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**Understanding Transformative Learning and
Transformative Tourism**

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Abstract

This study focuses on two major areas of transformative learning and transformative tourism. The study aims to understand how transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow was first introduced to the academia and then adopted in the field of tourism. Transformative travel and tourism is an emerging paradigm in the travel industry, characterized by travel experiences that lead to profound personal growth, self-discovery, and societal benefits. This paper explores the intersections of transformative learning theory and transformational tourism experiences through a qualitative research approach. By synthesizing secondary data from diverse contexts and empirical studies, the study examines how transformative learning processes manifest in the context of travel and tourism. The theoretical framework draws on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, emphasizing critical reflection and perspective learning. This study is based on a general review through thematic analysis of narratives. The research identifies mechanisms that facilitate transformative experiences during travel. The literatures highlight on novelty seeking, escapism, freedom, self-efficacy, the transformation of consciousness, self-development and personal growth, and subjective wellbeing which is an outcome

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of transformative travel. This study explores the concepts of transformation, transformative learning, transformational tourism, tourism motivation, tourism destination image, marketing, authenticity, satisfaction, and transformative experiences.

Introduction

In order to make a change and, consequently, reach the next stage of human growth, people are bound to follow a transformation path. They need to transform themselves – their values, life priorities, lifestyle, and the way they use resources and spend time and money. They must move towards a world in which they learn about the purpose and meaning of their life, a world that gives way to new values of ecological awareness, empathy for others, non-violence, human rights and equality. Human survivability and creating a better life are inextricably linked to human transformation, which can be achieved through travel and tourism. Travel and tourism can transform their journey and help make the future better. There are travel styles and products of the highest quality that heal rather than harm their global ecological, socio-cultural, economic and political systems. Travel and tourism can shift their perspective on life and change the course of their knowledge, values, attitudes and behavior (Reisinger, 2013, p.xii).

Hoggan and Finnegan (2023, p.5) say that the potential of humans to transform has arguably been a concern for thousands of years, from Greek epic poems and myths through to religious chronicles. As Charles Taylor (1989; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023) notes, modernity give rise to new ways of thinking about identity characterized by an unprecedented “inwardness, a sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths.” This transformation of our sense of the importance of the inner life, and its depth and complexity, is of course only one shift among a very wide range of social, economic, cultural, demographic, political, and technological transformations which created the modern world system (Braudel, 1986; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023). Modern capitalism is characterized by a high level of dynamism, and social transformation has gathered pace and intensity.

Discussions of the self have been traced all the way back to Plato (c. 428-347 BC) and essentially revolve around the fundamental human questions of “Who am I and how do I fit into this world?” William James (1890; in Phillips, 2019, p.13) was perhaps the first to highlight the importance of the self for understanding human behavior (Leary & Tangney, 2012; in Phillips, 2019, p.13). James adopted linguistic terminology to highlight the tension between agency and social control when he distinguished between the self as subject (“I”) and the self as object (“me”). The self as subject is also called the “self as knower” (I) and is responsible for self-awareness and self-knowledge, which differs from the self as object, or the “self as known” (me). However, James argued that these were two deeply intertwined aspects of the self which were both heavily influenced by social interactions. In this way, James was an early proponent for using the concept of “self” to examine and understand human behavior (Leary & Tangney, 2012; in Phillips, 2019, p.13).

Transformative tourism has become one of the leading academic discussions in the academia of tourism. The literatures reveal that the term transformation is the center of attraction in the field of “journey” meaning “being-in-the-world” (Morgan, 2010). In order to understand transformation in better way, first and foremost, an effort has been made to clear what the prefix “trans” refers to. In this regard, Choi and Pak (2006) have explained the meaning of ‘trans’ as across; over, beyond; on the far side of; through. In course of defining transmodernity; Ateljevic (2013, p.39) also believes that the meaning of ‘trans’ is ‘through’. In the same line, Elzinga (2008) focuses on outside science as trans-science. Therefore, ‘trans’ refers to ‘outside’ (p.347). While Alhadef-Jones (2012; in Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015) reminds that at the very core of the word transformation is ‘trans’ meaning to go across and formation meaning to take a new shape altogether. According to Rodriguez Magda (2017), ‘trans’ is not a miracle prefix, or the longing for an angelic multiculturalism rather it is ‘transmodernidad’. As Rodriguez Magda (2017) argues that, the prefix ‘trans’ connotes not only the aspects of transformation but also the necessary transcendence of the crisis of modernity, taking up its outstanding ethical and political challenges (equality, justice, freedom...), but assuming postmodern criticism.

As far as transformation as a concept is concerned, the Cambridge Dictionary (2017; in Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017, p.59; Phillips, 2019, p.67) described “transformation’ as “a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that thing or person is improved.” Hence, it is understood that transformation is connected to process of move forward into, perhaps, an evolved being (Terán, 2016, p.35; Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017).

Moore (1984, p.21; in Hobsbon & Welbourne, 1998, p.79) defined transformation is a reforming of persons, of societies, and of historical tradition itself. According to Ross (2010, P.54; Robledo & Batle, 2015, p.2; Terán, 2016, p.30) transformation is:

“... a dynamic socio-cultural and uniquely individual process that (a) begins with a disorienting dilemma and involves choice, healing, and experience(s) of expanding consciousness [...]; (b) initiates a permanent change in identity structures through cognitive, psychological, physiological, affective, or spiritual experiences; and (c) renders a sustained shift in the form of one’s thinking, doing, believing, or sensing [...].”

Thus, it can be concluded that transformation is a process of going through life in order to enjoy a better quality of life compared to the previous life. Kunjuraman and Hussin’s (2017, p.60) review indicates that the concept of transformation could be applied in any fields include tourism as long as it fit the context of the study.

Reisinger, (2013) argued that:

“In order to make a change [...], we need to follow a transformation path. We need to transform ourselves-our values, life priorities, lifestyle, and the way we use resources

and spend time - We must move towards a world in which we learn about the purpose and meaning of our life, a world that gives way to new values of [...] empathy for others, non-violence, human rights and equality.”

Transformation can be defined as a growth-enhancing, irreversible change that is a fundamental break with the past or current practices that require new knowledge for successful implementation (Reisinger, 2013). This is in line with Coghlan and Weiler’s (2015) definition of transformation as an individualized process that leads to a critical awareness of the old and the new self, ultimately resulting in a new self-concept. Jointly, these definitions suggest that intra-personal transformations may not always be obvious to outside observers because they involve subtle reflection and re-evaluation of the content of knowledge, process and premise of knowing as well as its relational component (Coghlan & Weiler, 2015). Transformation mandates a conscious effort on the part of an individual in a form of meaning-making (Boswijk, Peelen & Olthof, 2013; in Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017; Mezirow, 1991).

Current understanding of transformative processes has arisen largely from studies in education, psychology, and health. Adopting an integrative, multidisciplinary perspective, Holland-Wade (1998, p.713; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015) defines personal transformation as “a dynamic, uniquely individualized process of expanding consciousness whereby individuals become critically aware of old and new self-views and choose to integrate these views into a new self-definition”. Within Holland-Wade’s definition, several terms have particular relevance; for instance, transformation is an individualized process that leads to a critical awareness of the old and new self, leading to a new self-definition. Another founding scholar in this area, Mezirow (1978; Snyder, 2008; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), reminds us that transformation is a process rather than an end state, pointing out that transformation can occur over and over again in a person’s life. The definition transform in the Oxford English Dictionary is uncompromising. Transform means to change the form of, to change into another shape or form, to change in character and condition, to alter in function or nature, to metamorphose (Simpson, 2010; in Newman, 2012).

Transformative learning

Transformative learning is a concept based on transformative learning invented by Jack Mezirow (1978; Phillips, 2019; Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023) in the field of education. Transformative learning refers to a “process of effective change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p.5), and new habits of mind or views can form in this process. Therefore, it is very important to understand what transformative learning is and in what context this theory was developed by Mezirow with its greater expansion in the field of adult education. Mezirow identified factors that hindered or facilitated their learning progress and observed that these women underwent ‘personal transformations.’ This led Mezirow to develop Transformational Learning Theory (TLT), which explores how adults interpret life experiences, derive meaning from them, and transform their beliefs, attitudes, and an entire worldviews (perspectives). This

process is personally emancipating, freeing individuals from previously held constraints and distortions in their lives. His theory provides a framework for meaningful, life-transforming changes (Mezirow, 2009; Reisinger, 2013).

The influences on Mezirow’s early theory of transformative learning included Kuhn’s (1962; in Kitchenham, 2008) paradigm, Freire’s (1970; in Kitchenham, 2008) conscientization, and Habermas’s (1971; Kitchenham, 2008) domains of learning (Mezirow, 1978a, 1991a, 2000; in Kitchenham, 2008). The key ideas of these theorists informed Mezirow’s transformative learning theory and the significant concepts of disorienting dilemma, meaning schemes, meaning perspectives, perspective transformation, frame of reference, levels of learning processes, habits of mind, and critical self-reflection. Based on his pioneering research with adult learners, Mezirow (1978a; in Kitchenham, 2008) outlined “a theory of adult development and a derivative concept of adult education” (p.153) that has been argued for and against for more than 20 years (Cranton, 2006; Kitchenham, 2008). Several years after his initial theory was proposed, Mezirow (1991a; in Kitchenham, 2008) revised the original 10 phases that adults go through when experiencing a perspective, rather than a personal, transformation and added an 11th phase, altering present relationships and forging new relationships, to the theory.

Table 1: The influences on Mezirow’s early transformative learning theory and its related facets

Influence	Transformative learning facet
Kuhn’s (1962) paradigm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspective transformation • Frame of reference • Meaning perspective • Habit of mind
Freire’s (1970) conscientization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disorienting dilemma • Critical self-reflection • Habit of mind
Habermas’s (1971, 1984) domains of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning processes • Perspective transformation • Meaning scheme • Meaning perspective

Source: Kitchenham, 2008, p.106

Transformative learning theory has changed the way of teaching adults. Like all strong theories, it has been critiqued, tested, revised, and retested throughout the past three decades to arrive at a definitive framework for describing how adults learn best (Cranton, 1996, 2001; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Cranton & King, 2003; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Taylor, 1997, 1998, 2000; in Kitchenham, 2008, p.120). As more researchers test the theory in other disciplines, such as educational technology (K. P. King, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000, 2002; Kitchenham,

2006; Whitelaw, Sears, & Campbell, 2004; in Kitchenham, 2008, p.120), the evidence for the robustness and applicability of the theory will grow.

The concept

Mezirow's early development of transformation concept was highly influenced by three different international influential scholars: one from Paulo Freire (Brazilian educational theorist), another from Jürgen Habermas (German philosopher and sociologist) and Edee Mezirow (wife of Jack Mezirow). Mezirow's initial theory was influenced by Freire's (1970; in Phillips, 2019, p.25) theory of conscientization and Habermas' (1971; Phillips, 2019) domains of learning. Freire (1970; in Phillips, 2019) was very critical of traditional education and argued that traditional education scenarios are problematic because students are dependent upon the teacher for knowledge and are thus not able to think for themselves. Moreover, Freire (1970; in Phillips, 2019) believed that education is not confined to the classroom but can happen anywhere and anytime. Sharan Merram, Rosemary Caffarel-la, and Lisa Baumgartner (2007) talk of transformative learning as a "dramatic, fundamental change" (p.130; in Newman, 2012)

Learning is commonly defined as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught. Mezirow's transformative learning is highly influenced by Habermas's (1971; Phillips, 2019) learning theory which is as follows: 1) instrumental learning (allows us to manipulate and control); 2) communicative learning (learning what others mean when they communicate with us); and 3) emancipatory learning (this knowledge comes from questioning the other two types of knowledge-instrumental and communicative).

Meaning making

His next important concept in transformative learning is meaning making. Making meaning means making sense of and interpreting an experience (Mezirow, 1990; in Phillips, 2019, p.26). This may involve revising or making a new interpretation of the meaning of an experience. Mezirow (1991) argues that meaning making is central to what learning is all about. The learning process may be understood as the extension of our ability to make explicit, schematized (make an association within a frame of reference), appropriate (accept an interpretation as our own), remember (call upon an earlier interpretation), validate (establish the truth, justification, appropriateness, or authenticity of what is asserted), and act upon (decide, change an attitude toward, modify a perspective on, or perform) some aspect of our engagement with the environment, other persons, ourselves (p.11; Phillips, 2019, p.26).

Simply stated, learners ask how they could best learn the information (instrumental), when and where this learning could best take place (dialogic), and why they are learning the information (self-reflective). Central to the perspective transformation and, therefore, the three types of learning are the meaning perspective and the meaning schemes. A meaning perspective refers "to the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which our past experience assimilates and transforms new experience" (Mezirow, 1985, p.21),

whereas a meaning scheme is “the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shapes a particular interpretation” (Mezirow, 1994b, p.223; in Kitchenham, 2008).

Frame of reference

For better understanding, transformative learning may be defined as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change. A frame of reference is a predisposition with cognitive, affective, and conative (striving) dimensions (Mezirow, 2009, p.22). Transformative learning may be understood as an epistemology of how adults learn to reason for themselves-advance and assess reason for making a judgment rather than act on the assimilated beliefs, values, feelings, and judgment of others (Mezirow, 2009). Frames of reference are categorized in three domains of learning: Psychological (personal views about oneself and one’s capacities); Socio-cultural (beliefs about the world and ideological cultural cannons); and Epistemic (conception of knowledge and its construction) (Mezirow, 1997).

Transformative learning processes

Studies of transformative processes have perhaps been pursued most vigorously within education. Originally proposed by Mezirow (1991; Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), transformative learning is theorized as a shift in one’s assumptions and world beliefs, represented by a series of 10 steps. He describes these 10 steps as follows. First, an individual must experience a disorienting dilemma (step 1). Next they must undergo self-examination (step 2), conducting a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles (step 3). Then they must share and analyse their personal discontent and similar experiences with others (step 4), before they can explore options for new ways of acting (step 5), and build competence and self-confidence in new roles (step 6). They must also plan a course of action (step 7) as well as acquire knowledge and skills for action (step 8), try new roles, and assess feedback (step 9). Finally, they must reintegrate into society with a new perspective (step 10).

Michael Poutiatine (2008; in Phillips, 2019, p.31) put forward a list of nine fundamental principles that are critical to understanding the process of transformation. As Poutiatine (2008; in Phillips, 2019) argues, these nine principles are by no means exhaustive, but rather aim to help understand the nature of transformation and delineate it from ordinary change. Ideally, the outcome of transformative learning is a change in perspective that leads.

Critical reflection

While studying transformative learning, Mezirow has focused on reflection and critical reflection intensely. Here the term reflection refers to becoming aware of and assessing the taken-for-granted assumptions within one’s meaning perspective, in order to construct a more valid belief (Mezirow, 1991; in Mälkki, 2010). While discussing the broader field of reflection, Mezirow (1990; in Phillips, 2019, p.29) differentiates between three different types: reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection. *Reflection* is defined as the

“examination of the justification for one’s beliefs, primarily to guide action and to reassess the efficacy of the strategies and procedures used in problem solving” (p.xvi; in Phillips, 2019, pp. 29-30), whereas *critical reflection* involves the “assessment of the validity of the *presuppositions* of one’s meaning perspectives, and examination of their sources and consequences (p.xvi, highlight in original; in Phillips, 2019, p.30). Finally, Mezirow (1990) suggests that *critical self-reflection* involves the “assessment of the way one has posed problems and of one’s own meaning perspectives” (p.xvi; in Phillips, 2019, p.30). Transformative learning is learning through critical self-reflection by critically reassessing what is already known in order to enable a more discriminating, integrative, and inclusive understanding of one’s experience.

Mezirow (1991a; in Phillips, 2019, p.30) distinguished three types of reflection on experiences: content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. Content reflection involves examining what occurred and considering any available data and information related to the problem or experience. Process reflection involves on figuring out how to address the problem or experience and creating an effective plan of action. The most radical form, premise reflection, involves reflecting on one’s underlying premises, assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the problem or experience. It entails “becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do” (Mezirow, 1991a, p.108; in Phillips, 2019). This type of reflection is a key to enable transformative learning. A *meaning perspective* (or *habit of mind*) refers to “the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to – and transformed by – one’s past experience” (Mezirow, 1978, p.101; Phillips, 2019, p.26). Likewise, Mezirow (2000; in Kitchenham, 2008, p.120) has categorized four types of learning that reflects the revised theory of transformative learning such as: elaborating existing frames of reference, learning new frames of reference, transforming habits of mind and transforming points of view.

Transformative learning as a research agenda

Transformative learning remains a very active area of research which is also increasingly international. Transformative learning is a theory that has been, as it is with all ardent theories, analyzed, tested, critiqued, revised, embraced, and (by some) written-off. After nearly four decades since the earliest iteration (Mezirow, 1978; DeSapio, 2017), the theory has proven itself to be worthy of constant discussion. The theory has been the subject of 12 international conferences (Transformative Learning Network, 2016; in DeSapio, 2017), and in 2003 spawned the inception of The Journal of Transformative Education, a quarterly publication of scholarly and peer reviewed articles (Markos & Me Whinney, 2003; in DeSapio, 2017). The volume of submissions and publications in the *Journal of Transformative Education* has also steadily increased. In *Adult Education Quarterly*, the theoretical merits, and problems, of TL remains a live topic of debate (Michelson, 2019, 2021; Hoggan & Kloubert, 2020; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023, p.6). Mezirow has noted that his work have been addressed by more than a dozen books, hundreds of scholarly papers and presentations, and more than 150 dissertations (Mezirow, 2006; in DeSapio, 2017). According to Hoggan and Finnegan (2023,

p.5), transformative learning over the previous 45 years, describes its current condition as a relatively mature collection of theories, and calls for greater clarity, new iterations of theory, and productive and substantive steps forward.

Interest in Mezirow's transformative learning theory has resulted in seven international conferences, each devoted to a different aspect of the theory and producing numerous peer-reviewed papers, including many in the *Journal of Transformative Education*. More than a dozen books, hundreds of scholarly papers and presentations, and more than 150 doctoral dissertations (Mezirow, 2006; in Kitchenham, 2008, p.120) have addressed the theoretical and practical implications of the theory. Transformative learning theory has undergone modifications and incorporated new constructs as they are debated and tested and will, undoubtedly, continue to influence adult learning praxis across many disciplines.

Over the past decades or so, European TL research (Fleming et al., 2019; Formenti & West, 2018; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023) has become more consolidated and has a clearer identity, with the International Transformative Learning Conference being held in Greece in 2011 and scheduled to be held in Italy in 2024. Currently, there are European societies and national networks (in Italy and Greece) and research centers or departments with a strong focus on TL (for example in Ireland and Austria) which have held conferences, seminars, and residential doctoral schools over the past 6 years. Recently, scholars have used TL to explore learning challenges related to migration in Europe (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023), as well as to analyze TL in relation to *Bildung*, a traditional German concept related to lifelong self-development devoid of instrumental purposes (Buttigieg & Calleja, 2021; Laros et al., 2017; Nohl, 2016; in Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023). As per Hoggan and Finnegan (2023), it needs to be stressed that it is still mainly linked to North America, Europe, and Australia; there has been relatively little TL, scholarship from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Transformative Learning (TL) research has explored transformative experiences in education, including adult and higher education, and teacher training extensively. TL has been investigated extensively across formal, non-formal, and informal learning settings, as well as in workplaces, social movements, community education, and therapeutic contexts. Spirituality, emotions, embodied knowing, social action, and critical reflection are key themes that have seen deepening insights. Traditionally, TL research has been small-scale, qualitative, and relied on interviews, focus groups, and case studies. However, there is a growing interest in quantitative methods to better understand and map TL (Hoggan & Finne, 2023)

The outcomes of transformative learning expanded environmental awareness, expanded global awareness, changed views on one's own culture and its values, a deepened sense of social responsibility, increased understanding of cultural differences and diversity, increased tolerance, acceptance, and even curiosity, new or refined interpersonal communication skills, expanded self-awareness and self-esteem, increased self-efficacy, increased competence

in critical thinking, increased competence in narrative meaning-making, increased open-mindedness, and enhanced empathy (Phillips, 2019, p.340).

Transformative tourism

Transformative tourism can be defined as “a process” where tourists engage in an inner journey that “is part of the awakening of consciousness, and creates more self-awareness, more self-inquiry into the purpose of life, living by a higher set of values, and making greater contributions to others (Sheldon, 2020; p.2; Soulard, McGehee, Stern, & Lamoureux, 2021). It aims at triggering a disorienting dilemma by pushing tourists out of their comfort zone, encouraging them to self-respect about the discomfort felt, leading them to value other cultures more, and fostering awareness about the ecological and social impacts of the way we consume services (Neuhofer, Celuch & Linh To, 2020; Soulard, McGehee, & Stern et al., 2019; Soulard et al., 2021). The most promising tenet of the transformative tourism theory is that tourists become agents of change as a result of their transformative tourism experience, advocating for social empowerment and environmental protection in their community (Pung et al., 2019; Pung et al, 2020; in Soulard et al., 2021). From a theoretical standpoint, transformation is described as a series of steps (Mezirow, 1990; in Soulard et al., 2021), where self-reflection is critical to lead tourists to acknowledge their own biases, realize the presence of assumptions, decide to take actions, and bring positive changes in their community (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; in Soulard et al., 2021). These transformations typically take place through socially and environmentally responsible interactions with host communities intended to benefit both transformed tourists and local residents at the destination (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Walker & Weiler, 2017; in Soulard et al., 2021).

Literature review

A literature review is a valid approach and necessary step towards structuring a research field, and forms an integral part of any research conducted (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002; Mentzer & Kahn, 1995; in Arman, Ali, & Qadir, 2023). A review of past literature is not only a crucial endeavour for any academic research (Webster & Watson, 2002; in Arman et al., 2023), but also the foundation and inspiration for substantial, useful research (Boote & Beile, 2005; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012; in Arman et al., 2023). Undoubtedly, tourism research appears to be a multidisciplinary/diversified lesson (Arman et al., 2023)

The works related to transformative tourism carried out by Amaro, Caldeira, & Seabra (2023), Zhao and Agyeiwaah (2023), Rus, Dezsi, Ciascai, and Pop (2022), Chhabra (2021), Neuhofer et al. (2020), Sheldon (2020), Vidickienė, Vilké, and Gedminaitė-Raudonė (2020), Pung and Del Chiappa (2020), Soulard et al. (2021), Soulard et al. (2019), Kirillova et al. (2017, 2016), Ateljevic, Sheldon, and Tomljenovic (2016), Coghlan and Weiler (2015) Robledo and Batle (2015), Reisinger (2015, 2013), Lean, Staiff, and Waterton (2014), and Walter (2013) have shed light on the importance of transformative tourism in the academia.

They are Nandasena, Morrison, and Coca-Stefaniak (2022, p.285) who have reviewed 194 scholarly sources related to transformational tourism were found to have been published between January 1978 and June 2020. They broadly grouped 194 literatures into four themes, namely: tourism experiences; leadership; responsible tourism and the United Nations' sustainable development goals framework (Nandasena et al., 2022, p.287). Nandasena et al. (2022) have explored different aspects of transformational tourism adopting varied perspectives that included: existential-humanistic approaches (Kirillova et al., 2017), co-creation (Wengel et al., 2019), volunteer tourism (Knowlensberg et al., 2014), pilgrimage tourism (Nikjoo et al., 2020), ecotourism (Pookhao, 2014), the sharing economy (Guttentag, 2019), experience development (Wolf, Ainsworth, & Crowley, 2017) and host-tourist relationships (Lean, 2012; Soulard et al., 2019; Robledo and Batle, 2017).

Contemporary studies of transformative tourism experiences often focus on niche markets, for example, "gap year" tourists (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2011; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), backpackers (Noy, 2004; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), long distance walkers (Saunders et al., 2013; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015) as often as not, volunteer tourists.

While following transformative tourism, it is found that Reisinger edited two books on transformative tourism from both tourist (2013) and host perspective (2015). In both editions, multiple authors explore the issues of how travel and tourism can change human behavior and have a positive impact on the world. Investigating various types of tourism such as educational, volunteer, survival, community-based, eco, farm, extreme, religious, spiritual, wellness, and mission tourism, the authors provide empirical evidence of how these specific forms of travel as well as hosting provide conditions that foster the process of transformation (Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.17).

Change happens when individuals' ways of thinking are challenged by new and more valuable viewpoints (Mezirow, 1978; Alahakoon, Pike, & Beatson, 2021, p.2). Therefore, Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory brought light to the concept of transformative travel and tourism as an emerging global theory in the academia of tourism studies that started from Bruner (1991) until before the concept of transformational tourism founded by Reisinger (2013; 2015). Transformative tourism is an emerging paradigm in the travel industry, characterized by travel experiences that lead to profound personal growth, self-discovery, and societal benefits. He is Bruner (1991) who first conceptualized the term transformative tourism followed by Kottler (1998; Phillips, 1998; Nandasena et al., 2022, p.282) with early tourism scholars exploring the therapeutic and experiential aspects of travel.

Transformation has long been associated with travel (Reisinger, 2013; Robledo & Batle, 2015). In this regard, Ross (2010) considers that travel, "when approached in a conscious way, can be a widely available, individually tailored, and enjoyable way to gain self-awareness, spiritual experience, and an expansion of consciousness" (p.54; in Robledo & Batle, 2015, p.2; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.37).

Transformative tourism, as form of tourism leading to “positive change in attitudes and values among those who participate in the tourist experience” (Christie & Mason, 2003, p.9; in Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020, p.2), may represent a timely vehicle of hope for expanding peoples’ world view and conveying a greater sense of inclusiveness belonging to the world (Pritchard et al., 2011; Pung and Del Chiappa, 2020).

Christie and Mason (2003, p.9; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015) define transformative tourism in terms of outcomes, that is, “the practice of organized tourism that leads to a positive change in attitudes and values among those who participate in the tourist experience”. Of the studies that explicitly set out to explore transformation through tourism experiences, many are conceptual in nature (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Christie & Mason, 2003; Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Lee & Woosnam, 2010; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015). Others, such as White and White (2004; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), Noy (2004; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), Hudson and Inkson (2006; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), Zahra and McIntosh (2007; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), Tomazos and Butler (2010; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015) and Saunders et al. (2013; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015) offer qualitative data in the form of “thick descriptions” or in the case of Voigt, Brown, and Howat (2011; in Coghlan & Weiler, 2015), a quantitative survey to explore the transformative benefits of wellness tourism. These studies provide some encouragement that tourism experiences may foster transformation, but are less focused on the elements present in the process of transformation (Coghlan & Weiler, 2015).

The transformational travel (TT) in academic research has been coined by Kottler (1998; Terán, 2016, p.30; Phillips, 2019). Kottler (1997; in Robledo & Batle, 2015, p.2; Phillips, 2019) first introduced the term transformative travel into scholarly discourse. He defines it as a process that involves the actualization of “something missing” driven by “intellectual curiosity, emotional need, or physical challenge” (Kottler, 1998, p.26; Robledo & Batle, 2015; Phillips, 2019). According to Kottler (1997; in Robledo & Batle, 2015), travel often takes people into unfamiliar situations, allowing them to experiment with new ways of living, and to readjust their lives to meet their needs. Kottler (1998, p.14; Robledo & Batle, 2015; Phillips, 2019) claims that there is “no other activity that has greater potential to alter your perceptions or the ways you choose your life”.

Transformative travel is about travel experiences that encapsulate “journeys of the mind” aiming at self-fulfillment, responsible behavior towards humanity and natural ecosystems (Reisinger, 2013). Pung and Del Chiappa state that “transformative tourism meanings could be perceived as self-flourishing and may positively influence the tourists’ well-being” (2020, p.3; Chhabra, 2021). Sheldon (2020; Ateljevic, 2020, p.4) examines how the ultimate human journey is an inner onetowards the state that gives us the sense of peace and unity and connectedness with all living beings, and how tourism destinations and providers might design tourism experiences to assist tourist on the path to this ultimate inner destination. Skift (2018; in Ateljevic, 2020) (the agency that invented the term *overtourism*) claims that ‘travelers today are increasingly drawn to travel as a form of self-actualization and personal transformation and growth.

In their study, Pung and Del Chiaapa (2020) express interviewees primarily focused on subjective tourist transformation as achieving greater self-efficacy, humility and personal enrichment. Findings suggest that transformation facilitators correspond to: interacting with locals and travelers, facing challenges, experiencing the sense of the place, long stays and post travel reflection. Participants reported experiencing eudaimonic wellbeing, rather than happiness and hedonia (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020).

The intentional nature of transformative travel is also reflected in practitioners' definitions. Lean (2009; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.37) draws attention to the transformational travel definition within a UNDP India project in rural tourism: "travel not only for pleasure but to broaden travelers horizon, where travel is attracted by the host society and where experience transforms attitudes, prompts changes in people's consciousness and foster sense of pride in culture, heritage and environment of the region visited". Lean (2012; Nandasena et al., 2022) emphasized the essential role of physical travel in this transformative process.

While defining the transformative cultural tourism, it is also important to note that it covers smaller group of services than the transformative tourism and is the subset of transformative tourism. Travel agencies often offer transformative tourism services in the form of so-called "heroic" or "adventure" travels, when tourists take part in physically challenging outdoor activities in remote or exotic locations. In many cases, such travels cannot be classified as cultural travels. Tourists engaged in heroic travel seek to transform their physical and emotional qualities rather than their cultural values. Transformative cultural tourism is focused on how to use cultural components of a visited place for individual or collective transformation (Vidickienė et al., 2020). Vidickienė et al. (2020) emphasize that academic effort to explain new cultural tourism types focus mainly on "creative tourism" and "experiential tourism." Their article, however, centers on the latest evolution stage: "transformative tourism," which they adopt from scholars who also refer to it as "transformational tourism."

Transformative tourism embraces socially and environmentally conscientious travel practices that are underpinned by the "silent revolution" which is spearheaded by a growing number of "cultural creatives" (Phillips, 2019, p.70; Ghisi, 2010, p.40; Ateljevic, 2009, p.279, 285; Ateljevic, 2011, pp. 505-506; Ateljevic, 2013, p.42; Mkhize, Economics, & Ivanovic, 2019, p.996; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, pp. 11-12, 62) and which are defined as individuals who acquire "new ways of looking at, and new ways of being in the world" (Ateljevic, Sheldon & Tomljenovic, 2016, p.12; Phillips, 2019). In line with cultural creatives (inner-directed, embrace globalism, positive human values and relationships, spirituality and authentic experiences, altruism and social activism and adopt lifestyles), Ateljevic et al. (2016) defined transformative travelers as individuals who travel in order to re-invent themselves and the world; they travel in order to volunteer and make a difference; they value what is small and simple and aim for self-reliance; they are connected and communicative; they seek meaningful experiences which help them develop personally and collectively. Hence, cultural creatives are transformative travelers or new conscious consumers (Ateljevic et al., 2016), who consider

travel a powerful medium to reinvent themselves and search for new ways of living and new worldviews.

In a similar vein, Reisinger (2013; Phillips, 2019) advocates transformative travel and argues that human survivability is inextricably linked to our ability to transform our attitude, values and behavior and to better citizens of the world who are responsible thinker.

Tourism can offer very interesting insights on transformation, and different lenses through which the transformational potential of human contact with the environment might be considered. Travel for different purposes to different locations regardless of time can deliver experiential learning defined as ‘the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment’ (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p.2; in Reisinger, 2013, p.30). Reisinger (2013, pp. 223-228; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.37), in the concluding remarks of her book calls for more research into ways tourism foster transformation- can transformational tourism contribute to sustainable development?

Transformative tourism is not only limited to its transformation of tourism, it has also connected different perspectives of tourism including hopeful tourism founded by Pritchard, Morgan, and Ateljevic (2011), conscious tourism (Pollock, 2012, 2015), and transmodern tourism (Ateljevic, 2009). All these types of tourism have become more powerful which strongly support to the transformative tourism.

The hopeful tourism network can trace its origin to 2004, since when it has generated the critical tourism studies conference series (2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011) and several publications (Pritchard et al., 2011). Hopeful tourism scholarship seeks to transform tourism enquiry, education and practice by engaging emancipatory and democratic learning agendas, by emphasizing critical thinking, action and education for a sustainable and just world (Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.17). It is described as a values-led humanist perspectives that strives for the transformation of our way of seeing, being, doing and relating in tourism worlds and for the creation of a less unequal, more sustainable planet through action oriented, participant-driven learnings and acts (Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015).

Similarly, conscious travel is a movement, a community and a learning program that enables places to attract and welcome guest in a manner that doesn’t cost the earth. Places, guest and host are the three elements of tourism, it is all about people. Tourism is embedded in and dependent on a biosphere for its life support (<https://conscioustourism.wordpress.com/>; Pollock, 2012). This movement is based on a conviction that the growth of mass tourism that started since 1950 which is now out of control (<https://conscioustourism.wordpress.com/why-the-term-conscious-travel/>; Pollock, 2012). According to Pollock (2012), the concept of conscious travel has three forms: a mind set, a movement, and a business model. In a similar vein, Pollock (2015; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.18) puts forward the new ‘*conscious travel*’ model based on six paradigmatic observations: 1) “Business as Usual” is neither possible nor desirable and transformation is inevitable; 2) Humanity must shift its focus from addressing

symptoms to root cause; 3) Tourism is not an industrial assembly line but a living, dynamic system and systems-thinking capacity will be essential; 4) Tourism can shift from being part of an outdated, unsustainable Extractive Economy to help build a life-affirming Regenerative Economy; 5) This shift will involve a redefinition of success from a focus on volume growth and profitability for a few to the flourishing of all stakeholders; 6) The Regenerative Economy is “place-based” and will be built from the ground up- community by community. In her fairly pragmatic yet poetic approach she puts forward the conscious travel model as a ‘*fresh perspective* on tourism’s role and mode of operation that’s suited to the current period of transition and transformation’ (Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015).

In course of describing transmodern (it connotes the current form of transcending the limits of modernity; in Rodriguez Magda, 2017, p.3) tourism, Magaret Silf (2006, P.178; in Ateljevic, 2009, pp. 293-294), writes, to travel is to discover that human beings in other lands and cultures are also people with whom we can share our laughter and our tears, and that what we have in common is a great deal more than the sum of all our differences. Therefore, if governments, civil society, tourism producers and consumers begin to recognize such deeper meanings of tourism potentialities, tourism can become a leader ‘industry’ in the emerging concept of carrying/spiritual global economy (Ateljevic, 2009).

Slow tourism’ is a form of alternate tourism that revolves around the core principle of advocating to the tourists, the importance of slowing down to a desired pace that is ideal for savoring the flavor of travel; promotes appreciation of, and is instrumental in protecting the environs; and leads to culmination of memorable and quality tourist experience (Khan, 2015).

Several studies have pointed out that slow tourism, combined with slow cities, can help tourists enjoy their time while traveling and engage themselves with places and local people, focus more on sustainable tourism experiences and gain a deeper attachment to the destination. A quality experience and the fine state of true self can be achieved through a “slow” featured tourism. Consequently, discussing the role of experience and existential authenticity simultaneously against a slow tourism background may propose new ideas on tourism contributing to revealing the interaction mechanism between tourists experience and existence authenticity (Shang, Yuan, & Chen, 2020).

Methodology

According to Liao and Wen (2007; in Chang & Katrichis, 2016), research consists of three aspects, problem, theory and methods/tools. This study is based on qualitative research. As Creswell (1994; in Halim, Tatoğlu, & Hanefar, 2021) states that qualitative research is the best choice when a researcher intends to understand social or human problems, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, and conducted in a natural setting. This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature as this paper attempts to investigate a problem which has not been studied in detail. One of the most important objectives of this study is to understand transformative tourism through published literatures in better way.

This study follows general and non-systematic review. However, an attempt has been made to collect maximum research articles as possible. Data is collected from existing literatures, including academic journals and books. The secondary data sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research and identify gaps in the literature. The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic analysis is chosen for its flexibility and its ability to provide a detailed, nuanced account of the data. This is not project-based study. The authors attempted to study on their own. This work will be useful for the students and researchers of transformative learning and transformative tourism.

Tourism motivation

Motivation studies have evolved immensely since the very first time that Lundberg (1971; in Khalilzadeh, Kozak, & Del Chiappa, 2024) asked the question of ‘why do tourists travel?’ Dann (1981; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024) has provided a comprehensive list of studies in the 1960s and 1970s that, either directly or indirectly, have investigated the concept of tourism motivation (Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Both tourism practitioners and scholars have always been interested in motivational forces that guide travel consumption. Although the 1950s is known as the motivation research era in the consumer behavior literature, it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that it (i.e., motivation concept) appeared in the travel and tourism literature (Fletcher et al., 2018; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Since then, motivation has been among the most researched concepts (Gnoth, 1997; Kozak, 2002; Wong, 2013; in Khalilzadeh, et al., 2024) and motivation studies have been considered fundamental in the tourism literature (Pearce & Packer, 2013; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024).

Motivation in the tourism literature is defined as “a meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes an actor or a group of actors to travel, and which is subsequently interpretable by others as a valid explanation for such a decision” (Dann, 1981, p.205; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Accordingly, traveler’s motivation is as much a psychological concept as a sociological one, meaning that it is under the influence of both brain biology and cultural context (Lundberg, 1972; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). As a result, not long after the early motivation studies that took a psychological approach to examine motivation, the social psychology approach to motivation was introduced to the literature (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Parrinello, 1993; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024).

Yousaf, Amin, and Santos (2018, pp. 204-205) reviewed different theories of motivation developed by pioneer scholars like: Maslow (1943; in Yousaf et al., 2018) who developed a concept known as “Hierarchy of needs theory” that explains that human behavior is the outcome of various needs that occur in a hierarchical order and the fulfillment of one need leads to an awareness of the next level of need. Likewise, the theory provides a better understanding of how human needs are a crucial underlying factor in any context. Similarly, Cohen (1972; in Yousaf et al., 2018) developed a theory popular as “Types of tourists” which classifies tourists

based on their travel behaviors and groups them as 1) organized mass tourists, 2) individual mass tourists, 3) explorers, and 4) drifters. Dann (1977; in Yousaf et al., 2018) conceptualized a theory called “Push and pull theory of tourist motivation” which builds a framework based on two concepts: anomie and eco-enhancement. He is Crompton (1979; in Yousaf et al., 2018) who came up with altogether nine different motivation theories that has been classified into two major groups which are “Socio-psychological motivations to travel” which identifies seven motives and two cultural motives that drive individuals to travel. Iso-Ahola (1982; in Yousaf et al., 2018) highlights on “Social psychology model of tourism” based on push and pull effects, asserts that personal escape and search and interpersonal escape and search motivate tourism and recreation that combines the main elements (i.e. escape and reward). It is Pearce (1988; in Yousaf et al., 2018) who popularized the theory called ‘TCL’ and ‘Travel Career Path (TCP)’ (Pearce & Lee, 2005; in Yousaf et al., 2018). The TCL theory incorporates five travel motivations: relaxation, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem and development or fulfillment which categorizes travel motivations into two groups: needs that are self-centered and needs that are directed at others. Likewise TCP theory centers on 14 motivational factors: 1) Self-actualization–internal 2) Self-enhancement–internal 3) Romance–internal 4) Belonging–internal 5) Autonomy–internal 6) Self-development (i.e. host site involvement)–external 7) Nature–external 8) Escape/relax–most important 9) Novelty–most important 10) Kinship–most important 11) Nostalgia–less important 12) Stimulation–less important 13) Isolation–less important and 14) Recognition and/or social status–less important (Yousaf et al., 2018)

The term motivation refers to self-reported reasons for participation in a recreational activity (Ewert, 1985). In previous tourism research, motivation has been studied extensively in various fields, including pleasure tourism (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; in Kim, Lee, Uysal, Kim, Ahn, 2015, p.3), rural tourism (Park & Yoon, 2009; in Kim et al., 2015), and special-event planning (Backman, Backman, Uysal, & Sunshine, 1995; in Kim et al., 2015). Raadik, Cottrell, Fredman, Ritter, and Newman (2010; in Kim et al., 2015) identified four major Recreation Experience Preference (REP) factors: self-discovery, experience of places, seeking solitude, and challenging self. Furthermore, there have been several studies examining explicitly nature-based tourism. Zeppel (2008; in Kim et al., 2015, p.4) showed that the main motivation for nature-based tourism is aligned with environmentally related factors, such as visiting uncrowded, unspoiled destinations, and learning about and appreciating nature.

In course of studying tourism motivations, many different adventure tourism scholars also developed adventure motivational theories which are known as peak experience (Maslow, 1961; in Tumbat & Belk, 2010), peak performance (Privette, 1983; in Tumbat & Belk, 2010), edge work (Lyng, 1990), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; in Tumbat & Belk, 2010), sensation seeking (Zukerman, 1976; in Tumbat & Belk, 2010), reversal theory (Apter, 1982; Houge Mackenzie, 2015; in Tumbat & Belk, 2010), extraordinary experience (Arnould & Price, 1993; Tumbat & Belk, 2010), transcendent experience (Watson, 1991; Williams & Harvey, 2001; in Tsaour, Yen & Hsiao, 2012), self-efficacy (Slanger & Rudestan, 1997).

Findings from Buckley's review highlight the dearth of research on adventure tourists, with only 15 of the 50 studies focusing on adventure tourists. Table 2 illustrates the key motives found from 7 (Cater, 2006; Fluker & Turner, 2000; Patterson & Pan, 2007; Pomfret, 2006, 2011; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Wu & Liang, 2012; in Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014, p.6) of the 15 studies which specifically examine adventure tourists' motives. Other motivational-based research on adventure tourists, which is not presented in Buckley's (2011; in Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014) review, has also been added to Table 2. It shows that motives driving multi-activity participation have been the main research focus and that only a very few outdoor adventure activities have been examined in an adventure tourism rather than an adventure recreation context. Clearly recognized adventure sports, such as surfing, snowboarding, horseback riding and paragliding, have been neglected by researchers, despite such activities being offered as holiday experiences by commercial tourism organizations and being engaged in by independent adventure tourists.

Table 2: Motivations of adventure tourists

Adventure activity	Motives	Authors
Hiking	Relax mentally, get away, challenge, feel close to nature and sense of accomplishment	den Breejen (2007)
Mountaineering	Aesthetic and physical enjoyment of mountain environment, educational, psychological, physiological, safety (use of guides), ease of organisation, skills development, gaining experience, natural environment, availability of mountaineering opportunities, mountain conditions and supporting infrastructure	Carr (1997) and Pomfret (2006, 2011)
Multiple activities	Rush, fear, thrill, excitement, uncertain outcomes, danger and risk, challenge, anticipated rewards, novelty, stimulation and excitement, escapism and separation, exploration and discovery, absorption and focus, contrasting emotions, boredom avoidance, sense of adventure, change of environment, knowledge, insight, learn about other people, places and cultures	Buckley (2011), Cater (2006), Patterson and Pan (2007), Schneider and Vogt (2012), Swarbrooke et al. (2003), Tsaur, Lin, and Liu (2013), Walle (1997) and Weber (2001)
Skiing	Thrill, relaxation, social atmosphere, snow conditions, fun, excitement, achievement, challenge, safety, quality of accommodation, hills and trails, resort services, range of ski runs and terrain	Holden (1999), Klenosky, Gengler, and Mulvey (1993) and Richards (1996)

Adventure activity	Motives	Authors
White-water rafting and kayaking	New experience, enjoyment, socialising, natural environment, flow and playfulness	Fluker and Turner (2000) and Wu and Liang (2012)

Source: *The author, and developed from Buckley, 2011; in Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014, p. 7*

Table 2 also highlights how there are shared motives across activity types – for instance, the natural environment motivates mountaineers and also kayakers – as well as variations.

Despite variations between different categories of adventure activity, motivational dissimilarities across these categories have been under-researched, and the few studies that have been carried out tend to be based on experienced adventurers, although there are exceptions. For example, one investigation (Ewert et al., 2013; in Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014, p.7) of 801 canoeists, rock climbers, white-water kayakers and sea kayakers, of varying skill levels, established motivational differences according to activity type. Rock climbers scored higher on sensationseeking motives than canoeists and sea kayakers. And canoeists scored lower on self-image motives and higher on social motives than participants in white-water kayaking, sea kayaking and rock climbing. Ewert et al. (2013) contend that such motivational differences reflect the diverse nature of these activities. Rock climbing and white-water kayaking, for example, usually take place in more challenging settings, they are more demanding, and they necessitate higher levels of skill than canoeing and sea kayaking (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014).

Tourism scholars unanimously agree that the nature of tourism motivation is multidimensional (Robie et al., 1993; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024), dynamic, nonlinear (Fodness, 1994; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024), and complex (Parrinello, 1993; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). We also know that the growth of motivation range, which leads to multi-motivational situation, increases the level of complexity (Mansfeld, 1992; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Therefore, positivistic paradigms cannot create a comprehensive knowledge of this subject matter (Mansfeld, 1992; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Moreover, needs are central to the motivation system (Jewell & Crofts, 2009; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024), and the diversity and complexity of travelers' expectations and needs have been multiplied (Sharpley & Stone, 2010; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024) since the early days of tourists' motivation studies (Sharpley & Stone, 2010; in Khalilzadeh et al., 2024).

As specific tourism studies are relatively recent, many researchers have based their motivational theories on the traditional needs-based theory (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1998; Murray, 1938; in Hindley & Font, 2015, p.3) and drive theory (Hull, 1943; in Hindley & Font, 2015). Shaw and Williams (2004; in Hindley & Font, 2015, p.3) suggest most travel motivational theories fall into three categories: 'reductionist' (tension between new and familiar), 'structuralist' (identification of underlying structure with push-pull motives linked

to needs) and 'functionalist' (inner needs create tension of psychological or physical nature resolved by holidays). Travel motivation theories include such as push-pull, seeking and escaping, and needs based. A 'disappearing destination' could be the pull (Dann, 1977, 1981 & Crompton, 1979; in Hindley & Font, 2015, p.3). According to Phillips (2019), a review of the literature on the motivations of long-term travelers/backpackers yields four main motivational triggers based on patterns and combinations and include novelty-seeking, escapism, freedom and self-development.

Decision making process

Many scholars are focusing on how individuals make decision for their travelling processes. The main queries in these processes are: "what are the traveler's psychological processes during judgment or choice tasks (i.e. motivation studies)? Decision making can be broken down into a series of well-defined stages: a) recognition that there is a decision to be made, b) formulation of goals and objectives, c) generation of an alternative set of objects from which to choose, d) search for information about the properties of the alternatives under consideration, e) ultimate judgment or choice among many alternatives, f) acting upon the decision, and g) providing feedback for the next decision (Caroll & Johnson, 1990; Huber, 1980; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1986; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

While writing about the consumer decision-making research, Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) have adopted many theories such as the expected utility theory (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1947; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1972; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), regret theory (Bell, 1982; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), satisfying theory (Simon, 1956; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and its derivative theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1987; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Abelson and Levi (1985; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) categorize decision-making literature on three continua: structure versus process orientation, risk-free versus risky choice models and normative versus descriptive models. A key difference between normative and descriptive models revolves around whether tourists are looking for optimum decisions or simply accepting a satisfying solution for a wide array of reasons (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005, p.816). Information-processing theory is central to all consumer behavior models (Bettman et al., 1998; Gabbot & Hogg, 1994; in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005, p.817).

Discussion

People before their travel expect various outcomes from their journey through the selection of different destinations and nature of travel. The motives of travel as mentioned in different literatures are as follows: novelty-seeking, escapism, freedom, self-development and personal growth, self-efficacy, transformation of consciousness and subjective-wellbeing.

Novelty-seeking

Novelty-seeking is considered one of the key motivators for travel. Cohen (1972; in Kunwar, 2017, p.49) first introduced novelty-seeking to the tourism literature by placing tourists on a continuum of novelty-seeking and familiarity-seeking, with the drifter being located on the novelty-seeking end of the spectrum. This is similar to Stanley Plog's (1974; in Kunwar, 2017, pp. 53-55) classification of psychocentric and allocentric tourists based on their personality and desire for novelty. He referred to psychocentric tourists as passive, risk averse and unadventurous. They do not exhibit high levels of curiosity; tend to be perceived as safe. In contrast, he described allocentric tourists (which he further divided into explorers and drifters) as active and risk-taking tourists who travel for reasons of excitement and adventure. Not only are they comfortable meeting strangers, they actively seek unfamiliar situations. Some scholars have even suggested novelty-seeking is an innate quality in travelers (Cohen, 1979; Kottler, 1998; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; in Phillips, 2019, p.76).

Escapism

It is widely accepted that escape is one of the most important driving forces behind travel (Krippendorf, 1987; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; in Phillips, 2019), and this is particularly true for long-term travelers. Molz (2012) even argued that the modern world requires an escape: "The modern individual can escape the stress and structure of modern work life, the conformity of consumer society, the constraints of moral norms and even the ordered hierarchies of social class identity" (p.138; in Phillips, 2019). The reasons for escape identified in motivation literature are manifold: escape from mundane routine life at home, escape from an anomic society, escape from social constrictions and expectations, escape from one's personal or interpersonal life crises (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Krippendorf, 1987; Iso-Ahola, 1982; MacCannell, 1976; Turner & Ash, 1976; in Phillips, 2019). In order to foster a feeling of escape, Crompton (1979; in Phillips, 2019) argued that the travel destination must be physically and socially different from the home environment.

Freedom

By following push and pull factors, Riley (1988; in Phillips, 2019, p.80) put forward "an opportunity to experience real freedom" In this sense, travel offers not only an escape from something but also an escape to an environment of perceived freedom, choice and agency, a space that differs significantly from home and that allows freedom to explore and play out new versions of the self. Naomi and White (2004) examined the motivations of mid-life and older long-term travelers and found that the sense of freedom inherent in long-term travel is not only a freedom from social constraints and pressures of everyday life but also "offers alternative ways of living, the chance to do things differently and most significantly to live spontaneously (p.212; in Phillips, 2019).

Self-development and personal growth

Travel can be one of the most rewarding forms of introspection (Lawrence Durrell, 1957, p.15; in Phillips, 2019, p.83). Another highly significant travel motive in the context of long-term travel is the notion of self-development and personal growth. Although the link between cross-cultural travel and the potential of personal growth is well established in academic literature, a “gaping hole” in empirical research has left this hypothesis unexplored (Hirschorn & Hefferon, 2013, p.283; in Phillips, 2019).

Learning in tourism contexts is process, product, and experiential in nature (Bueddefeld & Duerden, 2022). Learning during tourism is an engaging process of exploring one’s self, relationships, other people, cultures and places where reflection about the self, relationships, past experiences and differences between ones experience than the experience of others form the basis of the learning experience that allows the people to confirm or disconfirm pre-existing knowledge by freely engaging in activities, with people and in spaces outside of the usual environment (Bueddefeld & Duerden, 2022; Van Winkle & Lagay, 2012, p.350).

Empirical research attesting to the potential of personal growth and self-development resulting from extended cross-cultural encounters is derived largely from the fields of education, psychology, tourism and sociology. Backpacker research, in particular, has shown that the construction of a new sense of the self (Urry, 1990), even if temporary, is a central motivator for travel (Desforges, 1998, 2000; Cohen, 2004; Elsrud, 2001; Galani-Moutafi, 2000; White & White, 2004; in Phillips, 2019, p.84).

Self- efficacy

Self- efficacy as theoretical framework was developed by Bandura (1977, p.192; in Gomez, Hill, & Ackerman, 2007) who described self-efficacy as an individual belief that he or she can complete a task that tests his or her ability, while experiencing risk. By definition, self-efficacy is the notion that the kinds of outcomes people anticipate depend on their judgments of how well they will be able to perform (Slanger & Rudestam, 1997, p.356; Gomez et al., 2007). One could argue that rock climbing by nature is a recreational activity that may be highly influenced by mastery of attempts and, thus explained by self-efficacy (Gomez et al., 2007). A self- efficacy derives itself from four areas: (a) mastery experience; (b) vicarious experience; (c) verbal persuasion; and (d) physiological states (Bandura, 1977; in Gomez et al., 2007, p.307).

Bandura also suggested that the relationships between self-efficacy and performance are reciprocal: efficacy expectations influence performance and performance outcomes influence self-efficacy. The direction of reciprocity, increasing or decreasing self-efficacy, also depends on the degree of stress present in the situation. Selye (1974; in Priest & Gass, 2018) described stress as occurring in one of two forms either eustress, which is pleasant and desirable, or distress, which is unpleasant and undesirable, depending on the effect - in the form of emotions and feelings-exhibited by the person under stress (Priest & Gass, 2018, pp. 207-208).

Transformation of consciousness

According to Sheldon (2020), to address tourism's challenges, a transformation of consciousness of all stakeholders is necessary. When awakened, the individual not only experiences inner peace and freedom, a sense of flow, transcendence of the small self, connection with something greater, but also a desire to contribute is the greater good. It suggests that tourism scenarios involving deep human connectivity, deep environmental connectivity, self-inquiry and engaged contribution or some combination of these four scenarios can shift human consciousness. Within these scenarios, peak transformational moments can be designed to give glimpses or create persistent shifts in consciousness (Sheldon, 2020).

The ultimate human journey, according to many spiritual and philosophical traditions, is an inner one. The destination of this journey can be described in various ways—freedom, self-actualization, enlightenment, awakening, unity consciousness, or divine realization (Isherwood & Manchester, 1947; Martin, 2019; Maslow, 1954; Tsu, 1973; in Sheldon, 2020). It is known as nirvana in Buddhism, Samadhi in Hinduism, Fanaa in Sufism, or Satori in the Japanese Zen Tradition (Suzuki, 1907; in Sheldon, 2020). The enlightened state, either in its permanence or brevity, has been described as unity consciousness, transcendental consciousness, the flow experience, fundamental wellbeing, awakening, or non-dual awareness (Sheldon, 2020).

The development of compassion and other core human values is an integral part of the journey of transformation and the common ground of all religions (Shankar, 2009; in Sheldon, 2020, p.2). The awakening individual tends to express more compassion to all living beings and fields and empathy with them. The life of an awakened individual is infused with honesty, courage, forgiveness, kindness, gratitude, generosity, non-violence, tolerance, compassion, integrity, service, responsibility, humility, justice, wisdom and truth (Sheldon, 2020).

Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being has been an important subject in various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and gerontology. Each discipline defines subjective well-being in slightly different terms, such as happiness, quality of life, and life satisfaction (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; in Kim et al., 2015, p.5). "Happiness" reflects an individual's feelings regarding their life (Bowling, 1995; in Kim et al., 2015, p.5) while "life satisfaction" reflects an individual's perceptions of achieving what he or she wants in life. These affective and cognitive facets can be seen as two main aspects of the appraisal of life (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; in Kim et al., 2015, p.5). Shin and Johnson (1978, p.478; in Kim et al., 2015, p.5) have defined subjective wellbeing as happiness, stating that it is "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria". Bradburn (1969, p.13; in Kim et al., 2015, p.5) argues that subjective well-being means "the person is experiencing mostly pleasant emotions during this period of life or that the person is predisposed to such emotions, whether or not he or she is currently experiencing them". Based on a review of the literature regarding

subjective well-being, this study measures the hiking-tourist's subjective well-being as the individual's own judgment regarding his or her feelings of happiness and their culminating emotional status following the trip.

Transformative tourism marketing

First and foremost, one should understand what tourism marketing is. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2007; in Sadq, Othman, & Khorsheed, 2019), tourism marketing is the process by which the needs of tourists can be balanced against the objectives of a tourist organization or region. Tourism marketing is an activity that tourism institutions do to innovate, communicate, deliver and share offers that have added value to customers, partners and the relentless community.

While examining in more detail, as mentioned by Chhabra (2010; in Wahyuningsih, Suparman, Bachri, & Muzakir, 2021, p.2) tourism marketing consists of several activities, namely tourism destinations, tourism business marketing, hospitality marketing, travel marketing and others that are definitely related to everything related to tourism Nicolaidis (2018; in Sadq et al., 2019) posits that sales and marketing must be honest at all times and professional when dealing with customers, competitors, regulatory bodies and employees. Marketers must strive to behave honestly, and depict products correctly and always adhere to the company policies and code of ethics, laws and regulations. Ethically managed hotels are those that show deference to the rights of all stakeholders while not weakening business value.

Tourism marketing activities focus primarily on tourism products or services and their development and reasonable pricing policies to control the quantities of tourism between peak and recession seasons, a distribution channel to target markets, and the development of the tourism services package by integrating the total tourism services (Hong, 2008; in Sadq et al., 2019). The purpose of marketing is to provide optimal satisfaction to consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016; in Wahyuningsih et al., 2021). In line with this argument, tourism marketing aims to create satisfaction for tourists with the hope that these tourists will revisit and recommend to others. To achieve maximum level of satisfaction, service providers need to provide best services, including amenities, accessibility, and attractions. Moreover, tourism is categorized as a service, therefore marketing mix strategy is not only 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) but also include 3Ps (people, process, physical evidence) which is known as service marketing mix.

As far as the notion of “transformational marketing” is concerned, relatively it is a response to the need of marketing to be based on core virtues, such as integrity, patience, perseverance and willingness to choose between easy profit and responsible actions that protect the environment and human beings (Hossain & Marinova, 2013; in Martins & Santos, 2022). One of the best definitions of transformational marketing is given by Baker (2014; in Martins & Santos, 2022) as he defines that transformational marketing means using marketing knowledge, insights, tools and techniques to communicate how choice and behavioral change

can increase individual satisfaction, without having a negative effect on other people, or in the environment which we all share and depend on, for our wellbeing and survival.

The PR Smith's (1990) SOSTAC model is adopted in this study as a guide as it involves the planning of marketing strategies. The SOSTAC model was rated as the third most popular model by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) due to its nature of ease when planning for various marketing activities (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022, p.1043). SOSTAC stands for Situation – where are we now? Objectives – where do we want to be? Strategy – how do we get there? Tactics – how exactly do we get there? Action – what is our plan? Control – did we get there?

Marketing strategy is a very crucial strategy for business and organization to succeed. It is directed to provide superior value to customers. According to Kotler and Keller (2016, p.1; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022, p.1041), marketing strategy is a marketing mindset that will be utilized to achieve marketing objectives, in which there is a detailed strategy consisting of target market, positioning, marketing mix, and budget for marketing. Businesses communicate with customers through advertising via print media or Email, sales promotions, creating a pleasant store atmosphere, creating publicity, direct selling, and referrals (Dunne et al., 2013; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022). There are different ways of reaching an audience or market (Zingsheim, 2011; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022). According to the author, the options to reach customers include print media, magazines, digital mediums, online platforms, social media, exhibitions, conferences, video, direct mail, Email, and text-message advertising. Developing the right marketing strategies requires a combination of flexibility, adaptability, and discipline that businesses have to follow in order to keep up with the ever-expanding marketing world (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022, p.1039). A marketing strategy is formulated on the basis of the marketing mix, which involves marketing activities such as product, price, place, and promotion, also known as the four Ps that reflect the needs and wants of consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; in Moodley & Naidoo, 2022).

Tourism destination image

One of the most important features of transformative tourism is the image of destination. Destination refers to the place where tourists intend to spend their time away from home. This geographical unit visited by tourist may be a self-content centre, a village or a town or a city, a region or an island or a country. Furthermore, a destination is defined as it may be a single location, a set of multi-destinations as part of a tour (Cho, 2000, p.144). Images can be regarded as the ideas and the beliefs which tourists hold about the destinations. Numerous studies have revealed that a destination possesses an image and the choice is influenced by the tourists' images of alternative destinations, whether these images are true or not (Cho, 2000, p.145).

Destination attractiveness refers to an individual's perceptions and feelings about a destination's ability to satisfy their travel needs (Vengesai et al., 2009; Yangzhou & Ritchie,

1993; in Alahakoon et al., 2021). Likewise, transformative destination attractiveness is recognized as travelers' perceptions of a destination's ability to provide transformative travel opportunities (Alahakoon et al., 2021). Two dominant perspectives are common in destination attractiveness literature where the demand-side focusing on travelers (Lee et al., 2014; Vengesai et al., 2009; Yangzhou & Ritchie, 1993; in Alahakoon et al., 2021) or the supply-side focusing on the industry and experts is captured (Jin et al., 2012; Lee & Chen, 2017; Puška et al., 2020; in Alahakoon et al., 2021). Evidently, the choice of perspective is largely determined by the travelers' ability to evaluate destination attractiveness. Alahakoon et al. (2021) highlight destination images have been of interest to scholars for years. This is because it serves as a "mental short-cut" (Josiasen et al., 2016; in Alahakoon et al., 2021) that affects destination choice (Gartner, 1993; Isaac & Eid, 2019; in Alahakoon et al., 2021), destination positioning (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Pike & Ryan, 2004; in Alahakoon et al., 2021), visitor satisfaction, and decision-making (Chon, 1990; Jenkins, 1999; in Alahakoon et al., 2021).

A tourism destination image is described as the totality of the impressions, feelings, and beliefs of tourists about a destination (Baloglu, 1997; in Tang, Yang, Wang, & Ge, 2022). It starts to take shape before tourists arrive, and the visitor's experience will cause their image of the destination to evolve dynamically (Estela, 2019; in Tang et al., 2022). Echtner and Ritchie construct the destination image using three axes: functional-psychological, common-unique, and attribute-holistic, and propose a combination of standardized measures and open ended questions to generate the destination image (Baloglu, 1997; in Tang et al., 2022). Gartner suggests that a destination image comprises three parts: cognitive, affective, and conative (Gartner, 1993; in Tang et al., 2022); this definition has been widely accepted by tourism researchers (Stylos, Vassiliadis, Bellou, & Andronikidis, 2016; Wang, Hao, Law, & Wang, 2019; in Tang et al., 2022). The cognitive image is constructed in the tourist's mind based on facts about the destination and is the sum of what the individual knows or believes about the destination (Bui, Alaei, Vu, Li, & Law, 2021; in Tang et al., 2022). The affective image refers to the individual's emotional responses or appraisals, which reflect their feelings about the destination (Hallmann, Zehrer, & Mueller, 2014; in Tang et al., 2022), and the identification of an emotional image helps tourists to pursue benefits that match the emotions associated with the destination, thus creating a more positive image of the destination (Klenosky, 2002; in Tang et al., 2022). Conative image is the motivation, preference, or behavioral intention of the visitor after being influenced by cognitive and emotional images. Therefore, destination image theory proposes that cognitive and affective images represent an individual's subjective associations or impressions about the attributes of a destination (Gartner, 1993; in Tang et al., 2022), and the conative image depicts the individual's own idealized and desired future condition (Dann, 1996; in Tang et al., 2022).

The World Tourism Organization grappled with this concept during a special forum that included academic institutions and destination management organizations. In the

end, a “local tourism destination” was defined as a physical space that includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders, often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations. They are the focal point in the delivery of tourism products and the implementation of tourism policy (WTO, 2002; in Lew & McKercher, 2006, p.405).

Authenticity

Authenticity has been acknowledged as an academic keyword (Knudsen, Rickly, & Vidon, 2016; in Shang et al., 2020) and an essential tourism motivation that drives visitors to a specific place. Authenticity means an original, universal values and a crucial driving force motivating tourists to travel to distant places and experience different time periods (Frisvoll, 2013; in Park, Choi & Lee, 2019). Collins and Murphy (2010; Ivanovic, 2008; 2014; in Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015, p.26) highlight that the term authentic was initially used to delineate a proof of genuineness and originality of the artifacts displayed in museums.

The authenticity was transformed from purely one-dimensional modernist construct to denote realness, genuineness and originality of tourism attractions objects (objective authenticity) (MacCannell, 1973; in Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015), to a multidimensional concept defined by postmodern relativistic ontology to denote a range of individually constructed truths, either somewhat reflective of objective reality (constructive authenticity) (Cohen, 1979; in Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015), or completely independent from objective reality (existential authenticity) (Wang, 1999; Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015).

Wang (1999) developed three types of authenticity: the objective (real), the constructive (socio-political), and the existential (phenomenological) (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; in Park et al., 2019). Present-day existential authenticity has received considerable attention in the tourism academic research (Fu, 2019; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Brown, 2013; in Shang et al., 2020). In the context of modernity, people were suffering from a boring life and pressures, which eventually lead to a loss of self (Howard, 2012; in Shang et al., 2020). The achievement of existential authenticity means that tourist could be more close to a sense of freedom and obtain richer experiential encounters with the self (Fu, 2019; in Shang et al., 2020). Hence, the search of an authentic self has become an important motivation for tourist and a selling point from destination marketing (Jiang, Ramkissoon, Mavondo, & Feng, 2017; in Shang et al., 2020).

In authentic economy, the customers/consumers are guided through personal transformation towards the authentic-self. Consequently, in new authentic economy, the consumers and the product are not juxtapositioned in a traditional sense; the consumers are/ become the final product through an integrative process of co-production of products and experiences known as presumption (Toffler, 1980; in Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015, p.28).

An authentic-self is achieved by rendering five genres of authenticity in relation to the main types of economic values/offerings. These are: natural authenticity (commodities), original authenticity (goods), exceptional authenticity (services), referential authenticity (experiences), and influential authenticity accountable for personal transformations beyond self-actualization. Each genre of authenticity is defined by Gilmore and Pine (2007, pp. 49- 50; in Ivanovic & Saayman, 2015) as follows:

- *Natural authenticity* is that which exists in its natural state in or of the earth, remaining untouched by human hands; it is not artificial or synthetic.
- *Original authenticity* is that which possesses originality in design, being the first of its kind, never before seen by human eyes; it is not a copy or imitation.
- *Exceptional authenticity* is that which is done exceptionally well, executed individually and extraordinarily by someone demonstrating human care; not unfeelingly or disingenuously performed.
- *Referential authenticity* is that which refers to some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and loggings; not derivative or trivial.
- *Influential authenticity* is that which exerts influence upon other entities, calling human beings to a higher goal and providing a foretaste of a better way; not inconsequential or without meaning.

In new transmodern economy, authenticity does matter as it denotes the consumers sensibility (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) towards something real (authentic) as opposed to something fake, and serves as a differentiating factor between similar experiential offerings (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010).

Satisfaction

An understanding of satisfaction (fulfilling the desire) is basic for evaluating the performance of tourist attraction, destination product and services (Schofield, 2000; in Park et al., 2019). This is also related to customer loyalty which is affected by customer's satisfaction (Oliver, 1999; in Park et al., 2019).

Academics are also advocating for a shift in the focus of tourism research towards outcomes related to happiness, self-actualization, and self-fulfillment after returning home (Chhabra, 2021). They are also calling for a focus on the entire human experience of tourists (Cavender et al., 2020; Sheldon, 2020; Teoh et al., 2021) instead of mainly studying tourist experience outcomes related to travel satisfaction, behavioural intentions, and positive emotions (Chhabra, 2021; Kirillova et al., 2016).

Transformative tourism experience

Experience is a core concept in tourism (Schmitt, 1999; Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, & Reisinger, 2015; in Shang et al., 2020). As per Bruner (1991, p.242) experience means how events are received by consciousness. According to Kirillova et al. (2017; Neuhofer et al., 2020), transformative experiences could be described as an event that leaves an everlasting impact by intensively and emotionally triggering a person. The inherent transformative characteristics of this experience underline a rearrangement of the mind and an interruption between the present self and the past self, such as an individual's reassessment of aesthetics, beliefs, judgment, identity and relationships (Riva et al., 2016; Gaggioli, 2016; in Neuhofer et al., 2020).

Four dimensions of transformations namely physical/behavioral, psychological, social and spiritual were identified as major dimensions of specific outcomes of transformative experience (TE). The term transformative experience of tourists connotes the moment when tourists experience deep changes during travel and also after they return home (Soulard, McGehee, & Knollenberg, 2021; in Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023). The transformative potential of the tourism and the power of transformative experience have been well confirmed in previous literature (Alhakoon, Pike, & Beatson, 2021; Brown, 2009; Fu, Tanyatanaboon, & Lehto, 2015; Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017b; in Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023).

Research on tourism experiences has been evolving over time, starting with a focus on peak experiences (Maslow, 1964; in Amaro, Caldeira, & Seabra, 2023), which refer to extraordinary moments. It then move towards the study of flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; in Amaro et al., 2023), a state of mind where individuals are completely absorbed in an activity, and of optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; in Amaro et al, 2023), characterized, as flow experiences, by a sense of control and mastery but also by a sense of meaning and purpose.

For instance, based on the shift from an experience economy to a transformation economy, Pine and Gilmore (2011, 2019) developed a conceptual frame-work that provides an understanding of the progression of economic value proposing a new economic offer, named transformational experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2014). Additionally, Kirillova et al. (2016) developed a framework for transformative tourism experiences, identifying nine chronologically ordered existential themes associated with such experiences based on the principles of existential philosophy and humanistic psychology. Their findings suggest that highly meaningful tourist experiences drive a gradual process of after-trip transformations.

Wolf et al. (2017) also developed two frameworks for sustainable experience development, marketing, and monitoring in parks. One described the interrelationships between participant and experience characteristics that trigger a transformation process as well as the experience benefits and outcomes for parks.

Tourism experiences are mentally and physically healthy pursuits for consumers as it recharges consumers from the grind of daily life (Chen & Festick, 2013; Cohen, 1979; in Teoh,

Wang & Kwek, 2021). It can have transformative attributes, as it poses routine and allows consumers to reconsider life matters (Lean et al., 2014; Teoh et al., 2021). Transformative tourism experiences (TE), occur when consumers subsume staged experiences, potentially prompting life-changing actualizations (Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Teoh et al., 2021). TE is subjective and co-created, derived from interactions between consumers' minds, past experiences, and the staged experience. Pine and Gilmore (2013; in Teoh et al., 2021) predict transformations to be the next wave of economic phenomena. From a practical perspective, how can the tourism industry capitalize on this economic wave and create experiences that have lasting effects on consumers? More importantly, how can tourism scholars understand consumer transformations to inform tourism management practices? The importance of understanding TE is two-fold: it improves consumers' satisfaction, potentially garnering recommendations and, possibly creates life-changing positive improvements to a consumer (Prayag et al., 2016; Pung et al., 2019; in Teoh et al., 2021).

Teoh et al. (2021) identified three dimensions: i) Experience, focused on place characteristics (landscapes, social dynamics, and properties); ii) Experience consumer, related to any person consuming a tourism experience. This dimension has three aspects: the consumers' pre-trip factors, cognition, widely known as critical reflections in transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), and emotion, referring to peak experiences); iii) Experience-facilitator, focused on experience providers and their respective facilitators. Four different outcomes were also identified to both the experience-consumer and experience-facilitator, based on the inter-relations between those dimensions: from the internal personal changes perspectives: i) psychological change; ii) physical change and from the external societal implications perspectives: iii) knowledge change; and iv) social change.

In transformative travel, tourists increasingly seek experiences that offer meaning, purpose and personal fulfillment (Pung et al., 2020; in Neuhofer et al., 2020, p.2882). The transformation economy suggests the transcendence of hedonic experiential consumption and a focus on one's wider life aspirations and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; in Neuhofer et al., 2020). In this personal journey of moving from the status quo self to a future higher self, designed experience are seen as a prime vehicle to intentionally occasion and induce such transformation.

In the context of tourism, tourists undergo transformative travel and expect changes in body, emotions, attitudes and skills (Fu et al., 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2020). Robledo and Batle (2017; Neuhofer et al., 2020) emphasize spiritual growth as one of the most dominant factors of transformational tourism experiences. Another recent research suggests that socialization, acculturation and re-enchantment are at the heart of personal transformation in tourism experiences (Decrop et al., 2018; in Neuhofer et al., 2020). Overall, different from gradual psychological change throughout a person's lifetime, transformative experiences often include a sudden shift in perspective on the world and a positive change in lifestyle (Soulard et al., 2019; Neuhofer et al., 2020), which holistically contributes to the meaning of one's life (Fu et al., 2015; in Neuhofer et al., 2020).

Transformative experiences have been studied in mainly two different lines of research: 1) within the framework of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) and from a managerial perspective (Custodio Santos et al., 2020; in Amaro et al., 2023, p.2), and 2) as subjective experiences, within the scope of transformation experiences theories, giving rise to individual benefits as result of their consumption increasingly important role in the economic and social life. In social science literature on the tourist experience, most researchers focus on the experience in sharp contrast to the daily experience is thus understood as the “pure”, “net”, or “peak” experience usually derived from the attractions, rather than “mixed”, “gross”, or “supporting” experience such as eating, sleeping and so on. The relationship between the two (peak experience and daily experience can thus be characteristically summarized by a series of “opposition” between the daily and the peak experiences such as “the ordinary” versus “the extraordinary”, “routine” versus “usual”, “the familiar” versus “novel”, “the profane” versus “the secret” and so on (Quan & Wang, 2004, p.300; in Kunwar & Karki, 2019, p.55).

Experience economy

This is an era marked by experiences, where consumers are looking for a deeper and more personal engagement when purchasing a good or service—such as travel, entertainment, or leisure, during their customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rather, 2019; in Amaro et al., 2023, p.2). Marketers often refer to this market trend as the “experience economy”, which Pine and Gilmore (1998; in Amaro et al., 2023) first introduced. In an increasingly competitive world, companies must seek differentiation. Before, businesses attempted to customize a service turning it into an experience; now, “customizing an experience turns it into a transformation” (Pine & Gilmore, 2000, p.19; in Amaro et al., 2023). In tourism, which is one of the most experience-driven sectors (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Amaro et al., 2023), transformative experiences are playing a prominent role, taking the experience economy to the “third generation” (Kirillova et al., 2016; Amaro et al., 2023) where a tourism experience meaningfully transforms a consumer (Boswijk et al., 2013; in Kirillova et al., 2016) and promotes tourists’ existential authenticity (Kirillova et al., 2016).

Thus, in practice, as most tourists are likely to engage in some form of staged experiences rather than co-creative or transformative experiences (Neuhofer et al., 2020; Amaro et al., 2023), tourism stakeholders should not only incorporate the values of the three generations of the experience economy, i.e. staged experiences, co-creative experiences, and transformative experiences (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; in Amaro et al., 2023) but also move beyond staged experiences, designed for many tourists, towards the promotion of the role of tourists in co-creating experiences, and the role of tourism in supporting life-changing transformation and self-actualization among tourists, intended for few tourists (Boswijk et al., 2013; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Kirillova et al., 2016; Neuhofer et al., 2020; Soulard et al., 2019; in Amaro et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Transformative Learning theory, originally conceptualized by Jack Mezirow (1978) based on Kuhn's (1962; in Kitchenham, 2008) paradigm, Freire's (1970; in Kitchenham, 2008) conscientization, and Habermas's (1971, 1984; in Kitchenham, 2008) domains of learning (Mezirow, 1978a, 1991a, 2000; in Kitchenham, 2008) posits that transformative experiences are initiated when individuals critically reflect on their deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews. This process often leads to a dramatic shift in perspective, fostering a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative worldview. Mezirow's theory is built on the premise that adult learning is not merely about acquiring new knowledge or skills but about fundamentally transforming the way individuals perceive and interpret their experiences.

Transformation is defined as "a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that thing or person is improved" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017; in Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017, p.59; Phillips, 2019, p.67). Ross (2010) considers that travel, "when approached in a conscious way, can be a widely available, individually tailored, and enjoyable way to gain self-awareness, spiritual experience, and an expansion of consciousness" (p.54; Robledo & Batle, 2015, p.2; Tomljenovic & Ateljevic, 2015, p.37). In this regard, Reisinger (2013) not only defined transformation but he also led a foundation of transformational tourism. Since then, up till now as Nandasena et al. (2022) mentioned there are more than 194 literatures on this new and upcoming dimension of tourism.

Tourism can be a powerful vehicle for changing people's thinking and behaviour both during travel and upon their return. Higher disposable incomes, greater technological advances, increased life expectancies have not led happier and healthier lives (Lean, 2009, p.191). Life and work stresses can be detrimental to mental and physical wellbeing. The last four decades have brought many achievements for the tourism industry. Therefore, a vacation is as preventive medicine for those who seem to be busy at work equivalent to afford opportunities for rejuvenation and refreshment so that one can return to his/her life equipped with the energy to deal with whatever the problems come over. Arguably most commendable are those relating to its contribution toward sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Lean, 2009, p.192). However, there is a growing need for more holistic strategies that stretch beyond the destination.

The transformative tourism experience may occur through a disorienting dilemma, a reflection of the self, overcoming by looking for new options, and acquiring new knowledge, abilities, and viewpoints (Wolf et al., 2017), which is related to the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1994; Soulard et al., 2019; Wolf et al., 2017). Alternatively, it can manifest as peak experiences (Kirillova et al., 2016; 2017), and is associated with the existential authenticity theory. Transformative tourism is designed to immerse travelers in experiences that challenge their existing worldviews, often by exposing them to new cultures, perspectives, and environments that are vastly different from their own. This can lead to a *disorienting*

dilemma, similar to what Mezirow describes in educational settings, prompting travelers to critically reflect on their preconceived notions and beliefs.

The intersection of transformative learning and transformative tourism underscores the broader applicability of Mezirow's theory beyond traditional educational settings. It highlights the potential for learning and personal growth to occur in a wide range of contexts, including those that are less structured and more experiential in nature. This expansion of transformative learning theory into new domains has also prompted researchers to explore diverse methodological approaches to studying transformative experiences. The literatures highlight on novelty seeking, escapism, self-efficacy, self-development and personal growth which is an outcome of transformative travel. Nepal is one of the most popular transformative tourism destinations due to its profound natural, ecological, geological, wilderness, adventure, rural, cultural, religious, spiritual, wellness, aesthetic, and other terrestrial, aerial, and aqua-based activities which have lasting experience for novelty seeking travelers.

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