The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at
www.emeraldinsight.com/1352-2752.htm

Storytelling research on international visitors

Interpreting own experiences in Tokyo

Drew Martin
College of Business and Economics, University of Hawaii at Hilo, Hilo, Hawaii, USA, and
Arch G. Woodside
Department of Marketing, Carroll School of Management, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

Purpose – Using brand netnography (analyzing consumers' first-person on-line stories that include discussions of their product and brand use), this article aims to probe how visitors interpret the places, people, and situations that they experience while traveling in Japan.

Design/methodology/approach – Through analysis of online consumer stories about their trip experiences, Heider's balance theory is applied to visitors' trip experiences. Follow-up contact with the consumers allows application of autodriving methodology to gather additional post-trip insights.

Findings – The results show immediate and downstream positive and negative associations of concepts, events, and outcomes in visitors' stories. Maps of consumer stories identify kernel concepts and include descriptions of how visitors live a specific destination's unique promises (e.g. distinct cultural history). Using the kernel concepts as a basis, Holt's five-step strategy for building icons is applied to the travel destination to show how a destination can create a brand identity.

Research limitations/implications – Bloggers reporting their travel experience may not be representative of the population of travelers. On the other hand, travel blogs potentially can influence trip planning by other visitors collecting travel information.

Practical implications – Blog reports represent an unobtrusive method of collecting emic interpretive information from consumers. Emic reporting provides deep insights about consumers' trip interpretations. Tourism and hospitality managers can use this information to improve service experiences and design communication strategies to strengthen positive iconic imagery reported by consumers.

Originality/value – Emic and etic interpretations of travel experiences create a bricolage of the travelers' experiences. Autodriving methodology is extended to tourism research to gather additional insights and to better clarify informants' interpretations. This article also expands on a revisionist proposal to Holt's five-step strategy for building destinations as iconic brands and suggestions for tourism management.

Keywords Storytelling, Consumer behaviour, Tourism, Japan

Paper type Research paper

Certain cities project unique identities that allow visitors to escape from their ordinary lives (Judd, 1995; Pagano and Bowman, 1996). For example, Las Vegas is called "Sin City". For example, this allegory implies Las Vegas can fulfill adult fantasies. Destination nicknames widely shared are kernel expressions of iconic myths with roots in medieval allegories (Stern, 1988, 1995). Such allegories permit "the championing of the id over the ego" (Holt, 2003, p. 49) via a personal experience event happening that leaves an indelible

Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal
Vol. 14 No. 1, 2011
pp. 27-54
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited
1352-2752
DOI 10.1108/13522751111099319

memory (Peters, 2003, p. 113). Part of the brand-destination experience often is stored and retrieved unconsciously (Bargh, 1989; Bargh *et al.*, 1996; Woodside, 2005; Zaltman, 2003).

Typically, empirical positivistic, cross-cultural research is employed to profile tourists' activities (Lee, 2000; Reisinger and Turner, 1999). Not many cross-cultural studies examine tourists' interpretations of their visits (Ronkainen and Woodside, 1978). This paper's objectives include etic (researcher) analysis and interpretation of communications by first-time visitors to Tokyo, Japan. Etic interpretations are alien reports of the informant's first-hand (emic) observations (Pike, 1967). To read between the lines of the informant's emic observations, the researcher needs considerable first-hand knowledge of the experience described. Together, emic and etic interpretations create a bricolage interpretation of the world (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001).

This paper addresses three propositions (P_i):

P_1. Heider's (1958) balance theory to understand emic (first person) interpretations about their travel experiences and destinations they visit. Heider proposes individuals seek to maintain psychological balance in order to overcome imbalances when they occur.

Imbalances are unpleasant surprises that cause stress. For example, first-time foreign visitors to Japan discover that public restrooms typically do not supply free toilet paper. A new balance occurs by learning that vending machines at most bathroom entrances sell tissue paper.

Consumer research scholars (Arnould and Price, 1993; Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Hirschman, 1986) demonstrate "[. . .] people think narratively rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically" (Weick, 1995, p. 127). Gladwell (2005) concludes that these narratives are stored subconsciously in peoples' memories and emerge instantaneously to make snap decisions:

P_2. A person's memory includes stored and retrieved episodic information.

These stories include experiences, outcomes/evaluations, and summaries/nuances of person-to-person and person-and-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Schank, 1990).

Finally:

P_3. Stories expressing how and why life changes are highly persuasive (McKee, 1997, 2003).

When Lafcadio Hearn first arrived in Japan in 1890, he was enamored with the profusion of Chinese and Japanese characters decorating everything. Had the streets been covered with roman-lettered signs, he would have been repulsed. To Hearn, the printed Chinese and Japanese characters represented more than words of communication, the written language "cries out to the eyes, words that smile or grimace like faces" (Cott, 1991, p. 243). Many Japanese people consider Hearn's written descriptions of Japan over the following 14 years to be among the most accurate by a foreign observer.

Storytelling research clarifies and deepens knowledge of how people resolve paradoxes triggered in their minds by unbalanced states (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Fourier, 1998; Schank, 1990). Learning stories enables the researcher to perceive the complexity often associating when initial balanced states become unbalanced and the steps taken to achieve old or new balanced states (Heider, 1958; Woodside and

Chebat, 2001). Storytelling research enables holistic views on how initial balanced states become unbalanced and the steps taken to achieve the old or a new balanced state.

First-person stories (e.g. the protagonist reports to herself and possibly to others) is an emic interpretation of how, why, who, when, and where events unfold with what immediate and long-term consequences. Ethnographic researchers interpret visitors' behaviors and meanings attached to visitors' experiences. Often these etic interpretations fail to include the emic interpretations (Moore, 1985) – the reader of such reports might well ask, do the visitors actually report to themselves and others very similar interpretations as the ethnographer reports?

Visitors' experiential storytelling often describes myth enactments/climaxes uniquely relevant to specific destinations. The internet has become an important medium for sharing these word-of-mouth experiences (Niininen *et al.*, 2007). Travelers satisfy both hedonic and social needs in telling their stories online (Maulana and Eckhardt, 2007; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Such storytelling frequently closes with advocating future visitors by oneself and others, or the avoidance of such visits – the present paper examines this fundamental proposition.

Myths and consumer behavior experiences

Holt (2003) contends people need myths to make sense of the world. Powerful icons are encapsulated within the myths. These icons deliver myths in a tangible form, thereby making them more accessible. Icons can be brands; however, often they are people (e.g. James Dean). When a brand creates a myth, consumers perceive the myth as embodied in the product. Buying the product is a ritual action serving to consume the myth and to forge a relationship with the brand. Nike's core customers laced up their Air Jordan's in the early 1990s to tap into Nike's myth of individual achievement through perseverance. Iconic brands embody myths that attempt to resolve acute tension people feel between their own lives and society's prevailing ideology (Holt, 2003).

As an alternative brand strategy of offering unique attributes and benefits, why not provide a compelling myth (Holt, 2003)? Mythical brand winners become icons. Successful icons rely on an intimate and credible relationship with a rebel world such as Harley with outlaw bikers or Apple with cyberpunks. Can a destination create a compelling myth?

One example of destinations providing visitors the opportunity to enact iconic myths is the illusion created for holiday vacations to Hawaii. Through furniture, books, dishes, and record albums from the 1950s, Borgerson and Schroeder (2003) describe how marketing, tourism, music, and stereotypes combine to package paradise metaphorically with connections to the primitive, pagan, and virginal inspire visions of exotic young females, sensual, sexually available, and ready to frolic. One Waikiki hotel owner even jokingly suggested that Waikiki be off limits to local people to preserve the exotic image created for tourists (McDermott, 1990, pp. 65-6). Whether or not visitors enact this myth, as Borgerson and Schroeder interpret from examining artifacts, such additional research complements and extends insightfulness of other research approaches. Hunt (1993) confirms etic interpretations' limitations and suggests using multiple methods to explore issues objectivity.

This paper examines the stories visitors tell themselves and others about their visits to Tokyo, Japan and briefly reviews the iconic myths implied by first-thoughts (e.g. kernel concepts). Second section presents the methodology. Third section covers

the findings. Fourth section provides a revisionist paradigm to Holt's recommendations on how to build a brand icon. Fifth section provides a general discussion, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

Method

An individual-level netnography using a purposive sampling of visitors' journal stories provides the interpretive data for this report. Kozinets (2002) provides details of conducting ethnographic studies in cyberspace – what he labels to be netnography. Following Brown *et al.* (2004), the study examines both positive and negative visitor journal postings of experiences and first impressions while visiting Tokyo, Japan. The sampling strategy used does not offer representativeness or transferability (Hwang and Fensenmaier, 2004); but focuses on building theory through analytic depth and insights into lasting iconic impressions.

For this study, purposive sampling includes implementing the following plan. Search for informant reports focusing on finding mainly overseas visitors writing blog reports on their first visits to Tokyo. The search includes finding positive and negative communications about the city. Google searches using "Tokyo," "blog," and "good" or "bad" were conducted plus additional variations on these broad themes.

The method includes mapping four stories according to relationships from one concept to the next that appear in the stories. The concepts include persons, places, acts, outcomes, beliefs, and the linkages reflect positive/negative sentiments or states of unit versus not unit relationships (e.g. Tokyo is a city in Japan expresses a unit relationship). All four informants were contacted and asked to provide additional self-analysis of their trip experiences. Two informants responded. Autodriving reinterpretations were collected from these informants and a multiple iteration approach was employed (Heisley and Levy, 1991). Autodriving includes informants examining photographs of themselves, friends, and possessions, their own prior written text, or other personal items and interpreting these items to themselves and to a researcher. The informant sets the frame/context, asks herself questions, and provides answers to the questions in autodriving.

Following Heider's (1958) balance theory, the analysis includes examining the resulting maps to consider the balance and imbalance relationships among the concepts implied by the story. While unit and sentiment relations are non-orthogonal, they represent independent theoretical and empirical constructs grounded in cognition (e.g. units) and affection (e.g. sentiments). When tension caused by imbalance arises in the mind of the individual, then the individual is likely to exercise some mental and physical effort to eliminate the tension.

Woodside and Chebat (2001) provide further details of mapping balanced and imbalanced states found in consumer stories. The two authors worked independently in developing the maps. These maps were shared during additional meetings between the authors. Maps were revised until both authors agreed the direct and indirect linkages, sentiments, and unit relationships accurately reflected each story's concepts.

Findings

Tokyo is Japan's first city and the center of government, industry, finance, and education for the nation. Tokyo's greater metropolitan area has the world's largest urban population with an estimate 35.5 million people (City Mayors, 2006). The city offers visitors

an interesting mix of old world charm and modernity to its 13.7 million foreign visitors (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2006).

To see artifacts of Japan's long history, the best place to start is the center of the city in Chiyoda ward. Visitors can see the Imperial Palace as well as a number of historic government buildings in Marunouchi. The adjacent Bunkyo ward has a number of old Japanese streets that have changed little over time. For visitors that enjoy nature, Bunkyo is the home of the Koishikawa Botanical Garden an Edo Period Gardens. Minato ward includes the Asakusa area that has a number of interesting Shinto shrines and museums. Walking through Asakusa, visitors also can learn about traditional Japanese crafts and how they are produced.

Tokyo is also a modern city with all the amenities that visitors desire. For shopping, Chou ward is the place to start. Chou's Ginza district is the home of elegant shopping. A shopping excursion in Tokyo would not be complete without stopping at Shinjuku ward. Shinjuku's Akihabara district is famous for its electronic goods shops. For night life, the Roppongi district in Minato ward is the place to visit. But what do first-time visitors report in their blog journals?

Susanne Jespersen's emic interpretation of Tokyo

The following passage describes Susanne's experience visiting Tokyo in 2004:

> Tokyo can be immensely overwhelming and underwhelming at the same time. Everything is always in motion, people have little time to spare and are often running to make the last train, last bus or, in the case of some well-dressed but drunk business men, the alternative is to pass out on the spot wherever that may be. Forget the ride home on the vomit comet. Especially after all you can drink at Karaoke until six a.m.
>
> I was lucky to have several Japanese friends from Toronto along to take me to the right spots for people watching: Roppongi (though I was not impressed with all the tourists), Shibuya (good times), Ginza and the Tokyo's fish market (best sushi ever!!!). I kept up with the best of them drinking *shōchū* all night and meandering through lounges, bars and restaurants. The sheer volume of people and places is what one imagines before coming to Tokyo, and one would be right. There is always noise and motion. [. . .] Tokyo is earthquake central. I missed one Tsunami the day I landed and three major earthquakes the month after I had left.
>
> Unless you are a top executive, being catered to while on an all expenses paid trip, Tokyo is better left for the hardcore traveler. English is not common, the food is strange (and I eat Japanese at home in Toronto all the time), and it is not the easiest to navigate. But if you have a sense of adventure, take your chances and get yourself lost in transit (Jespersen, 2004).

Susanne reports both positive and negative experiences in Tokyo. Figure 1 shows Susanne's story while visiting Tokyo. The four kernel concepts that caused imbalances include issues concerning navigating/transportation, food, interactions with Japanese people, and concern about natural disasters.

Most first-time visitors find navigating Tokyo to be intimidating. Susanne's imbalance of traveling in a large, congested, and fast-paced environment is reduced partially by her travel companions who apparently are repeat visitors. A second equalizer may be attributed to the stops at numerous lounges and bars. This traveler's overwhelming experience likely was numbed the alcoholic drinks she consumed. Shōchū is distilled sake, a high-octane liquor.

Susanne's discussion about Japanese food is somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, she claims to have tasted the best sushi ever at the Tokyo fish market. Susanne also

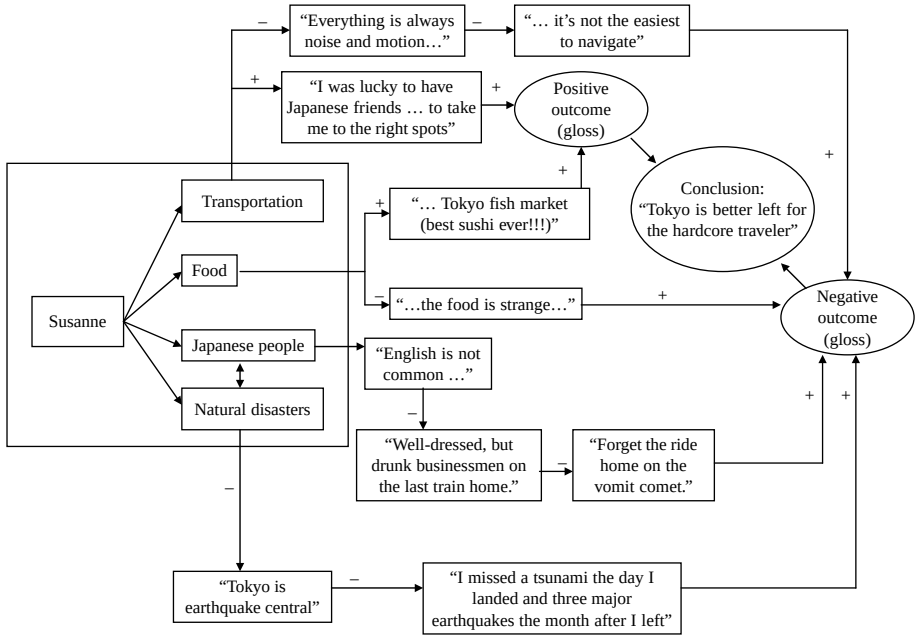


Figure 1.
Mapping Susanne Jespersen's visit to Tokyo story

Note: Story elaboration

states she frequently consumes Japanese food. On the other hand, Susanne also comments that the food is strange suggesting that the average North American would not enjoy eating raw fish. Perhaps, she is able to balance this paradox by assuming that she is unique in her frequent consumption of sushi back at home.

Apparently, Susanne cannot speak the Japanese language because she was frustrated by the lack of people who can speak English. English language study is compulsory in Japanese schools; however, only reading and writing are emphasized. As a result, most Japanese people are uncomfortable conversing in English. Being conversationally illiterate in Japan, Susanne experiences another imbalance. Unable to resolve this issue, perhaps Susanne achieves a new balance by finding fault in Japanese people. For example, she is critical of inebriated businessmen. Given her lounge and bar hopping activities, Susanne's comments seem a bit hypocritical. She also expresses concerns about natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes and tsunamis). These comments may be related to achieving a new balance. Rather than admit her own deficiencies with the Japanese language, Susanne finds fault with Tokyo.

Katie Viventi's emic interpretation of Tokyo

Katie is a university student. She attended a four-week advertising course that included visits to Tokyo, Beijing, and Shanghai to study sports marketing. Although the trip was designed to learn about new advertising technology, Katie's itinerary included visits to tourist destinations as well. The evidence suggests that the socio-cultural exposure affected her more than seeing Japan's technological innovations. Due to the length of Katie's blog report, the full text of her comments about Tokyo can be found in Appendix 1.

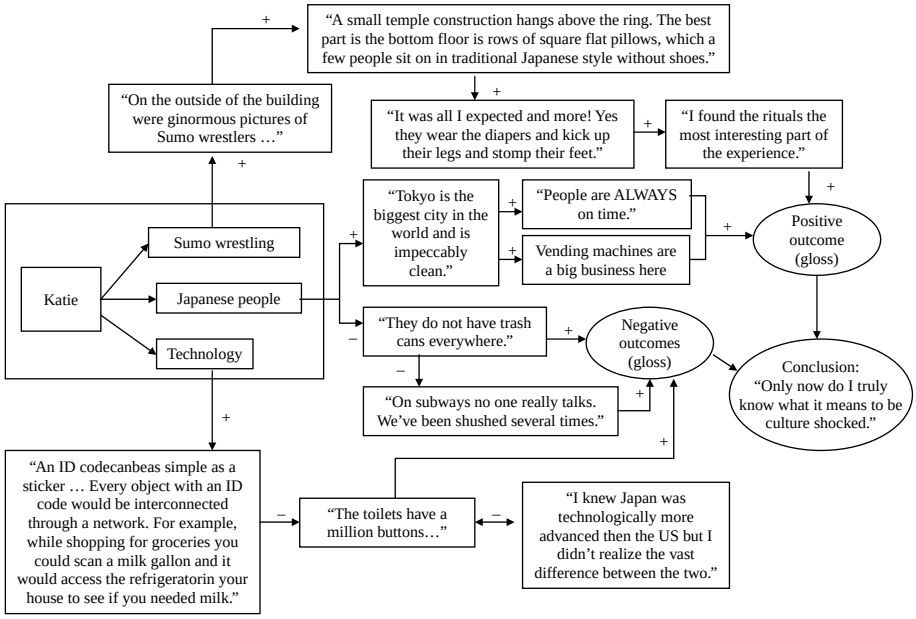
Figure 2 shows Katie's story about Tokyo. Watching sumo wrestling, observing Japanese people, and learning about new technology are three kernel concepts in her travel blog.

Katie's experience watching sumo wrestling appears to be a trip highlight. Although sumo competition is held throughout Japan, three of the six major tournaments are held at Ryōgoku Kokugikan (Tokyo's sumo hall). Arguably, sumo's connection to Tokyo is strong and iconic.

Before watching the competition, her group toured a museum that explained sumo's rituals and origins. This new sumo knowledge transformed the competition from watching large men in diapers stomp around in the dirt to enjoying the rituals associated with the sport. These sumo rituals are very ancient and are influenced by the Shinto religion. While a couple of hours of watching sumo does not make anyone an expert on Japanese culture, the experience opened Katie's eyes to other possible interpretations to things she sees in Japan.

A second kernel expression is Katie's observations of Japanese society. She is very impressed with the clean, orderly nature of society. Clean streets, vending machines offering every imaginable convenience good, and punctuality are admired. On the other hand, Katie finds the lack of public trash cans to be problematic. How can a city be so clean when no place exists to dispose of trash? The irritation Katie expresses is noted by other visitors to Japan. She rebalances by concluding conscientious Japanese people take trash home and follow procedures for recycling. Actually, two other explanations exist. First, some people just toss the litter on the ground. Shop owners and community-minded people pick up the trash. Also, the train and subway stations have trash disposal bins for various types of garbage located at train and subway stations.

A second irritant regards Katie's negative experience riding the subways. She finds people riding the subways tend to be quiet. To her amazement, some natives appear to be



Note: Story elaboration

Figure 2.
Mapping Katie Viventi's visit to Tokyo story

annoyed with the conversations Katie's group had while riding the subway. She mentions her group was "shushed" by an elderly Japanese lady (Viventi, 2008c). The lady spoke to Katie in Japanese, so she did not understand the comments that followed. The scolding by the elderly lady surprised Katie. Also, Japanese people rarely make negative comments to foreign visitors. One author recalls an experience when an elderly Japanese gentleman scolded high-school students for bring an open soft drink on the train. Perhaps, elderly people in Japan have a greater tendency to speak their minds?

Finally, Katie describes new technological being developed in Japan. New technologies to help the advertising industry impressed her greatly. She was surprised at the number of additional uses the Japanese have found for mobile telephones as well. Like many tourists, she also is attracted to the technologically advanced Japanese toilets. Had Katie visited a Japanese house in the middle of the winter, she would have realized that most homes do not have central heating. A heated toilet seat is a welcome improvement with the room temperature is just above freezing.

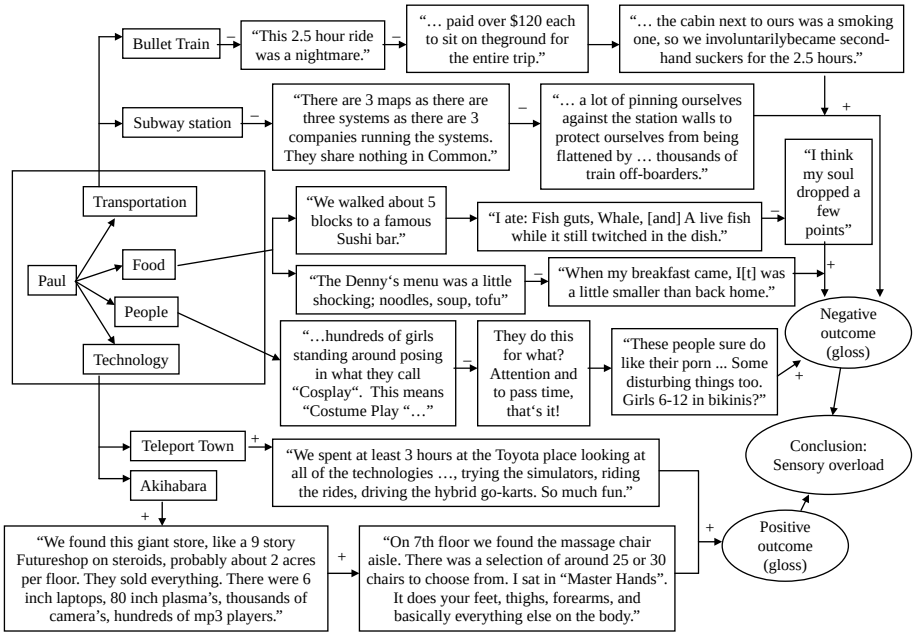
Follow-up correspondence with Katie revealed that her grandparents are from Japan (Viventi, 2008b). While the primary purpose of the trip was to learn about advertising, Katie is surprised how much she learned about Japanese culture in just one week. This experience helped Katie to better understand her grandparents' behavior. A week in Japan allowed Katie to explore her roots and rebalance her relationship with the grandparents. Now, Katie sees a connection between Japanese culture and her grandparent's behavior. She dreams about returning to Japan with her grandparents to learn more about her ancestry.

Paul Bennett's emic interpretation of Tokyo

Paul and Amy spent four days in Tokyo and took a one-day side trip to Kyoto. They stayed in hostels while in Tokyo. Paul notes that they new little about Japan before arriving in Tokyo, so the Canadian couple tried to slowly transition themselves into the environment. Although Paul apparently did some research before arriving, the couple had a number of surprises on their trip. Paul's blog report about Tokyo can be found in Appendix 2. Figure 3 shows Paul's visit to Tokyo. Based on Paul's blog, four kernel expressions describe his Tokyo experience.

Tokyo's train and subway system is a modern marvel. To Paul, Tokyo's underground subway system represents a confusing mess. A combination of three different subway systems and shielding themselves from thousands of passengers rushing through the transit system create a high level of anxiety. Tokyo's train and subway stations do display English language; however, the system's immense size combined with the high population density and jet lag created an overwhelming experience for the travelers. Returning to Tokyo from Kyoto created additional imbalance. To Paul's surprise, buying a bullet train ticket does not guarantee one a seat. He was forced to sit on the ground for two and one-half hour return trip. To make matters worse, the connecting cabin allowed smoking, so every time a passenger moved between cabins, Paul received a cloud of second-hand smoke. Paul concludes that the bullet train experience was a disappointment considering the amount of money spent.

Like Susanne, Paul was amazed by the array of food. To ease into Japanese cuisine, Paul opted to have the first meal at Denny's. Much to Paul's surprise, the menu included some local foods as well as Denny's North American cuisine. Ordering a typical North American breakfast seemed to be a safe bet. To Paul's disappointment, the portions



Note: Story elaboration

Figure 3.
Mapping Paul Bennett's visit to Tokyo story

served were considerably smaller than he was accustomed to receiving. The lesson here is things from back home often get modified to suite the locals' tastes.

Paul decided to dive into Japanese cuisine. His experience with some exotic specialties (e.g. a twitching fish) was an enlightening experience that clearly took Paul out of his comfort zone. Although everything tasted good, but he felt appalled by his own behavior. This feeling of remorse serves to rebalance Paul's unbalanced state after eating foods (e.g. whale) that may have violated his philosophical beliefs about eating rare species of animals.

Surprisingly, Paul's impression of Japanese people was not positive. In particular, he did not understand the Cosplay trend sweeping Tokyo. Why would young women want to dress in bizarre costumes and stand around so that people can take their pictures? He concludes that the young women have no better way to pass time. He has difficulty understanding gender roles in Japanese society. Paul concludes that Japanese society has strange views about young women. Further investigation of Japan uncovers examples of Japanese pornography. To build on his premise that Japan's society has warped views about women, Paul notes disturbing magazine pictures of very young girls in bikinis.

While Paul's assessment of Japanese pornography has merit, his interpretation of Cosplay seems a bit harsh. The young women involved in Cosplay likely are university students or young women with part-time jobs. These young ladies went through a very ordered system through high school. Nearly, every school in Japan requires students to wear uniforms and conform to the educational system.

Japanese students typically sit and listen and they do not participate in classroom dialogue with the teacher. The young women had little opportunity to express their own originality and creativity. Cosplay provides an opportunity for young people to be

individuals and express themselves in public. Typically, this outlandish behavior has a limited term. When the young women get a full time jobs or married, they return to their structured societal roles.

Finally, Paul's Tokyo experience included exposure to some amazing technology. Trips to Teleport town exceeded his expectations. Paul first learned about this amazing place from the Discovery Channel. He spent hours looking at new technologies. The trip to Akihabara also did not disappoint. To Paul's delight, a seemingly unlimited display of electronic equipment awaited his arrival. This experience clearly reinforced Paul's image that Tokyo is a center of technological innovation.

Dan Wolfe's emic interpretation of Tokyo

Dan, his wife, Tonya, and young son, Max visited Tokyo in 2008. Dan's blog report, the full text of his comments about Tokyo can be found in Appendix 3. Figure 4 shows the three kernel concepts and story map of their visit.

Like Paul, Dan was a bit intimidated by the subway maps. Even his guide book suggested that finding the right train and buying the right ticket is an insurmountable task. Dan had done his homework prior to departure. In addition to his copy of the *Lonely Planet*, Dan talked to friends that recently visited Tokyo and he borrowed several books from the library (Wolfe, 2008b). Although he felt somewhat lost due to a lack of Japanese language skills, the well-labeled maps at each subway station exit helped tremendously (Wolfe, 2008c). Seeing Japanese people looking at the maps too made him feel better. Realizing that even the natives have difficultly navigating Tokyo rebalanced Dan's

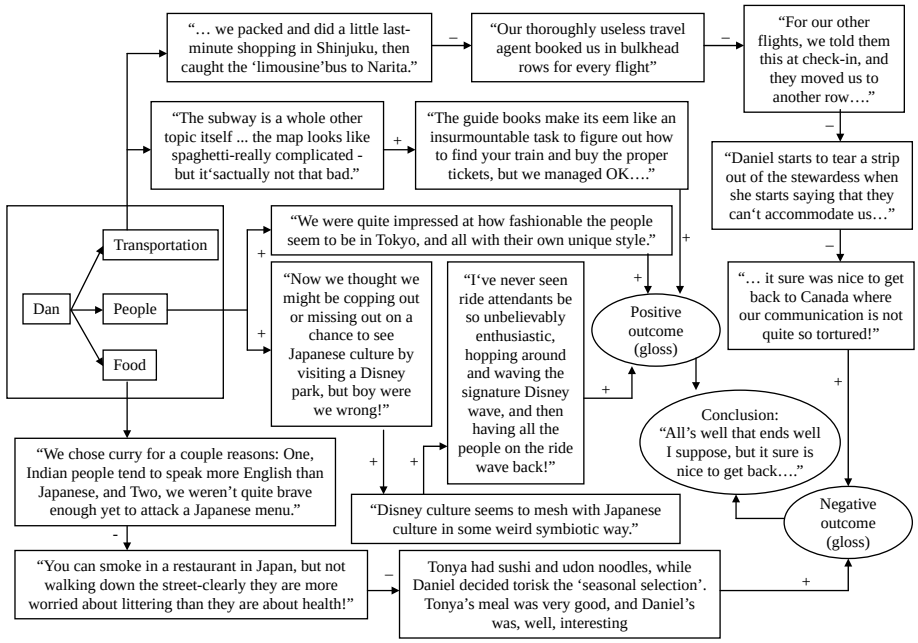


Figure 4.
Mapping Dan Wolfe's visit to Tokyo Story

Note: Story elaboration

relationship with navigating Tokyo. By being patient, Dan rode Tokyo's mass transit system without any mishaps.

Dan's experience at the Tokyo airport was less pleasant. The child seat did not fit into the airplane seat in the family's assigned seating. The stewardess was unable to accommodate Dan's need a different seating arrangement. Fortunately, other passengers came to the rescue and switched seats with Dan's family. These naturally occurring findings support and extend Rabinowitz and his colleagues (1997) field experiment findings that some participants display high willingness to help tourists.

The Japanese people are Dan's second kernel concept. Although Dan felt a bit under-dress most of the time, he marveled at the fashion-oriented dress style of people in Tokyo. Their side trip to Tokyo Disneyland seems like a way to escape from Japanese culture, but Dan was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and fabulous customer service provided by the park employees. In a sense, he found that Disney corporate culture and Japanese culture are compatible. The result was a memorable experience about the Japanese employees.

Dan's final kernel concept is the food. Like Paul, Dan decided to take a gradual approach to the local cuisine. He started with Indian food with the expectation that the restaurant employees would be more likely to speak English. One surprise was that people can smoke in Japanese restaurants. The smoke-filled restaurant clearly disappointed Dan. Latter, they tried Japanese foods with mix results. After experimenting with restaurants, they ended up buying sushi from convenience stores so that dining would no longer be a surprise.

All four travelers had positive and negative experiences in Tokyo. Only Susanne appears unlikely to return. Katie, Paul, and Dan's blogs suggest that they left Tokyo wanting to see more. Personal communications with Katie and Dan confirm that both of them plan to return in the future (Viventi, 2008b; Wolfe, 2008c). Based on the travelers' experiences, how can tourism managers promote Tokyo? Holt (2003) suggests brand icons are powerful for creating mythical imagery of product. The result is better customer awareness and loyalty.

A revisionist view on how to build a destination brand icon

Holt (2003) recommends the following steps for building an iconic brand. First, national contradictions need to be targeted. Tokyo is a dichotomy of modernity and tradition. A common theme in the positive visitor emic interpretations is that travelers enjoy the historical artifacts, but they also like modern conveniences. Negative interpretations, such as fear of a major earthquake, relate to unbalanced experiences. Tokyo's world class public transportation system is a modern marvel, yet tourists find the navigation to be overwhelming.

Second, creating myths that lead culture are necessary. According to Katie and Paul, Tokyo is a center of technological innovation. Acres of electronic goods are waiting at Akihabara. Teleport town provides hours of enjoyment for people viewing new technology. New technologies are being added to cell telephones so that the device can be used to purchase products from Tokyo's numerous vending machines. Even identification codes can be added to refrigerators, so shoppers can decide at the grocery store whether or not they need to buy milk.

Third, speak with a rebel's voice. Gastronomic treats like potentially lethal puffer fish in Japan is a risk that rebel travelers might take. Paul's adventure eating fish guts, whale, and a moving fish are examples of person eating something that the average

Western person would not dare to try. The evidence suggests that positive experiences often come from doing or seeing something that the average tourist does not.

Fourth, a successful brand icon draws on political authority to rebuild myth – continue to once again champion the id over the ego. Everyone that works at a Disney theme park knows they are part of the attraction, even the person sweeping trash. Dan was impressed tremendously with the way Japanese employees acted at Tokyo Disneyland. Reading his blog, one gets the sense that the Disney experience at another theme park would not have been as good. His positive experiences were due to pleasant interactions with the natives. A private citizen going out of his/her way to direct a tourist to a museum helps reinforce the mythology that visitors are welcome. On the other hand, a native population that does not understand foreign languages can be interpreted as unfriendly or uncooperative. Katie still does not know why she was shushed in the subway for making too much noise. Still, she wants to return to Japan to learn more about her cultural roots.

Finally, brand icons draw on cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is critical for building icons; however, this element is solely lacking in most manager's arsenals. For example, a sumo wrestling match is filled with cultural clues. Casual observers might conclude that sumo is merely a couple of underdressed, overweight men pushing each other. As Katie notes, the 15 seconds of pushing are only part of the show. The 3-4 minutes of pre-fight activities are orchestrated to build excitement in the arena. These activities include drinking water out of a bamboo cup and throwing salt into the ring. To Katie, the best part of the show is the rituals performed before and after the sumo bout. Typically, icons are more than tangible structures; however, they must be woven with intangibles (e.g. Tokyo's is clean and safe).

While useful for consumer goods, the following revisionist view may be more appropriate for building a destination into a brand icon. First, reach consensus – make sense – of new visitors most receptive to becoming the protagonist in the myth that they assign to your destination; thus, understanding the storyline goes hand-in-hand with understanding the protagonist. For example, Susanne's trip to Ginza gave her the opportunity to eat the "best sushi ever." Second, collect first-person stories of how protagonist report their experiences in living the myth while visiting the destination. Tokyo is the cleanest and safest big city in the world. Third, build authentic brand attachments with core symbols evoked automatically by new visitors. Sumo wrestling is an ancient sport in Japan. Watching sumo provides both entertainment and a snapshot of Japan's rich history. Finally, update stories within the myth to keep the myth alive; bring the myth to life in new ways. The Cosplay trend in Japan is bizarre. Young women standing around in costumes, often resembling animated cartoon characters, and people walk by them and take pictures.

General discussion, limitations, and future research

Some stories move people profoundly to destinations as well as in their search to fulfilling their needs for specific terminal values (McKee, 1997; Woodside, 2005). Stories provide clues to unconscious as well as conscious thinking (Zaltman, 2003). People store, retrieve, and talk to others in story contexts (Schank, 1990). These communications influence other peoples' decisions to visit specific destinations. First-hand visitor reports of experiencing destinations indicate that tourists tell stories that offer clues of how they interpret and enact the myths that these destinations enable.

Netnography research of visitor blog-journal stories is an opportunity to collect emic interpretive data unobtrusively. These stories potentially can influence substantial numbers of future visitors seeking first-person unbiased, unrehearsed reports of others' own destination experiences. Potentially, researchers may have direct contact with the storyteller to ask for blog report elaborations and relevant post-blog report behaviors (e.g. comparisons with competing destinations and repeat visit behavior). Both Katie and Dan responded to further inquiries about their travel experiences. They were both delighted to continue dialogues about their recent experiences in Tokyo. In Katie's case, her experience in Japan has lead to an interest in learning more about her Japanese cultural roots. Such revelations are exciting to both emic and etic interpreters.

All four travelers had no knowledge of the Japanese language. Learning the local language opens up greater understanding visits to foreign countries. Susanne and Katie had native speakers to guide them through the city. They expressed different concerns because navigation and food decisions were not as difficult to make with assistance. With some basic conversational language skills, one can at least ask for directions. Also, the native population tends to appreciate foreigners that go to the trouble to try and learn how to communicate with them. Even a few words of Japanese are appreciated deeply.

Netnography limitations include the rather limited extent of reporting experiences lived in a destination as seen, interpreted and self-edited by the visitor (Kozinets, 2002). Visitor reports of experiences covering seven months often are less than 1,000 words in length. While valuable, the visitors' blog-journal reports are likely to be self-edited in ways unknown to these visitors (Russo *et al.*, 1989), and given that most thinking occurs unconsciously; netnography is not a panacea for uncovering the lived experiences as done or interpreted by visitors. Also, the interpretive data collected from bloggers who report their experiences cannot be generalized to the total population of visitors. Future destination studies as brand myths lived and interpreted by visitors may benefit from rigorous cataloging and probing of large samples of blog-journal entries using samples of 300 plus visitors (Kozinets, 2002).

The preceding examples extend Heisley and Levy's (1991) autodriving methodology to netnography research. Many blog self-reports include both written descriptions and pictures of visitors' experiences. By posting the blogs, the informants tend to be people that want to talk their travel experiences. One informant even apologized for not responding immediately! Multiple iterations with informants provide an opportunity to gather rich insights by allowing self-reflection. For example, the trip to Japan has changed how Katie views her heritage. Katie's mother is a second generation Japanese, but she always considered herself to be Caucasian. The trip to Japan sparked a new interest in studying different cultures. After attending just two sessions at the University of Michigan's Intergroup Relations program, she concludes that other people do not view her as Caucasian (Viventi, 2008b). The realization was a shock since she grew up in a predominately white, suburban neighborhood.

Heider's (1958) balance theory is useful for understanding visitors' self-reports of their travel experiences. Japan's culture is distant from the socio-cultural environment many Western travelers have experienced, particularly first-time visitors. Even adventurous travelers likely experience psychological imbalance when visiting a culturally distant county. The preceding cases show unexpected surprises create a lot of tension with travelers. In some cases, the traveler's restored their psychological balance by blaming the

problem on the host country. In other cases, the travelers learned from the situation and adjusted such as Dan's convenience store sushi after bad dining experiences.

Balance theory has some shortcomings, particularly in cross-cultural settings. First, balance theory assumes that the person making the observations has socially balanced common sense. When visiting culturally distant environments, people are under more stress because everything is imbalanced. Susanne's comments about Tokyo being full of noise and motion could be applied to New York, Los Angeles, or London. Tokyo's culturally distant environment appears to have created such an imbalance for Susanne that everything was viewed as abnormal. A related concern is about the universality of common sense. Is common sense universal? Most likely common sense is viewable usefully through cultural lenses of the observer. A traveler unfamiliar with a foreign environment may incorrectly interpret an event as normal. For example, a smile in Japan can mean either happiness or embarrassment. A foreign visitor may incorrectly interpret the gesture as an imbalance when one has not occurred. For example, a Japanese student walking into a classroom a few minutes late may smile. The instructor would interpret the smile as an imbalance because the student appears to be happy for being late. In this case, the student is displaying embarrassment.

Finally, icon building for a destination has merit. Like consumer goods, a destination's icons create reasons for customers (tourists) to visit a destination. Creating myths that are consistent with visitors' views can create a compelling reason to visit a specific destination. On the other hand, iconic destination development is very complex compared to consumer products. Holt (2003) notes that successful companies have struggled to create the correct iconic image for products like Mountain Dew, a brand of soft drink.

Destinations typically have multiple icons and diverse target audiences. Transportation, food, people, and technology are common kernel concepts discussed. These kernel concepts are a starting point for building the multiple icons appropriate for Tokyo. For example, Tokyo's modern transportation system is amazing, but the foreign visitors find navigation of the subway system to be daunting. Emphasis on the convenience and efforts to improve system navigation (e.g. a telephone to call an English speaking person for help at the stations) may strengthen the iconic strength of Tokyo's subway system.

Japanese food is exotic and adventurous. With the world's largest fish market in town, Tokyo has both the seafood variety and quality to exceed the expectations of any adventurer. While many informants did not dive into the local specialties on their first night, Paul was eating fish guts and whale a day later. Even Susanne, who thinks Japanese food is strange, enjoyed the fresh sushi. Why not take a walk on the wild side and eat a piece of twitching fish?

Meeting and watching the natives make a trip memorable. Although Tokyo has high population density, people are polite and most tourists feel very safe. Communicating with the natives is challenging because many Japanese people are self-conscious of their poor English speaking skills. As many travelers discover, drawing pictures and using hand signals can get the job done in many cases. Like Tokyo, many large cities have interesting attractions. Tokyo stands apart from most by being exceptionally clean and safe.

Watching the natives also is memorable. Looking at a large group of young women dressed up as animated characters arguably is unusual, particularly when the apparent motivation is self-gratification. Also, attending a sumo wrestling match is entertaining to both natives and visitors. Influenced by ancient Shinto religion, the wrestlers

perform a series of traditional steps prior to their bout. The audience's reaction can be entertaining as well. For example, when a grand champion loses a bout, hundreds of seat cushions are tossed at the *dohyo* (the elevated circular ring where the match takes place). Grand champions are not expected to lose a sumo bout, so the audience expresses displeasure by flinging the seat cushions. Cultural events in Tokyo provide a chance to learn about Japan's rich history. Watching people using wood mallets to pulverize steamed rice into *mochi* shows how the Japanese have prepared a favorite food for thousands of years.

Finally, Tokyo is a center of technological innovation. Seeing the most innovative electronic goods is appealing to people enamored with the newest gadgets. Electronics stores with seemingly endless shelves devoted to new and diverse products are designed to appeal to demanding Japanese consumers. Tokyo's Teleport Town is a gateway to technological innovation. The Discovery Channel's feature story about Teleport Town enticed Paul to visit. He was not disappointed.

Tokyo is both a modern marvel and a center of cultural history for Japan. Good management of this contradiction helps build the image of Tokyo as a travel destination; however, this duality may create a fuzzy image because the two images may appeal to different target audiences. Some tourists are attracted to the modernity and nightlife; other visitors seek exposure to pre-Meiji Japan. Turning a brand into an icon requires selection of one contradiction that best aligns the brand's political authority (Holt, 2003). For this contradiction, each may appeal to different target audiences. Iconic development for destinations is more difficult because infinitely more variables exist than for a single consumer product.

Strategic implications for building effective destination images

Research on naturally occurring visitor storytelling provides destination tourism strategists with information about "exciting incidents" (McKee, 2003) representing unique associations and emotional highpoints. Visitors retrieve and report these stories automatically when discussing these destinations. Storytelling reports provide creative clues for positioning a destination uniquely and meaningfully in the minds of potential future visitors. Often the stories visitors tell will include their own explanations of their own photographs. There reports capture what the informants find especially worthwhile to report to others. Such visualizations and emic interpretations serve to inform the strategist how well a destination's planned positioning strategy matches with visitors' take-away images and word-of-mouth reports. Making such comparisons offers an early warning system for learning destination's image problems. In addition, these stories are an early opportunity system to learn which images excite visitors. These travelers can become evangelists that advocate destination visits to friends, family members, and blog readers.

Trip memories are holistic stories of interconnected events. One or two unpleasant surprises negatively impact the entire experience for some travelers (Martin, 2008). Both the informant (traveler) and everyone that reads or hears the story are affected. Netnography research provides important insights to practitioners. Identifying imbalances and learning how visitors overcome them helps tourism and hospitality managers reduce gaps between expected and actual service experiences. For example, Japan Railroad should post foreign language signs at ticket purchase windows that state general seating tickets do not guarantee seats. Likewise, the Tokyo Denny's

foreign language menus should include a statement that food portions are smaller than served in North America.

Story telling research provides a wealth of information for researchers. Given that people tend to store information in narratives, empirical positivistic research cannot capture the true essence of the behavior. Informants self-report what they see and how they feel. Researchers' etic interpretations bring further insights when informants emic reports fail to explain the root cause of their behavior or feelings. Autodriving methodology (Heisley and Levy, 1991) also allows researchers to contact informants for clarification or follow-up questions. The result is a gestalt image of consumer behavior.

These techniques can be applied to understanding consumer behavior of other high-involvement purchases (e.g. art, automobiles, and recreational equipment). Detailed information is collected quickly and inexpensively. While the sample size typically is smaller than empirical positivistic research, better information about consumers' thought processes are collected, often in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, both researcher and practitioners will find these methods are inexpensive compared to collecting primary survey data.

References

Arnould, E.J. and Price, L.L. (1993), "River magic: extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 24-45.

Arnould, E.J. and Wallendorf, M. (1994), "Market-oriented ethnography: interpretation building and marketing strategy formulation", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 484-504.

Bargh, J.A. (1989), "Conditional automaticity: varieties of automatic influence in social perception and cognition", in Uleman, J.S. and Bargh, J.A. (Eds), *Unintended Thought*, Guilford Press, New York, NY, pp. 3-51.

Bargh, J.A., Chen, M. and Burrows, L. (1996), "Automaticity of social behavior: direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 71 No. 2, pp. 230-44.

Bennett, P. (2007), "Day 2 – Tokyo", available at: www.realtravel.com/tokyo-journals-j3576511.html

Borgerson, J. and Schroeder, J. (2003), "The lure of paradise: marketing the retro-escape of Hawaii", in Brown, S. and Sherry, J.F. Jr (Eds), *Time, Space, and the Market*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, pp. 219-37.

Brown, S., Sherry, F.J. Jr and Kozinets, R.V. (2003), "Teaching old brands new tricks: retro branding and the revival of brand meaning", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 67 No. 3, pp. 19-33.

City Mayors (2006), "The world's largest cities and urban areas in 2006", available at: www.citymayors.com/statistics/urban_2006_1.html

Cott, J. (1991), *Wandering Ghost*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY.

Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 343-73.

Gladwell, M. (2005), *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Little Brown, New York, NY.

Heider, F. (1958), *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, Erlbaum, Hillside, NJ.

Heisley, D.D. and Levy, S.J. (1991), "Autodriving: a photoelicitation technique", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 257-72.

Hirschman, E. (1986), "Humanistic inquiry in marketing research: philosophy, method, and criteria", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 237-49.

Holt, D.B. (2003), "What becomes an icon most?", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 81 No. 3, pp. 43-9.

Hunt, S.D. (1993), "Objectivity in marketing theory and research", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 No. 2, pp. 76-91.

Hwang, Y.H. and Fensenmaier, D.R. (2004), "Coverage error embedded in self-selected internet-based samples: a case of northern Indiana", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 297-304.

Jamal, T. and Hollinshead, K. (2001), "Tourism and the forbidden zone: the underserved power of qualitative inquiry", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 63-82.

Jespersen, S. (2004), *Lost in Transit*, available at: www.bumpmedia.blogspot.com

Judd, D.R. (1995), "Promoting tourism in US cities", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 175-87.

Kozinets, R.V. (2002), "The field behind the screen: using netnography for marketing research in online communities", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 61-72.

Lee, D.Y. (2000), "Retail bargaining behavior of American and Chinese customers", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34 Nos 1/2, pp. 190-206.

Martin, D. (2008), "Toward a grounded theory of international tourism behavior: building propositions from emic interpretations of Japanese travelers visiting the United States", in Woodside, A.G. and Martin, D. (Eds), *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behavior and Strategy*, CABI, Cambridge, MA, pp. 62-93.

Maulana, A.E. and Eckhardt, G.M. (2007), "Just friends, good acquaintances or soul mates? An exploration of web site connectedness", *Qualitative Marketing Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 227-42.

McDermott, J.W. (1990), *Kelleys of the Outrigger*, B.L. Hughes, Honolulu, HI.

McKee, R. (1997), *Story*, Regan Books, New York, NY.

McKee, R. (2003), "Storytelling that moves people", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 81, June, pp. 51-5.

Moore, A. (1985), "Rosanzerusu is Los Angeles: an anthropological inquiry of Japanese tourists", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 619-43.

Niininen, O., Buhalis, D. and March, R. (2007), "Customer empowerment in tourism through consumer centric marketing (CCM)", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 265-81.

Pagano, M.A. and Bowman, A.O.M. (1996), *Markets and Images: Development Policy in America's Cities*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.

Peters, T. (2003), *Re-imagine!*, Dorling Kindersley, London.

Pike, K. (1967), *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior 2e*, Mouton, The Hague.

Rabinowitz, F.E., Sutton, L., Schutter, T., Brown, A., Krizo, C., Larsen, J., Styn, J., Welander, A. and Wilson, D. (1997), "Helpfulness to lost tourist", *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 137 No. 4, pp. 502-9.

Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L. (1999), "A cultural analysis of Japanese tourists: challenges for tourism marketers", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 33 Nos 11/12, pp. 1203-27.

Ronkainen, I.A. and Woodside, A.G. (1978), "Cross cultural analysis of marketing profiles of domestic and foreign travelers", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 8, pp. 579-87.

Russo, J.E., Johnson, E.J. and Stephens, D.L. (1989), "The validity of verbal protocols", *Memory and Cognition*, Vol. 17 No. 6, pp. 759-69.

Schank, R.C. (1990), *Tell Me a Story: Narrative and Intelligence*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.

Stern, B.B. (1988), "Medieval allegory: roots of advertising strategy for the mass market", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 84-94.

Stern, B.B. (1995), "Consumer myths: Frye's taxonomy and the structural analysis of consumption text", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 165-74.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2006), *Tokyo Statistical Yearbook*, available at: www.toukei.metro.tokyo.jp/homepage/english.htm

Viventi, K. (2008a), *Katie goes to Asia*, available at: http://realtravel.com/tokyo-journals-j7046585.html

Viventi, K. (2008b), personal correspondence, July 17.

Viventi, K. (2008c), personal correspondence, July 20.

Wang, Y. and Fesenmaier, D.L. (2004), "Modeling participation in an online travel community", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 2261-70.

Weick, K.E. (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Wolfe, D. (2008a), "Getting our bearings in Tokyo", available at: http://realtravel.com/tokyo-journals-j6541215.html

Wolfe, D. (2008b), personal correspondence, July 13.

Wolfe, D. (2008c), personal correspondence, July 14.

Woodside, A.G. (2005), *Market-driven Thinking: Achieving Contextual Intelligence*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, Amsterdam.

Woodside, A.G. and Chebat, J.C. (2001), "Updating Heider's balance theory in consumer behavior", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 18 No. 5, pp. 475-96.

Zaltman, G. (2003), *How Consumers Think*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Further reading

Bruner, J.S. (1990), "Culture and human development: a new look", *Human Development*, Vol. 33, pp. 344-55.

Orr, J.E. (1990), "Sharing knowledge, celebrating identity: community memory in a service culture", in Middleton, D. and Edwards, D. (Eds), *Collective Remembering*, Sage, London, pp. 168-89.

Zukier, H. (1986), "The paradigmatic and narrative modes in goal-guided inference", in Sorrentino, R.M. and Higgins, E.T. (Eds), *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition*, Guilford, New York, NY, pp. 465-502.

Appendix 1. Katie Viventi's Travel Blog on Tokyo (Viventi, 2008a)

I arrived in Japan last Sunday May 17th. It was great! The plane ride was not so bad and we even got our own hotel rooms. Tokyo is an AMAZING city. Of course I had sushi and sashimi using chopsticks. We even got to go to a few traditional restaurants where you sit on the floor. The first couple of days we visited Meiji Jingu Shrine which was amazing because it was not only beautiful but also such a peaceful place put in the middle of a city. After visiting the shrine, we got to see sumo wrestling. Sumo was all I expected and more! Yes, they wear the diapers and kick up their legs and stomp their feet. However, I also learned there are many rituals that go into the "bout," which is equivalent to a round in boxing except they only fight once. Rituals include

cleaning their mouth with water when entering the stage, throwing salt into the ring before they enter and entering and exiting the ring several times before they actually fight. We also got to see Mt. Fuji, Kamakura (Temples and Shrines with a very large Buddha), and the fish market.

With all the site seeing, you would think we did not learn anything academic. We visited the Nos 1 and 2 advertising agencies in Japan, Dentsu and Hakuhodo. We have mainly been learning about QR codes. QR's are bar codes designed to work with Japanese cell phones. Using a cell phone to take a picture of the bar code, consumers receive product information, links to url, voucher/coupons for stores like McDonalds and even business card information to be stored on their cell phones. This technology opens up another marketing method for the advertising world. My visit to Japan was by far the best experience I have ever had. I am learning so much about their culture and seeing so many places that I want to go back.

Note 1: Sumo wrestling

On the second day of our trip in Japan, we attended a sumo wrestling match. We arrived about 3:00 p.m. because the more famous people wrestle from 3 to 6 p.m. People were lined up to see the sumo wrestlers enter and exit the ring. We kept walking and saw large colorful signs that had the names of some of the sumo wrestlers. On the outside of the building were ginormous pictures of sumo wrestlers. Our group took lots of pictures. We took a million pictures of just about anything. Next, we went through the sumo wrestling museum, which was interesting to see the interpretations of sumo on pictures and scriptures from the past. Finally, we entered the venue. The venue was amazing and different than anything I have seen in the USA. The ring is on a square platform in the center. A small temple construction hangs above the ring. The best part is the bottom floor has rows of square flat pillows, which a few people sit on in traditional Japanese style without shoes. The upper decks had cushioned seats like most stadiums in the USA.

We sat down and watched a few of the bouts. They called the sumo matches bouts. During the bouts, two sumo wrestlers perform rituals and then fight each other. They did things as expected such as wear diapers (not sure about the technical term) and fight each other until one hit the ground or fell out of the ring. They also had the fancy hair "topknot," and they raised their legs and stopped on the ground. I found the rituals to be the most interesting part of the entire experience. The wrestlers would approach their corners on stage to prepare for the bout by washing their mouths. Then, they walk to the ring and threw salt in the ring before entering. The pamphlet says they do this because "salt has been believed to possess purifying powers [. . .] wrestlers toss salt in the air [. . .] purifying the ring as a sacred place."

Once in the ring, they squat and do hand motions. They approach the center and squat several times and kick up their legs like you see in images growing up in the USA of sumo wrestling. Then they squat some more and look like they are going to fight but they return to their corners. The process of salt and motions are repeated. They come back to their corners and get all pumped up and everyone cheers. They return in the same ritual and then actually fight. Bouts are done in a few seconds. The winner is awarded an envelope. The wrestlers exit the stage bow in their corner and leave. Then, a man comes to the center and sings a really high-pitched song. I cannot tell if this is introducing the next round or acknowledging the last bout.

The entire sumo experience was amazing. I expected to see large men with their hair done stomping their feet and pushing each other in diapers. Instead watching sumo was a cultural experience that I will never forget. I was really interested in the history behind the actions and rituals that they performed. If you are ever in Tokyo, I highly recommend that you watch a few bouts of sumo wrestling.

Did I mention a few of us got pictures with some sumo wrestlers!!!!!!!!!!

Note 2: Technology

I knew Japan was technologically more advanced then the USA but I did not realize the vast difference between the two. This week we were introduced to several knew technologies, QR codes, virtual worlds through ID codes, and Ferica. These new technologies can be very helpful to the

advertising industry. First, we were introduced to the QR code (quick response code) while visiting Dentsu Advertising. The QR code is a square bar code. People use their cameras to capture the bard code image, similar to taking a picture. Almost instantly, they receive product information. I have learned throughout the week that QR codes allow people to store business card information in their phone, receive a URL link, tell how many calories are in a product, receive coupons/vouchers, receive advertisements, and get songs and games uploaded to their phone.

A company called Denso created the QR code. Dentsu used the QR code last year in a campaign across Japan. The campaign was structured around an anime comic book. In subway stations, pillars were covered with a digitalized photo of an anime character. Each square of the photo had an individual QR code that people could photograph and receive information over their phone about the anime series. This promotional campaign prompted a widespread use of the QR code.

NTT Docomo Center introduced a virtual world through ID codes. An ID code can be as simple as a sticker. Every product would have a code attached (e.g. food, furniture, and clothing). The ID codes would be interconnected through a network. For example, while shopping for groceries you could scan a milk gallon. The network could access the refrigerator in your house to determine whether or not you needed milk. They also introduced a virtual world where robots can express emotions of people. For example, a father at a conference in Japan could virtually hold his daughter in the USA through a robot. The robot would give all the emotions and feelings of the father. Lastly, they introduced more technological objects like 3D picture frames and enhancing the QR code by accessing the QR code on a mobile phone through sound waves.

A Waseda University professor further explained Japanese mobile phone technology (yes they call them mobile phones more than cell phones). We learned the phones have a program named Ferica, which allows them to use the advanced devices on their mobile phones (e.g. QR code, Internet, and television). We also learned cell phones can be used like a credit card. Tapping your cell phone on certain objects allow consumer to do things such as buy a subway ticket, purchase a coffee in Starbucks or get a coke from the vending machine. Cell phones also receive and redeem vouchers at stores like McDonalds. This system is very similar to the Visa tap but the cell phone makes the transaction even easier.

These technologies were eye opening to another side of technology. New technology creates new advertising tools. Specifically, using mobile phones as credit cards allows advertisers to reach people in a different way. I think the best part about this new method is the sales promotions (e.g. vouchers and coupons). These promotions are easily accessible at restaurants, stores, and online. Since the process is more interactive, people are more likely to redeem the coupons and vouchers because they are tailored to the individual. I think this technology is the wave of the future. The USA better hop on before they are left behind. Technology is changing constantly. The USA advertising industry needs to implement these changes in order to effectively reach more people in a timely fashion.

Note 3: Culture

I have visited Europe and Mexico during spring break and short family trips. These trips allowed me to learn bits and pieces of culture while navigating the cities. Only now do I truly know what it means to be culture shocked. The best part about this trip, and any other study abroad trip, is learning the culture of your host country. Being half Japanese, I took great interest in noticing cultural aspects each day and night. I have never been more intrigued in my life. Below is a list of the things I noticed. I have barely scratched the surface of understanding the underlying meaning of many:

- People are ALWAYS on time.
- People do use chopsticks instead of silverware. Some traditional Japanese restaurants require customers to take off their shoes and sit on the floor.
- Staple foods are mainly noodles and green tea, and then sushi, and sashimi. They do NOT have California rolls, or any other crazy rolls that are served in the USA.

- The driver sits on the other side of the car and they drive on the other side of the road. (I still have not gotten used to this experience and I cannot understand why looking both ways still does not work).
- Most people do not cross the street until the signal changes to green (some people in my group, cough cough Joe, had trouble with waiting).
- On subways, no one really talks. We have been shushed several times. They also sleep on the subway trains. We were told that some people pretend to sleeping in order to avoid conversation with others.
- Tokyo is the biggest city in the world and the streets, windows, and sidewalks are impeccably clean.
- Trash cans usually are not available in public places. People must take the trash home and recycle it in 20+ different ways. When trashcans are available, they are for combustible waste and bottle/can recycling. I also heard the Japanese recycle a lot because they have a high population density on a relatively small land mass. To prevent being overrun with garbage, they have to be very useful with their resources.
- Vending machines are a big business. They even have ice cream vending machines!
- Besides the lack of trashcans, many paper towels are uncommon. Most restrooms only have electric "jet dryers" which are high powered and dry your hands quickly.
- The toilets have a million buttons (OK more like 5-10), which include both front and back water washers. My personal favorite is the toilet seat warmer, which reminds me of my dad's old Cadillac seat warmers, kind of odd.
- Lot of clothes are hanging outside on poles and clothes lines. People air dry a lot of things rather than use electric clothes dryers (thank gosh our hotel has a dryer).
- Driving towards the outskirts of Tokyo, you see cemeteries on the sides of the highways. I could not tell if these were for locals or for people who live in the cities. My own conclusion was both.
- Highway rest stops are more like mini markets than restrooms and vending machines. These rest stops have food service, vending machines, restrooms, and even a small supermarket.
- While site-seeing outside of Tokyo, I noticed beautiful mountains. Yuki (our graduate student guide and the nicest person ever) told me the mountains are very distinct because they are "softer" than most others such as the Chinese mountains. These mountains look like large rolling cumulous clouds rolled over the mountain.
- Jobs are very important here. Young people usually are highered right out of college and they stay with the same company for their entire careers.
- Japanese workers do not worry about individual advancement in their companies because they have job stability.
- People are paid based on their age more so than skill.
- College students do not really do internships during college to build up their resume.
- Employees work long hours. Normally, they work 9:30 a.m. to at least 6:00 p.m. In some extreme situations, people start work early in the morning about 6 a.m. and stay until 2 a.m. the next day. Sometimes these people pass out while working in the office.
- Japanese women get three years for maternity leave.
- Giving business cards to people is like presenting a small gift. Hold the card with two hands and present it to the other person while bowing is very typical.
- Men and women usually do not look each other in the eyes while speaking.

- Men most always wear business suits, including the jacket.
- Women are more conservative and cover their shoulders. Also, our generation's fashion is truly amazing. Both men and women of our generation wear the coolest styles.
- The housing market is crazy. Many families live in very small apartments and many family members share rooms. College students usually live at home.
- Their smallest bill is 1,000 Yen equivalent to $10.00.
- You must be 20 years old to legally drink alcohol (although nobody was carded on our trip).
- Although people usually do not get ridiculously drunk, many business men get drinks and food with co-workers after work.
- To sign their names, sometimes they use a stamp of their last name (I got one that says Morey, my mom's maiden name).
- They LOVE karaoke.
- Women do wear Kimono's.

The list goes on and on but these are just a few things I noticed about the Japanese culture. I have grown to love Tokyo and leaving makes me sad. I hope to return one day and to have many more cultural experiences.

Appendix 2. Paul Bennett's travel blog on Tokyo (Bennett, 2007)

After riding the airplane for hours and crossing the international date line, we landed at Tokyo Narita Airport. Since the Japanese written language is complex, we were lucky that most signs have English on them as well!

We spent at least 45 minutes at the entrance to the train station trying to figure out how the heck to get to our hostel's station. The transit system here is huge – like found in any large city that we have visited.

Eventually, we arrive in Asasuka. The hostel is very nice. Like everything in the streets and public areas of Tokyo, everything is manufactured and engineered to function as perfectly as possible.

After entering through the front door, we had to remove our shoes, put on fuzzy slippers and then slide open a door into the main reception area. The whole place is run by young Japanese girls (pain).

The toilet seat is heated with air, sprays your bum clean. This appliance does a few other interesting things that I am not going to try.

We went on a long walking adventure looking for our second meal of the day around 17:30. I was dead set on finding a place with an English menu so that we could ease our way into the local cuisine. A Spanish menu would work too.

Eventually, Amy started getting "hungry girl irritating", so we stopped at an udon noodle chain restaurant. Lucky for us, one girl that works at the hostel was in the restaurant. She was able to help us with ordering. The restaurant was an interesting experience. First, you walk up to a vending machine, find the picture of the food that you want, pay the machine, and then sit at the counter while the kitchen staff prepares the meal for you.

Oh yeah, I forgot to mention, at least a half dozen vending machines are on every street. Vending machines are located in the back alleys, parking lots, pathways, at the entrances to peoples' houses, and everywhere else you would not expect them to be.

So far we love it. I managed to stay awake until to about 19:30 local time before heading to bed. Vancouver is GMT − 08:00, Tokyo is GMT + 09:00, that is technically a time difference of 17 hours. Because we crossed the international dateline, the time difference is 7 hours and one calendar day as well.

I brought the wrong USB cable for my camera, so no photos from my camera yet.

Day 2 – Tokyo

This entry is going to be a long blog for two reasons:

(1) I have the time because the time is only 06:50 and Amy will be in bed for a few more hours.

(2) After one day in Tokyo, I could write a book.

We began the day around 7 a.m. One of our roommates woke me up at least half a dozen times starting at 9 p.m. In a room of eight people, only one person woke me up. He did not mind rummaging through paper and plastic bags with the lights on. He also did not mind leaving the room for half an hour with the lights on. I am happy that he was comfortable enough with his routine to start again at 3:30, and turn the lights off and on at least another 11 times.

At 3 a.m. in Tokyo, Vancouver is mid-morning. Not surprisingly, I had trouble getting back to sleep. I did manage to sleep a few more hours until 7 a.m.

At 7 a.m., the hostel lobby was lively. Three or four people were drinking coffee, sharing stories and preparing for their journey home. I sat and wrote the first journal entry, while Amy planned our day.

Not quite prepared to take on the language, we decided to head somewhere a little bit more familiar and less intimidating for our linguistic skill level (e.g. Starbucks and Denny's). Starbucks was the same as home, except that my $1.60 Americano was $3.40 in Tokyo. Denny's menu was a little shocking because noodles, soup, and tofu were staple items. They did have a nice looking "Denny's Breakfast" though. When my breakfast came, the portion size was a little smaller than back home. If you are having trouble losing weight, come here.

I forgot to mention my smell impressions yesterday. At first, I thought that Tokyo smelled like tent and the people smelled like Peru. Now, my impressions have change. I believe that Tokyo smells like 1960s plastic and trains in the mountain.

After breakfast, we headed back to the hostel to clean up and get ready for the day.

We received decent instructions from the girl working at the front desk. Somehow, we still spent 30 minutes in the subway station staring at the three maps of the system. These three maps display three different systems operated by three different companies. The different maps share nothing in common. Good luck.

We returned to the hostel for further instructions. Eventually, we boarded the correct train and headed to Harajyuku.

Following a confusing system transfer and a lot of pinning ourselves against the station walls to protect ourselves from being flattened by surges of train off-boarders, we arrive at our destination. Walking out of the station, we experienced a feeling of sensory overload and complete overwhelming "crazy wow goodness deluxe fun time happy day." These sensations hit us like a dump truck.

We walked up the sidewalk to the park entrance. Here, there were hundreds of girls standing around posing in what they call "Cosplay". This phrase means "Costume Play" as Amy pointed out.

The cost play people are dressed like fictional Japanimation (just called "animation" here, I would assume) characters. Some people just wore strange outfits made to shock or to draw attention to them. They do dress this way? These people just want attention and to pass time!

Crowds of people clicked off pictures, some people even posed with the girls. In most places of the world, you cannot have your picture taken with someone for free. At Harajyuku you can.

After a long visit with the freaks, we walked into the park to see the shrine. It was a huge park with a huge shrine. Visitors have to clean their hands and mouth before entering.

It is really really cold here, about 4°C.

The shrine was pretty cool. We enjoyed watching people cleansing themselves, writing wishes and hanging them on this wall thing and throwing money into some thing, praying. At one point, some important looking guy escorted a bunch of people into the middle of the shrine so that they could all pray together, while some less important guy beat a drum.

After this experience, we spent the next few hours wading through a sea of young Japanese girls in the shopping districts (mostly Shibuya). Taking in the sights and sounds of the city was so overwhelming. Tokyo is just thick with people and shops. Every inch of every building has some sort of add, banner or sign posted on it.

Business are located in every nook and cranny. Restaurants or shops can be found on each level of every building. This city is so overwhelmingly commercial.

Tokyo can be summed up by the following words:

- girls;
- cars;
- technology; and
- food.

All the people are kind and polite. People go out of their way to be nice. Everything is so extremely well thought out. Vandalism and crime are rare.

If you are not interested in "stuff" then this place would seem sickeningly materialistic to you. Tokyo is the epitome of consumerism. It seems like the people here live to show themselves and their things. They live to spend money and socialize.

We headed back to have dinner with that girl that works at the hostel. She brought another girl that works there too. We headed to what would turn out to be the most unique eating experience I have had in my life.

We walked about five blocks to a famous Sushi bar. We lined up outside. When I got inside we realized that we had been lining up outside in preparation for the lineup inside.

After about an hour we were seated at the bar. I ate fish guts, whale, and a live fish while it twitched in the dish. It was difficult, but the food was pretty tasty. I think my soul dropped a few points after eating the live fish and whale.

After dinner, we walked to a not-so-near-by bar for a taste of the local booze. I had really good sake. Amy had a good plum wine cocktail too.

We returned to the hostel by 22:00 and then hit the sack. The morning we woke up at 07:38, time to get ready for another day.

Day 3 – Tokyo

We woke up this morning and headed out to a Japanese breakfast restaurant down the street. I had shredded pork on curry with a soft boiled egg and rice. Amy had pork, rice, and raw egg. The food was strange, but filling.

Next, we headed over to the huge temple just up the street. We toured around a bit and went through the souvenir markets. I started looking for a USB cable for my camera, or anything cool and not super touristy. Julian wants a small Asian family to clean his house, no luck yet J.

We met a local man in one of the temple gardens, he told us that we needed to go a few blocks over and check out the "Plastic food" shops. These places sell the fake food to go in the display cabinets in front of restaurants, pretty strange stuff.

We eventually made our way over to the plastic food. It was incredible how well done most of it was. Expensive though, a piece of sushi was $15, grilled fish $75, and an ice-cream cone $12.

After our fill of plastic food, we caught the train downtown. We headed to a place that Galaen recommended in Akihabara. We found this giant store, like a nine story future shop on steroids, probably about 2 acres per floor. They sold everything. There were 6 inch laptops, 80 inch plasma's, thousands of camera's, hundreds of mp3 players. There were literally millions of items in this place. I bought the USB cable that I needed, as well as one of those exercise stretch cords so that I do not get fat.

While we were there, we happened on a few interesting sections. On seventh floor, we found the massage chair aisle. This selection had 25 or 30 chairs to choose from. I sat in the

"Master Hands" chair. This chair massages your feet, thighs, forearms, and basically everything else on the body. It was great for sore feet.

Next, we found "Rodeo Boy," the latest trend for losing the fat in Japan. People ride a fake horse that looks like a saddle with a handle that flops around like a galloping horse. People spend $1,300 to buy this thing. Of course I tried it out. We spent about 4 hours in the store and then we got hungry. Down the block, we found a vending machine restaurant. I pressed the wrong button and got soup with noodles and white mucus on top.

Above the vendo-straunt is a massive nine-story book store called "Book Tower." We walked through the whole store looking for English books and did not find any. These people sure do like their porn though. Some of the materials are particularly disturbing (e.g. girls six to 12 years old in bikinis).

We took another train ride to Ueno station, one of the busiest areas. Near the station is a huge park with a giant five storey pagoda. A lot of homeless men were sleeping in this park. Wild cats were everywhere. Still, we felt safe. In the middle of the park there is a lake (swamp) with boats for rent. We rented a boat for about six dollars for 30 minutes. I had a good time chasing the geese, ducks, and other foul. We walked up to have a look at the pagoda. It is pretty big, but fifth storey is for midgets. The doors appear to be about 3 feet high. We were unable to go inside, however, I took some good pictures.

Next, we walked down into the Ueno shopping district. Crazy, cool, cheap, and good stuff could be found everywhere. I bought shoes, and a hoodie. I saw two more pairs of shoes that I am going to buy. Puma's are priced at $32, and they are real!

As we do at least once in every country, we ate at McDonald's then took the train home.

Day 4 – Tokyo

Another long day on the feet, but I wore new shoes.

We had breakfast at Sukiya which we are now starting to feel comfortable enough with that it is our regular meal place.

We headed off to the famous Tokyo Teleport town. I saw this part of the city on the Discovery Channel as part of the whole marvels of engineering genre. Residents live, work, shop, and play all in a futuristic high tech mini city built entirely on reclaimed land in Tokyo harbor.

We took a special train line over the rainbow bridge. We walked along the boardwalk and then into Aqua City, a mall with at least 50 American chain stores like The Gap, Toys R Us and similar retailers. I had a California chicken sandwich at the California Drive through.

We walked through the stores and then down the path towards to infamous telecom building. From the telecom building, we took the train to "Meg@ Web". This place is half mall, half amusement park, and half Toyota presentation center. I guess it is really one and a half places in total.

We spent at least 3 hours at the Toyota place looking at all of the technologies, trying the simulators, riding the rides, and driving the hybrid go-karts, so much fun. They had F1 cars, GT cars, GTR cars, and other cars from racing series that I have never heard of before. They had the race driver's game where you have to hit buttons when they light up (harder than you think). For one ride, the platform moves around while you play a simulation video. There was a car that drove itself unattended along a track through the presentation center, outside, around the mall, and back in again. It knows where to go based on metal dots in the road. The car even avoids traffic with lasers and stuff.

Hours later we headed home and I fell asleep.

I woke up at 9:45 and we headed down to the overnight bus to Kyoto. Finding the bus was a nightmare, but we made it in time! I watched a bad movie on PSP and then fell asleep.

Day 7 – Back to Tokyo

We grabbed our massive pile of luggage and headed off to Kyoto station where we caught the bullet train to Tokyo for 25,400 ¥ (about $254) for the two of us. This two and one-half hour ride

was a nightmare. About one dozen of us, crammed into the exit/entrance portion of the cabin. Essentially, we paid over $120 each to sit on the ground for the entire trip. To add to our rip-off of a ride, the cabin next to ours was a smoking one, so we involuntarily became second-hand suckers for the 2.5 hours. The relief getting off of that train was short lived. We had one-half of an hour to get back to the hostel before the reception desk closed. We found our way through the metro system and ran back to the hostel. We were 5 minutes late. Luckily, the receptionist was still here. We met up with Tom (the Aussie) and drank sake with some fellow Canadians until 2 a.m. We were both really happy to be back in a big city.

Appendix 3. Dan Wolfe's travel blog on Tokyo (Wolfe, 2008a)

We stuck out not because we were white, but because we were dressed badly [. . .]

On our first afternoon in Tokyo, we wandered around Shinjuku, slightly dazed from the overnight flight, but not doing too badly overall. Shinjuku is a business district with lots of shopping to be had. The Tokyo City Hall as well as several head offices are all in this neighborhood (e.g. NTT DoCoMo), so there are always plenty of black suits about. We did not know too much about the area before coming to Tokyo, but we found it to be a very convenient spot to be based. Shinjuku station is a major hub for both the JR lines (like an LRT) and the subway.

The subway is a whole other topic itself [. . .] the map looks like spaghetti – really complicated - but it is actually not that bad. The subway system was really convenient. We even managed to buy the correct tickets every time! It is a lot like the London Underground, where you have to pay a different fare depending on how far you are traveling. Guide books make the subway seem like an insurmountable task to figure out how to find your train and buy the proper tickets, but we managed OK with no knowledge of Japanese to our credit.

There is not as much English spoken as in Hong Kong, but we found enough to get by. I have to say I felt bad for not learning at least the basic Japanese phrases before going. It is amazing what you can accomplish with hand gestures. We were grateful to be fluent in the most commonly known language worldwide – there are very few people who do not know at least a couple words of English.

We visited a number of the different department stores in the area, Keio, Takashimaya Times Square, and Mitsukoshi, as part of getting our bearings. We used our Lonely Planet guide to find a restaurant, which of course no longer existed. I am not sure if Lonely Planet has EVER help us to find a restaurant in Asia. Now that I think of it – we are not impressed! OK, I think one out of six restaurants we tried to find in Hong Kong was actually in operation. We picked another restaurant on our own though, a little curry place on the second floor. We chose curry for a couple reasons: one, Indian people tend to speak more English than Japanese, and two, we were not quite brave enough yet to attack a Japanese menu. So, the curry was good, notwithstanding the smoking that seems to be allowed everywhere – except on the streets. I find the smoking etiquette really funny. You can smoke in a restaurant in Japan, but not walking down the street. Clearly, they are more worried about littering than they are about health! The department stores in the Shinjuku area are all pretty high end. The products are very fashionable stuff though, but definitely not in our price range. We were quite impressed at how fashionable the people seem to be in Tokyo, and all with their own unique style. You see some very outlandish outfits that would never fly in North America, but it all seems normal here. So much for the staid, boring Japanese, they seem to have way more style than we do! And not European or New York style, their look is uniquely Japanese. We stuck out not because we were white, but because we were dressed badly.

Max was pretty bushed (well, we all were) so he conked out in his stroller, and so missed several toy stores and the Disney store. We tried to wake him up, but he was not having it. One store we visited, called Tokyu Hands, was billed as the Japanese equivalent of Home Depot. I do not quite understand, since they did not stock lumber or renovation stuff of any sort, however,

you could buy just about anything else. They had everything from Halloween costumes (dress up as an eggplant, anyone?), to camping gear and to an amazing variety of light bulbs, including some very funky LED ones.

Our Disney day had come! We got going relatively early in the morning. Everyone was excited to get out and see what Disney Sea was like. Tokyo Disneyland was built first, and it is basically a clone of the other Disneyland parks. Disney Sea is a Tokyo-only park, and we were quite impressed with it. We got there via the JR, and were slightly worried that we were not on the correct train (no English in sight), but the train was full of kids and little Minnie-Mouse key chains hanging off of purses so we probably were on the right track.

Max's first wow-wee was the big globe at the entrance to the park, which he was quite enamored with. Only the promise of something really exciting "this way" could pry him away from it.

Now, we thought we might be missing out on a chance to see Japanese culture by visiting a Disney park. We were wrong! The Disney experience was definitely our most interesting day of people watching. The crowd was a very different from the American Disney park. Instead of 80 percent families with kids, the Japanese version had 80 percent teens and 20-somethings, with only 20 families. Girls far outnumbered the boys, and most of them had Minnie ears on, or other floppy hats that came in Tigger, Stitch, and many other varieties. Tonya had her heart set on one specific hat, but despite our best efforts, we could not find where they were being sold.

Disney culture seems to mesh with Japanese culture in some weird symbiotic way. I have never seen ride attendants be so unbelievably enthusiastic, hopping around, and waving the signature Disney wave. All the people on the ride also wave back! Cynicism does not seem to exist here! At the very least, their idea of "cool" is utterly different from ours.

Max had an absolute ball, from the carousel where he got to ride the Genie, to the Mermaid show, to the "submarine" ride, to the roller coaster (yes, we snuck a two-year-old on the kiddie coaster) and to the teacups. Max shouted "again, again" every time at the end each ride, and often tears were shed as we made way for the next wave of riders. The kiddie coaster had a minimum age of 3, but we just played dumb, held up three fingers and walked on with Max, three times in all – this was definitely Max's favorite ride – the kid likes being scared. It was actually a pretty good kiddie coaster, we really held on to Max to make sure he did not go flying.

The best part about this day was that we managed to time Max's nap perfectly. We enjoyed eating our lunch in peace (Max has not been doing well at mealtimes). Tonya had sushi and udon noodles, while Daniel decided to risk the "seasonal selection". Tonya's meal was very good, and Daniel's was, well, interesting. Lots of different little pickled things on the side, a couple sculpted piles of salty rice and udon noodles, with a wide variety of things swimming in the broth – some quite yummy, some not so much. In any case, Daniel feels happy that he tried something different. We now have increased impetus to do a little more food research before a return visit to Japan.

More sushi from the AM/PM was on the docket for dinnertime (hey, you find something that works [. . .]), so that we could get Sir Max to bed before the witching hour really set in.

On our last morning, we packed and did a little last-minute shopping in Shinjuku, then caught the "limousine" bus to Narita. Daniel forgot a package with some of our Balinese art on the bus, so our first few moments at the airport were a tad stressful, sprinting to the other end of the terminal to the bus counter to see if they could track down the bus and pull our package off before it headed back to Tokyo. Thankfully, they did manage to find it!

We spent over a half hour at the check-in desk having "discussions" about our car seat, which we have been taking on the planes for Max to sit in. Our thoroughly useless travel agent booked us in bulkhead rows for every flight, even though he knew we had a car seat for Max and we would not be using the bassinets. On our first flight, we discovered that the car seat does not fit in the bulkhead rows, but any other seat in the plane is fine. For our other flights, we told them this problem at check-in, and they moved us to another row – no issue. This lady figured she knew better than us I guess, and phoned lots of people, with the end result that she told us we

would be just fine in the bulkhead row. Of course, we get on the plane, and the seat did not fit. Daniel started to tear a strip out of the stewardess when she started saying that they cannot accommodate us. Fortunately, a nice family from Abbotsford with four kids seated behind us volunteered to move forward a row so we could use Max's seat.

About the authors

Drew Martin is Associate Professor of Marketing, College of Business and Economics, University of Hawaii at Hilo. He is a member of International Society of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research. He is Associate Editor of Buyer Behavior for the *Journal of Business Research*. Drew Martin is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: drmartin@hawaii.edu

Arch G. Woodside is Professor of Marketing, Carroll School of Management, Boston College and Adjunct Professor of Marketing, AUT University, Auckland. He is a Fellow and member of the Royal Society of Canada, American Psychological Association, Association of Psychological Sciences, Society for Marketing Advances, and the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. He is Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Business Research* (Elsevier Science journal). "Business-to-Business Brand Management" (Emerald Publishers) is a forthcoming (2009) co-edited book by Mark Glynn (AUT University) and Arch Woodside.

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: **reprints@emeraldinsight.com**
Or visit our web site for further details: **www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints**