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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Negotiating authenticity: Three modernities

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ABSTRACT

Post-postmodern authenticity is introduced and used in this conceptual article to characterise a new and emergent approach to negotiating reality and fantasy by tourists through tourism. Alongside modern and postmodern approaches, post-postmodern authenticity contextualises recent developments within authenticity discourse. Modernism involves constructive, objective and verisimilitude stances for negotiating authenticity and inauthenticity, including by tourists through tourism. Postmodernism takes more deconstructive, subjective and hyperreal stances. Post-postmodernism meanwhile, implies reconstructive, performative, and as this article is the first to conceptualise, alterreal stances. The three orientations towards authenticity interact and react off of each other. Unable to address the paradoxes of negotiating reality alone, together, they provide a contextual, extended and holistic conceptualisation of complex authenticity.

Introduction

Authenticity is a notion concerned with what is real and what is fake (Andriotis, 2009) as well as the authentication mechanisms by which these are interpreted (Lau, 2010). Commonly, authenticity is used to denote the genuineness, reality or truth of something (Kennick, 1985). It has also been defined in terms of sincerity, innocence and originality (Fine, 2003). Thus, "'authentic' is often described in terms of its characteristics being real, reliable, trustworthy, original, first hand, true in substance, and prototypical, as opposed to copied, reproduced or done the same way as an original" (Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016: 111). An important topic in tourism studies (Cohen, 2007a), authenticity is a juncture of discussion within the philosophical and practical sides of tourism (Zhu, 2012), due to its role as a mediator of tourist long-term behaviour intentions (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Accordingly, discussion in the literature often suggests that the more real, genuine and truthful tourist encounters with objects, places and others are perceived to be, then the higher the chance of serendipitous discovery of meaning or connection with these, and through them of oneself (see Ram et al., 2016; Shepherd, 2015). Equally, the fear is that an experience which is not authentic in the term's sense of being genuine, truthful, or real, will not contribute to such meaning-making (Wang, 1999).

In a broad sense therefore, tourists use authenticity in attempts to distinguish the inauthentic, in terms of being fantastical, disingenuous and dishonest, from the authentic, in counter terms of being real, genuine and honest. The distinction between authentic and inauthentic is nonetheless not binary (Olsen, 2002). Touristic authenticity is an amorphous concept, variously referred to as objectivist and constructivist, inter and intra personal, external and internal (Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017; Knudsen, Rickly, & Vidon, 2016; Shepherd, 2015; Wang, 1999; Yi, Fu, Yu, & Jiang, 2018). Authentic and inauthentic are open to complex interpretations, intertwined, contextual, personal, fluid and incomplete. Lovell (2019) identifies for example, magical realities, marvellous realities and the fairytalesque as permeable terms encapsulating the fantasies that tourists seek. Thus, for Baudrillard (1983:

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461) "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real". Pretes (1995) recognises that the imaginary destination can be considered real. Meanwhile, Lovell (2019) describes how the real heritage destination can be reimagined and mystified.

Consequently, authenticity is akin to a negotiation process, necessary because of the widely interpretable and fluid nature of truth, reality, genuineness and meaning, as well as their dialectics of untruth, unreality, ingenuine and meaningless. Indeed, Halewood and Hannam (2001) describe authenticity as much sought after although negotiated in different and sometimes ambivalent ways. Liu, Yannopoulou, Bian, and Elliott (2015) help to illustrate this when looking at Chinese consumers' evaluating of branded products' authenticity. These, "proactively negotiate between these chosen attributes and criteria that lead to informed and complex judgments" (p. 32). Furthermore, the satisfactory negotiation of authenticity-inauthenticity is questioned. Capturing its ephemeral nature in relation to tourism, Rickly-Boyd (2013: 684) writes; "existential authenticity is not created in isolation within the individual, but occurs in fleeting moments, informed by social, cultural, and physical encounters". Others question the frustrations (Tribe & Mkono, 2017), superficiality and transience (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017) of tourist's quest for authenticity. Therefore, authenticity is implicated in not only complex, but also on-going negotiations of reality and fantasy by tourists through tourism.

The contribution of this article is to look at authenticity negotiations through the lenses of three modernities. Modern, postmodern and post-postmodern conceptualisations of authenticity are outlined. Emphasising constructive-objective-verisimilitude, deconstructive-subjective-hyperreal, and reconstructive-performative-alterreal, authenticity stances, authentication interpretations, and tourist states, respectively, modernities are useful to overviewing different strands within tourism authenticity discourse. Authenticity has been associated with objective, subjective and performative perspectives as three major approaches in conceptualising the term (Zhu, 2012). Authenticity can correspondingly be measured (Chhabra, 2012), felt (Matheson, 2008), performed (Knudsen & Waade, 2010), and it can be all of these things simultaneously (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Modernities are demonstrated in this article to help contextualise these various approaches and to help explain the interactions between them. Various authors have highlighted the need for more holistic understanding of the authenticity concept (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2012), and these are complemented here.

Going beyond this relatively well-trodden structuring of authenticity however, a secondary contribution of this article is to conceptualise a distinctive emergent state that tourists enter into when negotiating fantasy and reality through tourism using a more post-postmodern orientation. Termed 'alterreality' as representative of tendencies to focus upon preferred alternative realities, as well as to purposely agglomerate and assert these so altering reality, a contemporary outlook on negotiating authenticity is proposed. This complements modern tourist authenticity as more a state of verisimilitude and postmodern authenticity as one of hyperreality. By introducing post-postmodernism into tourism authenticity discourse, and through proposing the notion of alterreality, this article helps to illustrate how the contextually informed authenticity concept is adapting to prevalent contemporary social, cultural and philosophical stances, and how this may be shaping current tourism. Post-postmodern alterreality draws from, complements and extends previously established conceptualisations of authenticity.

This conceptual contribution is timely given that after a period when the theoretical discourse of authenticity seemed to have exhausted itself (Cohen, 2007a), the last decade has seen authenticity placed back on the map of tourism studies in a major way (Knudsen et al., 2016). Discussion moreover continues a precedent of linking authenticity conceptualisation with different modernities (see Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Thus, after a review of the post-postmodern movement and then the authenticity concept, comparison is of three modernities and their respective stances towards authenticity negotiation. Outlined here are their particular theoretical backgrounds, overall stances regarding the nature of authenticity as truth, reality, genuineness and meaning, versus inauthenticity as the dialectic of these, the authentication mechanisms for interpreting this dialectic, and the tourist state implied by engaging with authenticity through tourism. This leads into an elaboration of post-postmodern authenticity as a novel approach to, but also complementary aspect of, authenticity overall.

The post-postmodern turn

The post-postmodern turn refers to a shift in contemporary culture, society, economics, politics and the arts, away from a period of dominance of postmodern philosophical and stylistic influences and towards what are being described as post-postmodern ones. The different modernities drawn upon here are timeless and concurrent, yet the influences of one or more may be more prevalent and easily noticeable during particular time periods. Recently, the decline of postmodern time culture has been called attention to (i.e. Boje, 2006; Breu, 2011). Hatherley (2009) for example, highlights how in architecture typically postmodernist devices such as historical eclecticism and glib ironies seem to have entered a terminal decline. Subsequently, Cova et al. (2013: 214) ask "if the demise of postmodernity is understood as reflecting a shift in zeitgeist that renders postmodernism anachronistic, then where can we locate centres and convergences in contemporary critical theory?". In addressing this question, the term 'post-postmodern' has been recently adopted by consumer studies scholars looking to identify and typify a new time culture zeitgeist (i.e. Canavan & McCamley, 2020; Skandalis, Byrom, & Banister, 2016, 2019).

Engaged in this article is Cantone, Cova, and Testa's (2020) envisioned task for consumer researchers to move beyond the pioneering big picture of the shift towards the post-postmodern, in order to develop a better understanding of how consumer culture has or could change as a result. Here, the focus is upon how tourist's orientations towards, interpretations of and engagement with authenticity through tourism, has or could change as a result of a post-postmodern turn. Where Cohen (2007a) suggests that it is appropriate to enquire into the paths of change, contemporary usages and fate of the authenticity concept in an increasingly postmodern world, then this paper takes up this challenge in what is now arguably an increasingly post-postmodern one. Taking broad social,

cultural and philosophical surroundings into account is relevant given that tourism authenticity is a relational concept, measured, perceived, experienced and felt in relation to other phenomena (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Stern, 1994). For Davis (2012), whilst the priorities of authenticity remain stable over time, the ways in which we aspire towards authenticity are culturally, historically and materially contingent. Hence, Martin (2010: 553) believes that "our task should be to attempt to make sense of each assertion or denial of authenticity within the specific social context within which it arises and makes sense".

Different modernities provide such necessary contextual background for explaining authenticity. Botterill (2007) for example, looks at how advertising messages, including those invoking authenticity in terms of being meaningful, are situated within the broader historical, social and institutional context of modernity. The terms modern, postmodern and post-postmodern have been used to describe time periods with specific cultural, social, economic, political and artistic stances and structures (Eisenstadt, 2000). Antonio (2000) describes different modernities as the ending of a historical conjuncture when existing sociocultural ideas and practices are challenged, as may be the case with ideas and practices of authenticity. Thus, where Bryce, Murdy, and Alexander (2017) call for debates of authenticities and their relationship with tourist engagement and loyalty to be grounded with some sense of specific cultural grounding, modernities may provide such foundation.

What is more, post-postmodernity draws attention to ways in which that ground is shifting. According to Eshelman (2000), although a new time culture borrows in many instances from the old, it breaks with it sharply in other decisive regards. Kirby (2009) for example, advocates that the terms by which authority, knowledge, selfhood, time and reality are interpreted, have been altered suddenly and forever somewhere in the late 1990s or early 2000s, where the emergence of new technologies restructured violently the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them. For Diken and Laustsen (2004), the 9–11 terror attacks represent this break in that they resulted in a return to and reinvention of dichotomous narratives contesting truth and reality. Similarly, Morgan, Wisneski, and Skitka (2011) summarise the social psychological impact of 9–11 as 'expulsion from Disneyland'. Their assessment is of the reductive and hopeful responses to 9–11, including revival and re-imagination of differentiation markers.

This depiction highlights a divergence from the postmodern Disneyland described by Baudrillard (1983: 460) as "a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra". Post-postmodernism hereafter moves away from the postmodern stance of cynical, critical and deconstructive perspectives towards concepts such as truth or reality, characterised by Lyotard's (1984) rejection of metanarratives and Baudrillard's (1994) truth-reality as simulations, and towards a stance that is post-ironic and sincere (Doyle, 2018), typified by engagement with narratives (Canavan & McCamley, 2020). In essence, this sees post-postmodernism as a reconstructive movement that is engaged with selecting fragments of narratives, truths and realities, and then agglomerating these into and asserting larger overarching concepts. Illustrating this impulse are the grand, globalised and generalising narratives of the war on terror built up from disparate fragments over the years since 9–11. Doyle (2018) relates such reconstructive sincerity to a search for and hope in meaning being at least possible. Similarly, Frangipane (2016: 527) explains how "a number of contemporary novelists find various ways to alert us that they cannot tell the true or complete story, but then tell their stories anyway, justifying their existence by pointing to the things that narrative can give us, such as hope and satisfaction, or empathy". Canavan and McCamley (2020) add a darker interpretation of such reconstructions as manipulative.

Post-postmodernism brings therefore, a fresh perspective upon tourists' negotiation of reality and fantasy. As will be reviewed, this distinctive stance has implications for and extends the negotiation of authenticity-inauthenticity by tourists through tourism.

Authenticity

Ram et al. (2016) highlight authenticity as a complex concept that simultaneously includes philosophical, psychological and spiritual aspects. It is the former that this article focuses upon; authenticity as interpretations of truth, reality and meaning. When outlining the authenticity concept as applied within tourism studies, an existential philosophical perspective helps to structure the breadth of the concept's application and discussion. Following Wang's (1999) seminal paper on existential authenticity, existentialism is a theoretical underpinning widely adopted within tourism studies for addressing authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Shepherd, 2015). Albeit existentialism is not the only such framework (see Knudsen et al., 2016; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Vidon & Rickly, 2018).

Existentialism is, broadly speaking, the study of being and existence that stresses our lived sense of mortality, autonomy and freedom (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006). Various existential philosophers have described the internal sense of alienation that arises for all humans as a result of awareness of the contingency, finitude and unconditional freedom of existence (see Tillich, 1952). Sartre (1969) for example, saw anxiety as provoked by the multitude of choices facing us and the different life direction carried by each one, as well as by the understanding that we alone are the author of our choices. Resulting from this inherent existential predicament are human behaviours that seek to alleviate through the avoidance or confrontation of alienation (Berger, 1973).

Thus, existential avoidance refers to the strategies employed by humans to evade, postpone or flee from existential discomfort by becoming distracted via and lost within the routine, quotidian or group (Berger, 1973). Existential confrontation meanwhile, might be summarised as facing up to the contingencies and finitude of existence. Xue, Manuel-Navarrete, and Buzinde (2014) describe this in the Sartrean sense as something attained when a person is conscious of social conformity and makes a choice to pursue their own meaningful choices. Similarly, Miars (2002) relates existential confrontation to questioning who and what we are in relation to how the world operates and in which one must be. Stemming from this confrontation derived awareness of self and surroundings, for Yi, Lin, Jin, and Luo (2017) existential authenticity is the idea of individuals feeling free to engage with their true selves.

Avoidance and confrontation can both alleviate alienation. However, existential philosophy distinguishes between the integrity of these pathways. Although avoidance is useful in being comforting, Sartre (1943, 1948, 1956) argues that attempts to evade responsibility result in a loss of the real self, subsumed as it is before systems, others and ego; a state he summarised as 'bad faith'. For Sartre this state is inauthentic in the sense that individual responsibility is being avoided by distracting from or derogating ownership over decisions. Sartre additionally believed that individuals cannot escape from the profound sense of responsibility that existential alienation carries with it, and that those who do are merely disguising their anguish or are in flight from it. In the sense that avoidance of alienation is dishonest and ineffective, it is from an existential perspective, inauthentic.

Sartre contrasts bad faith with the pursuit of self-potential, awareness and ownership. Such implicitly 'good faith', although Sartre never termed it as such, involves putting the self out there, being an object amongst objects, a thing amongst things (Sartre, 1943). Associated with confrontation, existential authenticity refers to a state of being that includes a philosophical discussion of the self in context and a reflection of how true one is to oneself (Ram et al., 2016; Wang, 1999). These descriptions are akin to Turner and Manning's (1988: 137) description of authenticity as "only possible once the taken-for-granted world and the security it offers are called into question". They go on to explain that this potential is dependent on alienation in the sense that subjecting everydayness to questioning reveals the groundlessness of human existence. However, rather than avoiding this mood, confrontation may enable authenticity. Thus, Xue et al. (2014) summarise the existentialist notion of authenticity as one of confronting alienation.

This divergence between bad and good faith echoes in what authenticity as a concept is used to do. Avoidance implies inauthentic fantasy in the individual sense of retreating into comforting myths, with associations of dishonesty, denial, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, a return to alienation. Confrontation points towards authentic reality in the individual sense of better finding and fulfilling oneself, associated in turn with honesty, bravery, and accommodating the unavoidable, endless and inherent alienation at the centre of being human (Grene, 1952). In broad terms therefore, what authenticity does is attempt to distinguish between reality as antecedent of existential confrontation, and fantasy as that of existential avoidance. This is important from an existentialist standpoint given the divergent implications of confrontation and avoidance pathways. It is confrontation rather than avoidance that complements existential ideals of self-possession.

Negotiating authenticity

Linking this discussion with tourism, Vidon and Rickly (2018) explain how alienation and anxiety act as important drivers in tourist motivation, spurring tourists on in their search for experiences they believe may alleviate these unpleasant feelings. Accordingly, authenticity as a concept is used in tourism to negotiate the different possibilities of avoidance, dissipation and bad faith, as well as confrontation, realisation and good faith (see Comic & Beograd, 1989; Canavan, 2018; Kirillova et al., 2017; Shepherd, 2015), which may be temporarily facilitated through travel consumption. Ultimately, alienation is not something to be overcome or reconciled, but has to be on-going managed, with tourism potentially having a role in this (Canavan, 2020). It is important to note that existential authenticity applies specifically to the philosophy's discussions of self-development through confrontation as opposed to self-dissipation through avoidance. However, authenticity as used in tourism studies, is a broader term that encompasses tourists' motivations for seeking, what it is means and does for tourists, and how tourists use it.

Because tourism can potentially play a role catalysing existentially inauthentic and authentic pathways, it holds the associated possibility of plunging the tourist into further alienation. Light and Brown (2021) summarise bad faith as an inauthentic way of living involving self-deception, disregard of the other, compromising and denying individual freedom, and suggest that this underpins many tourism practices. Rickly-Boyd (2013) explains that pure escapism is associated with self-deception that perpetuates the tendency to deny the responsibility of freedom and the actuality of self and that ironically returns the individual to a state of alienation. Simultaneously, tourism holds the promise of experiencing transcendence, or at least fragments of it momentarily. Brown (2013) highlights that tourism can be a catalyst for confrontation with the self and other, triggering reflexivity, learning and growth. Such existential depth may underpin many tourism practices. Vidon & Rickly (2018: 73) note, "authenticity is an experience that lies at the horizon, in the next adventure, or in the past as a memory, and thus serves as a beacon, a siren song that inspires and drives".

These boundaries of avoidance and confrontation, of the implicitly inauthentic and authentic, are overlapping and unpredictable. This is elaborated by Canavan (2020) in his reading of existential themes in the short stories of Guy De Maupassant. Here, Canavan identifies the author's recognition that escapist avoidance through travel is not guaranteed and can lead paradoxically to confrontation. Furthermore, authentic encounters and accompanying self-realisation are in their disruptive nature frequently painful, even catastrophic. Highlighted by Canavan therefore, is the messy and unpredictable potential for existential avoidance and confrontation through travel. Similar insights can be observed in Rickly-Boyd's (2012) description of the serendipitous nature of self-discovery amongst climbing tourists as frequently incidental and unexpected, but facilitated by the natural and social surroundings of tourism.

Canavan and Rickly-Boyd both point towards the finitude of transcendence or self-discovery whilst travelling. Travel may arguably catalyse more enduring self-transformations as a result of various avoidance or confrontation related experiences (Brown, 2013; Kirillova et al., 2017). However, Wang (1999) posits that tourist experiences can facilitate short-lived existential authenticity. For Cohen (1979), ideals of the traveller living authentically and travel assisting self-actualisation can only be partially fulfilled at best, and hence need to be managed through different strategies to avoid a personal crisis of renewed sense of alienation. Consequently, for Knudsen et al. (2016: 43-44) "the touristic fantasy of authenticity can never be completely satisfied, driving the perpetual desire for more travel and more experiences in pursuit of various manifestations of authenticity".

The existential predicament felt by all humans pushes towards avoidance and confrontation pathways as a means of coping with inherent sense of existential alienation. Whereas inauthentic avoidance suggests only a denial of and ultimately a return to alienation, authentic confrontation hints at its possible, albeit fleeting, transcendence. Hence the significance of the authenticity concept to negotiating this dialectic. Returning to the notion of authenticity as relational, if existentialism informs a timeless baseline relating to inner human conflict, then authenticity is associated with contextual human strategies for negotiating this inner conflict. The unpredictable and impermanent nature of both avoidance, fantasy and inauthenticity, versus confrontation, reality and authenticity, implies their ongoing negotiation. Prevailing stances within wider society may shape the emphasis of this negotiation.

Three modernities and authenticity

If existential theory helps to illuminate an inherent and timeless human impulse towards authenticity and avoidance, then modernities help to illustrate how these impulses are contextually interpreted and applied within prevailing human time-cultures. Modern, postmodern and post-postmodern conceptualisations of authenticity demonstrate the on-going, complex and evolving negotiation between confrontation of reality and retreat into fantasy, as necessary and contextually informed human strategies for dealing with their underlying existential alienation. The following sections break down these three modernities. First, a brief introduction is to each particular theory of modernity is presented. Second, the authenticity stance emphasised under each modernity is outlined. Third, interpretations of modernities' authentication are reviewed. Goulding (2000) illustrates that although a desire for authenticity is widespread amongst consumers, there are different dimensions to its interpretation, whilst Lehman, Kovács, and Carroll (2014) note that interpretations of authenticity are embedded within the cultural language of a society. Fourth, the tourist state implied, sought or entered by each modernities' stance towards and interpretation of authenticity is described. Hereby, "authenticity as a 'state of being' includes a philosophical discussion of the self in context (external world) and a reflection of how true one is to oneself balancing two parts of one's being, rational and emotional" (Ram et al., 2016: 111). The example of backpackers, a tourist niche particularly motivated by a sense of alienation to search for more authentic tourism (Zhang, Morrison, Tucker, & Wu, 2018), is used to illustrate how tourists engage with such authenticity states of being. Finally, the limitations of modernities and how these inspire renegotiation are considered.

Modern authenticity

Modernism is a mode of thinking articulated and prominent across disciplines during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries although with far older and also on-going discourses. Williams (1989), who describes as a state of alteration or improvement, captures how the term modern shifted from describing 'now' towards 'then'; a retrospective term for a classical period, between roughly 1890 and 1940. For Williams, the central aspect of modernism is that it defines and divides both between and within specific movements. In this way modernism contains an amazing variety of visions, values, ideas and social processes (Berman, 1988), many of which are paradoxical, such as Communism versus Fascism. Yet modernism is a focus on both an improvement, the "aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own" (Berman, 1988: 16), and on determining how the specific improvement is to be defined and made (Williams, 1989).

In relation to authenticity, modernism is therefore associated with a more constructive overall stance. The authentically real, genuine and meaningful is from a modern perspective something to be worked towards by tourists and tourism practitioners. Modernism approaches authenticity as something that can be pursued and discovered by tourists and can also be made and presented for them. Hence numerous oxymoronic calls in the literature are for more authentic constructions (i.e. Sims, 2009; Yeoman, Brass, & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). These take the insight that in certain circumstances what is staged can be more authentic than the original (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). Daugstad and Kirchengast (2013) elaborate for example, the pseudo-backstage, which may be fabricated by tourist hosts to enhance their guests' sense of authenticity.

Linked with such things as origins, genuineness, pristineness and sincerity, modern tourism authenticity emphasises the touristic quest to experience these (Cohen, 2007a), supposing that authenticity is something which exists externally to the tourist, being a characteristic, which is inherently found within an object such as a product, an event or a place (Wang, 1999). This is authenticity as a tangible quality that can be found in an object (Cook, 2010). Objectivity "believes in the existence of the real world, external to humans and independent of human experience. This belief relies on the existence of reliable knowledge about the world, knowledge that we, as humans, strive to gain" (Jonassen, 1991: 8). In this quest modern authentication is a process of judgments formed around indexical cues (a factual connection between the object and time) or iconic cues (the extent to which an object or event is a reasonable reconstruction of the past) (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Objective authenticity always contains the promise that the situation may be appraised using etic or external criteria (Pearce, 2007), and objects are examined, judged, or measured, by an expert to determine their true nature in a museum-type process (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Barthel (1996) for example, analyses historic sites, determining their authenticity in terms of originality, structures and social context.

Taking the example of recreating historic attractions, such as the childhood village of Abraham Lincoln, Bruner (1994) suggests that objectively authentic in this sense means credible and convincing based on verisimilitude, genuineness, originality and authority. Similarly, Sims (2009) talks about the convincing presentation of craft and tradition as important to adding value within food tourism. In these examples, heritage or food as consumed tourism object add value for likeminded tourists through constructive efforts that support this type of search for authenticity. As such, modern authenticity is for tourists a state of conviction in the

extrinsic credibility of a construction encountered through tourism. Illustrating this, backpacker tourists have long been noted as prioritising a sense of proximity to local cultures, exposure to unknown sites and disavowal of mainstream infrastructure (Hampton, 1998), partly out of a desire to access more authentic destinations and also selves through the journeying to them (Noy, 2004). Such tourists commit to a state of searching for and interacting with more credible indicators of authentic as opposed to inauthentic tourism.

However, modern authenticity contains limitations. This approach is not well placed to deal with the contradictions of construction. In taking a divisive deterministic stance a pursued or constructed tourist experience is authentic or is not. Yet doubts may be seeded by realisation that objectivity can be incomplete, contaminated or fabricated. The modern objective concern for direct interactions with what is real and genuine therefore, reveals an underlying tension in that if one interacts with a fake then the interaction is fake and meaningless (Cohen, 2007a). Modern authenticity can never be obtained with complete confidence. Its objective analysis may even make underlying contradictions more acute. As such, Mechling (1980) describes the unconsummated search for authenticity in modern life. Prompted by this frustration is a pursuit of other means of negotiating reality and fantasy that can complement, assuage or distract from such doubts.

Postmodern authenticity

Postmodernism became prominent in the mid to late 20th Century (Huyssen, 1986). Suggested by Brown (2006) as more of a critique than a concept, it is the highlighting of ambiguity which typifies the postmodern. As a mode of thinking about and critiquing ways of being and doing, postmodernism offers a deconstructive perspective on notions of truth, knowledge and reality, involving characteristic rejection of meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1984). "Postmodernist sensibility invites the (re)cognition that all social reality is constructed, and that the distinction between the real and the fantastic is more in the orientation one has towards one's surroundings than in the nature of those surroundings" (Fırat & Dholakia, 2006: 131). For Thompson & Tambyah (1999, 236), "postmodernity is a cultural epoch that celebrates the pleasures and freedoms offered by simulacra, hyperrealism, aesthetic pastiches, and bricolage identities, against modernist ideals of originality and purity of form". Hereby, the depthless, contingent and baseless nature of reality and truth is more than acknowledged, but embraced as a source of play and liberation (Bauman, 1996).

This deconstructive stance influences the postmodern approach towards authenticity. Postmodernism is cynical towards the modern touristic quest for authenticity (Thompson & Tambyah, 1999), and objective reality emphasised by modernism gives way to representation as the real is no longer meaningful or necessary (Pretes, 1995). According to Vidon, Rickly, and Knudsen (2018) it is possible to have feelings of authenticity despite awareness of the partiality of such a concept; "tourists may well be aware of the inauthenticity of a site or attraction, but they participate as if it were authentic or holds the potential for their own authenticity" (p. 63). Fantasy and reality are recognised as being interwoven in the world of tourism (Nuryanti, 1996), which as an industry relies heavily upon providing access to signs and simulacra and will go to creative lengths to do so (Pretes, 1995). Simulations assuming a feigned appearance, such as the themed spaces of Las Vegas or Disneyland, aim to induce consumer delight (Fırat & Dholakia, 2006).

Subsequently, postmodern authenticity in tourism is more about the sensual than verisimilar (Hughes, 1995). The postmodern perspective allows for more subjective interpretations of authenticity to be considered (Zhu, 2012). Shift in focus is from the displayed objects provided by the tourism industry, to the subjective negotiation of meanings as a determinant of the tourist experience (Uriely, 2005). Subjective authenticity acknowledges how authenticity is a value resultant of social processes and cultural values (Cook, 2010), social structures such as power, class and ethnicity (Barthel-Bouchier, 2001), and also the feelings triggered by touring those objects (Zhu, 2012). Authenticity is thus understood as the projection of tourist's beliefs, expectations, preferences and stereotyped images onto toured objects (Wang, 1999). Under postmodernism authenticity is ultimately indefinable and dynamic, and hence can be enjoyed as tourists are liberated to pursue pleasure through a multitude of objects, sites and experiences as suits their own particular whims (D'Urso, Disegna, Massari, & Osti, 2016).

Under this fragmentary and individualist ethos, hyperreality is exemplified by the fantasy worlds of theme parks, virtual reality and computer games, involving the loss of a sense of authenticity and the becoming real of what was originally a simulation (Brown, 1994). Simulation and simulacra are described by Baudrillard (1988) as best exemplified when the reproduction is more real than the original. It is no longer a question of imitation, reduplication, or even parody, but rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself. With hyperreality there is a breakdown in conventional distinctions, such as real versus contrived experiences (Baudrillard, 1983). Postmodern backpackers for example, are described by O'Reilly (2006) as representing the mainstreaming of various forms of alternative independent travel. This sub-cultural celebration has accompanied a breaking down of the distinctiveness of backpackers from other tourists as well as the fragmenting of backpackers into various sub-categories. Postmodern backpackers may be less concerned by a search for verisimilitude via travel to unconventional places, and instead be more content staying within backpacker enclaves that repeat originating cultures abroad (Wilson & Richards, 2008). Hence, Kontogeorgopoulos (2003) suggests that it is a subjective concern for achieving authenticity rather than any measurable objective achievement that distinguishes many backpackers from mass tourists.

Illustrated in this postmodern deconstructive approach to authenticity is what Lindholm (2002) recognised; that "the challenges of modernity also offer avenues for creation of a different kind of authentic reality" (p. 337). Lindholm argues that the impossibility of absolute validation of such things as saintly relics has not meant they have lost their fascination or power. Rather, these are forged anew by such things as imitation, parody and bricolage. Postmodern authenticity thus responds to the unsatisfying aspects of its modern forebearer. Yet, various authors have argued for the continued importance of object

authenticity to tourists in at least some sense of origin-essence (i.e. Belhassen & Caton, 2006; Lau, 2010; Mkono, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Chhabra (2005) for instance, highlights the prominence of essentialist authentication in heritage tourism merchandise supply chains, with verification of provenance traced back from the tourist recipient through vendors to producers. Negotiating reality and fantasy through a postmodern perspective therefore opens up fluid and flexible possibilities, that complement alternative approaches.

Post-postmodern authenticity

For some time, academics and cultural commentators have pointed towards the relative demise of postmodern themes in areas such as popular (Kirby, 2009) or consumer culture (Cova et al., 2013). Breu (2011: 199) summaries that whilst some theorists have rejected the category of the postmodern altogether, "others don't so much reject the concept of postmodernism as define it as a historical era, a set of aesthetic practices and theoretical assumptions whose time has come and gone, and thus argue for the emergence of post-postmodernism". Attempting to define this emergent contemporary time culture Skandalis et al. (2016) articulate that if postmodernism represents deconstruction because of paradoxes, then post-postmodernism represents reconstruction despite paradoxes. Subsequently, Skandalis et al. (2019) distinguish more anti-structural or structural traits of postmodern and post-postmodern consumption respectively. McLaughlin (2004) for example, identifies such constructive traits within post-postmodern literature, arguing this disengages from a cynicism often co-opted by that which it sought to criticise, and now a source of conservatism-upholding inaction rather than change. Instead, post-postmodern writing may look to at least partially suspend disbelief, cynicism and irony, in order to rethink and remake possibilities for meaning and reality (see also Doyle, 2018).

Post-postmodernism adds a reconstructive stance to authenticity negotiation therefore. Arguably illustrative of this, Cohen and Cohen (2012: 1300) describe 'hot authentication' as "an immanent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving and reinforcing an object's, site's or event's authenticity". Similarly, Cohen's (2007b) mythical authenticity draws upon tourists in South East Asia who subscribe to local mythology regarding naturally occurring phenomena because this makes for a more special experience. Rather than a deterministic analysis or critical deconstruction of the 'Naga Fireballs', mystery surrounding the event is engaged with and elaborated by tourists who craft a self-convincing fake narrative. Demonstrating a post-postmodern tendency towards pragmatic and purposeful reconstructions (Cova et al., 2013), tourists know that the Naga fireballs are explainable by something mundane, but choose to overlook this in favour of indulging the enjoyable myths built up around this. Consequently, distinctive from Brown's (1996) postmodern 'genuine fakes' bought in the knowledge that they are a fabrication and as such are genuine (Cohen, 2007a), post-postmodern authenticity involves fabrication in becoming 'fake genuine'.

Performativity as embodied practice (Zhu, 2012) may support such a reconstructive approach to authentication. Cohen-Aharoni (2017) identifies performance as an important part of supporting authenticity claims that have neither object nor emotion basis, whilst Cohen and Cohen (2012: 1300) describe how "the process of hot authentication is emotionally loaded, based on belief, rather than proof, and is therefore largely immune to external criticism". The authors continue to elaborate "an accumulative, self-reinforcing process: the performative practices by and between visitors help to generate, safeguard and amplify the authenticity of the visited site or event" (p. 1300). Building further on this, Lovell and Thurgill (2021) augment the original definition of hot authentication by identifying variations in the belief in urban legends, including the suspension of disbelief. They describe how the infusion of imagination into hot authentication provides tourists with enrichingly off-centred lived fantasy experiences as opposed to the escape from disenchantment into fantasies. Hereby, it is more convincing performances that constitute contemporary authenticity, rather than facts or cultural customs. Such self-convincing and affirming performativity points towards individually inhabiting and expressing a role, and through performing this before and with others, agglomerating and asserting this (Canavan & McCamley, 2020).

As such, where postmodernism is indelibly linked with hyperreality, it may be that post-postmodernism is similarly associated with what could be labelled alterreality. Alterreality is so called because it derives from alternative and altered realities. Alternative realities refer to the multiplicity of truths, interpretations of events, memories and so forth available in any given situation. Barr (2006) suggests that unreal narratives which alter and become reality characterise a new post-postmodern era. If postmodernism reveals reality as fragmented, then post-postmodernism takes this insight and from the many alternative realities available a preferred version may be prioritised. Altered realities meanwhile, relate to the agglomerating and asserting of preferred alternative reality. Impulse is to not just identify with an alternative reality, but to assert this version over and alter other alternative realities to fit (Canavan & McCamley, 2020). Thus, where Baudrillard (1988) suggested that America as embodiment of hyperreality and simulacra cultivates no origin or mythical authenticity, living instead in perpetual present and simulation, alterreality by contrast involves a making real of the simulation.

Akin to this in contemporary tourism, Ponting, McDonald, and Wearing (2005) describe the construction of a backpacking-surfers' wonderland in the Indonesian Mentawai Archipelago, as based on myth obfuscating the tensions between a desire to be sustainable and the unsustainability of such tourism. In this study the authors describe an island tourism industry that sells environmentally friendly tourism to ideologically inclined tourists. Pristine nature and the conscientiousness of visiting surfers are highlighted. Yet the reality of tourism in Mentawai is less clearly sustainable. Environmental resources are being degraded through rapid overdevelopment. Local people are largely excluded from managing or participating in the industry. Rather than confront such issues, tourists in Mentawai are instead inclined towards fabricating narratives that tourism here is sustainable. Sharing these stories with fellow surfers and online audiences reinforces and agglomerates this idea, gradually building a sustainable surf tourism myth that deviates significantly from the reality on the ground, but nonetheless becomes its own reality. By embodying and performing sustainable myths surfers craft and manifest a preferred alternative reality. Such myths are used to both

symbolise sustainable and justify unsustainable aspects of island tourism, thus obfuscating the actuality of the situation and transcending its being addressed. Documenting the evolving myths used by tourists to reconcile the paradoxes of their tourism consumption, Ponting and McDonald (2013) term this process 'Nirvanification', whereby a sustainable surfer paradise is socially constructed from various fragments. In this way Mentawai surf tourists make real a simulation of sustainability, for themselves, if not for local ecosystems or inhabitants.

Discussion and conclusion

This article has presented how modern, postmodern and post-postmodern perspectives can help to distinguish overlapping but distinctive strands within authenticity discourses. These relate to the various ways in which tourists in their perception and acceptance of authenticity, negotiate between the real, genuine and meaningful on the one hand, and the fake, disingenuous and meaningless on the other. The search for authenticity may be timeless, driven by the existential alienation inherent in the human condition. It is nonetheless circumstantially negotiated in various and evolving ways. To illustrate, Fordahl (2018) describes how political authenticity in the United States, has moved from an association with external goods into an individual and interior phenomenon, and more recently towards charismatic projection of the inner workings of the self. As outlined in this paper, a similar evolution may be the case with tourism authenticity.

Separately therefore, modernities contextualise different interactive strands within tourism authenticity discussion. Hereby, modern authenticity is concerned with determining the tourism object, site or experience, as either authentic or inauthentic (Cook, 2010; Wang, 1999), using objective iconic and indexical cues. Tourists engage with this orientation towards authenticity when pursuing verisimilitude through tourism. Credible, externally verified constructions are prioritised and sought out. Meanwhile, postmodern authenticity is a more emergent subjective process (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006), adopting cynical and personal cues. Tourists engage with this authenticity stance when immersed within more fluid hyperreality. The thoughts, feelings and emotions triggered by personal encounters with myriad tourist spaces are emphasised. A post-postmodern stance however, sees authenticity as something that can be reconstructed. Performative cues are adopted to support this interpretation of authenticity as something to be agglomerated and asserted. As such, tourists engage with this approach to authenticity by embracing alterreality, whereby preferred alternative realities are identified with and overall reality is altered to suit these. The emphasis is on tourism as a vehicle and source of material for inhabiting convincing performances.

Such alterreality can arguably be seen with Canavan's (2020) tourist celebrities who invoke and enact fame through their consumption of and reporting upon a particular form of tourism. Hereby, backpackers undertaking an extreme endurance event seemingly do so because of the attention gained on the road and online. It is the performance of being a noteworthy individual that seemingly motivates such tourists and their particular choice of tourism supports this performance of being noteworthy. Canavan captures the efforts of participants in the Mongol Rally to solicit and document the attention of local press, people and police. Social media is used in particular to collect, curate and share evidence of being noticed by others. To collect materials for such reconstructive presentations, Canavan evidences that such tourists are willing to invest considerable resources in putting a literal show on the road; seeking to travel not to look at others, but to be looked at by others. By travelling to remote locations, dressing in elaborate outfits, and driving in decorated vehicles, these backpacker's performance unsurprisingly garners local attention. This then feeds entry into an alterreality of being a tourist celebrity.

The post-postmodern perspective enables us to better understand such contemporary tourist behaviour; how they interpret and use notions of authenticity. Nevertheless, the post-postmodern orientation elaborated in this article does not aim to make an antithetical argument, but instead an additional supplement to the existing discourse on authenticity (as per Zhu, 2012). It has previously been recognised that no one category can account for the entire range of experiences that come under the banner of authenticity (Vidon et al., 2018). Objective and subjective types of authenticity for example, not only coexist, but also are significantly related and hence conceptual exclusivism can be counterproductive (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Although they take different stances, modern, postmodern and post-postmodern authenticities are intrinsically linked. These, overlap, inspire and complement rather than contradict each other. Understood as multiple (Eisenstadt, 2000) and entangled (Therborn, 2003), modernities do not exist in isolation, but instead interact with, influence and respond to each other (Canavan & McCamley, 2020). As Doyle (2018: 260) articulates; "just as postmodernism is intrinsically linked to and informed by modernism, post-postmodernism must assess and utilize thematic and stylistic aspects of postmodernism and employ them against the strategies and beliefs of its predecessor to find a path forward".

Together therefore, modernities help to build up a more sophisticated overall conceptualisation and understanding of authenticity negotiation as multifaceted, incomplete and on-going, and provide a contextual framework for this evolution as demonstrated in Fig. 1. This is useful to explaining the overall resilience and frequent re-conceptualisation of authenticity that can be observed in the literature. Handler (1986) suggests that authenticity is a cultural construct particularly renewed by cultural anxieties. Meanwhile, Rose and Wood (2005) describe authenticity as a process involving the negotiation of its inherent paradoxes and requiring coping, resolution or creative approaches to overcome the anxieties seeded by the inevitable frustrations of authenticity as existentially uncertain and impermanent, leading to new questions that challenge existing and open up new possibilities for negotiating. Post-postmodern reconstruction may be an alternative to modern and postmodern approaches to authenticity, both of which contain limitations, and therefore offer an alternative and altogether more nuanced means of pursuing authenticity through travel. Indeed, Thompson and Tambyah (1999) recognised that an alternative to the deconstructive pose of the postmodern tourist can be seen in reconstructive tourist projects and behaviours. As demonstrated with Mentawai's surf tourists, Tiberghien, Bremner, and Milne (2017) find that performative aspects contribute to visitors' perception of the authenticity of their eco-cultural experiences, helping to assuage doubts and thus perpetuate authenticity despite the paradoxes within this concept.

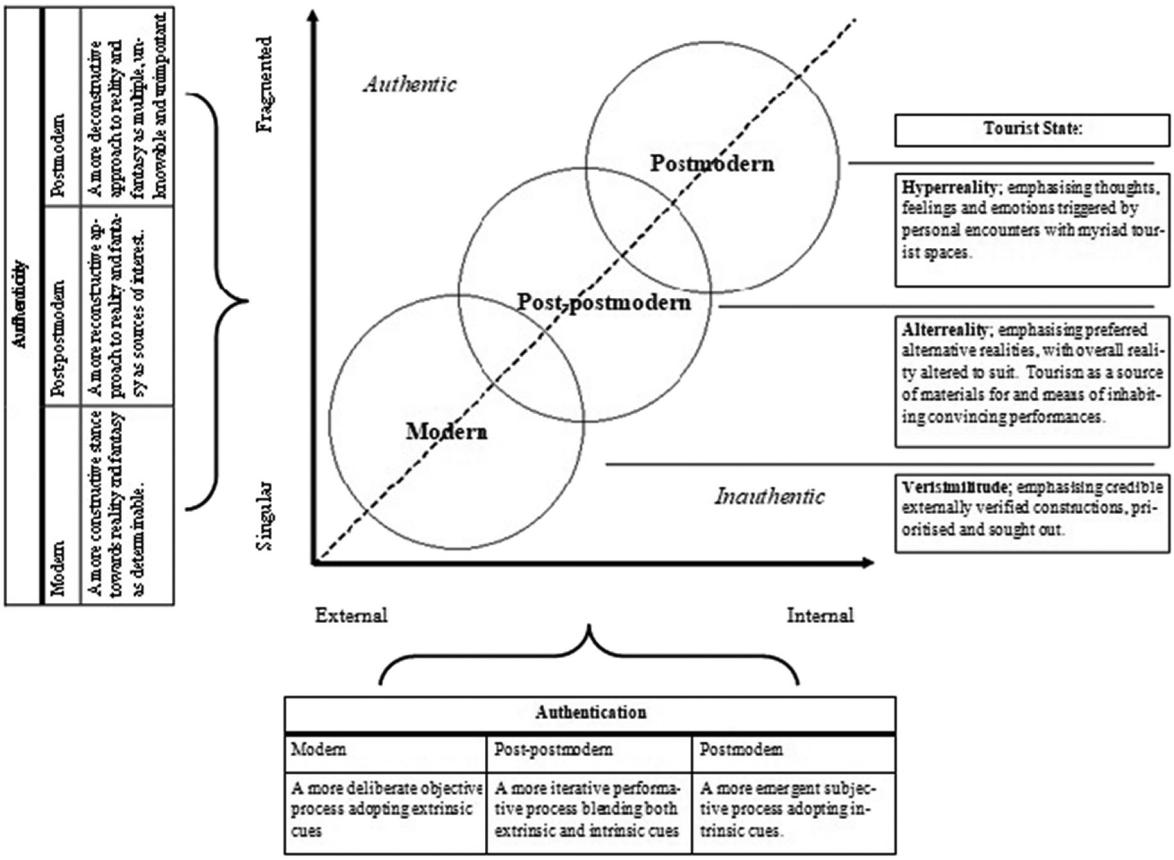

Fig. 1. Modernities and authenticity summary.

It is unlikely that any single approach towards authenticity can be especially satisfying given the uncertainties, paradoxes and transience of authenticity and its dialectic alienation, as outlined in existential philosophy. However, such challenges encourage discussion and debate. Post-postmodernism extends current conceptualisation of how tourists engage with authenticity through tourism despite its inherent paradoxes. Together with modern and postmodern perspectives, these three stances add up to a more comprehensive negotiation of authenticity and its many frustrations. It seems likely that tourists will use all approaches to authenticity negotiation simultaneously in order to experience a more convincing iteration of this. This allows for the dream of authenticity to remain viable even when challenged (see Gable & Handler, 1996), and indeed for the fantasy of authenticity to be propagated (Knudsen et al., 2016). Buchmann et al. (2010: 243) for example, highlight the "complex way in which film tourists appear to appreciate the 'authentic' in a world that is so fully simulated and which trades directly on the blurring of fantasy and reality". They continue that "it seemed that for most of our film tourists it was the merging of both reality and myths that made for the most fulfilling, and authentic, experience" (p. 244). Demonstrated through three modernities is that authenticity is drawn out of such sophisticated and multifaceted, contextual yet simultaneous, overlapping but distinctive negotiations.

Statement of contribution

In this article, modern, postmodern and post-postmodern conceptualisations of authenticity, are used to illustrate the complex and evolving negotiations of this by tourists through tourism. Emphasising constructive, deconstructive and reconstructive stances respectively, the three modernities are distinctive. Separately therefore, modernities help to explain and contextualise specific approaches to authenticity negotiation. In particular, introducing and developing post-postmodern theory into tourism studies helps to complement and extend existing literature. This contribution is the case when conceptualising 'alterreality' as a state engaged by more post-postmodern tourists when negotiating authenticity-inauthenticity through tourism. Together meanwhile, modernities as overlapping and mutually influencing, help to build up a more sophisticated overall conceptualisation of authenticity negotiation.

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