

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAVEL JOURNALISM

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors in
the Department of Journalism
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

May 2, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Travel journalism is not travel writing. Nor is it travel blogging. Travel journalism is a writing form all its own. Even though travel journalism is often dubbed as a lesser form of journalism, it is indeed an important medium of information, especially as our world shrinks with globalization. Travel journalism must stay factual and the authors must strive to be non-biased in order to decrease the feeling of “us” versus “them” among peoples, reduce miscommunications—whether in business or between locals and travelers—and to help readers understand the culture and importance of a place they visit. A travel journalist must go beyond writing reviews of a festival, museum, or hotel—that’s travel writing. Travel journalists must explain what each of these things means to a culture. Travel writing appeals to tourists, while travel journalism appeals to travelers—those who want to authentically understand other cultures.

The Importance of Travel Journalism

Journalists strive to be honest and present only the facts. Most strive to do non-biased work, though this doesn't always translate into value. Some forms of journalism are seen as more vital than others. Travel journalism tends to be dismissed as frivolous. But travel is a billion dollar industry and travel journalism provides context on locales. Travel journalism serves as a guide as the world becomes ever smaller with globalization. Travel journalism is distinct from travel writing. Travel journalists tell stories and offer greater insight about locations that goes beyond a review of a hotel, festival, or museum. For the purposes of this paper, travel journalism is distinguished by its reflective look at tourist sites within the framework of their cultural significance.

By comparison, travel writers are more aligned with public relations or advertising. They are writing to appeal to tourists. Contrarily, travel journalists are writing for those who want to fully understand other cultures: travelers. For example, a travel writing article of Stockholm would offer a guide book-like "walking tour" of the city, while a travel journalism story would showcase the differences between American culture and Swedish culture.

In addition to offering advice about travel in a certain location, travel journalists have a distinct and important role: to decrease the feeling of "us" versus "them" among people, reduce miscommunications caused by cultural differences and misunderstandings, and to help readers understand the culture and importance of a place they visit.

The Beginning of Travel Journalism

One reason travel journalism is important is because it offers a way for people to learn about accurate representations of other cultures, which is evermore important in global affairs and globalization. People have written about travel for centuries. Merchants forged trade routes and returned home with tales of strange lands and cultures. As word spread, additional explorers were sent to learn more. Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Charles Darwin, and Lewis and Clark all journaled what they saw on their ventures. Those traveling for religious purposes too wrote of what they saw in foreign countries. “Muslim pilgrims making their hajj to Mecca wrote copious descriptions of their journey as did East Asian Buddhists devotees traveling to India to visit holy sites and to study with Buddhist masters.”¹

But there is also travel writing, where the author only sings the praises of the hotel they stayed at, or the festival they witnessed. They do not offer any investigative information about the city or country they are in that pertains to why the subject of their article is important. Some of this writing takes place on online blogs or in e-books, because it is now easy to self-publish. In a study published by *Publishers Weekly*, researchers looked at the top 7,000 top selling digital genre titles on Amazon’s category bestseller list. The study showed that the Big Five traditional publishers (Penguin Random House, Macmillan, HarperCollins, Hachette and Simon & Schuster) only account for 16% of the e-books on Amazon’s bestseller list. Self-published books now

¹ “THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING WITH TRAVEL WRITING THROUGHOUT HISTORY,” Matador Network, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/the-importance-of-connecting-with-travel-writing-throughout-history/>.

represent almost 31% of e-book sales on Amazon's Kindle Store.² In addition, anyone can have a blog. According to Ken Doctor, "It's a dizzying picture; our almost universal access to news and the ability of any writer to be her own publisher gives the appearance of lots more journalism being available."³

In actuality, there are fewer jobs in the journalism industry. Doctor says that the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) annual count of people in a newsroom working for daily newspapers across the country was 41,5000 in 2010. This was down from 56,400 in 2001⁴. In 2015, 32,900 people worked as full-time journalists at nearly 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States⁵. ASNE also says that more 3,500 people work at the Big Four (NBC, ABC, Fox, and CBS) network level television stations, but that total has dropped more than 25 percent in recent years.⁶ But, "there are high dozens, if not hundreds, of journalists operating their own hyperlocal blog sites around the country."⁷

In addition to the loss of journalism jobs, newspaper circulation has fallen in recent years. A Pew Research Center analysis of Alliance for Audited Media (AAM) says that weekday and Sunday circulation fell to 3% from 2013 to 2014. This decline was uniform for newspapers of all circulation sizes.

² Betty Kelly Sargent, "Surprising Self-Publishing Statistics," *Publishers Weekly*, July 28, 2014, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/63455-surprising-self-publishing-statistics.html>.

³ "The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts," NiemanLab, accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/11/the-newsonomics-of-journalist-headcounts/>.

⁴ "The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts."

⁵ "2015 Census," American Society of News Editors, accessed January 31, 2016, <http://asne.org/content.asp?pl=121&sl=415&contentid=415>.

⁶ "The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts."

⁷ "The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts."

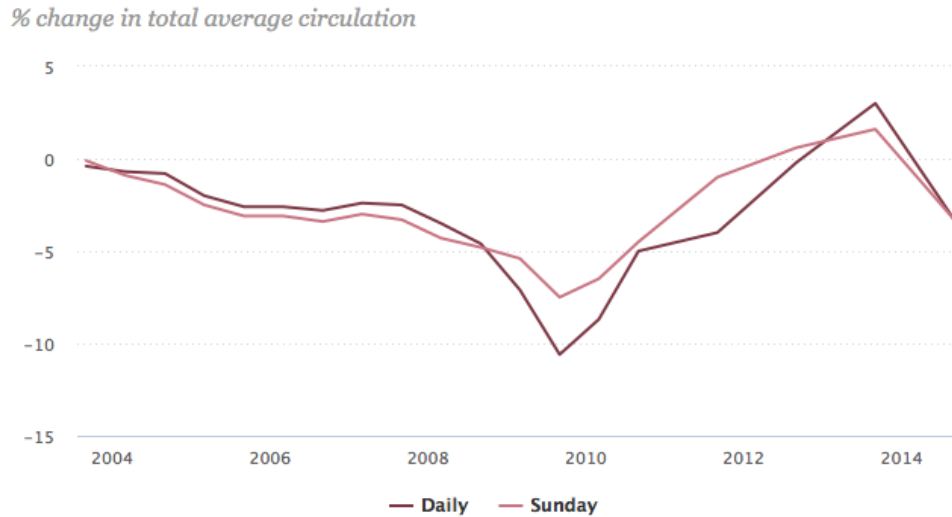


Figure 1: Newspaper Circulation Falls in 2014; Source: Pew Research Center

Despite the rise in blogs and the fall of print, the majority of readership remains on print-only mediums. While websites may boast about having thousands of visitors a month, the duration spent on each website is actually shorter than spent with a newspaper. And readers are not necessarily subscribers to that website. They may have just come across an interesting article. For example, the *New York Times* reported an average weekday print circulation of less than 650,000 in September 2014. However, its website had almost 54 million unique visitors in January 2015.⁸ The Pew Research Center also says,

Yet far more people report reading a newspaper in print than on a digital device. Why this discrepancy? One clue lies in the time spent. The average visit to The New York Times' website and associated apps in January 2015 lasted only 4.6 minutes – and this was the highest of the top 25. Thus, most online newspaper visitors are “flybys,” arriving perhaps through a link on a social networking site or sent in an email, and so may not think of this experience as “reading a newspaper” but simply browsing an article online.

⁸ “Newspapers: Fact Sheet,” Pew Research Center, accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/newspapers-fact-sheet/>.

From 2014 to 2024, the number of reporters, correspondents and broadcast news analysts is expected to decline 9 percent.⁹

Employment projections data for reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts, 2014-24				
Occupational Title	Employment, 2014	Projected Employment, 2024	Change, 2014-24	
			Percent	Numeric
News analysts, reporters and correspondents	54,400	49,600	-9	-4,800
Broadcast news analysts	5,100	4,500	-13	-600
Reporters and correspondents	49,300	45,100	-8	-4,200

Table 1: SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

As journalism jobs and circulation decrease, so do travel sections of newspapers and their editors. Catharine M. Hamm, the travel editor of the *Los Angeles Times* said, “The number of travel editors in traditional media roles has decreased dramatically over the years, just like the number of stand-alone travel sections.”¹⁰ Ken Shapiro, the editor-in-chief of *TravelAge West*—a travel magazine based out of California— said that there are only 12 full-time newspaper travel editors left in the United States¹¹. But Hamm said, “The field of travel journalism, however, has increased greatly and much to the better, I think. The competition for attention is fierce, and I think that has had a good effect on the quality of information. The best stuff thrives and, like cream, rises to the top.”

⁹ “Job Outlook,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/reporters-correspondents-and-broadcast-news-analysts.htm#tab-6>

¹⁰ Catharine M. Hamm, email to author, January 25, 2016.

¹¹ “Three Travel Editors Speak Their Mind,” Travel Writing 2.0, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://travelwriting2.com/three-travel-editors-speak-their-mind/>.

Today's Travel Journalism

Travel journalists today must go beyond writing reviews of festivals, museums, or hotels. They must explain what each of these things means to a culture. Travel writing is aimed toward tourists while travel journalism is for those who want to fully experience and understand other cultures. Hanusch and Fürsich said,

We define travel journalism as factual accounts that address audiences as consumers of travel or tourism experiences, by providing information and entertainment, but also critical perspectives. Travel journalism operates within the broader ethical framework of professional journalism, but with specific constraints brought on by the economic environment of its production.¹²

Hanusch and Fürsich continue to say that the terms “travel writing,” “travel literature,” and “travel journalism” are interchangeable. However, “the term ‘journalism’ for most people invokes certain norms and ideals.”¹³ They also say that there are different standards between travel journalism and other forms of travel writing. Travel writing more often includes “fictional elements and other literary license that would not be accepted in traditional news media,” and that travel journalism is “bound to professional ideals of journalism in its representation of distant places and people.”¹⁴

Travel journalism is not a collection of the author's reactions of their travel.

¹² Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Fürsich, eds., *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture* (Palsgrave Macmillan, 2014), accessed December 14, 2016, https://books.google.com/books?id=RWC0BAAAQBAJ&pg=PT17&lpg=PT17&dq=We+define+travel+journalism+as+factual+accounts+that+address+audiences+as+consumers+of+travel+or+tourism+experiences,+by+providing+information+and+entertainment,+but+also+critical+perspectives.+Travel+journalism+operates+within+the+broader+ethical+framework+of+professional+journalism,+but+with+specific+constraints+brought+on+by+the+economic+environment+of+its+production.&source=bl&ots=NPS2SIPyG_&sig=7EzpGxZ7uGgIMsPURbdkY1KGB2A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwilqu_SytXKAhXOxyYKHSUpDagQ6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q&f=false.

¹³ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 6.

Travel journalism should have an investigative component to it. In any case, it should offer a larger view of the place the story is about—not just something the author experienced. “All strong travel writing requires insight and perspective, but especially in the essay, you need to have thought and read about the theme in order to develop content worth writing.”¹⁵

A changing field

Travel journalism has changed drastically along with the rest of journalism. “With the proliferation of digital, we've had to become better storytellers as we adapt our craft to the platform. I'm not terribly visually intelligent, but now I need to be. I've upped my game. I've had to.”¹⁶ Hamm also says,

People don't learn in the same way (at least, conventional wisdom tells us that). Why in the world did we ever think there was just one way to convey journalism or tell a story? Because it was easier? Because the number of avenues was limited? Not sure of the answer. What I am sure of is that the world still loves a story, whether it's 2,000 words or 140 characters. We just have to open our craft to everyone.

The Importance of Travel Journalism

Travel journalists must realize that their writing could be about so much more than themselves. Travel journalism opens doors to countries that most people have never, or will never visit. Josh Johnson, a travel journalist for Matador Network, says, “I want what I write to matter. And by ‘matter’ I mean be important, relevant, timely, and meaningful to the community at large.” He is bothered by the fact that the majority of travel writing—professional and amateur alike—is mostly, “Personal adventures,

¹⁵ “Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles,” *Writer’s Digest*, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://www.writersdigest.com/qp7-migration-writers-digest-conference/travel-writing-excerpt>.

¹⁶ Catharine M. Hamm, email to author, January 25, 2016.

marketing couched as ‘destination pieces’, and ‘look-how-cool-my-trip-was’ essays.”¹⁷

Camilla Fuhr agreed. She, calling herself a travel writer, commented on the online article saying she likes articles that “takes them behind the facade of what you would normally experience on a trip”—something you can’t always get in a guidebook. She referenced one of her own stories, saying,

“When describing the ghosthouse, I wrote how the taxidriver reacted to the house; ‘Don’t stare up at it, you’ll go blind’ to show his fear of the unknown. Because who would have thought of a haunted house on a hill in Muscat when writing a travel clip?”¹⁸

Travel writing and travel journalism have two separate audiences. Travel writing is aimed at tourists, and travel journalism is aimed at travelers.

There is a difference between a traveler and tourist. A tourist is someone who visits all the sites designed for him. He sees what he expects to see. And the locals are “witnessed from a safe distance.”¹⁹ And because the stereotyped experience is what the tourist is seeking, anything besides that—what may be the authentic culture—is seen as a nuisance. A tourist does not strive to broaden his or her knowledge about a culture, or to experience anything not written in their guidebook.²⁰ A traveler interacts with locals.

Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon is a blogger and the former editor of *Caribbean Travel + Life*

¹⁷ “YOUR TRAVEL WRITING DOESN’T MATTER!” Matador Network, accessed December 21, 2016, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/your-travel-writing-doesnt-matter/>.

¹⁸ Camilla Fuhr, 2010, comment on Josh Johnson, “YOUR TRAVEL WRITING DOESN’T MATTER!” *Matador Network*, November 3, 2009, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/your-travel-writing-doesnt-matter/>.

¹⁹ “THE LAST ARTICLE ON THE TRAVELER/TOURIST DISTINCTION YOU’LL EVER READ,” Matador Network, accessed December 24, 2015, <http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/the-last-article-on-the-travelertourist-distinction-youll-ever-read/>.

²⁰ “THE LAST ARTICLE ON THE TRAVELER/TOURIST DISTINCTION YOU’LL EVER READ”

magazine. She is also a travel writer, but she too interacts with locals. She said, “I think the locals point of view and authentic content is critical to anyone who wants to be successful in the travel writing field, because why are they going to watch your video or read your article if it’s basically the same thing from a press release?”²¹

Karl Baedeker was known for his tourist books. He created a “star system” to rank attractions and cultural activities of a certain location. While Baedeker never gave tourist attractions high rankings, Boorstin writes,

Anyone who has toured with Baedeker knows the complacent feeling of having checked off all the starred attractions in any given place, or the frustration of having gone to great trouble and expense to see a sight only to discover afterward that it had not even rated a single asterisk...As Ivor Brown shrewdly observes, this star system has tended to produce star-gazers rather than explorers.²²

Because it is not the number of tourist sites, nor the number of checkmarks that line the margins of a guidebook that determine how much of a traveler a person is. It’s having an open mind to learn about a new culture, even if it disagrees with preconceived stereotypes. “What grants authentic discovery is opening your awareness.”²³

Travel is about being open to new experiences and new outlooks. A traveler becomes a tourist when they prefer, and even expect, that the travel experience caters to their preconceived notions.²⁴ Travel journalists must themselves keep an open mind and cater to those who are willing to do so. “The key to insight is dialogue: remaining open to

²¹ Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon, phone call to author, September 25, 2015.

²² Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: a guide to pseudo-events in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1961) 106.

²³ “THE LAST ARTICLE ON THE TRAVELER/TOURIST DISTINCTION YOU’LL EVER READ”

²⁴ “HOW CHANGING YOUR PERSPECTIVE MAKES ALL TRAVEL AN INNER JOURNEY,” Matador Network, accessed December 24, 2015, <http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/how-changing-your-perspective-makes-all-travel-an-inner-journey/>.

new ideas, tolerating difference, and helping one another see more.”²⁵

Aaron Huey walked across the United States, journaling as he went. He wanted to “Experience America without the clutter of life’s daily distractions, free of the judgments and preconceived notions that prevent us from really getting to know people.”²⁶ Huey said he had to consciously decide to keep an open mind each day, and that it wasn’t easy.

I want to be able to sit down with people and not have arguments. I want it to be a little easy. It’s really hard going into people’s worlds that were so foreign to me. I tried to go to the table ready to make adjustments to my view of reality with everyone I sat down with. But it took a lot of energy to stay that open-minded.²⁷

But keeping an open mind is the only way to learn about other ways of life. And it is imperative that travel journalists do so, in order to write a story that is factual and worth reading. And by doing so, they can write stories that decreases the feeling of “us” versus “them,” can increase cultural understanding, and increases an appreciation for what a traveler can experience—it broadens horizons and widens world views.

“Us” vs. “them”

It is easy to look at a person who is different, and have a “me” versus “them” attitude. It’s easy to think, “They don’t act like I do, so it must be wrong.” But when a person visits a place, and observes the life of the locals around them, they can begin to understand why the people living there act a certain way. Locals become less “alien” as travelers see the human side of them. Travel journalism pieces that revolve around this aspect of travel are sometimes written as narratives. But the problem with some of those

²⁵ “HOW CHANGING YOUR PERSPECTIVE MAKES ALL TRAVEL AN INNER JOURNEY”

²⁶ Stuart Eskenazi, “Walking Across America,” *Seattle Times*, April 25, 2005, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/walking-across-america/>.

²⁷ Stuart Eskenazi, “Walking Across America.”

stories is that it becomes author-focused. A comment on the article “Your Travel Writing Doesn’t Matter,” said,

I like reading travel accounts for the narrative unto itself. But it actually has to BE A NARRATIVE, with a conflict and rising and falling action. Describing some teahouse poetically does not a narrative make. There must be some sort of protagonist with interests at risk for me to read an essay about a place I do not want to visit myself.²⁸

A good example of a narrative is “Alive and Well in Pakistan: A Human Journey in a Dangerous Time,” by Ethan Casey. Casey follows a family of Pakistanis, and through telling their story, explores bigger issues Pakistan faces, as well as the intricacies of daily life there.²⁹ Giving accurate descriptions of the locals and their culture is important, especially for places that most people will never visit—like Pakistan. Hanusch and Fürsich said, “The most dominant concern of scholars studying travel journalism so far has been its role in representing other cultures and nations. The main purpose of travel journalism is to represent the Other.”³⁰ Travel journalism is also important because interest in “hard” international news is waning.³¹ However, they add, “media representations of ‘others’ remain decisive factors in this era of globalization,”—another reason accurate descriptions of locals and the culture is important. If a writer’s article is the only interaction a person has with a people and culture, that is what they understand

²⁸ Erin, 2010, comment on Josh Johnson, “YOUR TRAVEL WRITING DOESN’T MATTER!” *Matador Network*, November 3, 2009, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/your-travel-writing-doesnt-matter/>.

²⁹ Ethan Casey, *Alive and Well in Pakistan: A Human Journey in a Dangerous Time* (USA: Blue Ear Books, 2005).

³⁰ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 9.

³¹ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 6.

the people to be like. An incorrect depiction can lead to misunderstandings and an increased feeling of “us” versus “them.”

For example, Melissa Mitchell, a news editor for Inside Illinois said,

Picture this: You’re on vacation in Portugal, strolling through the winding streets of a quaint village, described in a travel story you read in your hometown newspaper as an “enchanted paradise . . . where time stands still.” Suddenly you witness two locals engaged in a loud, boisterous verbal exchange, which you perceive as some kind of argument.

She said that according to Carla Santos, a professor of leisure studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, that an American tourist would most likely get uncomfortable, thinking they were fighting. Mitchell said that the pair was probably having an animated discussion, but that the misconception is easy to understand:

That’s because, according to Santos, our perception of the culture is likely shaped by accounts of travel writers, who tend to perpetuate certain myths and stereotypes about tourist destinations, who rarely interact with natives of the culture, and as a result, portray countries and cultures in limited, unrealistic and sanitized terms.³²

Santos said that travel writers also tailor their writing to their audiences, playing off of and enforcing preconceived stereotypes. “The result, she said, is ‘negative effects for both sides’ – tourists as well as native populations.”³³

Examining travel journalism is also a strategy for analyzing the dynamics of globalization.³⁴ So, Hanusch and Fürsich said, instead of criticizing travel journalism as a lesser form of journalism, those stories can be used to spread cultural awareness and

³² “Travel writers tend to perpetuate cultural stereotypes for tourists,” Inside Illinois, accessed February 5, 2016, http://news.illinois.edu/ii/03/0821/08travel_P.html

³³ “Travel writers tend to perpetuate cultural stereotypes for tourists.”

³⁴ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 6.

understanding, as well as “examine what discourse is created within media representations of travel.”³⁵ Then, Hanusch and Fürsich say, we can examine assumptions held about a people—both culturally and ideologically. Travel journalism can play a part in correcting incorrect and damaging stereotypes and assumptions. As F. Daniel Harbecke said, “As the Global Village becomes more neighborly, the future will belong to the fluent – the ones able to accept the unknown and welcome it.”³⁶

Cultural understanding

As the world “shrinks” and business practices between companies across the globe become more common, it will become increasingly important to understand other cultures. Understanding other cultures can reduce miscommunication faux pas in everyday life, as well as in business, where one slip up can ruin a business deal that took months of planning. For example, it is considered rude in Japan to write notes on business cards exchanged during meetings. Entrepreneur Will Tindall learned this the hard way. He was meeting with a senior executive at a bank in Japan. After receiving his card, Tindall began making notes on the back of the card, until he saw his host’s reaction.

At that point I saw this guy’s face change to a very strange shade of red. My actions went down incredibly badly. Although I was giving this business card lots of respect, the idea of writing on it was definitely frowned upon. When I went to leave and try to shake his hand, he turned his back on me. It was embarrassing but then I quickly realised [sic] that was also because they don’t really shake hands.³⁷

Using humor in travel journalism is a good way to share with readers how to avoid faux

³⁵ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 6.

³⁶ “THE LAST ARTICLE ON THE TRAVELER/TOURIST DISTINCTION YOU’LL EVER READ”

³⁷ Matthew Jenkin, “Cultural complexity: the etiquette of doing business abroad,” *The Guardian*, October 27, 2014, accessed January 25, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/oct/27/cultural-etiquette-doing-business-abroad>.

pas like these, because reading about someone else's cultural mistakes is entertaining.

“Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles” says,

They'll absorb the author's travel-related mistakes and learn what not to do, perhaps even feel a tad smug at the hapless writer's errors. Confronting prejudices and misunderstandings can be funny, if we the writers are willing to be honest and humble about our mistakes and illuminate the larger issues through humor.³⁸

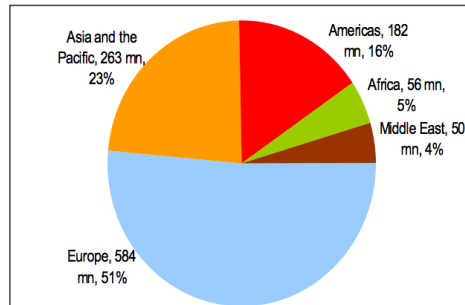
Not only can understanding a culture reduce miscommunications in business, but also between a traveler and a local. Americans enjoy traveling, and receive a fair amount of tourists each year. The United States is a “hotbed for both outbound and inbound tourism spending.”³⁹ By having reliable travel journalism, Americans can better interact with people from other countries, whether visiting a different country, or interacting with a foreigner that is visiting the United States.

Overall, Europe as a region receives the most tourists per year—at 584 million a year. It also receives the most tourism dollars.

³⁸ “Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles”

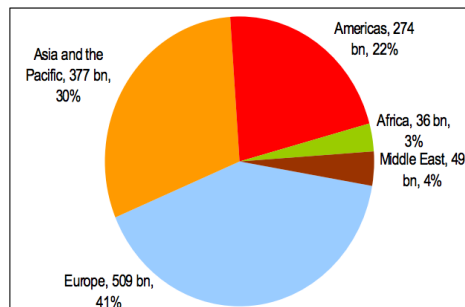
³⁹ Dan Peltier, “4 Key Charts That Show the Rapid Demographic Shifts in Global Tourism,” *Skift*, August 6, 2015, accessed January 25, 2016, <http://skift.com/2015/08/06/4-key-charts-that-show-the-rapid-demographic-shifts-in-global-tourism/>.

World Inbound Tourism
International Tourist Arrivals, 2014* (million)



Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©

World: Inbound Tourism
International Tourism Receipts, 2014* (US\$ billion)



Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©

Figure 2: World Inbound Tourism; World Tourism Organization

However, when broken down by country, the United States receives the most money from inbound tourism.

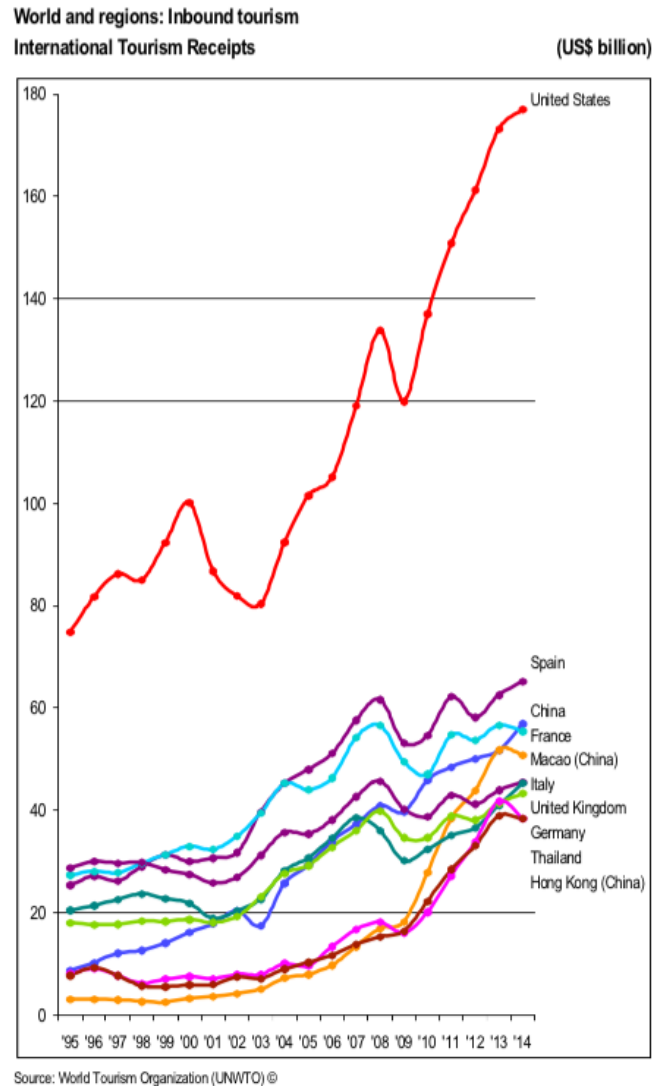


Figure 3: World and regions: Inbound Tourism; Source: World Tourism Organization

And while France had the most international visitors, the number is starting to plateau, while the number of international visitors to the United States is increasing rapidly.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Dan Peltier, “4 Key Charts That Show the Rapid Demographic Shifts in Global Tourism.”

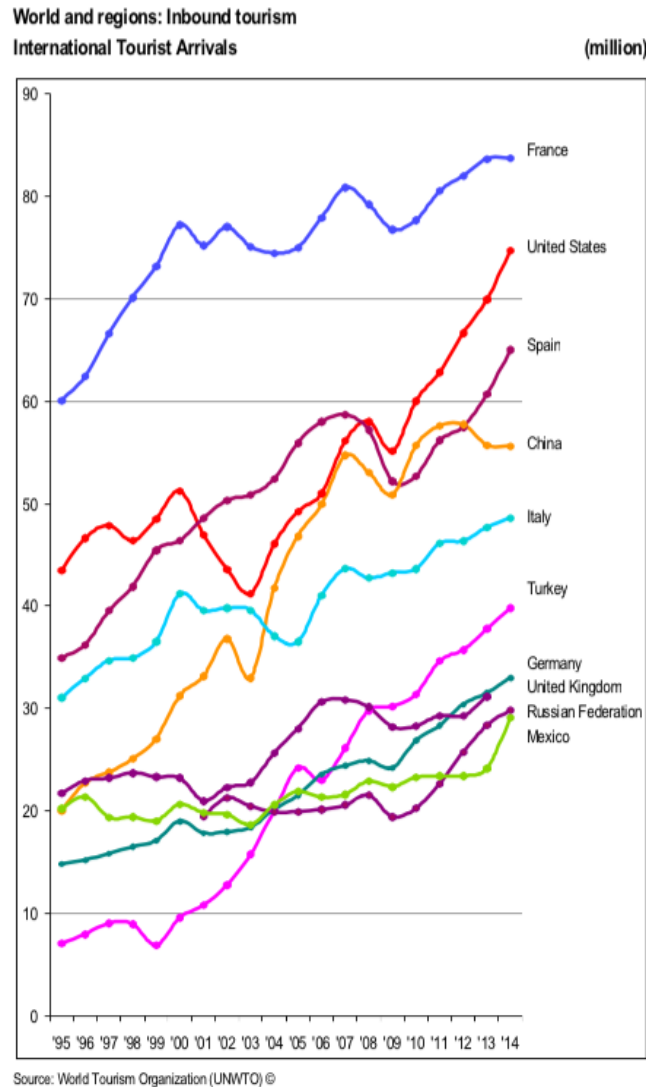


Figure 4: World and regions: Inbound tourism; Source: World Tourism Organization

Americans also enjoy traveling abroad. Foreign travel planning has changed within the past 20 years with the rise of the digital age. Now, people can plan their own trips via online websites.

Twenty years ago, researching a trip was done in the library, in the travel sections of the newspaper, and in travel agencies. Purchasing guidebooks like Lonely Planet were crucial to planning, as they offered personal testimonials from seasoned travel writers. Keeping abreast of the political and economic climates of

countries was done by contacting government organisations [sic] directly or via the news media.⁴¹

And the traditional tourist destinations are losing their hold on that title. “Developing countries account for 40% of all international tourist arrivals and spending in these countries claims about half of all international tourist spending.”⁴² This is why travel journalism is important: it brings a cultural awareness to places that have not historically been visited as often. This is especially important as foreign travel increases. “We've seen the dramatic rise of low-fare bus travel; the increased outsourcing from mainline airlines to regional carriers; and the upsurge in cruising.”⁴³

An increased appreciation

Since travel journalism has an investigative aspect to it, it can bring greater meaning to a place for a reader who eventually travels there. Knowing the problems a country faces, and understanding the different points of view can help explain to a traveler why the country's government or citizens might act a certain way. It reminds readers that a foreign country is not just a fun, mystical place to visit, but a land with problems and issues all its own.

Two types of travel articles that can help with this exploration are designation articles and even food and travel articles. “Destination articles explore the place within the structure of the story themes.”⁴⁴ For example, a story centered on car racing, driving

⁴¹ “THE 6 MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN TRAVEL IN THE LAST 20 YEARS,” Matador Network, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/6-significant-changes-travel-last-20-years/>.

⁴² “4 Key Charts That Show the Rapid Demographic Shifts in Global Tourism.”

⁴³ Bill McGee, “10 biggest changes in travel in the past 10 years,” *USA Today*, April 24, 2013, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/columnist/mcgee/2013/04/24/10-biggest-changes-in-travel-in-the-past-10-years/2107309/>.

⁴⁴ “Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles.”

lessons, and Italy's racecar industry offers opportunities to educate about historical landmarks and social history.⁴⁵ Food and travel articles also are ways to show a culture. Food and travel articles are not restaurant reviews. Instead, they discuss the cultural practices around the food, and the creation thereof.⁴⁶ The locals often have the best advice on where to find the best food.

One of the pleasures of food and travel writing is that you can start with no information; just follow your nose. Aromas will lead you to an innovative kitchen and the chef within just might share the names of a local olive oil press, chili grower, curry blender, or wine cellar. Ask questions that provoke more detailed stories. Ask for recipes if the opportunity arises.⁴⁷

While the food itself might be worth mentioning in an article, it is the feeling of the atmosphere around it that is especially worth sharing with readers. Jan Morris believes that print travel journalists do this better than television travel journalists. She says that television allows people to see what foreign countries look like. But what television does not show is the feeling of a place. She says,

What they feel like is something else, and in a profounder sense the best travel writers are not really writing about travel at all. They are recording the effects of places or movements upon their own particular temperaments—recording the experience rather than the event, as they might make literary use of a love affair, an enigma or a tragedy.⁴⁸

It is impossible to fully understand the character of a place by watching it on television. Or even if someone visits the country or city, they will not understand the culture of it by visiting solely tourist sites.

E.M. Forster set out to write a guidebook of Alexandria, Egypt in 1922. His most

⁴⁵ "Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles."

⁴⁶ "Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles."

⁴⁷ "Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles."

⁴⁸ "The Allure of Travel Writing."

memorable advice was “to wander aimlessly about.” However, Morris says, he was anything but aimless. “It is their technique that is aimless, not their purpose. They know exactly what they are doing, and the result is something far more complex and profound than mere wandering.”⁴⁹

Well-written travel journalism also battles the fictional accounts written by travel bloggers and travel writers. In addition to providing facts about hotel accommodations—whether good or bad—or informing readers if a location is worth their time and money, travel journalism fights overly dramatized reports written by bloggers. Axel Bruns says the biggest challenge for journalism is the amount of amateur writers passing their stories off as thoughtful travel journalism, and that a similar situation is happening in mainstream news.⁵⁰ Anyone can blog, but not everyone is a trained journalist. Travel journalism is about more than describing a city. A comment on “Your Travel Writing Doesn’t Matter,” said,

Travel writing, at its best, allows both the writer and the reader to better understand the world and their place in it. Some of the comments bring up the consequences of travel and social responsibility. This is something that I think travel writing, as an industry, has to start addressing more. To be relevant to readers, our writing has to answer the question, "Why should I care?"

The commenter also said,

I find a lot of travel pieces I read irritate, instead of inspire with their abundance of adjectives and clichéd tugs at the traveler's imagination. If I read one more travel article about Hanoi or Bangkok or (insert any city in the developing world)

⁴⁹ “The Allure of Travel Writing.”

⁵⁰ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 8.

as ‘bustling’ ‘vibrant’ or ‘at the crossroads of modernity and tradition’, I’ll hit someone with my knock-off Japanese motorbike.⁵¹

Susan Orlean wrote a piece for *Smithsonian Magazine* about a trip to Morocco. In order to create a factual piece that informs but isn’t boring or “just a review” of the place, she creates a metaphor about Morocco and a donkey. She says,

This encounter was a decade ago, on my first trip to Fez, and even amid the dazzle of images and sounds you are struck with in Morocco—the green hills splattered with red poppies, the gorgeous tiled patterning on every surface, the keening call from the mosques, the swirl of Arabic lettering everywhere—the donkey was what stayed with me. It was that stoic expression, of course. But even more, it was seeing, in that moment, the astonishing commingling of past and present—the timeless little animal, the medieval city and the pile of electronics—that made me believe that it was possible for time to simultaneously move forward and stand still. In Fez, at least, that seems to be true.⁵²

She is not only thinking about “donkeyness,” but also the relationship between the animals and the people of North Africa.⁵³ This narrative is a good example of how to describe the atmosphere of a place without making the story a “review.” She explores bigger issues through telling about a donkey—something that is central to life in Morocco.

Dangers

The ethics of travel journalism versus travel writing are very different. Travel writing does not hold up to the same standard as travel journalism. Travel writers are not bound

⁵¹ mel_bk, 2010, comment on Josh Johnson, “YOUR TRAVEL WRITING DOESN’T MATTER!” *Matador Network*, November 3, 2009, <http://matadornetwork.com/notebook/your-travel-writing-doesnt-matter/>.

⁵² Susan Orlean, “Morocco’s Extraordinary Donkeys,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 2009, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/moroccos-extraordinary-donkeys-40973739/?no-ist>

⁵³ “The Allure of Travel Writing”

by the rules of objectivity. Travel writers can accept media trips, flaunt a travel destination in the hopes of receiving free hotel stays, and their stories are not investigative in nature. Travel journalists cannot accept media trips, or accept any “freebies” that might sway their writing, and must strive to be as non-biased and objective as possible.

Media trips

One of the main differences between a travel writer and a travel journalist is the accepting of media trips. A media trip is paid for by a hotel to host writers in hopes of receiving positive coverage. For example, Australia has a visiting journalists’ program, and the nation targets countries from which Australia hopes to receive tourists.⁵⁴ However, accepting any “freebie” is hugely unethical in the journalism world. Some travel journalists and travel editors argue that media trips are okay to accept as long as the author clearly states that the trip was paid for. However, does a free trip subconsciously affect their writing, regardless? Greaves-Gabbadon does not think so. She says that hotels know that good writing is not guaranteed. If she does have a bad experience, she does not mention anything about the hotel in her article—good or bad.

Then again, Alexander Eliot says that travel sponsors never overtly ask for positive coverage. He said, “Never was I asked to soften or sweeten anything I wrote, nor did any sponsor ask me for special treatment.”⁵⁵ But according to Hanusch in “The

⁵⁴ Folker Hanusch, “The geography of travel journalism: Mapping the flow of travel stories about foreign countries,” *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 1, (2013): 63

⁵⁵ Alexander Eliot, “A cure for skepticism about travel journalism,” *Editor & Publisher* 127, no. 46 (November 12, 1994), pg. 56,
<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=14&sid=e3ce0a24-0222-4019-ab7c-13249b893db1%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4113&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWNvb2tpZSxp>

Dimensions of Travel Journalism,” there is also covert pressure. He says receiving a free trip may cause a journalist to write only positive things so that they may be “asked back on another trip, or the sponsor does not withdraw their advertising.”⁵⁶

Media trips are not new. Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, and Lewis and Clark all had sponsored trips. However, hotels or tourism companies did not sponsor their trips. Talking about Columbus, David Page said, “Had the ambitious Genoan’s ships and provisions been paid for by the Bahamas Tourism Bureau, his reports on the natives might have been filed with a slightly different tint.”⁵⁷ A more modern example is David Foster Wallace’s story in *Harper’s Magazine* about a \$3,000 cruise he failed to enjoy. The magazine paid for the trip, but would his story have sounded different if Celebrity Cruises, Inc. had paid for his trip? Page said, “Would he have found himself tempering his irreverence ever so slightly had the trip been paid for by Celebrity Cruises, Inc.? Or would he have been able to spin it into even more hilarity?”⁵⁸ Portray the good and bad about a place. Not only is this informative journalism, but it adds character to a story.

Don’t take anything for granted. Lessons you learn in your travels can become the nucleus for travel advice articles. Your chagrin becomes the genesis of a story. Experiences like running out of gas in the desert, missing transport connections, or being stopped by a traffic cop in another country are part of real travel and the sort of anecdotes to include. The trip where nothing goes wrong isn’t a learning experience.⁵⁹

cCx1aWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZlJnNjb3BIPXNpdGU%3d#AN=9411293801&db=f5h (accessed November 2, 2015).

⁵⁶ Hanusch, *The Dimensions of Travel Journalism*, 52

⁵⁷ “DO FREEBIES UNDERMINE HONESTY IN TRAVEL WRITING?” Matador Network, accessed January 24, 2016, <http://harpers.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/HarpersMagazine-1996-01-0007859.pdf>.

⁵⁸ “DO FREEBIES UNDERMINE HONESTY IN TRAVEL WRITING?”

⁵⁹ “Getting Started: Types of Travel Articles”

Local representations

Travel journalists must also write about locals factually in their stories. Travel journalists must be wary of overdramatizing festivals and cultural celebrations. Do not write purely to fulfill a reader's stereotype of a place. Indulging stereotypes does not only happen in print. Travel television shows do this too. The locals dramatize a festival for the camera, and the journalist shows it. But what is being shown is not an accurate portrayal of the festival or the culture. Hanusch and Fürisch said travel journalism presents "a friendly and celebratory, albeit exoticizing and stereotypical discourse of the Other."⁶⁰ They add that studies in the field of marketing in tourism show that news media reporters influence the images tourists have of a location. So showing accurate portrayals of locals is important, and travel journalists must realize that an overly dramatized festival is not the true culture. Therefore, when writing travel journalism, talking to locals is also imperative. Ask them if the certain festival is usually so dramatized. While travel writers can be satisfied with surface-level material suited for tourists, travel journalists must not be fooled.

Writing styles

When writing a travel piece, find narratives, anecdotes, and quotes from other travelers to paint a picture of the location. This offers another angle from the author's perspective. A problem with travel writing is that it focuses around the author as opposed to the location or the locals. Travel writings are more similar to a travel diary, or a reactionary piece. Hanusch says "Such journalists were mostly interested in the experience of travelling [sic], citing the excitement and fun of that endeavour [sic]." He also says, "Some travel journalists were motivated by the ability to travel, a value they aimed to pass on to their

⁶⁰ Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Zürich, *Travel Journalism: Exploring Production, Impact, and Culture*, p. 8.

audience by inspiring them to travel. This type of motivation could perhaps be linked to a typology of an uncritical tourist.”⁶¹

Contrarily, travel journalists visit a location not as a “tourist,” but as an “anti-tourist” or “post-tourist.”⁶² According to Hanusch, Lieschke says that travel journalists see themselves as providers of practical information. They see themselves as “service providers”—which aligns with a journalist’s public service ideals.⁶³ These journalists dug deeper than the surface of issues they were reporting. They examine cultures anthropologically. These journalists act as mediators to other cultures, which is evermore important in our globalized world. That being said, Hanusch says, travel journalists should be more aware of impact their portrayals of a place can have.⁶⁴

Emily Mathieson is the Word of Mouth editor at *Condé Nast Traveller*. She said having a passion for travel and being able to string a sentence together does not a travel journalist make. Travel journalists must be able to determine what is fact versus fiction, and inform readers about a location in ways that travel books don’t. “If it’s already in a guidebook, what are you adding to it?”⁶⁵

For example, “The Walking Tour through Stockholm” is travel writing because it doesn’t have any investigative components to it, and it does not give the reader a clearer view and understanding of the Swedish culture.

This tour begins with visits to museums highlighting Stockholm’s medieval and royal history and continues through the streets of Gamla Stan, ending on the

⁶¹ Hanusch, *The Dimensions of Travel Journalism*, 51

⁶² Hanusch, *The Dimensions of Travel Journalism*, 9

⁶³ Hanusch, *The Dimensions of Travel Journalism*, 9

⁶⁴ Hanusch, *The Dimensions of Travel Journalism*, 5

⁶⁵ Emily Mathieson, “Breaking into travel journalism: advice from the experts,” *Condé Nast Traveller*, January 3, 2012, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/careers/breaking-into-travel-journalism>.

island of Riddarholmen. It is broken into sections for those who have limited time or simply want to sample different locations along the route. You can easily take a full day if you visit all the sights included.⁶⁶

It's sole purpose is to list tourist attractions. Like the name suggests, it is a walking tour—something that someone could find in a guidebook. There are no quotes from anyone other than the author—no viewpoints from locals or fellow travelers.⁶⁷

However, travel journalism of the same city looks a little different. "The top six ways the US and Sweden differ" is travel journalism, because it broadens the readers' knowledge of the cultural differences between the two countries. It gives specific examples for each of its six categories, and is educational beyond a list of places to visit.

Much of my time in Sweden was spent surrounded by many bicyclists or ensconced on trains and buses. All of that vanished upon returning to my home in America. My US environment features transport in large automobiles with mass transit an infrequently available option and bicycling a far less widespread activity.

In Sweden, ownership of two cars marks a household as economically elite. Not so in the US, still very much a "car culture." Our two-car garage in Minnesota is the smallest on our street.⁶⁸

This article is beneficial to someone to wants to visit the country because it helps them to better understand the culture, beyond knowing the touristy "what to do" and "what not to do."⁶⁹

Keeping the standard

Organizations exist to maintain a code of ethics among travel journalists and travel writers. Two such organizations are the North American Travel Journalists Association

⁶⁶ "A Walking Tour of Stockholm's Old Town," RealScandinavia.com, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://realscandinavia.com/a-walking-tour-of-stockholms-old-town/>.

⁶⁷ "A Walking Tour of Stockholm's Old Town."

⁶⁸ "The top six ways the US and Sweden differ," TheLocal.se, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://www.thelocal.se/20140729/the-top-six-ways-the-us-and-sweden-differ>

⁶⁹ "The top six ways the US and Sweden differ."

(NATJA) and the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW). NATJA keeps a code of ethics similar to the ones Baedeker abided by. Part of its code reads,

Content should be precise, factual, and unbiased. If expressing a personal opinion, it should be clearly stated as such. Members should remain objective and relevant whenever possible. No member should publish information about a subject about which they lack first-hand knowledge unless the member uses sources that are believed reliable and material is fact-checked to the best of their ability.⁷⁰

Similarly, SATW says one of their purposes is to “promote responsible journalism.”⁷¹ The organization also says, “No member shall publish information about a destination about which he or she has no first-hand knowledge unless the member uses reliable sources of information.”⁷² However, neither NATJA nor SATW bars its members from going on media, or press, trips. NATJA only says that those on the trip must pay for anything extra that is not provided by the host. SATW says the same, but its code of ethics also adds that members cannot lie about going on such trips. “No member shall deliberately misrepresent his or her participation in a press trip in order to secure an editorial assignment.”⁷³ It also says, “SATW members should maintain the highest standards of professionalism on press trips” and that no member can accept payment or “courtesies” for positive coverage. The organization also does not accept stories that appear to be paid

⁷⁰ North American Travel Journalists Association, “North American Travel Journalists Association Code of Ethics,” North American Travel Journalists, <http://www.natja.org/code-of-ethics> (accessed November 15, 2015).

⁷¹ Society of American Travel Writers, “Who We Are,” Society of American Travel Writers, <http://www.satw.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3268> (accessed November 15, 2015).

⁷² Society of American Travel Writers, “Who We Are,” Society of American Travel Writers, <http://www.satw.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3268> (accessed November 15, 2015).

⁷³ Society of American Travel Writers, “Code of Ethics,” Society of American Travel Writers, <http://www.satw.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3268> (accessed November 15, 2015).

advertising. Further, SATW does not allow members to be compensated for their stories with a cruise, airfare, or other travel experience from the host—which they call “pay-to-play revenue strategies.”⁷⁴

Both the NATJA and the SATW include writers, photojournalists, editors, and producers, among other fields. It also includes bloggers. Bloggers are a breed all their own, according to Richards. She said social media and blogging is the biggest thing that has changed during her time as a travel journalist. Professional bloggers use advertisements on their sites, and choose what to write based on what is popular that week, not necessarily what is newsworthy. Richards said they often will do a “Top 10” list story based on the top ten keywords of the week. Also, bloggers are not bound by journalistic ethics. They make money from their blogs, and do not submit articles to publications, like other writers. And since many publications will not accept work done on a press trip, this may deter writers from accepting the press trips. But many bloggers do not face this obstacle. Richards also said that professional bloggers “tend to get a lot of things for free...and most of the time they’ll straight out say that.” She also said they are supposed to mention when they were given a free trip, but they do not always do so. Freelancers are required by the SATW to tell publishers if they wrote a story from a press trip, but bloggers are their own publishers, so this rule does not apply to them.⁷⁵ Instead of giving the public the information they need to know, as journalists do, bloggers give readers what they want to know—based on the pop culture of the week.

⁷⁴ “Code of Ethics,” Society of American Travel Writers.

⁷⁵ Society of American Travel Writers, “Code of Ethics,” Society of American Travel Writers, <http://www.satw.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3268> (accessed November 15, 2015).

Most importantly, bloggers generally are not obsessed with the truth;⁷⁶”The blogger, who isn’t necessarily committed to objectivity or other journalistic standards will certainly attempt to shed light on the facts as he or she sees them; however, without years of training to beat down one’s own personal bias, it’s almost impossible to see data other than through the lens of one’s beliefs.”⁷⁷ Journalism is a truth-finding field. Bending the facts to fit one’s idea of the truth is not journalism.

Conclusion

Travel journalism is an old writing form, but one that has offshoots that no longer tell facts and inform readers of lands afar. Instead, they tell embellished accounts of festivals, resorts, and paid-for trips. Travel journalism must stay factual and strive to be non-biased in order to decrease the feeling of “us” versus “them” among peoples, reduce miscommunications—whether in business or between locals and travelers—and to help readers understand the culture and importance of a place they visit. In a world that more often than not stands divided rather than united, travel journalism can be used to bridge the divides. However, it must be remembered that travel journalism is not travel writing, and travel blogs are not always journalism. A travel journalist must go beyond writing reviews of a festival, museum, or hotel and bring—as much as possible—the authentic feeling, culture, and character of a people and a place to their readers.

⁷⁶ Jolie O’Dell, “How to Tell a Journalist from a Blogger,” Jolie O’Dell, <https://jolieodell.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/how-to-tell-a-journalist-from-a-blogger/> (accessed November 1, 2015).

⁷⁷ “How to Tell A Journalist from a Blogger”

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