Abstract

Adventure tourism research in developing countries is well established (Stevens 1993, Goodwin 2003, Nepal 2009, Simkhada, Teijlingen, Regmi and Bhatta 2010) but few studies capture the voice of Nepali workers within the trekking industry to greater understand socio-cultural impacts on mountain regions. The Himalayan Research Expedition (HRE 2011) organised through Carnegie Great Outdoors, part of Leeds Metropolitan University's extensive outdoor programming provided the perfect vehicle to capture the interface between trekkers and Nepali workers. Approximately 33 Nepali workers were involved in focus groups and interviews and their views of working in the industry sought. Most of the research occurred during the HRE 2011 and difficulties associated with this are highlighted. Three key theories are considered within the underlying theme of the tourist gaze (Urry 2011, Lim 2008). Hall's concepts of the 'postmodern subject', 'othering' and 'west is best', MacCannell (1973) concept of 'staged authenticity' and Goffman's (1959) 'presentation of self' all gave rise to rich and thick examples of all three concepts drawn from the HRE 2011. Western lifestyles seemed readily adopted by many Nepali workers of status (Surdars, local Sherpa Guides and Climbing Guides) and socio-cultural and environmental concerns were raised by interviewees. Trekkers searching for the untouched, uncommodified life (Moran, in Lim 2008: 3) are juxtaposed with many Nepali workers seeking the very experiences of Western culture from which trekkers are keen to escape. Continuing to protect the lure of the region for trekkers requires careful consideration for all who value this unique experience.

Introduction

In November 2011 Leeds Metropolitan University embarked on a Himalayan Research Expedition (HRE 2011) to the Makalu National Park to climb Mera Peak (6500m) and Baruntse (7200m). It was organised by Carnegie Great Outdoors (CGO) to support PhD work occurring in the School of Sport, part of the Carnegie Faculty of the University. CGO provide a plethora of outdoor opportunities for an array of different client groups. This paper examines the impact of this trekking expedition from the viewpoint of Nepali workers employed to ensure expedition success.

The expedition was arguably the largest of its kind yet to be organised with 37 members in total of whom 30 were involved in scientific research before, during and after the expedition. Its aims were to gather data regarding response rates of participants to acclimatisation. Four pre-expedition exercise regimes were developed: exercise at altitude (simulated 4300m), exercise at near sea level altitude, no exercise at altitude (simulated 4300m) and no exercise at near sea level altitude. Participants underwent rigorous testing before the expedition for two weeks under a planned and assigned exercise regime, during the expedition at altitudes of 3500m, 3800m 4200m and 5200m and immediately after the expedition. The rise in popularity of Himalayan trekking has highlighted altitude related problems and even death through poor acclimatisation (Kayser 1991, Hackett and Roach 2001, Shrestha, Pun and Basnyat 2014). Carefully considering pre-acclimatisation regimes may help considerably in reducing incidents of altitude related illness and death.

The success of this expedition relied on employing approximately "150 Nepali workers as Surdars (co-ordinators), local Sherpa Guides (Nepali workers with excellent local knowledge), Climbing Guides (extraordinary Nepali workers with mountaineering experience some of whom had summitted Everest up to nine times), Cooks and Porters" (Interviewee 5). Their employment occurred through a Nepali-based trekking organisation already known to Leeds Metropolitan University.

This paper is not concerned with the outcomes of scientific testing. Such findings will be reported elsewhere. Instead, it seizes the opportunity to investigate the socio-cultural impact of such a large expedition, moving away from the natural science, forming the main HRE 2011 objective and into the socio-culture interface between expedition members and Nepali support workers and others involved in trek tourism. A qualitative approach to data collection was adopted. Wide ranging articles are available addressing issues of tourism impact in trekking regions (Stevens 1993, Nepal 2000, 2005, 2007, 2009, Goodwin 2003, Simkhada, Teijlingen, Regmi and Bhatta 2010) but few try to capture the views and thoughts of Nepali people living and working in the region, although this number is growing (Simkhada et al 2010). The paper will share views of Nepali people in the Everest trekking region and of those servicing the HRE 2011 to highlight examples of socio-cultural impacts. This was particularly pertinent given the expedition's size.

Lim (2008: 3) suggests tourism "entails seeking out and enjoying sights that are usually outside one's ordinary social and cultural experience, and the gaze is the key means for enjoyment which a tourist employs upon arrival at any particular desired destination". Trekking as a tourism activity quintessentially embodies this experience. It is predominantly a Western pursuit growing in popularity (Mintel 2010a, Mintel 2010b). Nepal promises unprecedented scenery and a unique cultural experience for the tourist, particularly for those willing to make the effort to trek into the country's wilder places. Lim (2008: 3) neatly encapsulates this constructed expectation:

When the private enterprises and tourism authorities both utilise the same tourism marketing strategy, the fate of Nepal as an 'exotic' tourist destination is more or less sealed. Of course, this exoticisation of Nepal is nothing new, and has received the attention of numerous commentators. For example, Peter Moran notes in *Buddhism Observed* that Nepal has been central to Western fantasies of 'untouched, uncommodified life, where one can encounter people who "live in pure culture"'.

It is difficult to sustain exoticism while managing large numbers of tourists. There were over half a million tourist arrivals in Nepal in 2010 (Kruk et al2011, Khatri 2010) and their expenditure was responsible for 7.9% of Gross Domestic Product (Kruk et al 2011: 55). Not all visits to Nepal involve trekking. However, at 21% of the total it represents a significant number of tourists visiting fragile environmental and cultural areas of the country (ibid).

This ethnographic study was fuelled through Lim's (2008) mindfulness of an over-reliance on Urry's (2011 [1990]) work on the tourist gaze and his reminder that while tourists gaze at hosts during their visit the hosts also have preconceived ideas of the tourist and their worlds:

> While Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze' is a useful tool for understanding tourism practice, we must guard against over-visualisation of tourism analysis by paying attention to what Coleman and Crang call the perfomativity of tourism, that is, the concrete interactions between the tourists and host communities that consist of a constant negotiation of spatial meanings (Coleman and Crang 2004) (Lim 2008: 4).

It is the importance of the negotiation of spatial meaning that is sometimes lost in considering the construction of tourisitc destinations. It is easy to forget that while tourists and the industry construct visualisations of places the hosts are often mirroring these actions and developing constructions of visitors, their backgrounds and their expectations; what Lim (2008) refers to as the 'counter-gaze'. This paper uses the HRE 2011 to ethnographically explore the concept of the counter gaze and uses three other important theoretical lenses to critically evaluate the service roles of Napali trek workers.

Theoretical concepts

This study had a number of theoretical drivers. It follows an already published theoretical paper (Lim 2008) and develops important interlinking concepts: Goffman's presentation of self (Goffman 1959) is linked strongly with authenticity (Boorstin 1961) and staged authenticity (MacCannell 1973). Stuart Hall's (1992) work on 'identity' and 'othering' is instrumental in understanding socio-cultural views of 'hosts and guests' (Smith and Brent 2001) and is the start of this theoretical underpinning. Hall's (1992a, 1992b) work considers how concepts of identity have changed over time. Importantly, three concepts of identity are recognised. The Middle Ages gave rise to the 'enlightenment subject' where 'man' was at the centre of created identity. Later, recognition of the importance of significant others; co-workers and role models gave birth to the 'sociological subject'. However, the 'post-modern subject' considers the importance of other outside influences shaping the identity of individuals; media sources, internet and Western influences, the all pervasiveness of capitalism and global interconnectedness. The 'post-modern subject' is particularly important when considering the scale of global interconnectedness and its impact on remote areas such as the Everest trekking region. Cultural markers, while still of absolute importance in shaping identity, are tempered and influenced by global markers both virtually and in reality as predominantly Western trekkers visit the regions. The socio-

cultural impact in such areas is not solely limited to visitors to the area. Hall's concept of the 'post-modern subject' is increasingly important in understanding the shapers of individual and collective identity in trekking regions and the size of the HRE 2011 is a consideration when focusing on socio-economic impacts in the region.

Using the many 'portals' through which Western life may be viewed a distorted image of Western culture and style and what it means to be Western occurs. While Urry's (2011) concept of the tourist gaze is familiar, less developed, but becoming increasingly important, is how those serving tourists at the destination view visitors. This is an important concept within this paper. Lim (2008: 1) makes a brave attempt at "a simultaneous analysis of the shifting images visitors and hosts have of each other". It is an important theme developed by Hall (1992b) who uses the term 'othering' to provide insight into how people in developing countries view the West (referred to by Urry (2011) and Mowforth and Munt (2009) as the outward gaze) as well as how they view their own society and culture being the inward gaze. Interestingly, to an extent, this also becomes a counter gaze as the reflected attitudes of the West mingle and shape formed attitudes from developing countries. Nations really do believe the perceptions of others in forming collective identity, particularly within developing countries. Hall (1992b) uses two oppositional positions calling these The West and the Rest. Table 1 considers perceptions of the West and developing countries representing the homogenised 'othering' of post-modern cultural identity.

The West	Outward Gaze on the West
• Democratic	• Cool
• Free	• Hip
• Developed	• Where it's at
• Civilised	• All embracing
• Ordered	• What everyone's doing
• Peaceful	• Superior – it must be better

Table 1: Perceptions of the West. Adapted from Hall (1992b).

Table 2 provides the antithesis to table 1 where collective perceptions of developing countries, or to use Hall's (1992b) phrase 'The Rest' are expressed more generally from collective accepted expression and reinforced and internalised by those nations within developing countries.

The Rest	Inward Gaze on the Rest
• Despotic	• Embarrassed
• Undeveloped	• Apologetic
• Violent	• Poor (materially)
• Barbaric	• In need of help – (to develop)
• Fundamentalist	

Table 2: Perceptions of the Rest. Adapted from Hall (1992b).

Hall's (1992, 1992b) work sets the scene for a study that probes such fundamental notions of 'othering' between 'the West and the Rest'. Such concepts are underpinned by a post-modern collective identity influenced not just by cultural markers but global markers driven by Western ideology. Internet, media and global interconnectedness all contribute to the 'othering' of nations.

How people act and react during every day social encounters has been considered by many theorists (Goffman 1959, Hall 1992, 1992b, MacCannell 1973, 2008, Mowforth and Munt 2009). Drawing on
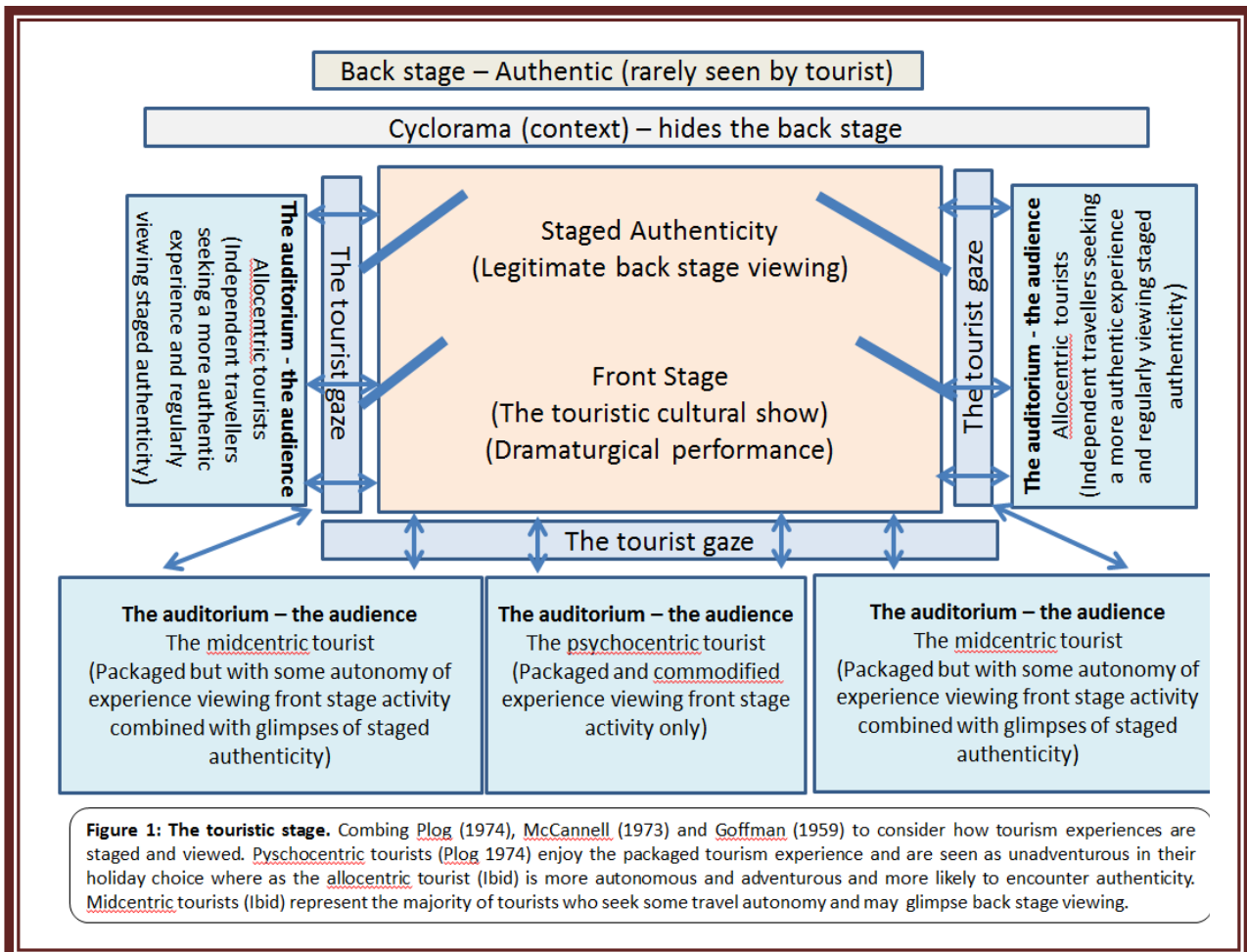
seminal work by Goffman's (1959) 'presentation of self in every day life' the importance of every day encounters and the way individuals manage these is highlighted. Goffman openly criticises his own attempts to understand how people present themselves in every day life. As the central tenet of his work he sees social interaction as a staged event; a dramaturgical activity "presenting things that are make belief" (Goffman: 1959: xi). Encounters with others are acted out on the social stage and its actors share information allowing each to build a persona of the other. How true to the 'real persona' this might be depends largely on circumstance and context of the social encounter. Goffman reminds us that such 'impression management' is almost always manufactured to allow a positive persona to be displayed to the other. MacCannell (1973) sees the dramaturgical enactments of these encounters where real life is buried behind a façade of self presentation as the perfect back drop to understanding touristic encounters more fully. Thus, in accepting that the majority of these encounters are staged events, MacCannell's (1973, 1976) concept of "staged authenticity" (1973) is an important consideration.

Hillman (2013), in reviewing concepts and definitions of authenticity, suggests that "objective authenticity can be defined as an experience which genuinely samples the culture of the other, that is, of the host society and the host people" (Hillman 2013: 2). Given the foundation of MacCannell's (1973) work such a definition is problematic. He explains the difficulty of true authentic contact with the 'host societies and host people' suggesting even the 'back stages' or hidden areas such as kitchens, offices, work conditions and so on are often subject to 'staged authenticity'. Many touristic experiences are extended beyond the 'front stage' to include apparently 'back stage' activity rigged to simulate a more authentic touristic experience. MacCannell's (1973) concepts of 'staged authenticity' are therefore far more complex than the simplistic notion of the front stage (viewed by tourists) and the back stage (hidden from tourists), a point laboured heavily in his 2008 critical evaluation of Bruner's (2005) interpretation of his work in the book *Culture on Tour*. MacCannell (2008) is at pains to refute the notion proposed by Bruner (2005) that his work simply recognises a series of binary oppositions of which the concepts of front and back stage are classic examples. He initially purposefully situates "staged authenticity" between the front and back stage arenas "to name a new kind of space that could not be assimilated into either one of the original pair" (MacCannell 2008: 335). This precisely is 'staged authenticity', that moment when the tourist firmly believes they really have glimpsed the real world of the host society or host people, yet in reality, this may not be the case. Tourists are often cleverly duped into believing they have "genuinely sample[d] the culture of the other" (Hillman 2013: 2) when in fact this is rarely the case.

Three important theoretical distinctions are now in place: First, Hall (1992a) suggests identity to be considerably influenced by global interactions through the 'post-modern subject' allowing us to construct our own, others and indeed a whole nation's identity. From these constructions come the concept of the West and the Rest as two idealised ways of presenting developed and developing countries (Hall 1992b) and, in turn, this allows the consideration of the outward and inward gaze. The interactions emanating from the gaze are two-way, allowing "constant negotiations of spatial meaning" (Lim 2008: 4) between host and guest (Smith and Brent 2001). Second, Goffman suggests that all human interactions are in fact only dramaturgical events showing each 'player' positively and such interactions are unlikely to show the true identity of individuals involved. Third, are the enactments in which glimpses of 'true' cultural experiences occur, although MacCannell (1973) refers to these as 'staged authenticity'. This is far more complex than the simple binary of front stage (viewed by the tourist) and back stage (hidden from the tourists), as more back stage activity becomes legitimate viewing and thus packaged accordingly. The tourist theatre (figure 1) provides a diagrammatic representation of theories discussed using the theatre as a way of depicting theoretical development. Plog's (1974) tourist categorisation of psychocentric, midcentric and allocentric has been used for the theatre auditorium. Its classic bell shaped distribution curve depicting midcentric tourists as the greater number is seen through the seating capacity but attention must also be paid to

the seating positions and the stage views these afford. I have taken time to develop the concept of 'staged authenticity' to ensure it is understood before applying it to examples from the HRE 2011. It also requires distinction from the work of Goffman's 'impression management' firmly rooted in 'front stage' operations, yet it is important to understand the interlinking nature of such concepts. Again, conceptual distinctions will become clearer as examples are given.

Methodology

Figure 1: The touristic stage. Combing Plog (1974), McCannell (1973) and Goffman (1959) to consider how tourism experiences are staged and viewed. Pyschocentric tourists (Plog 1974) enjoy the packaged tourism experience and are seen as unadventurous in their holiday choice where as the allocentric tourist (Ibid) is more autonomous and adventurous and more likely to encounter authenticity. Midcentric tourists (Ibid) represent the majority of tourists who seek some travel autonomy and may glimpse back stage viewing.

This study was evaluative in nature. It sought to highlight socio-cultural impacts of the HRE 2011 and trekking more generally, through ensuring the voice of Nepali workers was heard. Simkhada et al (2010), in their study of sexual health knowledge, sexual relationships and condom use among male Nepali trekking guides, found frank and honest discussions difficult on this topic. In this study less sensitive issues were tackled yet Nepali workers were still being asked for opinions on work conditions, their employment roles and other sensitive issues such as the impact of their work on family life, relationships and routine more generally. As an active member of the HRE 2011 team the researcher was not best placed to conduct such a study, however, this was the scenario presented. It was very difficult to ascertain how truthful responses were based upon the researcher scenario given. For example, Nepali participants may have felt a favourable response to questioning would lead to more work in the future. Conversely, perceptions that a less favourable response, or indeed unwillingness to be involved in the research, could lead to being prematurely dismissed from the expedition were also a possibility. Although such issues were addressed within the participant information presentation to all workers it was very difficult to ascertain whether this important point was understood by everyone. At the beginning of each interview and focus group recorded verbal consent of all participants occurred. The researcher being an active member of the HRE 2011 team, although a

considerable drawback, did allow access to a purposive sample of Nepali workers as well as participant observation opportunities over a three week period.

The position of participant observer was adopted for the duration of the three week expedition. Diary work and MP3 recordings throughout the expedition were used for all observations. Openness and honesty from the researcher occurred at the outset with all 37 HRE 2011 UK members aware of and consenting to the observation activity. It was made clear to UK members that the primary focus of attention would be to observe interactions and elicit views from Nepali workers because UK members had already consented to a busy scientific research schedule. However, inevitably observation of interactions would involve UK and Nepali members. Many of the 150 Nepali workers involved in the HRE 2011 were addressed collectively at Lukla at the beginning of the trek. A member of the trekking organisation acted as interpreter and a short talk of approximately 12 minutes was delivered explaining the research. Two important points were emphasised: observations would take place while trekking together and volunteers would be required for discussion during the expedition. This also gave a chance to welcome the Nepali workers to the HRE 2011.

Initially individual interviews were conducted but this approach failed to elicit fluid and open discussion. Each question was asked through an interpreter and responses followed the same process. Participants felt intimidated and were reluctant to engage. Discussions took place with the trekking company staff and other academics and researchers on the HRE 2011 and a different approach was adpoted. Initial interviews acted as valuable piloting experience. These data were not included in study results. The initial pilot consisted of three individual interviews. It was decided that where Nepali workers were fluent in English (for example trekking company staff) individual semi-structured interviews would continue to be conducted. For other workers focus groups of up to five people occurred allowing participants to address questions through group discussion. This worked well, although over reliance on the interpreter providing only the essence of what was discussed was a serious flaw in data analysis. After each focus group lengthy discussions occurred with the interpreter and key issues concerning socio-cultural impacts and evaluative data were highlighted. Capturing the essence of discussion from focus groups and relaying information from key informants using a grounded theory approach were the prime objectives of the data collection tools.

In addition to the Nepali workers involved in the HRE 2011, key informants were also interviewed. In total interviews with six key informants occurred including trek leaders from the UK and Nepal and owners of tourist outlets such as tea houses and cafés. Seven focus groups occurred with approximately 27 Nepali workers contributing to these from across the expedition working roles (Surdars, Local Sherpa Guides, Climbing Guides, Cooks and Porters). Interviews and focus group duration ranged from 20 to 50 minutes in length. All interviews and focus groups were MP3 recorded and then transcribed in Microsoft Word. However, focus group recordings were only transcribed through the interpreter, therefore missing vital discussion points between Nepali members.

Working at altitude was particularly challenging. Specialist IT equipment was required for such work and this was not available to the researcher due to budgetary constraints. Therefore, transcriptions of interviews and focus groups occurred sometime after the expedition making clarification of discussion issues in recordings after each interview and focus group difficult. Verbatim transcripts of all focus groups would have significantly increased the richness of data but required specialist interpreters and funding. This did not occur. Ethical approval for this study was granted through the Leeds Metropolitan University's Ethics Committee. I am indebted to the Nepali trek workers and company directors for giving valuable time to this project on top of such long working hours.

Results and discussion

The post-modern subject

Hall's theme of the post-modern constructed subject or identity was resonant at all junctures of the trek. Having visited Nepal a number of times for trekking and climbing purposes in the past stark observations occurred between 2011 and my last visit in 2001. Singularly the most important influence was mobile phones. Trekkers were able to talk to family on many parts of the journey. Interconnectedness remained despite being in a remote area of the Himalaya. Many Nepali workers, particularly in the more responsible roles (Surdars, Mountain Guides and Local Sherpa Guides), owned mobile phones. On a number of occasions on acclimatisation treks I would hear conversations in Nepali and expect to find a group of people on the next section of the track. Instead I came across one Nepali in conversation on their mobile. This somehow seemed incongruous with the surroundings but acted as an important reminder that this beautiful environment was in fact a lived-in space where local people work and raise their families.

Internet access and the proliferation of the World Wide Web were ever prominent. Major centres such as Lukla were well equipped with internet access sites and all seemed well patronised. Trekkers with mobile internet devices remain connected to the internet providing a strange juxtaposition of connectedness within disconnected locations along the trek. It seemed surreal to be able to receive and send e-mails; to provide instant images of wild places for your facebook community who would receive such communications in the comfort of their living rooms. And, while this was predominantly a trekker's activity, it emphasises the way in which a persona came to be built using images from what, for some, may be a trip of a lifetime. The images sent do not depict day to day existence yet will be used to ensure a positive on-line personal image occurs. Such connectedness is available to all, trekkers and Nepali's alike and this is broadening the horizons of indigenous mountain people. In an interview with a key well-educated and travelled Nepali informant, both positive and negative issues of interconnectedness were highlighted:

> When I was young I could not dream because I had never seen the world; we had never heard of the world. And now people have seen the world through the TV, on the computer. Now it is only 2 or 3 years since I have started using the computer and I still am unable to use it properly but my grand daughter is only 16 months old and is already pressing the buttons on the mobile phone and saying hello, hello! So Nepali people are looking for more and more. In one way it is very good but in another way it is not so good because for a long long time no one had anything and we were happy. We never knew what was going on in the world; we never heard any news, no TV, no phone nothing. We didn't have these things and we were happy. We didn't hear anything. We were blind to the world. But now we hear all about what is happening in America, what is happening in the UK. We can hear what is happening in Canada and that makes us very distressed in other ways (Interviewee 1).

The globalised nature of post-modern living knows no bounds. The tendrils of technological twenty-first century living extend to all but the most remote of places. It shows people how others live and fuels the inward and outward gaze. It brings with it worries, concerns and stresses about how nations live their lives. Interestingly, the interviewee is trying to embrace technology and, through their grandchild, recognises the inevitability of the encroachment of the modern world into mountain communities. It is often the less obvious that combine with change more generally to produce other issues of concern in mountain regions, as explained below:

> Change is an accepted thing. It comes with tourism. But other changes we don't see so readily are happening. People are now moving in and out of the villages. Some are going abroad, the amount of knowledge people have about the world and other

people is vast. Most of the people who move abroad are well educated. This is a
problem because those who can effect change in the area are the very people who
move away (Interviewee 2).

It is easy to consider visual, physical and structural changes occurring without necessarily realising
more subtle changes are also problematic and have a considerable affect on the way in which people
live their lives. Interviewee 3 comments specifically on the changes recently seen in Lukla as a direct
result of the trekking industry:

Even five or six years ago Lukla was not like this. Having the hospital built has made
a difference because people come to use the hospital. But also the number of
lodges and tea houses has increased dramatically (Interviewee 3).

But more hidden changes are also occurring. The globalised nature of living and the insight into the
lives of others can, in itself, be hugely unsettling for a people who often see their culture and lifestyle
as inferior to the way in which people are able to live in the West. Of grave concern to Interviewee 1
is the impact upon indigenous culture through the all pervasive Western contact. While nature
remains largely resistant to the growing number of trekkers visiting the region, Nepali culture is far
more fragile:

In my generation people are quite concerned about our culture. Our dress, our
customs. But people are becoming educated; some in Kathmandu, some in
Australia, Canada and they might bring the Western Culture back but I hope they
won't forget our culture; to preserve it and share it with people. And also the
mountains. We have Everest and Cho-O-yu. We have the most beautiful mountains
in the world so at least we cannot change the mountains. Nobody can change the
mountains. In the future what worries me is that we might lose our culture through
the younger generation (Interviewee 1).

Daily routines for families during the trekking season are severely disrupted. It becomes difficult for
those going away on long treks. In Focus Group 7 one man openly admitted being "home sick a lot
when I am away. I want to be with my family but I am miles away". And those left to continue the
family routine worry about their loved ones and find chores more of a burden. In Focus Group 7 a
woman commented "much of the time I worry about my husband because it is a dangerous job but
also there are so many chores that need to be done at the tea house and these do not go away". In
season, trek work is demanding, hours are long and long periods of time can be spent away from the
village and family. But this is not always an obvious thought for Westerners enjoying their experience.
In Focus Group 7 one man suggested "there are two important issues – earning money and, therefore,
being able to stay in places with the family". The two are inextricably entwined and he goes on to say
"while it is possible to earn more money abroad it does mean you are away for long periods and this
affects the family considerably, so I prefer to have less money but stay in the region and be able to
spend more time with my family". Inevitably family and relationships are of the utmost importance.

West is best and othering
Hall's (1992b) notion of 'othering' is seen in the dress codes of many Nepali's living in the mountains. Younger Nepali's often sport jeans, t-shirts, puffer jackets, branded eye wear and baseball caps. Ironically, many of the clothes warn will be copied products made within Nepal and providing another perspective on the notion of 'staged authenticity'. Interviewee 3 comments directly about how Western style is becoming more pervasive.

> But having the Westerners coming to Nepal is one of the main benefits for us. You
> can be a porter and then become a guide and they earn money from this. And then
> people do change their clothes style, they dress like Westerners and it looks like a
> fashion show (Interviewee 3).

In many experienced Nepali mountain workers as well as Western trekkers the embodiment of the mountaineer can be seen; tanned and clad from head to toe with labelled mountain clothing and equipment. Such images will fuel their on-line persona and build dramaturgically the presence they wish to portray to others. For many, just as in the West, this will never be a true depiction of how they live their lives.

There seems to be an acceptance of Western ways of living, almost without question, as being the way forward. The overall feeling through observation is that if it comes from outside the indigenous culture then it has to be better. Through contact with Westerners outward migration is becoming an issue as Nepali's seek the Western way of living either in cities or further a field in other countries. Interviewee 1 comments:

> In those days they didn't have any opportunity to gain anything you know. They
> were happy with how they were but now people have seen everything they want
> more and more and more and more. I talked to one of my colleagues and he said I
> work very hard but still my father wants me to work harder. I said to him this is the
> thousand Buddha's time you know. We say everyone wants more and more and
> more and they are never satisfied. So this is what we say. So, if you are not satisfied
> you are not happy. And this is the human way. It's not the Western way it's the
> human way (Interviewee 1).

Global connectedness through the World Wide Web allows the viewing of cultural depictions and the lives of others to be viewed. But often these are only depictions and it is very easy to gain false impressions of whole nations through on-line postings. This is theoretically problematic because compartmentalisation tends not to consider theory interaction. For example, Nepali workers may well be enticed away from Nepal because of the 'front stage' depictions of what might be offered in other countries. Just as individuals wish to ensure a positive on-line persona for anyone with whom they have contact, so too do companies, cities and whole nations. All three important theoretical strands can be seen working together, spinning a web of deceit into which unsuspecting workers may stumble. The more vulnerable workers are those with most to gain and these gains are usually measured materially and economically.

Staged authenticity
For many Nepali workers in the trekking industry there is only a four to six month period to earn as much money as possible to support the family for the rest of the year. Supporting the family often includes an extended family for which the worker may also be financially responsible. But, because Nepali workers are often highly organised teams of experienced workers, trekkers may have little idea of the long hours and considerable effort expended to ensure a high level of service delivery.

Everything seemingly runs like clockwork. Here, cooks discuss their daily routine and provide insight into team working:

> In the morning we wake at 4 a.m. and then begin boiling water. It takes three hours to do all this. Breakfast is at 7 so we must be up early to boil the water and begin cooking. If a hot lunch is prepared during the day, sometimes this happens, then it will take 2 hours to do this. Normally soup and hot drinks but it still takes 2 hours. Then evening meal, again, is 3 hours preparation. We do the same in the evening. If the teamwork is good then it is not too hard but sometimes people come from different areas and it takes time to build a team and get into a routine and then it becomes more difficult. Often the cook team will come from the same village. Our village is below Lukla. We are neighbours and work together. It takes 1½ hours to walk to my neighbours house (Cooks - Focus Group 1).

On the face of it this reveals an eight-hour cooking day but this is a static activity in camp and does not consider dismantling the kitchen and dining shelters daily, walking the same distance as trekkers and reconstructing facilities at the next campsite. For many Western trekkers the trek itself represents the main activity of the day. To incorporate this daily activity into their working routine results in an incredibly long and arduous working day. All cooking equipment, food, fuel and tents are carried by the team and they must somehow leap frog the trekkers to ensure lunchtime and evening meals are served on time. Often when trekkers arrive at camp tea and biscuits are already available. Carrying loads of at least 25kgs they must ensure a journey time of half that of the trekkers for the same distance covered and their day may well be in excess of 16 hours for every day of the three week trek. Different roles are assigned to the team depending on experience and there is a distinct hierarchy within all trekking support work performed by Nepali workers:

> There are 13 of us in the cooking team. It is my job to coordinate the efforts of all those people and divide the jobs up. We need to consider who is carrying kerosene, food, the kitchen, dining room and how all this is set up. We have to do everything between us and we carry everything from one area to the next (Cooks – Focus Group 1).

Much of this effort can be viewed as 'back stage' work. Trekkers appreciated the high standard of food served; everything from Dal-bat to pizza, yet the efforts of the team were only truly considered and understood by trekkers with experience and insight. Bed tea would arrive at 6 a.m. as if by magic with little thought as to how long the cooks had been working beforehand and how much they had to do during the day. Just as research in the field is logistically problematic, so too is actually serving the trekkers and always ensuring high standards. Again, the complicated nature of ensuring 37 Western trekkers receive a good meal at 19.00 hours each day of the trek is not something fully grasped by many clients. In focus group 3, articulating the complexities of one day's trekking covering all possible eventualities is expressed and this reveals the highly skilled and experienced nature of the coordinating roles required to ensure service delivery:

> All staff are very experienced. But they are not classified as a cook because you need to be in the role for five or six years before becoming a cook. We split the meals so that if there is ever a problem with porters not arriving we can still cook and make sure everyone can have a meal. So we split the cook staff down. We have people

carrying food then we have people carrying stoves and kerosene separate to the food, always separate. So these guys have less responsibility and they may end up going with the cook and the kitchen boy. But we have to be careful here. The stoves have to go the same time as the cooks and the food. So the stove or kerosene boys are of lower importance and this is their job. The two kerosene boys carry the stoves and kerosene and their own equipment. And again we always make sure, even if the other kerosene boys do not arrive, we always have stoves. One day's worth of kerosene is always up front so we can cook, just in case anything goes wrong (Mixed group - Focus Group 3).

The 'behind the scenes' work becomes even more complicated when all other facets of the trek are also considered. Eating good food on the trek is incredibly important but only one element to be considered by the trekking organisation. Camping, accommodation, climbing and within the HRE 2011 the research elements all have to be blended into the mix. Here Interviewee 2 discusses other aspects of the service requirements:

Looking at the loading, the weight, the carrying and ensuring the logistics all work is an important business. Logistics are important. We have to put the names down for all the porters and then we have to make sure all are going and getting to places safely. Then we have the porters that have to come back. After six days we have three porters coming back and after ten days another three porters and so on. It is all worked out with where people live and how much time they can spend on the trek (Interviewee 2).

All this frenetic 'back stage' activity of which trekkers may be more or less aware, depending on experience, is necessary for the smooth running of expeditions and the Nepali workers are viewed by others always within the context of trekking. However, because of the close proximity between workers and trekkers, glimpses of 'back stage' activity frequently occur. For example, in discussion with the Cooks during Focus Group 1 one cook commented "I like to be with people who will talk with you and you feel comfortable with the people around you. Little things are important like leaders going to the kitchen and thanking you for the food". Such discussions may elicit sharing of work routines and insight into the working day. This may therefore more realistically represent 'staged authenticity' or MacCannell's (1973) middle ground between the front and back stages, the *real* back stage being the real lives of workers away from the trekking industry. Here, porters (Focus Group 2) provide insight into life away from work:

We are often friends or related to one another. Our village as not a tourist village and although living in the Everest region some of us have to walk at least three days to seek work in Lukla which acts as a hub for all trekking organisations..[…].. We want to be able to provide an education for our children, something we have not had, and we are hopeful that tourism will supply the opportunity to do this through the money we earn. It not only means our children can have food and clothes, but also pens and paper so they can study at school (Porters – Focus Group 2).

Through such information, sharing glimpses into the real back stage, inaccessible authentic lives of Nepali workers occur. Even those running the trekking company also spend a proportion of their time in their home village:

> People visit my area now and there is more money in the region. Compared to government wages trekking is well paid but it is seasonal and it does cover only 6 months of the year. Most of the other 6 months is spent on the land. We still live off the land and few in my area are business people. They still live off the land. When I am not working I do go back to my region and work on the land (Interviewee 2).

There are instances of trekkers visiting the villages of workers and providing assistance for a better standard of living. Interviewee 2 reports that with money raised from trekking "we are also trying to build a school in the region so I am working hard on this too". Porters also allude to schemes that may help support the wider village community. "I have been trekking with tourists and working since I was 12 years old. There is support from some tourists in the form of clothes, money, sponsorship and so on" (Porters – Focus Group 2). Generally, the subsistence agricultural life, forming the mainstay for Nepali trek workers, remains segregated from their daily work routine. This is no different to other occupations, except that there may be huge disparity between work and home life, with the latter often consisting of a hand to mouth existence for whole extended families relying on wages from trek workers. Again, such disparity is often hidden from view because many trekkers never stray away from the main tourist mountain routes and their lived experience of the region is the supporting tourist infrastructure specifically catering for Western trekkers rather than the authentic villages away from tourist areas. But the money from trekking does help sustain village life for those whose family members are working in the trekking industry. This is considered in Focus Group 4.

> It is about the money first, but I like to serve the foreign people who come to see the mountains. This is important as well. It's part of our duty. We serve them and they pay us so it's a win win situation for us. Tourism is a good thing. The major reason is to earn money and therefore sustain local villages. But there is also a coming together of the family because money is earned in the tourist season and this allows the family to stay together during the off season. It is economically sustaining for the rest of the year (Mixed - Focus Group 4).

This focus group highlighted once again the importance of family and village life. The dramaturgical act being immersed into a sixteen hour day trekking activity for long periods occurs to allow more time with the family at other times of the year. There were numerous reports of the enjoyment such work provides, particularly positive contact with interesting people but workers always commented on the importance of time with loved ones and were acutely aware of being able to sustain their 'authentic' *real* life away from trekking once the season is over.

Conclusions

This paper has used three important theories as lenses to critically evaluate the socio-cultural interactions of the HRE 2011. First, it recognised the all pervasiveness of global interconnectedness and Hall's (1992b) post-modern subject. There seems no escaping the proliferation of the World Wide Web and with it the inevitable cultural drive towards Western capitalism. The study has highlighted the complex nature of the depictions of people and places through this medium and this in turn encroaches on the dramaturgical ways we present ourselves both on and off-line.

Through the voice of Nepali trek workers this study has depicted the tourist gaze as a two-way process where opinions of both 'hosts and guests' (Smith and Brent 2001) are formulated (Urry 2011 [1990],

Lim 2008). It has provided examples of 'othering' (Hall 1992a, 1992b), with an underlying premise that unquestionably West is best, and this is further fuelled through the World Wide Web and global interconnectedness. Finally, 'staged authenticity' has been discussed in the context of the HRE 2011 itself and extended to consider the 'real' lives of Nepali workers away from the trekking industry. The juxtaposition here is the importance of the well-paid (locally) trek work (the staged authenticity of life at work) sustaining the real lives of whole families who still live a predominantly subsistence lifestyle in rural mountain communities.

Motivations for visiting mountain regions of Nepal are the beauty of the environment and the cultural experiences associated with physical and emotional journeying in such incredible landscapes (Lim 2008). Here lies the greatest juxtaposition of all in terms of understanding authentic touristic mountain experiences. While many Nepali trek workers seem to seek the monetary and materialist gains of paid employment in tourism and embrace Western ideology and lifestyle, Western trekkers seek the "untouched, uncommodified life, where one can encounter people who "live in pure culture"" (Moran, in Lim 2008: 3). In seeking the true 'authentic' pure culture living in the mountains so close to nature may afford, trekkers espouse a more attractive materialistic way of living for Nepali people who seem to embrace this more materialistic and apparently sheik lifestyle. Trekkers seem magnetically drawn to the pure Nepali mountain culture only to find Nepali people seeking the very experiences from which Western trekkers are eager to escape. While Interviewee 1 is steadfast in the unspoilt beauty of the mountains that are the Everest region, cultural concerns remain and the same old conundrum is seen where tourism continues to erode the very core of its attractiveness.

The region is changing, even the mountains are changing through global warming, a Western phenomenon, but it is difficult to project a scenario in the foreseeable future where Nepali mountain regions and their unique cultural experiences will not be attractive to tourists. How this is managed and the way in which both environment and culture are protected are both topics requiring close scrutiny in the coming years and are of great concern for those with insight in the region. Interviewee 1 provides an important reminder that all resources are finite yet understanding their limits is far from an exact science.

> If I could use a crystal ball I can just see things going on and on and on. I can see no end. But I do see boundaries and if you step beyond those boundaries you will always fall down. It's this more and more and more that seems a problem. I have no idea how far it can all go. It can fall at any time. It can go a little bit further but nobody knows (Interviewee 1).

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