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Etic interpreting of naïve subjective personal introspections of tourism behavior

Analyzing visitors' stories about experiencing Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo

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Abstract

Purpose – To demonstrate how brand netnography is useful in showing how visitors interpret the places, people and situations that they experience when traveling.

Design/methodology/approach – Through analysis of online consumer stories about their travel experiences, this paper probes how visitors interpret their experiences while visiting cities in Asia. Deconstructing texts written by consumers via Heider's balance theory provides the method of analysis for samples of both positive and negative travel experiences of foreign visitors.

Findings – Mapping consumer experiences shows immediate and downstream positive and negative associations of concepts, events, and outcomes in visitors' stories. These maps include descriptions of how visitors live specific destination's unique promises.

Research limitations/implications – The population of bloggers who report their experiences may not be representative of the population of all visitors.

Practical implications – Blog-journal stories provides the opportunity to collect emic interpretative data unobtrusively. These stories have the potential to influence substantial numbers of future visitors who go online in search of first-person unbiased, unrehearsed reports of others' destination experiences. First-person (emic) reports enable managers of places (brands) to learn and talk in dialects of customers.

Originality/value – This paper provides a revisionist proposal to Holt's five-step strategy for building destinations as iconic brands and suggestions for tourism management. The revisionist view includes interpreting consumers' own interpretations of their place experiences.

Keywords Tourism, Travel, Storytelling, South Asia, South East Asia, Far East

Paper type Research paper

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Certain cities are able to project unique place identities that transform visitors from their ordinary lives to extraordinary experiences (Judd, 1995; Pagano and Bowman, 1996). For example, New York often is called the Big Apple. What does this metaphor imply about New York? "Big" may suggest a major transformation, or largeness. "Apple" conjures up images of Adam and Eve and forbidden knowledge, or perhaps rebellion against parental authority, banishment, and achieving adulthood. The point here is that destination nicknames widely shared are kernel expressions of iconic myths rooted in medieval allegories (Stern, 1988, 1995) – allegories permitting "the championing of the id over the ego" (Holt, 2003, p. 49) via a personal experience-event-happening that leaves an indelible memory (Peters, 2003, p. 113). Consumers often are unwilling to admit/know (to ourselves or to others) the need to enact the promise that an iconic brand offers (for a review, see Woodside, 2006) – thus, the possible scoffing at the Big Apple allegory. Part of the visitor's enacting a brand-destination experience occurs unconsciously and this part is often stored and retrieved unconsciously (Bargh, 1989, 1994; Bargh *et al.*, 1996; Woodside, 2005; Zaltman, 2003) – see Zaltman's (2003) literature review confirming that most thinking is done unconsciously.

This paper's objectives include analyzing naturally occurring communications by first-time visitors to cities in countries beyond their home nations. The paper examines whether or not Heider's (1958) balance theory is useful for understanding the first-person reports visitors communicate about themselves and interpretations about their self-reports of own travel experiences and destinations they visit (e.g. emic storytelling). Heider's theory includes the proposition that individuals seek to maintain psychological balance and to overcome states of imbalance when psychological imbalance occurs in their lives. For example, a Jewish couple buying a German car has to overcome an imbalanced state of automatically associating Germany with the Holocaust (Woodside and Chebat, 2001).

The work of several scholars in consumer research (Arnould and Price, 1993; Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Hirschman, 1986) and relating fields of human inquiry (Bruner, 1990; Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976; Orr, 1990; Zukier, 1986) support the proposition that, "… people think narratively rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically" (Weick, 1995, p. 127). Two additional propositions complement this first one:

P2. A substantial amount of information stored and retrieved from memory is episodic – stories that include inciting incidents, experiences, outcomes/evaluations, and summaries/nuances of person-to-person and person-and-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Shank, 1990).

P3. Stories expressing how and why life changes are highly persuasive (McKee, 1997, 2003).

Storytelling research (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Fourier, 1998; Shank, 1990) is useful because such research helps to clarify and to deepen knowledge of how people resolve paradoxes triggered in their minds by unbalanced states. 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 (i.e. a story that the protagonist in the story reports to herself and possibly to others, that is, an emic interpretation of how, why, who, when, and where events unfold with what immediate and long-term consequences) are what people bring back from travels and destination visits. Ethnographic researcher (i.e. etic) reports of city visitors' behaviors and meanings visitors have of their experiences often fail to include 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' storytelling about their own experiences often describes myth enactments/climaxes uniquely relevant to specific destinations. The internet has become an important medium for sharing these experiences. Travelers satisfy both hedonic and social needs in telling their stories online (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 brand experiences

According to Holt (2003), people always have needed myths. These simple stories with compelling characters and resonant plots, myths help to make sense of the world. Encapsulated within myths are icons. Icons are powerful because they deliver myths to us in a tangible form, thereby making them more accessible. Although icons can be brands, often they are people (e.g. Ronald Regan, Marylyn Monroe, and Martin Luther King). When a brand creates a myth, often through advertisements, consumers come to perceive the myth as embodied in the product. Buying the product serves to consume the myth and to forge a relationship with the brand. Anthropologists call this event "ritual action." For example, 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).

Holt (2003) urges marketers to consider moving away from conventional marketing of attempting to position a brand as offering unique attributes and benefits; he outlines a brand strategy for competing to provide the most compelling myth. Brand winners in myth markets become icons; they are the greatest performers of the greatest myths, and they bask in glory and cultural leadership. More often than not, in America at least, those who win in myth markets are performing a myth of rebelling: the most successful icons rely on an intimate and credible relationship with a rebel world: Nike with the African-American ghetto, Harley with outlaw bikers, Volkswagen with bohemian artists, Apple with cyberpunks, Mountain Dew with slackers – protagonists who would rather pursue quixotic activities than "grow up" and get serious abut careers (Holt, 2003).

While Holt approaches iconic brand analysis from the perspective of marketers, the need exists to learn how consumers implicitly and explicitly enact brand myths. For example, from one marketer's perspective at Harley: "What we sell is the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns, and have people be afraid of him" (Peters, 2003, p. 116). Does the 43-year-old accountant's lived-myth plot match with the marketer's plot? Responding to this issue, a substantial number of studies focus on how consumers enact myths via experiences with iconic brands (Brown *et al.*, 2003; Stern, 1988).

Relating to the primary focus on destinations providing visitors the opportunity to enact iconic myths, Borgerson and Schroeder (2003) detail such a myth for the holiday vacation destination frequently found to rank first among Americans: 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, connections to the primitive, pagan, and virginal inspire visions of exotic young females, sensual, sexually available, and ready to frolic. What better escape than the postcoital sigh, the fall into slumber, and a tasty luau meal upon awakening (Borgerson and Schroeder, 2003, p. 223). However, the issues remains for further study of if and how visitors enact this myth as Borgerson and Schroeder interpret from the artifacts they examine; such additional research complements and extends "insightfulness" only research approaches (Holt, 1991, p. 61; Holt, 2003). Hunt (1993) informs this observation and suggests using multiple methods for exploring the issue of objectivity (Woodside, 2006); Hunt tellingly describes accuracy limitations of insight-only etic interpreting.

This paper reports an exploration of the stories visitors tell themselves and others about their visits to four Asian cities (Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo) and briefly reviews the iconic myths implied by first-thoughts (e.g. nicknames, kernel concepts) these four cities imply. Section 2 following this introduction presents the method. Section 3 covers the findings. Section 4 provides a revisionist paradigm to Holt's recommendations on how to build a brand icon. Section 5 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. The attempt was made to find diverse (both positive and negative) visitor journal postings of their on-going experiences and first impressions while visiting Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo (with separate informants for each area). Similar to the method that Brown *et al.* (2003) outline, the method include acquiring diverse stories. 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 Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo. The search includes finding two positive communications and at least one negative communication per city. Google searches using the city name, "blog" and "good" was conducted as well as the city name, "blog," and "bad," plus additional variations on these broad themes. In addition, Google searches included visiting the tourism marketing sites and major attractions and locations frequently identified with each. This paper includes lengthy excerpts from two positive and one negative story for each city.

The method includes mapping each of the 12 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. Mumbai is a city in India expresses a unit relationship).

Following Heider's (1958) balance theory, the resulting maps were examined to consider the balance and imbalance relationships among the concepts implied by the story:

> By a balanced state is meant a situation in which the relations among the entities fit together harmoniously; there is no stress toward change. A basic assumption is that sentiment relations and unit relations tend toward a balanced state. This means that sentiments are not entirely independent of the perceptions of unit connections between entities and that the latter, in turn, are not entirely independent of sentiments. Sentiments and unit relations are mutually interdependent. It also means that if a balanced state does not exist, then forces toward this state will arise. If a change is not possible, the state of imbalance will produce tension (Heider, 1958, p. 201).

While unit and sentiment relations are non-orthogonal, they represent independent theoretical and empirical constructs grounded in cognition (i.e. units) and affection (i.e. 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:

> Unbalanced situations stimulate us to further thinking; they have the character of interesting puzzles, problems which make us suspect a depth of interesting background ... Stories in which the stress is laid on unbalanced situations are felt to have a deep psychological meaning. Dostoevsky, for instance, describes again and again feelings full of conflict resulting from just such situations (Heider, 1958, pp. 180-1).

Woodside and Chebat (2001) provide further details of mapping balanced and imbalanced states found in consumer stories with the resulting maps analyzed following Heider's (1958) balance theory. Two of the authors worked independently in developing the maps; the resulting maps where shared in additional meetings among all three authors; the maps were revised until agreement through discussion was reached among all three authors as to direct and indirect linkages and the sentiments and unit relationships that the story concepts express.

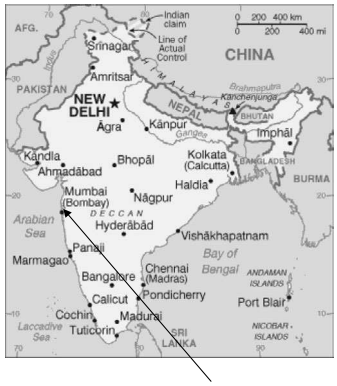
Findings

The findings include a summary of the iconic myth each city presents over several decades and centuries as found in popular literature and tourism marketing web sites. Following a summary exhibit for each city, additional exhibits offer abstracts or complete blog-journal stories – two positive and one negative stories per city. A balance/imbalance map deconstruction exhibit follows each story.

Mumbai (formerly Bombay)

Mumbai (Figures 1-3), is the capital of Maharashtra, is located on the west coast of India. Its townscape includes Victorian buildings that are evidence of England's colonial period. Arguably, Mumbai is India's most cosmopolitan city. It is the center of India's commerce, industrial, and financial sectors. Mumbai has India's largest urban area population with an estimated 18.84 million people (City Mayors, 2006). In 2004, this region received 1.2 million foreign and 13.4 million visitors (Government of India, 2006, p. 50).

Mumbai's principal landmark is the Gateway of India. Gateway's design appears to be influenced by France's Arch of Triumph and Sixteenth Century Muslim styles



The Location of Mumbai in India

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

• Location:18. 96°N 72. 82°E

• Population:12,691,836 (2001)

• Racial Groups

• Main Industry: Mumbai has a vast array of different industries. However, textiles are still Mumbai's largest industry. Some of the other industries that Mumbai has include: Pharmaceuticals, construction, engineering, metals, silks, glassware, printing, plastics, bikes and film. It also has a large petroleum industry. Nearly all of India's petroleum is marketed in Mumbai. Mumbai has one of the world's best natural harbors,which is located on the Arabian Sea.
(Source: http://www.macalester.edu/courses/geog61/espencer/industry.html)

• Tourism Industry: Tourism in Mumbai does not need any boosters. Being the capital of Maharashtra and hub of film stars, Mumbai as such attracts tourist from all over the world.
(Source: http://www.indiatravelog.com/mumbai/mumbai-tourism.html)

• Tourism marketing

Figure 1.
Basic profile of Mumbai (Bombay)



Mumbai (Bombay), the cosmopolitan capital of Maharashtra, is located in the west of India. Not in the least because of its location and the mark the British left on the city, it changed from a fairly isolated town into a major commercial city with over a million inhabitants. Recently, the government changed the city's former, Anglicised name Bombay, into Mumbai. But what's in a name? Mumbai still is a must for travelers and is, to a certain extent, a match for cities such as Paris and London.

Although not everyone is pleased with its nickname, Bollywood, the film industry in Mumbai produces over 300 films a year and is therefore, in this respect, second after Hollywood. The actors enjoy their god-like statuses and dwell in exclusive mansions on Malabar Hill, the area that holds its own with Beverly Hills. Although not may people are permitted to actually see the ins and outs of the film shooting process, there are some tours to the film studies and if that doesn't work, there is always a place where you can bathe in the typical mélange of Indian dance, songs, optional violence and melodrama.

Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by the big city character because there are plenty of nice things to see and do. There are museums, such as the Gandhi Museum (in one of the Mahatma's former residences- it's light on history and heavy on memorabilia), art galleries, bazaars (check out Jhavari Bazaar, where bargaining is done comfortably on piles of pillows), parks (the hanging gardens are a must) and temples. Especially in the Hutatma Chawk area, you'll find a large concentration of impressive and important historical buildings, such as the fabulous Town Hall in neo-classical style. Marine Drive nearby the seaside, which is also called the Queen's Necklace because of its sparkling nightlights, is a nicearea to stroll and relax in the evening hours.

However, you haven't actually been to Bombay if you haven't seen the Gateway to India. This monument was built to commemorate the visit of king George the V and Queen Mary in 1911. At the same time, it's the place where you can catch a boat to the Elephanta Island, a UNESCO world heritage site where you can see rock-cut temples and caves dating back to the 6th century. Daytrips from Bombay include visits to the Kanheri Caves at Borivli (more rock carvings), Bassein (to see its Portuguese fort) and Cheul (ruins of Muslim and Portuguese forts). From Bombay visit Ellora and Ajanta.
Source: World66 (2006)

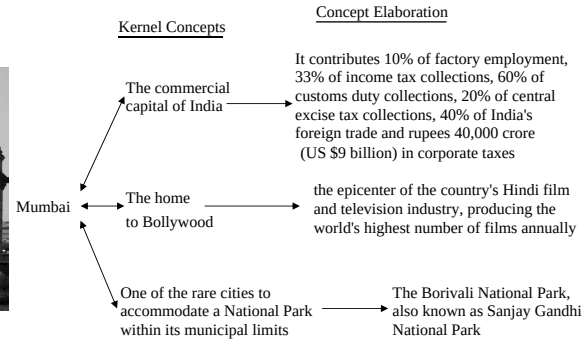
Figure 2.
Marketing Mumbai (Bombay)

of architecture. The Gateway monument was built following the visit of King George V in 1911. Officially, the Gateway to India was opened in 1924. Today, the monument is a popular location for people to congregate. The surrounding area has many bazaars that sell an array of tourist trinkets. From the Gateway to India, one can catch a boat to Elephanta Island. Elephanta Island is a UNESCO world heritage site that includes stone carvings that date back to the sixth century.

Mumbai also is the home of Bollywood. Bollywood is the center of India's film industry. This destination has the highest annual production of movies in the world. A number of India's actors live on Malabar Hills, India's equivalent of Beverly Hills.



The city's most recognizable landmark:
The Gateway of India, Mumbai



Early and/or later Elaborations:

Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, is the capital of the Indian state of Maharashtra and is the most populous Indian city. Mumbai is located on an island off the west coast of India. With an estimated metropolitan population in 2005 of 17 million, it is the sixth largest metropolitan area in the world, and clustered along with its outlying satellite townships forms one of the world's most populous conurbations. The city, which has a deep natural harbor, is also the largest port in western India, handling over half of India's passenger traffic.

Mumbai is the commercial capital of India, and houses important financial institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India, the Bombay Stock Exchange, and the corporate headquarters of many Indian companies. Within Mumbai is located Bollywood, the epicentre of the country's Hindi film and television industry, producing the world's highest number of films annually. Mumbai is also one of the rare cities to accommodate a National Park within its municipal limits.

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

Figure 3.
Mumbai (Bombay): Kernel concepts, elaborations, and consumer behavior implications)

As a result, Malabar Hills is a popular destination for tourists wishing to catch a glimpse of India's famous movies stars. Malabar Hills also is the location of Jain temple, the Hanging Gardens and Kamala Nehru Park which offer outstanding views over Mumbai.

Lubna Kably's interpretation of a visit to Mumbai (August 12, 2002)

The following statement is Lubna Kably's (2002) interpretation of Mumbai:

> Everyone who visits Mumbai hears of and invariably visits the Gateway of India. This 26 meter-high stone gateway was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to India in 1911.
>
> Tourists throng to visit it now, and right opposite stands the 5-star luxury hotel of the Old Taj, equally impressive. I learned that there was an attempt to drive away the many pigeons that roost here, through methods not really humane. Fortunately, the pigeons are still here. My visit here was for a different purpose. Steep stone steps lead into the sea, and one can ride on the small motor boats or ships and see Mumbai's coastline or, better still, satisfy one's curiosity of the island looming in the distance. I opted for the latter. In just under 40 minutes, we reached the island of the Elephanta Caves. Jumping off the jetty, I walked up to the caves. A long walk, one also has to trudge up steep stone steps, but I did not think it worthwhile to wait for the little toy tram (if there really is one as I did not see it) to take me up there. The island seems to have got its name after a huge elephant idol, which was discovered by the Portuguese who first landed here. A few guides mention that this elephant statue is found in one of the local museums, yet others swore that it is in the Victoria Gardens, the local zoo. On my next trip to Mumbai, I shall try and trace it out. It seems to me that the name of the island should be changed to "Monkey Island". No offence meant, but the throngs of monkeys were a real nuisance, as were the guides. I finally joined a group of other Asian tourists; most of them were from Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Heavy pillars carved from rocks held up the main cave. There are three entrances to the temple caves, from the north, east and west sides. We stepped gingerly into the opening in the volcanic cave. The guide informed us that these caves date back to 6th century AD and were built during the reign of Raja Krishnaraja

and are dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, who has three avatars (persona): the creator, the preserver, the destroyer. The tiny guide booklet, which I held firmly in hand, has another story to tell. It stated that the caves date back to the 9th century, when the Silhara Empire reigned. Irrespective of these contradictions, it is certain that the temple caves are dedicated to Lord Shiva. The most famous carving is that of Maheshmurthi – a huge (20 ft-high according to the guide) three-headed bust of Shiva, depicting these three avatars; it is in fact a carving found in the inner recesses of the cave.

The main cave has many other carvings: a dancing Shiva; Shiva with his wife Parvati during their wedding ceremony (the ceremony is presided by another god, Brahma, and is attended by scores of other gods and goddess); Shiva in meditation with snakes coiled around him; Shiva gently releasing the goddess Ganga (the holy river of India to ensure that she does not flood the world); and Shiva depicted as Ardhanareshwar (I hope I have got this spelling right!). It seems that Shiva split his body, creating two forms, the male and female, and thus birth was possible. A few other carvings are found on the walls of this main cave. Added to this, however, is the graffiti by the local Romeos – sickening. At another end is the Linga. The Linga (a conical shape) depicts Shiva as the Lord of Fertility and Reproduction. Bright red and yellow flowers were being offered at this place. There are other smaller caves (rooms), most of which are in much need of repair. In fact, restoration is on going in some places, as the Elephanta Caves are now labeled as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. One of the officials mentioned that the rock formation is of basalt and limestone, thus the carvings are easily susceptible to wear and tear. Most of us stood mesmerized by the Maheshmurthi. Once our eyes had gotten used to the dim light inside, we noticed that the middle head, gazing straight ahead, depicted an unbelievable calm and serenity. Our guide informed us that it is not always so. During the day, he has witnessed Shiva having several different expressions. We knew that this was largely because of the interplay of light; light enters the cave from different angles. But we preferred to believe him as we made our way back to the jetty. Mumbai's Arabian Sea did offer quite a few pleasant surprises (Kably, 2002).

Figure 4 shows the story using Woodside and Chebat's (2001) mapping application of Heider's balance theory. Visiting the Elephanta Caves is an example of an incident that meets McKee's (1997, p. 191) dictum: the protagonist must react to the inciting incident. Overall, Lubna's reaction is favorable. It takes only 40 minutes to reach a cave filled with ancient treasures. The artifacts inside the cave data back to the sixth century AD. They include a famous carving of Maheshmurthi and many carvings of a dancing Shiva. The storyline Lubna provides from her Elephanta Caves experience reflects satiating sensuality for the eyes – in story writing terms (McKee, 1997). This thought pattern represents the controlling idea of her visit report to the Elephanta Caves in Mumbai implying both the story's central idea and its function:

> A CONTROLLING IDEA may be expressed in a single sentence describing how and why life undergoes change from one condition of existence at the beginning to another one at the end (McKee, 1997, p. 115).

Positive visitor emic interpretations of Mumbai by Rob Wallis (June 28, 2005)

Rob Wallis provides another example of a positive travel experience in Mumbai:

> Mumbai is a very interesting place, we visited the gateway to India, built by the British at the turn of the 20th century, a very well built monument, it was the place where the British ceremoniously left India after the second world war finished. A lot of local people congregate here at night and we were continuously trying to be sold ridiculous 6 foot long balloons the shape of skittles, why??? I have no idea …

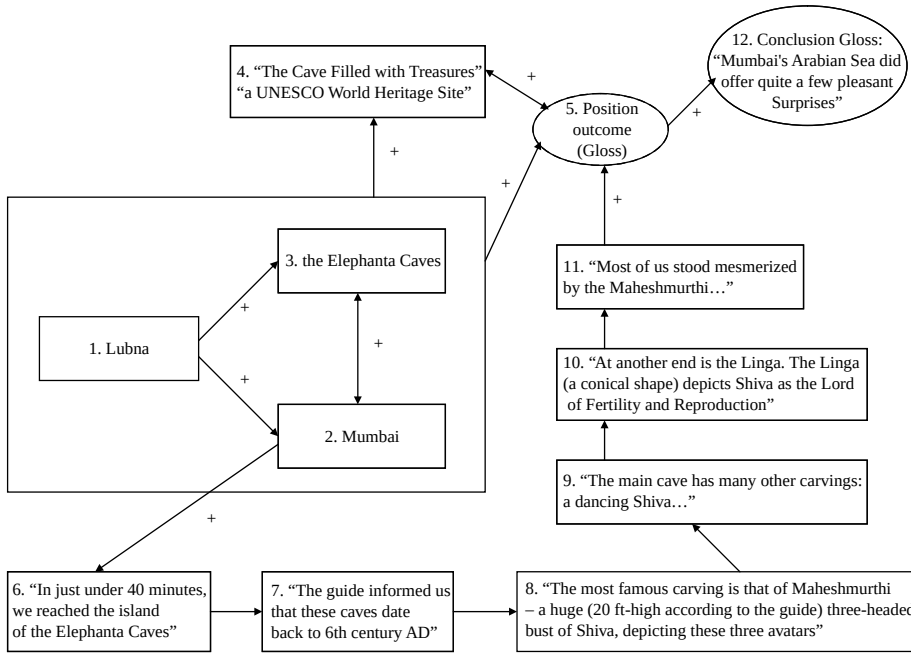


Figure 4.
Mapping Lubna's visit to Mumbai story: story elaboration

There are plenty of bazaar's selling useless stuff, but some have interesting cloths and trinkets, etc. not worth buying though. There are many restaurants offering very good traditional Indian cuisine, I have decided not to eat any meat (health reasons and so forth), however, the vegetarian choice is excellent and there are many pure veg eateries to choose from anyway.

On the second day we tried to get a boat to Elephenta Island, really worth visiting apparently, however, due to the monsoon the sea was too rough. Instead we decided to hire a guide for half a day. After fighting off some ludicrously priced hustlers barely managing to say hello in English promising to show us the city we made our way to the tourist office and arranged a government approved guide by the name of Mr Veer, this method proved to be a fraction of the price of the touts. We also hired a taxi for 4 hours and set off. To start we visited the first English church built here after our occupation started. In a stark contrast to the rest of the many unpleasant smells of Mumbai, the church smelt musky and damp like one of our churches, it was built in a very similar 19th century style with all the materials imported from the UK. Cruising the city, heading north we made various stops along the way to view interesting buildings and architecture, notably close replicas of Notre Dame and Big Ben. The main train station (CST) is very similar to St Pancras station in London. Our next destination was Malabar Hill to visit a Hindu temple called Jain temple. It was a fascinating building with exceptionally ornately painted ceilings and amazing panoramic views over Chowpatty beach and the rest of the city. Just along the road are Mumbai's Hanging Gardens, again brilliant views and home to many giant snails. The guide was very good and spoke very sound English. On our return journey to Colaba we briefly stopped to see the site where all the dirty washing in Mumbai is washed, it was a huge, many people were hard at work, a bit like Widow Twankies! The main thing I took from the tour was that so much architecture

has been built with our influence, the majority of buildings are pre WWII and as such the city bares a great resemblance to many parts of central London (Wallis, 2005).

Rob's story focuses on the city's buildings and architecture. Rob takes great interest in the English influence on the architecture in Mumbai. Figure 5 shows a map of his story. The conclusion, "Mumbai is a very interesting place."

Negative visitor emic interpretation of Mumbai, report by Shakirah and Erik

Shakirah and Erik record a less positive visitor experience in a 2005 visit to Mumbai:

> . . . or Bombay nightmares, as this was not our most enjoyable stop.
>
> First, we endured a 15 hours overnight bus ride from Goa – not nice:- (Then just as we thought we'd found a nice place to stay (Apollo guest house), our room was located next to the side of a rubbish dump in an alleyway, so a funky smell came seeping through the AC!!! And all kinds of bugs were crawling through the sink . . . nuff said! After we both started to get a bit sick, physically and mentally, we spent some extra bucks on another room.
>
> We had a some good and bad experiences during our 5 day stop in Bombay . . .
>
> Bad first – The pollution was extreme and there was no way of taking one deep breathe, it was just filthy . . . There were rats the size of small pigs crawling the side streets, and worst of all, the poverty really hit home.
>
> Good – We hit a few good bars and clubs in the suburbs including a club called "Seijo and the Soul dish" which was a mixture of Japanese, western and live drumbeats and the interior

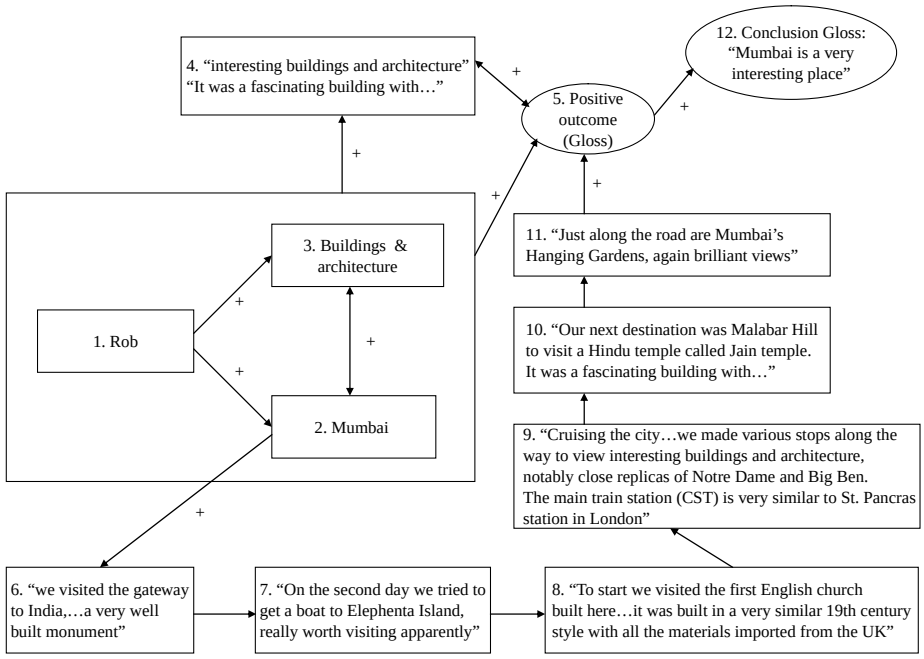


Figure 5.
Mapping Rob's visit to Mumbai story: story elaboration

> walls were painted with large sized manga characters. We also celebrated HOLI, a Hindu festival which involved spreading the lurrve through paint … see pics. We partied in the street with some local Indians and ended up being bigger attractions than the Gateway of India (Shakirah and Erik, 2005).

Figure 6 shows the Shakirah and Erik's bad experience in Mumbai. When a trip starts out bad, it is difficult to recover. In this case, the travelers have an unpleasant, 15-hours bus ride. Upon arrival, Shakirah and Erik find negative visual and olfactory stimuli to compound their misery. The ongoing exposure to pollution, poverty, and vermin resulted in the conclusion that Mumbai is not an enjoyable stop.

Seoul

Seoul (Figures 7-9) is South Korea's capital as well as the country's center for business and industry. Its metropolitan area population is estimated at 9.52 million people (City Mayors, 2006). South Korea's first city is located in the northwest region of the country on the Han River. Seoul is old city that has been a capital city since the fourteenth century.

Although Seoul is a modern city, visitors interested in historical sites and museums have a number of options. Seoul's South Gate (Nam-Dae-Mun) is a good place to start. It used to be the main entrance to the city. Today, it is surrounded by modern architecture showing an interesting contrast of traditional and modern architecture. In Jongno ward of Seoul, there are a number of historical sites. For example, Gyeongbokgung Palace is worth a visit. It was the main palace during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910).

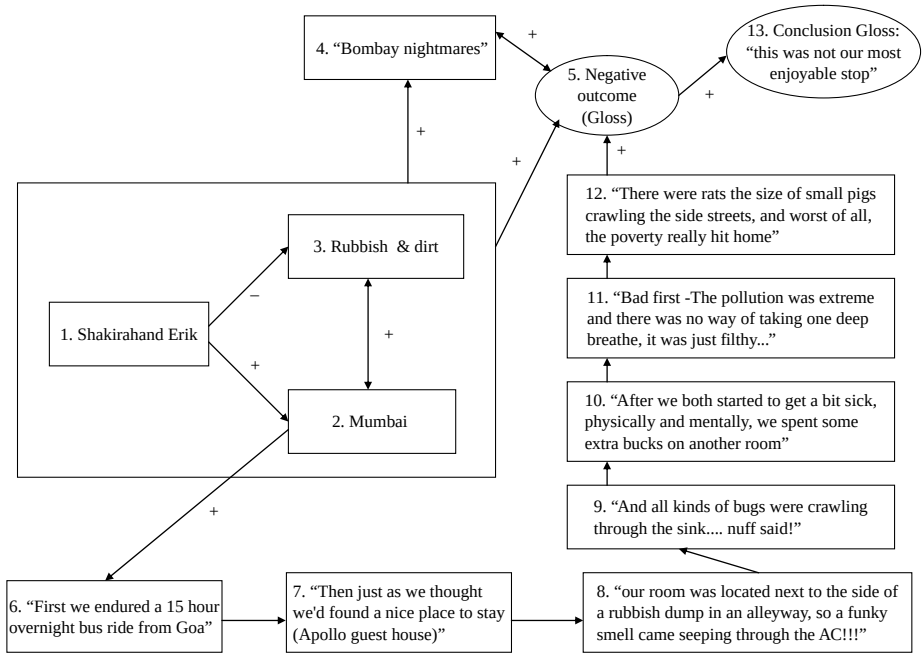


Figure 6.
Mapping Shakirah and Erik's visit to Mumbai story: story elaboration



The Location of Seoul in South Korea

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

• **Location:** Seoul is located at 37°35' N 127°0' E

• **Population:** 10,276,968 (the end of 2003)

• **Racial Groups:** The number of foreign residents in Seoul as of the end of 2003 is 102,882 or about 1 % of Seoul's total population. They include 52,572 Chinese, 11,484 Americans, and 6,139 Japanese.
(Source: http://english.seoul.go.kr/today/about/about_01quick.htm)

• **Main Industry:** Seoul functions as an "industrial incubator", nurturing information technology & financial service industries, and is also the center of banking, securities and insurance for Korea.
(Source: http://english.seoul.go.kr/business/environ/envi_01info_01.html)

• **Tourism Industry**

• **Tourism marketing**

Figure 7.
Basic profile of Seoul

The capital of South Korea is a modern city with a long history. This ancient city has been the capital of Korea since the 14th century.Some of the old city gates can still be seen -most notably the South Gate (or Nam-Dae-Mun), which used to be the main entrance to the city.

There is no better picture of Seoul than The South Gate, which stands as an architectural feat and a reminder of Korea's heritage and history. But much like Paris' Champs-Elysees, it is situated right in the middle of a modern and bustling city, serving as a constant symbol of Korea's proud past intersecting with its bright future.

While there are many modern sites to visit, perhaps the typical tourist would like to visit the old city first.

In the old city there are many sights to see. Toksu Palace is set in a park and is a nice place. The Kyongbok Palace (built in 1395) houses the folklore museum and has beautiful pavilions. Other sights include the Tonggunung tombs Chonsugongbang, Changkyong Palace, Pomun-sa Temple and the Toksugung Palace. For a quiet afternoon head to one of the numerous gardens and parks. The Secret Garden in the Changdok Palace complex is probably the nicest of them all.

Source: World66 (2006)



Figure 8.
Marketing Seoul

Near Gyeongbokgung Palace is Insa-dong. At Insa-dong, visitors can visit numerous galleries and see traditional crafts and goods.

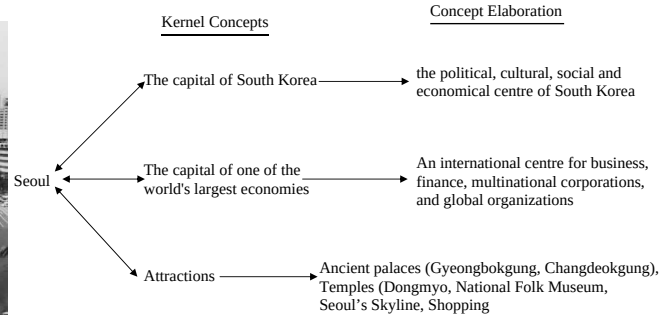
South of Jongno is the Jung ward and Namsangol Hanok Village. This Village is comprised of five traditional Korean houses that have been restored. Also, Jongno is the location of Myeong-dong, a shopper's paradise. Myeong-dong hosts a number of brand name shops and department stores that sell high quality merchandise.

Helen Percival's positive visitor emic interpretations of Seoul (June 27, 2005)
Helen provides the following information about her visit to Seoul:

> After a day of teaching children I reflect upon my 4 months here in South Korea. I have just recovered from a day of white water rafting where the water was ankle deep. The most unusual whitewater rafting trip I have experience, a lot of walking and lifting the raft. But we got too see beautiful river side rock formations, but not a lot of wildlife.
>
> The monsoon has arrived, but the spring time has been great with pleasant days and beautiful spring blossoms, I climbed to the top of a mountain in Seoul to get a view of the city which was amazing and looked like a toy town. Seoul is enormous and is surrounded by a belt of mountains. Everyone over the age of 45 climbs mountains even in sweltering 30 degree



Seoul Ancient South Gate



Early and/or later Elaborations:

Seoul is the capital of South Korea. It is a designated special city. On the establishment of South Korea (the Republic of Korea) in1948 it became the capital of the country, except for a short time during the Korean War. Seoul is located at 37°35' N 127°0' E.

Seoul is located in the northwest of the country, south of the DMZ, on the Han River. The city is the political, cultural, social and economical centre of South Korea. It is also an international centre for business, finance, multinational corporations, and global organizations. This, along withits position as the capital of one of the world's largest economies, has continued to raise its global status. Today, it is one of the most visible symbols of the Korean economic *Miracle of the Han River*.

According to UN Population Division figures, Seoul's Urban Area contained 10.3 million people in 2003, making it the 22nd most populous such area in the world. Its density has allowed it to become one of the most *digitally-wired* cities in today's globally connected economy. It also has more than 1 million registered vehicles which cause widespread traffic-jams beyond midnight.

Attractions: Ancient palaces (Gyeongbokgung, Changdeokgung), Temples (Dongmyo, National Folk Museum, Seoul's Skyline, Shopping, Namhansanseong park.

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

Figure 9.
Seoul: Kernel concepts, elaborations, and consumer behavior implications

> heat you can find groups of woman and men kitted in the most up-to-date winter walking gear. You can imagine the looks of surprise when I walked with my flip flops.
>
> My most recent school trip was to a race course with the children a surprise location but it proved to be very peaceful and a pleasant day out of the classroom (Previcil, 2005).

Helen is enamored with the natural beauty of Seoul. From her vantage point on the top of a mountain, Helen is amazed by the enormity of the city and the belt of mountains surrounding it. Her whitewater rafting experience also provides an opportunity to view beautiful rock formations. Finally, she remarks at the beauty of spring flowers in bloom in the area. Figure 10 shows Helen's positive experience in Seoul.

Positive visitor emic interpretations of Seoul by Carrie Neilands (October 23, 2004)

Carrie Neilands provides the following positive travel experience:

> Seoul was great. it's probably a good thing that I don't live there though … I'd dress great! But I'd live in a box in an alley somewhere. Soooo [sic] expensive! Anyway, while we were there we visited a palace and a folk village, complete with Buddhist temple, and of course, we checked out the night life. I [sic] posted some of the more picturesque pictures, enjoy … (Neilands, 2004).

Carrie's travel experience combines Seoul's traditional and modern attributes. She enjoys visiting a palace and folk village. From her pictures, it appears that Carrie is most impressed with the Buddhist temple. The modernity of Seoul also impresses this visitor. She makes favorable comments about the shopping and nightlife. Also, her picture of Seoul tower suggests some appreciation for the modern skyline of this destination. Carrie suggests that Seoul is a nice place to visit, but she could not afford to live there. Figure 11 shows Carrie's travel experience in Seoul:

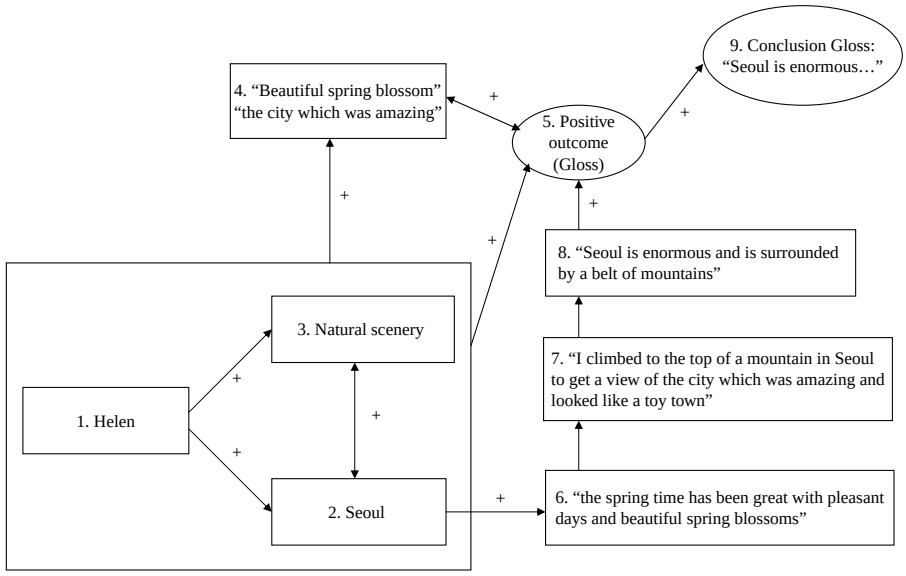


Figure 10.
Mapping Helen's visit to Seoul story: story elaboration

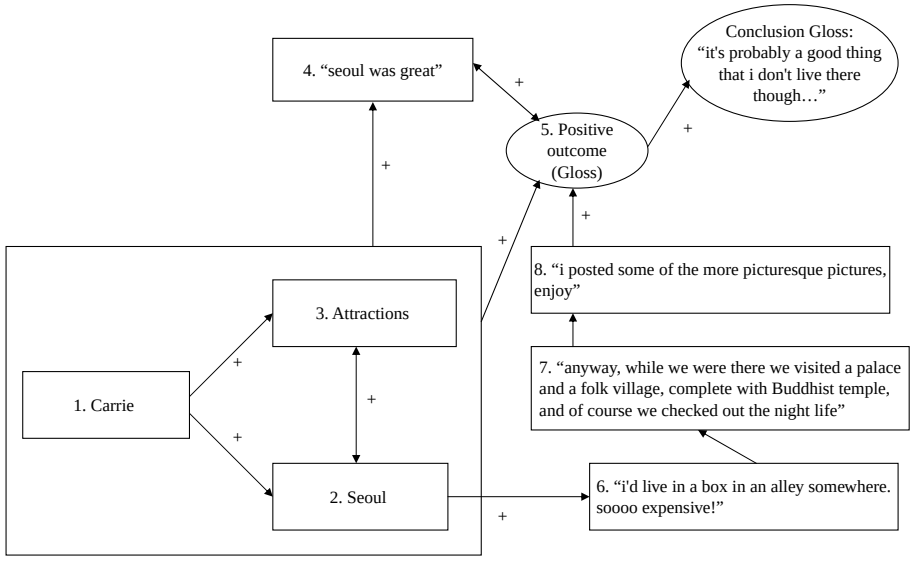


Figure 11.
Mapping Carrie's visit to Seoul story: story elaboration

Negative visitor emic interpretations of Seoul by Natalie (May 21, 2005)

The following passage is an example of a person that is not having a positive travel experience in Seoul:

> My god, I don't even know where to begin. I ended up just sitting in my hostel last night drinking 50 cent rum and cokes, which where actually mostly rum, and a tiny bit of coke.

I found a bug in my room – a BIG BUG – so I kicked it down the stairs and it made a big thud going down.

I woke up this morning at 5 a.m., a bit hung-over, to catch my 7 a.m. flight.

I haven't really been able to sleep in the past few nights, my room was so hot it was crazy! Anyway, on my way out I saw the biggest cockroach – bigger and wider than my thumb! – running across the wall. So obviously, being the big baby that I am, I shrieked and ran away.

The flight wasn't too bad, a ton of turbulence though. It wasn't as bad as on one flight where I thought I was going to puke because of all the sudden descents. Yeah that just adds to my fear of airplanes.

Anyway that's just the beginning of my day. When I got off the airplane, this lady told me my bag was lost AGAIN. They left it in Hong Kong. She said it was because I had transferred planes in a short period of time. Excuse my language but bullshit. I had a 50 minutes layover and the plane was late in taking off.

But I've learned that everything in Asia moves at a much slower pace than Canada, so I'm beginning to stay calm. I didn't cry or yell this time:p. And they said they'd have it personally delivered to my hostel my 10 p.m. tonight. Yay for that, because once again I'm stuck with stinky clothes and no toothbrush.

Oh but the day got even better! No one in Korea speaks any English! And there are barely any English signs anywhere. Watch me walk into a brothel or something. Anyway, I finally managed to get on the bus. It turns out the airport in about 2 hours from downtown Seoul in rush hour. I didn't think of this when I got on the bus wanting to pee. 2 hours go by and my bladder is about to burst and the bus get's into a car accident. The driver stops the bus, so I asked him and everyone else on the bus how long this would take. No one seems to speak English. So I had to cab it to my hostel. But the cabbie couldn't speak any English either. On the plus side, the taxis here have a free interpreter you can call. He dropped me off in front of the wrong hostel. But this hostel was great! There were so many people and the sweetest looking dogs. One even looked a bit like Buddy. So they took me to my hostel and this one' lonely. There are no people at all. I haven't been up to my room yet, but I have AIR CONDITIONING and my own SHOWER! I'm excited.

So here's a list of my goals for this trip, other than the obvious see the world, experience new things, learn different languages ...

1. Get over fear of flying.
2. Get over fear of cockroaches.
3. Learn to calm down and not yell and cry.

I'm getting a bit sick of the city; I might go find a mountain (Natalie, 2005).

Natalie's troubles begin prior to reaching her destination. A number of uncontrollable transportation issues wear on her before reaching her destination. First, her experience at the airport is unpleasant. The airline company lost her luggage. Natalie's inability to understand the Korean language increases her frustration level because she is unable to communicate with people or to find transportation to town. The long bus ride and the discomfort of a full bladder increase her anxiety. Finally, reaching the destination Natalie finds sweltering heat and disturbingly large cockroaches waiting for her.

Apparently, these issues confirm previous experiences for this sojourner. She remarks that she "… didn't cry or yell this time." Natalie appears to have a history of unpleasant travel experiences. She recognizes that her travel anxieties stem from ethnocentric views and lack of pre-trip preparation. Although Natalie has a bad experience, it seems likely that she will continue traveling abroad and learning from her past negative experiences. Figure 12 shows Natalie's negative travel experience.

Singapore

Singapore (Figures 13-15) is a group of islands located at the southernmost tip of the Malaysian Peninsula. It has a population of 4.5 million people (City Mayors, 2006). The population includes ethnic Chinese, Malays, and Indians as well as a large number of expatriates. As a result of this multiracial element, the country has four official languages: English, Tamil, Chinese, and Malay. The territory is composed on one main island with total land area of 682 square kilometers, and at least 60 small islets. Despite its small size, Singapore is one of Asia's business and financial centers. Also, it is the busiest shipping port in the world. Visitors to Singapore are impressed by the high standard of living and the availability of modern conveniences.

In 2005, Singapore welcomed 8.94 visitors (Singapore Tourism Board, 2006). What do tourists do in Singapore? The city has a wide array of planned attractions and shopping malls. Popular tourist attractions include the Singapore Zoo and the numerous ethnic enclaves throughout the city (e.g. Arab Street, Chinatown, and Little India). For shopping, the Orchard Road district is filled with many multi-story shopping centers. Visitors that want to escape the city can take a trip to Sentosa Island. Sentosa Island has three beaches and the Dragon Trail Nature Walk which is a one-mile stroll through a rainforest.

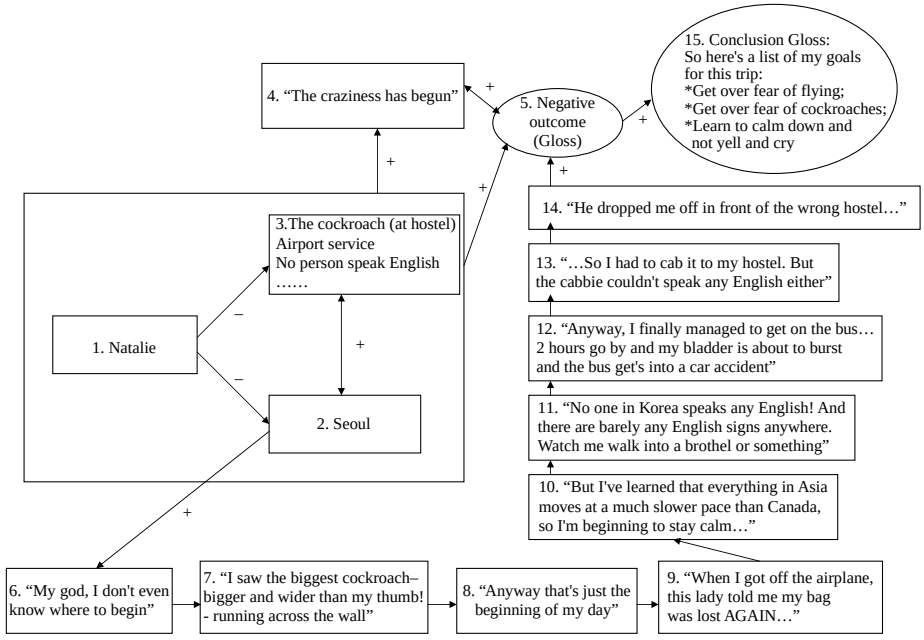


Figure 12.
Mapping Natalie's visit to Seoul story: story elaboration



The Location of Singapore in Singapore

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

Figure 13.
Basic profile of Singapore

• **Location:** 1˚17' 0" N 103˚51' 0" E

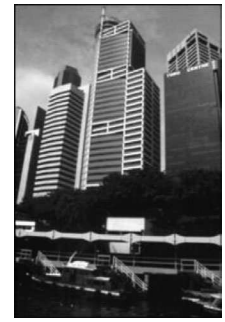
• **Population:** 4,163,700(2002)
Source: http://www.citypopulation.de/Singapore.html

• **Racial Groups**

• **Main Industry:** Biomedical Sciences industry, Chemicals industry, Education Services, Electronics and Precision Engineering industry.
Singapore is the business hub of Southeast Asia.
(Source: http://www.sedb.com/edbcorp/sg/en_uk/index/industry_opp.html)

• **Tourism Industry:** Singapore has become noted among international travelers as an exciting travel destination, making tourism one of the largest industries in Singapore.

• **Tourism marketing**



Singapore is an island city located at the southernmost tip of the Malaysian Peninsula in South East Asia. It is well-known for being one of the richest, most well organised, efficient countries in the world with a very high standard of living and an excellent skyline by the water. Singapore is an island with "1000 shopping malls" or so they say. Despite the hot climate, it is a tropical paradise for most tourists. This great diversity of lifestyles, cultures and religions thrives within the framework of a regulated society. Singapore's "FINE" city reputation is well-earned, and in fact, many will admire at once the clean, modern metropolis. Surrounded by artificially 'ordered' parks, its tall housing projects are populated by more than 80% of the population -whose smiling native charms often belie underlying tensions of the way the island is progressing after 30 years of development.

Highlights of Singapore include some of the ethnic parts of town: Arab street, Chinatown, Colonial District, Orchard road and Little India.

South of Singapore are a few beautiful islands that are well worth visiting. The most visited is Sentosa island. It is a playground for people of all ages. See the Sentosa island section for more information.

A common misconception is that chewing gum is strictly not allowed into Singapore and that you will be arrested for that "crime". However, THAT IS COMPLETELY WRONG! The law states that chewing gum cannot be sold in Singapore, but it is PERFECTLY OKAY for you to bring in chewing gum for your own personal consumption. But if you improperly dispose of the gum, just as you would litter any other thing, you might be fined, BUT the authorities rarely enforce this ruling. The signs are there to act as a deterrent and the authorities do not enforce the rules strictly at all.

Please note that, like all countries in the region, visitors are not exempt from strict laws pertaining to drug possession and trafficking. The death penalty will be prescribed if you are caught with more than a specific weight of narcotics.

Source: World66 (2006)

Figure 14.
Marketing Singapore

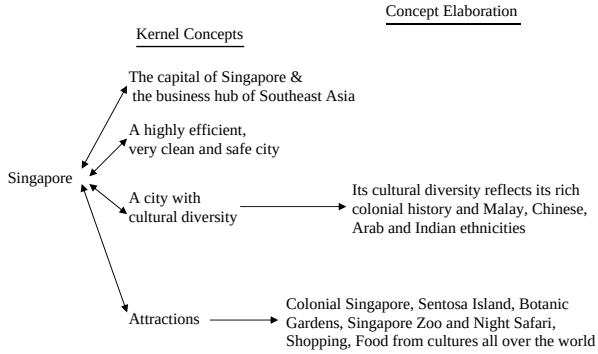
Rebecca's positive visitor emic interpretations of Singapore (May 6, 2005)

Recollections of Rebecca's experience include the following passage:

> So much to say about this place, stayed a week and it was amazing. Went to an Island called Sentosa which was a little too touristy but still beautiful.
>
> Hot humid weather but still caught tan but also got caught in torrential downpours much to the amusement of the locals . . . skirt went see through and everything but it beat the heat so I was smiling.
>
> Not as many brits unfortunately (fortunately really cause got to meet the locals who were amazing and a good laugh)
>
> People kept taking photos, the toilets know when you've finished, the MRT (underground) is amazing (even I worked out how to use it), the people are all friendly. It's great here.
>
> Definitely come. I have loads of photos which will put on but can't in this computer place so may have to wait a while. One thing have to tell you all is went to zoo (which is the nicest one seen as all animals in big arenas in open air). Anyhow, the keeper of the cats took a shining to



Singapore's central business district



Early and/or later Elaborations:

Singapore is the capital of Singapore. For many years considered to be the business hub of Southeast Asia. Singapore has become noted among international travelers as an exciting travel destination, making tourism one of the largest industries in Singapore. Its cultural diversity reflects its rich colonial history and Malay, Chinese, Arab and Indian ethnicities. For many years considered to be the business hub of Southeast Asia, Singapore has an expansive shopping precinct located in the Orchard Road district. Filled with many multi-storey shopping centres, the area also has many hotels, and is regarded by many as the tourism centre of Singapore.

Other popular tourist attractions include the Singapore Zoo and its Night Safari, which allows people to explore Asian, African and South American habitats at night, without any visible barriers between guests and the wild animals.
Singapore is a highly efficient, very clean and safe city, with Englis has one of its numerous official languages.

Attractions: Colonial Singapore, Sentosa Island, Botanic Gardens, Singapore Zoo and Night Safari, Shopping, Food from cultures all over the world.

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

Figure 15.
Singapore: Kernel concepts, elaborations, and consumer behavior implications

> me and secretly let me into pen with real live cheetahs … yes in the same pen, no cage nothing. I got to stroke it … couldn't get photo there and then as would've scared it but took some when back on the right side of the bars!!! It was sooo cool and was a large 5 year old male apparently tamed from birth! I was (undoubtedly) a little scared but assurance was on the sign outside building saying 'zoo will not be held responsible for any injury or death' … nice!!!! (Watkins, 2005).

Interactions with the local people help create positive images for Rebecca. Even high humidity and heavy rain do not dampen her spirits. The best part of the trip is a visit to the zoo. Living conditions for the animals meet or exceed her expectations for humane treatment. The highlight of the zoo trip is petting the cheetah. While Rebecca is a bit apprehensive about entering the cheetah's enclosure, she is overjoyed to have an opportunity to touch an exotic wild animal. Figure 16 shows Rebecca's experience.

Positive visitor emic interpretations of Singapore by Laura Chant (March 27, 2005)

Laura's positive experience in Singapore is described in the following passage:

> We arrived safely in Singapore (amidst the rain … again). Singapore has been good from what we've seen so far. The one thing that's blown me away is how much of a nightlife there is in Singapore. It's a bit different when the shops are open until 10 p.m. and not 6 p.m. in Australia (There are also a high number of shopping centres quite odd for such a small area). There are fast food joints and food hawker stalls galore here. When I asked someone who had been here before on what there is to do … he just said eat and shop. He was right. There are so many different varieties of Asian food to get here and its not just low grade food aimed towards westerners who don't know any better! One thing I'd have to warn people heading to Asia is to not underestimate the spice tolerance of Asians. I thought I could handle the two

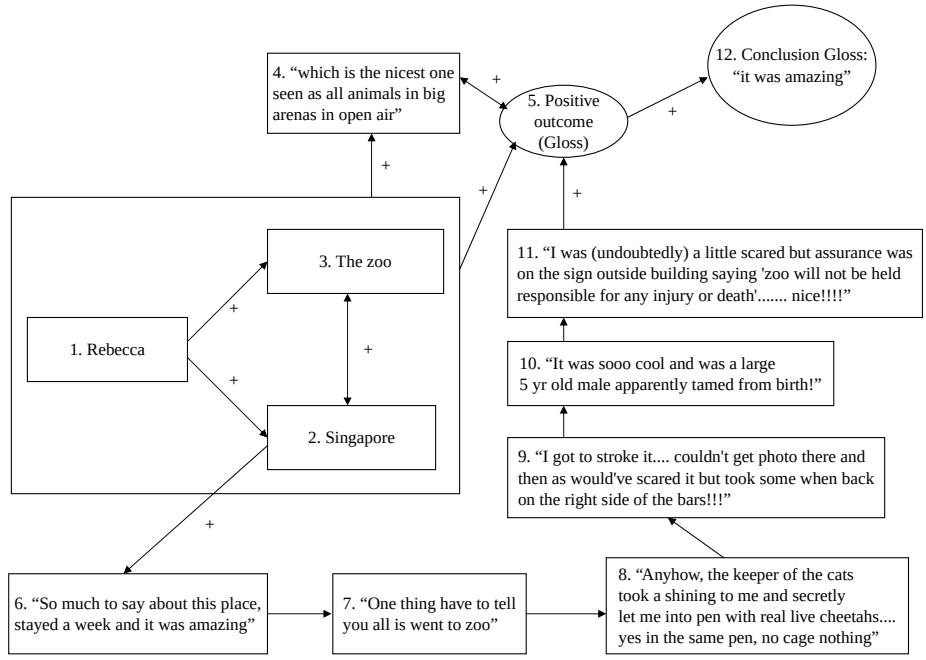


Figure 16.
Mapping Rebecca's visit to Singapore story: story elaboration

> chili pepper out of three rating the spicy chicken miso ramen soup had . . . I think my mouth still burned for a good 15 minutes after I was done eating.
>
> As for what we've done here (other than eating) . . . mom and I took the Singapore Airline explorer bus (cheaper if you have your boarding pass!) and headed for the beautiful Botanical Gardens. Inside there was the National Orchid Garden which was worth the time. I guess they create hybrids and then name them after dignitaries when they come to visit Singapore . . . there are Nelson Mandela, Laura Bush, etc. orchids (Chant, 2005).

Laura is struck by the number of shopping and culinary options open in the evenings. She is impressed with the variety of delicious foods available. Apparently, Laura is a bit of a gastronomic risk-taker when she eats spicy chicken soup. The mouth-numbing experience does not dampen her spirits. In addition, to shopping, Laura enjoys her visit to the National Orchid Garden. Laura's experience is shown in Figure 17.

Negative visitor emic interpretations of Singapore by Chun Lee (December 14, 2004)
Chun's negative experience (Figure 18) in Singapore is described in the following passage:

> This is a land of contrasts that is if you count concrete contrasting with glass.
>
> Everywhere you look there are huge towers that are invariably either a shopping mall or an apartment block or frequently a mixture of the two. 90 percent of Singapore's 4 million people live in a high rise of some kind. At least we are not talking about Hackney style council flats, but clean colour coded concrete jungleness.
>
> Everywhere we have traveled in Asia seems to be under construction and here is no exception. I read somewhere that all heavyweight buildings here is causing Singapore to sink

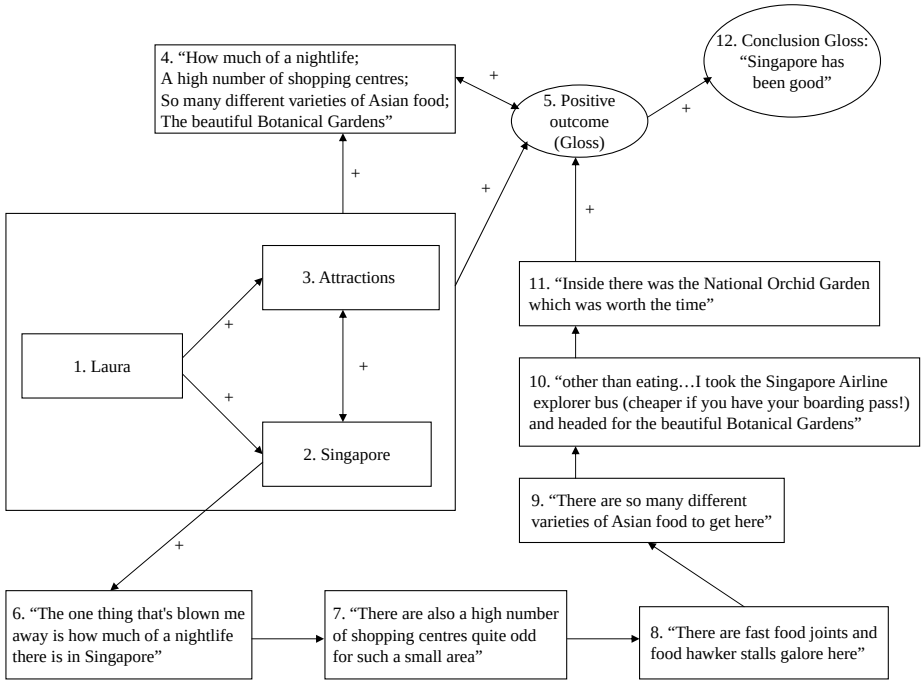


Figure 17.
Mapping Laura's visit to Singapore story: story elaboration

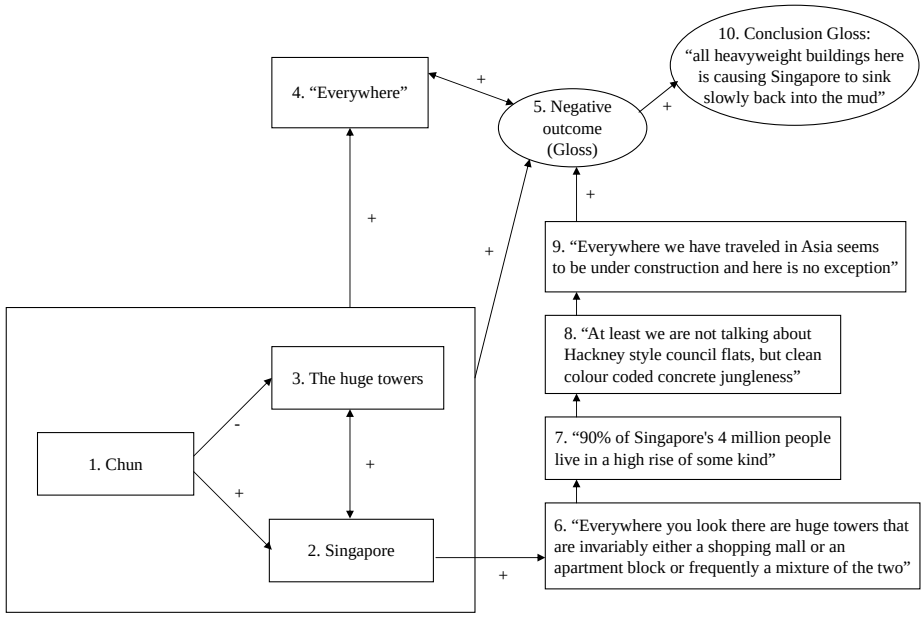


Figure 18.
Mapping Chun's visit to Singapore story: story elaboration

> slowly back into the mud from whence it came. I'm sure at some point the Singaporeans will think of some technological marvel that will avert the crisis at some point and it will probably have lots of glowing lights, bits of chrome and a little sign saying don't touch or be fined $5000 (Lee, 2004).

Chun reacts negatively to the plethora of high rise buildings in Singapore. According to Chun, these towers are either shopping malls or apartment buildings. Also, he laments that the construction of these concrete jungles continues. Chun appears to be concerned that Singapore is becoming a sterile block of concrete and glass.

Tokyo

Tokyo (Figures 19-21) is Japan's first city. It is the center of government, industry, finance, and education for the nation. The greater metropolitan area of Tokyo has the world's largest urban population with an estimate 35.5 million people (City Mayors, 2006). Tokyo 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. Its 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. This section of Tokyo is very international. But what do first-time visitors report in their blog journals?

Chris Green's visit to Tokyo

The following passage describes Chris' positive experience visiting Tokyo:



The Location of Tokyo in Japan

Source: Wikipedia (2006)

- **Location:** 35°41' N 139°46' E
- **Population:** 12,527,115 (2003)
- **Racial Groups**
- **Main Industry:** In accordance with the city's world position, Tokyo's economy has shifted to put much more emphasis on financial services and banking. It is also an important wholesale center. Among the diverse industries of Tokyo are the manufacture of electronic apparatus, transport equipment, automobiles, cameras and optical goods, furniture, textiles, and a wide variety of consumer items, as well as publishing and printing. (Source: http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861581.html)
- **Tourism Industry**
- **Tourism marketing**

Figure 19.
Basic profile of Tokyo



Tokyo is really, really big, and depending on who you talk to, the largest city in the world. It actually consists of 23 different wards (ku) -cities that have their own special attractions. Since it doesn't make too much sense to tell about all of these different cities as if they were one city, we have subdivided Tokyo in the following way.

Akihabara has the largest concentration of electronics shops in the world. There are good deals to be found. Most shops have English speaking staff. Foreign visitors can get refunds for taxes paid. Remember to bring your passport as proof of foreign residency. The big shops also have locations in Shinjuku West Exit with prices being about the same but Akihabara specializes in the foreign market.

Asakusais famous for its temples and pagoda. Across the river you can see the Asahi Beer building. It's the cube-shaped black building with the gold *_thingy_* on top.If you don't know what is supposed to represent.... don't feel bad. The gold worm like thing is commonly referred to as the 'turd'. Enjoy the view but if you want to drink down some suds and eat some food the restaurant on the ground floor of that building can accommodate any hunger or thirst.

Ginza has fabulous shopping opportunities for equally fabulous prices. It is an extremely busy place. Apple's first retail outlet is located in Ginza. The Mac Store has English speaking staff & 4 floors of that computer cult culture for all to enjoy. Harajuku Takeshita-dori is a high school girl's dream street.With cheap fashions abounding and sickly sweet crepes made Japanese style guaranteed to rot your teeth and add buxom to your fashion vocabulary. On the other side of the spectrum, continue to Omotesando, the fashion avenue, with names like Armani, DKNY, Jean-Paul Gaultier, and Chirstian Dior to name a few, fashion is every where! How much you want to spend is up to you!

Marunouchi is the area around the huge Imperial Palace. The newly renovated Marunouchi Building is filled with spectacular dining opporunities.

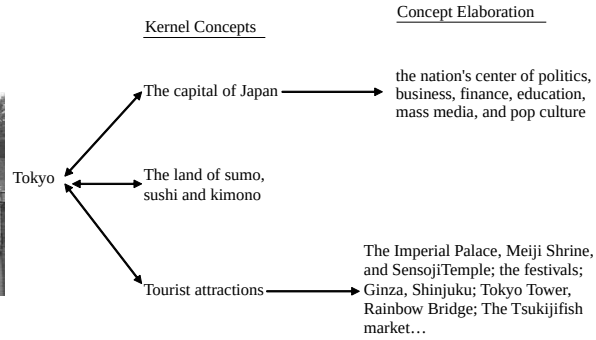
Roppongi is the place to go to for nightlife. Filled at night with energy, people from around the world walk the streets in search of fun and excitement. This part of Tokyo never sleeps. Adult entertainment, a play ground of sorts is yours for the enjoyment. Shibuya is north of the center and has shrines and trendy shops. With its neon, traffic, and huge TV screens, it resembles New York City's Times Square. This is the center of youth fashion for the affluent Japanese teenager. Styles change weekly with hip designers along side more established names in the big *deppato* Be sure to visit *centa-gai* the main street just across the scrabble crossing in Shibuya(it world's busiest pedestrian crossing). Great food awaits visitors who venture into mid-range Izakaya. Traditional Japanese food is very healthy, light and nutritious!

Source: World66 (2006)

Figure 20.
Marketing Tokyo



One of the traditional symbols of Tokyo:
Nijubashi Bridge at the Imperial Palace, Tokyo



Early and/or later Elaborations:

Tokyo is located in the Kanto region on the island of Honshuin Japan. It is counted as one of the 47 prefectures of Japan and commonly referred to as the capital of Japan with the government of Japan and the Emperor of Japan residing in Chiyoda Ward. With a population of over 12 million, or about 10 percent of Japan's population, it is by far the country's most populous and most densely populated prefecture. The center of Tokyo is located at 35˚41' North, 139˚46' East.

Internationally, Tokyo is regarded as one of the major cities of the world.

Being the nation's center of politics, business, finance, education, mass media, and pop culture, Tokyo has the country's highest concentration of corporate headquarters, financial institutions, universities and colleges, museums, theaters, and shopping and entertainment establishments. It boasts a highly developed public transportation system with numerous train and subway lines.
Attractions: Imperial Palace, Ginza, Shinjuku
Source: Wikipedia (2006)

Figure 21.
Tokyo: Kernel concepts, elaborations, and consumer behavior implications

I love Japan. I love Japan. I love Japan. The Japanese are so friendly, courteous and helpful – probably the opposite of us English!! Tokyo itself was a great place with so much to see and do, but it's the memory of the people that will stay with me longest. (And the women are very hot too!). Some examples:

Arthur left his unwanted US dollar coins next to a ticket machine in the entrance hall of the metro. We went down to the platform and were waiting for a train when one of the station staff jogged up to us, bowed and gave us back the money.

I used my phrasebook to ask a young couple in the street where the nearest internet cafe was, but they didn't know and they spoke little English. I thanked them and we carried on walking. About 5 minutes later they caught us up and the girl passed me her mobile phone. She had called one of her friends who spoke English and her friend gave me directions over the phone.

I asked an old lady for directions to the beer museum, but rather than just point me in the right direction she stopped what she was doing and walked me to the door, about half a mile away (Green, 2005).

Unlike many travel blogs, Chris attributes his positive experience to interactions with the locals rather than the amenities of the location. He is amazed at the honesty and kindness of the natives. Chris lists several examples that show local people going out of their way to help him locate specific destinations. For example, the "old lady" that he met on the street walked a half-mile out of her way to help him find a museum. He states that the memory of the kind locals will be his fondest of Tokyo. Figure 22 shows Chris's first-person description of his visit to Tokyo.

Another visitor's positive experience is from seeing a live sumo match.

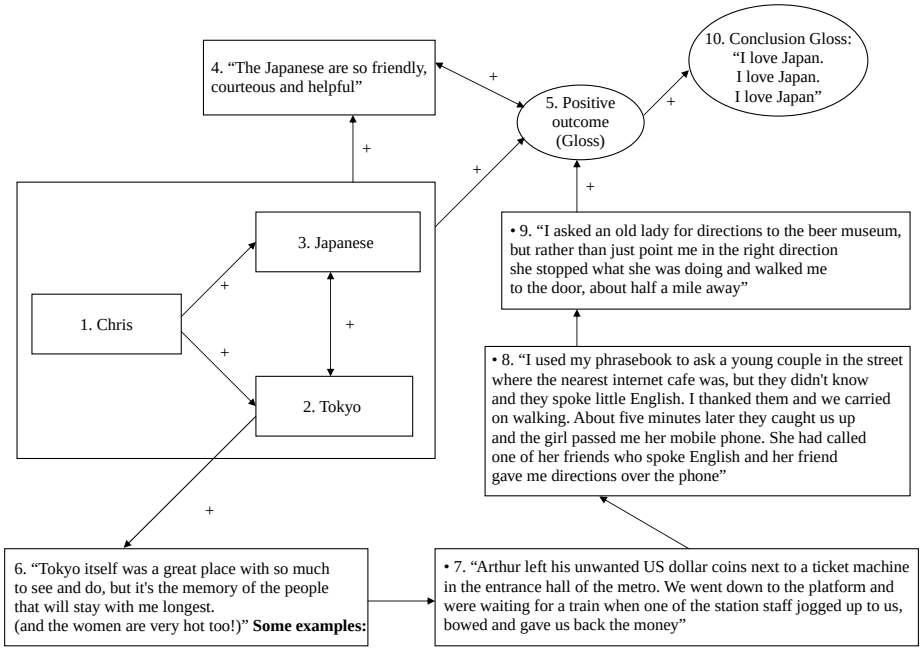


Figure 22.
Mapping Chris's visit to Tokyo story: story elaboration

Larry Karpen describes his visit to Tokyo

> After relaxing in the morning, I decided to head out to a Sumo Wrestling match at the Ryogoku Stadium and see the preliminary matches of the Grand Summer Tournament. Upon my arrival, I caught some of the Makuuchi division wrestlers (these are the big boys!) as they made their entrance into the arena.
>
> Inside the octagon shaped arena where the floor seats are grouped in four's and are cushions, I sat in the cheap seats up top. But thanks to my quick thinking, I made my way down to the second level by smiling, pointing and bowing to ushers. From these seats, you can feel the impact when the two combatants crash into each other.
>
> The sport is very appealing to watch. Most of the time of each match is spent conducting ceremonial acts like bowing, stomping, and chalking up hands (like a gymnast). During this 3-4 minutes, the crowd builds into a frenzy so when the actual match begins, excitement has almost peaked. Most of the actual wrestling in a match takes somewhere between 3-6 seconds, with a few going up to as much as 15 seconds (Karpen, 2005).

Larry's positive experience at the Summer Grand Tournament stems from the ceremonial aspects of sumo. He is mesmerized by the 3- to 4-minutes pre-match activities performed by the wrestlers. While Larry does not understand the significance of the ceremonial aspects of sumo (e.g. wrestlers throw salt to symbolize that they will fight fairly), the crowd's reaction tells him that everyone is entertained. He concludes that sumo wrestling is "very entertaining to watch." Figure 23 shows Larry's story occurring while visiting Tokyo.

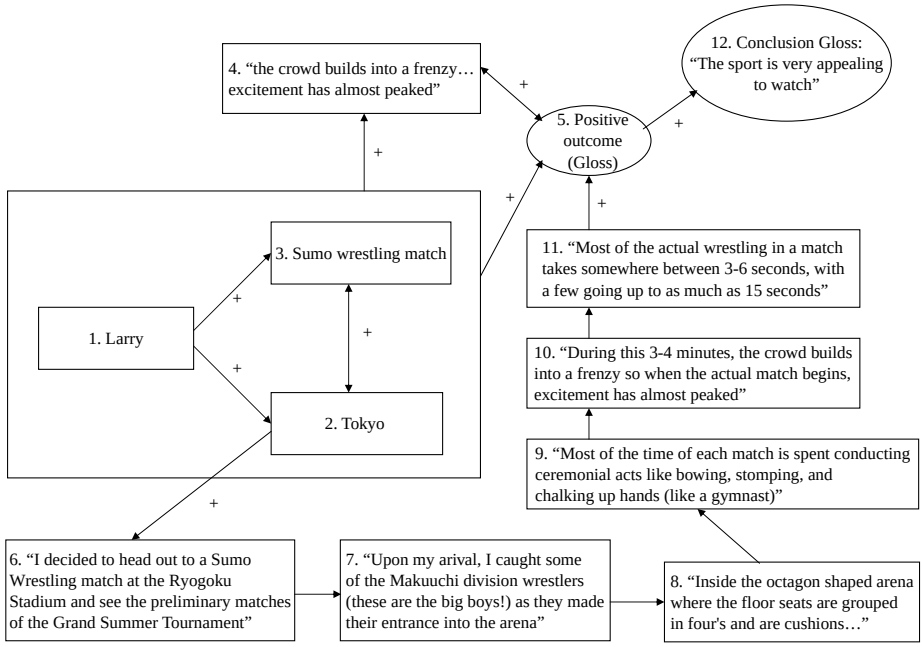


Figure 23.
Mapping Larry's visit to Tokyo story: story elaboration

Negative visitor emic interpretation of Tokyo, report by Jen and Jeremy

Finally, the following passage describes an unpleasant experience in Tokyo by Jen and Jeremy:

> Last Wednesday morning at 4:45 a.m. we were awakened by a magnitude 5.5 earthquake. It was extremely disorienting to come out of sleep into a world where it sounded like 4,000 tables were being dragged across a hardwood floor. Not to mention all the movement. We lost a couple of plates to gravity. The earthquake during the day was much more fun. We sent a memo to the Pacific plates asking them to confine their head butting to daylight hours (Jen and Jeremy, 2005).

Jen and Jeremy's negative experience in Tokyo is due to an uncontrollable event. While Tokyo has a history of tremors, travelers normally do not plan trips to avoid earthquakes. Apparently, the distress associated with the 5.5 magnitude tremor stems from its arrival in early morning. The shaking, loud noise, and personal property damage were a bit much at 4:45 a.m. A second earthquake during daylight was not as distressing. Figure 24 shows the negative story plot of Jen and Jeremy's visit to Tokyo.

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. All four destinations share a dichotomy of modern and tradition to a certain degree. With its ancient rock carvings and Victorian architecture, Mumbai has a stronger association with tradition; however, Singapore's high rise skyline associates it more closely associated with modernity. A common theme in the positive visitor emic interpretations is that travelers enjoy the historical

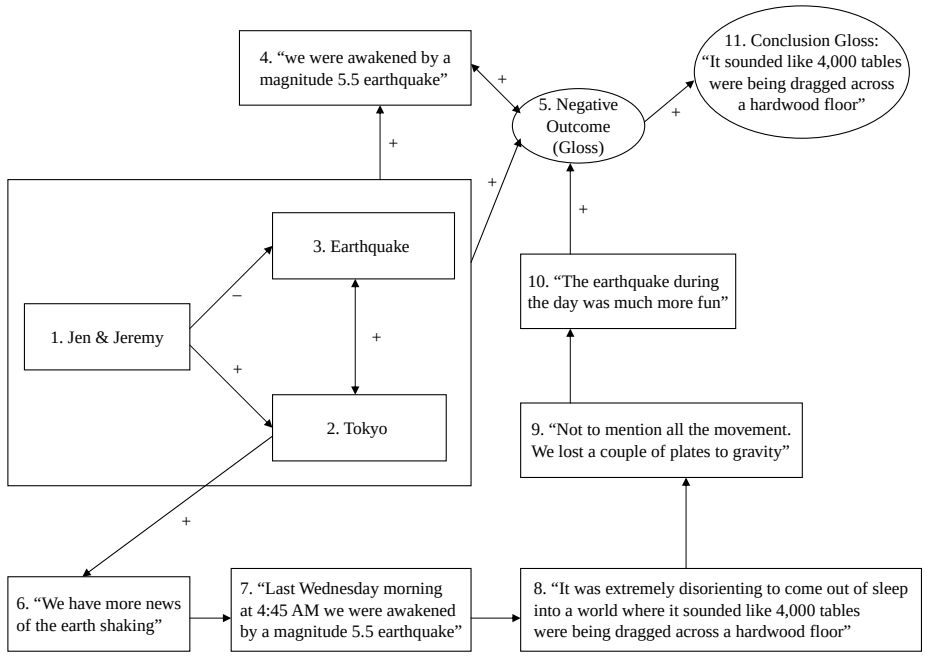


Figure 24.
Mapping Jen and Jeremy's visit to Tokyo story: story elaboration

artifacts, but they also like modern conveniences. Negative interpretations relate to unbalanced experiences. A sweltering hotel room teaming with cockroaches may be too much local flavor for visitors.

Second, creating myths that lead culture is necessary. For example, a sumo wrestling match is fraught with cultural clues. A casual observer might conclude that sumo is merely a couple of underdressed, overweight men pushing each other. As Larry notes, the 15-seconds of pushing are only part of the show. The 3-to-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.

Third, speak with a rebel's voice. Gastronomic treats like mouth-numbing spicy chicken soup in Singapore, or potentially lethal puffer fish in Japan are risks that the rebel traveler might take. The evidence suggests that positive experiences often come from doing or seeing something that the average tourist does not. For example, touching a cheetah at the zoo may be a privilege that only a select few can experience. It should be noted that even rebels like to pick and choose their battles. Sitting in congested city traffic with a full bladder is not a challenge that most people would willingly accept.

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. A number of the 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. Lost luggage, traffic jams, and a native population that do not understand foreign languages can be interpreted as unfriendly or uncooperative.

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. Mumbai's Gateway of India, Singapore's high rise skyline, Soul's Gyeongbokgung Palace, and Tokyo's Imperial Palace are examples of icons. One should note that icons are more than tangible structures; they also are woven with intangibles such as the Singaporean's reputation of being a clean, safe, and friendly destination.

While useful for frequently purchased 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, the number of shopping and culinary options in Singapore amazes Laura. She thinks that Singapore is a shopping paradise.

Second, collect first-person stories of how protagonist report their experiences in living the myth while visiting the destination. The mountains that surround Seoul impress Helen. Seoul may be a major cosmopolitan area with ancient roots, but the city is surrounded by natural beauty.

Third, build authentic brand attachments with core symbols evoked automatically by new visitors. From Mumbai's Gateway to India, Lubna takes a short boat ride to the Elephanta Caves, a UNESCO world heritage site. Inside the Caves, visitors are treated to ancient treasures.

Fourth, create myth-brand communities-meetings where brand use/encounters occur (e.g. sponsor book club meetings where principal Asian cities serve as background environments). The humane conditions of animal displays at the zoo, positively influences Rebecca's image of Singapore. If zoos care for animals well perhaps the destination area cares well for visitors.

Fifth, update stories within the myth to keep the myth alive; bring the myth to life in new ways. The highlight of Chris' trip to Tokyo is meeting friendly and honest people. He reports that he will not forget the old woman that walked a half-mile out of her way to help him find a museum.

General discussion, limitations, and suggestions for future research

Stories do move people profoundly (McKee, 1997) to destinations as well as in their search to fulfilling their needs for specific terminal values (Woodside, 2005). Stories provide clues to unconscious as well as conscious thinking (Woodside, 2005; Zaltman, 2003). People store, retrieve, and talk to others in story contexts (Shank, 1990). 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 provide the opportunity to collect emic interpretive data unobtrusively of the meanings lived by consumers while in the destination and after their visits – these stories have the potential of influencing substantial numbers of future visitors who go online in search of first-person unbiased, unrehearsed reports of others' own destination experiences. The potential also exists for the researcher to achieve direct contact with the visitor storyteller to ask for elaborations on the blog reports as well as information on post-blog report behaviors relevant to specific destinations (e.g. comparisons with competing destinations; repeat visit behavior and meanings of such experiences to the destination described in the original journal entry).

Kozinets' (2002) provides a thorough discussion on the limitations of using netnography. These limitations include the rather limited extent of reporting experiences lived in a destination as seen, interpreted, and self-edited by the visitor. Even when a visitor reports experiences covering seven months, the report is unlikely to include more than 1,000 words. While valuable, the visitors' blog-journal reports are likely to be self-edited in ways unknown to these visitors (Russo *et al.*, 1989), given that most thinking occurs unconsciously; thus, netnography is not a panacea for completely uncovering the lived experiences as done or interpreted by visitors. Also, the interpretive data collected are difficulty to generalize to the population of bloggers who report their experiences in visiting the destination or to the population of all visitors.

Future research in the study of destinations 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. Similar to Kozinets (2002) classifying consumers reporting on their coffee use via online communications, several variations of the compelling myths of a given destination are likely to be uncovered via such in-depth reporting.

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 that visitors are likely to retrieve and report automatically when discussing these destinations. Such storytelling reports provide creative clues for positioning a destination uniquely and meaningfully in the minds of potential future visitors. The stories destination visitors tell often include their own explanations of their own photographs that capture what these 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 problems with a destination's image as well as an early opportunity system for learning the images that excite visitors to advocate visiting the destination to friends, family members, and blog readers.

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