you can do is to: 'do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study'. With qualitative analysis, the fundamental aim is the search for meaning in the texts - that is, texts in their widest sense, Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Holliday (2002). The search takes place through analysis and interpretation throughout the study, rather than being a discrete, latter stage in the process. An area of agreement across a number of writers is that familiarity with the material is paramount, and they recognise the linkage

between a thorough background knowledge of the topics and the interpretation of material (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Thompson 1997, Patton 2002). Indeed, it is difficult when adopting an interpretative approach, to separate the fieldwork process from the analysis, and in this emergent study I have embraced Wells' (1995:1) view that:

> qualitative research is living, evolving; a source of insight and ideas, which can emerge at any time during a project, not just at the end. We should deal in ideas, not 'data'.

Just as Glen (1993:9) recognises, interpretation began 'in my head' even as the first interviews were taking place, and continued throughout the transcription process, thus enabling me to become 'immersed in the data' (Patton 2002:441), so that by the time I was ready to embark on the more formal process of analysis I already a strong sense of the whole. In emergent design, interpretation of the texts is integral to the whole process and is ongoing throughout the research and the study was inductive, emergent and iterative throughout.

5.20 Phase One – Analytical Process

Patton (2002:453) argues that there are no generally agreed terms for describing the various terms for qualitative analysis, so adopting his terms to describe the inductive process of analysis that I undertook, for both stages of phase one (1/1 and 1/2) I chose to use a widely utilised, systematic method of organising qualitative data, that of using pattern recognition and thematic headings. Patton (2002:452) defines the process of organising and reducing data in order to make sense of it as 'content analysis'. At this stage the data were sorted and organised through a process of coding. As patterns began to emerge they were developed into the themes that provided the headings for the discussion. In the discussion, material from the body of data (the various texts) was used to support the discussion. Figure 5-2 draws on the 'reflexive questions' in figure 5-1 to illustrate the influences on the various stages of the interpretative process that I adopted in phase one. It should be noted that in accordance with traditional research in this phase I attempted to adopt the stance of the 'objective outsider' :

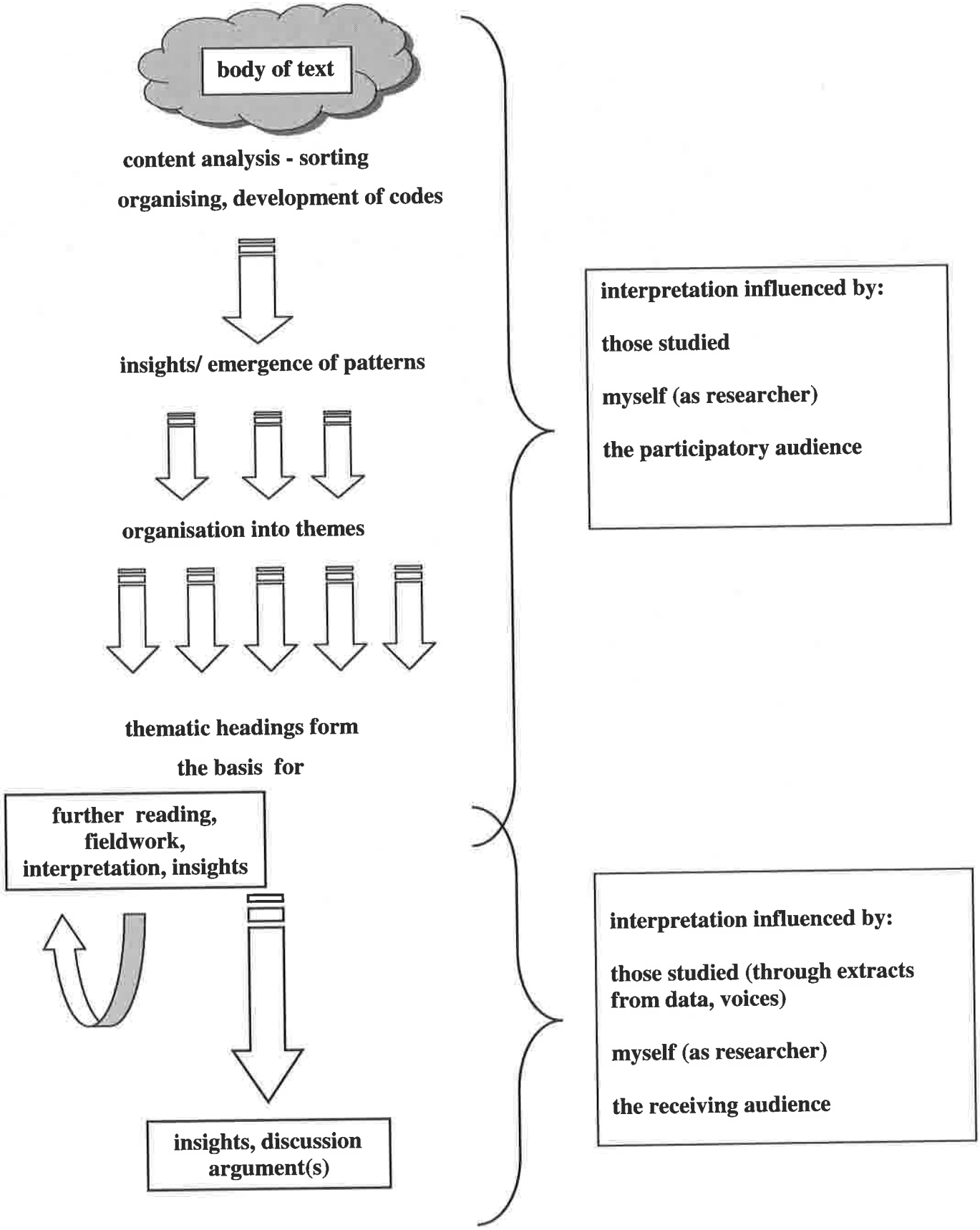


Figure 5- 2 Interpretative Process and Influences Phase One

As phase one was largely an exploratory phase, the aim was to explore attitude, motivations, and behaviour, and elicit brand associations, while observing the interaction of group members. Texts included the audio recordings of the interviews and the focus groups, the transcriptions of the recordings, the documented responses that the focus group participants (1/1) had compiled during the projective tasks and my own brief field notes. After each session I transcribed the recorded data, subsequently reading and re-reading the transcriptions until I had gained a thorough 'understanding of the consumption meanings conveyed by the text' (Thompson 1997:441). I then began the process of coding (using coloured pens and letter/numerical codes), identifying and comparing the patterns and developing the themes. After initially making notes on the transcripts, I transferred these notes on to different sheets of paper under the thematic headings as I read and re-read the transcripts, and listened to the tapes. This made it possible to compare across the themes, and categories, identify the significance with the aims, recognise the surprising and unexpected, relate to theory and identify relevant, supporting quotations. With the projective scripts (1/1), I organised the responses by developing a matrix as a conceptual guide. The insights and heightened understanding that I gained after each session led to reflection and reconsideration of earlier interpretations.

5.21 Phase Two – Narrative Interpretation

As I have previously discussed, as the study progressed, my epistemological stance and my research approach developed. Key to this philosophy was the involvement, position and authority of those involved in the study. As the guided conversations progressed it became clear that because they were so rich in information and personal narrative, they needed an alternative analysis, interpretation and presentation approach in order to do them justice. At the beginning, during the first layer of conversations, I began by organising the information in the same systematic way as in phase one - comparing, contrasting and grouping the information in order to form a basis for the analysis. This meant that I had to split up the individual narratives - fragmenting and fracturing what had often evolved into sequential experiences. As Glover (2003) notes with respect to his own work, the richness of information and the sheer individuality in these narratives proved to be very difficult to categorise, and things tended to be reported (and received) out of context and the thread of

thought of the participant was lost. And yet, it was often this very sequence of thought that was interesting, and it seemed that there was a rich vein of information in the way that the participants themselves linked their thoughts and the development of their stories. Significantly the voices of the participants were merged, becoming indistinguishable from one another as - contrary to my underlying philosophy - it was my voice that was heard, rather than those of the participants.

Certainly, there is an escalating interest in personal narrative as a way of representing life experiences. Riessman (1993, 2000) and Glover (2003) note the way that valuable, sequential information is lost when conversations are fragmented into categories as often tends to happen during the conventional approaches to qualitative analysis. Acknowledging the depth of experiential information in personal narratives, Patton (2002:115) referring to the researchers' own stories and narratives (autoethnography) and the stories and narratives of others, argues that they 'reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences'. Similarly Riessman (1993:2) argues that 'nature and the world do not tell stories, people do, interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations' – it is through the stories that they tell, that people reveal things about themselves and their experiences (Richardson 1994, Ochs and Capps 1996, Padgett and Allen 1997). Indeed, Glover (2003:152), while recognising the increasing acknowledgement in a wide range of disciplines, laments the failure to embrace this significant method of inquiry in leisure (and related) research: 'narrative helps us understand the roles leisure activities, setting and experiences play in self-identity'.

In phase two, each participant produced a very personal and individual set of visual data, supported by lengthy in-depth, guided conversations. The value of the interviews in this phase is in the way that they were structured only by the visual material that each individual had constructed, rather than by a more formal framework developed by myself. I therefore considered that treating the individual conversations and the visual representations as texts in which narratives of personal experience are located, would result in a far fuller understanding. In order to do this, rather than grouping the collective thematic material together, I have presented each individual separately. This approach disrupted the flow and context of the first person accounts far less than more traditional analytical methods, allowing each participant's voice to emerge, and gaining deeper

understanding of individual, personal experiences. I have used an approach that, as Belk *et al.* (1988:467) state: 'explicitly takes into account the complexity of people's lives and experiences, rather than attempting to isolate elements of those experiences.'

The conversations were transcribed from audio recordings; the transcriptions were then used in combination with the visual texts that the participants had prepared as the basis for the interpretation. The involvement of the participants was central to this phase of the study, and while the use of visual data attracts criticisms of subjectivity regarding its analysis, it is important to recognise that interpretation is indeed subject to the influences and perspectives of those in the three audiences (Patton 2002, Pritchard and Morgan 2004). The autodriving technique enabled the participants to interpret their own visual texts, therefore rather than carrying out a detailed content analysis, I made notes on the content of the collage, for example what had been included such as destinations, transport, accommodation, activities and people and the overall impression of the type and range of experiences in terms of levels of luxury, activity and the range of sources of information that had been used. In the case of my own texts, my written diaries, photographs and collage formed the interpretative basis. Treating each participant individually the interpretive process took the shape of notes made from repeated readings of the texts and re-listening to the tapes (I regularly travel long distances by car, and often listened to the tapes during these journeys), and notes made on the visual texts. I then used these notes to link across the narratives of the participant, searching for insights, for support and for contradictions. Again referring to my earlier point, in phase two it was imperative to recognise the additional influences on the interpretations – those of myself as the researcher and a participant, and the way in which the voices of those being studied would affect the interpretations of the receiving audience. Thus each participant is presented as an individual, allowing their voice to emerge with my interpretations presented as a 'discursive commentary' (Holliday 2002:98). A brief profile of the participant is presented at the beginning of each individual section, in order to contextualise and provide a foundation for the discussion. In presenting the narratives, I used the sequence that the insights emerged from the first conversations, and sequentially thereafter for subsequent conversations. Due to the time lapse between meetings, often participants had been involved in other holiday experiences, and also referred to previous experiences. This presented further insights and commensurate with the iterative process, this always

prompted further reflection and richness, either through the addition of new dimensions or linkage to the existing relevant interpretation – hence resulting in an interwoven rather than a sequential discussion.

5.22 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the rationale, justification and explanation of my research paradigm and philosophy which has informed my choice of methods and techniques for data collection and analysis. I have also highlighted the applicability of emergent design in qualitative tourism research and how - by considering this project as a journey of discovery - it has developed and gathered depth according to the insights gained during its progress. I have tried to use a range of innovative and exciting methods that acknowledge the perspectives and influences of those involved in the research, arguing that contemporary qualitative tourism research should consider issues such as positionality, subjectivity and reflexivity as being its paradigmatic principles, rather than attempting to conform to scientific, positivist constructs that are inappropriate. Thus I have also argued that progressive research demands different criteria for judging quality in qualitative research. The next chapter contains the interpretations and discursive commentary emerging from the data collected during both phases of the study.

Chapter 6

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

Phase One

6.1 Introduction

Understanding the complexity of the relationship between consumers and products is the key to successful marketing and brand management. Marketing theory argues that for consumers the range of functional benefits include adherence to expected levels of quality, performance and safety. Time is reduced through the simplification of the information search, and as a shorthand device through memory recall of associations and value. Emotional and symbolic relationships are much harder to build, maintain and understand than associations with functional qualities but, it is increasingly argued, far more valuable and far harder for competitors to undermine. This makes the challenges even greater for tourism marketers where much is based on experiential aspects and associations with products that are complex and predominantly intangible.

In this initial phase the focus was on the role and significance of brands in holiday choice, the influence of expectations and experience on brand associations and decisions, brand awareness and brand loyalty. As my knowledge and understanding developed during the course of this phase of the study, I became aware of the complexity of tourism experiences, and the significance for individuals of seemingly inconsequential aspects. The combination of these insights coupled with my own development of knowledge led to the consideration of tourism as a much more individual, personal and idiosyncratic experience. Experiences were commensurate with the characteristics ascribed to postmodernism – something rarely reflected in generalised or tourism related marketing theory and constructs. While certainly not all tourists could be described as 'post-tourists' (Feifer 1985) it became clear that there was a need to probe brand usage within tourism experiences more deeply, to consider tourism within the context of postmodernism and to adopt a more progressive and individual approach to the study. Thus phase one provided a foundation for phase two,

the insights gained in this phase proving invaluable in the development of the study and the quest for deeper understanding.

6.2 Attitudes towards brands in general

When I asked about the importance of brands when making general purchases, participants of the stage one and stage two (1/1 and 1/2) focus groups and phase one stage two (1/2) interviews made two main functional associations - risk aversion and quality. The response of the majority of participants supports the literature on the benefits of brands in speeding up and simplifying purchase decisions, reducing risk and providing expected standards (Strasser 1989, Aaker and Biel 1993, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Barwise *et al.* 2000). It was generally felt that even low involvement purchases (Westwood *et al.* 1999b) such as groceries and clothing can be time consuming and stressful events, and that as Olsen (1994) and Ewen (1994) note regarding European immigrants to the USA in the nineteenth century, the familiarity of a trusted brand provides security and reduces risk in an increasingly brand saturated world. As a participant from the stage one focus groups (1/1) commented *'I quite like Ecco shoes ... and it takes the strain out of a purchase decision - buying a brand'*. Key words associated with this line of questioning were commensurate with the acknowledged functional brand associations and included: *'trust' 'knowledge' 'quality' 'familiarity' 'guarantee' 'tried and tested'*. The majority of participants commented that a known brand gave security (an expected standard, a guarantee): *'because it's a known brand I feel secure'*, and offered an assurance of quality through identification with familiar values and associations: *'you have the backing of a large company ... something to identify with'*. Several participants mentioned the name, logo and associated images as being synonymous with their performance expectations: *'logo, image - that's what a brand means to me'*, and another said *'something known, a name, a logo. I can identify with it – makes me feel I'm buying something of good quality – because it's a known brand I feel secure.'*

It was interesting to note that participants in both stage one and stage two (1/1 and 1/2) used similar examples of branded products such as washing powder to illustrate low involvement purchases, and cars for more involved purchase decisions, whereas trainers

were used to illustrate high price, medium involvement, fairly frequent purchases. While the tourism literature classes holidays as complex, high involvement purchases (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999, Laws 2002, Williams 2002) the indication is that they do not have the same associations with brand values as even low involvement tangible products such as washing powders. There are implications here for the consideration of changes in holiday taking – that for some it has altered from being considered a major, high involvement event, a feature of the modern project (Urry 1988) to a frequent, low involvement, ad hoc experience. A further indication of these changes is that while Urry (2002) states that within modern society, tourism was comparable to a house or a car as a mark of status, there is no indication that this applies to tour operators for contemporary tourists. The symbolic significance of the tour operator is low – indicating that they are considered as facilitators rather than as significant elements of the experience. Similarly, other tangible products such as trainers and cars had symbolic significance in the sense that they indicated status and fashion, as one focus group (1/1) participant remarked in relation to trainers: *'the quality of the shoes and/or the brand name is the most important factor'*.

The emphasis on individuality and choice within contemporary society (Ryan 1997a, 2002) is reflected in the literature on brand symbolism and associations as key signifiers (Brabeck 2001, Olins 2001). However, Lury's (1998) assertion that it is consumer perceptions and feelings towards a brand that are important does not translate to tour operator brands. Despite the experiential nature of tourism products, the responses in reference to tourism brands such as air tour operators illustrate the weak product differentiation and lack of identification with significant brand associations. Overwhelmingly the brand was considered insignificant and was not a factor in decisions. Comments such as *'all of a kind'* were heard frequently, with most participants stating that they did not consider the brand important, nor did it hold any particular values or meaning for them, the general view being summed up by a focus group participant (1/1) who said: *'When I hear 'brand' in respect of holidays I think of uniformity, lack of individuality.'*

Indeed, the following dialogue between a husband and wife in a stage two focus group (1/2) demonstrates the influence of associations and perceptions on choice, indicating how received brand associations and perceptions are not always positive and can have an adverse effect on consumers:

f – I didn't even realise that we were coming with Skytours
m – my wife said 'I'm not coming with Skytours because of all the free children', and I said 'look –we're booked!'.

Overall there was a significant feeling of similarity and blanket distrust of tour operators. While some participants expressed confusion due to the range of choice, it is notable that despite the plethora of different product offerings this participant felt that choice was in fact very limited:

'to be quite honest, I wouldn't trust any of the operators. You haven't got much choice sometimes – if you're going to Spain and the Canaries – they are all pretty much the same – hotels and the like, and generally speaking, I mistrust them'

Again, this indicates the lack of product differentiation and awareness of the significance of individuality for contemporary tourism consumers resulting in the absence of any emotional relationship and brand commitment.

6.3 Brand Expectations and Choice Influences

Traditional marketing theory emphasises the significance of strong consumer - brand relationships which are created through consistent delivery of expected benefits over time (Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998). Expectations are created through information and experience – both direct and through the experiences of others and through external commercial sources (Urry 1990). Expectations are also reinforced or challenged through experience. The implication is that if certain elements of the experience fail to meet expectations, it will adversely affect attitudes towards the brand as a whole, which influences future decisions (Ryan 1993, 2002, Gilmore 2002). However it also became clear that expectations and experiences are influenced by a whole range of other intrinsic and extrinsic, personal, individual influences and perceptions, something that was not sufficiently developed in this phase.

Barwise *et al.* (2000:78) argue that in today's brand cluttered environment, the key to brand power is 'trust, familiarity and difference'. When talking about brands in general, brand expectations (heightened through marketing and brand messages) were quite high and generally participants felt that expectations were met. On occasions when brand expectations had not been met there was marked disillusionment, with those participants who had experienced disappointment admitting that it had affected their future decisions. It was very marked that in contrast, expectations of package holidays were quite low, with the view that things were not expected to be as depicted in the brochure being repeated several times. This supports the general level of distrust and lack of relationship between tour operators and consumers, and indicates a much greater propensity to believe the brand promises of generic products as opposed to tourism products. There is a marked difference here from the level of trust in operators during the 1960s and 1970s (Poon 1993), due to the perceived elements of risk involved in an overseas holiday. The inference is that for many consumers, heightened awareness of the failure of tour operators to consistently keep their promises, increased confidence and experience and the wide availability of relatively affordable overseas travel have resulted in brand scepticism and lack of trust. However, it can also be argued that because of the complexity of the amalgamated tourism product, there are far more opportunities for 'moments of truth' (Baum 2002:99) – those consumer/provider occasions where even minor incidents can mar or enhance an entire experience.

The low expectations were further indicated by the level of pessimism. A significant number of respondents anticipated that the holiday would fall short of their expectations.. Varying degrees of pragmatism were expressed – some considered that things would eventually go wrong - that if they did it was not surprise, but if they didn't then it was a bonus. For example:

what we do ... and what I think most people do is they travel hopefully ... it's better to travel hopefully than to arrive sometimes. And when you get there you're either pleasantly surprised or you're not surprised.

SW – What do you mean by 'not surprised?

Well – not surprised if it's not quite right –for some reason – you kind of expect things not to be quite as they seem in the brochure or what you've been told – if they're not - well then you're not surprised.

Others were less pragmatic about such failures to meet expectations as in the case of one interview participant (1/2) who always took a copy of the brochure with her so that she had some form of reference if her expectations were not met. This also indicates the increasing confidence of contemporary consumers (Poon 1993), the need to ensure that brand promises are met (Bitner 1995, Morgan and Pritchard 2001) and the significance of the links between expectations, satisfaction (or disappointment) and consumer's tourism experiences. Despite the generally low expectations, unprompted recall of a disappointing holiday experience provoked a highly emotional response from many participants. Whereas the overall indications were that brand had no positive significance in decisions, bad experiences were salient and as with products in general, the association always resulted in negative perceptions. Tourism experiences are complex composites of a range of associated micro-experiences, and although it was often just one or two elements of the overall experience that did not meet expectations, beliefs and attitudes were formed towards the brand as a whole. Previous experiences - either their own or those of others – emerged as being very influential in future decisions. Areas where expectations had not been met covered all elements of the experience – some functional, tangible elements such as aircraft punctuality, safety and standards, accommodation, and the destination itself. Disappointing experiences tended to be remembered, for example as one interview participant (1/2) stated:

... with Sunworld – I mean, it was a disaster from start to finish with them because when we got to the airport they said they didn't have us on the list for the bus, and that's how it started – the holiday! We don't take much notice of other operators – it wouldn't matter which one, we only know we wouldn't use Sunworld again!

A focus group participant (1/1) had also had a bad experience with Sunworld, which created negative associations with the brand. However in contrast, previous good experiences with Thomson had resulted in his repeat business and loyalty. Other elements of the experience were cited as being important considerations, for example security and

safety (Westwood *et al.* 1999a, 2000). This focus group participant's comment about British Airways sparked off a debate about the merits of flying with a national carrier, all participants except one agreeing that familiarity with the language and the culture added to their sense of security. It is also interesting that he regarded British Airways as an aspirational brand – he associated strong values with the brand (the inference being that these associations were developed as a result of British Airways' market position and very strong brand values of Britishness, customer service, security and general superiority). It is also interesting that he made a connection between quality and price – perceiving British Airways as being more expensive than other airlines, and acknowledged that he is constrained by financial considerations which prevent him from using the airline regularly:

I think value for money is important but then again I like to go with whom I'm familiar. I really want to fly British Airways all the time, but only rarely do I do it because they tend to be more expensive than the bucket shop or the travel agent in the high street. I'm very loyal to Thomson because I've had good experiences with them – two years ago when we went with Sunworld it was awful quality-wise. That put me off using that particular brand totally. I've got some Thomson's shares so now I've got an added incentive'.

SW – What are the sort of things that make you want to travel with British Airways?

The occasions that I've gone with them, usually on business, I perceive a product that's high quality. I feel comfortable with it and the whole package they offer ... and I quite like to board a British plane at a foreign airport, I feel more secure.'

Less tangible elements of dissatisfaction included organisation and in particular, staff attitude. Research on consumer sensitivity to staff attitudes strongly indicates that it is more important than quality and price when consumers are considering branded products (Rogers 1998, Westwood *et al.* 1999a, 2000). Indeed, increased investment in internal marketing and staff training to engender brand commitment and understanding is becoming a key initiative for leading service companies such as British Airways (Gofton 2000). However the diversity of experiences is a factor here – one interview participant (1/2) was dissatisfied with her holiday for a variety of reasons – she had cockroaches in her

room and was highly dissatisfied with the way that the tour operator representative had handled the situation:

I know that there are things that can go wrong with any of them ... you know that ... you hear about things all the time, but you don't expect cockroaches and then a rep that ignores you.

She felt that she was wrongly advised by the travel agent that it was '*a nice place ... well you listen to them don't you*?' She disliked the high proportion of Spaniards in the hotel and felt that she had paid a high price and therefore was entitled to – what she perceived as being – exclusivity. This is interesting in the context of Urry's (2002:23) comment that the attractiveness of a resort depends on the proportion of other people 'like oneself' that are staying in the same place:

I paid nearly £400 for this holiday, and the hotel is jammed with Spaniards – I mean in the restaurant – this morning – they just surge into the restaurant – like this morning – you can't get in for your breakfast.

Her comments again indicate a certain level of acceptance that something may not be as expected, and also how factors that may seem relatively insignificant for some, are major areas of dissatisfaction for others. It is notable that throughout the interview, this participant returned repeatedly to the handling of the cockroach situation – an indication that it was this (negative) 'moment of truth' which had overshadowed others and would be remembered and recounted in relation to the tour operator in the future – although not perhaps in the sense that the post-tourist subverts negative situations into critera of success to be recounted with glee on return (Feifer 1985, Ryan 2002).

Despite an increasing propensity for independent and flexible travel, and allusions to the demise of the 'naff' package holiday (Barrett 1989) they remain the major type of holiday for UK consumers. Indeed as discussed in chapter 2, as consumers become increasingly time constrained arguably they will see value in the simplification and reassurance of pre-prepared, packaged goods (Cooper 1991, Dawson 2000). Convenience and the reduction in time, risk and cost were still considered key factors for the majority of the participants and

generally it was felt that they offer better value overall. Responses to questions about what people expect when they book with a tour operator were similar for focus group and interview participants and included predominantly: value-for-money, convenience and expected level of standards and quality - as one focus group participant (1/1) commented:

I like the organisation of package holidays, because when I've sat down and tried to work out how to do something on my own I've had so many things to consider – cheap flight, then get the train, then get to the station for the airport, and then the train takes me so far and I'll have to organise a bus from there and I'm thinking 'what time am I going to get to the destination, and once I get there, so I get a car hire, have I booked the accommodation'. It's all these things that with a package holiday, all I need to do is be in this place at a certain time and ... 'do you have a coach going?' ... 'yes, we'll throw that in as well' .. you don't have to pay extra.

Another focus group participant (1/1) also referred to the convenience of a package, although her comment indicates her inherent distrust of operators:

they take all the hassle out of planning, you know ... you book and leave it up to them, and they supply you with your tickets, and God willing, everything goes well ... it's just something ... you take your chance, you know?

Other considerations such as the destination and the accommodation were the primary choice factors. Again, participants tended to choose the destination and then search for a tour operator that could satisfy other criteria such as price, accommodation, departure airport and timing. Key words included: *'convenience, low price, value for money safety, security'*. In the following quotation, the interview participant (1/2) explains how, having chosen the destination and the accommodation she and her partner shop around until they are satisfied that they have the most competitive price for the package:

the main thing is finding the hotel, the tour operator is unimportant, the one that's got the holiday we want is the one we'll go for - you find that Thomson's, Thomas Cook or Lunn Poly will offer you one price and you go to another travel agent and they'll undercut it ... we go to three or four travel agents and get the best price.

Similarly, this focus group participant (1/2) explained how he chooses the destination first, then using previous experience as a starting point he compares other offerings, with consideration of factors such as departure details and price taking precedence over the operator:

I would pick up a brochure from a company that I normally go with, or that I have used before and compare it with others, but I would usually go for the one that was the most convenient in terms of departure. I would look at the prices, and if there was an enormous difference, then I would go for the one that was cheaper provided it was where I wanted to go. I usually have a firm idea of where I want to go.

Although the concept of package tours was considered to have many advantages, tour operator brands emerged as having very little significance when making holiday choices. The comment by an interview participant (1/2) typifies the responses with regard to brands: *'when I hear brand in respect of holidays, I think of uniformity, lack of individuality, I don't think of tour operators in terms of brands'.*

6.4 Tour Operator Brand Awareness

Within the increasingly cluttered contemporary marketing environment, organisations strive ever harder to arrest target consumers' attention (Morgan and Pritchard 2001). The level of awareness that consumers have of a brand is argued to be a core component in a brand's success – awareness that is developed through the effective communication of brand values and associations to the target audiences. Clarity of brand image and the ability to recall the associations are the key to creating brand awareness (Aaker 1996, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Kelleer 1998, Pavitt 2000). Thus awareness must also translate into meaning for the consumer – something that the participants in this phase of the study indicate is lacking in mainstream tour operator brands. While all the respondents were able to name at least three mainstream tour operators, overall there was very low awareness – which also supports the previously discussed lack of perceived differentation between brands and product offeriengs. Interestingly throughout the interviews and focus

groups a hierarchy of operators emerged. Thomson were the most salient and appeared to be the standard by which other mainstream operators were judged. Thomson were perceived as being superior to the others, although this was for a number of reasons – some were tangible such as reliability and breadth of choice and some less so – simply a perception of general superiority:

I don't know why I felt I should mention Thomson - maybe I think they are a little more superior to the others.

Thomson have the biggest brochure ... they're a well known operator, reliable, also because of the breadth of choice.

This was supported by the findings in the brand personality activity. Whilst the perceived superiority of Thomson emerged in the activity, there was a significant lack of awareness of any definable image of tour operators in general. Interestingly the focus groups ascribed virtually the same characteristics to a number of the tour operators, and participants struggled at times to attribute any characteristics at all to some operators. This exercise also indicated a strongly patriarchal seller relationship through the personification of all the tour operator brands as men. Gendered brand and image associations have been highlighted by researchers as being an area of major concern for marketers (Nelson, 1994, Westwood *et al.* 1999a, 2000, Knights and Odih 1999). Research indicates the need for marketers to identify and reflect the changes in contemporary consumer behaviour - women have been identified as the primary decision maker for tourism choices (Hawkins 2002) and similarly, shopping is argued to be a dominantly female gendered activity (Cockburn-Wooten 2002) – and yet tourism marketers and researchers repeatedly marginalise women.

Thomson and Thomas Cook both have prominence through high street travel agencies (although Thomson's travel agency is branded as Lunn Poly), and they are two of the two of the longest established operators. These operators were perceived as being similar and was personified as: '*middle aged, middle class, male, sensible, boring, well mannered, living in a detached house with neat gardens, driving a Rover/Mondeo car and playing*

golf (Thomson) whilst Thomas Cook was seen as *'middle aged, tweed suited, male, very sensible, well educated and experienced'; 'similar to Thomson but more experienced'*
In contrast, Airtours (subsequently re-branded as MyTravel) was perceived as being younger and less dependable and was personified as an:

Essex Man – flashy, wearing branded casual clothes, slightly cheap, male, in his 30's, not highly educated and driving a Ford Escort.

The lack of perceived difference between operators was evident in other descriptions - Unijet was described as *'cheap, boring, no personality'*; First Choice was perceived as similar to Airtours while Cosmos was perceived as being similar to Thomson but *'living in a flat, not a house'*.

There is a strong indication that these tourism brands lack the unique characteristics and core values that engender emotional associations – in short, the brands have little meaning for contemporary tourism consumers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, since this phase of the research was carried out there have been strong indications that tour operators are still lagging behind other industries in understanding what constitutes a successful, sustainable brand that holds the meaning necessary to engage contemporary consumers. Indeed it is equally unsurprising that the industry, city financiers as well as consumers are confused and unconvinced by two re-branded major players in the industry. Thomas Cook was re-branded as jmc holidays in 2000. Shortly after being voted the worst UK air tour operator (The Guardian 2002) it announced that it was abandoning the jmc brand and launching three brands targeting different segments of the market: jmc for families and young adults, Sunset (a former sub-brand of Thomas Cook) for the budget market and Thomas Cook as a premium brand for experienced travellers. Airtours were rebranded as MyTravel in 2002 and are currently on the verge of collapse after sustaining heavy losses since 2002 (Mintel 2003).

6.5 Brand Decisions and Consumer Confusion

Branding theory asserts that brands aid in decision making by simplifying choice and reducing time, through identification with understood and expected values (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Fill, 1999, Berthion *et al.* 1999). Throughout both the focus groups and the interviews, there were strong indications that, in the mind of the consumer, there is little brand differentiation between tour operators or between travel agents, revealing a lack of awareness of and association with any brand values. The level of consolidation and vertical integration among the few dominant air tour operators has long been a matter of contention within the industry. Directional selling and restriction on consumer choice have been issues investigated in a Monopolies and Mergers Commission enquiry in 1997. In fact, there was a great deal of confusion between tour operators and between tour operators and travel agents, and a complete lack of knowledge about their commercial relationships:

I am confused about them – I don't know which are operators and which are agents ... who owns who ... I know that some of the operators own the travel agents and the airlines – but I'm not sure which.

Very often participants were confused between tourism product brands and sub-brands and perhaps more significantly, between tour operators, airlines and travel agents. Rather than simplifying the process several respondents stated that the lack of differentiation between brands and sub-brands made decision making much more complicated and time consuming. The comment of a focus group participant (1/2) illustrates the sense of frustration for consumers with the proliferation of brochures and sub-brands which feature very similar products targeted towards different market segments:

If everything was in one brochure ... they wouldn't need Airtours ... oh, well, Airtours isn't Thomson, but all these – they all belong to Thomson, if they had one brochure it might be thick, but you could go through the lot in one night, it is very confusing – why do you need five or six different ones?

The level of distrust and lack of any emotional or symbolic properties was again evident in the comment of an interview participant (1/2) that the reason for such a large number of similar offerings was simply an economic ploy - to enable operators to charge varying prices for the same holiday: *'they can charge a lot of different prices for the same holidays'.*

6.6 Brand Commitment

In the ongoing debate between marketing academics and practitioners about what demonstrates 'customer loyalty', it is generally agreed that repeat purchase does not constitute loyalty (McLuhan 1999). Although some participants admitted being loyal to brands of certain products only a few perceived themselves as being committed to any tourism products. Referring to brands in general, one focus group (1/1) discussed branded washing powders at length. A participant expressed loyalty for a brand, using the word *'distressed'* to describe his feeling if it was unavailable (because he trusted it to give the results he wanted). This indicates his emotive relationship with that particular brand – however in the case of washing powder it is the functional aspects that create the bond, rather than the symbolic. However, during the following discussion the general agreement was that for low involvement purchases, price became the main factor and *'own brand - Tesco's or Sainsbury's - what ever is the cheapest'* was considered as good. This participant admitted to being very brand loyal whatever the level of purchase (a 'Steadfast' consumer as categorised by Langer (1997)): *'I'm very brand loyal, whenever I find something that switches me on, I'll stick to it'.* However, in general, participants felt more loyalty to high involvement purchases, whereas price was an over-riding factor in low involvement purchases. Own brand products were considered as 'unbranded' and perceived as being of lower quality (indicating that price is perceived to be an indication of quality), whereas branded products were deemed to be of higher quality:

with some products I'm not bothered about brands - I just buy Sainsbury's own label ... I am drawn to branded products if it is more expensive - because you want quality and reliability.

With regard to tourism products, other activities and questions revealed some patterns of loyalty to certain tour operators – mainly based on previous satisfactory experience. When asked which operator they had chosen for their most recent holiday and why, the large majority of responses from interviews and focus groups indicated a pattern of repeat booking with the same operators. One said they use *'Airtours because we had used them before and were generally happy'*, another that they used *''Thomson, because I have used them in the past and had no problems'* and a third commented *'Thomson, we go with Cosmos sometimes, but usually Thomson'.*

By their own definition, however, this repeat purchasing was not brand loyalty but a reflection of satisfaction with certain elements of the product - in particular with respect to tangible elements such as destinations and hotels or logistical elements such as convenience of schedules and departure airport. This reflection of the complexity and multi-layered nature of tourism products supports previous research on destinations, in that the tour operator merely provided the 'packaging' and choice was made primarily on the ability of the tour operator to satisfy the other requirements (Ryan 1995b). Whereas there was little indication of emotional attachment and loyalty to tour operator brands, it was notable in relation to destinations and hotels with several participants. For example an interview participant (1/2) stated: *'it might not be everybody's cup of tea, Fuengirola, but we love it – we keep coming back'.* In addition to returning themselves, often participants had made recommendations to family, friends and colleagues. One interview participant (1/2) had returned to the same hotel twenty three times – but not with the same operator. In this particular case, the choice criteria were flight schedules and departure airport. Another participant (1/2) had returned to one destination for the past nineteen years and to another for the past six years. It is noteworthy that the word 'love' is used by these participants to describe the level of emotional attachment to particular destinations:

We usually come here in March and October and go to Italy in June. We always come to Fuengirola – we've been coming for about six years ... Italy's nineteen years ...we just love Sorrento.

In contrast, there was no indication of the same loyalty to tour operators, the same participant stated that:

We're not really that bothered about who it is – all we want is what we require and as long as we have no problems, it doesn't matter.

Similarly the response of others indicated strongly that when making holiday decisions the prime considerations were destination, accommodation, price and departure airport, with the choice of operator being of low significance:

when you are looking at a place - for a holiday ...you have to look at other things ... the hotel, the flight ... that is what's important. We have to pick and choose – if everything fits, then ...

The focus on functional aspects such as price and departure airport indicates that European package tours are considered low involvement purchases – commensurate with the remarks discussed earlier in respect of the level of loyalty to low involvement, generic goods purchases. This raises questions regarding changing patterns and attitudes towards holiday taking. Since this phase of the research was carried out, air travel with Europe has changed dramatically with the success of the low cost airlines. Their emphasis on cost reduction is reflected in the non-augmented 'no-frills' product and very low prices – however their market performance indicates the strength of their brands, and they are arguably meeting the needs of contemporary tourism consumers in facilitating short haul, ad hoc, opportunist travel.

6.7 Word of Mouth

Howard-Brown (1999) suggests that recommending a company or a product to friends and family is a sign of loyalty – although it is argued by other writers that loyalty is a far more deep seated relationship (Fournier 1998, Jones 2003). Notwithstanding this, the first phase of the study indicated that word of mouth recommendation and the communication of information is considered valuable and reliable. Despite the escalation in reliance on technological sources the need for dialogue and endorsement from more 'experienced' and trusted others emerged as still being an important factor in terms of a reference point and

risk reduction. The level of reliance and trust placed on word of mouth recommendations was significant, participants relied very much on recommendations from friends, colleagues and even other tourists for all aspects of the holiday experience, and in particular for destinations and accommodation. Again this indicates the lack of any significant emotional or symbolic relationship with tourism brands. As this focus group participant (1/1) illustrates, experience is the basis for recommendations and for choice:

...it's based on experiences I've had in the past, whether they've been good, reputation is important, recommendation from friends and colleagues counts a lot. I listen to their comments about the experience and the types of deals they got ...

A pattern emerged regarding trust and loyalty. Cliff and Ryan (2002) highlight the significance of the relationship between the consumer and the travel agent in developing perceptions and expectations of the tourism experience. Certainly in this study participants felt more loyalty and were more likely to build a trustful relationship with travel agents, largely due to the fact that there was a personal interface. Cliff and Ryan (2002:93) argue that the travel agent also fulfills the role of gatekeeper 'identifying and opening portals to a far off land' and thus is highly instrumental in the formation of the consumers' expectations. There was also an element of choice transference. Rather than relying on brand values and associations for choice simplification, participants used information and recommendations from 'trusted' others, to simplify their decision. These focus group (1/2) participants were representative of the general attitude towards travel agents – participants often had built up relationships over a number of years and felt them to be trustworthy:

We've got a travel agent that picks them out, you see...and whatever he's picked, we've gone on.

We use an independent agent, we've used him for years and he's very good, because if we say 'that looks nice' he'll say 'you won't like that'.

... it's all part of the experience, in fact ... she meets us on the street, she says 'oh you'll be coming for your tickets next week'.

Similarly, this excerpt from a different focus group (1/2) illustrates the convenience of using the same agent, and the use of a past experience as a basis for future choice:

M2 – yea..it's in Bradford
M3 – 'cos it's closest to where we live
F2 – you go back again, don't you? If you've had a good holiday before, you go back again 'cos you hope you'll get a good holiday again
M4 – it's strange actually ... it's strange. I don't know why I go back there but we're all creatures of habit, and we all do the same things over and over again. I always go to the same shop, I don't know why, but I always do....
F1 – it's what you get used to - you don't have to think about it
F4 – the one we use has been there for so many years....
M4 – I've looked at some of the web sites
F3 – I've checked things out – looked at the flights see what you can get, but nothing more

This strongly supports the arguments of Fournier (1998), and Bendapudi and Berry (1997) on the importance of customer/provider relationship in brand loyalty – that is that loyalty should be viewed as a partnership that develops through trust over time. There was a general consensus that it was important to exchange views with people, both for information before making a decision and for reassurance after purchase, for example:

that's how you find out about good and bad operators and places worth visiting ... you can find out a lot about how they feel about places then you go back and look in the brochure.

Despite the increase in iternet travel marketing and booking facilitation, for the majority of participants the tangibility of the brochure remained an important and primary source of information, particularly in the pre-consumption stages when consumers were searching for information and comparing products and prices. Brochures were also used as a tangible guarantee - to confirm and reassure when choices had been made, even when holidays had been booked by other means. Teletext was generally perceived to be useful for last minute bookings, however some distrust was voiced, particularly regarding pricing. Of those who had experienced Teletext many stated that they would not do it again – citing *'hidden extras'* and *'unknown accommodation'* as the main reasons. Some participants

used the internet and it was considered as a possible form of future booking by others. The internet was used primarily as a supplementary information source for destination information, accommodation, availability and prices in conjunction with brochures and Teletext. This need for reassurance underlines the need of consumers for 'reliable' information, support and confirmation from another source, corresponding with 'dissonance reduction' brand buying behaviour and the evaluation of the experience (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). Additionally it indicates a lack of engagement and confidence in the overall brands, again revealing the problem with understanding the complexity of the tourism product and the role of brands in the tourism experience.

6.8 Holiday Patterns and Opportunistic Consumers

The number of multi-holiday consumers has escalated sharply throughout the 1990s. The growth in the market is widely attributed to the plethora of new products that have been developed in response to technological developments and increased demand from increasingly aware and flexible consumers (Mintel 1998, Edgar 2000). This trend is clearly supported by this research. Almost all the participants took several holidays a year, often one main holiday and several shorter breaks. The few who took only one holiday tended to be older, often retired and planned much more in advance - often several months - with destination and hotel choice being the primary factors. Those who took two or more holidays tended to book later and price was more important. Interestingly there was a marked difference in understanding of the term 'advance booking' between the older and the younger participants. For the older participants 'advance' meant anything between one and eight months, whereas the response of a younger focus group participant to the question '*did you book long in advance?*' *'Yes, about six weeks ...'* illustrates the change in time perception for contemporary consumers.

Overwhelmingly, a pattern of opportunism emerged in the way that participants took these holidays at short notice – lead time ranged from three weeks to a few days, with very little planning, it being a case of simply taking what was available at the time – the key choice criteria being destination and price. The following comments from interview participants (1/2) are representative of the increasingly opportunistic tourism consumer, for whom the

removal of certain constraints provided the impetus. For example these participants booked immediately the constraint of family illness was removed:

Just three weeks ... my brother in law hadn't been very well and when he said he was well enough ... we said OK we'll go. I usually have a week in February, rather than March, I had a summer one last year – in August, but this year ... I haven't booked anything yet – I usually have three or four holidays a year – abroad, that is. Sometimes I've booked airfare only, Teletext or fax – if you can get the fax number and they usually reply straight away.

For others, it was the constraint of work *'we both had a week off work, so we decided we'd go away for the week'*. However, for many it was even more opportunistic – often on a whim *'it was only a spur of the moment thing, it was only two weeks ago we booked'*, and *'This was just a last minute holiday ...we usually book last minute – 'phone them up and say 'what have you got', and they'll say 'we've got this'...we decide where we want to go, last time we went to Cyprus ...'*. For another couple, it was response to a price promotion *'We took the kids to the airport, on a Saturday for a day out ... and the price was pretty reasonable – so we booked it!'*

These links between contemporary tourism behaviour and the emerging pattern of opportunistic, ad hoc and low involvement decision travel is something that was insufficiently covered in this phase of the research, should be highlighted as areas for further research (chapter 7).

6.9 The Holiday Experience

This phase of the research concentrated on consumer choice and decision making within the context of package tours and tour operators rather than the tourism experience per se. Nonetheless it did highlight the need for far greater insights into the experiential nature of holidays and the individuality and diversity of the micro-experiences that make up the holistic experience. Tour operators rely heavily on demographic and life-stage segmentation, presenting a range of barely differentiated sub-branded offerings such as

Thomsons' 'Young at Heart', Cosmos' 'Golden Times' and Airtours' 'Golden Years'. While age and life stage was a factor, participants had very different ideas about what constituted a good holiday experience. Access was important to all, and there was an emphasis on the standard of accommodation and quality of the food. While some chose a full board package, others preferred self- catering so that they could eat out at different restaurants. The experience for the older participants tended to be less active, with an emphasis on walking and sightseeing, Some older participants were seeking social activity whereas others shied away from organised activity of any kind. Dancing was central to the holiday experience for this retired couple in their mid sixties (1/2):

F- we like good hotels
M – when I get a brochure, the first thing I look for is the hotel – preferably a four star or a five star, and it's got to have that extra something about it – unless it's got dancing every night we don't want to know. That's why we come to the Angela . We're staying at the Angela ...
F – we belong to a dance club at home, so that's why dancing is so important ...
M – it's what we look for, really in hotels – having found the Angla` three years ago – this is our third visit –
F – we speak to quite a lot of people there you know ... we're extremely chatty ... some of them have been back for twenty-two years ... others for fourteen ... someone else for twenty ... we've only been three times – we're way behind! We meet all sorts of people – all different nationalities, and it's rather interesting.

In contrast, the following interview participant (1/2) was of a similar age and profile, yet was seeking a very different experience:

I find it a bit hard to associate our age group with the collective goings on ... 'now's the time to play Bingo, now's the time to dance, or to do whatever...' doing things we've never even seen before – we have a bit of difficulty with. You get a little bit more of this situation than we've had before ...and we don't really like it ...we've always avoided this type of resort in the past – it was an anathema to us – noisy people, rowdy this and that – but it hasn't been. We like walking and there's plenty of opportunity for that here, we're not very sociable ...

Similarly, a younger interview participant (1/2) stated:

When you actually get to a destination, as soon as I arrive I completely ignore all the rep meetings etc., and go off and do my own thing – don't see the others until it's time to get the coach back to the airport. I don't like being around crowds of people on holiday – my lifelong friends who I've known for five days ....

For other participants, the experience was about indulgence, relaxation, fun, excitement, sport and socialisation. The following quotation demonstrates the strong experiential aspect of one interview participant's (1/2) holidays:

In the summer ... June ... something which is ... well, I wouldn't say cheap, but maybe the Italian Lakes, anywhere that you can go and do something – walking and the suchlike. In September, I usually go to America – I book on tours. I've been going for about the past twelve years – I go all over America and Canada, like some people go to Florida, or if they're adventurous go to California ...I go to the lakes, the national parks, the canyons – I've been rafting down the state river in Wyoming....

Again, this phase of the study has highlighted the complexity and elusiveness of the tourism experience, the diversity of consumption behaviour and the myriad of expectations, notions, influences, constraints and symbolic associations that enrich, enhance, and even disappoint tourism consumers. It does not however explore them in any depth, but rather opens up areas for the development of the study.

6.10 Status and Symbolism

In respect of brands in general, branded items (fashion goods in particular) were generally agreed to be symbols of status: *'that's what people are buying, and not the actual product'*. The reference to the visible indicators of status through the display of tangible brand symbols supports the argument of Verblen (1912), Statt (1997), Corrigan (1997) and Featherstone (1997) that the attractiveness of brands is in their conspicuous display of buying power. Yet, although holidays are usually expensive purchases, holiday brands

were not perceived as being indicators of status – the inference being that due to their intangibility there is nothing to display. One focus group (1/1) participant freely admitted that he chose particular brands for the status, symbolic and functional associations, however he had very low awareness of tour operator brands despite taking several holidays a year, and considered that there was no particular sign value attached to them:

yes – I buy designer stuff – it's important to me – watch, jeans, footwear ... .yes I'll pay more – it says something about you – the kind of person you are...I like that. You can't have a holiday brand that makes a statement - if you are wearing a Timberland shirt you have a logo ... but where do you wear a holiday brand?

Other focus group (1/2) participants echoed this lack of status attached to tourism brands:

OK when you are standing in a queue at the airport you have a fancy tag on your suitcase, but who cares?

Similarly:

When anyone asks me if I had a good holiday and where I went, I don't tell them which company I went with, it doesn't matter.

However, one or two of the participants did feel that tourism products had status value. This participant indicated her awareness by stating that she would not display a particular brand on her luggage because of its perceived low status value and associations:

I suppose you would not be too happy to show that you'd booked a holiday through Co-op or something ... I might not want to put the Co-op label on my luggage ....

In the following excerpt from a focus group dialogue (1/2), other participants illustrate the recognition of the status associated with certain brands, and how it influences people's behaviour. It is notable that while they recognised this trait in other people, they were emphatic in their disassociation with any form of ego or status display:

M1 - If you see someone with Kuoni on, you think 'they've got a bob or two'

[laughter]

M3 - yes ...you do notice

M2 – but it's not for me, no...

F2 – all these years we've been on holiday – you see the T-shirts 'I've been there, I've been there' – we don't want the T-shirts. Nothing with logos on, no

M1 – you get people who've been to exotic places – you see them around the resort, with the T-shirts on, you know...the 'I've been here' style of thing...and you hear them ... 'well we went to Argentina last year' and 'what do you think of India?' and 'we liked China better than that' ...

M3 – funnily enough ... well ... it was a lady who was complaining bitterly – we were at the airport, last year, on holiday in Tunisia and the Portland/Thomson rep. came and mentioned Portland, and this lady was most upset to think that she was being classed with the Portland people – she was really upset – she said 'I've come with Thomson's I haven't come with Portland.

The inference here is that the strong symbolic associations with the brand significantly enhance the desirability of some branded products, whereas it is the quality of the actual, holistic experience that influences tourism choices rather than any brand affiliation. With high status, premium products, consumers are willing to pay high prices for the brand as much as the quality of the item. However, while tourism products are high value, occasional purchases, brand choice often rests on the previous experience of the consumer and/or the experience of 'trusted' others.

6.11 Phase One Summary

This exploratory phase of the study supports general theories that for many types of goods, brands are used as benchmarks of differentiation, quality and reliability. Consumers attribute certain values to brands, they offer a short cut and reduce risk in the decision process. Brands are also used as ego and status enhancers through their symbolic and sign value. Yet, as the research has clearly shown, despite attempts by major tour companies to engender loyalty and awareness of their brands through expensive and sophisticated

marketing and promotional activities, it is clear that they are failing to engage with consumers. While consumers do have some awareness of the major tour operators, they are often confused between brands and between tour operators and agents. There does appear to be a hierarchy of tour operators, which is based on previous experience, rather than brand associations communicated through marketing initiatives. This is however a tenuous link, as it is also clear that negative experiences often become key factors in future choice.

The lack of success in building valuable, emotionally based relationships is evident in the overall level of distrust, low expectations and confusion. In holiday choice, factors such as destination, accommodation, price and accessibility to the departure airport were considered important – a case of *'where, when and how much?'* rather than *'who'*? with the actual tour operator being of little significance. In contrast to the early days of the overseas package holiday of the 1960s and 1970s, when naive and inexperienced travel consumers placed their trust in the operators, contemporary tourism consumers are savvy and confident. They are pragmatic and consider the operator as simply the facilitator. Despite assertions that tourism has a status equal to objects such as a house or a car (Feifer 1985, Urry 2002) the indication is that there is little display or badge value related to holiday brands. The comment of one focus group participant summed up the general attitudes towards tour operator brands when she said:

we don't really care who the holidays with as long as it is somewhere we want to go at the lowest price – all the companies are pretty similar – same hotels quite often.

It is clear from phase one that consumers distrust major operators and doubt the promises made in marketing communications – indicating that tour operators need to concentrate on developing brands with which consumers can identify and believe in. Often decisions and perceptions are based on experience – either personal or vicarious, passed through word of mouth. That the experience is paramount is very clear however, and the tourism experience is very complex – made up of a minutiae of micro experiences which are influenced, enhanced and enriched by a diverse range of tangible and intangible aspects, thus presenting challenges for organisations in segmenting markets and in ensuring consistency. However, the diversity of experience presents opportunities for differentiation

based on experiences – the need therefore is to understand the interaction and relationships between consumers, products and the other influences on tourism experiences, thus this has directed my attention and research focus towards a much more individualistic and detailed study. Phase two draws on phase one to develop the study and considers tourism consumption within the context of contemporary consumption theory and postmodernism, seeking to understand consumer brand relationships within individual tourism discourses.

Participant Profiles and Narrative Interpretation

Phase Two

6.12 Introduction

Tourism incorporates daydreaming, fantasy, imagination and anticipation (Urry 2002) and tourism consumers are ultimately seeking pleasure and (re)creation through a range of different, interconnected experiences. There are predominantly functional experiences such as pre- travel preparations, travel arrangements, the travel itself; and there are emotional, symbolic and cognitive experiences such as excitement, relaxation, romance, education and self- actualisation. The first phase has shown the significance of past experiences in future tourism choices, the individuality of consumers, the lack of commitment to tourism brands and for many consumers, the increasing propensity towards opportunism in leisure travel. Postmodern consumption is characterised by flexibility, opportunism, freedom of choice, individuality and multiphrenia (Firat 2002, Urry 2002). Phase one identified the elusiveness of tourism behaviour and need to understand consumer experiences at a micro-level, from the perspective of the individual consumer – understanding the meaning of the micro-experiences that constitute the overall experience, understanding what informs and enhances the experience, what matters in the experience and what individual consumers feel embodies a 'tourism experience'. After all, the experience is what consumers take home with them, remember and recount to others, and what differentiates a commodity (Boorstin 1992, Pretes 1995, Calder 2001) from something that responds to the diversity, aspirations and self-awareness of contemporary consumers.

However, while it highlighted the significance of these aspects, phase one did not probe very deeply into the 'meaning' of consumers' tourism experiences. Thus it stimulated my desire to explore contemporary consumption more deeply, and congruent with the emergent design of the study, phase two developed through the progression of my own interest in contemporary consumption behaviour, and through my awareness of the need to consider tourism behaviour within the context of the postmodern environment – characterised by increasing fragmentation, time/space compression, hyperreality, juxtaposition, multiplicity of identity and pastiche. Postmodernism emphasises the changes to the way that consumers use products – in terms of their own satisfactions, aspirations and lifestyle (MacCannell 1992, Selwyn 1990, 1996, Featherstone 1997, Firat 1997, Firat and Dholakia 1998, Firat 2001) – yet it neglects tourism as a focus for the consideration of consumption behaviour (Urry 1990a, Oh 2003). 'Experience' is paramount in contemporary consumption – and indeed, is the very essence of tourism - however there is a huge diversity between consumers, and between experiences – people might seek different experiences in different situations and find satisfaction and pleasure in each. Thus this phase was a much more detailed study of tourism experiences and the way in which products, brands and other influences are used to enhance and enrich them.

In this section I present an interpretation of the texts of each individual participant. In chapter five I have explained my struggle with conventional analytical approaches to presenting the rich data in this phase, and my adoption of an individual, narrative approach to the analysis and presentation of the conversations in this phase of the study (Riessman 1993, 1994, 2000, Glover 2003). I have also discussed why and how the individual approach is commensurate with the participatory ethos in this phase of the emergent study. The interpretation is based on a series of conversations and on visual material prepared by the participants themselves. Analytical and noteworthy aspects are discussed with relevance to the previous phase and the supporting literature, and are interspersed with sections of the narratives, thus enabling the participants to tell it as it was, in their own voices. Additionally I relate to these in the discussion of my own experiences which draw on visual data in the form of photographs and a collage. For ease of reference the collages and the photographs are included with each participant's profile and interpretation.

There is no specific reason for the order in which I have presented the narratives, it is simply the order in which the initial interviews were conducted, that is:

1. Dai
2. Audrey
3. Rebecca
4. Susannah
5. Jemima
6. George
7. Elizabeth
8. Myself

Dai

Dai

D1

D2

D3

D4

D5

D6

FREE
WOMEN'S
PRIVATE EYE !!
BLAIR'S FRESH START
WOMEN'S LIFESTYL

D7

D8

D9

6.13 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation One - Dai

Dai is a married man in his sixties. He retired early from his job as an accountant and is very fortunate to have developed his life long sports-related hobby into an area of expertise where his knowledge (based on the precise statistical information that he and his team collate), is unique. He has built up a world renowned reputation as the expert in this particular field, and works full time on the various projects in which he is involved. He is passionate about his work and spends a huge amount of his time involved with the various aspects. He has several assistants who work with him, most of whom are post-graduates involved in a variety of sports-related research studies and interests. The fact that they are all quite young is important to him, as he feels that the environment he works in helps him keep young.

Through his job he travels often on business, regularly (once a month) to Ireland, and several times annually to other destinations such as Australia and South Africa. He considers that the leisure element of the trips is vitally important as: *'business trips are also pleasure trips, I combine the two – I enjoy business and I also enjoy the pleasure – very much ... it's really important to have that – the leisure is very important.'* Firat and Schultz's (1997) awareness of the different 'life spheres' that people inhabit at different times, and how their consumption behaviour alters accordingly is illustrated by the way that Dai makes a very clear distinction between business and leisure. He uses ritual behaviour (showering and changing) *'But something that is very important, I always take a complete change of clothes – that's very important. When I've finished for the day I always go back to the hotel, take a shower and lie down for a rest – then I get dressed in something fresh completely from head to toe'* using objects as signifiers (Keller 1998) - in this case clothes to demarcate between work and leisure. That is, after work he wants to relax and switch off, and has a routine of changing into different clothes in order *to 'draw a line, delineate between the two'*. In the interviews he discussed aspects of the business trips (which he undertook as a lone person with some leisure elements) and 'holidays' (trips taken purely for leisure, some of which he took alone and some accompanied by his wife). There is an interesting paradox here - when discussing his 'imaginary' holiday, he stated that he would *'probably give a few talks and stuff'* – linking work and leisure in a

tourism context and indicating the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure (Firat and Schultz 1997).

Dai is extremely fit physically, and works hard to ensure that he stays that way. He attends a gym at least five times a week, goes tap dancing, rides a mountain bike regularly and has an extreme aversion to participating in any sport or activity that he considers to be for older people. Writers agree that products and objects carry symbolic meaning for their owners and for other people – people infer meaning from other people's conscious and unconscious display and usage of goods, and use goods to communicate their own desired self image to others (Gardner and Levy 1955, Levy 1959, Sherry 1987, Biel 1993, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Valentine and Gordon 2000). I argue that this equally applies to activities, certainly with Dai his conception of self and his preoccupation with ageing are strongly reflected through the type of activities he chooses, (both in the actual and the imagined) and is supported by the clothes he wears and the items he takes with him on holiday.

6.14 Symbolism and Self-image

Through the course of the study it became clear that Dai has a fear of ageing and of being perceived as old – or even his actual age. His self image (and the image he projects) are of someone much younger than his actual years. Cognitively older people consider themselves fifteen years younger than their chronological age (Morgan and Pritchard 2001, Ryall and Collier 2001), something that is demonstrated very clearly in a tourism context throughout the interviews and the collage images. Postmodern consumers use goods in the construction of identities 'to accord with others expectations, or to distinguish him/herself from others, or possibly just for fun' (Pasi and Falk 1998:7). It is also apparent that he uses branded clothing to communicate his membership of a particular social group (Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Belk 1978, 1987, Belk *et al.* 1982, Dittmar 1992, Olsen 1994, Bauman 1995, Featherstone 1997). For example, here he is discussing a particular brand of youth wear which he included in the collage, and which he would wear so as not to stand out as being different in a particular situation – he admits that he might stand out because he is much older than the others, but it is important that he is considered a

'member' in the sense that his clothes indicate that he belongs to the lifestyle and status group – while he doesn't mind being considered foolish, it is important that he is seen to belong:

SW - These t-shirts, this Primal Wear brand ...is there a reason?

Yes, I suppose it's a scream for a long lost youth I suppose, I don't know, it must be something pretty deep in there that makes me want to put a stupid t-shirt on and wear ragged cut shorts and enjoy myself with guys who are only 20 or 30 and join in on the cycling and the rest of it so yes, I suppose they are illustrative of the fact that I try not to think I'm old. Basically my interests, to be serious for a second, are of someone generally speaking a lot younger than I am, I mean the fact that I go to the gym 5 days a week, I go cycling, I go to pop concerts, I go to tap dance lessons, they're not the normal things that someone of my age does, they're the sort of things that people younger than me do, I don't do it because I want to be younger, I do it because that's the way I am and I suppose really these illustrate what I think I am because there are two people, I think I've told you before, I'm sorry to harp on about the age thing but you will find that you end up there's two people; there's the person you think you are and the person you feel and then there's the person you see in the mirror and in photographs where you're not posing. And they are quite different from one another and it's quite shocking sometimes. So if you notice here, there's nothing to suggest age is there? Which I didn't realise that until you pointed it out to me but there's nothing there which would suggest age. This is what I mean, this could be enjoyed by a 20 year old, 30 year old, 40, 50, there's nothing there that … [here the sentence tails off ...]

SW - and do you think this is a projection of the person you would like to be seen as as well as the person you feel you are? So by maybe wearing the t-shirt?

I mean, they probably think 'what a silly arse'. I mean it's not to impress them because this is what I mean ... there are two me's if you like, there's the person I think I am and I could wear that silly shirt and think I look a cool dude and yet they would look at me and think, what's that silly old fart doing dressed like that, so it's certainly not to impress them. I would feel more part of the scene than if I was wearing something more formal amongst

all these kids enjoying themselves, that's all. It's so they don't turn around and think 'well he's out of place here'. They may think I look a fool but they wouldn't think I look out of place, there's a difference isn't there, a subtle difference.

In the following excerpt, Dai is talking about his bike, the one that he will take with him on a biking holiday. It is clear that he is very proud of his bike. He values it not only for its technical superiority, but it has significant symbolic and sign value, and he uses it to indicate his own status and personality (Barley, 1989, Slater, 1997), and to assure him of acceptance (and a position of superiority) within a particular social group. The literature discusses Urry's (1990) awareness of the significance of the social composition of other consumers in shaping the tourism experience, something that is illustrated quite clearly by Dai. When I asked him if he looked at other peoples' bikes he said that he did, admitting that he would also watch them looking admiringly at this bike, *'and I dare say I'll probably look at them admiring mine, it's ... it's a smart bike, a very smart bike'*. As Belk *et al.* (1982) argue, this indicates how consumption objects are used in non-verbal communication. His awareness of observation by others boosts his self esteem and reinforces the self-image he projects through association with his bike. The communication and image association is two way - he goes on to say how he forms perceptions of other people through the types of bikes that they ride, admitting quite openly that the association of his bike image is a good reflection of his own (self perceived) image:

... you know what they say – people resemble their dogs (laughs) I've got a theory that people resemble their bikes. If I see someone on a bike with mudguards and a pannier and a bell and all the rest of it, I'll have a certain image of them, you know? But if I see someone who's got a – you know – a mountain bike, that's to do off road stuff, then it gives you a different message.

SW – What sort of person would ride a bike with panniers and a bell?

Well, they would be essentially the sort of people who enjoy rambling and walking in the country and trees and air issues and all that sort of stuff, you know? That's the sort of image you might get.

SW – Is it important for you to be associated with the image of your bike?

Yes well it would be, mine's a sort of Jack the lad's bike isn't it?

SW - Do you consider that it is a good reflection of you?

Oh yes, yes – because ... [laughs] *– you have to understand age you see. I know it's something that's creeping up on us all, but there are problems, you see ... I have a fundamental ...there are two Dai Davies's* [here he knocks on the table for emphasis] *that's the problem. There's the person who I feel I am- because like you, I exercise 5 days a week, I cycle on a Sunday, I eat sensibly and I wear young persons clothes and I work with people half my age, and I'm involved in sport full time – EVERYTHING I do makes me feel 32/33 – everything I do ... I'm as fit now as I ever was - and so I don't feel any older than that. But when I look in the mirror or I see a photograph, I see a completely different person that I don't recognise – not the same person, not the person I feel I am – I don't think it reflects...but it doesn't lie – I mean for Christ's sake and there's nothing that I can do about it. So I think in many ways you need to get things like a bike and all that sort of stuff I think it's a ... I think you're trying to show that you're not really old, that what you see there isn't exactly the person they're going to get. So think that maybe... I don't do it intentionally, but I'm sure that subconsciously it's one of the things that you do. You know, it's got - disk brakes on it as opposed to having callipers, it's very light as well, it's got suspension at the front and suspension at the back and it's got ... and all that sort of stuff so it's very nice ... very nice indeed.*

SW – and important for the holiday?

Yes – it's a nice bit of kit, a nice bit of kit. And ... I suppose really, if you are talking about image and stuff, certainly when I take stuff on holiday anything that's suggestive of an old man's stuff wouldn't get near my case.

SW – Oh, really? What do you consider being 'old man's stuff'?

Well, things like check shirts, flannels, errr... sort of flat sort of shoes, you know the old men's shoes...I would never wear a trilby or a hat like that , a Panama hat ... I wouldn't wear anything like that because I just don't feel it's who I think I am. I mean I know ... there's nothing I can do about it, but ... it's not image really, it's how I express myself ...

In this response he reveals a lot about his own self awareness, his fear of age and the importance of communicating his self image through the products he uses and the clothes he wears. It is very important that he is not seen as someone he perceives as being typical of his age. The projection of his image as one who is not his age is very clear, reflected in his collage through his choice of holidaying alone, his clothing and his general health and fitness. His aversion to including anything in his suitcase that may be perceived as belonging to an 'old' person is very marked. Later on in the conversation he refers to certain branded clothing which he perceives as having a certain image and status that is commensurate with his own self image:

The wardrobe that I would take with me I would imagine a thirty year old would take - or if you opened it up, you wouldn't see anything ... It would be pretty ageless, no one could say that ' oh, this is a guy of 60 or whatever... I mean there'd be a pair of jeans – denim shirt, T-shirt, a pair of shorts, a Ralph Lauren shirt, not Falmers ... but you know the sort of thing ... reflects what I feel – not that I would go and have plastic surgery, it's just that I don't feel that the sort of age ... what people see reflects the person I am.. I suppose ... you get perceptions from what people look like – I hadn't thought of it before, but I suppose that subconsciously you're trying to give them a different message, aren't you?

He again quite openly admits that he feels much younger than his chronological age and has a horror of growing old. His choice of quite extreme and emotional vocabulary '*the tremors of shock and fear*' to describe what he feels when he looks in the mirror reveals how deep this concern is. From speaking to him during the course of the study, it is apparent that he is waging a constant battle against ageing, and is very aware of himself in this context, choosing a lifestyle and activities that reflect his own self concept, and present this image to the world. The clothes that he wears, his work environment, his leisure activities and even the vehicle he drives (he has recently swapped a vintage Mercedes

sports car for a 'Toyota Rev4' four wheeled drive in electric blue) all reflect his attitude towards ageing and are carefully chosen to communicate his self image.

6.15 Constraints

My awareness of the significance of constraints on people's tourism and leisure experiences raised in phase one, was further increased during the course of the first conversation with Dai. It was quite quickly apparent that Dai's leisure activities are constrained by his wife. He describes them as being *'a bit like Jack Sprat and his wife – what she likes I don't like and she doesn't like very much'*. As the significance of the constraints began to emerge in other conversations, I developed the second stage of this phase to reflect a situation without constraints. Through the repeated referral to the things that his wife wouldn't or couldn't do it was clear that while Dai was not explicitly criticising his wife, he did feel very strongly that the leisure holidays were developed to take account of these constraints. There is a great difference in his behaviour in terms of the things he does and the places he visits during the business trips, his biking holidays and his very active imaginary holiday experiences (in this situation while he does make reference to the people that he will meet along the way, it is significant that he is alone), and the holidays he takes when accompanied by his wife, which appear to be much more sedentary and relaxed. Indeed, in his imaginary situation he structures a trip around activities and events, stating quite categorically that *'you've always got something to look forward to as opposed to relaxing and doing nothing and it's almost participating.'*

In the following excerpt he has been talking about the importance of books in his holiday experience, then he switches in the next breath to talk about the constraints imposed by his wife – the indication being that although he loves reading, he reads rather than do other (more active) things because of her. A note of wishfulness creeps in as he thinks about how different a holiday might be on his own or with another person:

The thing that's associated with holidays more than anything else is that I read. I read books, I absolutely devour them, I have been known to read a book every day – so for ten days that's ten books ... I just read and read. I collect books – if there's a holiday coming

up, I'll collect books in readiness to go on holiday – a typical holiday I'll take about 10-12 books, on the basis that I won't read them all and also on the basis that some I won't like so much so...you know? I'm a bit constrained on holiday ... by the person I go with – as we all are – you know, you have to find things that you both ... get a bit of a balance. If I were on my own or if I went with somebody different, I should think my holidays would be ... a little different. Because my wife – she likes to go ... she just likes to relax. Her idea is to stay in the same place for a fortnight. She doesn't even like going to one place for one week and then another place for another week. And she likes to get up in the morning, and go for a walk, she just likes to totally chill out. I'm happy to do it, but there are holidays that I'd like ... to be ... more active ... and with a different person I would imagine some of the holidays would be quite different ... it's a matter of compromise. I'm going on my own now, next week ....

There was a clear statement that if not for these constraints then his holidays would be very different and a reason that he enjoyed his business trips so much was that he could please himself what he did. He states quite early on in the conversation how much he enjoys eating out, and mentions it several more times, in terms of his own pleasure. He also mentions that his wife doesn't like eating out:

For instance she doesn't like Chinese food, or Thai food, or food that's been 'mucked about' as she would say – she likes everything plain, so going out – you know, the eating experience - is not very stimulating back at home so when I go over there I make sure that I eat in places I wouldn't go with her – I trawl the best eating places.

This comment is further illustrated by the fact that his current choice of favourite restaurant while on business trips to Dublin is Thai (something his wife doesn't like). His choice of emotive and descriptive vocabulary '*absolutely stunning*' and the emphasis on the taste and quality of the food is further demonstration of the enjoyment he gets, even to the extent of taking photographs of the exterior of the restaurants and the food itself [*photographs D1, D2, D3, D4]*:

Café Mao which is described as fusion of light cooking between East and West – and it's absolutely delicious and it's full every night – it's held in high regard ... this next

photograph looks a bit peculiar – but it was absolutely stunning - it was some Thai noodles ...

The fact that he has taken photographs of the exterior, the food and that he makes reference to the ambience of the restaurant indicate that it is the whole experience that is enjoyable, and one that is even heightened by the fact that it is something that he doesn't normally do. Postmodern consumers actively seek meaning and feelings of wellbeing and enjoyment through a variety of experiences (Ryan 1995b, Firat and Dholakia, 1998) and it is clear that Dai considers his trips as a compendium of experiences – he takes delight from each individual experience 'the experiential moments' (Firat and Dholakia 1998:99) which he can mix, match and juxtapose at will as well as the holistic experience.

He admits to being a careful planner, and he plans all the trips carefully, as an important part of the experience *'It's not a chore, it's not a chore, it's let's get stuck into this next holiday sort of thing, find out what we can about it, making lists and all the rest of it and yes, that's all part of the fun.'* He uses the internet widely, making repeated references to it during the conversations, both as the main source of information and also as a booking facilitator. Research indicates that 'silver surfers' are amongst the highest users of the internet for information and facilitation – the 50 plus segment is the fastest growing web user group within the UK. Although in phase one, the participants who tended to use the internet for information and holiday bookings were in younger age groups, research in 2002 revealed that 43 per cent of 55 to 64 year olds use the internet and they are predicted to be the largest users by 2005 - (Devaney 2002, Sclater 2002). However for Dai, his familiarity with technological advancement may also be another way to ensure that he is abreast of current trends and developments:

Well I never do any travel holidays now without going on the internet. Everything is done via the internet. I may get some brochures as a consequence of being on the internet, but that's my reference point. So if I'm going to for example, we went to America last year, decided we wanted to go so the first thing I did was to go straight onto the internet, type in the island and type in accommodation and all the rest of it and it all came on there and I did it all through the internet. And the mountain bike holiday again I go through and I

find the holiday sites, I just save them on my favourites and when I'm thinking of a holiday I just go through and pick them out.

Commensurate with the majority of participants in phase one, he does not use brands to reduce time or risk during these searches and displays no particular brand loyalty, other than to Ryanair, the airline he travels to Dublin with. However while the internet is always his first port of call when looking for tourist information, he also uses other sources of information. Like many participants in phase one he consults brochures, together with guidebooks such as *Fodor* and he subscribes to *Holiday Which*, and uses this as a guide to airlines, and for destination information. This wide use of a range of information indicates the increasing knowledge and awareness of consumers, as *Holiday Which* is a consumer support publication which is often openly critical of many tourism offerings. As well as booking via the internet, he regularly uses an independent travel agent who he trusts and has built up a relationship with over a period of time.

6.16 Ritual

There are many facets of ritual within tourism – indeed it is argued that 'almost all types of tourism take a ritual form' (Franklin 2003:112), whether as the repetitive, predictable events such as annual holiday(s), or as part of the tourist experience such as rituals and events that form part of the tourist spectacle (MacCannell 1976, Graburn 1983). Tourism is generally considered as a time apart from the ordinary and the everyday – a time to experience the extraordinary, to indulge and step beyond the boundaries of 'normal' life and cultural constraints (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003). In doing so it is argued that it conforms to a ritual framework – that is of three transitional stages – which are not distinct but flow and overlap as the tourist gradually adapts. The beginning stage is preparation and travel away from home, the second stage is one of emancipation, when tourists are temporarily distanced and suspended from home and the familiar, immersed in tourism activities, and the final stage is one of repatriation – the return to the constant and the everyday (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003).

Ritual is certainly a significant part of Dai's experiences. According to the writers above, it is a time of suspension from ordinary life. As such it is often also a time of stress and loss of security. Dai is a very organised and controlled person, and thus the inference is that for him ritual is a way of creating security and retaining control through familiar routines, patterns and processes. His trips to Dublin are regular and frequent and there is a strong sense of ritual and routine in them, which is important in enriching the overall experience, and which he has strived to instil. This is interesting in respect of the theory that tourism is a break from the norms of everyday – although Dai is in an extraordinary, temporary situation on these trips, he nonetheless is imposing his own constraints and normalising them through his ritualistic and routine behaviours:

I go to Dublin every month – that's 12 times a year and I always go at the same time of the week – Wednesday to Friday - and I always stay at the same hotel ... in the same room even, I always go to a nice place for dinner and I always go to the theatre.

His journey follows the same ritualistic and systematic pattern through the airport, on arrival, the place he stays, in the way his time is organised – the meals, the entertainment, the purchase of his newspaper – which is a different title from the one he buys at home. This is consistent over time – several months later he states that:

I go to Ireland again and again and again and it's now ... the next one will be my 28th trip so I haven't missed a month out in over 2 years.

SW - and you're still keeping to a similar routine?

Yes, exactly the same routine ... the same hotel ... I go on the internet before I go over there to see what's on at the theatre, I'll frequently book my tickets from over here, I know the manageress of one of the theatres over there so I will give her a call before I go over there and say 'Mary, give me the low down' ... because I've got a choice of four over the 2 nights ... 'give me the low down on what's the word on the streets of the best ones', so she usually tells me 'don't go to the Gate this time, there's something in the Abbey that you mustn't miss' so I do that and I book them on the internet. And I get there and it's identical every trip. Nothing changes, absolutely nothing changes other than I get to the airport a

little earlier than I used to because I missed a flight through no fault of my own ... anyway, so the only difference is that I get there a quarter of an hour earlier than I normally would but I do exactly the same apart from that. I buy a Private Eye, which I pay for and then when I come back I get a taxi which I don't pay for, I go to the same hotel, I eat in the same restaurant, same hotel, they give me the same room, I'm on their records now you see so, 'oh yes, Mr Davies, same as usual?' 'yes please'. So it's complete routine and I've no intention of changing it either, it's thoroughly enjoyable and I've been doing it now, building up to my routine, this routine's now been going for about 18 months.

SW – You obviously get a lot of pleasure from the routine, why do you think that is?

Well, it's very simple really, first of all I really enjoy eating out and it's something I do very little of here - my wife doesn't like eating out, and secondly one of my great loves is the theatre and always has been so I go somewhere where I can actually walk to one of 6 theatres, so it gives me the opportunity to pursue one of my hobbies actively once a month so it's huge really, it caters for two of my needs.

Again he emphasises the leisure element of his business trips. There is strong indication of the significance of routine in his trips – it is something he is very conscious of – and indeed has consciously 'built up'. While there is an element of convenience in this – saving time searching for alternatives - it is clear that he enjoys the routine, the sense of the familiar, and being known. Over time, he has developed a trustful, emotional bond with the various products and people, and he derives pleasure and satisfaction from this – as various writers argue, this evolves over time through the delivery of consistent value and benefits, and a strong consumer-provider relationship, the aspects that for the tourism industry, are absolutely crucial (Bendapudi and Berry 1997, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Fournier, 1998).

More particular examples of this ritualistic element and the importance of certain (branded) products in enriching his travel experience are evident in the following excerpt. Initially he is describing his routine patronisation of the Thomas Cook Bureau de Change [*photograph D5*], he then goes on to talk about the purchase of the magazine '*Private Eye*' and his deliberation over a particular brand of sweets [*photographs D6 and D7]:*

SW – Do you always use Thomas Cook?

Yes – always, it's part of the routine – I've used them for years – because of the non-commission charge and it's definitely a bit of a ritual. It's what I always do and I wouldn't go somewhere else. This is World News [Photograph D8] *– somewhere else I always go to. I always go in and wander round, there's always a waiting time, so this is where I go to ... this is a picture of Private Eye – you know Private Eye?*

SW – Yes

I always buy a copy of Private Eye to read

SW – Why do you buy it?

Well ... it's a neat package – you know when you've not got much space on the plane, you can't struggle with a newspaper – it's unmanageable, and the articles are in bite sized chunks – you know what it's like when you're travelling, sometimes it's difficult to concentrate – you get interrupted so you can pick it up and put it down when you need to ...

SW – Do you always buy Private Eye – or would another publication – say the Economist – do instead?

*Oh yes – I ALWAYS buy Private Eye – nothing else will do ... this is a real ritual. If they don't have it I'd be upset and wouldn't buy anything else...no, definitely not ... ahhhh the sweets (*Photograph D7). *I always go and look at the sweets – I don't always buy them – but I always look. I like to have some sweets – I keep a packet in the car so that I can just have one when I feel like it. These are Campino – they taste DELICIOUS – really like strawberries and cream - the best things I've tasted. The trouble is, if I buy them I will eat them – they always come in large packets – if they did them in tubes then I'd buy them. Sometimes you can get them in a tube. I don't like to buy a lot in a packet ... the whole packet is too much. Because if I eat them – which I might well do - it might take the edge off my appetite – my dinner is a very important part of the trip and I don't want anything to*

spoil it. So the bags are no good ... I do look though ... always ... I like to see what's there ... see if anything catches my eye.

Leisure consumption is an increasingly important element in the lives of contemporary consumers (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) who increasingly seek products to 'delight and excite the senses' (Cooper 1999:7). Awareness of choice is a characteristic of the post-consumer (Feifer 1985, Ryan 2002, Urry 2002) and these also emerge very strongly with Dai, particularly the sense of play, and his indulgence in the freedom of choice. He considers the journey pleasurable, it is a part of the overall experience, rather than in modernist thought where the journey was simply the means to arrival (Firat 2002). Yes, he always chooses to do (or not do) these things, but he demonstrates the postmodern trait of self-indulgence, he is making consumption choices that will enhance his leisure experience. The brands are important as part of the ritual and he delights in the level of choice and the freedom to choose. Whilst the basic brand concept of loyalty (Fournier, 1998) is evident, it has gone beyond this, his loyalty to certain brands has developed from satisfaction with the functional elements of the product and the service, to an emotional, symbolic relationship and enhancement of the experience (Knox 1996, Mitchell 1998) – encapsulated in Lury's (1998:4) statement that 'it is our perceptions – our beliefs and our feelings about a brand that are important'. This is something which is also present when he talks about his loyalty to Ryanair [*photograph D9*]. In the following excerpt you can feel his empathy with the low cost airlines' policy of low fares and no frills, pitted against the competition which is British Airways' full service product:

Ryanair – now I'm a great fan of Ryanair... aah – I'd have to take Ryanair anyway, and that's the first thing. If I want to go to Dublin and I want to go from Cardiff I can't go by anyone else now. A few years ago they were the only one – nobody else went. Then British Airways came on the scene – they offered a daily service with more than one flight a day – so you think ...ahh – that's quite an attraction. It was of no attraction at all, because they were ... the times weren't terribly good and it was quite expensive. It was £286 return. Now, Ryanair – I've paid £5 each way ... I've paid £7 each way ... I've paid £25 each way and I've paid £80 each way. And the price varies from day to day and it's an internet booking company now. So you've got rid of all your overhead booking commissions from outside and they want you to book over the computer using the internet.

And ehhh, what it does do, it just fosters such a feeling of goodwill towards them because they're sensible, they always fill the aeroplane up and when it's not full they make an incentive to go, and what I've also noticed they do - they put people in the habit of going to Ireland frequently. Irish people over here they go back much more than they did before, even though sometimes it's cost them this much a flight, because you think gosh, well I OWE them hundreds of pounds – if I go for a fiver each way and then next week it's £65 … it balances out. So that generates a feeling of real goodwill, and eehm as I've told you, they go backwards and forwards far more often than they thought they would because of it. And they get fantastic PR out of it … I mean, where I go, there's one chap – the Chairman- in actual fact he is from Cardiff – and always – whenever I see him – he says 'how much did you pay for the flight this time?' and I might say ' oh, five pounds each way', but this one time I said - I can beat that- David Gibbons [not his real name] *– he's an ex Welsh coach – he was taking a team to play in Dublin. He said 'look lads, when I arrange your next trip, why don't your families come and see us play and come out in the evening?' Anyway Trevor said – 'maybe my wife would like to come, she's just finished her studies and might like the break how much is it to go over – flying from Bristol?' and … do you know how much he paid?*

SW – No…

…fifty pence each way!

SW – fifty pence?

yes …so that's that – I told him the story but he said 'hey – listen to this one'… and he pulled the ticket out of his pocket – 2p!

He emphasises the enjoyment and fun element of travel when he tells how the low fares have developed into a friendly competition between himself and his colleagues. He also indicates a sense of guilt, that he almost feels indebted to the airline for providing the service he requires at such a (ridiculously) low fare. The personality of a brand is significant in the development of a strong consumer-product bond, overriding the functional elements and influencing consumer attitudes (Gardner and Levy 1955, Aaker

1996, 1999). Certainly Ryanair have developed a personality with which Dai identifies and he clearly states that even if the competition were to offer the same product at the same price, he would not change – a clear indication of the power of brand personality to influence consumer attitudes and choice (King 1973, Cooper 1980, Aaker 1999). The airline search and booking is an experience in itself, it is part of the overall experience and it gives him pleasure and satisfaction for a variety of reasons. It gives him value in financial terms and in other respects such as performance and self-satisfaction (Knobil 2002), for example in the way that he is championing the underdog pitted against the major players, and it provides an element of fun.

6.17 Postmodern Tourism Consumption

The findings from phase one supported literature on the contemporary consumers in indicating increased levels of confidence, sophistication, independence and marketing awareness (Poon 1993, Yiannis and Lang 1995, Southgate 1996, Lury 1998, Mintel 1999). Here in phase two, Dai's familiar usage of marketing terms and references to marketing practices also support these theories. Another characteristic is escalating familiarity and ease with using technology such as the internet both as an information source and a booking facilitator. On the one hand, Dai's positive references to the internet support this. His story about the way he used the internet to find *'the perfect place to stay'* is an example, but then he goes on to talk about his discomfort with other aspects that are generally accepted as being intrinsic to a tourism experience. He considers that tourism experiences should be stress free, and in a sense he should be insulated from the realities and harshness of everyday life. He takes pains to avoid situations which may cause him psychological insecurity and stress, and his dislike (borne from a lack of confidence with the accepted social etiquette) of tipping and his concern with *'not looking out of place'*, are a significant factor in his choice of types of accommodation and destination. It is interesting that he found the augmented product attributes that are designed to differentiate the brand and add a touch of something special, disconcerting and cited them as a reason for seeking other accommodation:

...when we go to Florida – we go to Anna Maria Island, it's wonderful, and we've found the perfect place to stay – Pelican Point - I found it on the internet – a wonderful piece of marketing ... I'll tell you the story of Florida...We went the first time and stayed in a very up market hotel. The place - Anna ... Anna Maria is on a ... you know a strip of land – and is a very up market place – a lot of wealthy Americans live there and it is a wonderful place – just perfect, but the hotel was too grand – I don't like very up market hotels, I'm just not comfortable – we had all the luxury – doors opened, fancy service – having to dress for dinner, beds turned down every evening with a chocolate and a poem left on the pillow – but we don't want that, it's not relaxing – and the tipping – I really can't cope with the tipping, it's something I'm not comfortable with. I never know when to do it, how to do it, if it's enough/too little – I find it stressful – and they expect it whether you've had good service or not –and I don't always want to tip – and I hate the feeling of not never knowing whether I've got it right – stressful. That was the great thing about the QE2 – you don't tip. You just give £50 at the beginning and that's it – you don't have to but that sort of covers it and then you don't have to be bothered and stressed about it during the rest of the trip. So we liked the place and decided to go back so I looked on the internet – I'm the holiday planner – I do all the leg work and I get all the information, brochures, books, maps – loads of stuff and spend ages going through it all – anyhow this time we knew the place we wanted to go, we knew the type of accommodation and the first one that popped up was this one Pelican Point – it had a great web site – really great –all the information you need, and it had a page of 'most frequently asked questions'. Well, one of the questions was 'do you have room service' and the response was 'give us a break ... you're on holiday – we change the sheets, make sure that everything is clean but that's all we do - we leave you in peace'. Well, that – to me - was just perfect – just what we wanted so I didn't look any further – I just phoned them up and booked straight away. And it is just right – it's a great place, perfect, nothing fancy, very basic but has everything we need and no-one bothers us. It was such a good web site – perfect example, so easy to use and all the information there.

While Pelican Point is not a major branded product per se, it has strong associations for Dai which are bourne out by his experience of the product. This indicates that meeting or even exceeding expectations will result in a highly enjoyable tourism experience – an experience that begins with the reservation (Westwood 1997). In turn this promotes

loyalty, positive word of mouth and return visits. Barley (1989), Olsen (1994) and Slater (1997) all refer to the use of brands to project a socially acceptable identity, in a world that is considered increasingly hostile and confusing. Dai is clearly uncomfortable and less confident in certain tourism situations. He makes reference to the way in which he quickly became disillusioned about the projected images of Dublin by the amount of poverty, begging and drugs indicating that he finds it upsetting – not commensurate with the fun, stress free tourism experience. In contrast, he is clear about his ease in Anna Maria Island which is as he admits *'is a wealthy place...there are some very wealthy people there who wear expensive clothes'* however while he states that *'you wouldn't feel out of place just being casual – you could wear something from Primark and not get noticed particularly'*, he does go on to admit that he might *'wear a shirt with a label ...logo on it – what's the one? Lauren for example – not the Tommy Hilfiger all over, but just something good, yes to send a signal, make you feel more comfortable - fit in.'*

There is evidence here of branded goods being used as benchmark for status and as a societal anchor (Fournier 1996, Slater 1997, Mercer 2001) as a way to fit in to an unfamiliar environment. He refers to Primark as symbolising low price, low quality; Lauren symbolising up market, tasteful, image commensurate, and Hilfiger symbolising expensive but not image commensurate. This empirical evidence fully endorses Betsky's (2000:110) comment that 'we identify ourselves and others by how we dress, what music we listen to, which brands we sport'.

I previously discussed postconsumers' preoccupation with the search for meaning through immersion in a variety of experiences, indeed Bauman (1983:83) describes postmodern consumers as 'fun loving adventurers' and 'gatherers of sensations'. Dai certainly exhibits this postmodern preoccupation with participation in different tourism activities (actual and imaginary) that will provide physical, mental and spiritual satisfaction. Discussing a mountain biking holiday, he describes the mental process he went through in contemplation of pushing himself through gruelling days of riding, and then the sense of achievement and pleasure at the end of the day:

And then I went on a weekend down to Dartmoor mountain biking and I stayed in a Georgian manor house which had been converted by the couple and their parents and went

on Friday morning and went out on Friday afternoon, a group of us and it was almost in the bottom of a valley and either side of the valley there were wooded mountains, really going up, totally forested and so we cycled in and around the forests for 2 and a half hours and it was really very very hard and it was great cycling as a one off and I woke up thinking, oh, I don't want to do this again. I mean I did it and I can do it and I mean it wasn't a physical thing that frightened me, I'm quite fit so that wasn't a problem, it's about do I really want to spend a day doing that again because it was hard. Anyway I did the next day and then the following one we went on Dartmoor itself and it was the weekend of driving rain and I mean it was unbelievable and that's the best bit of it, it was really good fun, mountain biking in the rain ... in the evening, you sit around have a chat with a glass of wine and you have that wonderful feeling of physical exhaustion that is something absolutely special, which really makes it ....

Another time when discussing his collage, he talks about the feeling of pleasure, exhilaration and satisfaction from immersing himself in totally new and stimulating experiences. Again there is an allusion to the defiance of his chronological age, and his choice of vocabulary (*'fabulous', 'amazing', 'rewarding', 'incredible'*) is experiential as it describes the activities, the scenery and the sensations:

It's downhill mountain biking and cross country mountain biking and these guys they are just amazing, the speeds they go and the courage they have and they go head to head against each other down the mountain and you can see them coming down one against the other down the mountain. It's just fabulous and so that really is good fun and it's such a young persons sport as well and when I go there and I'm probably twice as old as the second oldest there, it's just such a fun, relaxed time, people with their t-shirts on and their ragged arse stuff and they're staying in tents and drinking beer and I just love the whole laid back atmosphere of the place, which is why I put these and as a reminder [on my collage] *I've got that guy up there and it's a daft thing but that gives you an idea and I've got these shirts here. They're just funny shirts, like that one there's got 'bull shit' written on it and then these will be again novelty shirts that just illustrate that it's a really fun, informal, relaxed and you go there and there'll be Cajun music playing all over the site, there'll be burger stands and vegetarian fahitas and all the rest of it, ice cream and all the rest of it. There's just a real fun, fun trip and to see the top boys going to will be really*

good fun and then I'll do a bit on my own, I'll probably join a group or do something because as far as I'm concerned to do something like that is the most exhilarating thing there is.

SW - This is a picture of a lone biker and a mountain

Yes, and I'd be very happy, happy to get up to it on my own, it's nicer to be with someone but like that one there for example, those two guys are having real good fun. You're not talking to anyone because you're on a single track, it is just such a fantastic feeling being high up, having made the effort yourself to get there and then you can't hear anything you can just see this most incredible scenery and I've found it's much more rewarding than driving in a car up to the top and having a look.

It is significant that in two places on his collage he had written the Latin phrase '*Carpe Diem*' (Seize the Day). In discussing it, he again alluded to his stage of life and the fact that he is more reckless, and certainly his choice of destinations and activities indicate that he is challenging and defying age and physical infirmity through his experiences:

Yes. I mean seize the day, in other words, sod it and just do it, you know because it doesn't, without being too morbid about these things, I'm certainly three quarters of the way into my life probably, I'm in the last quarter now, which explains that so I think I would probably take more risks now too.

SW - In what sense do you mean risks?

In doing daft things or whatever, oh well, I won't be coming here again so just do it, whatever it is, you don't think oh gosh I'm an accountant or all the rest of it, I'll never come here again, let's just sort of seize it, whatever it is, quite honestly, like I said I didn't have any particular thoughts on it other than if anything was offered or anything came up in the experience, that would be my drive, that would be the driver.

6.18 Patterns of Holiday Taking

In the literature review I argued that tourism is a postmodern consumption experience. Patterns of holiday taking have changed dramatically in the past thirty years - from being a special, regular, regulated, long planned and anticipated annual or even bi-annual family event it is now a much more eclectic and ad hoc experience. Rather than seeking a single theme, consumers seek to immerse themselves in a range of different themes and experiences (Ryan 1995b). Dai was born during the Second World War. He grew up in post war Britain, his father owned his own business who worked six days a week (as was often the case during this period). He recalls that they had many day trips to local destinations, but few family extended stay holidays. He went regularly to a camp belonging to a youth social group of which he was a member, he had a great sense of anticipation and planning for these events. His use of the term '*innocent*' is interesting – the inference being that expectations were far less, and nowadays greater sophistication and choice has resulted in a loss of the more simple pleasures. Holidays became a regular annual family event – usually repeat visits to local destinations, again he mentions the constraints of his wife and children as being a factor in the choice of destination:

I was a Welsh speaker and I belonged to an organisation called Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth) and for years I went to camp – not in tents, but in chalet type accommodation and had a really great time – doing simple things– there were no such things as discos and clubs – much more innocent - life was much simpler then, and more innocent ... I really enjoyed those holidays – those were the only holidays I had ....

When I was seventeen I went to University – I never had any holidays while I was at University – I had to work – the fees were very expensive and I had to work to pay for everything during the holidays. I didn't have a holiday until I was twenty four – then I was married and we used to go for holidays locally – we had our honeymoon – two days in Bournemouth ... and then a week in the Brecon beacons. My wife doesn't like the car – she can't go anywhere that entails a long car journey – so with her and children who are always asking 'are we nearly there' we were limited. We never went abroad – even over the Welsh border was too far. For nine years we went to Tenby every year – we used to

rent a cottage, drive there and then not use the car again until the journey home 2 weeks later.

SW – Did you get excited about holidays?

Oh yes – they were really special events – planned for a long time and it was a special time – you waited for your holiday all year – planned for it.

More recently there has been a marked change in these patterns, commensurate with postmodern consumption behaviour. While some are driven by the business need, there is a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure. There is huge variety in the types of activities and entertainment, there is a marked search for self fulfilment, the admission of self indulgence and the defiance of time exhibited here through Dai's denial of age. The search for sensations is paramount as is the acknowledgement that satisfaction is found in relaxation and escape from everyday stress (although replaced by stress through physical challenge). Juxtaposition is also a postmodern characteristic and there is evidence in this narrative of multiplicit postmodern consumption behaviour in the juxtaposition of types of activities (to prevent boredom Dai would '*pick and mix*' these). His collage is certainly one of contrasts. It includes the vigorous physical exertion of downhill mountain biking and the cognitive satisfaction of watching top sporting events; exotic beaches and the luxury and self-indulgence of five star hotels; economy class air travel and the Orient Express; natural Italian scenery, the man made spectacle of the Eiffel Tower, the view from the peak in Hong Kong and the entertainment and superficiality of Las Vegas.

This last is interesting. Las Vegas is the destination which exemplifies postmodernism (Boorstin 1992, Firat 2001) and is one of the most prominent destinations on Dai's collage. He makes several references to Las Vegas during the conversation, alluding to the pastiche, the fun and the experiential aspects of the place:

Just for the buzz and people watching I mean that's the real fun of it. And I do like people watching and if I'd go to Las Vegas I'd go to all the casinos and see the shows and watch the gambling, not that I gamble myself, a few dollars here and there but I'd just like to see some live shows and just experience the experience of Las Vegas and then the other,

because I've got the cards up there and I do like American beer as well so I've got the Budweiser, and that's why I'd go to Las Vegas is that would be another focal point ... I think that's Vegas actually [here he points to an image on the collage] *that is the ... it's supposed to be like Venice ... there, that's illustrative of the sort of hotel that would be very nice in between.*

Brands play a major role in Dai's tourism discourse. In his collage he is very concerned with the experiential aspects, and he uses the associations with particular branded destinations and products to characterise the experiences he imagines. For example, a significant part of his experience is the symbolic identification with American culture, and he uses Budweiser to epitomise American beer and 'Americanism' in the same way as Coca-Cola is often used (Pavitt 2001, Pendergrast 1994). Las Vegas represents the need for fun, for escape from reality through the hyperreal pastiches – as Dai states *'to experience the experience'*. The Orient Express and the new Queen Mary symbolise luxury and Colorado symbolises the freedom and physical challenge of the outdoors. He speaks about the Maldives in a derogatory 'not for me' way using them to exemplify boredom and inactivity on empty beaches - something that does not appeal to him. While he does include images of beach resorts in his collage they are linked to contrast: *'it would just be a contrast to what was going on in the rest of the holiday and which is why I put in things like the beaches, I've got beaches there, I've got beaches there'*. Interestingly, they are also used to display marketing and brand hostility - one of the attractions of the Anna Maria island resort that he and his wife return to regularly is that *'there's no McDonalds, there's no Wendy's, no Burger King, there's no building higher than three stories, there's no billboards'*.

Audrey

A1

A2

A3

A4

A5

A6

A7

6.19 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Two

Audrey

Audrey lives in Birmingham where she is in the process of completing her PhD on Shakesperian Sonnets. She is very literate, is creative, artistic and conscious of style and form, all which carries through to her lifestyle, and is evidenced in the way she dresses and decorates her home. Aged 26, she is married without children. While she has travelled regularly and quite widely, she has never taken any prolonged trips. She comes from a very close family and could be seen as something of a homebody, liking the security and comfort of the familiar, for example whenever she travels in winter she takes her hot water bottle with her: *'I do very pathetically like to take my hot water bottle ... it's my one and it's furry and comfy and also I just feel the cold massively and if I've found that I've gone away and forgotten it then I'm really cross because I just like to have that before I go to bed'*. Somewhat conversely her husband could be described as an allocentric tourist who has travelled for extended periods to some remote destinations (Plog 1974). He is a medical doctor, fluent in several languages and feels the need to travel often, although the pressure of work and examinations have curtailed his travel recently.

My interpretation begins with Audrey's narrative of her childhood holidays. The following excerpt illustrates the way in which her holiday taking pattern has altered, partly as a consequence of growing older and the changes in her personal circumstances:

It's very vivid, my holidays when I was little between ...well about three ...and probably about thirteen - fourteen, we just went every year to West Wales to a little village called Manorbier. So for our whole family the word 'Manorbier' is just like a word of general paradise ... so it was always 'when are we going to Manorbier...?' I love Manorbier, you know, in the rest of the year if we felt unhappy or unsettled, it was 'think of Manorbier' when you're going off to sleep, so basically it's just a sort of really fantastic place .... It's actually just a little village with a beach and nothing spectacular, but it was just great for us because I suppose because it was very safe, very different from a normal campsite, it was a caravan site, circular thing you could all look in the middle of the field and play cricket on that, which meant that for us we could run around and not be with Mum and

Dad so much ....and also there was the kind of walk to the beach which wasn't, you know...it was perfectly safe for children to go to, so I suppose it was somewhere that was like a child freedom place. And we used to go there every Whitsun for two weeks and then later on as it became more difficult to take the time out of school we would then go instead in the long summer holiday but traditionally it was going at Whitsun. So I can just, I remember it very strongly, my first time going even though I was very tiny then because I went with only my Gran and Grandad and not Mum and Dad and this was a huge excitement to be going alone, although not scary, but I sort of felt like I was kind of special and everything because I was going on my own and so we went for a week and just sort of played around there and the second week was very different because Mum and Dad and Anna and Lisa my cousin and sister and Uncles and Aunts and hundreds of people seemed to come up and it was a huge descending and then it was more of a planned holiday rather than a me holiday. So it ended up being somewhere where lots of people came. And it was always sort of a bit of a squash but, it was great.

SW - You've obviously got quite fond memories of those holidays, is it something that you use as a benchmark for other holidays?

I think so, I think it probably is actually and it is certainly something I kind of think 'oh it would be lovely if I could have that for my children', somewhere regular that we go, somewhere familiar. I think... I don't know because I haven't got any children ... but I think that actually children quite like routines and like places like that to sort of think of when they are in other places that are comforting and nice, so I suppose it is a benchmark in that is what I would like as opposed to going somewhere different all the time with small children, which would be difficult and I suppose not necessary a lot of the time. But then when we go back there now and it's changed, that's quite disconcerting and I think that I wouldn't want to go to Manorbier every year again or anything because it's different. We had one sort of summer holiday when I was eight when we went to Mallorca which was 'oh my goodness we're going abroad!'... when we went there for two weeks at Whitsun ... even so it was an even more profound change because it was the same time of year, only somewhere different, and then we went back to Manorbier again so that was just a one off. And then we went again to France and I remember that because I hated it so much and I really wished we were back in Manorbier because that was on a campsite and it was for

three weeks which is quite a long time and it was ... we had just imagined from the brochure and from talking ... it was a 'Canvas Holidays' holiday ... that it would be wonderful and green, and I suppose we probably looked - had more of an idea - of sort of Brittany or somewhere like that, and it was somewhere further down, I think it was the Vendee or somewhere like that? Anyways it was quite far down on the West coast so it was sort of sandy and a bit grubby and kind of not all perfect as we thought it would be, surprise surprise! And it was just sort of a rough and ready place. I mean now, when I look back I think it was probably quite fun but at the time I felt quite unsettled by it, and I really didn't ... it was probably all tied up with the fact that it was the summer before I went to high school and I was feeling quite apprehensive about that in a way and probably wanted something a bit more familiar in that context, but there I mean my Dad and sister really enjoyed that holiday and I just didn't like it at all .... I know I would much rather never go camping again but so many people tell me you've got to so I suppose that will be something to get over when it comes to re-camping. And after that, after France we started going to different places all the time and sometimes abroad and sometimes here. We tended to be quite regular ... summer holiday ... 2 or 3 weeks ... sort of family. We don't ... I've never been skiing for example, and we're ... certainly while I was living at home ... it was - we go on holiday in summer, in August normally, probably because it was the easiest time to get time off. We didn't ever go away in the winter or anything like that, it stayed kind of the same regular thing, only just going to different places.

SW - And how did you feel, did you have a lot of anticipation when you were thinking about the summer holiday?

Yes I suppose I did. Not quite the excitement from when we were little, because you're sort of tied up in other things and suddenly there's the holiday, as opposed ... it wouldn't be beyond us to actually make a chart of when we were going, of the days! So I suppose it was more sort of relief because you have the work stresses or things going on at school and all the things that go along with being a teenager, you know it's more sort of a getway. I mean in the last few years it's become much more erratic, partly to do with money and just sort of life takes over sometimes, and suddenly I find I haven't had a holiday and it's getting towards the end of the year and I haven't been away so sort of this is since going to university and I think the difference has probably been that I've been more open to short

city break things with friends as opposed to sort of a long holiday staying in one place, you know, lying by the pool kind of holiday which we had to a certain extent, you know a sort of more static holiday I suppose for a two week break. So now it will be more oh, we're going to go here for four days, and then try and tack on a bit of that for three days, and then try and fit a bit more in, and move around a bit more on the holiday , and then end up going at all sorts of times of year, sometimes Easter sometimes suddenly in September we've got some spare time, get a last minute thing - you know - much more up and down like that, not particularly planning for a long time or anything, just sort of you know , we should try and use that time off well and then at the last minute go and sort something out. I'm not actually that bothered by having to go abroad every year or anything like that, that doesn't actually bother me. I do like to have breaks from the routine obviously, but I'm very happy to have that break at home actually or to go somewhere quite close, you know in Britain, whereas my husband Martin, he does feel the need to go away and see somewhere else and I suppose that kind of rubs off sometimes in that I just think, oh, we better get another place done before he gets cabin fever. Yes I suppose it is definitely to do with ... I would say it's more to do with how we're feeling at the time whether we think we need to see somewhere else, rather than I have got to see that place before I die kind of feeling. So as I say, it's more to do with me than the place.

Significantly, this extended excerpt of narrative illustrates how holidays have changed. When Audrey was young, they were very much a routine. She describes it as a 'ritual' an annual event to familiar places with the same activities. Later, while the holiday remained an annual two or three week event, she recalls that in the mid 1970s the Manorbier pattern began to change. She remembers a *'one off'* trip to Mallorca as being special, the inference being that it was very exotic and exciting – in fact a break in the normal ritual of Manorbier. Gradually her holidays became more diverse as family circumstances altered, and nowadays they are a very ad hoc occurrence. Predominantly this is triggered by intrinsic factors (here she repeatedly uses the word *'feelings'*) such as awareness of the need for a break, for a release from the pressures of work; awareness of the time since the last one; awareness of her husband's need to travel (implicit here is her need to find a balance between her own travel preferences and those of Martin, her husband).

The power of experiences – both good and bad – to shape and influence future perceptions and decisions is very clear. Audrey recalls past holidays from her childhood with great poignancy – they were annual events and times of great fun and (perceived) freedom from parental control, and yet she stresses how safe and secure she felt – perhaps because of the familiarity of the rituals. A number of tourism theorists, for example Cohen (1972) and Smith (1989), have described a destination as being an environmental bubble – that is, where tourists can indulge in a range of experiences outside the social and cultural constraints of everyday life and routine, and yet remain safe and secure within what Farell (1979) refers to it as an 'enclave of familiarity'. For Audrey the sense of pleasure, novelty and change is enhanced by the familiarity of the 'unfamiliar' destination. Indeed, it is so strong that she uses those memories to provide comfort in times of insecurity and unsettledness. However the destination is preserved within the aspic of her memories; she recognises that over the years both she and the destination have changed, she now sees it quite differently and she has no desire to return. While she hopes to create similar experiences for her own children when the time comes, the destination would be different.

6.20 Anticipation and Expectations

Satisfaction with the holiday experience is gained as much from the anticipation of pleasure as from the actual consumption (Laws 2002). Failure to live up to these anticipations and expectations can lead to severe disappointment. Audrey recalls how she and her sister used to mark off the days to the holiday on a chart (this can be related to the 'animation stage' of the ritual famework of tourist experience (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003) - part of the process of absorption into the holiday state, the transition from mundane, everyday life to the out of the ordinary experience). She also recalls how one holiday that did not live up to expectations formed through the images and information in the brochures was hugely disappointing (here she uses the word '*perfect*' to indicate the high level of expectation, referring to Manorbier as a benchmark for a perfect holiday). She recalls the holiday brand very distinctly and the experience has had a very negative impact on her perception of camping holidays in general. It is interesting that she adds the words '*surprise, surprise*!' here to denote her (now) level of awareness, cynicism and

distrust with marketing activities (Poon, 1993, Yiannis and Lang 1995, Southgate 1996, Lury 1998).

6.21 Time Constraints

As was usual during the 1970s work patterns were the main consideration in terms of the date for the holiday. Holidays were regular, annual events planned well in advance, giving ample opportunity for anticipation to build up. In the previous passage, as Audrey continues to speak, her narrative takes on a different pace. Referring to the present, her words reflect that time has taken on a different meaning - although still a key factor, there is a greater sense of urgency, of immediacy and instant gratification – as in postmodern consumption, the experience is much more transitory. She infers that time is a valuable commodity – referring to using time well (rather than wasting it), and holidays are driven by intrinsic factors rather than the pull factors of any particular destination.

Work commitments are still an important consideration – while her husband has some flexibility in choosing his holiday time, it is limited to two weeks at a time, putting constraints on long haul travel, and stress in terms of ensuring that the time is not wasted. Factors such as the increase in low cost airlines, internet communications and more confident and experienced travel consumers have resulted in falling demand for traditional packaged holidays (Mintel 199b, Johnson 2002). However, I have argued that, as consumers become increasingly time constrained, they will seek organised, packaged holidays that minimise the amount of organisation and reduce risk. This can be seen in Audrey's prediction that in the future, tailored packages may prove the most efficient and effective way to take holidays:

I can see us becoming more interested in organised holidays because we just don't have time to get it wrong, because that's the only time of year we've got to go on holiday and I can just sort of see that were we to be able to afford to, I would probably go for one of those companies who tailor things so it wouldn't be kind of a package holiday but I might be interested in someone who can book things for me just because I know I just don't want

to be ... I haven't got time to faff around because time is quite short unfortunately with jobs.

Later in the conversation, she refers to a three-week holiday in Africa with her family, stating that '*we had a long time there, so there wasn't the pressure to kind of be organised and get things done, because we had time'*. In the collage, Audrey illustrates how as the structured processes of travel are completed and the holiday develops, time takes on a different perspective. Holidays are very much about relaxation and freedom from the constraints of time. Referring to her collage she explains the significance of the image of the clock:

This clock here just represents how for me going on holiday is a real time thing at first, got to get the flight, got to get the train to the flight, it's all very regulated and on time and then after that you know it's just so lovely to leave that behind and I often don't wear my watch on holiday and forget what day it is and everything and that's really important so I thought I would put that there just to show I was leaving it behind.

6.22 Experiences, Expectations and Lifestyle

A holiday is not one tourism experience, rather it is a multiplicit and diverse amalgam of micro-experiences. Audrey presents a very good illustration of the diversity, the juxtaposition between luxury and basic accommodation and the small pleasures and satisfactions that make a destination or accommodation experience memorable in the following passage. She is describing a trip to Tanzania in 2001 with her husband, her parents and her sister. This trip involved a number of destinations and a number of different 'experiences' – Moshi in the North East to visit places and people that her sister knew through her gap year experience; the Serengetti for a safari; Stone Town in Zanzibar for history and culture; relaxation and luxury on the Zanzibar coast. She makes very interesting comments and observations regarding the sense of belonging and ease one felt in the various standards and types of hotels. Rather than the level of luxury denoting the level of detachment of the staff, like Dai and Jemima (*see narrative five*) she clearly identifies the 'corporate' (branded) hotels as having distinct barriers between guests and

staff. She felt far more comfortable and welcome in the ambience of a privately owned, prestige hotel and also in a very basic 'backpacker' hostelry, and she has retained more positive memories of her stays there than of other places. My inference here is that the very brand qualities (the homogeneity of the product in terms of expected levels of service, style, ambience and facilities) of international branded hotels result in a homogenous experience which fails to linger in the memory. Conversely, it is the quirkiness and individuality of other hotels that distinguish these experiences. Her experience at the basic hotel was enhanced by interaction with other guests (Lovelock 1996), whereas she attributed the ambience in the prestige hotel to the influence of the European female manager – however, she made an interesting observation that the staff were less than happy to be working for a woman.

... I was just thinking then about the planning thing, that doesn't mean to say that we didn't anticipate enormously, the whole time we were waiting to go we talked about it a lot, we just didn't make any paper plans. But anyway, yeah, when we got to Moshi, the small village we stayed in the Buffalo and that was just great because it was the sort of place that me and my sister would find to stay in just generally but my parents, we've never seen them in anywhere like that so that was quite amusing.

SW - Why, do you say 'a place like that'?

Because it was kind of concrete floors and just a spout for a shower and very cheap and you know it was quite tumble-down and had no luxury about it at all. It did have hot water intermittently but you know it was not a swish place at all and not that my Mum and Dad do normally stay in that sort of place but it's much more ... they would normally stay in the hotel in that little town, whichever one that most people stay in as opposed to this little 'find' place that's quite odd. But they loved it really and that was quite fun actually and turned out well. So we went there and then we went on safari and I suppose then we stayed in nicer places really because we were sort of thinking that it would be long days and things like that so we wanted somewhere to just sort of flop in the night and my Mum gets quite tired because, for whatever reason, so we were just thinking of her really and so then we staying in slightly smarter places ... but we didn't, although that was great ... we don't actually think it was as fun and we didn't think of it as fondly now as the Buffalo which was

really good and there were lots of locals at the Buffalo as well, so we got to chat to them and that felt quite natural, whereas in the posher hotels you felt a sort of barrier between you and the staff that there wasn't at the Buffalo. But having said that, when we went to Zanzibar it was an incredibly swishy hotel, there the staff, it was not as if there were barriers oddly enough, I didn't know if that ... we kind of thought it was because possibly because it was run by a woman, unusually, which the staff found quite annoying - basically that women shouldn't be running places like this, and she was a Dutch woman and I felt a quite European influence in that place, very nice décor and things like that with African things, but it had a different feel definitely to the sort of corporatey feel to the hotels on the safari. The only funny odd thing was that we were going to stay in one place in Stone Town, which was just too far off the beaten track for my Mum and Dad, it was really quite run down, well I think the hotel itself was fine but the one room they had left was very shabby and quite horrible actually and we were fine with it but Dad just wouldn't let Mum stay in it, that was his kind of Waterloo, you know, 'she's not staying here', so that was the only place that there was any kind of problem.

Later on, when discussing her collage, I point out that, although there are a few images of individually stylish hotel bedrooms and interiors, there are no particular hotels. Her response reflects her previous comments on her discomfort with the standardisation of international branded hotels. Like Dai she identifies much more with the individuality and idiosyncratic personality of the more intimate establishments where she can feel relaxed and at home while shrouded in comfort and luxury. She seems to have had more disappointing experiences than good ones which may account for her ambivalence towards hotels in general – again an example of the increasing necessity to understand and meet individual expectations rather than rely on the brand to deliver a predictable, standardised 'McDonaldized' product (Ritzer 2000):

I would like to stay in somewhere that has nice linen, say, or has a lovely big bed or has a particular feel to the rooms but I don't have the feeling that I want to go and stay in the so and so hotel in wherever, it's more just a feeling of a cocooned, nice, luxurious place. But yes, that is quite interesting I suppose and thinking about it and the holidays I have had in the past really only in, I think only in Africa has there been a hotel I've gone to say 'you've got to go and stay there'... oh, there was once a little pensioni in Italy that was absolutely

beautiful, but those are the only two places that I've gone to that I would say you have to go and stay there because it's great. And that was something else I was going to say was that when we went to Costa Rica for our honeymoon we were really disappointed because we ... well we weren't really disappointed ... but we had chosen the sort of nicest hotels because we thought 'this is our honeymoon and we're going to really splash out' but we wished we had actually done our usual way of doing things because I just don't think, well not in Costa Rica anyway, they just don't do what we consider to be luxurious hotels. The hotels were very American and there was lots of Americans staying in them who seemed to think that it was great but it wasn't what we have come to expect here which is much more I think, I think we're just more subtle, it's more to do with the feel of the linen on your bed and those sort of drinks you get and the service you have, rather than some real flashy great set of curtains with bows and things like that ... and that's why I felt that the one in Africa you could tell was owned by a European and the one in Costa Rica, even though it was staffed by Costa Ricans, you could tell it was owned by Americans ... definitely much more standardised and they weren't particularly interested in giving you particularly good service, they just seemed to think that the hotel was there and that was great enough in itself, whereas in the smaller hotels in Costa Rica the people were great and really friendly and very much into providing you with what you wanted. I sort of have a love hate relationship with hotels ... I do love the whole idea of luxury hotels but with a sense that they are alive as opposed to just being printed out to plonk all over the world.

Word of mouth recommendations are acknowledged as being influential in consumer decisions, and certainly tourism consumers are more likely to trust anecdotal and experiential information than marketing literature (Webster 1991, Price and Arnould, 1999). As in phase one and with Rebecca, Jemima and George (*see narratives three, five and six*), word of mouth communication is one of the main ways that Audrey gains information about potential destinations and accommodation – the people whose opinions she trusts and values in this context are people with similar tastes and lifestyles. Travel literature is another source of information that is considered more reliable (in the sense that it is more honest and unbiased) than marketing literature, and here brands are significant for Audrey. Identifying with the personality of the brand, she refers to herself and her husband as being '*Lonely Planet buyer people*', and describes the ritualistic trip to

Waterstones to purchase the *Lonely Planet* guide for the destination they are considering, something that signals the point at which the anticipation starts to build.

Despite the flexible and ad hoc nature of the holidays, with pre-booking not expected at the level of accommodation they tend to use, there are two significant factors in her explanation of why she feels the need to book accommodation in advance. Based on a previous experience, she likes the security of knowing that they have somewhere to stay, and she feels that booking in advance saves valuable time on arrival in a strange destination – the inference being that finding the accommodation is one of the mundane necessities of the process of travel, rather than a pleasurable activity. However, she then goes on to contradict this, describing how, while she tends not to read specific travel sections in newspapers and magazines, she avidly reads the articles about destinations and accommodation in glossy lifestyle publications. Such publications represent and portray aspirational styles for life, work and leisure which consumers select and adapt in order to define and locate themselves in society (Hirsch 1976, Bordieu and Passeron 1990, Featherstone 1997, Abramovici and Ateljevic 2003). The indication is that while at the basic level, accommodation is merely somewhere to sleep, at the premier, lifestyle level accommodation is an entire experience – it becomes the reason to travel, taking precedence over the destination. This is interesting when related to Luhrman's (1998) prediction that tourism destinations will increasingly be considered as fashion accessories – defining the identity of the traveller. My inference here is that with this type of accommodation Audrey would be (albeit temporarily) buying into a particular lifestyle.

We tend to often ... it depends, quite often it's just on recommendations from friends who may have been somewhere, say it's really nice and we should go there, people who are quite like us, other couples with the same idea about their breaks, short breaks sort of just trying to get a little bit of sun in or something like that so often that's how we do it. But often ...we're real Lonely Planet buyer people, we often buy a Lonely Planet... even for countries we've never actually got round to visiting! So that would be... I think that's the start of our holiday feeling ... is to go to Waterstones, get a Lonely Planet and begin thinking about it then, so we would be more ... book the hotels ourselves separately - sometimes ring up beforehand and sometimes ring when we get there, and that can be quite funny because we tend to choose the lower end of the price range less so more

latterly but we used to. They would be amazed when we rang up to book, they would be like 'why do you want to book, sort of three weeks in advance' or something, and they just didn't understand it at all ... so that was quite odd and then we would get there and realise why - because there's only like two people staying there.

SW - So why did you feel you needed to book?

I think because that one time that happened was in Naples and I had been there before, not to Naples but to Rome, and I usually just couldn't bear to have to walk around with a really heavy backpack on in the hot, in July in an Italian city looking for somewhere to stay and I just thought that we were only going to be in Naples for four days, this is where the time thing comes in, we just didn't have time to faff about and it's not a small village, it's a huge city so it's going to take a long time to know where to start, so I think we felt we just wanted somewhere there done and dusted so you could get on with getting on with your holiday really. I'm not the sort of person who thinks of that as part of the holiday, that's something I want to get rid of, done and finished. I'm not actually a big reader of travel sections, I don't know why, they just don't really appeal to me that much. I will occasionally read something if it's something I've already been very interested in but I'm hardly ever caught into reading it. But I do find - because I'm addicted to other sorts of glossy magazines ... and I will read the travel section in those quite happily, I don't know why that is but in that I suppose it's because it's shorter, it's a simple article about it so you know I do read those sorts of things. I'm quite interested in travel and hotel ... you know you get those books out of just hotels, like Hip Hotels and things that. I quite like to look at those and the interviews and all the things you can do there and that kind of thing. Maybe that's a reflection of how I'm maybe more interested in the hotel than the place! I would love to stay there, they're not something I expect in because they are phenomenally expensive the ones that I'm interested in. But yes, I do think they look great, I love the idea as well, you know, having somewhere that's very luxurious and all very everything on tap but isn't your house so it's not all full of clutter and hasn't got all the things that you should be putting away and thinking about and you know ... so you get all the home comforts without all the home hang-ups.

The reference to lifestyle influences is further supported in her photographs. In photograph A1 she has displayed a few of her huge collection of glossy lifestyle fashion magazines to which she says she is '*addicted*'. She is clearly aware of the aspirational nature of the magazines – what is particularly interesting is that while she does not read travel articles in other publications, she reads the ones in the fashion magazines. Moreovoer she develops perceptions of destinations from those used in the fashion shoots – there is a strong lifestyle linkage between the aspirational nature of the desirable, branded and very expensive fashions and accessories, the models and the destinations. Although these are the backdrop and secondary to the goods, they are without exception interesting, very often exotic, and always artistically portrayed to complement the beauty, perfection and desirability of the models and the goods on display.

Holidays are emancipatory, a time for fun, for escape from everyday life and freedom from responsibility, a time for hedonistic indulgence and a time to be someone else (Gottleib, 1982, Jafari 1987, Ryan 2002). For Audrey this is epitomised by the experience of (temporarily) staying in the prestigious designer hotels portrayed in the glossy magazines – all the comforts of home and more, and the shedding of the responsibilities that home entails. Her fondness for magazines also reveals other interesting characteristics. There is a status hierarchy in the magazines she buys – the inference being that the magazine brands reflect her self- image and identity. While she admits – quite proudly - to being '*addicted*' to magazines, there is nonetheless a notion of slight embarrassment and guilt about them. Normally she chooses up market, lifestyle magazines such as such as *Vogue* and *Elle* (like her), however, on holiday she feels released from social constraints. Her use of words such as '*free*', '*allowed*' and '*lapse*' indicate the suspension from status which gives her license to indulge in buying as many as she wants, and to buy magazines in a different market position such as *Hello* and *OK* that she normally considers 'not like her'. Nonetheless, as Pritchard (1992:20) notes 'women watch themselves being watched' and there is an element of guilt at this indulgence and she still feels the need to present a functional justification for purchasing the magazines – having something to read while at the airport. Her commentary on her photographs is revealing:

OK, this is all my, the small collection of many hundreds, of glossy magazines and this is basically ... the way I was thinking about this with holidays is partly just from looking

through them in quite an aspirational way - of places we would want to go to as I was saying before, the travel sections, but also sometimes they have fashion shoots in places that look interesting, things like that, so these are partly to do with my preparation I suppose or thinking about holidays and also to do with clothes and things you would take with you, but then also they're a real indulgence at the airport where you can stock up on loads of magazines to take away. Basically because I sort of have a guilt about how many magazines I buy but when you go on holiday you're are free to buy as many as you want because you're sitting around at the airport, and you need something to read on the plane so that's sort of, so yes, I do tend to buy them at there rather than carting them around getting them here. I always ... Elle and Vogue are my main reading matter, but when I'm at the airport I will lapse into OK and Hello and all those sort of celebrity magazines which I'm too embarrassed to buy in the local shop so there, that's partly why I love it because then I'm allowed to read some of these trashy things because I'm on holiday. So yes, there I buy a load of rubbish ... it only happens in those sort of hiatuses of normal life.

6.23 Brands, Identity and Freedom

In the initial stages of the conversation where we discussed Audrey's past holiday experiences and used her photographs as stimuli, the focus was very much on her as part of a collective, family unit including her husband, parents and younger sister. While she is strong willed and determined, she seemed perfectly acquiescent and contented with the choices and styles of holiday that she engages with. However, when talking about her idealised holiday and her collage she revealed a different side to herself and there are some distinct contrasts between current experiences and aspirational experiences. Audrey's collage is a complex myriad of juxtaposed images in which brands feature prominently. In her narrative she reflects that while she was ambivalent over the choice of destination, this altered to feelings of fluidity – represented in the collage by a range of diverse destinations and representations of style. The most surprising aspect is that linked to her theme of fluidity is her choice of travelling companion. She remarks that while she gave careful consideration to the choice of companion, rather than choose a '*real*' person to accompany her on the journeys, instead she chose a strongly branded car: '*I decided that my companion would be a Mini Cooper*'. When I asked her why, she responded with several

clear brand associations and indications of a high level of emotional and symbolic attachment to the Mini Cooper brand.

The fit between the personality of the brand and the self concept of the consumer is a key aspect in the engagement with a particular brand (Lannon and Cooper 1983, McCracken 1986, Aaker 1996, 1997, 1999). Physically, Audrey is conventionally very attractive, petite, neat and stylish and she identifies with things British, artistic and avant-garde. These are similar to the personality characteristics that she ascribes to the now 'retro' Mini Cooper which has enjoyed a resurgence of popularity since its re-launch. Britishness is a recurrent theme throughout her narratives and it is clear that she has strong affinity with her nationality and its symbolic icons. Interestingly while she identifies with the Britishness of the car and fleetingly questions its authenticity in that it is no longer a British brand, it is not a significant factor in her emotional attachment to the brand – for her 'the car or the brand that I pick out expresses what I think I am – or what I want to be' (Martineau 1957:74):

Well basically because I've always loved Minis, I think they're great and cool and trendy and just fantastic and I've actually got a Mini but practicality wise my old Mini is not going to get me very far, and so even though I love that style more because it is British and little and just great and a really practical car and I love the way British people go for small cars which are so much more useful than those huge ones and Martin's a fanatic and he won't call this a Mini because he says it's not British. So I sort of slightly feel that it's not quite the real thing but I do also think that it's a lovely car anyway so that's, so I thought I would go for that and that would then take me to lots of places so that sort of covered my destination thing.

Postmodern consumers are whimsical, using brands to change identity according to need, mood or occasion (Restall and Gordon 1993, Belk and Costa 1998, Pasi and Falk 1998). In adopting the role of the holidaymaker (which changes according to the type of holiday) she is aware of stepping into a different, temporal life sphere where the normal 'rules' don't apply. As symbols of the indulgence and freedom of the holiday experience brands play a key role in this transformation. Similarly to Dai and Jemima (*see narrative five*), there is a significant ritual element in Audrey's holiday experiences. A part of the ritual of

going away is the purchase of the magazines and other particular branded items at the airport – items that she would not normally buy. The Chanel and Gucci sunglasses [*photograph A2*] and the Chanel lipstick are all premier brands commensurate with the lifestyles portrayed in the glossy magazines. In her collage she has a multitude of brand images depicting stylish, designer clothes, luggage and other accessories – the things she aspires to and would use to enhance her imaginary holiday, but in reality cannot afford to buy.

The next excerpt is from Audrey's discussion of her collage. It illustrates the complexity of Audrey's aspirational self, and the way in which she plays with brands in order to construct and reinforce various identities and enhance her experiences. Earlier, she indicated how the initial structured, functional stages of the holiday – the travel to the destination, in some cases the search for accommodation were processes to be endured before the holiday could be enjoyed. Referring to the images on the collage, she begins by describing herself as '*smart and travel suited*', listing brands that correspond with this identity. Louis Vuitton is a premier brand of leather goods and travel accessories that is heavily associated with luxury and status. It primarily advertises its distinctive luggage in lifestyle fashion and travel publications such as *Condè Nast Traveller* and *Vogue.* However, similarly to Burberry it is also linked to the overly conspicuously branded style of consumption associated with the nouveau riche pop and sports stars. People infer stereotypical characteristics based on consumption cues (Belk *et al.* 1982), and interestingly Audrey uses Posh Spice (a brand in her own right and a partner in the Beckham brand) disparagingly as a metaphor for a certain 'flashy' (uncommensurate with her self identity) style. Rebecca (*see narrative three*) also included images of Louis Vuitton luggage on her collage, and while it epitomised her aspirational identity, similarly she discounted it because she considered it too ostentatious.

The role of the smart, suited woman traveller links in with Audrey's preferred airline and class of travel, and her notion of the transport element being functional and approached in a structured fashion. Throughout the conversations it is clear that she identifies strongly with Britishness. She chooses British Airways (the national flag carrier), citing functional associations with the brand such as safety, reliability and service, and she uses the term '*exciting*' – indicating that somewhat conversely travelling on a premier airline in a

premier class is an enjoyable part of the experience as opposed to a chore to be endured. The Leica camera is another aspirational brand but not because of its functionality (which is a key aspect of the camera). Similarly to Susannah (*see narrative four*) who based her choice of car on the gadget for holding her designer sunglasses, the Leica is representative of an aspirational lifstyle and chosen for the non rational emotional and symbolic associations of style, image and the '*red ...blob thing*' (the very distinctive red logo).

As her narrative unfolds, she metaphorically casts off the formal suit and relaxes into the role of the wealthy, playful holidaymaker in her conversatons of her ideal holiday. As a post-consumer she consciously plays with identity, and, released from the confines of the norms of social etiquette by the identifiable premier brands she is wearing and the walls of the environmental bubble, she constructs experiences in which to immerse herself (Feifer 1985, Smith 1989, Firat 1997, Pasi and Falk 1998, Valentine and Gordon 2000, Urry 2002). Her comments on her collage reveal her aspirations:

This is kind of how I would like to be, this really smart travel suited person with the monogram luggage as I was saying, and this is Louis Vuitton which I think is a bit flashy to be honest and a bit Posh Spice but you know that kind of idea?... but matching luggage. And this is just quite an upmarket branded, Hermes - that is make up bag, and Elizabeth Arden and things like that, and that idea as well of being quite minimalist, you know, just being able to be very rationalised about your make up instead of having a huge messy bag as I have, and similarly this Nina Ricci stuff looks very clean and clinical and nice to take away so that's the sort of stuff that I would then put into my ... I like that suitcase ... I think it's Vorna Keely who designed that, which I think is really ... it's very practical on that pulley thing, but also just the design is eye catching and just something a bit out of the ordinary which you would perhaps not carry around the streets here but would take on holiday. This is the British Airways planes, which actually it's been ages since I flew with British Airways but that is still a holiday feeling for me you know the flight, the planes and all their tail fins or whatever they are called, that's all very exciting. Although I am not scared of flying, I do have ... you know, I would not be happy to fly with Aeroflot and would feel quite scared of that. I suppose to a certain extent the safety thing would be the only thing I would sort of want to go with one brand over another, one company over another, because you know I tend to think now that I should get a Ryanair flight because

they are cheap or Easyjet or something like that but if you can get it I'm always quite pleased if we're going on British Airways because we can get a drink and things like that so I suppose my main things would be the cost and partly my confidence in the company.

SW – But in this instance where cost was not a factor?

Yes where cost was not a factor I would I think I would go for British Airways first class. I would love to do that whole first class thing and just not have any hassle and just go on.

And then this is a camera, this is our aspirational camera which we cannot afford, but would love a Leica just because they are beautifully made, they just look very stylish and they produce a nice clunk click and they are just great so in an ideal world I would have a Leica and I love their red ... blob thing. And then this is the whole ... I just love Chanel as a label anyway, and it represents sort of continental sophistication and kind of glamour and that's quite cool as well, that sort of cardigan over a bikini so that's very holidayish sort of wear obviously ... you know, you could feasibly wear that for lunch on holiday, obviously you wouldn't do that anywhere else. So I just wanted that there just for the whole feeling of almost like a role play for me this whole holiday thing is just to be somebody I couldn't afford to be here and just my lifestyle ... going to lunch in Chanel would be part of it .... And I suppose the whole idea of having a lovely swimsuit to go away, to take away, you know, the towel and the bag ... I mean I just sort of, you see people, often continental women, who just look all very tidy, kind of, smart and British people, well my impression of British people anyway is that they often have hundreds of bags, which is what I am like in real life but I'd love to be that person who just trips down to the pool with a book and a towel and everything is all very chic so with those matching swimsuits, that kind of thing.

Despite her earlier identification with Britishness, in this situation she wants to disassociate herself from national behaviour and style traits such as being un-chic and unco-ordinated (which she deplores and does not associate her imaginary self with) by taking on the role of a continental woman whose behaviour she admires (Schenk and Holman 1980, Solomon and Assael 1987, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Aaker 1997). There is a profoundly more hedonistic element in her imaginary, collage experience. She has included images of cocktails which she uses to represent the temporality and state of suspension from normal

life - the fragility of the glasses and the opening of a full bottle are symbolic of the lack of possession, the fleetingness of the moment and the sheer hedonistic indulgence of the experience, and all part of the role she is playing at that time.

I love cocktails, they're so camp and such impractical drinks, that sort of represents being somewhere different and a different personality for me, and it's decadent as well because you know with cocktails you have to buy a huge bottle of something just to use a dash of it in a cocktail so that whole thing of being, money is no object ... Margaritas always lovely. But you know I quite like a cocktail in a Martini glass with those sides to have somewhere - sitting by a pool or something - that feels very holiday-ish because it is quite a spindly glass, it's quite fragile, you know, it's not something like a heavy pint or something like that so that gives a whole different way to holding it, a different feel. I quite like rum cocktails too because that feels very Caribbean.

Drinks are enhancers of her experience in other ways. In her commenraty on her photographs she talks about the drinks that they buy, again brands that are different and more expensive than their normal ones, reinforcing the aspect of indulgence, and explains how they keep the bottles afterwards, as souvenirs and reminders – something that she quickly qualifies by presenting a rational justification. The careful choice of cigarettes is another symbol of brands enhancing and enriching the holiday experience. By choosing brands which are exotic, foreign and different, she is enhancing her experience through immersion in the local culture, symbolically indulging in the consumption characteristics of the host destination – she is clear that this is only temporary, something that she does while on holiday, not to be carried home.

Another ritualistic element, and example of the construction of situational self through consumer goods is the clothing. Dai used clothes to differentiate between his work self and his leisure self, Rebecca [*see narrative three*] carefully planned her travel wardrobe with consideration of the various situations that she would encounter. Audrey also has clothes and shoes that she keeps primarily for her holidays. While she justifies this rationally by stating that the clothes are impractical for everyday wear, there is nonetheless a strong sense of the level of existential and sensual enhancement of the holiday experience through the specialness of the clothes. Just as the wealthy classes in the seventeenth

century gained hedonic pleasure from consumption items such as clothes and accessories (Firat and Dholakia 1998), Audrey explains how the anticipation of the holiday builds as she prepares the clothes that she keeps carefully packed away to wear on holiday – even keeping clothes new to wear the first time on holiday. Her choice of the word '*preciously*' to describe the evocative sense of these clothes indicates the sensory and hedonistic pleasure and anticipation of constructing her holiday persona through enrobement in these garments [*photograph A3*]. Interestingly, she also alludes to the airport as being a marginal, liminal space and time – a part of the journey, already she is in a state of transformation from her everyday role into a situation where cultural and social norms don't apply:

These are our sunglasses that we bought when we were going away. Designer sunglasses are a holiday thing for us, because both of us are quite interested in fashion and design in lots of elements of life but it's obviously not very affordable at all, but you can buy into that in duty free because it's so much cheaper. So those are Martin's Chanel ones and mine are Gucci which is ridiculous. I mean we would be embarrassed to buy them here because they are so expensive but you know when you're on holiday ...? And I'm a particular fan of Amsterdam airport and so there we often indulge and I love that, it's kind of the start of our holiday, new sunglasses and the other thing, one of my photos which hasn't appeared is Chanel lipstick. I always like to have either a lipstick or kind of some small thing you know, that's smart looking and nicely packaged and just feels exciting and sort of slick. And it's slightly like the magazines. It's as though the airport's the sort of place that doesn't operate with normal rules. Anything that's there, you can sort of indulge in a lipstick, the same with the sunglasses and I just wanted to show that because that's actually something that Martin buys into as well. He doesn't do that very often but he will go for the sunglass thing. And now this looks quite odd but this is my summer dresses ....and I've got quite a lot of nice dresses that increasingly are becoming impossible to wear in this country and so that's a big part of my holiday, getting my dresses out and putting tissue paper on them and wrapping them up nicely and putting them, you know, flat in the box and just keeping them quite precious and then we will always go out for a very, you know, a nice meal while we're away that you can wear a nice dress to, which sort of sounds silly but it's quite an important part of the holiday. I often buy things for my holiday and keep them preciously until we go and not wear them before. And also I keep them on the top

shelf that we have in the spare room there ... so sort of the things that I would be waiting to wear... and then after the holiday I would be free to wear them as much as I like but they are sort of, I want to wait for the first time to be on holiday.

SW - So you take particular clothes for particular occasions?

Yes, you know ... not that specifically but definitely I want to have worn that dress by the end of the holiday to a nice restaurant, kind of thing. Partly because I don't have very many opportunities to wear them here and they also are very silky material so that feels like holiday, wearing them and sort of light weight and things so and quite similar here all our shoes which are also just stuff you can't wear here. So here are our summer shoes which is quite similar in that we don't wear them very often here because they are too impractical, but that's sort of a holiday feel because they are of impractical materials and things that they are made of, but they are nice to wear obviously. Then here this is our duty free. We always buy something in the duty free, a spirit usually, to drink in the hotel room sort of before we go out or whatever while we are getting changed. That is something that feels very much part of relaxation time is having a drink so and then also in the same way bringing them back. We usually bring back a brand of gin or, simply because we like gin and tonic, or vodka. We usually buy a brand of gin that's expensive here which we probably wouldn't buy regularly and we buy that in duty free and bring it back and sometimes we even save the bottles for those quite sadly but they are nice because they have nice labels and you can keep things in them. So that's a nice thing that we're quite into. Tanqueray Gin we're very fond of and Bombay Sapphire and that's probably our main thing and we might buy a really big bottle of Smirnoff vodka or something like that that would be, I mean we probably wouldn't buy here. Before ... we don't smoke anymore but we used to, and then we would buy something like Gauloise or something like that or Lucky Strike, something that we think of as being a foreign brand which is quite difficult to get here and we just probably wouldn't bother purchasing it here or there in our hand luggage to bring back and then you've got those to carry around with you for a little while.

Reliability and trust in the functional characteristics of brands is illustrated by her choice of film. Photographs are very important as aide memoirs to her holidays, based on negative

past experience with other brands she tends to '*end up usually just going for Kodak because often when we've deviated from them they end out being washed out or whatever for whatever reason so we would stock up on a load of Kodak films for the holiday*'.

Similarly this informs her choice of luggage - while she admits to aspiring to monogrammed sets of designer luggage, and includes them in her collage, she recognises that in reality finances and functionality are key considerations. The type of holidays that she takes dictates the type of luggage – her comment about never being 'allowed' to take taxis, is a reference to her husband's allocentric traveller characteristics, that is that walking and public transport are the transportation methods of choice. She refers to past experience with the brand and also the associated brand values of reliability and strength of two brands of backpack as key choice elements, stating that:

We do usually end up buying a Berghaus I think it's called or a Karrimor, they usually end up being quite top end-ish sort of brand, more than just whatever you can pick up just because you know it's going to come under quite a battering and I suppose we would rely on those more than ones without labels.

Dubbed 'the holy grail of marketing' (Mitchell, 1998:104), brand loyalty is notoriously difficult to develop and sustain and theorists argue that the key to developing significant loyalty to a brand is to engage the consumers' emotions and well as keeping the functional brand promises (Fournier 1998, Barwise *et al.* 2000). It is also argued that product recommendations to other people is an indication of loyalty (Howard-Brown 1999), and the first phase of the study demonstrated the level of trust and reliance placed on word of mouth recommendations. Speaking about her husband, Audrey describes his loyalty to a particular brand of sunscreen, his level of emotional attachment is evident in the way that he continually and convincingly tells other people about its performance qualities. It is interesting that as in phase one, a tangible product brand with strong, proven functional qualities such as sunscreen can engender a high level of commitment, whereas no similar commitments was displayed for certain tourism brands:

Martin is a big ... P20 is it?... suncream person and he will only use that suncream just because he thinks it's wonderful that you only have to put it on once and everything and he

was actually once asked how long he had actually been working for P20! He just talked about it so much around the pool once that they thought he was a rep. That was very embarrassing. So that's, you know ... Martin won't go on holiday unless he knows that is in the bag. I think it only used to be in airports, now I think you can buy it in other places, but we have to pick up the P20 before we go.

6.24 Souvenirs, Artefacts and Preserving the Memories

As 'lifestyle' has been adopted by consumers and industries as a way to define, develop and demonstrate individuality and personality, so food and drink are now considered major lifestyle activities (Pavitt 2000, Abramovici and Ateljevic 2003). Just as the purchase of local cigarettes is a way of immersion into the local culture, so food plays a significant role in Audrey's holidays. She explains how one of the pleasurable rituals during the holiday is finding good local restaurants. The use of her word '*trapped*' in referring to the cuisine within hotels is interesting – again indicating that freedom to choose is a key to the experience, and another example of her aversion to corporate, standardised hotels. She also talks about how she brings back local food items for consumption and display at home – preserving and re-creating the memories through their use in everyday life [*photograph A4*]. Souvenirs are important holiday purchases, not only as reminders of holiday experiences, but as symbols of status and she admits, '*one upmanship*' that display their combined travel experience. Photographs which she describes as '*precious*' are not left to gather dust in a drawer but are carefully selected, and used – as visual representations of tourism experiences and to show to others. Post-tourists accept hyper-reality and play with signs and experiences for their own amusement (Feifer 1985, Urry 1988, 2002), and Audrey talks about how she collects kitsch souvenirs as playful reminders of their multiple experiences, and goes on to describe some of the rather bizarre objects that amuse and delight them [*photograph A5*]. However, like the photographs, these are not kept hidden in a cupboard, but displayed in prominent places, enduring reminders and symbols of the diversity of their experiences:

Whenever we go away food is quite important to us, we're really interested in food as a general rule and so on holiday eating out and trying local foods are a very important part

of it, and therefore we always stay in hotels where we have breakfast at the most because we don't want to be trapped in to only eating in the hotel. A big part of it is traipsing around looking for the right little restaurant to try tonight and also part of that is also the shops, the food shops - so here we've got some marron glace, some balsamic vinegar and herby things so we do often buy things like that and bring them back [photograph A4]. *Often it gives you a feeling of authenticity if you're having Italian food and you've got the balsamic vinegar that you bought in Sicily, that sort of makes it feel, you know, just sort of nicer and just reminds you of when you ate the same food when you recreate things you've had on holiday, and to have the elements there is great and certainly ... I mean I actually don't like that marron glace stuff but Martin is very much, oh this reminds me of holidays in France you know at breakfast and that kind of thing. And then that's a piece of very odd looking cheese, that's from when we were in this country, often we go to a delicatessen if we go away for the weekend to a cute town that's got nice little shops we often spend quite a lot of time buying local produce, you know, cheese or wine things to bring back again for just because it's unusual often the things you can get there and also partly so we can say, oh we bought this wherever, so that's quite an important part of our holiday, the food element. These are sort of odd curios things* [photograph A5]. *I'm a real fan of buying things like this, games that you could play abroad or you know, objects for around the house. I mean they don't have any intrinsic use but they remind me of my holidays and I like to be able to sit in my lounge and look around and think, oh I got that there, I got that there and it's a sort of collection of places I've been and lots of associations with them. Martin is very anti that, he thinks they are a waste of space so that usually involves a tussle in bazaars on holiday about whether to buy them or not. But I think they are important and usually fight out to get to keep them and they are certainly things that you know in this country I would agree with Martin, I'm not a great buyer of objects just around, you know, you have a lot of shops like that around these days, but on holiday I like doing that because then I can say it's going to remind me of here and it's my present from here and that sort of thing. Sometimes like quite kitschy things ... I quite like if they've got you know the place where you've stayed or something like that, something sort of quite silly really, pens and things like, with the name of the hotel on and stuff. And actually that's one thing Martin has done, we once stayed in a posh hotel in Vienna where the Queen once stayed and he's treasured the sliver of soap ever since. Which is still on our mantelpiece! I suppose in some ways, I might go for things which are labelled with the place but often I like, not so*

much to have, but that Russian doll there for example, you couldn't ... you could get it here obviously, but that looks very Russian, but it really is as opposed to one you could just buy in John Lewis. And then this is a drinking horn which Martin has drunk much vodka from in Georgia, so I suppose in some ways, we would go for things that people would use in the various countries, we just want to have them there, for us I suppose they transform into just being things around the house but you can say, when I was there I actually used that and same with the game. But we do actually play that game quite a lot so it's also become something that we use as well as just sort of sitting there. But I think there is an element to it just sitting there and probably just an element of showing off as well, that you actually bought it in the right country.

SW - In what way? When people come?

Yes, exactly. And you sort of want ... it's nice, I mean well I feel quite strongly about my house looking nice and everything and therefore part of that is - you know, showing places you've been to because that's part of you and that can be expressed in things around the house. But it is also slightly a one up man thing I suppose, as opposed to... you know when you have fashions here for foreign objects and that, Japanese prints say or something but it's nice to have, even if it's just for you, you can say 'well actually I did buy that in Japan'. And this is a thing ... [photograph A6] *for after the holiday, this is all our photo albums which are an important thing for us and we're quite slow about putting them together but it is a nice thing to do, to go through the photos and often do them together and put captions and that sort of thing and we're quite, not discerning but rigorous about throwing away the rubbish ones because otherwise they clutter up the whole house and what we quite like is just to have one book that, for example that little one there is all Italy so it's just, that's our Italy photo album. I think that is quite a nice, and that one is our honeymoon for example as opposed to those big terms that you go through that go from 1985 to 2000 in one big thing. I quite like the idea of the quite precious thing really of that goes with that holiday and those are the photos that came out well. So photo albums are quite important and something that we do actually look at quite often and when people come round we do show them so they don't just collect dust.*

It emerges from her narratives relating to the collage that for Audrey food is very important to the enhancement of her actual experience, and the experience is evoked and recreated through the use of the food that she would take home as souvenirs. She has included an image of a book which she explains signifies the small artefacts that she collects, carefully preserves and displays juxtaposed with each other, deriving pleasure not only from the visual memories that they evoke but the sensory memories such as taste and smell. It is interesting that she singles out a souvenir 'Coke' sign as a particular curiosity and souvenir. Coca-Cola is a global brand that is acknowledged as a symbol of North America and America-ness (Pendergrast 1994), and localised through the juxtaposition of language it becomes a 'take away' cultural symbol of the country where it was obtained (Firat 1997, Ritzer 2002).

I've got a book, a diary thing up there because I do tend to pick up menus and place cards and things like that or matches, boxes and things like that and hang on to them. Sometimes I will put them together with the photos in the photo album, other times they just seem to disappear from my life and get lost or whatever but I do pick them up with the intention of keeping them in the book. I've got quite a lot of little beer mats and things like that, often if they are beautifully illustrated or they've got writing on them in certain type faces that are attractive or look to me of that country then I will hang on to those. Just ...I mean I like the idea of a cornucopia of things, lots of different sort of stimuli so it would be, I suppose it would just feel like bringing back the holiday again but also lots of feelings with it. The sort of places that we went to but also the tastes of things that we ate there and the way I was feeling then and because it is a sort of round of things as opposed to just a photo, it has all the other bits and bobs to go with that ... to illustrate it a bit more. But also I just sort of like it because it's imaginative, it's a different way of writing things than we do here and it's just interesting to see different approaches to things, you know if they have some amazing intricate picture on a matchbox that we would not consider to be the place to put an artistic picture so that's quite interesting. The other thing I quite like, the thing we have here, is when you see things that we have here only in other languages you know when you have Coke signs in every language. I might if I see one that is portable I might pick that up.

SW - So a logo or...?

Yes, you know that kind of thing that's instantly familiar but strange. If it was on a card or something like that ...and I would probably have that in my kitchen because that would be to do with food and my kitchen has lots of different things in it, that's what I sort of think of with stuff I get from abroad. Lots of things up against each other.

Destinations do feature on Audrey's collage, however it very clear that it is the experiential element that is significant for her, rather than the actual destinations. Again, her fondness for things British is evident, she speaks quite passionately about holidays in Britain, mentioning destinations such as Blackpool, Whitby and Scarborough which she links to rather stereotypical and nostalgic notions of British seaside experiences – beach huts, postcards and fish and chips. Her use of the word 'real' to describe this type of holiday indicates that, as a post tourist, while she considers these 'traditional' symbols of British seaside holidays authentic and crucial to the experience, she is nonetheless aware of her self as a tourist (outsider) and that these are merely props enabling her to become immersed in the role of the (traditional, romanticised) British holidaymaker (Feifer 1985, Urry 2002). Similarly as she continues to speak about Europe, rather than distinct destination preferences she lists city destinations as if there is little to differentiate them in terms of the experiences she is seeking. These are generic sensory experiences – walking, shopping, markets, cafes, food, wine, sightseeing - emphasising the sense of lifestyle and contrasts between normal, everyday life and being on holiday - relaxed and free from constraints.

And so we start off actually in Britain because I love holidays here and this is a combination of countryside kind of, walk-y holidays and also the seaside because I have had some great holidays in like Blackpool and Scarborough and so this is all the [waves her hand across the collage] *... and I quite like all the sort of sense of going back in time. I mean obviously if you go to Blackpool now it's fairly dreadful but there is also a sense that people have been going on holiday there for years and people used to have the ... and still have ... the conferences there, and so this sort of 30s look says to me a lot about the seaside in Britain and that sort of look there ... and the beach huts and the silly postcards I suppose and things so that's the British thing but unfortunately you obviously have to have your wellies, your umbrella and a jigsaw to play because it will rain. I really love North Yorkshire, in fact I love North Yorkshire in general because you get a good mix of the*

walking and then you can go to Whitby and have chips on the front and you can also go to Scarborough and see all those big hotels that people used to stay in for the whole summer. It's just a real ... you don't really get that in other places, I suppose you might do in France but it's a very British feel, it's very sort of town-y so yes I would say those sort of places and also around the Welsh coast as well, that's a great place for holidays as well. So then moving on to Europe and this is something that we would definitely do as we go to French fruit markets even if we were staying in a hotel and not self-catering, we would still want to go and have a look around and just buy things for lunch there and then or the cheese and wine to take back if we were travelling not too far and again there the French onions, that's part of the food idea, you know that you have quite strongly there. And the same here with the cafes ... the outside cafes and eating outside. I mean eating outside is just so lovely that you know, and which you only have the chance to do when you're abroad in a relaxed way anyway, and that sort of idea of being able to look at an amazing view while having your lunch is definitely an important part of our holiday. But also I just wanted to have a sense of the cities as well as the, because again that is something I like doing is to go to Barcelona or Rome or Naples and Paris, just for a weekend break thing and that's a sort of a whole thing to do with the shopping and the food and the walking around and the architecture and all those things. And then I've got this picture here, she looks like a flamenco dancer or something just because that is just so Spanish and it just looks all Latin and fiery and I love the textures and feel of the old furniture against the white tiles.

Shopping is another significant part of the experience, but in a very relaxed way, drifting around and taking the opportunity of buying things that are perceived as bargains, either because they are cheaper than at home, or because they are different, and therefore worth the price. Purchasing brands indigenous to the country they are visiting gives them a special significance and preserves the memories:

This is just some photographs that I was taking around on holiday [photograph A7]. *This is just a typical place that I would like to end up browsing and also very representative or European shopping for me, really crowded, highly stocked shops with you know lots of variations on the same theme generally but I do like browsing around those quite slowly and just and I like they way they are all out on the street as well, I like that sort of you can shop outside and it's quite relaxed approach to shopping. I really enjoy shopping anyway*

but I do love the way on holiday you can take it at a slow pace and browse up and down and stop for coffee and things, it's much more a day of doing that as opposed to I need to go to the shops for whatever so it's a different kind of shopping I suppose and I'm quite into when we go on holiday to a place and you sort of know the kind of thing you can get there and so you sort of have a sensation, a feeling before, I'd like to see if I can get whatever, like when we went to Italy for example I was just interested in Italian clothes and make up and things but Martin wanted to get cycling things because he is quite into cycling and you can get more range and you know than other places when we have been, you do have, I suppose shopping is quite a big element because we often think of that as an opportunity to get things that are good quality or the best price or whatever because you bought them from where they came from and then also the food shopping thing that we spend a lot of time browsing around because often abroad they often have, obviously they have supermarkets as well, but that's an opportunity to go to small shops and those slightly more expensive or specialist and that's something we do quite a lot ... and also to the extent that we will buy you know Italian designer things in Italy thinking they must be cheaper and American designer things when I'm in America and so definitely, kind of a sense of wanting to get a bargain but still getting the nice quality.

Rebecca

R1

R2

6.25 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Three Rebecca

Rebecca is a career orientated woman in her early thirties. She has quite recently changed career direction and moved from a research and lecturing post in higher education, to work as a senior researcher for a government organisation in London. She has a permanent partner, and her life is very hectic as she commutes between London and her home in Cardiff on a weekly basis. She is very fashion aware, and loves to shop for clothes and fashion accessories. Both her past and her present jobs involved some business travel, occasionally overseas, but more often within the United Kingdom. Quite early in our first conversation and again at other times, she mentions time constraints as being a significant feature of her life, which affect her holiday taking. Rebecca considers tourism a ludic activity quite separate from the stress and constraints of every day life *'not having to do anything, not being tied to time and stuff like that'*. Her idea of a *'real holiday'* is going away from home for at least a week, *'to a new environment with relaxation, maybe new experiences'*. While she said that there may be an element of leisure in a business trip, she feels that there is a clear distinction between the two. Her experiences are very consumption focused with brands being significant, and her narratives shed light on many aspects of brand and consumer research theory. Born in the 1970s, her childhood holiday taking follows the development of the package holiday, from regular events to coincide with school holidays, at a British holiday camp and other British destinations, to overseas package holidays in Majorca, and then to more 'exotic' destinations (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999).

6.26 Symbolic and Social Aspects of the Holiday Experience

Rebecca had a lot of variety in her childhood holidays. When she was quite young, like Audrey she remembers the familiarity, routine and ritual in the annual family holidays to the same place and describes the ritual of having the same birthday cake from the same shop with fondness. Holidays were constrained by her mother's and father's working patterns, but as a family they tended to take more than one holiday a year, and there is a strong sense of impulse in the way that, although the holidays were planned according to work commitments, the destination choice was sometimes left until the last minute. In the

following excerpt from our first conversation, a particularly strong memory indicates Rebecca's need to conform and to belong – something that is reinforced as the conversations develop. She recalls how she felt on one childhood occasion when, being observed by other tourists as not being appropriately dressed – she felt embarrassed that that she didn't 'fit in' to the particular situation – particularly in contrast to the way that other tourists were '*kitted out*' in suitable clothing and equipment. Like Dai, she considers, clothing and accessories are symbolic indicators of belonging (Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Belk 1978, 1987, Belk *et al.* 1982, Dittmar 1992, Olsen 1994, Bauman 1995, Featherstone 1997). Travel and destinations are also social indicators - one pleasure on return from holiday being the way signs of the holiday are displayed and discussed on return (Holloway 1994, MacCannell 1999, Morgan and Pritchard 1999, Ingis 2000), and it is interesting to notice that Rebecca's reversal of this is an example of the social significance of holidays. She recalls how she was aware of the attitude of her peer group at school, and her consciousness of perceiving that the types of holidays she took marked her as being different from the 'norm' (in that it marked her as being better off in a working class environment) – which to some extent spoilt her enjoyment of the holiday. She also admits that rather than gaining pleasure from recalling the holiday on her return, she in fact would be afraid to mention it, for fear of being singled out as different and ridiculed:

Up until, when I was young, until my brother was about 18 months old, so I would have been about eight ...eight and a half, it was always domestic holidays. We had a caravan, well a number of different caravans and we, because my Mum was a teacher, we would always go to Weymouth, to Littlesea Holiday Camp in the summer. My Dad would take the caravan down, drop my Mum, her sister, because her sister's only about twelve years older than me, off and we literally stayed there for the whole of the summer holidays and then my Dad would come down for the weekends or sort of Bank Holidays. And because my birthday's in August, we always had my birthday in Weymouth and I always used to get the same birthday cake from the same bakery shop right on the front every year.

And when my brother was born, was about 18 months old, that's when we had our first real overseas trip to Majorca. I think it was either Easter time or it was half term. I think it was Easter time. I mean before that, when we had been at Weymouth, we might have

gone across to France for the day. I can remember going to the Isle of Wight once, but they were more sort of day trips rather than holidays. So we went to Majorca - and we used to go to Majorca quite a lot and spend quite a lot of time there when my brother was young ... and then it sort of ventured further afield really in terms of - because the holidays always used to have to fit around the teaching and the school year and my Mum's holidays, we used to practically ... most half terms, Easter and summer, but for the summer it would be maybe about four weeks during the summer. I think it used to be different things. If it was for a week, often it would be a package somewhere, so if it was Morocco or Corfu, Spain, Majorca, Tenerife, if it was a bit longer, Easter time, maybe we would go to Florida and then in the summer quite often it would either be taking the caravan again or literally just packing the car and going to Europe and sort of ... quite often we'd go take the caravan down to northern Spain, stopping at various points throughout but not taking too long to get to Spain but then spending about three weeks in Spain and coming back. And then one year they actually left the caravan in this particular park to store it so then holidays after that used to be packing the car, travelling through Europe, wherever we decided to go. It was often on the hoof. My Dad would say... ' well shall we ... which way shall we go to Spain, shall we go to Switzerland?' and then if we went to Spain we would organise to take the caravan out and get a pitch. I do remember one summer which is imprinted I think on my Mum and Dad's and mine and my brother's mind when we sort of came to this certain point in France, I can't remember where it is, where the motorway forks and if you go left you end up Germany Switzerland way and if you go right, it's towards Spain and I remember getting to this fork and ... 'well kids, shall we go to Switzerland or shall we go to Spain?' and at the last minute we decided to go to Switzerland and I can remember Mum saying, 'but we've only got summer clothes, but we've only got shorts and bikinis!' and we actually ended up in Switzerland in Grindlewald and we went on the mountain railway up to the top of the Jungfrau and it was really... it was the alpine train or something and it was really, really early we had to go, 6 o'clock in the morning or some godforsaken time and all we had on were flip flops and shorts because we didn't have any long trousers, and we didn't have any trainers or anything else, and it was so cold and I can remember, the sun was out but you don't go to the top of the glacier dressed in shorts and flip flops and I can remember these Americans that were all sort of kitted out and they had their coverings on their heads and everything and this woman thinking 'poor orphan child, didn't you have anything more to wear?' and my

Mum being so embarrassed because that was all we had on and looking like we were peasants.

We didn't travel a lot until my brother was born, but after he was about 18 months old, we went abroad quite a lot then. Actually it was at the time, I suppose I didn't really appreciate it because I used to get teased at school about it because I suppose we were from quite a, I suppose, deprived area and because we used to go on holidays a lot, the other kids used to tease me about it so I'd rarely tell them that we were going anywhere. So I suppose I never really wanted to go because I was being different to my friends and therefore I didn't want to tell them about it because people would tease you but also when I was there I suppose it was quite hard because I acted as though I didn't want to be there. I can remember once, it was the first time we went to the States in the summer and it was for the whole six weeks and we hired a car and we went through various states, Utah and Arizona and Nevada and we literally did, I mean my Mum and Dad planned it quite well and we knew where we were going to stay and all and I remember reading and reading in the car and the way that my Dad got really annoyed with me and chucked all my books and magazines out the window so I would take an interest in the holiday! So I suppose I was quite difficult to take away.

6.27 Brand Wardrobe

In chapter four I discussed the theory of the situational self and the 'brand wardrobe' – that is the concept that just as consumers have a diverse range of roles and identities in every day life, they choose clothes and accessories from a 'wardrobe' of brands in order to create the required self for a particular situation – as Dai did with his clothing (Goffman 1959, Schenk and Holman, 1980, Solomon and Assael 1987, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Pasi and Falk 1998). Certainly in a tourism context, Rebecca plans her suitcase very deliberately according to the various situations that she may be in, and the 'props' (Goffman 1959) that she may need. It is a matter of conjecture as to whether this has a bearing on her memory of being embarrassed in Switzerland because she was unsuitably dressed. Rebecca is very brand conscious and having the 'right' clothes and accessories for a particular eventuality is very important (she even consults her itinerary to check that she

has included clothes for every situation). Like Dai she describes how she grades her branded jeans according to their suitability for different occasions [*photograph R1*]:

Also because I knew we were going to a range of different places and staying in different places as well, a nice hotel, a hostel and stuff like that. It took me ages really to prepare what I was taking and thinking about what I needed and I had to have, and actually I do this quite a lot, is when I'm planning my suitcase, I have to have my itinerary about, especially with a trip like this, where we're going, who we're going to see, do I need to dress quite smartly that day, and stuff like that and then co-ordinating with all the shoes and things like that so that was planning. I suppose in relation to this trip it would have been across the whole week we were doing some inside and there were other things that you were going to be out in the wind and braving the elements but there was one day when we had a visit which was inside to a visitors centre and a talk there and meeting visitor centre managers so I knew I had to be fairly smartish but then we were going from there to the cliffs of Moah, which on a nice day it's really nice but if it's raining it would be muddy and cold and it would be wet so there was no point in tripping around on high heels and then we were going to the town which was quite near by and having another talk in like a visitor centre so like that day I had a real struggle to find a balance between clothes that were going to be comfortable and warm and suitable for outdoors on cliffs and clothes that were going to be fairly smart so you didn't sort of blend in as being one of the students in front of these people, so that would be one. Probably looking at the clothes I've got out here, I would have, if it was a day that I had to look smart casual, then I would wear darker colours, jeans, my Polo or my Diesel jeans rather than my Levis which are really sort of casual and light coloured and really casual, whereas the other ones, the Diesel and the black ones there, they're ... they do look much smarter when they are on. And even if you wore them with shoes that are sort of flat or comfortable, they still look like you've got a smart pair of jeans on rather than really casual clothes. Maybe on those sort of days I would wear a roll neck polo rather than a fleecy top or something like that to keep it a little bit smarter but you're still in quite comfortable, practical clothes.

She takes particular brands of toiletry products away with her, and while she states that it is more for convenience than from any symbolic association, it does indicate a holiday association as she doesn't use the same products at home:

... and I don't know why because I never use it at home, but Body Shop pink grapefruit shower gel. Now I don't know why I always take that, it doesn't matter where I go, I will always take that with me, but I never use it at home ... I don't know why ... it doesn't matter where I go but I never use it at home, just abroad, just when I go somewhere.

There are indications of brands entering the tourism dialogue – for example, referring to a trip to Southern Ireland, she talks about what she considers her friend's deliberate choice of a local brand of water [*photograph R2]* – as with the significance of American beer for Dai, this is a similar use of a locally branded product to symbolise the local culture:

And this was Anna's water which was Ballygowan, which was the Irish brand of mineral water there ... I don't know why she went for the Irish one, it wasn't cheaper or anything but it was just being in Ireland and picking things that were Irish or had an Irish connection more so than just a bottle of Evian or something like that.

On the same trip, she was also aware of the familiarity of some of the brand names on shop fronts and hoardings – and had noticed how the Tesco store frontage and logo had been altered to reflect the Irish culture. It was interesting that she was not attracted to familiar branded restaurants while on holiday, preferring to try something unusual or local, unless she: *'felt that the local restaurant looked really dirty and a bit dodgy'*, or as a shortcut, knowing the brand and the type of products on offers meant that time was saved:

... thinking about somewhere like Fridays, occasionally when we went to the States, we'd eat there because the prices are so much cheaper there than they are at Fridays here, and I think when we went to Thailand once we ate in Fridays, but it wasn't necessarily because it was a name we knew because we'd eat anywhere really, it was because I think it was late and it was the first place we came along ... but it was something that you recognised so it was 'yes that's Fridays and we know what they do so lets go in there' it's easier than looking for somewhere else and finding somewhere else that you don't necessarily know the menu.

This indicates that she did associate certain attributes in terms of hygiene, product offerings and quality standards with brands, and that when local offerings were not considered up to standard, then there was security in branded products with particular associations (Aaker and Biel, 1993, Strasser, 1989, Barwise *et al.*, 2000).

6.28 The Market - Place in the Tourism Experience

Shopping is increasingly considered a leisure activity, providing both a form of escape (from the mundane) and a source of pleasure and excitement (Henderson and Allen 1991, Falk and Campbell 1998, Lehtonen and Maenpaa 1998, Cockburn-Wootten 2002, Thomson 2002). Shopping was a very significant and recurring theme throughout Rebecca's narratives – indeed, in the conversations about her idealised situation, particular destinations were often associated with shopping and was often a primary reason for the visit. There is an interesting contradiction in the way Rebecca balances emotionality and rationality when describing her shopping activities. While Rebecca considers shopping an enjoyable pastime, she states early in the first interview that she doesn't consider shopping a leisure activity and – in a similar way to Dai - certainly the almost military precision with which her trips are planned and organised, indicate the seriousness of the activity. Although she was primarily shopping for non essentials such as fashion items and accessories she uses the term *'mission'* when describing a shopping trip in comparison to a tourist trip. However, throughout the interviews it is clear that she gains an emotional charge from shopping, particularly from finding bargains, and it is a highly significant part of her holiday experience.

Postmodern theory suggests that value is created in the actual consumption experience (Firat and Schultz, 1997), and I argue that increasingly brands play a significant role in the enrichment and enhancement of the tourism experience. This is certainly borne out by Rebecca. In the following excerpt she discusses a future trip to Hong Kong – a destination which is marketed as a shopping haven and recognised as one in a number of international shopping clusters (Kotler *et al.* 1996:873). Here she had expectations of purchasing discounted and even counterfeit branded premium clothes and accessories such as handbags and shoes. Her expectations of shopping on the trip are clear, and her use of the

word '*mission*' in an earlier narrative becomes relevant, revealing the dichotomous relationship between the fun of a holiday and the seriousness of obtaining the aspirational branded goods.

Price is a very significant feature – both at home and on holiday. She uses it as a benchmark for 'value' – her pleasure is enhanced by finding a bargain, and also as a benchmark of quality and prestige. In another example of her meticulous planning, she explains how she carefully prepared for her holiday shopping trip to a particular branded clothing store by visiting the UK store in order to note the clothes, the prices and her size, so that she would be able to calculate the amount of discount, and also save time in trying them on. The holiday, shopping and bargain hunting are inextricably linked – she uses the holiday as a way of obtaining the goods she wants to define herself. The women's clothes brand 'Karen Millen' (positioned at the high end of the high street retail market) is a favourite of Rebecca's and a style that she feels is 'her' (that is, commensurate with her self image) (Ross 1971, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Nicolson, 2002) but one which she admits is largely aspirational due to the high prices: *I want to be a Karen Millen woman .... I wish I could afford to buy their stuff at the real price, instead of always having to wait for the sale.*

The goods she speaks about are an interesting mix of those that are different (because they are unavailable at home) or very much the same (as in the global brands) but available at lower prices – indicating that while she is keen to 'buy in' to the associations of premium brands, the price is prohibitive within her normal life sphere:

SW – you mentioned shopping ... what sort of things would you go shopping for while on holiday? Is it the same as shopping at home?

In some ways yes, in other ways it will be getting things that you can't get at home, like your fake designer bags or designer shoes or things like that that you can't get at home. Or things that you can get abroad that you can get much cheaper abroad than here. I've got my list of things when I go to Hong Kong in the summer, you know I need to go to a specific shop because they do really nice trousers and nice trouser suits and they're quite

cheap and they do the alterations for you within like a couple of hours. It doesn't matter which outlet I go to, but I have to go to that shop.

SW - Is that a specific shop within Hong Kong?

Yes. I want a new watch and they are cheaper over in Hong Kong and they have a better selection as well. And also because I know that the sales are going to be on I've picked out specific shops, like for example, there's a Karen Millen outlet shop in Ocean Terminal and I know the Karen Millen sale here has started but it's only the first part of the sales, and there's not much off their clothes, so ...because... you know - you get the bigger discounts at the end of August, so what I did on Saturday was go into Karen Millen, have a look around, see what they had and what the sale prices are, and when I go to Hong Kong, I make a note of all the sizes I am for different clothes so I don't have to worry about trying on and stuff like that, and then I'll just go to the Karen Millen shop and see if they are cheaper.

Hong Kong has very strong associations as a shopping destination where copies and discounted branded goods can be obtained (Wong and Laws 2003). While these attributes are not openly advertised, word of mouth communication has ensured wide awareness, in addition Rebecca has previous experience to draw on – something that is highly influential in consumer choice (Dichter 1966, Lovelock 1996, Fill 1999, Price and Arnould 1999, Blythe 2000). It is price and the fact that she is able to buy counterfeit goods that provide much of the satisfaction in the shopping element of this holiday experience.

The next interview took place after she had been to Hong Kong. However, while it is apparent that she gains a huge amount of pleasure from the anticipation as well as the actual trip, her use of vocabulary such as *'mission', 'target', 'planning', 'list'* and *'objectives'* is further illustration of the seriousness and significance of shopping. She speaks about her disappointment at not meeting one of her holiday *'targets'* (that is, she found the Karen Millen shop closed down) – the inference being that the experience was marred by her expectations not being met. The branded goods that she discusses are very firmly positioned at the premium end of the market. They all have very strong lifestyle associations of style, class, high prices and exclusivity. However, she is not prepared to

pay the full price – in the postmodern sense while the brands and their strong associations are important as signifiers, it is all a pastiche - the indication being that the significance is in the (intangible) brand all the symbolic associations, rather than in the actual goods. She is quite happy – even delighted – to accept a good of less quality (there is a feeling of satisfaction at having gained the qualities she considers important at a far lower price). This is illustrated by her explanation of why she did not buy the 'original' Sports Sac – she is attracted to the brand for the symbolic and lifestyle associations, and yet she is not prepared to pay the Hong Kong price which was the same as the UK price. She illustrates high awareness of certain brands and their associations, using the word '*recognisable*' to describe the salient brands that are in her brand bank (Keller 1998).

The experiential, emotional and even hedonistic aspects of bargain hunting are clear in her description of the satisfaction she gains from purchasing other premium brands at heavily discounted prices. As a contemporary, marketing literate consumer (Poon 1993, Mintel 1999) she recognises the promotional pricing psychology of persuading consumers to buy more to save more (Kotler *et al.* 1996), but she is carried along by the impulse to buy - the emotional overrides the rational – and she is quite happy to accept it in this situation. Interestingly, she compares the price of goods in the UK and the price of goods in Hong Kong – using a UK brand (with familiar associations) as a benchmark for a local brand with no known associations:

The last time we were there about three years ago, ... there was a Karen Millen shop in this one shopping centre and when they had ... when they come to the end of their sales over here, a lot of the stuff in the Karen Millen shops are really really heavily discounted you know things like that have been over £100 you can get for £20 or whatever . So, I decided, 'right - I will go to the Karen Millen shop in Cardiff because the same styles are there before we went to Hong Kong and I will see what they've got'... you know ... 'I'll see what the prices are and I'm going to go to Hong Kong and I'm going to go to the Karen Millen shop and I'll see what the prices are like and if everything is cheaper'. And when I got there, the shop had gone so it had closed down completely so that was a bit disappointing really because that was one of my targets I had to get rid of.

And then I decided I wanted ... I knew there was this little Sports Sac outlet, a real genuine outlet and I decided you know, that these sorts of bags were becoming a bit more in at the moment so I decided I wanted a Sports Sac until I saw the genuine price of them and then I thought no, I'm just not going to buy it because they were just as expensive there as they would be here so I thought, 'actually, do I really need a Sports Sac? Probably not ....so I'll just forego that one!' What else? I probably had, on my list as well would have been things like Diesel stuff like jeans things like that because before we have found that they're sales were quite heavily discounted in their proper retail outlets. You know, I think we must have gone a bit at the wrong time, it must have been a bit early, because even though in a lot of places they were sort of up to 70, 80, 90 per cent off, there were a load of places where the real recognisable brands, were still quite expensive really and either sort of the collections were really weird and way out, things you wouldn't normally wear or there just wasn't the sort of selection there. I mean some of the shops tend to be quite minimalist and sort of the lay out and then you go in there thinking well you know, I don't like that skirt or that pair of trousers and then that's sort of your choice restricted then. Those were my sort of ... objectives. The main one was the Karen Millen one which was blown out of the water completely, the Diesel stuff which actually I didn't get anything from there in the end and then some of the fake stuff that I wanted. And then it was other stuff, I mean, we did, and then it was more sort of ad hoc shopping then so I knew that there were lots of Ralph Lauren outlets and various things like that so the fact that they then had big sales on and things like, you know, there was about 80per cent off and then if you spent, with most of them then, if you spent over something like HKD600, which is about £55 something like that, you can have something else free so in this one Ralph Lauren outlet I had picked up one T-shirt and a top and John had picked up a shirt, discounted and I think it came to about HKD550 and when we got to the till the woman said, 'oh you do realise that if you have...?' oh no.... it wasn't that you got something free, it was if you spent over HKD600 you got an extra 10 per cent off so you had your sort of 70 or 80 per cent off on the goods you picked up and then they came to HKD550, then she said' if you spend an extra HKD50 you'll get an extra 10 per cent off' so we were like a mad couple then going about... 'oh, what else do we like?.. we've got seconds to choose', you know, and John said to me and we were over on the women's side...,' oh that top will do, you know, that will fit you, that'll do and just have that'... and then it came to just over the HKD600 and so we got an extra 10 per cent off. So I think, yes, a lot of this seems very focused around that, so you're

almost sort of you feel a little bit pressured to buy something else because you get that extra 10 per cent off but in reality you're actually spending a little bit more to get that 10 per cent off. Oh the other thing I'd planned to get there while I was out there was they have, they've got this sort of Hong Kong based chain of outlets called G2000 which are kind of quite good for kind of like suits and stuff and things and they alter them free and what have you and they are quite reasonable prices. I suppose they are like, maybe they are like an equivalent to maybe Principles sort of I suppose and, probably about the same as Principles but they just wouldn't be as expensive as Principles here and they give a shortening service and stuff like that so that was the other thing as well, so I got some stuff.

Rebecca's shopping trips define her in the same way that Dai's leisure activities define him. He is seriously concerned with defying ageing, whereas Rebecca is seriously concerned with always looking appropriate and stylish – and both use brands to this end. However, it is not only in Hong King where shopping for specific brands is a significant part of the experience for Rebecca, she later talks about a trip to Spain, when she says she needed a shopping '*fix*' – again she uses comparisons with a UK brand as a benchmark for a style and price. Shopping and branded goods are also a significant feature in her idealised holiday – on her collage she has included images of premium, branded shops and status goods – such as Shanghai Tang which she describes as '*a shop with a real sort of status symbol attached to it*'.

There is a very clear illustration of the importance of the symbolic associations with the brand, rather than the actual product in her next narrative extract. It also illustrates Rebecca's awareness of the psychological-symbolic characteristics of brands. Here, Rebecca is describing a trip into mainland China, where she explains the selling of counterfeit goods is unregulated and a main tourist attraction – compared to Hong Kong where there are much stronger regulatory controls. She explains in great detail the difference between various grades of fake goods – distinguishing between the '*real fakes*' and the '*fake fakes*' (that is those where the logos may be similar but not exactly the same as the genuine) and in which situations certain '*grades*' may be acceptable or not. Her use of the word '*heaven*' to describe the shop indicates the hedonistic pleasure inherent in the experience of consumption. She describes a situation where she was even willing to accept the risk of doing something illicit and even the physical risk of following a local woman

into an unknown office block in order to get what she wanted – the risk then becoming part of the whole experience, and even in the end enhancing the symbolic value of the product.

Credibility and confidence are enhanced through endorsement of a brand by a celebrity or 'expert' (Fill 2002), and Rebecca mentions the endorsement of other people (who are qualified to comment because they own the real thing) as to the quality of the counterfeit goods, as if it adds an extra seal of authenticity. The importance she places on the belief of the goods to be genuine is significant. She clearly exhibits postmodern characteristics as she describes how she would juxtapose one or maybe two items of fake premium designer branded items with other '*genuine*' articles in order to communicate authenticity and credibility – it is part of the 'game', the playing with signs (Corrigan 1997). She also makes an interesting reference to the subversion of brands by a sub culture (Elliott, 1994) - she states how she feels uncomfortable wearing Burberry branded clothes and accessories because of their association with football hooliganism. Ryan (2002) states that holidays provide an escape from social responsibility, Rebecca subconsciously and consciously indicates her awareness of the ethical issues related to the deception. Her earlier use of the word '*stash*' – often associated with an illicit cache – is revealing and while she admits that the moral and ethical issues have not been a conscious consideration, she does feel slightly dishonest in attempting to pass off fake goods as the genuine article, although she does not feel guilty enough to stop.

Her reference to '*the blatant, proper branded fake goods*' exemplifies the theories that in postmodern societies the focus is on transitory, fragmented appearances, on hyperreality and inseperability between the virtual and the real. Signs and appearances are used to create pastiches, façades which exist without the stability of fixed reference and meaning, and which we construct in a knowing and playful way (Jameson 1984a, Lee 1993, Urry 2002). Increasing time compression, immediacy of gratification and speed of consumption are postmodern traits (Lee 1993, Cova 1996, Bauman 1998, Cooper 1999, Barwise *et al.* 2000), and are also characteristics influencing tourism consumption (Lovelock 1996, Ryan 2001). This is illustrated by Rebecca's positive comment about the speed at which the vendors will make up a product (tourists always being time constrained) (Ryan 2002) – the

inference being that not only is it possible to gain satisfaction through the purchase counterfeit branded goods, but the service element is commendable also.

Rebecca clearly demonstrates her use of the brand wardrobe in the careful construction of a particular persona for a particular situation (Schenk and Holman 1980, Restall and Gordon 1993, Pavitt 2000 and Valentine and Gordon 2000). In postmoderism goods are increasingly used to construct identity, to define self, to communicate and to provide societal anchors (Fournier 1996, Slater 1997, Mercer 2001). Her choice of goods to enhance her projected self-image is influenced by her awareness of the observations of other people and the importance of their perceptions (Nicolson 2002):

John's Mum and Dad came with us as well as his brother but they sort of, they couldn't handle the pace by about four o'clock so they went back and we stayed there because they had this huge properly built shopping malls but inside all the shops were full of fake goods and you know if you wanted things made up they would do them there and then.

SW - What sort of goods, can you describe them?

Shoes, bags, music, DVDs, films and computer games, electrical equipment, toys, they had so many toys and particularly remote controlled stuff you know sort of gadgetry type toys.

SW - What do you mean when you say fake?

Well they were copies of originals, I mean they were very good copies but they were blatant.

SW - So they were named?

Yes, they were named brands so you had your Burberry and your Gucci, they'd have your, like you'd see a watch shop here, they would have a watch shop there but it would be full of fake branded goods. And they'd even get out ... you'd go in and they would have a range of watches out but they would then get out the Rolex catalogue or a Tag Huer catalogue or something like that and you would literally go through and pick what watch you wanted and they would then go into their stores and see if they had it and come back. John had a

Rolex, a fake Rolex but they didn't have the fake Rolex I wanted so I didn't have anything. But and that was the same with shoes ... I had a pair ... I've got a pair of sort of Burberry sort of mules that are stamped Burberry for about ... I think they cost about £3. So some of the things like that but there didn't seem to be any ... mean it was very blatant, whereas in Hong Kong if you go to the night markets really are the only place where you are going to get the fake branded stuff - and I mean that is still very blatant, but I think it's become a lot ... they do things in a different way to when I first went there, which was when I first went there you would literally have all these people blatantly selling fake branded stuff, now you've still got the stalls and things are recognisable so you will see bags with sort of the Burberry print on but they won't necessarily say Burberry. So they are still sold in quite an open manner, or perhaps you will see something that you think perhaps should say 'CK' and the initials are slightly different, so they are sold quite blatantly - whereas if you want the blatant proper branded fake goods it's almost sort of a sneaky operation that, 'yes' they've got the catalogue, and then they will take you to their store room which is maybe in one of the tower blocks near their stall and you go and pick what you want, because the guys that normally go around with their little trolleys with all these fake goods, as soon as the police in Hong Kong come along, or sort of market inspectors and stuff, you know, they just disappear off with their trolleys.

But we had an interesting experience in Hong Kong where I was looking for... my Mum wanted a fake Louis Vuitton bag so I was looking for this bag, and came across this stall with the open sort of brochures and pictures of what he had and this woman said to us, what are you looking for?... and then she said, 'come with me', up into this block. Well I was a bit hesitant, I thought, 'oh, you might read about these where they get you into the office block and then they knock you on the head and steal your passport and your money and stuff' and John said, 'ah it'll be alright, it'll be quite safe, don't worry about it', so we went into this and it just looked like an office/residential block and we went into this room and it was like heaven! It was stacked from the floor to the ceiling with bags of any brand and desciption; Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Burberry, Gucci, Christian Dior, Hermés, what else...? Any brand, you know, designer brand, it was there - bags, shoes, wallets, boots, sunglasses, tops, sort of men's, belts, men's wallets, key rings, all sorts of accessories and things, it was stacked floor to ceiling and you know, this woman even had cards with you know, business cards with her name on and stuff and we were probably in there for about

... because you had to have a really good ferret because there was much more there than you had seen in the brochure downstairs, and of course you could try things on, you know, it was much better than having to be on a market stall and sort of picking in the open, so we got something and we actually went back a couple of days later because when we got the stuff back, John's Mum and his sister in law looked at it and ... because they of course have got all the real ones, and they looked at it and said that they were actually quite good or very good copies and much better than the copies you get in China as well, so they were very good copies, so the sister in law wanted something and I'd decided I wanted something else as well, so we actually went back this one night and we had to go through the market looking for this woman to actually identify where she was and as soon as she saw us then she took us up to get a little stash so that was quite good.

The fakes in China were very blatant, very, you know, all in the shops, but the copies weren't particularly good and they seemed to have two grades of copies so you've got your, with your watches you've got your "A" class and you've got your "B" class. The A class is an extremely good fake branded copy because John's brother gave him 2 Rolexes, one which was an A class, which was one of those sports watches where you've got your ordinary dial and then you've got maybe like smaller dials, one for like seconds, one that maybe tells your temperature, stuff like that, a really chunky sports watch. With the A class fake, all the hands moved, with the B class fake on the little sort of secondary faces with the seconds and temperature and stuff like that, the hands are stuck so they don't move, so that's how you could tell the fake.

SW - Would you be happy wearing those or using A and B class? Are there certain occasions when you would wear them? And are there occasions when you wouldn't?

The B class I probably wouldn't wear, (I mean I think John, when he came back he gave it to his friend and he was really impressed because he thought he had a really good Rolex), because there is something obviously wrong with that in that it doesn't all work, so that's one that I wouldn't go for. I didn't buy any fake branded watches this time, in the past I have and I've tended to wear them really I suppose until they have stopped in a way. I probably wouldn't wear them if I was going somewhere really special because it might be too obvious, I'd probably wear my real Cartier then, but if was sort of work or something

like that then in the past I have worn the fake one, because I mean if it's kept the right time and stuff like that then, you know, and some of them are so close to the real thing that you literally couldn't tell so, but yes, if I was going somewhere special then if somebody, if there was the chance that somebody was going to look really closely that it then I probably wouldn't.

SW - So there would be different occasions when you would ...?

Yes, or even like with the bags and things like that that I've got, it's maybe, I suppose on one hand it depends on where I'm going, it would also depend on what else I was wearing so, you know, for example, I wouldn't wear my fake bag and my fake shoes together because I think a) it looks, it would look OTT and b) I think sort of head to toe in Burberry check is a little bit, you know, is a little bit ... think it is over the top and then it might make people think, is that fake or is it real, could that person really afford to be head to toe? Whereas if you've got a bag or if you've got the shoes on, something like that, you've just got one little piece which I think, you know these days, one little piece, a lot of people would accept that as just assuming it was real because - maybe it was something people would aspire to or save up to afford to buy, sort of thing but I think head to toe is pushing it slightly.

SW - and when you are wearing the branded goods, how does that make you feel? Do you feel kind of good wearing them, using them?

I suppose it depends on the brand and it depends where I am, for example, with, when I went to Spain I bought a Burberry shirt from the market but I'm not too sure how you would know it - well I don't know whether it is fake, I think it is more sort of seconds so I think it is genuine Burberry but seconds sort of, or sample type stuff rather than being a blatant fake, and because it is a Burberry shirt it is very blatant, very sort of obvious Burberry sort of thing, and I wore it to work the other week, well I've worn it twice to work - the first time, you know, some people just recognised it as Burberry shirt and that was all very well ....and then we had conversation that actually it was from the market in Spain and it probably only cost about £20 or whatever, and then the second time I wore it somebody commented on it, well somebody asked, is that a Burberry shirt? ... and made

some sort of comment about - it wasn't as blatant as saying like 'fashion victim' but it was sort of along those lines and then there was also the thing in the press around that time was, particularly in the local press, about Cardiff City supporters and the sort of hooligan element within them tending to wear Burberry branded goods, and a lot of pubs in Cardiff wouldn't let people in if they had a Burberry bag, a Burberry whatever, because they were being associated with that group of people. And actually I haven't worn that shirt since but I like the shirt but I just did wonder to myself you know, if you've got a Burberry bag, you're not necessarily walking around with it all day and you know, if you've got shoes on then you know, they're always just a little flash aren't they, but if you've got a shirt on, it's very obvious. I mean I think I've worn it outside work now but I haven't worn it to work. And then of course I had somebody once mentioned to me about the moral dilemma when, being in sort of like a role with students and stuff around and you're wearing fake goods and someone once asked me about the morals of that and I thought that I don't quite have an answer for that because I hadn't really thought about it.

6.29 Brand Significance

The symbolic importance of branded goods emerges very clearly in a tourism context, and feature prominently on Rebecca's collage. Here the significance of having genuine Louis Vuitton or Gucci luggage is clear – she describes it as her 'aspiration'. However she considers that in reality having just one branded item would not appear credible as it would seem out of place if the rest of her clothing and accessories were not of a commensurate premium brand and quality. This is a prime example of the fragility of brand equity and the role of brands as signifiers. Aaker (1996) describes brand equity as the symbolic aspects and associations of a brand beyond the tangible features. The proliferation of counterfeit brands has undermined the brand equity of premium brands to such an extent that consumers are discouraged from buying goods in case their authenticity is doubted.

The images include a range of destinations, accommodation and experiences. Representations of tourism brands are juxtaposed with representations of tangible good brands - premium branded luggage, logos, shops, hotels, destinations and airlines all

feature strongly. Images of money and the Visa credit card logo all reinforce the significance of shopping in her tourism experiences. Her consciousness of self is clearly demonstrated in the imaginary situation where, although money is not a constraint, she is still clearly concerned about the messages branded goods would convey to others. She has included images of designer luggage with strong associations of quality, status and wealth on the collage, this is something that she feels is an intrinsic part of the whole experience. However, she demonstrates her awareness of the power of brands to communicate values and associations (Pavitt 2000). While she feels emotionally drawn to one brand she has carefully considered the associations that others may make and decided that a set of Gucci luggage – while having the same status value as Louis Vuitton - would be less ostentatious, and therefore less likely to send the 'wrong' signals and make her a target for crime:

... so that was what I was thinking as a central ... real Louis Vuitton or Gucci luggage. I think in a way it's sort of the status that goes with it. When I went into China for the day when we went to Hong Kong this year, when I said about them having all the fake stuff, they had like ... you know the pull cases, you know? I can't remember what you call them, but you know, like the air hostesses have.

SW - like on wheels?

Yes, but they had ones that were Louis Vuitton or Burberry or things like that. And John had said to me that if I want one ... and I mean, although they did look ... they were fairly good fakes - I did look at them and I thought 'no' because I thought they will be so obvious, and they will also be so obvious that if they are associated with me and the other stuff I am travelling with, they would be fake, so I thought they would only really look real, genuine, if you've got the whole kaboosh. You know, if you've got all the cases in Louis Vuitton.

So that would be sort of like my ... that would be a real aspiration I suppose for me if I had like, and I think Louis Vuitton might be because of the, I think the history involved with luggage and leather wear and stuff like that but I do have a worry that it is a little bit obvious and in your face because it is so, you know, particularly with the traditional LV

stamp, it is so obvious and you do think then, well, then would you be a target for people that think that you've obviously got such expensive luggage so would you therefore be a good target to sort of rob or something. Whereas maybe I looked at the Gucci one and thought, well, that would still sort of be quite an aspiration if you could have a whole set of Gucci luggage and particularly with the traditional black monogrammed one, then that's not quite so in your face and obvious.

Shopping is a recurring theme in Rebecca's narratives – she talks about feeling frustrated one time when she didn't have time to shop at the airport – again brands feature in her narrative as she uses them as a benchmark for the quality of the experience that she was denied:

... but you know, I didn't get chance to look around duty free and there was so many shops there because Terminal 4 ... they've developed it so much and they all had sales and there was a Pringle shop and a Gucci shop and I just didn't have time because it was going through and having to get straight on the plane sort of thing so that was a real pain.

Similarly, she uses brand names as analogies and positioning tools (Kotler *et al.* 1996) as she describes how shopping is a significant part of holidays to Spain:

... and again I think a lot of the holidays to Spain focus around sitting by the pool, reading books as well as sort of shopping like the stuff to do with Mango ... and I also find that at the airport this L'Oreal Plenitude eye cream was so much cheaper than here, here it's about £9 for this tiny little tub whereas over there it worked out at about £6 so I stocked up on that ... and also the Dunstall's as well, it's almost the Spanish equivalent of Marks and Spencer and they sell quite nice black trousers so I tend to go there.

Advertising and word of mouth are both highly significant in raising awareness and influencing consumer choice as I have outlined above. This is something that becomes very apparent during the discussion of Rebecca's collage. Successful brands have created a clear brand identity which reflect the unique proposition and personality of the brand (Morgan *et al.* 2002). Like Hong Kong, Dubai is heavily marketed as a 'shoppers paradise', and the brand is associated very strongly with images of luxury branded

consumer goods, exotic jewellery and sophisticated hotels (DTCM 1999). Rebecca has chosen Dubai as somewhere that she would visit on her idealised holiday, because of the shopping – and it is notable that she has included an advertisement for the annual Dubai Shopping Festival on her collage:

My last one [referring to the collage] *the Dubai link is because I've always wanted to go to Dubai...*

SW - What draws you to Dubai?

Shopping. Or the prospect of the shopping and also you know, it's the reputation as well in terms of the shopping and also the gold souks and things like that and trying to experience that. Yes, so that's probably what's drawn me to it and I suppose other people's experiences, other people that I know that have been and they've just sort of related that back to us. The shopping and also other people's experiences. Like because other people know I like shopping and even if it's only just window shopping but people always say, 'oh you've got to go to Dubai, you would love the shopping', you know, it's the emphasis that you would like it so from other people's perspective.

Other brands that feature in the imaginary tourism experience are airlines and hotels. She considered the way that freedom from money constraints would give her more freedom to choose airlines that had strong, positive brand associations and were '*well known, decent*' (here she mentions British Airways and Quantas) rather than price dictating the airline *'such as Garuda which I would never fly on because they have a bad track record'*. She featured several hotels that have strong associations of status and history such as the Burj al Arab in Dubai, and in particular she refers to the 'coverage' that the Peninsula Hong Kong gets (in marketing and lifestyle literature) all which has confirmed her feeling that the hotel would be special. It is interesting that here again, that her mention of the shops in the hotel arcade indicate the significance of shopping to the experience:

... also if money was no object, either the two places I would like to stay or one or the other would be the Peninsula or the Mandarin Oriental just because of the history associated with them and the fact that they are the best hotels and just like the whole background of

them and sort of the nature of them and the status of the Peninsula, the layout and the coverage it gets and the type of... I mean I've only ever really sort of walked through there because you can walk though ... there are a few shops in there that you can go into. But I've never even had tea in there yet. But you know - that would be nice.

There are references to brand associations with particular destinations – she talks about visiting the Maldives, not because she would like to go that destination in particular, but because the experience she would like is associated with the Maldives through the marketing literature:

I suppose it's not so much the destination of being the Maldives, it's these water bungalows which quite often ... well you rarely see them advertised in association with other destinations, it's quite often the Maldives that they are in.

While word of mouth, marketing communications, lifestyle and travel literature all influence Rebecca's choices, on her collage she also highlights the influences of film and media on destination choice (Tooke 1999). She has drawn an octopus connected with the 007 symbol which she explains has informed her choice of a particular hotel near the Taj Mahal in India. Another reference to destination images influencing her choice, communicated through TV holiday programmes and lifestyle travel magazines is the ice hotel. Tourism destinations have considerable lifestyle status, and the kudos that she would gain from going to such an exotic hotel concept is as significant factor in her choice (Morgan *et al.* 2002):

The other place I've always fancied going to since I saw it on, I must have read about it in a magazine years ago, about six or seven years ago this ice hotel concept and since then it's been on a lot of, well I think it's on a lot of TV, a lot of holiday programmes, I've seen it in lots of holiday parts of newspapers and weekend papers and things like that and although it is quite expensive, so I suppose maybe in a way it is sort of maintaining some sort of ... because it is such a different product I think and you know, to say you've been to the ice hotel and given the fact that that ice hotel changes every year because it melts and this sort of thing, probably yes, very much a sort of status thing that we've been to that other people haven't or your immediate collective of friends and family haven't. But having

said that I do pick up, I think it is Wanderlust, that travel brochure recently and they had a feature on winter destinations and they were featuring ice hotels not only in Sweden but also in Canada and Iceland and another place, Finland as well I think so quite a few different places picking up on this same theme.

As with the participants in phase one, she has an awareness of the hierarchy and positioning of tour operators. Commensurate with the style of experience that she imagines, she has chosen images of Kuoni – an up market tour operator who specialise in long haul destinations. She mentions the security and risk reduction aspects that she associates with the brand, and also their perceived ability to supply a more exotic product:

... but I suppose in a way Kuoni being one of those tour operators that specialise in that sort of area as well, so in a way, not having been there before I would probably want to go with someone that I knew and maybe someone that I had travelled with before. I suppose with places like Hong Kong and Spain it's not such an issue because you know where you're going, you know what you're getting yourself into when you get there so the product is not such a surprise when you get there, whereas I've got this real exotic idealistic image in my brain about this water bungalow so I would want to go with someone that's giving me that image.

However, her choice of Kuoni is also influenced by a previous good experience with the company. Describing a time when they were delayed due to an air traffic accident she recalls the assistance given by the representative, which she admits is another reason for choosing the same company:

... and it was a Kuoni rep and I called her and explained and everything and then she spoke to whichever airline it was supposed to have been from Bangkok to London and then instead of saying you'll just have to wait until we've got seats free they were going to put us on the first available flight out of there within the Alliance and that was how we ended up coming back on British Airways. So I suppose that's another reason why I feel quite confident with that company because we did have a huge problem, the airline also wouldn't pay for us to go and stay in a hotel or anything like that so it was only because

this rep in Bangkok was helpful and sorted it out that gave me that confidence in terms of that so I suppose that was the connection there.

I wish I
was here!
Whistler
The Maldives
Las Vegas
California

Susannah

S1

S2

S3

S4

S5

S6

S7

6.30 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Four Susannah

Susannah is quite an experienced traveller, having spent several years working overseas, predominantly in the Far East and the Antipodes. She is in her mid thirties and currently on maternity leave from her job as a University lecturer. She is married to Christopher and is very close to her family who live nearby. Holidays are considered ludic in nature, and the most striking aspect of Susannah's holidays is that they are hedonistic in the way that they are very experiential and combine fun, pleasure, relaxation, interest and excitement. She repeatedly uses the word '*experience*' in her narratives and it is clear that her attitude towards holidays is one of consuming tourism experiences (Valentine and Gordon 2000). She always goes on holiday with her husband. The main constraints that influence her tourism decisions are time (largely related to work) and to a certain extent, financial, however now that she has a young child, she recognises that this will add a further constraint to the pattern and types of holidays she takes. It is interesting that when she reflected on her construction of her collage (in the idealised situation when constraints were removed), she registered surprise that she included a range of other people in some of the trips. She had assumed that the trips would have focused on 'me' and while there is increased marketing focus on self-actualisation and the self (Padgett and Allen 1997, Elliott 1997, Firat and Dholakia 1998), pleasure is also vicarious – it can be gained from the observation of others enjoying their leisure pursuits (Wearing and Wearing 1988). Tourism experiences are also greatly dependent on interaction of others (Lovelock 1996, Ryan 2002). My inference here is that while this will be fun for everyone, the inclusion of others will significantly enhance Susannah's own pleasure:

It was interesting to do ... to think what I would want to do if I had just carte blanche as far as holiday experiences were concerned, never mind just holiday, just experiences you want to fulfil. I was quite surprised that I didn't just think of myself, that I wanted to include other people in this experience with me and not just my husband but my family and friends or who-ever. Because I think ... because you think about going on holiday and you think about going with your husband or family and I thought to my self that 'no if I've got this ability to be able to share it with everyone else then I want to ... and you know ...? So let's

do it like that' and that's what provoked ... especially the Florida trip and the California trip ... so yes, it was, I was quite surprised that I felt that way about it. That it wasn't just 'I've got carte blanche ... me ... what do I want to do?' because I didn't just want to experience it myself, I wanted to share the experience if I could with others.

6.31 Holiday Patterns

Susannah takes several overseas and domestic holidays a year. Although she says that while she was growing up, she had an annual 'main' holiday with her family, they also took short weekend camping trips - here again, they were mainly constrained by work time factors. Tourism experiences are very complex, they are subjective and individual, and are affected by a number of external factors such as the involvement and interaction of other people, the weather and particular events (Urry 1990, Lovelock 1996). Holidays are argued to be a time of family bonding (Crompton 1979) and the experiences live on in the memory and often influence future decisions and behaviour (Williams 2002). Susannah's enjoyable camping trips have influenced her present holidays, together with her family she relives some of her childhood experiences in camping trips – recalling the seemingly insignificant incidents with affection. She recalls a particularly memorable six week trip to Scotland (which was out of the norm) that they took when her father was between jobs and her mother on holiday from the school where she worked. She clearly remembers the weather, and events involving other people that enhanced her experience:

When we were children we did a lot of touring in the UK. The one I can remember the most ... and we were brought up camping ... and we still do it now as a family, myself and my husband and my brother and his wife and children and my Mum and Dad, we still all go away with our tents. But the one that sticks in my mind and one of the reasons why is because the year of the drought, 1976, and we went to Scotland in the six weeks of our summer holidays and all the way around Scotland and that was fabulous and we had really good fun. There's photographs of us as children on St Andrew's golf course with great big woolly highland cap on and I always remember one night and quite vividly in my mind this young couple and I was only nine at the time but this young couple put their little tiny tent next to us, right up in Thursow in the north of Scotland, and we had a terrible storm and they were down the pub and their tent blew away and off the side of the cliff. And those

sorts of funny things, you know, when everyone rallied around and someone lent them sleeping bags and someone had a big tent and they slept in their tent and stuff like that. I can remember those sorts of things and also very much always outdoor kind of stuff. My mother fighting with my brother to get him to wash his hair in the washing up bowl, soap suds everywhere. But those are predominantly the things I would think about - going away and not just seaside resorts but also inland places because my Dad is a big fisherman so we find somewhere to go coarse fishing that also has camping and stuff, that we could all do, but that's the sort of stuff I remember as a child. The first time we went away ... I was in my late teens really and we went to the Costa del Sol ... but that wasn't as a family, my brother never came then, he didn't want to come, wasn't interested, didn't want to go with the old people. But otherwise it has always been in this country and camping a majority of the time.

The reason we went for six weeks then was that my Grandfather was a Scot and unbeknown to us ... it was quite poignant ... because he died the year after. So he took us around Scotland and to his homeland and to his home town and stuff like that. But the other reason we could go for six weeks was that my Dad had just been made redundant from the steel works, so he had a period of time when he could go and my Mum teaches so she gets the same holidays off as us, as children, so we just packed up and went. But usually it was just a week or a fortnight or even a couple of days we would go if my Mum and Dad were very much like that, opportunists, if the sun was shining, everything would be thrown in the back of the car and we would go.

SW - So did you have more than one holiday a year, more than one trip?

Yes. We would go on various trips. I suppose when we were younger there would always be one main holiday, but then, if there was the opportunity to go somewhere else, we would, and we have relatives that live in Sussex and on the Isle of Wight so we would perhaps go and holiday with them sometimes as well and stay with them in their houses, that would be at different times of the year as well.

SW - What about more recently, over the past couple of years, for example, what sort of holidays and what sort of trips have you taken?

Well we took one big one in '93. I went for three years, we only went for 15 months on a round the world ticket but went for three years and that was working out travelling but it was still the whole travelling experience and just had the opportunity in different places to work so we did. But otherwise, it's been a week or a fortnight or a couple of days even. If we go abroad, it's always a week or a fortnight, but if it's in this country, it might be a couple of days with our tent somewhere. We always have more than one holiday a year, three or four probably. The big one was planned ... but well, saying that - it probably wasn't planned that far in advance, perhaps a couple of months, as long as we had to give in our notice from work, which I think was two months and that was it, we were away. But the other ones though, we just go on the hop, we think 'in a couple of weeks time, we'll go and have a week away'.

In the winter it's the snow and in the summer it's the sun, I suppose ... and then sort of the accommodation does come in, because skiing we usually go half board, whereas in the summer, we wouldn't think about going somewhere where we were catered for, we would always be self catering, so that we can do our own thing and have the freedom to do what we like, when we like, so there's those two definite differentiations there. Otherwise, I suppose it's just wherever takes our fancy. We're going to Majorca now and Christopher's never been so that's I suppose that's one of the other things, have we been there, haven't we been there, we like to go to places where we haven't been. We're not sort of repeat customers in that kind of respect, if we've been there once and we like it, we say we'll go again, but yeah, it was nice, but we'll go somewhere different. If Christopher and I don't like it, we just move, but with these late deals they are that minimal anyway, if you don't like where you are staying when you get there, you can just find somewhere cheap but nice because you are there at that point in time and you just want to see all the rooms - so we do do that, if we don't like the place we're staying, we'll go and find somewhere else there and just up and move.

Like Audrey and Rebecca, Susannah's early holidays were taken within the UK – and she also she clearly recalls her first overseas holiday to Europe. She has always taken more than one holiday a year, although the holiday and accommodation type has altered as her life stage and lifestyle has changed. The postmodern characteristics of freedom, flexibility, choice and juxtaposition are key aspects for Susannah. She describes the

freedom of self catering, and the flexibility afforded to them by the last minute deal – the inference being that these holidays are so cheap that if some aspect does not satisfy them they can afford to move somewhere else. She is confident and experienced - playing with the composite package offering, using various facilitative elements such as the booking and transport, with the knowledge of her freedom to choose alternative accommodation.

6.32 Opportunistic and Experiential Tourism

The findings of the first phase indicated that tourism has generally become a much more eclectic, ad hoc and frequent event than it has been in the past and there is a reduction in the level of involvement in the choice. However when she was younger Susannah's family took trips at short notice, particularly trips such as visiting friends and relatives and camping, and it is possible that this has influenced her current behaviour. Low involvement is characterised by lack of identification with any particular brand and purchases are chosen according to factors such as price and convenience (Laws 2002). Nowadays, while holidays are not routine, for Susannah they are quite frequent and very much a part of her fabric. Holiday choices are low involvement decisions, she has no brand preferences and there is little pre- planning. Her attitude is very relaxed towards holidays and destination choice. She usually chooses a package holiday, but has no preference for the operator, choice is primarily dictated by availability at short notice and price. The type of holiday tends to dictate the type of accommodation and she considers flexibility and freedom as being paramount in the choice. She uses the word '*opportunists*' to describe her parents behaviour – as I have previously argued, this is a word that fits aptly when describing current holiday taking patterns – increased internet access to information and reservations, low cost flights, more flexible working (Mintel, 2002) are all contributing to more opportunistic consumer behaviour:

I sort of structured it in the way that all along the bottom of the collage is things that I would like to do with Christopher and different kinds of things. I've got the section in the middle, well the top in the middle where I'd go if I could just hop off, or we could just hop off for the weekend or something like that. And then these two were very specific to me as I would love to be able to take all my family and Christopher's family and go all of us in a big group to Disney. I thought that would be absolutely fabulous for all of us to do that

together so that was one point. And then the other one is a sort of trip down memory lane that I would like to take with my friends and so that was sort of the emphasis on it. This is as I say with Christopher and whatever else and then the top part was with different people and to different places.

Susannah's collage encapsulates the experiential and varied nature of her holidays and there is a very strong sense of flexibility, fun and carefree enjoyment. Emphasising the experiential element as well as images of destinations and accommodation, she has included captions which describe the various experiences, such as *'for relaxation'*, *'to relax', 'for the fun', 'for the thrill', 'for the shopping'* and so on. In the current battle to gain competitive advantage, destinations strive to highlight their unique benefits through the development of experiential brand associations and the use of powerful, evocative imagery (Holcomb 1999). Susannah has included images of destinations which have strong brand associations with particular types of experience – for example: culture (Venice, Cairo) fun and nightlife (Las Vegas, Disney, California), excitement and thrill (Alaska, the Rockies, Whistler), relaxation and the exotic (the Maldives).

The experiences are very varied and contrasting – characterising the postmodernist move towards new modes of perception, time/space compression, speed of consumption and loss of commitment – increasing intensity and fragmentation into a series of vivid, powerful experiences (Featherstone 1991, Bauman 1998). There are images of the QE2 and Cunard combined with images of extravagant amenities, exotic food and destinations which she uses to portray relaxation and luxury – many different experiences rolled into one package: 'cruising becomes a carnival of arresting images and spectacles, the cruising experience best being described as a perpetual montage' (Williams 2002:196). Juxtaposition and an ad hoc pattern are very clear in Susannah's referral to *'hopping off'* at will and whim, and the attraction of being able to mix a range of different experiences:

The QE2 and the Cunard are two that you think 'well it's got to be opulent and it's got to be luxury and if I'm going to go on a cruise I might as well go on the best one I could possibly go on'. And then the other thing was that I looked at was where had I been or where hadn't I been that I would like to cruise around and have a look at...because although a cruise appeals to me I want to be able to get on and off and experience different

things as well, I don't just want to sit on the ocean like some people like to do. I would just like to use the cruise as my mode of transport and accommodation to get me to different places to experience different things.

Like Las Vegas, Disney World is a destination which also epitomises a postmodern, hyperreal space (Urry 1988, 2002, Featherstone 1999, Ritzer 2000, Hollinshead 2002). Featherstone (1999) describes it as a place where adults can appreciate sensations, realise emotion and lose the inhibitions that normally restrict them in their parental roles. Disney World has also been characterised as a branded tourism space (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Ritzer 2000, Middleton and Clarke 2001). In an example of a consumer becoming totally immersed in the brand experience, Susannah alludes to the ludic enjoyment in her recognition of the adult-child experience, and also the enhancement of her vicarious pleasure gained through others enjoyment. Within Disney there are a host of other branded attractions, she has included images on the collage and draws on them in describing the wider experience, even including the accommodation at the sub-branded Magic Kingdom:

... because it's got so much to offer and I've been there 10 or more years ago now and know how much as an adult I enjoyed it, but also the children in the family range from 4 to 11 and therefore how much experience they would get out of it ... but also we would enjoy their experiences as well. But I just think it would be a lovely place to take everyone. Also the other thing is that you don't have to live in each other's pockets there. If one set of family want to go off and do something else, or they don't want to do anything or whatever else, then the opportunity is there to chill out or if my Mum and Dad or Christopher's Mum and Dad say 'no we've had enough we're worn out today we just want to go and sit here or find a beach or something' then there is a lot of opportunities within that area of Florida to do that, you don't just have to go mad on theme parks all the time ... basically because of the other areas that are available to you. One of my Dad's passions is he would like to go to the Keys, he's a big fisherman ... and you know ... he would love to go down to the Keys, and I know my Mum would really appreciate things like on the Gulf Coast of St Petersburg and Tampa, how nice and laid back they are and stuff. And then you've got all the different parks that you can take the kids to ... definitely that you'd go to. You've got Walt Disney there in the centre where you could go to the different studios and Magic

Kingdom and stuff and then on the other corner there you've got Wet and Wild and Busch Gardens and Universal which are all independent to Walt Disney and you can go and visit those that are in different areas. That was why on the other ear of Mickey I put the accommodation but also I put the sort of people mover so we could hire a couple of cars and stuff and have that bit of independence to go off to other places as well for different people.

SW – is this accommodation actually within ...?

Yes, within the resort. Because I did toy with first of all looking at a big villa or something like that but in the end I went down the route of if we had a villa then we'd have to cook and we'd have to this and it would just be nice to be totally extravagant and be waited on hand, foot and finger because at the end of the day it's going to end up with the Mums doing the cooking and whatever else, the Dads cleaning the pool with the kids and just going back to that home environment whereas everyone is meant to be enjoying the holiday and doing nothing so that is why I went back to that. I looked and it says about the location that it's actually located in the Magic Kingdom or just outside the Magic Kingdom and available to all those particular parks so especially with the littler children, if they do get worn out or want to go home early then it's not going to be a trek to do that with them.

It is interesting that although she states that she isn't particularly keen to visit places that she has been to before '*it's just a case of getting away and doing something different, going somewhere different*' there is a strong theme of nostalgia running through her narratives. Due to the heterogeneity of experiences (Kurtz and Clow 1998, Laws 2002), each one is different. Like Jemima (*see narrative five*), many participants in phase one cited the significance of previous experiences as a choice factor. However although the destination and the accommodation may be the same – adding an additional element of pleasure to the experience – the experience will be unique. In one narrative Susannah talks about a recent holiday in Mallorca - this was a return visit for her but a first for her husband – she gained enjoyment from showing him things that she had experienced previously. They returned from a first visit to Turkey and returned again six weeks later because they enjoyed it so much.

Many of the destinations in Susannah's collage are chosen because they are places where she had enjoyable previous experiences. To illustrate one experience she has images of various destinations and attractions in the USA with the caption '*with my friends*'. The enjoyment of others is cruicial to her enjoyment of this experience, which is in part a sentimental journey for herself and a girlfriend, and to share it with their husbands. Again, these are predominantly heavily promoted 'key' tourist destinations and attractions with specific, sometimes unique, propositions that are 'famous for being famous' (Urry 2002:12). From her narrative I infer that this is an action packed, hedonistic trip involving a kaleidoscopic mix of experiences, in contrast to the more leisurely pace of other experiences. This reflects the pace and character of the destinations themselves - Las Vegas, LA, Hollywood and Beverly Hills, and the chemistry of the people who share in and contribute to the experience. This was mirrored in the mode of transport – previously they had travelled by Greyhound bus – now it is an open topped sports car:

I started off with Vegas because Christopher would love to go to Vegas and I keep saying to him 'I've been and he would love it', I know he would but I think it's just such a long way to go for a short break, New York is not so far but then when you go across state you're adding another three hours on or something like that for it to be for four days or five days. So then I started thinking well what could I do also to make it more of an experience and I thought well, we could do what I've put there, the twin centres sort of approach. And then when I started looking at it all the places that I was thinking of going to, my girlfriend and I, Lisa, we'd done it, when we finished college in '89, we finished college and went to the states for six months and travelled around and these are all the things we did. But Lisa's husband never did it with her either so my thought was well we could go on a trip down memory lane for the two of us but also take the guys along for the experience and I know Steve would love it as much as Christopher would love it and so I sort of took that kind of approach then. I wouldn't be with any other friends, it would only be with those particular friends because of how poignant it would be. And then things like I thought if we go to Vegas then we could do the Grand Canyon 'cause you can't go to Vegas and it be that close without going to the Canyon and you could shift on to California and there's the ...gotta see all those lovely places that we went to, so we've got to go to Beverly Hills, gotta go to Hollywood, but Newport beach is lovely with all the old colonial style houses there and Santa Monica is very different although they come up along side

each other and then shift up the coast a bit longer. Lisa and I did it when we were there. We actually went by Greyhound bus but ... I'd have ... and I put the sports car up here on the top to be driving along the pacific drive and the ocean coast and whatever else that then we could go up to San Diego and San Francisco and you couldn't particularly go there without seeing those two areas as well. I wasn't, neither of us was enamoured with LA so I left LA out and sort of thought well we'll go across and up and then it was just all the bits that went with it like the entertainment as far as Vegas but also the other places, food and drink.

6.33 Destinations, Sensations, Images and Experiences

Her choice of destinations in the imaginary situations is largely based on the associated experiences. In describing the various destinations she articulates the strong sensory and experiential associations that she has developed – she talks about the sounds, tastes and physical feelings. Crompton (1979:27) refers to destination images as being as: 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination'. It is these beliefs, ideas and impressions that position a destination brand in the mind of the consumer (Morgan *et al.* 2002). However, despite marketing efforts, perceptions of tourism destinations are often based on clichéd and stereotypical images and associations, formed from a range of sources such as media, advertising, travel publications, television programmes and word of mouth communication (Laws 2002, Morgan *et al.* 2002, Crockett and Wood 2002). On her collage, Susannah included very exotic beach and relaxation images, together with small objects such as a sea shell and a glass fish to represent her associations with the Maldives which she describes as being '*paradise*'. She also mixes experiences – talking of the way she would absorb culture (without effort) combined with relaxation in Venice – perceptions again based on stereotypical 'famous' aspects such as the canals and gondolas:

Italy ... I love Italy because I love the food, and we've had a couple of nice holidays in Italy and the people have been lovely. Rome didn't seem particularly that sort of ... I didn't have the pull towards it but then again Venice did because I thought it was very - you know - what I'd seen of it and read about it and the canals and the different stuff like that I thought 'that sounds interesting' and more so than Hong Kong which would be the shopping and

Cairo which would be about the different experience, Venice would be more of a relaxed, chilled out, take in the sights, sounds and smells ... but let someone else guide you around in the gondola and stuff like that so you wouldn't necessarily have to make the effort and then you know it could be a relaxing city break but quite cultural. You know, sometimes you go for the fun of it, like Disney would be for the fun and this thing here, the skiing and whatever else and the diving would be for the thrill of it so they sort of overlap some of them but those are the sort of experiences I would like to be getting out of a holiday. Hong Kong would be a trip down memory lane because Christopher and I spent some time there, '96, no '93 working and then since then of course it's gone back to Chinese rule and although they say it hasn't changed that much it would just be nice to go back and see but I know the shopping is fabulous there and you know there's different things that have been developed in terms of the outer islands and things and it would be nice to see the change. We know it's superb [referring to the image of the Mandarin Hotel] *but also that the seven months we were in Hong Kong was over Christmas and we went there for our Christmas dinner so it's sort of got that kind of invokes nostalgia and stuff like that ... and I know how lovely it was to have the dinner, but we never saw the rooms or stayed in there. It just looks so plush that I thought, oh yeah, that would be nice to stay there.*

I don't know I've just got this idea about it being idyllic. Christopher and I have done the South Pacific and I know how idyllic places like Fiji and Tahiti and Hawaii was, then I wouldn't go back there ... but I don't know ... there is just something drawing me to the Maldives. One of the big things is these water bungalows where you ... basically your accommodation is right there on the water, and we both love the water and we both dive and love the thought of these sea planes and just everything that's associated with water, you know the bar was in the river and the pool and sit by the side of the water and just chill out, or you do some activities that are associated with the water ... but it just invokes this thought of paradise to me, the Maldives. More so than other places like the Seychelles or the Caribbean, I've just got this image in my mind that the Maldives are paradise.

SW - Can you say why ... because they're very similar in the beaches and the sea and so on?

I don't know, perhaps it's the name or they've just evoked that thought. It sounds quite exotic and all you ever see are these little atolls with the perfect white sand around them and then the reefs that come off them and I just get the idea that because they are so small they will be nice and quiet and tranquil and whatever else.

In contrast, Susannah has developed a perception of Egypt as a destination that is unsafe and (to her) unappealing. Forming the basis of her perceptions are images that are certainly clichéd – people paying too much for a staged camel ride, and poor hygiene standards. Brands that tend to be chosen are those with high saliency – consumers form perceptions of their attributes, store them in their limited mindspace (Anholt 2002) and recall the brands when making choices (Strasser 1989, Aaker and Biel 1993, Lane 1998, Berthon *et al.* 1999, Barwise *et al.* 2000). Susannah's choice of the Meridien Hotel in Cairo is based on her perceptions of the quality and standards associated with the brand, for her this means reducing the health and security risk in visiting the destination, and thus she is prepared to overcome these inhibitions and includes it on the collage because it is a place her husband wants to visit. It is also a good example of the way that distance is now considered less as a barrier to travel. Fuelled by factors such as advancements in transport technology, coupled with more flexible working and greater consumer confidence and sophistication, places such as Cairo and New York that were once considered exotic and distant are now accessible as short break destinations (Edgar 2000). In Susannah's case this means that she is prepared to take the risk of experiencing Egypt in a few days rather than involving a more prolonged (and possibly disappointing) visit.

[sigh] *Christopher has always wanted to see the pyramids and I've never really fancied it, but when I saw the brochure influenced me to put that* [pointing to the collage] *there because I'd never thought of it as a city break. I'd always thought about going to Egypt as a holiday and going down the Nile and spending a couple of weeks there and stuff like that but then I seen it advertised as a city break and I thought I could probably handle it as a city break and a short weekend or four days or whatever else than spending two weeks because I don't know, I've never fancied Egypt and whatever else. I don't know whether it's the image I have about the people and I've got the pictures there of the camels because one of the biggest things as well is the rip offs as concerns the camel rides and having the pictures taken on a camel outside the pyramids and stuff like that. It's just never appealed*

to me [pointing to an image of the Meridien Hotel] *That was the brand, although I don't know anything about Cairo and what it was like, it's very much the brand, five star indulgence, if you're going all that way, you might as well stay. And also because of the kind of climate you were in and the country you were in associated with the food and things like that that I thought well if we went there at least perhaps we would be guaranteed some sort of normality as far as civilisation is concerned. I know it sounds a bit* ... [the sentence tails off].

6.34 Emotional, Symbolic Brand Associations and Holidays

Emotional, symbolic and functional associations with certain branded products are a part of the holiday experience. I asked Susannah about the sort of things that she would take with her on the cruise. Her response that she would have a range of clothing and accessories for different experiences supports my previous discussion of the situational self and the brand wardrobe. Her choice of the word *'force'* in the following excerpt is interesting – as with Dai and Rebecca, who both take pleasure in being appropriately dressed for a role - it indicates that there is an element of conforming to societal expectations, which while pleasurable, is nonetheless 'expected' and to digress would result in spoiling the experience:

You would probably go way over your luggage allowance for that because of the weight wouldn't you?! You would have to think about dining every evening in formal dress so that would be completely different, the different places that you would be going to, the different temperatures, experiences and stuff like that. I think it would be much more upmarket with the sort of image that portrays that would force you then to portray a much more upmarket, classier image.

SW -So would you have to make a special shopping trip?

Probably! Definitely, yes. But then that would be part of the experience, going and buying the appropriate stuff to then experience that fully, instead of feeling perhaps intimidated because you don't feel dressed properly, that you're dressed properly and everybody else is in their formal dinner gear and you're particularly, you're more casual than that and stuff.

Earlier, Susannah had discussed a photograph [S1] of her husband wearing Adidas trainers. Through this explanation the status and image significance of their brand usage becomes apparent as she explains how she plays with the brands which enhance her experiences. Similarly to Dai she uses brands to position products in her mind according to situations. There is a definite distinction between clothes for particular situations, and brands are ranked according to status value (Tesco, Marks and Spencer and British Home Stores (BHS for work) while they keep '*posh*' (Adidas, Reebock, Nike) branded items for special occasions such as holidays. Again like Dai, she uses products to differentiate between work and leisure - the inference is that holidays are a time of 'otherness', a special time with brands used in the creation of a different role and to distinguish the special time from mundane, everyday time. Unlike Jemima (*see narrative five*) who conversely keeps her best clothes for home use, for Susannah (as with Audrey) holidays are considered special occasions hence the 'best' trainers (which are kept in a box and ritualistically polished specially) and socks being included in the holiday wardrobe. This is despite the Adidas trainers being counterfeit ones bought during a previous holiday (which possibly even enhances their value). Just as with Rebecca and Jemima, the symbolic significance of the brand associations overrides the functional elements such as quality and performance. Again like Rebecca there is no sense of guilt or embarrassment that the brand is not genuine, rather there is satisfaction and added 'value' in having found a bargain – and in the game of successfully deceiving others into thinking that they are the genuine article. It is also similar to Dai's support of Ryanair (the perceived underdog) against the major airlines, the inference being that the (unscrupulous) big brand owners can well withstand the loss of revenue from counterfeit brands:

They're Adidas ... where did I ...? Actually he bought those in Bulgaria because it had only been a couple of weeks before - we'd been skiing, and Bulgaria do a lot of the fake brands but you couldn't tell the difference, so instead of paying like £60 for them, we paid £10 for them. But they are very much, they came away on holiday with us, I think that was the first time they had been out of the box because they were bright white with silver stripes and it was horrible weather over here but he only wears them now for going out in best, and they've been polished to go on holiday again. I think the thing with us, with logos, we're not particularly loyal to logos but we do wear logos.

SW - But why, can you explain?

You just ... I don't know, I suppose it's something to do with perhaps the quality and the image you try to portray that you're not walking round in Tesco - well you probably are walking round in Tesco socks or what ever else most of the time - but we have got some posh ones. Posh is the wrong word because I wouldn't class ... I would just class those sports socks as being everyday socks but because they are sports socks you associate them to a sporting label and therefore buy that kind of label, whether they be Adidas, Nike or Reebok, whereas for like his work socks, which are all black and whatever else, that's not one of those that has a label on it. They're Marks and Spencer's or British Home Stores or wherever are doing, wherever they are at the time.

Contemporary consumers use products (including cars, clothing accessories and activities) to define their 'lifestyle' in terms of style, taste and individuality (Featherstone 1987). Thus emotional and non-rational associations, rather than functional benefits are often the major influencers of consumer choice (Martineau 1957, Gilmore 1997). While she states that she and her husband are not brand loyal, Susannah's (authentic) Adidas bag has special significance as she bought it on honeymoon – she uses '*love*' to describe the way she feels about it. The logo is the design feature of the bag [*photograph S2*] which she keeps specially for holidays, for functional as well as emotional reasons. She buys specific branded cosmetics because they are the right size for holidays – but always chooses the same brands [*photograph S3*]. Susannah also has a pair of Gucci sunglasses that she bought on honeymoon. These are a key item in her holiday wardrobe, and she also uses them at other times. While they have a functional purpose, they are also a very strong lifestyle symbol - the Gucci brand has very powerful emotional, symbolic and status value. This is so strong that it has influenced other purchase decisions.

Increasingly functional products are being promoted as lifestyle accessories (Pavitt 2000). In the following passage Susannah illustrates the irrationality and complexity of choice influences as she explains that her choice of car was based on the feature that enabled her to store them safely, rather than the functional attributes (which she leaves to her husband). It is interesting that she uses the word '*sad*' – not in its literal sense, but in its contemporary, subverted usage as a self-depreciatory expression, indicating her awareness

of the shallowness of her attitude. Likewise, Audrey described her attraction to the Leica camera because of the *'red blob thing'*, rather than its functional qualities. In this next excerpt her use of emotive vocabulary further illustrates the high level of emotional attachment to the various brands. She also explains the associations with destination branded T-shirts bought on different holidays [*photograph S4*] and how the T-shirts are reminders of previous experiences and how they gain satisfaction from the role displays and sign value of the T-shirts. The reaction of others to leisure consumption signs enhances the leisure experience (Dimanche and Samdahl 1994, Urry 2000) and, in addition to the symbolic and emotional associations Susannah articulates the satisfaction that she and her husband gain through this display of the high status destinations and attractions that they have visited:

But my association with this bag and this brand is that, one, I love this bag because it's big and I bought it when we were on our honeymoon and, two, it's massive and I only take it on holiday and I put all our documents in there and my makeup bag in there and the cameras, anything that's important, which I suppose is daft really, because if we ever lost it, we'd lose quite a bit. But because it's so big ... but also the reason we bought it was, I suppose, because of the brand on the front of it, but that's the association of it and that's why I took the photograph. I bought it on my honeymoon and that was a lovely holiday that we had - but it's not a handbag, if you know what I mean, it's too big to be a handbag to use every day as well, so yes, but it's ideal for taking on holiday or taking off on weekends when you just need to shove a lot of stuff into a big bag and hang on to it. And I think it looks nice.

Again [pointing to photograph S3] *holiday things, I would never think about buying easy products to use at home. I would buy make up and make up remove ... I've got a bottle of Clinique and cotton pads... but to go on holiday I bought this particular product. And the same with the nail polish remover, I've got cotton pads at home, but to go on holiday, for ease of use, I bought these two particular products. And I just buy that brand all the time to go away. I use 'Simple' products. I bought those sunglasses on my honeymoon as well. My Gucci sunglasses, I love them.*

SW - They're Gucci?

Yes. With blue lenses. Christopher picked them, I didn't pick them, but they were one of the things I had off my honeymoon. Yeah, I just love the look of them and what they are, the brand ...well, they're just a statement aren't they? I take them everywhere, in my car, everywhere. In fact, I'm very sad ... one of the things that drew me, made me buy my car was the sunglasses holder actually in there. It's lovely, it's a little bit and you press the button and it falls to like this and you keep your sunglasses in there ... my husband looks under the bonnet and I look at what's inside. These are T-shirts that Christopher has collected and those sort of emblems that say 'although I am on holiday in this place, I have actually been to all these places as well'. And this one especially, the New Zealand one, in the middle ... I am sure, it must be that well made because I don't know why it would fall apart, but it's still as lovely as the day it was bought and that was about seven years ago! And then this Australia one, this one we had, he had in Turkey last year when we did some paragliding, so I took those because those are the ones that he wants to take on his holidays but also because they are showing people where else you've been on holiday and what else you've done. This one is called ... the New Zealand one, is called 'the Kiwi Experience' and on the back it's got the bus trip that we did all the way round New Zealand, so....

Susannah has taken a photograph [*photograph S5*] of some small complimentary toiletries, which she explains were representative of the range of small items branded with the hotel logo. For her these items reinforced the quality of the hotel and indicated their commitment to that standard:

Everything in the hotel that you used, because it was 5 star, had the hotel's logo on it from the beer mats to the towels to the freebies to the paper to the pens, every single thing that they gave you, or put down in front of you to use all had the Venus Beach hotel name and address on it, you kept seeing that everywhere ... it was everywhere, everything they did...there was no cutting corners, you couldn't go anywhere with not having products that had the company's logo on it ... from the sugar and little sweeties at the reception desk wrapped up in Venus Beach wrappers, the whole lot. So it was, I suppose, portraying that kind of quality image, the hotel was five star and they wanted to show you that they were putting their money into.

They also demonstrate the importance of the small items to the retention and preservation of the experience. Lack of possession and temporality are key characteristics of tourism experiences, and the retention and/or purchase of tangible items with some special relationship to the airline, destination or hotel is for many people, an important part of the overall experience. It is also however, a costly exercise for tourism providers which they trade off against the value of brand reinforcement. Additionally they are trophies (displayed but not used), to signify status and experience to others who may use the bathroom at home. Just as post-tourists display kitsch and quite bizarre trophies from their holidays – and as Audrey does - Susannah explains her friend's collection of 'do not disturb' signs collected from exotic destinations, and then continues to describe how her husband Christopher always collects things as souvenirs. It is interesting that she is quick to dissociate herself from this practice, indicating that it is something that she does not entirely approve of. Later, while explaining the way she collects pens, she again is quick to justify this behaviour by stating their functional value (as opposed to the toiletries which just sit in a basket in the bathroom). My inference is that these small branded complimentary items do have significant recall impact for consumers – preserving the memories of what is a fragile moment, keeping the brand salient through the association with particular experiences, and signifying experience and status to others:

Christopher is terrible for bringing back freebies from bathrooms. Everywhere we go, we've got a basket in the bathroom and we're not allowed to use them, but we've got it full of shower caps and shampoos and things like that ... I've got a friend that collects "do not disturb" signs off doors and all over her house she's got "do not disturb" signs from everywhere, from the Bahamas, different hotels, the whole lot. I suppose ...like.. souvenirs to her, but also perhaps displaying to other people where she's been, even though they know. Those were the bits from the hotel and we would have ... well Christopher would have brought those bits home ... [pointing to photograph S5] *and this was another hotel that we went to, somewhere in the forest that he brought those from. The only thing that I will collect is pens, but I find them useful. Yesterday I went to the Celtic Manor and had two pens from there and they are sat on my desk that I'm using now. And I know one of those pens is in my little pot next to the telephone in the kitchen, but then there's about seven other pens and pencils in there.*

Local brands also have particular significance to the holiday experience. Susannah, in explaining the picture of the local Cyprus beer Keo [*photograph S6*], tells how while her husband rarely drinks beer at home, and will only drink local beer on holiday. As with Audrey, this is integral to her holiday experience, and illustrates the way that holidays are a time of otherness - experiencing something different from the ordinary (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1989, Ryan 2002) - and how tourism consumers adopt symbols of local culture in order to immerse themselves in the experience. For Christopher, the sensory and symbolic associations of the local beer enhance his experience: '*he wouldn't thank you for a Stella or a Budweiser, but he will drink the local beer, just in the holiday mode I suppose*'.

Creating symbolic associations with positive and attractive destination attributes is paramount in establishing a brand identity (Hall 2002) – however it applies equally to all tourism products. Underlying this is the need to understand how people form associations and relate to the objects and experiences that they encounter in this context. Susannah's symbolic association between orange juice and Cyprus is clear – she states very clearly that for her: '*orange juice identifies Cyprus*' [photograph S7]. In this last excerpt she illustrates the pull of familiar brands for some tourism consumers. In Cyprus, Woolworth is a well established brand, with department stores located in the main towns. Within the UK, Woolworth has declined in profile and presence and is positioned very much as a low cost, medium value brand and has associations with the sale of cheap, low esteem products. Lipton is another long running brand that has declined in the UK from being one of the original distributor brands to a low profile, unpopular brand of tea and beverages (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). Susannah registers surprise at the popularity of the Woolworth cafeteria in Cyprus with British tourism consumers – observing (and thus disassociating herself from the practice, as she did with the collection of trophies as souvenirs) that while they wouldn't use a Woolworth café or drink Lipton's tea at home, they were doing so in Cyprus (a destination with a huge choice of cafés and restaurants). While this was probably not from choice (that is, the café possibly served only Lipton's tea) she considers it enough of a phenomenon to comment on and make the association between a national practice (drinking tea), and familiar brands (Woolworth, Lipton):

… and this cafeteria that we went into, well, in the Woolworths, it was packed. There were people queuing to wait to go and have a cup of tea in Woolworths. And they were all

English, so they were all tourists on holiday, so I suppose they were again just associating a brand with a product and home, although we don't have many Woolworth's cafés. It makes you wonder whether they would go to a Woolworth's café here. It's quite funny and then the typical thing that everyone was drinking pots of tea. It was Lipton tea, but they wouldn't buy Lipton tea at home, they'd probably buy Tetley or PG or something like that.

Jemima-a

Jemima-b

J1

J2

J3

J4

6.35 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Five Jemima

Jemima has lived in Wales all her life. She is in her late fifties, and is married with grown up children. She worked for many years as a personal assistant to several senior managers within the same organisation, and at the time of the interviews was considering taking early retirement. She is very active and sports orientated – she plays squash at competition level and is a very keen golfer. She had no holidays until she was married – she is the youngest of six children and her father was an invalid from the time she was born until he died when she was eighteen, thus holidays are a very important part of her life now:

I didn't have any holidays as a child because my father was ill. He was ill from the time I was born and died when I was eighteen and I'm the youngest of six so my eldest sister is eighteen years older than me and there were four elder children and when they were little they used to go on holidays but then there's a big gap and because I was so young and my father was always ill, I never went on holiday when I was young. Our honeymoon really was my first holiday abroad and I suppose I hadn't had many holidays before that because we went to Spain on our honeymoon and in fact I paid for it because I went on a Welsh television programme, one of these, do you remember "Take a Letter" in English?

SW – No

Well a programme like that but in Welsh and I won this £120, which was in 1963.

Since her marriage, the pattern of holiday taking has altered – from the early years of marriage when financial constraints meant that holidays were unaffordable, until now when she and her husband take several overseas holidays a year. Depending on the length of the holiday, planning and booking is done from very short notice to several months in advance. The pattern is commensurate with that of Mintel's (1998) multi-holiday consumer. However while each one is enjoyable, she admits that she has trouble recalling all the holidays in the past two years, unlike Dai, Audrey, Rebecca and Susannah, she has a far more ritual attitude to holidays which form part of the annual routine. Jemima's

holidays are almost always accompanied by her husband *'George always thinks he's got to come wherever I go,* however he goes skiing annually on his own because she does not enjoy skiing.

This year, where did we go? George went to Austria, then we went to Prague and then of course we went to Dubai and now we're planning two more little ones this year. Last year we went to, well we went to Acapulco, we went to Tenerife ...oh and I think we went to Grand Canaria last year, because we hadn't been there before. And then we've been to Mexico in the last couple of years ... I can't think where we went. And, oh that's right ... I went to Sorrento and where did we go then? I think we must have gone back to Tenerife. Because we like Tenerife in November or something because it's nice and warm so we tend to go there then. I can't think ... my mind's a complete blank ....

During the course of the interviews it became very clear that Jemima is a home loving person, extremely attached to her home, family and things familiar. Her experience includes routines and rituals through which she and prepares herself for the step from the familiar into the unfamiliar (Turner 1969, Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003). Similarly, she goes through a process of repatriation and re-familiarisation when she returns home. This is so important that she took a photograph [J1] of her home, because a very special part of the holiday experience is the return home. Here she describes the emancipation and repatriation rituals that she engages in prior to departing and on her return:

And the two [pointing to photographs] *that were last, these are our house, because the last two days of the holiday and particularly the last day of the holiday, I am so excited because I am going home. I love going on holiday but everybody thinks I am mad because... ' this is our last breakfast or whatever and we're going home' and I'm so excited about it ...so George said 'well you have to take a photograph of the house to show that you are always excited about going home'.*

SW - That's really nice. There's a lot of people who don't want their holidays to finish!

No, my friend's like that, she said 'I never want to come home, so I'm always miserable and I said, 'oh no, I love it, I love coming home. I go around all the room saying 'hello, I'm back' ... so you must think I'm nuts. So that's why that [pointing to photograph J1] *to remind me I love coming home.*

Throughout the interviews she makes repeated references to sentimental and emotional attachment to material possessions (Dittmar 1992) which inform and influence her tourism experiences. While there is a significant element of planning that goes into the things she takes on holiday, her emotional attachment to home is evident in the way that, unlike all the other participants in this phase (particularly Audrey, who hordes '*precious*' clothes to wear on holiday, relishing in the anticipation of the occasion when she might do so), Jemima leaves her '*special*' clothes at home, and takes pleasure from the anticipation of wearing them on her return. She is aware that this is different from other people, describing her behaviour as '*odd*'. Indeed, while she does in effect choose a situational wardrobe, she does not use brands in the symbolic sense and her behaviour is contrary to the received meaning of the concept of communication of self image (de Chernatony and McDonald 1988). The inference here is that the holiday is very much a time of suspension from the reality of the important place which is home:

I leave all my jewellery at home, I go very plain. I take one pair of earrings or two pairs of earrings and I take my jewellery off when I get there, put it all in the safe there and I don't wear any on holiday at all. Whereas a lot of people wear their best stuff on holiday, I tend to be the opposite. Isn't that funny?

SW – Yes

Same with shoes and everything, I just take ordinary shoes and I leave all my nice sort of special sandals and things at home. I suppose it's because I think they will be ruined in the packing and all this sort of thing and I am afraid that they will get lost so I just leave it all at home ... I think 'when I come back, I'll be able to wear that and that will be exciting' because I tend to keep them all for when I come back off holiday. It's most odd.

6.36 Word of Mouth and Past Experience

The connectedness to home is significant throughout Jemima's narratives. As with many other participants in phase one and phase two, previous experience, word of mouth and a personal connection are all highly influential in Jemima's tourism decisions (Mathieson and Wall 1982, Ryan 1995b, Fill 1999). Similar to Susannah's destinations which have a nostalgic connection, many of the destinations she has visited, and those included in her imaginary experience are repeat visits, to places that her husband (who travels widely on business) has already stayed, or which have a family or close friend connection. This indicates a lack of confidence and gaining security and risk reduction through the endorsement of others. This endorsement is a key factor in the choice of accommodation and destination, which combined with the links to home and the familiar enhances the experience:

Well the Orient Express is something I've always wanted to go on, I mean I do know someone who's been on it and said it was a lovely experience and obviously we want to go to Istanbul because George worked in Turkey for a while and I went over for a weekend and that's where we stayed when I went over. So I'd like to go back there because it's a super hotel because they had little shops as you went in and there was a jewellery shop there but because we were new and I wanted to buy, well normally I buy gold, he was very good because we happened to meet someone that George had worked with from Germany and he was friendly with the owner of this shop so he said 'I will close the shop and I will take you to the gold souk place and I will tell you which shops to go to which are reliable' and he did which was absolutely wonderful. And of course because someone helps you like that it is easier and you don't feel so threatened ... so that's why I would like to go on the Orient Express, I'm not sure George is so keen but I think he will enjoy it.

She mentions knowing people in Dubai who were able to show her around, and she includes Bermuda on the collage *'because my niece lives there ...I've heard so much about it'*. Her collage also features Hong Kong which she links to her godfather having lived there and her friend's son currently living there. Such emphasis on familiar connections to places becomes increasingly apparent in the way that she justifies a potential visit to New Zealand despite not knowing anyone who has been there:

... but only New Zealand because we both want to go there, we don't know anyone really – sorry - Tim Grey's daughter's there ... Carol ... but we don't know anyone else who lives there or anything, it just looks somewhere where we would like to spend a bit of time.

Her choice of a gift to give to a friend is another example of the linkage between an emotional connection and reason for visiting a particular place:

we just went to Covent Garden. I wanted to go to Covent Garden because one of my friends used to live in Kingston, she always used to go to Covent Garden and I wanted to buy her something for Christmas from there.

SW - so you went for something with the name on it?

No ... jewellery but you know something that had been designed by someone working in Covent Garden, and I wanted something purple because she's into purple.

Like Audrey, souvenirs are important to Jemima – however she does not exhibit post-tourist tendencies towards kitsch and idiosyncratic objects. Rather she again illustrates the strong links to home with her comment that she always buys something for the house that will evoke memories. Jewellery is very important to her, and as well as souvenirs for the home, here she explains how she tends to buy jewellery associated with the particular destinations she visits – while recognising that they are expensive, it is notable that she considers the symbolic value outweighs the monetary cost. Jemima is always immaculately dressed and wears beautiful jewellery – the jewellery that she buys while on holiday being very much a part of her particular style and persona:

I always buy something when I'm abroad because I suppose I always think that the gold is better out there anyway and cheaper isn't it as well. And when we went to Majorca, I like to buy something that's relevant to that area. So when we went to Prague, I bought some garnets ... is it garnets, the red stones associated with Prague? Yes garnets ... Yes – I bought some there but they were quite expensive. And the other thing out there is amber. Those are the two things that all the shops in Prague seemed to have, this red and the amber, all in the windows everywhere. But I didn't find it cheap but I did buy some.

6.37 Ritual and Talismans

Again, ritual surfaces in the collage. Jemima's imaginary holiday is a round the world trip with her husband George which is planned to take 49 days – a number that has special significance for her and her family:

We always try and do stuff with 7 in because why my car is K7 and my daughter's Katherine so it's K for her and 7 because she was born on the 7th day of the 7th month so we always try and do stuff in 7s .... and 7 7's is 49 so that's why 49. And our house is number 7 and we used to live at number 49.

SW - Is that on purpose?

Well we would like it, we always ask what number it is .....because we were looking for a flat down in Tenby and we kept saying what number is it? And if it was number 6 or something we were sort of a little bit ... [here she shrugs apologetically] ... *it's silly isn't it?*

This ritualistic and talismanic behaviour reveals her strong involvement with her home, family, friends, familiar objects and places. It is interesting that it is so strong as to influence high involvement purchase such as property, and the length of a once in a lifetime holiday. The indication is that the goods themselves are less important than the symbolic representations. Belk *et al.* (1989:30) assert that 'consumers accord sacred status to a variety of objects, places, and times that are value expressive. By expressing these values through their consumption, they participate in a celebration of their connection to the society as a whole and to particular individuals'. Other examples of this behaviour are in the way that Jemima objectifies and sacrilizes objects such as a hat and a small purple bag for her jewellery on holiday [*photograph J2]*: '*...purple because my daughter's colour is purple, not that she's coming with us but I always think of her, like a part of her coming.*' Here again there is talismanic and symbolic significance of the colour purple – in this way she is able to take her daughter with her. She has taken a photograph of a hat [*photograph J3*] which she always takes with her and which she refers to with affection. In addition to performing a functional purpose, her hat is a symbolic, talismanic reminder of past experiences and (perhaps) a charm to ensure enjoyment and safety:

... and my hat, that's the hat that goes everywhere with me. I bought that in Spain years and years ago. Well I just don't like the sun on my face anymore. Poor little thing, it's been squashed and things like that but it always goes, because ... it started I think to break at the edges but until it disintegrates that's the one that I always take.

While she is loyal in the sense that these strong links influence her behaviour and decisions, there is little indication that she is brand loyal or even particularly brand aware. However, brands do play an intrinsic role in the holiday experience. Consuming their own drinks in the privacy of their room is a ritual element. Here the sense of shopping at the airport is very significant – as it is with Dai and Audrey – it is the point of purchase for the same (familiar) brands of rum, brandy and tobacco at the departure airport:

We tend to have our drinks up in our room, so of course ice is very important because we have ice with all our drinks ... so we always like take a bottle of brandy and he always has a bottle of Bacardi, and then we have drinks on the balcony or whatever overlooking the sea because that's the way he likes it. He doesn't like going down to the bar or anything chatting to other people and mixing in that way so that's why it's important ... the one I tend to buy is Three Barrels because usually in the airports it's nearly always there and I know that I quite like that one so I tend to buy that one and George always buys Bacardi.

Similarly, they buy Gold Block tobacco for George's pipe – again an important part of the holiday experience. However unlike Audrey and Susannah for whom the purchase and consumption of local brands is an important immersion into the culture of the destination, she indicates that they choose brands that are familiar and trusted. Shopping is also major part of the holiday experience. It is interesting that while tourism brands have little significance, fashion and retail brands have greater salience. Speaking about a short break trip to London, she recalls the few attractions that they visited, including a number of retail shops: Harrods - acknowledged as a top tourist attraction (Walsh 2003), Selfridges, and Marks and Spencer. In the case of her trip to Dubai, shopping was a key factor in the choice of destination: *'well, I'd just heard so much about the fantastic shops and things out in Dubai and I said I wanted to go there'*. Dubai is another destination where counterfeit goods are widely available. Throughout the conversations Jemima does not display a high brand awareness or brand conscious behaviour, however an aspirational element emerges

with her satisfaction at purchasing a number of counterfeit branded goods is clear. Also clear is the way she relates them to items at home – she has purchased the bags to complement particular outfits or for particular, anticipated, occasions – and because they are items that she would not ordinarily buy due to the high price of the genuine articles:

What happened was ... Andrea ... that used to work here ... lives in Dubai so she and her sister met me one evening at 6 o'clock and they took me to the place to buy handbags. So they knew three of the shops that they always deal with so we went there really and I bought four handbags. One was Tod, one was Prada, and the other two were, is it Feragarno?

SW – Ferragamo

Yes. Two of those.

SW - So all well known brands. Are you pleased with those?

Yes, very, I won't take them on holiday, but I will use them here ... because I bought two cream ones, one for use at work and one for a wedding because it's quite an unusual shape and really it's a cream and mink colour, so that would nice for weddings or something special like that and the other two, one was to go with my wine/brown boots for the winter and the other one was, that's a lovely buttermilk colour with tan.

SW - and were the particular brands important when choosing those? Did you look at the bag and the colour or the brand first?

Well I wanted something that I wouldn't normally buy, I mean if you bought them at the proper prices they would be up to hundreds, because actually I did go to the Tod shop in one of the arcades and, you know, it was very, well understated when we went in because there's only a couple of bags and shoes but the cheapest bag there I think was something like £400, so I mean I wanted something because you don't get that opportunity at all do you? So I obviously was going to buy some brand or other, that I couldn't have afforded if I bought it, but then I also wanted a particular shape that would suit me. And what was

interesting going with Andrea was her sister because they are young, they looked at big chunky things, different from the sort of bags I like I suppose because I am older.

Like Rebecca, she is aware of the premium price of the authentic brand, which she uses as a benchmark for the 'value' she has obtained. While she does not attach the same sign value to the goods, there is nonetheless significant satisfaction in the acquisition. Again, this is an example of the actual quality not being important – it is the intangible associations that are significant, rather than the functional quality (Biel 1991, Aaker 1996)- a case of the brand being bought rather than the product.

6.38 Risk and Security

Jemima's strong connection to home and her prioritisation of personal relationships and her use of talismanic objects indicate that although she has travelled quite widely, she is more of a a psychocentric traveller (Plog 1991). Security is obviously important – it is not an explicit concern but she intimates that there are situations that feel threatening. On the collage she includes an image of New York featuring the 'Big Apple' logo. While she does associate the destination with the symbol and the strapline, there are no other brand associations: *Well yes because that's what you think of with New York, you expect to see a big apple out there, well that's what I think of, because everyone says the big apple.* However, she does associate it with security based on her husband's experience: '*George has been there but he didn't like it ... he said he can't explain it, he just felt that he was glad to get out'*. However, unlike Dai she is not discouraged from travelling to New York despite her husband's reluctance and feeling of insecurity when he was there and it does not prevent her from including it on her imaginary travel itinerary.

Security, consistence and dependability are all key rational qualities of brands (Gilmore 1997, Berthon *et al.* 1999, Barwise *et al.* 2000), however similarities between brand features result in consumer indifference and less discriminate choices (Tversky 1977, Nisbett *et al.* 1981, Chernev 1997). Jemima makes repeated references to her husband's preference for premium hotels. While she does mention particular brand names, for her the significance is in the qualities associated with the star rating, rather than differential

attributes between the particular brands. The Sheraton brand is salient and she uses it as a benchmark for hotels of a similar standard (Keller 1998):

Well, it's important that it has to be at least four star because George won't go otherwise and he chose this one [photograph J4], *partly because it was a Sheraton ... because he always thinks that they've got a good reputation because he stays in them all around the world - and he tends to go for somewhere like the Sheraton. The one he doesn't like is Carlton, funnily enough, which is normally because he finds it a bit old fashioned ... we have stayed in one but he wasn't impressed and he stayed in another one when he went away on his own and he said 'I really don't want to stay there again'.*

In the following excerpt Jemima explains that she included an image of the Radisson hotel on her collage because she had a good past experience to relate to – however she also demonstrates her brand confusion. It is noteworthy that like Dai and Audrey, she is uncomfortable with the high level of service in some premium hotels, finding it unnecessary and intrusive:

Well only because we stayed in the Radisson in Acapulco, I think it was. I can't remember, the Radisson that changed to Sheraton or Sheraton that changed to Radisson, one way or the other and we liked that so I thought we'd go for the Radisson again. Because we've used it before and I thought that was really nice ... because I think there are some five star hotels that I think you don't want to go back there again ...because they are too ... well in a way too attentive, you know? The man is always there to open the door for you. But I don't like that so much, it's just that you like all the comforts.

Jemima constructed her collage in combination with her husband George (*see narrative six).* It is very large – covering two sides of the sheet and is a mass of images depicting a one way, round the world trip that they would take together. The images are predominantly of destinations, transport and accommodation, used to represent the level of luxury and standard of quality that she would choose, rather than the specific brands. The exceptions are the Orient Express and Concorde – like Elizabeth (*see narrative seven*), the transport is a significant element of the overall experience, however these are unique brand experiences with very strong differential associations. She has used British Airways

Business Class to represent the level of air travel, but as she states: '*George went on British Airways ... I don't know if that's the best one but we just wanted to show that it would be business class if we went with that because I think that was what ... he went with business class and he thought that was nice. Because he says, I think he's been first class once or something but he didn't see much difference.*'

6.39 Holiday Patterns

Commensurate with family life cycle theories (Wilson and Gilligan 1997) Jemima's holiday taking pattern has changed with age – having higher disposable income and fewer commitments give her the freedom to travel more frequently. However, it is also indicative of postmodern behaviour – a lack of brand loyalty, and a sophisticated, bricolage approach to tourism. Rather than being passively influenced by marketing activities, her 'tourism experience' is made up of many individualised, personalised experiences. While she is brand aware to a certain extent, she chooses from a repertoire of offerings to construct her own experiences. In the following excerpt, she describes a visit to the Burj al Arab Hotel in Dubai – a heavily marketed seven star hotel which has become a tourist attraction in its own right (and charges an entry fee of £20). She describes how she purchased some souvenirs with the hotel logo that look '*expensive*'. Contemporary consumers attach worth to brands and products that make them feel good (Firat and Schultz 1997). The purchase of the souvenirs was very personal – a reminder of an experience, and she indicates the pleasure she gains from possession of the bags (Ross 1971) which in addition have significant badge value – she describes the good feeling she gets when using one of them. Again she emphasises the connection with home in her comment that '*everything is to bring home*':

We paid the £20 to go in but they're quite good, they gave you a voucher so you can use it inside. Some of the people inside the hotel had one of their teas, there's sort of like a high tea, but we didn't, we decided we'd just wander around and sit there, because you could do that anywhere, and then I bought a sports bag and a beach bag and something else to bring home. Everything is to bring home. They're very ... they're both black but they are very distinctive with this Burj al Arab motif on. They are very plain but I thought they just

looked very expensive and, I don't know how to describe them, they're very plain but there's something about them that I just thought ... 'yes they do look very nice'. I use them for the golf because I play golf and you know you take clothes with you to change like open days and things when we go to other golf clubs so I always use that one then. I just feel nice carrying it and I know it sounds silly.

SW - Not at all. Have people remarked on it at all?

Some people have said 'oh that looks very smart, where did you get it from?' I don't know that people notice really, but I feel it's nice so that's what we spent our money on.

6.40 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Six George

George is in his sixties and is semi-retired, working as a free-lance consultant which takes him overseas on business several times a year for a number of weeks at a time. He is married to Jemima and they constructed their collage together. Unlike Dai and his wife, they are clearly very compatible and when on holiday, while they have different ideas and preferences, they are willing to compromise. Because he has travelled so widely on business, he is familiar with a variety of airlines, hotels and destinations. However, he is not loyal to any particular brands and considers that there is little to differentiate between competing brands. The fragmentary and experiential nature of tourism products makes evaluating them very difficult and they are subject to many uncontrollable, subjective factors and evaluation is often based on the most recent experience and the extent to which they met expectations (Lovelock 1996, de Chernatony and McDonald 1998, Baum 2002). George illustrates this in the case of airlines where past experience led to lasting positive and negative impressions. His explanation of the features that influence his choices is an example of the challenge that service providers face in maintaining standards and keeping brand promises. In highly competitive industries where the basic product is virtually identical, there is heavy reliance on product augmentation and differentiation through service quality and positive brand associations. However, it is a tenuous link and disillusionment as a result of a bad experience is a constant threat (Kotler *et al.* 1996).

SW - You have a picture of British Airways ... is this your chosen airline?

Not particularly, we haven't had that, but Club I think is, you know, is sufficient. I wouldn't, OK I know there's no restriction on this idea, but I can't quite see the point of travelling first class, unless someone else is paying. And in fairness, that's the area that British Airways are now concentrating on, is their Club class, possibly to the exclusion of economy. That was the significance of it. I'm not sure that probably as far as airlines are concerned, I could come up with a few that are better than British Airways. Emirates was very good that we went to Dubai with ... Thai international I've travelled with quite a bit

and they were superb I thought. I'm going back out with them. Would you believe Air India was very good Club Class?

SW - In what way?

Excellent service and attentive. I've had good service with British Airways as well in Club, but I don't, they've gone off I think, British Airways. I used them the last time I went to Ethiopia, they were alright but they were probably not as a good as Ethiopian Air which I've gone on before. So there's no great significance in that. But I think that it is significant because if you're going to do this, generally, club class flying, I'd be looking for that, we'd be looking for that.

Like the majority of participants in phases one and two, George evaluates destinations based on experience and expectations. It is notable that rather than conducting more formal information searches, his expectations and images are formed from accumulated knowledge and impressions, and he uses other destinations and hotel brands as benchmarks for these expectations. It is interesting that his curiosity and information gathering on destinations tends to be retrospective rather than preparatory – the visit sparks an interest which leads to the quest for information, rather than using information to plan and create expectations. Interestingly in describing how their visit to Fiji was a huge disappointment he endorses Ryan's (2002:28) statement that: 'the contemporary tourist may travel through a space that is already familiar within certain perceptual maps and images that the tourist already perceives due to the representations of place through modern media of television, film, internet, newspapers and magazines, and is perhaps cocooned in a tourist bubble'. Outside the enclave of their tourist hotel it failed to live up to the expectations that he had formed from associations with images and experience of other destinations that he perceived as being similar. Conversely, Australia exceeded expectations to the extent that he would like to live there – like Jemima he has strong links with home, and it is interesting that his benchmark for highlighting Australia as a '*superb*' destination is that it was somewhere that he felt he could make his home. Interestingly he echoes his wife in the way that he endorses his feelings towards Australia with the comment that friends also have the same attitude:

I would think that the best holiday that we have had was Australia, where we went to Sydney and spent three or four days there and then flew up to McCae on the east coast of Australia, hired a car and drove from there up to Palm Cove north of Cairns and then back through back to Brisbane, to Fiji for a week, then back to Brisbane for another 3 or 4 days and that was, the Australian bit of that was superb. It's difficult to say why ... I think mainly, I think it is the only time that both of us said afterwards, well we could live there. I enjoyed going to America and Mexico, Thailand wherever, but on the basis of the holiday, for two weeks it's great, we had no ambition to live there. Australia was different. Australia, the people were nice, the scenery, the city, I'm not that keen on cities but we spent in total I think seven days in Sydney and it was superb, you know, we could have spent longer. It was just that everything seemed to be super, I mean, we're not alone on that, because we've got friends who've said the same thing and I guess that was the best holiday, although the week in Fiji was a bit disappointing.

I think possibly ... I think it was wrong expectation. It's a pretty poor country and not ... I don't want to say not nice ... but you know, pretty third world outside of the resort hotel? I think the other thing was that they had some drought problems and it's mainly sugar cane, so this was looking all pretty sick. So it didn't look that nice. I mean the hotel and resort where we stayed was very nice and we enjoyed that but we didn't actually go on any trips. It was meant to be a week where we did nothing and that's precisely what we did; we just stayed inside the hotel complex and there was no hankering to go and look at the rest of the island. I came by coach from the airport down to the hotel and what we saw we weren't that keen on, which was quite disappointing really because Fiji has got a glamorous sound to it.

SW - Yes, it's interesting you mentioned the word expectations there, we'll come back to that and maybe talk about expectations about Australia and expectations of Fiji and how they actually lived up to, exceeded or otherwise.

Certainly Australia, well I say Australia, all we did was that bit of the east coast. It's a big country ... I don't think I want to see the rest of it in the middle anyhow. That bit exceeded expectations I would have said. We're not ones to do a lot of reading and a lot of finding out before going, if only because I find it a little pointless because if you're going to do that

and one of the points of going there is to discover what it is like and the other thing is that I find that I am more interested in a place after I have been there than before I go there. So, yes, Australia exceeded expectations. But like I said, with Fiji, I think, I saw it as being a more idyllic and glamorous place than it turned out to be. If I'd stopped to think, I'd have probably realised that it is more going on being third world. I had a same similar experience in the West Indies when we went to St Kitts and it was nice, it was OK, but again, pretty third world, unlike say Dubai, because you've been to Dubai haven't you?

SW - yes

You know, all the shopping malls and the hotels are superb and in St Kitts we had quite a nice hotel but it wasn't the sort of hotel you would get in Dubai or in the Far East or wherever. It was a much more basic arrangement although it was a 4 star hotel.

SW - You mention expectations and pre-conceptions, how do you think you formed those?

I mean depends where it is. I have a little experience of the Far East, Thailand and Malaysia so I know what sort of hotels they have in that part of the world. I suppose the nearest place would have been Florida ... to the West Indies ... and as a sort of a comparison ... and it hadn't occurred to me that the West Indies would not have been up to that standard, let's put it that way. OK, I am sure that there are, or know that there are really swish hotels in the West Indies but these are way above the sort of price range I am looking at so that the 4 star hotel in, I am generalising, but certainly in St Kitts was no where near the standard you would get in the Far East.

SW - Do you watch travel programmes on the television or read any of the travel magazines ... do you think that you are particularly influenced by advertising?

No ... no not at all. I think it is much more experience than advertising or being affected by that.

SW - Is the brand of hotel important? Are there certain brands that appeal more than others?

Not necessarily. Through business I've stayed in quite a lot of quite good hotels ... Sheraton, Hilton, that sort of thing. It happened to be the Sheraton in Dubai but for a holiday they tend to be a bit too expensive because they tend to be five star hotels, it's a different matter if someone else is paying.

SW - so when you were choosing the holiday... was it, the Sheraton, important in that?

Not particularly no. The price was. They were giving the best deal at that time. I did look, funnily enough there was another one, I can't remember the name of it now, that was a 4 star one, and I was going to go for that, but it turned out the Sheraton was a 5 star and it was cheaper. And as it turned out I think the 4 star one was more towards the centre of Dubai. But although this was a long way away, about 32, 35 kilometres from the centre, it was ideal really.

Again, with accommodation it is his past experiences that tend to influence choices – using the star rating as a benchmark he reiterates his preference for luxury hotels, although he admits to the restrictions of financial constraints when he is paying the account – here price is a factor in the decision rather than brand preference. In terms of his wife's comment regarding his preference of the standardisation and impersonality of large, internationally branded hotels, he exhibits Plog's (1991) psychocentric characteristics, and my inference is that security is important – travelling within his environmental bubble he 'gazes' on the spectacles with little emotional engagement. In the previous excerpt, when on the drive from the airport Fiji failed to live up to their perceptions and expectations of 'glamour', he commented that they were not tempted outside of the secure, tourist enclave of the hotel boundaries.

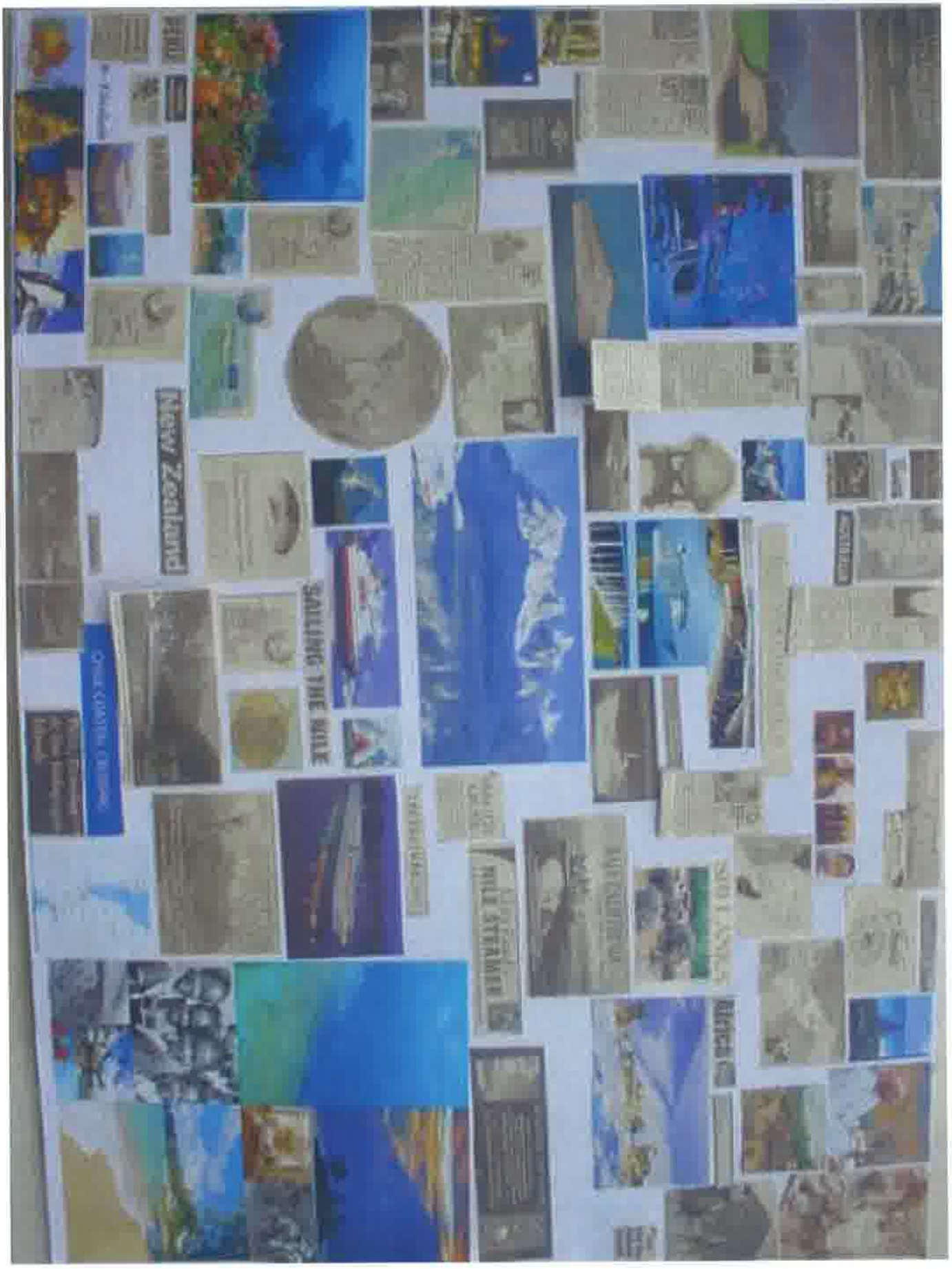
Tourism products are increasingly becoming commodified to be consumed at will (Boorstin 1992 Pretes, 1995, Calder 2000). Supporting Jemima's explanation of their holiday taking patterns, George illustrates the change in attitude towards the planning and nature of tourism participation with their ad hoc, bricolage approach. Somewhat surprisingly considering other factors such their psychocentric tendencies, they are quite opportunistic and little planning is involved. In accordance with the findings of phase one, George places considerable trust in the travel agent with whom he has built up a

relationship. Consumer/provider relationships are a key factor in the development of brand loyalty and as phase one of the research also indicates, consumers are inclined to have long standing, trusting relationships with travel agents. This emphasises the importance of face to face communication and particularly in the case of independent agencies with low staff turnover, personal relationships (Bendapudi and Berry 1997). In accordance with the findings of phase one, George places considerable trust in the travel agent with whom he has built up a relationship. Consumer/provider relationships are a key factor in the development of brand loyalty and as phase one of the research also indicates, consumers are inclined to have long standing, trusting relationships with travel agents. This emphasises the importance of face to face communication and particularly in the case of independent agencies with low staff turnover, personal relationships (Bendapudi and Berry 1997):

Well I guess we have at least three holidays a year, well at least I have three holidays a year. So first of all I go skiing for a week on my own because Jemima doesn't like skiing and then we have one long haul, maybe two, but usually one and then a few other holidays like Tenerife or Spain, well actually we haven't been to Spain for quite a while. So the long haul is the main holiday and we like going to different places. I rather like, it doesn't really matter where but I rather like the far east, having said that America, Mexico that sort of area is quite nice as well, so that's, it can be a do nothing holiday as Dubai turned out to be and we knew that it was going to be like that. Others we might go and have a look around and see what's there. Then the other shorter breaks, you know Tenerife say, hire a car and spend quite a bit of time lazing around but mixed up with driving around and looking at places. So that's basically the holiday side of it. If possible ... somewhere different, somewhere interesting, the weather has to be, well at least the chances of the weather being good are important so that, quite warm, even hot, as was the case with Dubai. What I tend to do is go into the travel agents and look at what deals they've got. I rarely go in to say we want to go to so and so, it's a case of see what's available and see whether I fancy it, or whether we fancy it I should say. So it's not ... I know a lot of people sit down and plan in meticulous detail what they want to do, where they want to go but we don't do that. It's more a case of what is available, oh that sounds quite good, let's give that a go.

SW - You mentioned using a travel agent, do you tend to use the same travel agent?

Yes. I get a pretty good deal there, it's someone ... forget his name now. Millennium Travel on London Road. I think he ... what happened was ... this guy, Phil someone, I think he worked here and he ran this travel agent and then I think he was going to pack it in but another girl, Sue Watts who worked with him, I think they were partners at that stage, she decided to open up her own travel agency and that's Millennium Travel. They're good ... it's, they are prepared to give the time, and the problem of going to the high street names is that you have to go in knowing exactly what you want. But as I said, what I do is to go in to Millennium Travel and spend two or three hours in there but then finding out what is available. We want to go in three or four weeks or whatever and want as wide a range as possible and they look to see what is available.



Elizabeth

E1

E2

E3

E4

E5

6.41 Participant Profile and Narrative Interpretation Seven

Elizabeth

Elizabeth currently works part-time as a G.P. practice nurse in Cardiff. She is in her early fifties and is married with two adult daughters. She is heavily involved in the medical profession both professionally and personally – her younger daughter is studying medicine at University and her elder daughter is married to a surgeon. Her husband is an eminent physician and academic who travels regularly on business both overseas and within the United Kingdom. Several times a year Elizabeth accompanies him on these trips, which are then extended into a holiday. These combination business/leisure trips form a significant part of Elizabeth's annual holiday portfolio and while she is not directly involved in the business of the conferences and seminars, she does have a strong interest in the proceedings and sometimes attends the lectures. There are two overriding themes in Elizabeth's narratives – time and self-actualisation.

6.42 Time

In contemporary society, leisure time is an increasingly valuable commodity (Cockburn-Wootten 2002). For Elizabeth holiday taking is heavily constrained by work and family commitments (although her children are grown up she still has a very close, maternal relationship), and is linked to the academic calendar through her husband's work. In her idealised holiday, the removal of time constraints is the most significant aspect. Her travelling companion is her husband, she imagines them both to be retired. Having time means that she can spend a leisurely six months planning the trip, which would span three years. Throughout the conversations she refers repeatedly to time and the luxury of not being time bound – aware of the constraints of time on her everyday life, she takes a retrospective view of travel, choosing modes of transport reminiscent of the days when travel took much longer, with the journey becoming a significant element of the experience. Her primary mode of transport is by ship and boat – which she considers is important in gaining a true perspective of distance and time. Time/space compression is a contemporary characteristic – applied to postmodernism, tourism and partly attributed to technological advancements (Bauman 1998, Cooper 1999, Ryan 2002).

In postmodernism the increasing pace of life and time compression is leading to greater individualism and self awareness, resulting in the need for escape into experiential, introspective and reflective pursuits (Firat and Dholakia 1998, Cooper 1999). Ryan (2002) recognises that tourism presents a time paradox – while tourism presents a time free from everyday constraints, it is in fact experienced within fixed time boundaries. In her imaginary trip, Elizabeth is stretching those boundaries. Unlike Dai, whose preoccupation with age impels him to actively defy it, rushing to engage in a multiplicity of experiences before it is too late, Elizabeth is conscious of time in a totally different way. While she also discusses a range of varied experiences, it is taken at a much slower pace. For her, the imaginary holiday presents a release from the bounds of time, time to learn, to reflect and to experience time and space within the context of different countries and cultures. However, Elizabeth presents an interesting dichotomy. While she wishes to escape the constraints of time, her need for communication with home is satisfied by harnessing technology – the very technology that will compress time and space in an instant to bring her and home together (Bauman 1998):

First of all I would retire from work because I am near the end of my illustrious career anyway and I would like to take six months in planning a trip. My ideal companion would be Elwyn of course and it would be very nice if we could retire and if I had Bill Gates' millions we could, so money is no object here. I was thinking to myself - mostly while I am on holiday I like to be doing something or other, learning something about where I'm at and as I didn't go to university and get a degree, you know? My education I suppose you could say ... is lacking in a way, I'm looking upon this as a big adventure and education. So we're going to take three years over this. And I wouldn't want to be going hurtling though the sky in a metal box. My mode of travel would be ship and because I feel then you get to appreciate the time it takes to actually reach some of these far flung countries for instance when my Aunt was in the Navy and posted to Hong Kong, it took her six weeks to get there and during which time of course she stopped off at all sorts of interesting countries on the way and it gives you a real feel of you've travelled the world to get to this destination. So I just think of myself as the old days of sailing, you know, when life was so civilised, that would be my ideal form of ship travel. I think it's quite disorientating for a start with the time zones of the world and your own body clock. You can arrive in a place and you really do feel quite unhinged, a bit detached almost because you haven't been

given time to prepare your body, your mind maybe because you more often that not have checked out where you're going to be arriving at so you're going to be expecting a certain amount, but it just doesn't give you such, it's almost like a shock to the system, maybe it's an age thing. Younger people, it doesn't phase them as much to arrive the other side of the world within 24 hours and just pick up the strings and get on with it. Maybe that is it, older people like to savour the time that bit more. So that's my first choice. Now the type of ship I would go on. I feel for three years I would need company because I am a fairly sociable animal and if I was not mixing with people after three years I think I would become more freaky than I am now. My husband isn't such a social animal but I think he needs it as well otherwise you lose touch. So I wouldn't go on some of these cruises that you see on the television with ... stampeding ... obese people rushing up to the dining room for the next nosh-up, which is totally gross. I think mine would have to be quite a select ship and I would, there could be different people getting on at different times and I would be getting off as well, but during that time it would be nice to meet interesting people who are not just thinking of food and drink the whole time. So on board ship I would, I like to think of secure things around me so I would have a really beautiful cabin and I would have all mod cons and if I wanted to, I could cook in my own cabin as well, I'd have a little kitchen so that sometimes if I was going off at a particular port for a day or however long, I could bring back local produce and sample that myself. I'd also have all the IT backup in my cabin so that I could link up with friends and family as often as I liked and I'd have the money to fly them out to me at various points on the go if I decided this could be super, I'll bring the family, friends, girlfriend, whoever, out for two weeks to join me. Therefore I am having the best of everything. I'm going around the world learning about it all but I am linking up as well. Because it's quite important to me. I think it would be very interesting to link up and talk about my experiences of the past week or that day or whatever, but also then to touch base at home so you've got the feeling the other side of the world, way in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, this tiny person, and yet you can link up in a couple of seconds to your nearest and dearest, so I'm not against technology as such but it just doesn't appeal to me. I know jet travel has to be because we're all so fast moving these days but for my dream, this is my dream, I would want to get away of the speed of the travel but yes I would want the speed of the link ups. So I want the best of everything by the sound of it. So in this cabin as well, or on board ship there would be a magnificent library and as I say, all the IT backup so that where, the country and ports that I am travelling to,

I can research before arriving so I would see my anthropological knowledge, I would hope, increasing. For instance the days spent on the Pacific, I could be writing up on part of my voyage so far but then I could also be researching and planning and learning about the peoples of the places I am journeying to. I've also put trains on my collage because I feel if I got off, disembarked, at say South Africa for instance, I would take ... is it the Blue Train that goes up through ....? So my mode of travel I think also would be train to get a feel for the countries I'd be visiting once I was there because I think that's again a very interesting way of travelling across a country. Yes, so I would have an idea of my trip, of my itinerary but then it would be subject to change as and when. So I would look at it as at the end of these three years I have really, really been round the world, not on these go round the world air ticket type thing, and I feel that I could then spend the next year or so collating all my experiences and writing about them and getting all the information together and to me that would be almost like my sort of dissertation on it.

6.43 Self Actualisation

In the past two decades there has been a steadily increasing focus on the satisfaction of higher level needs such as self-reward and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943, Lawson and Samson 1988). Intrinsic to Elizabeth's holiday experiences is a thirst for knowledge and self fulfilment. She is surrounded by highly educated people and academics. Although she herself is a well qualified professional who constantly strives to gain understanding and knowledge on a range of topics, she nonetheless has a feeling of inferiority and lack of confidence in her own level of knowledge. When she is planning a holiday she reads and digests a huge amount of information from sources as varied as tourism literature; newspaper travel articles; travel publications such as guides, novels, autobiographies and biographies; lifestyle magazines and the internet. The information is not restricted to the usual tourist attractions, but encompasses bird life, flora and fauna, food, history and music, and it is significant that her collage is very different form those of the other participants in that it depicts many of the cognitive aspects which are so important for her, such as reviews of travel related literature taken from broadsheet newspapers. In the following excerpt she is describing the things that she takes away with her. Music is very important – as Audrey and Susannah choose food and drink, she chooses music which is

representative of the country and culture to which she in travelling and uses it to enhance the experience of the host destination through immersion in to the culture [*photographs E1 and E2*]. She is very knowledgeable about a wide range of music genres and tolerant of the varied tastes of family members. Similarly, her choice of relaxation reading and listening material reveals her level of intellect. Rather than reading magazines and light beach reading she chooses non-fiction and contemporary novels. There is an interesting contradiction in that while she makes considerable effort to engage with the culture and atmosphere of the destination, she still feels a strong need to stay in touch with home, even taking a world band radio as priority in order to be able to listen to the news:

Right, we're talking about what's assembled on the bed for our holiday in Sicily [photographs E1, E2] *it's important to us to take CDs and portable hi-fi equipment to wherever we're staying. We usually take the kind of music that would be part of that country's music, for instance we've taken Italian opera, arias, the tenors, all the kind of range of Italian music, baroque music as well ... to us that is part of getting the feel of a country, whilst you're there it's very pleasurable to listen, as I say, at the end of the day sitting there with a glass of white wine and nibbly bits listening to an opera before going out for dinner in the evening. In addition we've taken ... because my daughter's staying in the same room with us ... her taste in music which would be hip hop, rap that sort of thing at a fairly reasonable level, plus then our other tastes in music which would range things like Billie Holiday, Django Reinhardt, whatever ... easy listening ... Frank Sinatra, things like that, to modern day easy listening pop like Craig David or whoever is around at the moment ... but so it would be very important to us to pack a world band radio so we can tune in in the mornings to world service and check in on the news from home so to speak. Again of course within your hotel room most places have television these days and sky news. We try not to put that on too much because otherwise you're never going to feel like you get away and have a change and you're bombarded with this. But as it was the World Cup football the week we were away, we did succumb and have one or two matches on or part of it. In addition we also take talking books and those sort of tapes we would listen to down in the gardens or next to the pool when you've got an hour relaxing you don't actually feel like reading a book you just want to lie there with your eyes closed listening to a story and those sort of things. I particularly like Garrison Keilor and he's got a very soothing voice and a very dry sense of humour. It could be Jeremy Paxman ... but I find*

him a bit abrasive. We pack the batteries, the adaptors, all that kind of thing and I do find that it takes up a lot of our luggage but very often we're border line going over the weight allowance because we've packed so many CDs and books, the books that are ... cameras as well, full camera equipment, a small in the pocket instamatic with a small zoom, in addition a big 35 mill with various zoom and wide angle lenses would then be in a separate case on the shoulder weighing a ton, but that again so we would take photography books, instruction books maybe or advice on to get special effects and this again is a very important part of the holiday, to go out and get interesting shots. So the type of books we would pack in addition to instruction books we would pack guides or we might go to the library and photocopy stuff or information. [Photograph E3] *William Boyd, yes we like him, very readable, especially on holiday, with good sense of humour, a lot of his books are about Africa which again we enjoy very much ... then there's a book on birds, Collins book on birds, we always take something like that with us, the birds of an area and might a month or two before we go buy books on the internet to further our knowledge, because often by buying a bird book you will find you will go to very interesting parts of the location you've arrived at that the brochures don't mention at all unless you are going for a specialist brochure like a bird watching brochure or bird watching holidays are even catered for now aren't they? Then we've got, I particularly like Fay Weldon, I enjoy her style and then I've got the Tracy Chevalier book about the Vermeer paintings, talking about Vermeer the artist which I love because I like art, I like history and it's very well written, not too heavy weight and literature wise so I would say yes, books are extremely important to take on holiday.*

6.44 Holiday Patterns

Societal and technological change has led to increasingly varied, flexible holiday patterns and attitudes. Childhood holidays for Elizabeth were annual events, taken within the United Kingdom and much anticipated. It is noteworthy that like Dai, she remembers them fondly for their simplicity – so much so that she attempted to re-create them for her own children during their early years (much as Audrey wishes to do for her – as yet unborn - children). From the late 1970s, family holidays became more varied and were often taken overseas, but were always constrained by work and school commitments. Even now, with the children grown up, her holidays are heavily constrained by her husband's work

commitments, and are often an extension of a business trip. De-differentiation, juxtaposition and blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure characterise postmodernism – leisure and relaxation are incorporated into the work environment, while work encroaches into leisure space – technological advancements and societal pressures ensure that people are no longer free from the workplace even while they are on holiday. Ryan (2002) notes the escalating propensity to combine work and leisure on business trips, and certainly Dai's juxtaposition between business and leisure bears testimony to this. In recent years, Elizabeth has taken an annual holiday with her husband and family, and several other trips when she has accompanied her husband on business. Due to constraints on time and work these business/leisure trips are a significant part of Elizabeth's holiday portfolio, and something that she relies on for breaks throughout the year. Driven by the business need, their sanction provides psychological freedom from pressures of work and time, the planning and decision making is reduced, as are costs as the trip is partly funded by the business. While she has no control over the initial destination, accommodation and mode of travel, she does have the choice of whether or not to go, and also the choice of where and how to extend the trip:

Last year's business trip was to go to the Far East, to Hong Kong, to examine medical students. They arranged for our flight and accommodation in Hong Kong and we thought that this was a very good opportunity to extend the trip and they very kindly paid for us to fly to Malaysia. And we explored Kuala Lumpur there and the rainforest and the highlands and then we went back to Kuala Lumpur and then we came home. That leg of the holiday was paid for by us of course, but they paid for us whilst we were in Hong Kong and we combined business with some sightseeing. Then the other one was this year to a conference. That was in the Middle East and again the hotel was very, very nice hotel ... modern, very tastefully furnished in local, can't think of the word, decor... style. So and then again we tagged on a week's holiday with that, flew from Qatar to Oman and that was not such a nice hotel, but it was absolutely fine, but Oman itself, Muscat and our activities there more than made up for it.

At the time of the second conversation she was planning a short holiday for herself and her husband. However, in the final conversation she explains how in the end they simply stayed at home, citing factors such as time, cost and lack of motivation:

We did have the idea of taking a short break but in fact when we researched the places we wanted to go to for short breaks, the options ... in most cases I would say, we would come unstuck because the flight times didn't fit in with our timetable a lot, and so we found that in the end got so exhausting a task, trawling through things all the time, well not really exhausting but you know, that it just put us off and we couldn't be bothered in the end ...we were doing it ourselves on the internet ... Prague or the continent, Spain, Grenada, Madrid possibly ... then Venice. For instance Venice put us off because the time allotted coincided with the time of the Venice carnival and we thought then, my husband's cynical thinking would be everything's three times the price and very commercialised so that's out. So there were various ifs and buts with them all. 'Til in the end ... and the weather wasn't very inspiring for us to go anywhere in this country... we thought maybe Suffolk or Norfolk which we've been to before, which is very pleasant and good walks and bird watching country, but the weather was shocking for that week so we stayed at home. And that can be quite satisfying in its way sometimes if you catch up with things at home, things that you don't have time to do.

It is noteworthy that while freedom of choice is a contemporary characteristic, but in this case with a wide range of choice and with motivation being quite low, certain elements of independent planning and preparation such as transport and destination choice and availability and costs were so stressful as to outweigh the perceived benefits (and need for relaxation) of going away. However, in the case of the business/leisure trip, where certain elements are managed by others, the reduction in planning, decision making, choice and costs significantly enhances her motivation and anticipation.

6.45 Shopping

Shopping is an integral part of Elizabeth's holiday experience, although not to quite the same extent as Rebecca. Its importance is illustrated by her inclusion of extra shopping bags to accommodate her purchases:

We always pack two extra shopping bags, the small zip up variety so you can fold them up and put them in your day bag so I'm prepared if I'm buying bits when I'm out, I've got

plenty of room then to bring home my trophies and again I like to think that I would buy something special to that part of a country location as a memento really of the holiday.

Describing one particular shopping element of a business/leisure trip, she uses the term '*aim*' – like Rebecca, she takes shopping seriously. She also uses the word '*trophies*' for her purchases – the inference being that she seeks them out and emerges triumphant with success. Here – as with Jemima , department store brands enter her narrative briefly, and she speaks of them with familiarity. As she continues to speak about her experience of shopping in the Middle East, her insecurity and fear of being cheated emerges (the inference being that local traders prey on vulnerable tourists). Where for Rebecca the risk enhanced the shopping experience (combined with the lure of the coveted goods), for Elizabeth there is more risk involved in this type of shopping experience, which is not ameliorated through familiarity with any brand values and associations:

So, during this time, during the scientific meeting, there is also a cultural activity laid on for spouses and this time it was you could go to the Jordvik museum or there was a walk around certain older parts of York, it wasn't the Minster, I didn't go on that and I had already gone round the Jordvik centre before so I spent the time shopping and researching macs, which is where I came across... I would say that [shopping] *was usually part of anywhere I go. I like to have a cultural activity but I like to have a shopping activity as well. So my aim was to research macs, sounds very boring but in fact it was very useful. I didn't actually buy it there because I wanted to check it out with the Chancellor* [her affectionate term for her husband as the one who controls the finances] *and indeed it was passed by the Chancellor and so I purchased it in Cardiff because they had them in the House of Fraser in Cardiff. I looked in Fenwicks in York which was a very nice store so, I would say that shopping was an important part of anywhere I go. I like to look at the shops. Not necessarily purchase, make a huge purchase, but definitely suss out the, whatever's on offer in the shopping areas. It would be nice to look for things that are a little bit different, special to that area, so for instance earlier in the year when we went to Qatar, I went with the specific intention of looking for a rug so that would be my interesting shopping experience then and also to go to the old Souks to see what it was like, and make a few purchases, but sometimes I'm a bit nervous in those sort of scenarios because I don't know the score, I don't feel happy ... like if I'm bartering correctly or*

maybe I should do a bit more research before going. I'm not sure if I'm getting the right price ... whether I look as if I am a prime target ... looking quite obviously as a tourist and therefore possibly could be overcharged - and I don't know then whether I would have the right knowledge to deal with it. It does put me off because I'm not a good barterer.

Although she expresses her unease with the situation, nonetheless the rug is a souvenir in the sense that it is a symbol of having 'been there', it has added value through the associations with the experience that it evokes – an experience that is all the richer for the risk and emotional capital invested in it. Later on in the same conversation she refers to the experience of purchasing the rug again, describing the pleasure that she gets from it – pleasure that is heightened by satisfaction in getting a bargain:

We went to the Middle East earlier in the year and I went with the specific intention of buying a rug, which I found very interesting, if somewhat stressful because of our knowledge of sales techniques in that part of the world and the bartering system. People had advised us but we felt rather nervous embarking on this scheme because it was an expensive rug and we didn't want to waste our money. We worked out our budget and stuck to that and I think we got a bargain, I would like to think we have anyway, although the whole procedure took three days so that was a very ... I mean I look at that rug with great pleasure now and think it was worth every penny. It brings a lot of memories about the holiday and the nicer souvenirs are just a joy to look at. We bought a silver pot with a lid, I don't know what you would call it, from Oman, again that was quite expensive but it's lovely and I will always take great pleasure in that. I'm not so keen on the junk tourist souvenirs from certain parts of Spain etc, which to me are an absolute load of rubbish.

She expresses her unease in some shopping situations again later in the conversation. Referring to her experiences in Africa, she explains how she finds the harassment of the vendors stressful, something that like Dai, she would rather avoid during her holiday. In the following excerpt she begins by talking about branded clothing. Her response to my question about destination branded T-shirts is a strong illustration of how products and brands are used to communicate and enrobe the situational self (Schenk and Holman 1980, Solomon and Assael 1987, Folkes and Kiesler 1991, Aaker 1997). She explains how she considers blatantly branded goods (where the brand logo forms part of the design) not 'her'

– although she suggests that this is partly due to her age and lifestyle. Interestingly she then continues explain that she would not mind if the brand were discreet, but it would depend on the situation. While conceding that her friends would be understanding and impressed perhaps, she is emphatic that she would consider any even mildly ostentatious display inappropriate if she were with her husband's colleagues, who she feels would view it as frivolous and with distaste – my inference here is that this is also another indication of her perceived intellectual inadequacy. It is also interesting to note that like Rebecca, Susannah and Jemima, she is not prepared to pay the full price for the designer branded goods, but would consider them a bargain if bought at a discount:

SW - Would you tend to buy something with the name of the destination on it so like the T-shirts?

I tend not to go for that. I might for my daughters buy something like that, I personally wouldn't buy it for myself unless it was very discreetly done. I don't particularly like the brand names or place names plastered over T-shirts type of look really, it wouldn't interest me. But I think for the younger end of the market they do wear these things so it must be a generation thing, possibly. I would only go for, I would not flaunt a Dior T-shirt unless it had a tiny little logo up in the top left hand corner so, oh that's a nice t-shirt, oh actually it's a Dior ... as a statement, less is more, I think. I would think oooh, but then again but some people would think that was a silly expenditure, to buy a t-shirt from Dior when you can buy just as good from Marks and Spencers in exactly the shape I like, and I would think that some people would feel a bit self conscious at times going around in a Dior t-shirt and thinking she's got more money than sense, possibly. But if it was in a Dior outlet I might consider it. I wouldn't pay the full wack. It would make me feel good ... yes, but I might feel a bit embarrassed in certain circumstances wearing it.

SW - so, can you just give me an example situation in which you might feel embarrassed, and one where you would not ... you would wear it with pride?

Right, I would wear it with pride possibly if I was going out with my girlfriends 'cause they would understand but if I was in a scenario say with some of my husband's colleagues, not that I think maybe that they wouldn't notice but I think certain men think how ridiculous

buying a Dior t-shirt, you really have got more money than sense, that's when I would feel embarrassed if someone might turn around and say, what's that you've got on your t-shirt and I said well actually it's Dior, I might feel embarrassed in that sort of situation. Yes, so shopping wise yes I find it a very enjoyable experience when I'm away although I have to say that going to certain, when I've been to certain, been to Africa, I found it very stressful in the bazaars there. Can I talk about that?

SW - Yes

Because I think it's too pressured and I can't deal with it then all the people bearing down on you with, pushing goods at you and I find it then very stressful and I'm not interested at all in what's on sale because I can't wait to get out of there. And then I'm disappointed when I return home and I see some of the shops full of Africa replicas. And I think really nothing's becoming exclusive in the world today.

It is interesting that she considers shopping a (feminine) gendered activity (Cockburn-Wootten 2002) and makes reference to men's dislike and intolerance with shopping (as in her reference to her husband as 'the Chancellor' – of the exchequer). She states that shopping is: '*more of a female thing, I do find that men in general are not interested in the shopping side of activities on holiday. I find them a bit of a dampening influence you could say and a brake ... '*

In addition to shopping, sensory aspects of the trip are important to Elizabeth, such as the purchase and consumption of local produce. Like Audrey she uses local produce to engage with the local culture, bringing things back with her that she can keep and display as souvenirs – although these are not the kitsch items collected by Audrey [*photograph E5*]. The products she buys on holiday influence her brand choice when she returns home – she seeks out similar brands to re-create the experience. Indeed, food is so important to her holiday experience that she explains how even when staying in hotels they often buy local food and wine to eat in the room, and she includes a small kitchen in the cabin on her imaginary cruise so that she can cook the local produce.

Another interest of course is food on holiday, it's very important to us again to sample local food and we're not searching for the nearest Jeannette and Dougie pub ... Jeannette and Dougie being a reference to Shirley Valentine ... egg and chips variety ... so I've taken some pictures here of the amazing displays I find in the continental shops which I find so attractive and so much better than over here, although we are getting better I suppose. So again I would buy some one or two boxes of delicacies to bring home and the wine possibly some cheeses, all of that I find very enjoyable and the ice creams in Italy are beautiful so when I come home, usually if I am buying ice cream, I would go for the Italian brands if I am going for stuff for the freezer. We would go to the local supermarkets and see what's there because, especially if we are choosing produce to come home because that's where you can pick up the bargains, the local delicatessen and so on and yes the supermarkets can be very useful ... and I would bring back things as presents for some people, wine, usually ranging through the wines, liqueurs, cheeses, biscuits that sort of thing, coffee sometimes, preserves possibly, that sort of thing, the other stuff is more perishable so you couldn't take it anyway. So ... and sometimes the bottles themselves are so interesting, you want to keep them, which I do and maybe put them out on display even, in the kitchen, or wherever. They bring back, definitely bring back memories.

6.46 Trust in Brands

As she is involved in the medical profession, Elizabeth is very conscious of health risks when travelling, and she relies on particular branded products that she is familiar with and trusts – indicating that they can reduce some of the perceived risk of travelling. Her use of the term 'good makes' with reference to insect repellents and sun creams is interesting – she equates quality with performance and although she acknowledges that other brands are probably just as effective she is not prepared to take the risk [*photograph E4*]. While she has no emotional attachment to any particular brands, it is an illustration of how brand associations and positioning combined with performance result in trust and repeat purchase. However, brands are important in enhancing her '*holiday mood*' and the airport features as a significant aspect in the experience. There is a ritualistic element in her behaviour at the airport and like the other participants, there are certain products that she routinely buys and which are symbolic of being on holiday. She mentions Chanel as an example of a premium brand that she may purchase. Although it can be purchased in

many high street stores, in this context it is a signifier or '*token*' of the transition from the ordinary to the extraordinary – something expensive and up market that she would not normally purchase - a symbol to denote stepping into a different life sphere:

I tend to go for familiar because I wouldn't trust the local thing in many ways because I hear of, it depends on where it is, if it's somewhere in Europe I'm sure it wouldn't bother me, I have to say ... but further afield I tend to go for brands I know of because part of my job is dealing with people who go on travel and it's my job to advise them on safe water and food and therefore I hear of cases where the bottle has been tampered with and filled with local water and resealed, so that to me would be something I would have to watch out for. So the well known brand would be important in that case ... these I'm just looking at [photograph E4] *are a range of insect repellents and sun creams which again are very important as I'm the type of person that insects like and there's nothing worse than an infected bite when you are away which can lead to all sorts of complications so I make a big deal of putting on lots of insect repellent and I buy good makes with usually lots of Deet in it ... I don't go for natural recipes you could say with herbal stuff because research has shown that they are more or less a waste of time, so I go for good quality in that range of holiday products. But Permetrin is the name of the actual repellent and Deet is the other thing, so they are often then in proprietary brands, the generic thing is Permetrin and Dyetho or shortened Deet constituent. But then I also think that sun blocks are important ... I'm fair skinned with a skin condition. I've recently taken to this P20 brand that I find very good because I apply it once at the beginning of the day, it is a performance to put on and you have to get up extra early because you have to put it on three quarters of an hour to an hour and a half - I can't remember - before sun exposure but after that you can swim, you can do anything and you don't have to reapply. And for me that's very important. I am so fair I burn and this stuff has shown ... that it doesn't allow you to burn. Otherwise I would then, I do go for the good brands of sun block, I might even go for something perhaps on prescription because of my skin condition, so to me ... Sainsbury's own probably is just as good but I tend not to go for supermarket brands, I would go for things like ROC, that sort of make, which is also available on prescription. But that would be my choice for very high factor and good quality. I would also visit duty free shops on my way. I like airports like Heathrow, destination airports, which are again a very enjoyable experience before your flight because you have to check in so far in*

advance, I then have time to pick up even more books and I usually like to buy something in the perfume range and maybe some make up. Usually it would be mascara, eyeliner or a lipstick, some small token of a designer brand like Chanel or something really nice. That for me is a treat and makes me feel in the holiday mood. I tend not to buy clothes in the airport or souvenirs or anything like that because if I am returning from holiday I would definitely buy the duty free perfume and make up whatever but I don't go for the ornaments or the clothes because I feel that they are more expensive by the time you've got to the airport they put the prices up.

She makes further reference to distancing herself from the ordinary and the everyday (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003) in her description of a journey to Sicily. The airline was chosen primarily on price and she had no particular expectations, however she expresses disappointment that she was unable to have an alcoholic drink, which is an important part of her travel ritual (alcoholic drinks being an expected part of the airline travel product unless the airline has strict religious controls). She explains how she finds holiday preparations stressful indicated by her reference to passing what she terms the 'pain barrier', and using products and rituals to symbolise and aid her psychological departure from the everyday into the holiday sphere. She then continues to speak about her wardrobe, acknowledging the difficulty she experiences in attempting to plan her wardrobe for every situation. While she does take a situational wardrobe, she does not choose any particular brands, indeed she alludes to the postmodern tendancy to juxtapose premium designer brands with cheaper high street items.

That choice was made on price and booked on the internet ... Air Italia and we thought they are reasonably safe ... there were not many frills attached but we felt quite happy with the Air Italia.. we hadn't heard anything, not Aeroflot or something like that. Therefore price was our main consideration. We had two legs to the flights, the choice was reduced anyway of getting to Catania airport in the end because we had to stop at Milan and there are not many airlines that continue on to Catania so that was part of our reason there. Well we didn't have much choice in the end. The airline itself, I wasn't too impressed with. I have to say once I am on a flight I do like to have a little drink because I am usually very tired by the time I have reached the going on holiday stage. I've gone through the pain barrier about why are we going in the first place and I've come out of that and I'm at the

airport and I'm ready to have a glass of wine on the plane usually. Provided it's not eight o'clock in the morning. Or a gin and tonic, and they didn't serve alcohol on Air Italia which was a disappointment to me I have to say. So that again was part of the experience. I do find getting ready for holidays stressful and sometimes I think we try to be too perfect perhaps, try to do everything, life goes on while you are getting ready, you're trying to fit all these things in, you're trying to take everything ... all sorts of outfits to cover everything, I find more often than not I pack too much and when I get there I'm usually down to a capsule wardrobe, so why I haven't done that in the first place I don't know but I never learn on that one. It's the just in case syndrome, almost as if there are no shops the other end, I've got to take that or whatever. I do pare down jewellery, I don't take much of that on holiday ... clothes for the more formal dinner going out and then I would take ... so I would divide it up into nice day, I would find it important to me I don't want to look like a naff British tourist, especially when I'm on the continent or in places like the Middle East or even the Far East. So I cover up and I think that looks a lot classier than people walking around with bare legs and shoulders in museums and churches, I think it shows a lack of respect for the culture. I find that I'm reading about fashion or clothes pieces that they say you can have one really good piece and then you can buy lower end high street odds and ends to go with it and that's what it's all about these days and people aren't necessarily saying 'I only go to Jaeger or I only go to Mondi' or whatever... it's mixing everything these days ... I would be as happy ... if I had the money ... in Gucci trousers say, or if I found the equivalent in a chain store but at a fraction of the cost, I would buy these and be just as happy if they looked as good ... I would be just as happy I can honestly say if I found something in Primark at the lower end of the chain for street fashion, if it fitted and it looked good I would buy it and wouldn't be a snob in that way, not at all.

alone
ON THE ROAD
world
independence
VISIT
anywhere...
karrimor
Traveller
freedom
impulse
go ?
Two nights
travel
HOLIDAY
Plan
style
BOOK
Just do it...
away
low cost
indulgence
easyJet.com
FLY ME TO ..?
hotels.com
TEXTURES
people
architecture
café society
COLOURS
Food & Drink
COUNTRY

Sheena

W1

W2

W3

W4

W5

W6

W7

W8

6.47 Personal Observations and Experiences

Ethnography along with many other research approaches is an etic approach to understanding 'the other' – that is with the researcher as outsider, seeking objective meaning in the behaviour of the researched 'other'. In contrast, introspection, autoethnography and biographical ethnography are similar approaches to gaining an emic perspective in that they all use the experiences of the researcher as an insider to gain deeper insights into human behaviour (Mikhalovskiy 1996, Reed-Danahay 1997, Bochner and Ellis 2002, Sparkes 2000, 2002). Unlike introspection which is based solely on the experiences of the researcher, autoethnography integrates the experience of the researcher with that of participants. Drawing on three tourism trips taken in the last two years, together with the photographs and my collage as visual texts, in this section I have linked my experiences and observations with that of the participants to add a complimentary dimension to the study.

6.48 Changing Holiday Patterns

As discussed in chapter five, I am an inveterate traveller. My earlier holiday patterns were very typical of the majority of white, middle class families in the 1950s and 1960s – that is, initially a one week and then subsequently a two week annual event which was long planned, long anticipated and long remembered. As our family was quite large, family holidays were usually taken in a rented property on the coast of Britain. As my brothers and I grew older, my father took a two week annual holiday and we began to venture to Europe in a touring caravan.

Like Rebecca and Susannah, I still remember very clearly my first overseas package holiday, which was to Lloret de Mar on the Costa Brava in 1968 - the height of the boom in standardised, inclusive, mass holidays overseas - with a school friend and her family. I remember the excitement of flying for the first time, of staying in a hotel for two weeks, the sense of 'difference' – the language, food, climate and culture. I remember it as being quite hedonistic – in the sense that it was my first taste of freedom from the constraints of my own family, and the concessions we always had to make - with the main aim being to

get a suntan and possibly a holiday romance. I recall being proud of my suntan and on my return, the feeling of prestige from having flown to a distant country and experienced something different and special.

Since then I have taken every opportunity to travel domestically and overseas. I am an opportunistic traveller and for the years I lived in the Middle East, travel was a very significant feature of my life. I travelled regularly, for work and for leisure, and as with Elizabeth, the actual journey was an integral part of the overall experience – despite working with airlines and aircraft on a daily basis I have never lost the thrill of stepping as a passenger onto an aircraft or disembarking in a foreign airport. Often I would travel alone just for the sake of it – because I could – to Hong Kong for a couple of days shopping, to Britain and back in twenty four hours to visit family, and even sometimes to the Seychelles for the day. Since returning to Britain work, time, family and financial constraints have seriously curtailed my ability to travel. Nonetheless the advent of low cost airlines and the ongoing price war between long haul scheduled competitors and tour operators have provided transport opportunities and made ad hoc travel possible. The internet has also been a boon in terms of information, price comparisons and the last minute booking of flights, accommodation and other facilities.

In the past two years I have travelled for work and for leisure on a number of occasions including two student field trips to The Gambia, major holidays in Mexico, Dubai/Bahrain and Mallorca and several short holidays in Spain, France and Britain. The travel experiences I have focused on here are the field trips to The Gambia, the holiday in Mexico and the holiday to the Middle East. In the following accounts I have drawn on diary notes and photographs to present an interpretation of the motivations, feelings and observations that I consider relevant to the study.

6.49 The Gambia Experience

Of necessity the field trips were planned and booked several months in advance directly with the operators. The first trip in March 2002 was with the then, newly re-branded jmc travel. The choice of operator was made solely on price – the same hotel featured in

operators brochures and it was simply a case of whoever could offer the highest discount. While the departure airport was a consideration – Bristol or Cardiff being preferable - in the end it was cheaper to go from Gatwick despite the added cost of a coach. Group bookings are quite complicated, however the booking was made by telephone, and the booking process was unnecessarily protracted, inefficient and frustrating. The concept behind the jmc re-branding was to 'reinvent' the package holiday – that is, to bring the brand in to the 21st century by meeting the needs of increasingly demanding and multiplicit consumers. The focus was on augmenting the product through quality of service, a range of optional services such as special dietary meals, executive lounge facilities and pre-bookable seats, pre-ordered champagne and cakes usually at an additional cost. The theme of meeting the contemporary consumer was reflected in the logo, livery and in-flight meal service. Despite these obvious outward displays of change, on this particular occasion I experienced nothing that differentiated the experience from any other average package travel experience. In 2003 the tour operator experience was virtually identical – the same departure airport, the same hotel except that the tour operator was First Choice – again a decision made on price. This really supports the findings of the first phase and also the challenges faced by air tour operators in building a strong, emotive brand in such a price driven, competitive market when a significant number of the key components are not exclusive to one organisation.

As I enjoy travel so much there is always a pleasurable aspect even when I travel for work. There is however, not always a leisure aspect per se, this being particularly true for student field trips. In my professional role as lecturer and organiser (albeit shared) the responsibility involved often means that even in 'free' time or when engaging in leisure and touristic activities such as sightseeing, it is not easy to relax. The programme for The Gambia field trip is quite intensive and involves travelling around the country and spending two nights in very basic, village accommodation.

Like Rebecca and Audrey I feel that the style of luggage communicates messages about who I am. In my self perceived role as 'experienced traveller', I have a strong emotional attachment to my travel worn 'Karrimor' backpack which is the one piece of luggage I allow myself. The backpack has a significant and talismanic influence on my travel experiences, I feel that the backpack is commensurate with my self image as an

experienced traveller, and I am conscious of the brand. As a prestige brand of leisure wear and traveller accessories it is high quality and has some status value as a 'serious' brand, yet it is not ostentatious. Indeed, in an inversion of the practice of training service personnel to classify and measure the worth of consumers through the prestige of their accessories (Firat and Dholakia 1998), on occasion I gain pleasure from arriving at an up market hotel with my dusty, travel stained backpack. I also consider that the contents of my luggage can either enhance or mar a holiday experience. Like Rebecca, I pack very carefully, depending on the type of travel, the destination and the situations I am likely to encounter.

Packing for this trip is in a sense quite straightforward, and organised according to the various activities and situations. I know what the temperature is likely to be, I know what the programme is and I have an understanding of the culture. Therefore in this sense, I do consciously prepare my situational wardrobe – although in this case it is primarily in regard to climate, culture and comfort rather than style and self identity. Tourism is the main industry in The Gambia which has a long association as a mass package destination for winter sun, particularly with British tourists. Despite the numbers of incoming overseas tourists The Gambia is a poor country with major economic problems, and it is a country where the conspicuous display of even relative wealth is not appropriate. Unlike much of Africa, it is however a very secure country in terms of theft and personal safety. While I would have few qualms about taking expensive, branded goods from a safety aspect, I do from a personal social aspect. I am therefore extremely conscious of the things I pack, and I endeavour to include nothing that is ostentatious or overtly branded – I take no jewellery and have a special, plain wrist-watch, and a plain canvas bag to hold my camera equipment. There are however brands that I rely on particularly on this trip because of their functional qualities. The Gambia is very hot and a mosquito area, and the nature of the trip means that I have to carry quite a large amount of items such as sun cream, minor medical supplies and anti-mosquito preparations. Like Elizabeth, through previous experience I know the brands that I can trust, and would feel some distress if I did not have them with me, for example I always use ROC sunscreen, and take Savlon cream, Alka Seltzer, Imodium and a jar of Marmite – which I can't live without.

Elizabeth and to some extent Dai, demonstrated an aversion to things they felt were unpleasant. Dai avoids situations and areas where he may be exposed to perceived unpleasant and upsetting instances, while for Elizabeth in particular it was the sense of unease and stress with the market-place culture in Africa and the Middle East. It was significant that in the post-trip questionnaire given to the students, the only major negative comment was (repeatedly) a strong unease and dislike of the hassle and pressure put on them by the vendors in the market places. For some students this was so consequential that it affected their overall experience – indeed one student remarked that she felt it was: 'horribly stressful and frightening'.

Primarily through tourism, Gambian nationals have been exposed to aspects of developed Western culture for a considerable time, and this influence is clearly demonstrated here (Shaw and Williams 1994). While the Gambians have little access to communications technology, they are nonetheless very brand conscious and proudly use, display and trade branded Western clothes and other goods almost as an indication of their membership of a global culture [photograph W1]. The Gambian government have embarked on a programme of education for those involved with the tourism industry which includes understanding cultural aspects – again there is a strong indication of the power of brands within the tourism discourse. Photographs W2-5 are of a craft market close to the primary tourist area. In an attempt to differentiate themselves from other vendors selling very similar products and to woo and reassure British tourists, the vendors have adopted the brand names of prominent British retailers. Moreover they have used chosen premier, up-market brands and those with strong customer focused brand associations and values such as John Lewis and Tesco. For myself and other post-tourists, there is an ironic juxtaposition in the combination of the premium brand names and associations, and the eclectic array of tourist artefacts on sale – the kitsch tribal mask perhaps holding an extra significance because it was bought at 'Tesco'.

While generally these days I purchase few souvenirs – primarily because after having lived in the Middle East and travelled quite widely in the past I have to some extent saturated my capacity for local artefacts – I do always bring something (usually quirky and preferably old), with a particular personal significance back with me. In The Gambia I have purchased a few souvenirs such as local textiles to use as sarongs together with an

occasional wood carving and beadwork as much to stop the vendors bothering me as anything else – trinkets which lie unused, unworn and really unwanted gathering dust in drawers. However, on my first visit my prize souvenir was an old (I believe) and very tactile naïve bronze sculpture of a fish with four legs which came from Zaire. It still gives me immense pleasure and is displayed proudly. Last year I brought an old (I believe) and quite ferocious tribal mask – again sadly not from The Gambia. It was the sensory aspect of the pungent impregnated woodsmoke that persuaded me to purchase it. It is displayed on the wall in a very minimalist apartment where it is quite inappropriate – and the smell still evokes memories of Africa. I used to collect 'trophies' – I amassed quite a collection of metal airline teaspoons when I travelled frequently (and I still use them, and although nowadays they occasionally provoke a memory, they hold little symbolic status value for me). I collect the odd pen and notepad from hotels and other objects, such as a flamingo feather from a lake in Mexico and a turquoise bead found in the sands of Arabia, are still on display.

6.50 The Mexico Experience

This was a two week holiday with my husband taken in January. While my 'windows of opportunity' for travel are regulated by the academic calendar, his work pressures are such that while he can plan to take leave, it is not unusual for it to be cancelled at the last minute. Therefore we rarely book or even decide on a destination in advance. We are both 'travellers' in the sense that we don't like to stay in one place for more than a day or two and our holidays are very eclectic with a huge emphasis on multiple and varied experiences. I am not a reader of magazines, and the only one that I read regularly is the lifestyle magazine *Condè Nast Traveller* which signifies my interest and passion for travel – and my aspirations. In addition to having a professional interest in the features, I drool over the experiences and sensations depicted by the images of exotic and exciting destinations, stylish, luxurious hotels and innovative cuisine. However cost is a significant factor, and like Audrey and Rebecca I am Kardon's (1992:19) 'schizophrenic consumer'. I can only aspire to the travel style associated with the images, and our holidays tend to be a trade off - balanced unequally between very basic and occasional more luxurious elements. We want to travel from A to B as cheaply as possible with reasonable safety.

We use travel guides such as *The Lonely Planet* and *The Rough Guide* to find cheap, basic accommodation and interesting local restaurants – which is highly enjoyable. In contrast we 'trade off' the money we have saved, juxtaposing this basic style with a night or two in stylish and luxurious accommodation, and eat in expensive restaurants featured in upmarket lifestyle publications such as Condé Nast Traveller.

We booked the Mexico trip through an independent travel agent that I have used previously and had originally been recommended to me by a colleague. I support other participants in this study (phase 1 and George) in that when there are no particular destination or other preferences, it is much simpler to use a trusted, independent travel agent than spend time on the internet or on the telephone. The only criteria on this occasion was some warmth. We chose Mexico because we had not been before and because Airtours were offering a very reasonable package deal. The cost of the holiday including accommodation was less than the cheapest scheduled fare and we decided to use the accommodation as a base for touring part of the country. The only significance of the tour operator was that I had developed negative associations with Airtours from others' experiences. While like Susannah, I was unconcerned about the accommodation as we were not planning to make much use of it, I did have minor concerns as to the operational and functional aspects. However, like many of the participants, we had low expectations and consequently these were at the least met, and in some ways exceeded in terms of what we were using it for. As a result of this I have mentally moved Airtours from the bottom of my air tour operator ranking, to lie along side all the others. However – and this is a key point - our usage of this package holiday was very different to the conventional usage of package holiday. For us, it was simply a functional package – transport from point to point and an accommodation base. The flight and the accommodation were basic but because of the late booking and consequently the low price, excellent value for money. Other consumers who were staying for one or two weeks may have been less satisfied with the standard of facilities and amenities.

How much can be attributed to my natural, innate curiosity, and how much to the characteristics of postmodernism and the post-tourist is unclear, but wherever I go, particularly on holiday, I spend a lot of time watching other holidaymakers watch each other. Although the increase in mid- range package tours has contributed to Mexico

becoming more accessible in terms of flying time and finance, it is still generally considered an up-market and exotic location. Our accommodation was in Cancun, which is an archetypal enclave tourism resort. Dominated by up-market, barely differentiated, internationally branded North American hotel and travel organisations, the primary offering is an all inclusive package. Within Cancun the two or three Hiltons, Marriotts and Sheratons rub shoulders along the beachfront with other similarly (market) positioned hotels. I have previously discussed the concept of possession and the fragility and temporality of ownership within the tourism experience. The system for all-inclusive packages is that on arrival at the hotel customers are given a coloured wristband to wear denoting their level of provision. Usually marked with the logo of the hotel, these wristbands are identifiable with the hotel and sturdy enough to withstand normal wear and tear for a limited time. Although these bands are easily removable, in effect, by wearing them the customers are branded – in the original sense as a mark of identification, for the length of their stay. It was notable that the majority of all inclusive tourists continued to wear the bands when outside the hotel enclave, for example on day trips. My inference is that more than a mark of identification, these bands were worn with a certain pride, as a conspicuous symbol of status and group membership. Photograph W6 is an example of the tourism brandscape – heavily branded and banded tourists against a branded backdrop. On one particular occasion on a boat journey to Isla Majeres, I observed people looking at the bands of others and using the hotel as conversational gambit. Moreover, on departure at the airport people still wore the coloured bands, the inference being that the band was symbolic of the holiday experience, emancipation from the ordinary, hence wearing the band prolonged the experience and delayed the end of the holiday and the return to the ordinary and the mundane, as signified by its removal (Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003).

Photographs W1, W7 and W8 are other airport observations. The shop selling the T-shirts exemplifies the connection and juxtaposition of global brands (Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood) and the destination itself. As Susannah explained in her narrative, there is emotional, existential and symbolic value in these goods – the wearing of the T-shirt or hat is likely to evoke memories of a holiday experience; in a symbolic sense there is status in the display (or the gift giving) of global products and destination branded clothing. Similarly, photograph W8 shows a group of people wearing destination and product

branded clothing – however, here there is greater brand significance. Harley Davidson is more than a brand, it is a consumption sub-culture and a lifestyle icon (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Aaker 1996, Thomson 2000, Holt 2002). Through the conspicuous display of the linked tourism destination and Harley Davidson brands, these tourists are enhancing their (real or ideal) self concept, finding meaning in the goods, and thus 'feeling good' (Firat and Dholakia 1998:87). They are also sending resounding messages about themselves to others - not only have they visited Cancun (a prestigious, long haul destination) but they are (aspiring or actual) members of an exclusive club (Ross 1997).

6.51 The Arabian Gulf Experience

While a notion to return to the Gulf had been gestating for sometime, this trip was finally prompted by friends having gone to Muscat for a holiday. The following is an excerpt from a diary that I was keeping at the time and illustrates the intrinsic motivation that I felt: '*... already I am sensing a longing in myself - in describing the atmosphere and the sights, sounds and tastes they can expect I am beginning to get a sense of wanting to return'*. In the end I went on a whim at very short notice and arranged to stay with friends in Dubai and Bahrain – ironically, something that I did in the past many, many times without very much consideration:

'I will because I can' I am working at home, and start to think about the rest of the semester – I have not taken much leave this year and start to play around with dates – exam weeks are in May – I could take some time off during the first week and go to visit my friend in Dubai ... can I do it? In terms of work commitments yes – can I do it in terms of the family – how will they react? My husband is very easy going about my travels – the children are no longer dependent – except financially! The dog – my daughter will be here to look after him!

I booked my flights with Gulf Air using the internet and the telephone although based on my previous experience, Gulf Air would not be my airline of choice. However it was the only airline that would include a stopover on the return journey in Bahrain at a reasonable price. I had modest expectations of the airline, in actuality, due to the very poor standard

of on board service even these expectations were not met – something that will affect future decisions:

Gulf Air (GF) would not be my first choice of airline. I had to weight this up against the attraction of staying in Bahrain. I have had experience of GF when working for British Airways (BA) in Bahrain – and since then I have heard a range of reports about them - they have suffered against the competition of the newer and very ambitious Emirates. I am very loyal in a sense to BA – because I used to work for them, because I am familiar, because I trust their safety and their service. But - price is all important here and there was no comparison.

The Gulf Countries are very wealthy. While there is economic inequality, it is a very consumption focused society, with a high level of consumer sophistication and a good standard of living. There is a huge proliferation of globally branded goods with great status attached for those within the local and the expatriate communities. My hosts are socially very active and I knew the type of situations that I would encounter:

My friend in Bahrain is planning my visit. The Meridien Hotel has been built since we left on reclaimed ground on an island in the sea. It is now a landmark of Bahrain and for me a symbol of the changes that have taken place in the ten years since I left. The Hotels in the Gulf have acquired great tranches of the beach fronts that are divided (unequally) between private personal ownership, private commercial ownership and some public spaces – which are of necessity overcrowded and municipal. For the ex-patriates and local 'elite' the hotels are a vital part of the social fabric of Gulf life – as luxurious meeting places, drinking places and leisure places with exclusive – and expensive - beach clubs. The Meridien is now the premier hotel in Bahrain – having taken over that position from the Sheraton and the Inter-Continental. My friend has gathered together a group of old friends and booked a table for brunch on Friday (the Arabic weekend) at the Meridien –she tells me that it is a great opportunity to see inside the Meridien Hotel – this Hotel is itself a tourist attraction and my visit would not be complete without a tour of it.

On this trip I am in the role of experienced traveller, while I still use my Karrimor backpack as my main item of luggage, I also take a smaller bag which has symbolic value for me:

I recognise here that I am constructing myself as the traveller I want to be seen as, and consider myself to be through the anticipation of the signals I will send. I carry another bag – it is a Tumi bag – given to me by a friend and so has sentimental value as well as symbolic capital – Tumi is an understated, but expensive, prestige brand of luggage. I am proud to use it and taking it away with me gives me a good feeling – it positions me, defines me in my own sense and – as I perceive – in the sense of others. It also looks professional – it shows that I am not merely a tourist – I am travelling with some other (more serious) purpose. As a traveller I am entering a world of other travellers – ones who are sensitive to the signals that I give out as I am sensitive to the ones that I receive.

Unlike packing for The Gambia, for this trip I took my most stylish and up-market clothes and accessories. Rather than leave my jewellery and designer sunglasses at home, this time it was important to me to take my 'best' accessories jewellery with me:

I will wear my Cartier watch. This watch has great sentimental value, it is also my greatest symbol of prestige. I don't always wear it when I travel for security reasons – I have a Swatch (another style symbol - as a brand it has associations of simplistic style). I wear the Swatch sometimes when travelling and occasionally other times when I feel that it 'fits' – it makes the statement for the situation. Price wise it was relatively cheap – but I would not wear any other cheap watch ... Swatch is a brand that has a certain style. My Cartier watch gives me confidence – particularly in the Middle East where there is so much opulence and I know I will be visiting prestige establishments.

Dubai is heavily marketed as a shopper's paradise. Although I did not go specifically to shop, like Rebecca and Audrey, I did spend time searching for bargains – that is, goods that were different to those at home, or prestige branded goods at cheaper prices. Like Jemima and Rebecca I also bought counterfeit branded handbags, however it was not so much for the brand but for the design and the quality of leather. Relative to British prices, the leather goods are very cheap and generally of very good quality. Again like Jemima

and Rebecca I experienced a thrill in obtaining the bargains, however I am aware that although the quality is very good, it is not to the standard of the prestige brands such as Louis Vuitton and Prada. Now when I use the bags they always evoke pleasurable memories of the holiday, on occasion the bags are admired and my response tends to be *'thank you – I got it in Dubai – it's not real'*. Like Rebecca, I am conscious of their in-authenticity and I usually turn them around so that the logo is hidden, whereas if they were genuine I would use them with greater pride.

6.52 My Collage

The rationale behind my construction of a collage was twofold. Firstly in keeping with the nature of the participant involvement, it enabled me to understand and relate to the task as experienced by the participants; it also provided further insights into my own relationship with products and brands. The collage was constructed according to the same guidelines as the other participants. However as it was not possible for me to use it as a stimulus for a conversation, I have treated it reflexively, as a way to help me understand the contributions of the participants and my influences on the research and on the interpretations (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). Thus I describe my actions and thoughts as they relate to the process of making the collage, and the content and representations on the collage. I found some aspects of the collage challenging – occasionally it was difficult to find an appropriate visual representation for something, and on a psychological level, just as Dai and Audrey in particular stated, I found the process self-revelatory. It caused me to think deeply and confront my aspirations and desires, my behaviour and the influences relative to travel and holidays. It was also fun and gave me a sense of satisfaction, not only in completing something of value to the study that was quite nice to look at, but of having visually articulated thoughts, feelings and desires that I was previously not conscious of.

Central to my dream holiday experiences is freedom – primarily presented by the removal of the time constraints imposed by work and personal/family commitments. The idea of being able to go at a moment's notice – for a few days or a few weeks was the driving theme. Having no time constraints would give me to the freedom to go anywhere purely on

a whim – without planning. Stimulation would be primarily extrinsic - I have included images of a range of literature – books, travel guides and other literature such as *Lonely Planet* and *Condé Nast Traveller*. Sensory and cultural aspects would be very important, such as food, drink, music and activities such as sailing, skiing and walking, however unlike Susannah and Elizabeth I have not associated them with particular 'famous' destinations. I have no desire to visit any particular destination per se – my dream would be to have the means and the freedom to act on impulse and travel to a destination, a hotel, a restaurant or an attraction or an event as a result of seeing a picture or reading an article or a promotion for cheap flights. Finances are another constraint, having no monetary worries would contribute to the freedom - although I would not always choose the most luxurious and costly option. In a sense, little would change - I would continue to juxtapose high price and budget elements (although the balance would be more towards exclusive, individual and unusual – and expensive - accommodation). However, as with the shopping experiences of Rebecca and Jemima, and Dai's transport preferences, I gain huge satisfaction from obtaining a travel 'bargain', and despite the lack of financial constraints, it is something that I would not want to compromise. The juxtaposition would be reflected in my clothes, and travel accessories – I would continue to take my travel worn Karrimor rucksack, my Cartier watch and a laptop computer (essential for links to the internet for information), although I would only take the basics with me, having no financial constraints would enable me to purchase things locally when necessary, and leave (some of) them behind when I left. I would also take a top of the range 'Molton' folding bicycle – both a symbol and a means of freedom, independence and physical satisfaction. The brand is important here – being associated with status through its high price and its technical attributes. Other branded accessories were similarly chosen for their associations with high quality and functional performance and include a Maglite torch, a Canon camera and a Mont Blanc pencil. As with both Elizabeth and Dai who had a significant level of self-actualisation in their experiences (Dai's through physical challenges and Elizabeth's through education), and unlike Susannah's that predominantly hedonistic pleasure and excitement, my collage reflected the need for physical activity, challenge and self actualisation. Like Elizabeth and Dai I would use technology – the internet for information and booking and mobile links via the laptop computer.

6.53 Reflections on Personal Experiences

Born in the 1950s during the post war baby boom (Solomon 2002), I am younger than Dai and yet I can empathise with him and understand his use of leisure to challenge ageing through experiential and physical activity. I understand his fear of aging – not because of growing old per se, but because yes, life is too short and there are many places I will not visit, many experiences I will not have as a result of the natural progression of age. While I am aware that it is not possible to visit or experience everything I desire, there is nonetheless a compulsion to try, to fit in as many experiences before it is too late – so Dai's 'Carpe Diem' applies. Equally, I understand Elizabeth's feelings of intellectual inferiority and her search for self fulfilment and actualisation through her travel experiences. In the past nine years my programme of higher education has significantly enhanced my self perception and confidence, and my quest is still not fulfilled. However, I also empathise with and see parallels with Audrey, Rebecca and Susannah who are at different life stages. Like Susannah, my holidays are eclectic and experiential, like Rebecca, on occasions, shopping has great significance and I take it seriously, experiencing the same emotional charge from finding a bargain, or something different to the goods at home.

Just as the narratives of the participants reflect the individuality of tourism experiences, throughout the fieldwork I recognised both similarities and differences in my own behaviour, thoughts and perceptions. My brand expectations, perceptions and associations are based on past experience and stimulated by literature, articles and images in travel guides and magazines which raise awareness and induce feelings of desire. Mirroring many of the participants in the first phase of the study, considerations such as price and convenience outweigh brand as a choice criteria, even when the financial and time constraints were removed tourism brands would not be particularly significant, although other brands, particularly those of high quality, functional products would be very important experience enhancers. While I am not comfortable with the blatant display of status through brands, nonetheless they are highly significant in an unobtrusive, understated way. For me, brands signify membership of an exclusive, experienced 'traveller' (as opposed to luxury 'tourist') club. Echoing Elizabeth, who considers that

'*less is more*', 'famous' and branded destinations do not appeal, rather I would travel to places that had some idiosyncratic and different associations. It would have been interesting to further explore the extent of usage of the package as a functional, convenience transport/accommodation product, rather than a primary element in the overall experience. However in this study while the majority of bookings were relatively late and opportunistic, apart from Susannah, the tendency was to use the package in a more conventional way, rather than as I do as a convenient and cheap mode of transport and basic accommodation. This juxtaposition and play with various elements of the package gives me satisfaction and pleasure – my individuality is important and the slightly bizarre, the idiosyncratic and the unusual have a certain allure.

6.54 Narrative Summary Phase Two

The individual narrative presentation and interpretation of each participant is central to the approach and philosophy of phase two. So far in this section of the chapter I have synthesised the narratives of the participants with the interpretation and discussion. The information that has resulted from the conversations is so rich that it is not possible to condense the key findings into a few concluding paragraphs, hence the importance of enabling each participant to speak for themselves in their own voices, and the presentation of my interpretation within the context of the body of literature. Throughout the narratives, the range of diversities and the similarities in behaviours, influences and experiences is testimony to the complexity of contemporary tourism behaviour, highlighting the significance of understanding the intrinsic influences each individuals experiences. There are however a number of key themes, which have emerged and in this sub section I draw together some of the key aspects from phase two under thematic headings.

6.55 Constraints and Concessions

The identification of constraints as a significant influence on the participant's behaviour led me to ask them about their 'dream holiday' experiences, which in turn made them confront their own aspirations, influences and constraints. Take Dai for example - whilst at no time was he disloyal to his wife, nonetheless for him the constraining influence of someone who has very different behavioural characteristics – and possibly a different attitude towards ageing - was very marked. While he indicted that he was content to 'fall in' with her on joint holidays, there is a very clear difference in his own individualistic experiences, as evidenced by his work/leisure trips and in his collage. In contrast, while George and Jemima were interviewed separately (unlike Dai whose wife was not a participant), their narratives and their joint collage reflect their compatibility and their accommodation of each others preferences.

It is perhaps understandable that Dai, George and Jemima who are all semi-retired did not mention work and time as being significant constraints. However for Audrey, Rebecca, Susannah, Elizabeth and myself who are in full or part-time employment all considered

work and time as being significant constraints on holiday taking. It is noteworthy that since the last conversation Elizabeth is planning retirement from her part time job in order to relieve some of the pressures on her family life and thus reduce stress. Freedom from stress is an abiding thread in her narratives and she explains how she found planning a holiday stressful and thus did not go. She also describes her dislike of stressful bartering situations in local markets – like Dai, when on holiday she is uncomfortable and even distressed by situations that she considers unpleasant. Like myself, a key element in Elizabeth's imaginary experience is freedom from time and work constraints – those of herself and her husband. However, while I identified family pressures as another constraint, Elizabeth is similar to Jemima in that her narratives and collage reflect the need to retain contact with her family, harnessing technology to do so.

Other constraints are significant for Susannah. Like Audrey she considers holidays to be special times, separated from the mundane everyday through the symbolic use of branded and cultural products. However, while there is a certain freedom in being a tourist outside the social sanctions of normal life, she accepted that other social constraints exist such as dress codes and etiquette where non-conformance would spoil the experience. Similarly Dai, Jemima and Audrey expressed discomfort with some of the service aspects, for them impersonality and social and etiquette constraints were enforced by corporate, branded hotels. However, while Jemima was swayed by her husband's preference for this type of hotel, rather than conform or experience discomfort, both Dai and Audrey voiced a preference for smaller, individual establishments where they received a more personalised service.

6.56 Influences on Lifestyle and Leisure

This study has drawn attention to the range and diversity of intrinsic and extrinsic influences that shape the attitudes and behaviours of tourism consumers. Among the most interesting and surprising of these emerging from the narratives was the influence of Dai's attitude towards ageing on his whole lifestyle. In his experiences, he reveals the way in which his extreme consciousness and denial of age with its attendant infirmities and constraints, have a very significant impact on his life as a whole, and which consequently influences his leisure activities. In turn, his leisure and holiday activities are used to

support his self image and enhance his lifestyle. Past experiences – during childhood and during later life - were influential for several participants. Audrey stated she would like to re-create similar experiences for her own children, and Rebecca's memory of being embarrassed by being inappropriately attired has arguably influenced her need to ensure that she always has the appropriate situational wardrobe – thus reducing the risk of being in a similar uncomfortable situation. Past experience of other holidays was also found to be very significant for participants in phase one of the study – a positive or negative experience often being the basis for attitudes towards future tourism choices.

The influence of marketing, the media and travel literature emerges as significant in the narratives. In particular, the lifestyle aspects communicated through the images and articles in these publications were identified by myself, Audrey and Rebecca as being key factors in raising awareness, desire and aspirations. For Susannah, the destinations and experiences she chooses based largely on past experience, other choices are informed by marketing and media images from which she has developed quite stereotypical perceptions. In Rebecca's experiences the influence of word of mouth, marketing and media on awareness and communication of brand associations, the use of the brand wardrobe, the symbolic use of brands in constructing and communicating identity, the status value of brands and the success of brands such as British Airways, Kuoni and Dubai in building associations of quality, reliability and trust are all apparent.

Elizabeth's and to a lesser extent, Dai's and my own experiences, are characterised by a thirst for self-actualisation and knowledge. For Dai, his self-actualisation needs are satisfied through the hard, physical challenges of mountain biking. For myself, holidays are a way to widen my knowledge of music, art, architecture and other cultural activities. The significance of Elizabeth's notion that she is educationally inferior to family and colleagues is clear, and has been the motivating factor in her drive to further her knowledge, and thus her self image. The difference between Elizabeth's collage and the others is notable – it predominantly features destinations and transport interspersed with reviews of travel literature – emphasising the intellectual nature of her trip. She links the destinations with associated (marketed) experiences and attractions (Ryan 2002, Urry 2002) such as Emperor Penguins in Antarctica, geysers in Iceland, skiing and husky rides in Canada and elephant rides in Sri Lanka. The inclusion of captions such as '*expand your*

horizons' and *'discover the world'* captures the essence of her imaginary experience the motivation for which is learning and self-actualistion. In postmodernism the experience of movement is more valued than the arrival (Firat 2001) and this is certainly the case for Elizabeth. Travelling slowly from place to place, secure and safe within her tourist bubble she imagines engaging with the various cultures and destinations through literature, food and observation. Unfettered by the constraints imposed by the clock, and freed from the stresses and commitments of mundane, everyday life she imagines expanding her horizons physically, cognitively and spiritually – at leisure. Paradoxically however, while her holidays are a time for escape from the stresses and constraints of everyday life, and her imaginary experience is retrospective in capturing *'the old days of sailing ... when life was so civilised',* she feels a strong need to be in close contact with home – on the one hand expanding time and distance, on the other harnessing technology's ability to compress time and space to bring home to her on her travels (Bauman 1998).

6.57 Opportunism and Holiday Patterns

I have argued that patterns of holiday taking have changed from the days when holidays used to be annual, planned for and highly significant events in the calendar, to become more frequent, ad hoc and opportunistic. However, it is interesting to note how gradual these changes have been. Dai, Elizabeth, Jemima and myself are over fifty, and certainly those of us who had childhood holidays remember them as quite modest, annual events. Likewise, although Rebecca, Susannah and Audrey are a younger generation, their holidays were very similar in that they were quite modest, family events, although they were more frequent. They were largely dictated by the time constraints of parents' work and school, and generally remembered with great fondness, particularly the small, seemingly insignificant incidents. Audrey, Rebecca, Susannah and I recall the first holiday overseas and this emerges as being the point at which holiday patterns changed (it is likely that it also relates to family lifestage, independence and financial aspects).

Many of the participants in phase one were multi-holiday consumers, as are all the participants in phase two, and it is clear that generally patterns of holiday taking have changed to become more ad hoc and opportunistic – although they are still subject to a range of constraints. The amount of planning varied between participants – and here the

constraints were a significant factor - however, Dai, Elizabeth, Rebecca, George and Jemima were more likely to plan ahead (a few months which is relatively short in comparison to the past), while Susannah, Audrey, Rebecca and myself were much more opportunistic – indeed the freedom to go at whim is central to my imaginary experience.

6.58 Roles, Brands and Experience Enhancement

Postmodern consumers use and play with an assortment of carefully selected branded goods for self satisfaction and the enhancement of experiences (Thomson 2000, Holt 2002). Most significantly Dai uses products and brands as signifiers – to distinguish between work time and leisure time; to define and communicate his self image; to belong in social environments and therefore build confidence and security. Similarly the role playing element is very clear in Audrey's experiences. By nature Audrey is not very adventurous and she is not seeking thrills and excitement. For her, holidays are very much postmodern, sensory experiences with freedom to step out of everyday life roles into another time and situational sphere with environment, ambience and sensory stimulation being paramount. Her pleasure in these experiences is heightened by her awareness of their transient nature, and of her own role in their creation – using products and brands as props. Indeed, Audrey is very much a post-tourist. Aware of the fragility and temporality of the moment she immerses herself into a variety of 'experiential moments' (Firat and Schultz 2001:5), consciously playing with signs, roles and identities, using brands and consumption goods to enhance and enrich her experiences (Feifer 1985, Urry 2002). Anticipation is a very important part of the experience and she savours the time when she can wear the clothes she keeps 'preciously' for her holidays. Susannah also considers holidays special, and differentiates between clothes and accessories for work and leisure – some of which have special emotional and symbolic associations with past experiences. However, Jemima's behaviour is quite contrary to the other participants. Unlike Audrey and Susannah, she doesn't consider holidays as being special in the sense of keeping clothes and other goods for the holiday. Indeed it is an illustration of her emotional bond with home (and security) that she prioritises by keeping her precious goods for home.

My photographs depict the way in which destination branded T-shirts are used to enhance the pleasure of the holiday through the evocation of powerful memories and their status value – something that is supported by Susannah in her narratives. Likewise, prestige branded accessories possess particular significance through their associations with previous special holidays such as her honeymoon. On a functional note, branded tourism products provide a safety element – acting as risk reducers and also as benchmarks for quality, performance and expectations, as with Susannah's use of the Marriott Hotel in Egypt to reduce the risk of visiting a perceived unsafe (and therefore unattractive) destination. Similarly, psychographic travellers Jemima and George use branded tourism products to insulate them from the 'reality' of the destinations. Indeed, Jemima is extremely loyal to home, family and the familiar, however while she is brand conscious to a degree, she is not brand loyal. She uses brand associations and values in her choice of accommodation and transport, but she has far more trust in word of mouth and previous experience. George uses brands as benchmarks for the associations with expected standards of quality and service, but while he has some brand preferences, he too has no particular loyalty. This may be attributed to his travel experience – tourism consumers learn what gives them satisfaction through previous experiences, thus subsequent holidays tend to replicate these aspects in order to reduce risk and maximise resources such as time and money (Ryan 1995b, 2002).

6.59 Rituals and Talismans

MacCannell (1976:13) has described tourism as a 'modern ritual' and certainly ritual has long been a topic of interest in tourism studies (MacCannell 1976, Graburn 1983, Jafari 1987, Franklin 2003). Such writers argue that the tourist passes through three stages during the tourism experience: preparation and travel away from home, emancipation and suspension, finally repatriation. It was very revealing that many of the participants demonstrated the significance of ritual in holiday experiences. For Audrey, ritual included the packing of her clothes in tissue in preparation and anticipation of the holiday, similarly for Rebecca and myself there is a ritualistic element in the organisation and packing - with careful consideration of potential situations and the clothes and accessories that are packed,

but for different reasons. Mine is to save space and avoid taking unnecessary items, whereas Rebecca is a form of risk reduction.

For Jemima and George, holidays themselves are ritualistic and habitual in the way that they form part of the fabric of their lives, while holidays are special times, they are also routine, part of the ritual of life. Indeed, Laing (1987) asserts that holidaying is a matter of habit, although since his research was conducted in the 1980s it is arguable that this is a simplistic explanation for the diversity, frequency and opportunism characterising contemporary holiday taking. Jemima gives a very clear illustration of the application of the first and final ritualistic phases. She goes through a very structured and deliberate process of saying 'goodbye' to her home before departure, with the anticipation of the return building several days before departure for home – when, once again she goes through a process of greeting her cherished, familiar objects. Her use of talismanic objects to retain the bond with home and the familiar carries through to the way that other people inform her holidays, either through their own holiday experiences or as contacts and reference points in various destinations.

Dai's experiences also include a surprising range of ritualistic practices in which brands are significant. My inference is that rituals are a very important aspect – giving him a sense of security and safety through the familiarity and organisation of these rituals, without which his experiences would be far less satisfactory. For example there is the ritual of planning – always using the internet for information search and booking, working hard to build an important rapport with service providers through his repetitive and ritualistic behaviour in Ireland – and expressing pride in his achievements. When travelling on business, Dai uses products in a ritualistic sense to differentiate between work and leisure – always changing from one outfit to another at the end of the day. He also exhibits very strong and notable ritualistic behaviour at the airport. The airport has been revealed as a highly significant time and space in all of these people's travel experiences. For Audrey, Rebecca, Jemima and Elizabeth it is a liminal place, suspended in time and space where 'normal' rules and constraints do not apply. For Elizabeth, Audrey and myself it forms part of the tourism ritual – also a liminal space and a time to indulge in purchasing something extravagant, or something to enhance the holiday such as premium branded cosmetics or alcohol. For Dai it is a time to engage in other rituals - to gaze upon the array

of sweets and indulge in the freedom to choose, and to purchase his talismanic *Private Eye* magazine. Holidays too are times when people can indulge in behaviour outside the boundaries of 'normal' life - Audrey takes magazines that she considers '*a load of rubbish*' and usually would not read, and for Rebecca, Susannah, Jemima and myself, guilt is diminished when shopping for counterfeit branded goods when on holiday.

6.60 People and Self

Some interesting aspects of the role of self and the relationships with others were revealed in the study. For some participants (Susannah, Jemima, George and Elizabeth) other people were intrinsic to the experience. While for others (Dai, Audrey, Rebecca and myself) the inclination was towards a more solitary experience. Susannah registered surprise that her collage revealed the significance of others in her experiences and she includes different people for different experiences – although there is always a sense of self - her experience is enhanced through their enjoyment. Indeed, she demonstrates multi-identities– a trip with family, one with friends, another with her husband – playing at different roles together, with different props and accoutrements. Jemima's (and George's) experiences are also inextricably linked to others – symbolically through the tangible items Jemima takes with her and through the talismanic influence of the number seven; and through the endorsement and influence of word of mouth recommendations and family and friend connections to the destinations they choose. As for myself – although I am comfortable travelling alone, and have used the singular when describing my imaginary experiences, like Elizabeth, my experience would be enhanced by the inclusion of my husband, and/or our (now adult) children who are all invariably amusing, easy and compatible travelling companions.

The difference between Audrey's actual and her imaginary experiences reveals some interesting dichotomies, and supports the notion of consumer multiphrenia (Kardon 1992, Firat and Schultz 1993). In actuality she is family orientated, compliant and content in her role as daughter, wife, sister, companion. In her imaginary situation her choice of an inanimate, branded, lifestyle icon as travelling companion (the personality of the Mini Coooper brand being commensurate with her attraction to Britishness, retro-design and

style and a reflection of her self-identity) reveals her individuality and orientation towards the self, and the importance of brands in the creation of the various identities. Dai also reveals contrasts and contradictions between his own desires and some of his experiences. In actuality his work/leisure experiences give him the opportunity to indulge himself, in contrast to the constraints and concessions he makes when on holiday with his wife. In his imaginary experiences he is alone and free to indulge his hedonic immersion into a variety of diverse – and predominantly physically challenging - experiences.

6.61 De-differentiation – Shopping as a Tourism Experience

Although there is a gender imbalance in this phase of the study, it is notable that it supports Cockburn-Wootten's (2002) view of shopping as a female gendered activity. Shopping features to varying degrees as a significant element in the tourism experiences of all the women participants, but not the men. Dai mentions shopping briefly in his conversations, but is is not a significant activity for him, and George does not mention it at all. However, for Rebecca in particular, shopping emerges as a predominant element in her tourism experiences. While she clearly states that shopping and leisure are different, this is contradicted in her narratives. She states that the key features of a holiday are relaxation, new experiences and a new environment, and there is without doubt a fun element in the shopping, her narrative on the counterfeit brands contains elements of hedonistic pleasure, the excitement of the chase, the thrill of the risk and the satisfaction of the bargain (which is further enhanced through endorsement by others). However, her shopping is planned with great precision and focus, her vocabulary indicating seriousness and determination rather than relaxation. Interestingly she only shops for clothes and accessories and brands feature significantly – unlike Susannah, Audrey and Jemima there is no mention of other types of souvenirs, items for the home or aide memoirs - again an indication of her preoccupation with self image.

Shopping for souvenirs is something Audrey, Jemima, Elizabeth and to some extent I myself enjoy. However there is a difference - Elizabeth seeks 'serious' (as opposed to kitsch) products and artifacts; for Jemima the quality is less significant than the actual product and its symbolism, and she is prepared to pay a premium for locally produced

jewellery and artifacts for the home; while Audrey purchases products that will evoke sensory memories such as foodstuff (which she uses to re-create the tourism experiences), and – similarly to myself - kitsch, bizarre and unusual objects to display at home. Hyperreality and pastiche are characteristics of postmodernism, and both are evident in the attitudes of Rebecca, Susannah, Jemima and myself towards counterfeit brands – that is that the surface values symbolized by the brand overrode the significance of the authenticity – and any moral qualms that may have surfaced. Here again, were examples of the sense of play, fun and the satisfaction of passing off a fake as the genuine article. However, for Rebecca the game had more serious overtones – in her willingness to take risk in the pursuit of her 'goals'.

6.62 Post-tourists, Play and Pleasure

Unsurprisingly, there is clear indication of the strong element of fun, pleasure and escapism in many aspects of the participants' travel experiences – and indeed for Dai and Elizabeth an aversion to anything unpleasant that may mar the pleasure. There is an indication of the move towards greater immersion in sensations, performance and manipulation of products and signs in the enhancement of the experience (Firat and Schultz 2001:191). For example, Dai's delight in the minutiae of each experience is apparent. There is also a very significant experiential and sensory element in Susannah's holidays, her sense of hedonistic and ludic pleasure is emphasised by the variety of the experiences which range through camping, hyperreal, themed attractions, excitement, thrills, culture, nostalgia, romance, luxury and relaxation. Like myself, Susannah is very aware of her role as an 'experienced' tourist, as illustrated by her observations (and disassociation from) practices such as the collection of small items as trophies and her observation of the popularity of Lipton's tea in Woolworth's, and she also demonstrates her consciousness of the way she manipulates and plays with other branded goods, through her self mocking and depreciatory comments. Audrey too, exhibits very significant elements of fun, parody, play and role awareness. She uses a multitude of products and brands to enhance her role as tourist, and on return her memories are preserved and experiences re-created through sensory and tactile objects such as food and drink, and bizarre, kitsch souvenirs – such as displaying a sliver of soap on the

mantelpiece. In contrast, while there is undoubtedly a strong element of relaxation and leisure in Rebecca's narratives, there are contradictions – symptomatic of the postmodern consumer (Firat and Schultz 1997). She approaches her holidays with almost military precision, the domination of shopping which initially she does not consider a leisure activity, nonetheless being paramount.

However, although it is argued that contemporary tourism consumers are increasingly confident and immerse themselves in a variety of experiential moments, conversely Jemima and George illustrate the individuality of tourism consumers and the importance of an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour. Unlike the others, Jemima and George reveal few of the characteristics of the post-tourist. My inference is that Jemima in particular never really leaves home behind - there is little emotion in Jemima's narratives relating to holidays, yet there is strong emotion when she describes her pleasure in the anticipation of the return home. They are psychocentric travellers (Plog 1991), as they travel within their environmental bubble, experience is heavily influenced by links to home, family and the familiar (Cohen 1972, Farell 1979, Smith 1989, Holloway 1994), and there is a sense of gazing with detachment on the tourist spectacles that they encounter. They do not immerse themselves into experiences nor do they consciously play and manipulate with signs and signifiers. While they have travelled widely, it is on quite a superficial level, and although travel is very enjoyable, it is very much built into the fabric of their life - something that they do, quite frequently and as part of the routine of life. The indication is that while they have curiosity about places and find pleasure in various elements of the holiday experience, they do not fully engage in them. They pass through, gazing, remaining onlookers largely untouched by the experiences they encounter (Urry 1990, Firat 1997).

This phase of the study has revealed the way in which holiday 'enjoyment' has very different meanings and how experiences are shaped by diverse influences for each individual. At the risk of oversimplifying their rich narratives, finally I have reflected on the key traits that emerged as individualities of behaviour for each participant that emerged from the conversations, photographs and imaginary experiences depicted in the collages:

Dai	– age defiance and physical challenge
Audrey	– romanticism and roles
Rebecca	– planning, organisation and shopping satisfaction
Susannah	– hedonism, diversity and vicarious enjoyment
Jemima and George	– risk reduction, ritual and talismanic relationships
Elizabeth	– self actualisation and education
Myself	- freedom

Chapter 7

Thesis Summary – Reflections, Contributions and Limitations

7.1 Introduction

As with much qualitative research, this study is not decision or conclusion orientated. It is based on the philosophy of emergent design – that is, rather than being designed around a set of pre-conceptions and assumptions, it is an iterative progression of knowledge gathering and interpretation, that has evolved throughout. Aiming to 'reverse the causality' (Lannon and Cooper 1983:201) of consumption focused tourism research, I have embraced ontological and epistemological perspectives that value multiplicit, diverse, flexible, reflexive and participatory approaches to research. Throughout the study I have highlighted the need for greater understanding of the complexities and individuality of tourism consumption – the 'how' and 'why' of consumption practices as well as the 'what' - and in doing so used a range of creative and innovative methods and techniques which have contributed to the field of tourism marketing and consumer behaviour research. What began as an exploration of the role and significance of brands for holiday decisions, has developed into a rich portrait of individual tourism consumers and their relationships with the activities and products that enrich and enhance their experiences. I have not taken a passive approach in this study, isolating elements of the experience, but consider consumers as active participants, interpreting the experiences holistically and considering the minutiae of the phenomena that comprise the 'tourism experience'.

Wells (1995:1) argues that 'qualitative research is living, evolving; a source of insight and ideas, which can emerge at any time during a project'. In response to the question 'how do you conclude a qualitative study?' Wolcott (2001:120) states emphatically that 'you don't'. Similarly Patton (2002:506) suggests that 'not concluding is its own conclusion'. Indeed, in this interpretative study 'gradual pictures' (Holliday 2002:5) have emerged throughout, and satisfactorily concluding such as study as this where there is so much rich and complex information is not possible. Instead, in this chapter I return to the aims of the study and reflect on the things that I have attempted, the things that I have learned, some of the

questions that have been raised and what I think it all means – I leave the reader to shape her or his own 'conclusions' (Woolcott 2001).

7.2 Brand Associations, Experiences and Choice

The main focus for phase one of the study was the tour operating industry and the package holiday experience. With the increasing spread and dominance of the top few tour operating companies, the picture is one of confusion for consumers and significantly, within the industry itself. A generally accepted tenet of branding theory is that the brand is a mark of trust, differentiation and identification (Barwise *et al.* 2000) and yet, despite – or because of – the proliferation of package holiday brands, consumers perceived very little differentiation between products and did not consider them trustworthy. Interestingly this applied not only to differentiation between the product offerings of competing companies, but to those belonging to the same organisation. Contemporary consumers are generally increasingly individual, opportunistic and discerning, and yet the tour operators have failed to assimilate this into their brands and sub-brands. The strong indications in the case of package holidays was of brand confusion, brand scepticism and empty promises. Thus participants felt the need for a physical reference point – friends, family or colleagues – for information and reassurance; and a travel agent for information, booking facilitation and security. As consumer confidence, independence and volatility continues to escalate, expectations and concepts of 'quality' and 'value' are also changing and consumers increasingly seek tourism experiences that can satisfy a range of functional, emotional and symbolic demands.

While there are undoubtedly difficulties for tourism organisations in establishing bases for market segmentation and ensuring consistency in a product as subjective, complex and variable as a holiday, these properties also present opportunities. While phase one concentrated on branding within the context of mainstream package tour operators, its findings have equal application to tourism products in general. Within tourism experiences the functional elements such as accessibility are as significant as the 'soft' elements such as customer service. If just one element within the complex amalgam of micro-experiences fails to live up to expectations, or conflicts with the values that are being

communicated, the result is confused messages and disillusionment which adversely affects perceptions of the overall brand and future decisions. Phase one drew attention to the need for greater understanding of tourism consumption within the context of the contemporary climate – to concentrate on the diversity of behaviours even within market segments. It is vital then for tourism marketers to adopt new research approaches in order to gain insights, and thus be equipped to develop brands that reflect the multiplicity of aspirations and experiences and expectations - 'experience brands' that differentiate through holistic experience values rather than hollow brand values, and are strong enough to cushion any unpleasant experience associations.

7.3 Consumer Brand Relationships and Tourism Experiences

The range of literature reviewed in chapters two to four indicates that contemporary consumers have moved away from simply consuming products – that is, acquiring, possessing and using products for their defined, functional purpose – towards using products to define lifestyles and construct meaningful experiences. Despite this, tourism marketing theories are still primarily based on North American marketing literature developed in the 1960s, which adopts a strategic and scientific approach to developing limited typologies and frameworks for 'understanding' consumer motivations and practices. My emerging awareness of the need for research that addresses the complexity of consumption behaviour within the context of their individual, lived experiences, led me to the development of the second phase of the study. By their very nature, tourism experiences are subjective and inconsistent - personality, past experience and aspirations all shape preferences, choices, expectations, perceptions and the experiences themselves. The adjectives associated with tourism and holidays such as fun, pleasure, excitement, value, expectations, satisfaction (Ryan 1997b, 2002, Urry 1990b, 2002) all have different meanings for different people, and rather than just 'consuming', the participants interpreted the meaning and value in a wide range of goods and services to produce their own rich, individual experiences. Consumers have a range of complex and individual expectations, aspirations, desires and insecurities underpinned by a far greater awareness of time compression, self and intrinsic fulfilment. The study illustrates the participants' awarenesses of the fragility and temporality of the myriad micro-experiences, and how

they interpret and infer meaning from brands products, images and associations in the creation and preservation of the overall holiday experience.

However, while holidays are indeed ludic times when social norms are waived (Jafari 1987) it is because they are so special and individual that expectations are heightened. As 'time-out' from normal life, for a few days or a week or two every part of the experience has to be special - indeed holidays have a lot to live up to. Holidays are always portrayed as times of freedom and liberty and huge effort is expended in making them exceptional and memorable. However they are relatively fleeting, intangible experiences and as de Botton (2002:27) recognises, no matter how idyllic the anticipated experience, 'ourselves' always accompany us with our attendant (metaphorical) baggage and the 'anxious future'. Audrey in particular was very conscious of the temporality and fragility of the experiences, choosing from a wardrobe of props to enhance the momentary pleasure and using souvenirs as (sometimes ironic) reminders. Holidays are fuelled by anticipation and expectations and susceptible to the vagaries of a range of phenomena, many of which are uncontrollable. Enjoyment is shaped by a wide range of extrinsic and intrinsic influences such as past experiences (of self and others), childhood memories, other people (and their enjoyment), products, marketing images and associations. Thus for some, rituals and talismanic relationships with products, brands and personal artefacts provide a framework and security, for others they mark the transition from the everyday to liberation and play. Airport behaviour – the ritualistic purchase of branded goods (attainable there yet considered inaffordable on any high street) in this liminal space where different (global) rules apply - is a symbolic indicator of the (anticipated) pleasure and liberation that lies ahead.

In any experience sensation is significant and I have argued that we are increasingly self orientated and self focused – as exemplified by the emphasis on lifestyle. The sensations of food and wine, images and textures, sound and feeling - that were significant in the narratives have all become associated with lifestyle. Publications and marketing literature have a significant effect on desires, aspirations and choices – seducing and shaping perceptions and expectations through the (perfect, desirable, artistic) images and associations communicated in magazines, travel literature and promotions – selected or rejected as being commensurate with participant's actual or perceived self. Thus the

tourism experiences of the participants reflected the playing out of roles associated with the lifestyles, such as Dai's preoccupation with age and Elizabeth's perception of her intellectual inferiority. Aware of their personal and individual constraints, participants adopted various roles, using products and brands as props, juxtaposing, trading off, substituting and even fabricating (through counterfeit goods) in the construction of the experience and of self.

7.4 Tourism as a Postmodern Consumption Experience

Phase one of the study highlighted the lack of brand awareness and brand commitment amongst tourism consumers and the diversity of contemporary tourism behaviour. In the second phase I considered tourism experiences within the context of postmodernism, arguing that tourism is a postmodern consumption experience and that it is something to be played with, to be used by the consumer in a myriad of ways, to enhance life and lifestyles, and even to develop self worth and identity. If, as Uriely (1997) argues, postmodern tourism is characterised by the multiplicity of tourism motivations, experiences and environments, then the experiences articulated throughout the study are illustrative of his statement. Consumers are generally more opportunistic, multiphrenic and self-aware. Holiday experiences are eclectic, characterised by juxtaposition, fragmentation, pastiche and play. There is a preoccupation with self, and self-actualisation through tourism experiences – Firat (2000) argues that the postmodern customer is becoming the customizer, and certainly the participants interpreted the symbolic meaning of brands and found a fit between their own and the brand personality, using the brands to enhance their tourism experiences. Brands are used to communicate status, experience and subcultural meaning and as tourism often involves different situations and cultures where consumers feel a lack of confidence, here brands are used for communication and immersion in a shared sense of collective belonging (Dittmar 1992). Feifer's post-tourist is portrayed as one who traverses tourism experiences, gazing on the touristic spectacles, observing, juxtaposing, constructing and participating, all with an ironic consciousness of tourism and her or his role (as a tourist) in the play, and throughout phase two many of these characteristics emerged in the participants' behaviours. However, it is also clear that postmodernism and post-tourism cannot be considered a blanket condition to encompass

all tourism behaviour – as Urry (2002:77) argues, it is possible to be 'more or less postmodern'. The motivations, expectations and experiences of George and Jemima are thus very different to those of Dai, Elizabeth and myself - despite us all being at a similar life stage. While they are multi-holiday consumers, for George and Jemima holidays are part of the routine of life and they do not immerse themselves in Firat's (2001a, 2001b, 2002) postmodern experiences. Their brand relationships are on a predominantly functional level, with no symbolic or emotional associations. Although they find enjoyment and satisfaction in the experiences, they are more like Urry's (1990b, 2002) tourists gazing on various spectacles without involvement, without commitment.

7.5 Some Implications for Tourism Marketing

Much 'consumer research' and subsequent marketing activity is focused on measuring the expected responses of consumers to marketing driven initiatives. The study has clearly shown that even in the case of mainstream package holidays, the increasing individuality and eclecticism of contemporary tourism consumers means that segmentation and branding practices that are based on generic, 'one size fits all' principles simply do not work. While there is a limit to the sustainable level of customisation of offerings, and tourism products will always suffer the vagaries of the service characteristics (Lovelock 1996), this study illustrates the need to approach tourism marketing with an awareness of the active involvement of consumers in consumption. The study presents a challenge to conventional marketing theory and practices that are primarily based on limited stereotypical, systematic models, frameworks, categorisations and typologies, and which consider tourism consumers as rational, consistent, relatively homogeneous groups. As we move from a collectivist to an individualist society, marketing is no longer about selling products and ideas, but about marketing meaning and experiences. Tourism marketing needs to develop theories, approaches and initiatives that are based on thorough, in depth understandings of the volatility, complexity and individuality of contemporary consumers within the wider context of their social and cultural discourses. It also needs to embrace new ways of 'finding out' – adopting progressive and innovative approaches and methods, and considering tourism consumers as active participants.

7.6 Contributions to Tourism Research

This has been an evolving study that has documented a transition from a conventional, systematic study to the development and application of an innovative and participant involved research approach, methods and techniques. While it has been challenging, rewarding and exciting, it is not without risk – within tourism studies there is no historical underpinning of interpretative and subjective research approaches. A major contribution of this study is in my ontological and epistemological paradigm and my use of methods and techniques, which, while they are employed in other disciplines concerned with understanding meaning and behaviour, are not often used in tourism research. In both the design of the research programme, and (arguably) more significantly in the criteria for judging research there is a need to take on board what is happening in other disciplines – for people to (re-)consider existing orthodoxy and to embrace openness and flexibility.

The two phases clearly indicate the difference in the depth of understanding to be gained from two approaches to qualitative inquiry and analysis. While there has been recognition for some time that qualitative approaches are far more suitable for gaining insights into behaviour than scientific, detached, objective approaches, much of what passes for 'qualitative' research is still bound by the strictures and constructs of positivist methodologies. Phase one was 'conventionally qualitative' and while I used in-depth interviews, focus groups and projective techniques I still followed a systematic framework which was based on generalities, similarities and patterns of behaviour. While some interesting and insightful information emerged, it left many gaps – and not least it illuminated the need to delve far deeper into the motivations, influences and personal aspects of tourism experiences. It also caused me to question and confront aspects that I was increasingly uncomfortable with, such as subjectivity, positionality and voice.

Subjectivity in research has long been a topic of debate, and although approaches and methods that recognise subjectivity and researcher presence are increasingly utilised and accepted, they nonetheless attract scientific and positivist grounded criticisms of bias, clarity, validity and self-indulgence. I could have chosen to continue on the path of the first phase, adopting a tried, tested, accepted - and spurious - pseudo-scientific stance. Certainly, contrary to notions of 'easy' and 'self-indulgent' research, developing an

innovative and progressive approach was not an easy route – there are few guidelines and many pitfalls and unknowns. However once I became aware of other approaches, I developed a strong conviction of the need to push out the boundaries of tourism research and develop innovative research that would not only yield deeper insights, but would contribute to future research approaches and directions. Thus phase two was interpretative, tactile and participatory.

Autoethnography enabled me to position myself as a participant, and my involvement enhanced my understanding of the tasks and processes - having made the decision to involve myself and the participants in the research process I had to decide how and how much. Where the participants were concerned, the use of autodriving techniques such as the photographs and the collages proved to be extremely effective and rewarding. The involvement motivated the participants and gave them control through the visual representations and throughout the subsequent conversations. This created a much greater sense of ownership and participation. As can be seen from the comments, particularly with the collage, this induced far deeper reflection and introspection than would otherwise have been forthcoming. Significantly this was reflected in the way in which during the subsequent conversations, they (rather than me) directed the conversation according to the texts they had constructed, which consequently yielded far greater depth. The intensity of the information did however pose another challenge in finding the most effective way to analyse and present the findings. Having realised the value through the participants' involvement, there was a danger of losing some of the richness and individuality that was so key to the study through systematic and structured analysis. In the spirit of continuing involvement, adopting an individual and narrative approach proved to be an effective way of letting the voices of the participants follow through into the interpretation. This has resulted in rich, highly insightful discussions which emphasise the individuality of the relationships, narratives and discourses that influence and inform tourism experiences.

In more 'conventional' research approaches, it is a case of the researcher putting 'the other' under the microscope. In the adoption of an autoethnographic approach, the researcher adopts the position of insider, confronting and examining her or his own behaviour within the context of the research topic. While this is perceived by some to be safe, easy and indulgent, in actuality I found it difficult, complex and challenging. I find

speaking about myself difficult, particularly in a situation where my thoughts and behaviours are in the public domain. Rather than hiding behind the screen of anonymity as 'the researcher' I was forced to confront, interpret and synthesise what is normally hidden and silenced. It was difficult to know how much of my self to include, and to achieve a balance between what was informative and insightful and what might be construed as self-indulgence and (in this context) meaningless. This study is a reflection of the journey that I have taken as a tourism marketing researcher. In this sense it is exploratory - I have argued that there is a need to reach out and step beyond the safety zone of tried and tested, conventional research approaches and further develop contemporary, consumer centred approaches to researching tourism phenomena. Locating the study within the context of postmodern consumption, and adopting tourism pertinent, creative, tactile and pleasurable methods and techniques, has enabled me to present a different perspective to ways of understanding tourism consumption behaviour.

7.7 Limitations to the Study

The study represents a significant, if relatively small, step in the development of more flexible, subjective, qualitative approaches to gaining insights into contemporary tourism behaviour. Commensurate with the emergent design of the study, the first phase revealed the need for a far more individualistic approach to understanding tourism consumption behaviour, which the second phase aimed to address. In this phase the involvement of the participants in the research, the use of the voices of the participants through the interpretation of their individual narratives, and recognition of my own involvement all contributed significantly to the richness and depth of the study. I have already described the study as a journey – all journeys are learning experiences where limitations are exposed. The main limitations concern my own lack of experience and knowledge in the approach, methods and techniques. Unlike tried and tested methods and approaches, there is no body of literature within the field of tourism research to refer to, and it was very much a case of finding my own way through, drawing on the limited texts and examples from other disciplines.

Positionality and 'otherness' are significant considerations in contemporary research (Riessman 1993, Galani-Moutafi 2000). I have argued that for this particular study, it was significant that the participants and myself were similar in terms of culture, ethnicity, social status and education. However, it is a mono-cultural, small scale study and as such, a starting point for other studies to adopt in-depth, interpretative studies reflecting the diversity and multi-culturalism of tourism. Another restriction was my limited knowledge of the interpretation of visual texts. Here my lack of psychological knowledge resulted in the very rich data embedded in the visual texts produced by the participant not being interpreted to the full. Nor had I anticipated the amount and scope of inter-disciplinary literature and depth of the data that emerged as a result of the nature of the study, or the challenges that were presented in the interpretation and presentation. Thus this study – while being complete in itself - is a stage in a journey which has highlighted many opportunities for further research, and I close with a reflexive excerpt from the diary I kept during the process:

From the time of the slow dawning of the 'acceptability' of my entering the research as an identified entity, rather than having to struggle with distancing my self both in language and in perspective, I felt as if the shackles had been removed. From being a chore and a struggle at times, fieldwork, thinking and writing became what it should be - an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. Metaphorically speaking, it was akin to opening the door of the small and perceptively confined Dr Who's Tardis, and finding an unanticipated, new, uncharted space in front of me.

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Phase 1 Focus Groups 1 and 2

Initial Framework/Guidelines

Restrict the sample to:

People who make holiday decisions
Age 21+
Must have taken or be planning to take at least mainstream inclusive package holiday within the past three years
Socio-economic groupings A/B/C1/2

Catchment Region:

S.E. Wales

Recruitment questionnaire/filter questions to ascertain eligibility

Demographic classification - age, social class

Exclusion - any respondent who has taken part in a focus group exercise within the past six months, or who is involved with the tourism industry or market research.

Usership questions - to ascertain frequency of purchase of package holidays

Objectives of exercise

- Broad perceptions of inclusive tour operators
- Awareness of brands
- Salience of brands
- Choice and preference of brands
- Loyalty to brands
- Perceptions of brands including:
  benefits
  values
  characteristics
  experiences and satisfactions
  attributes
  personality
- Attitudes towards brands
- Importance of brand in choice of holiday/operator

Focus Group Framework/Guidelines

Distribute pens and papers, explain that some of the games we will play involve writing down responses – ask to tick the following where appropriate: (gender and lifestage, Mintel 1995)

under 35 not parents
15 - 54 at least one child aged under 15 still at home
35 - 54 no children
over 55 not working

My last holiday was to a destination:

within Europe
outside Europe

My next holiday will be to a destination:

within Europe
outside Europe

1. Warm up discussion - word association, sentence completion, brands in general (approx. 20 minutes)

- **Brands in general - verbal**

When making purchases, in what situations do you consider brands important?
For example - if you are buying baked beans, a camera, clothing - jeans/training shoes?
How important is brand when choosing a holiday?

- **Word Association**

Will elicit polar responses, useful for finding out salience/awareness/imagery and gleaning consumer vocabulary associated with particular brand. Good 'ice-breaking' exercise, preparation for other projective techniques. Participants may be familiar with the concept and if they write their responses they are able to 'disown' them and therefore will be less inhibited, embarrassed.

'Write down the first thing that comes to mind when I say:

brand
overseas holiday
package holiday
holiday company

- **Sentence Completion**

Use in early stages to give insights to broad perceptions of tour operators

Participants write down responses, after 5 minutes share with group some of responses/discuss - ask each participant to read their response and briefly explain it. Encourage participants to respond to each others reactions.

Complete the following sentences:

1. People who go on package holidays are looking for .....

2. When planning my most recent package holiday, I chose ..... (tour operator) because .....

3. When choosing a holiday company I consider .....

4. I think that package holiday companies are .....

5. On Saturday my partner and I spent the whole day shopping for a pair of trainers in his/her size. There were loads of trainers that looked exactly the same. I think .....

2. Attributes/ attitudes (20 minutes)

Attitudes, attributes. Participants identify the most important attributes of a brand and determine how rank order of attributes, certain aspects. Arrangement of brands that best fit certain given attributes e.g. reliability, value for money etc.

Using the list of tour operators and attributes, please choose which attributes you associate with the brands that you are familiar with. It is not necessary to use all the listed attributes or brands, and please feel free to add any others you can think of:

Discussion - choose some attributes e.g. **reliability, honesty, safety, trust** etc. and ask participants to discuss choices of tour operators

Thomson

Cosmos

Sun International

Crystal Holidays

Virgin Holidays

Jet Sun

Sunset

Airtours

Thomas Cook

Sunworld

Unijet

Saga Holidays

World Holiday

Aspro

British Airways Holidays

Global Holidays

Skytours

First Choice

Inspirations

ATTRIBUTES

RELIABILITY SAFETY VALUE PRESTIGE QUALITY
FLEXIBILITY CHOICE TRUST HONESTY SECURITY
CONVENIENCE CUSTOMER FOCUS INNOVATION

3. Brand Personalities (20-30 minutes) FLIP CHART

Use when group relaxed. Personalities, imagery, perceptions, attributes. Participants asked to think of a brand and to imagine it as a person which they then describe to the moderator - e.g. dress/look/behave a certain way. Or, ask participants to ascribe an object or animal to the brand e.g. 'If Airtours were an animal/car, what would it be?' The animal/object chosen will represent the respondent's feelings towards the organisation, e.g. lion, king of the jungle, aggressive, strong, unfriendly; elephant - trustworthy, large, friendly etc. Participants are then asked to tell the group why they attributed certain characteristics, animals. It is this explanation that is significant, rather than the researcher's interpretation.

I am going to name some of the top tour operators by group turnover 1996. I would like you to think of the brands that I will name as if they were a person, and jot down a description of them - for example old/young, man/woman, how they are dressed,

how they behave - do one by one - write up on flip chart as suggestions made, try to build up a picture of each.

ADD TO THIS LIST ANY THAT WERE PREDOMINANT IN LAST EXERCISE

Thomson
Airtours
First Choice
Thomas Cook
Inspirations
Unijet
Cosmos

I name brands - elicit responses and ask for agreement, disagreement, different opinions, why etc.

4. Conceptual Brand Map (10 minutes for exercise/ 20 minutes for discussion)

Use to find out participants' view the market, similarities between brands, perceptions of segmentation, brand awareness, salience, similarities. Participants are asked to group a variety of brands according to certain criteria (on table/floor). This excercise could be done several times using different criteria. Forces participants to move around, interact.

Participants given a conceptual map and asked to write all the brands they can think of, grouping the ones they think are similar in the same box in the grid. After 5 minutes, participants are asked what categories they developed and why. Discussion could follow on the various brands and why they were placed in the particular boxes.

On page 3 you have a grid. Please write all the different brands of package holiday companies that you can think of, grouping the ones that you think are similar in the same box. Feel free to draw more lines and create as many boxes as you like.

Discussion - on flip chart, write various categories in boxes, and ask participants to name specific brands they put into each box – discuss - aim is to determine rationale for classification.
e.g. size, reliability

Usual that one predominant approach emerges - this forms focus of stage 2 of discussion:

Verbal prompts

Emotional responses - imagery, personality, experiences, feelings.
Tell me more ....
I don't quite understand, can you explain what you mean?
Does anyone have an example of that?
Is this anyone else's experience?
Does anyone have a similar/different perspective?
Can anyone build on this a bit?
Does anyone have a comment that fits here?
Has this provoked any thoughts or feelings?

Phase 1 Focus Groups 1 and 2
Reflection and Changes after First Focus Group

In introduction, talk about aims of focus group, define 'inclusive package tour/tour operator'

Categories

- based on Mintel, lifestage but need to add
35-54 - no children/no children living at home
- do not give out 'packs' of questions

Exercise 1 - warm up

- **branding in general**

Went well. No changes.

- **sentence completion**

Went well – no changes

- **word association**

OK. Maybe think about adding some more words

Exercise 2 – attributes/ attitudes

Went reasonably well, some initial confusion. Explain in more detail. Identified lack of awareness/ homogeneity

Exercise 3 Brand Personality

Very effective – participants enjoyed this after initial surprise at the concept

- **Exercise 4 - conceptual map**

Did not work that well. Problem seemed to be with categorisation of T.O.'s and actual identification of inclusive tour operators. Confusion. When went through on whiteboard, was clearer.
CHANGE -
break down more - e.g.
1. ask to write down all tour operators aware of
2. ask to group according to certain categories - pre-draw grid on paper containing categories - (such as)
value for money
quality
safety
security
honesty

Dear .....

Photographs

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this phase of the research for my PhD. For this task I have given you a disposable camera which I would like you to use to record your interactions with products and services that have some bearing on your holiday experience. Our next meeting will centre on a discussion of the photographs that you have taken. The photographs can be as ad hoc and informal as you like – they should be a reflection of your images, perceptions, choices, thoughts and observations related to the things (products, artefacts, accessories, services) that you use and interact with.

All the pictures should be related to your overall holiday experience in some way - for example – preparing for the holiday – what do you pack? Do you have special 'holiday' clothes and accessories that have some significance from past holidays, or that you use/wear to get you in the holiday mood? At the airport – what do you buy; do you order specific drinks (e.g. a 'Manhattan' cocktail on a flight to New York?). Possibly you may consider the transport, the destination, the accommodation , restaurants ..... . Do you collect 'souvenirs' e.g. match boxes, napkins, cocktail stirrers as souvenirs and 'aide-memoirs'? At the destination – what do you wear, what accessories do you use, for which situations and experiences? Shopping ..... brand choices ... shops ... goods .... clothes ...food.... gifts..... and even other people.

Have fun with the camera ....

Yours sincerely

Dear .....

The Collages

Thank you for your interest and participation so far. For this exercise I am asking you to let your mind run free – to daydream and really express yourself through the way that you construct your collage.

We are all bound by constraints in the things that we do – whether these are financial, family, time, psychological, physical and so on. What I am asking you to do is to imagine that all these constraints have disappeared – to imagine holiday(s) or tourism trips that you would take if there were no constraints. In the collage please stick, paste, draw those things that illustrate the trip – the places, the accommodation, the transport, the people that would accompany you – and quite importantly – the things that you would take with you (remember this is an 'ideal' and 'dream' situation!) to ensure that the trip is out of this world.

I am hoping to collect the collages from you by the end of November, so there is plenty of time to gather all the bits and pieces together. Please feel free to use any materials that you like – cuttings from magazines/newspapers; bits and pieces – seashells, feathers....., drawings and sketches ... whatever you feel illustrates your imaginings. Don't feel limited to one trip or holiday – please feel free to illustrate different ones – on the same piece of paper or if you need more paper or glue please let me know.

When I have received the completed collages, I shall arrange another interview so that we can talk about the collages. Again, I do appreciate your help and time in all this.

Again, many thanks and happy dreaming!