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The hidden gem that is Kenya

A research examining the representation of Kenya via travel blogs by domestic tourists

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Introduction

Since 2010, there is a significant rise in attention to domestic tourism in Kenya. The realisation arose that domestic tourism can, to some extent, stabilize revenue flows in low seasons (Kihima 30). Additionally, it is also a beneficial contributor to inter-ethnic dialogue. By replacing money streams from richer areas to the less-developed areas, it leads to a form of tourism that assures income by operating in the low season as well. One way of actively promoting this type of tourism is through domestic travel bloggers. They share their experience of travelling in the home country and they are promoting the less visited spots and thereby show that there is 'more than meets the eye'.

Tourism in Kenya has blossomed over the years, but has also endured many changes. Originally, the country had to rely mostly on international tourists. It was not that domestic tourists did not exist, they simply were not the focus. Domestic tourism is defined as "travelling within one's own within one's own country for the purpose of leisure or pleasure" (Kihima 26). Before, this type of tourism was never paid much attention to, as international arrivals would bring in much more money (Kihima 22). Tourism in Kenya dates back to the colonial era, where the first explorers would describe and maintain a certain image in their travelogues. Here, they would be posing Kenyans as the 'Other', which is a term that is negatively toned and is posed as inferior. Furthermore, the travellers see themselves as more civilised, reassuring their moral superiority (Middleton 66). The concept of 'Othering' is closely related to travel blogging, because these travelogues of male explorers were the first type of documented stories, as they are known today in online form. The developing digital age, has caused an unforeseeable change in the way the tourism industry is designed. People, ideas, information and capital have greater mobility than ever, and the tourism industry is severely impacted by this (Li and Zhao 204). Currently, travel stories and photos are being shared immediately via the web, wherein blogs are a popular medium to do so.

Since Kenya gained independence in 1963, many changes have taken place in the country, also in tourism. Some 20 years ago, various tourism-related problems revealed that the tourism sector needed to be decentralized, and there was a need for a different strategy that would involve more local decision-making (Akama 102). Until then, locals received little benefits from tourism, and the focus was on international tourism, maintained by western tourism agencies (Kihima 33). In 1984, the government installed a tourism policy, encouraging residents to participate in tourism and travel (Kihima 22). There were several reasons to do this, but the main goal was to preserve tourism seasonality. If tourism is in operation all year round, it guarantees productivity and thus jobs in the low season.

International tourists are tourists that visit from abroad, calculated by international arrivals each year in the peak season, from June to August and from November to January. (Kihima 23). International tourists only visit certain well-established attractions. The reason for this is that the image that was made of Kenya by the first European settlers is maintained to this day (Middleton 65). Hence, the alluring question is if this would differ from Kenyan tourists travelling in their own country, and how. Would they visit the same established touristic sites, or would they show truly unique 'off the beaten track' locations?

Another part of the active promotion of tourism, was uncovering less visited areas in Kenya. For this, infrastructural developments and plans had to be made. Within this process, international tourism remained the focus. However incorrectly, the assumption was made that domestic tourism is similar to international tourism (Kihima 24). This could mean that in their promotion, there was not much distinction between the targeting of domestic and international tourists. According to Odiara Kihima, it " shows that domestic tourism may actually be reproducing and appropriating the existing patterns of travel as exemplified by international tourism." (Kihima 26) while the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) conducted a study that showed that there were more similarities in travel behaviour

between international and domestic tourists. This reinforces the assumption that domestic tourists share an interest in the same destinations as international clients (Kihima 27). As domestic and international tourists are being targeted in the same way, one could wonder how domestic tourists approach their travels and what they undertake on a trip. How would they describe the experiences in their own country?

Over the past few years, there has been a fierce debate going on about the role of travel writers and travel writing. Some commentators see it as a damaging way to introduce mass tourism in remote places, while others see it as an opportunity for "encouraging behavioural change" (Frost et. al 1402). At the heart of this debate, lies the question what the responsibilities of the travel writer are, and what their role should be when documenting while travelling, encountering the Other. Ruth Lister defines Othering as a "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between us and them, through which social distance is established and maintained." (Cited in Jensen 65). Since this Othering originated from colonial times, one could wonder if this course of action is still present in the 21st century, or if new models have emerged. It is important to determine the differences and the significance of their role in portraying the Other in contemporary online travel writing. Especially when taking the perspective of domestic tourists. Another valuable concept stemming from the Empire is auto-exoticism, which reproduces forms of representation popular in the West (Zahlner 540). This phenomenon can be seen in the Shanghai Expo of 2010. Here, stereotypical images of countries were amplified through "performed cultural nationalisms" (Winter 70). Auto-exoticism could be seen as profiting and anticipating a western audience. Ultimately it functions as a pretext, through which writers try to convey ways of re-appropriation and re-imagination of cultural identity.Due to the development of the internet and digital technology, the world became more connected and travel stories and photos easier to access. As the world develops regarding travelling, the tourism sector also

develops.

For this research, it is important to find out how domestic travel writers are representing themselves, their country, but also how they position themselves in relation to the Other. How these things are represented in their online blogs tells a lot about the type of tourism they undertake. Furthermore, it is interesting to see if they follow the established tourist locations, like KIPPRA would expect, or if they visit lesser known sites. The question that arises is if domestic tourism is any different from international tourism and how this is displayed. This issue will be investigated within this study, with the following research question:

How do domestic tourists in Kenya represent their country and fellow countrymen through travel blogs?

The phenomenon that is studied in this thesis has a focus around Kenyan travel writers writing about their own country. It is a fact that what fuels international tourism activity is not uniformity but differences, otherness, contrasts, novelty and fresh experiences (Kihima 36). Domestic tourists exploring their own country would therefore be interesting to examine, as they would already experience less 'Otherness'.

Taking Kenya as an example is a compelling choice, because it is a country with a rich culture and a lot of different developments over the years when it comes to tourism. At the core of travel writing lies "the negotiation between the self and the other that is brought about by movement in space." (Thompson 9) Since domestic tourism is growing and of increasing importance for the country, it is interesting to see how this plays out in travel writing.

More and more people see the benefits and possibilities of domestic tourism, and therefore it is also really important to research the motives and perspectives of these people, as they gain ground in the tourism industry of Kenya (Akama 104).

Literature review

Travel writing

Literature on the subjects of this research shows us various points of insight. First, it is important to look at the origin of travel writing. The possibility of travelling to other countries, was and still is, mostly a privilege for the wealthy (Sintobin 223). Travel writing is defined by Carl Thompson as "a record or product of an encounter between the self and the Other, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference it entails" (Thompson 10). It can include an actual narration of events, but it can also be an account of the new information that is acquired through travelling. Thus the perspective and 'lens' of the travel writer is important here. There are two implications of travel writing: It describes unfamiliar cultures and countries, but says just as much about the person who is writing the travelogue (assumptions used, thoughts, and culture).

From this, it can already be deduced that the 'Other' plays a ubiquitous role in the art of travel writing, which is as old as man's quest for exploring new lands. Columbus' voyages started a European expansion into lesser-known lands. These travels were not motivated by curiosity and desire for cultural enrichment, but were more about expanding opportunities for the first forms of colonization (Thompson 41). The published travel accounts served as information sources and nothing more.

Travel blogs

Today, online travel stories are an important tool through which bloggers construct and negotiate their identities (Gretzel and Lee 38). Travel blogs can be defined as: online diaries or personal journals for anyone to view online, having the additional function of two-way interaction. Online blogs function as a forum, where travel experiences are shared and information is provided. Furthermore, travelogues can be a means of expressing a cultural identity, characterised by common traits of members of a certain (social) group (Gretzel and Lee 39). In contemporary online travel writing, an increasingly more intercultural

communication narrative is formed due to globalization. Herein, only a selected few bloggers (mostly wealthy and privileged) get to describe their own perspectives. According to Jonathan Friedman, this group incorporate a type of international cosmopolitanism that deals with consumption and appropriation (Santos 625). These select few, referring to mostly the wealthy and privileged, incorporate according to Jonathan Friedmann a type of international cosmopolitanism that deals with consumption and appropriation (Cited in Santos 639). However, Debbie Lisle states an opposing view, saying that travel writers are aware of the legacy of the Empire, and try to distance themselves from it (Lisle 4). They try to embrace and take advantage of the possibilities that come with rapidly increasing globalisation.

Travel and tourism organisations that use blogs on their websites as a form of destination marketing, should consider the cultural differences in blogging-related needs and activities (Gretzel and Lee 50). For example, it depends on what country you are from and what cultural traits are at play. Looking at travel writing done by inhabitants, it becomes clear that Kenya is a country with a collectivistic culture. This can be concluded due to the focus they lay on relationships, and their interdependence on their nation and fellow countrymen (Triandis 909). People from collectivistic countries might not seek out direct interactions with the marketeers through this medium but more with their in-groups. Thus, blog postings might not be seen as particularly relevant unless they provide opportunities for conversations and relationship building (Gretzel and Lee 50).

Tourism and social media

Tourism and social media are always closely linked to one another. The travel blogs under study are a form of social media that by the continuous evolution of the internet, became a sharing place where people become senders as well as receivers of information, thus become part of the media themselves (Buhalis et. al. 3). This form of User Generated Content (UGC) means "online information in the form of text, videos, graphics and photos that have been

posted by other users or experienced travellers" (Adzharudin and Manap 53). UGC is an important stakeholder when it comes to the tourism industry, because it is helping to attract potential guests and increase the online presence of a destination (Buhalis et. al. 4). More specifically, travel blogs are a helpful tool as they more honestly reflect the thoughts and needs of tourists. This can help Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to identify attractive features.

Moreover, it was indicated that the internet plays an important role in the decision-making process when planning a trip (Adzharudin and Manap 52). Some agree that UGC should be considered and utilised as an official marketing effort, as it helps to increase domestic and international tourism (Adzharudin and Manap 53). The importance of further research into UGC is also emphasised by Gary Akehurst, as it can also help educate tourism consumers and gain more credibility than traditional marketing and websites (55). Opinions regarding this are divided. Serena Volo is unconvinced of the influential powers of travel blogs. Stating that "traveller blogs lack the 'essence' component in their description of a trip" (Cited in Lange-Faria 199). Anita Wenger on the other hand says that "many blog authors display the same characteristics as actual visitors." (Cited in Lange-Faria 200). By this, again referring to the increased credibility and authority of the speaker over the behaviour of the traveller

The scholars discussed here, see the modern travel writers as having improved in their writing when it comes to representing the Other. Furthermore, travel blogs can be seen as a form of expressing the own identity, and due to rapid globalisation, travel writers are becoming more and more aware of how to deal with the legacy of the empire when visiting other countries. Overall, they agree that UGC is promising, but there is still a gap in knowledge on how to use blogging to its full potential for the advertisement of certain destinations. What these studies do not really go into, is differences between domestic and

international tourism. Likewise, the sharing of blogs and thereby expressing cultural identity, is under highlighted when it comes to domestic tourists. These travelogues contain a lot of inside information. That is why it is interesting to examine this.

Theoretical framework

This part discusses key concepts and related issues, that are used throughout the thesis. They create an important foundation to understand the context of the research topic and the analysis of the whole thesis.

Othering

It is established that Othering is inherently connected to travel writing. Various studies mention Othering when the origin of travel writing is influenced by colonialism (as explained before). During imperial times, travel writing had an ideological cause (Thompson 5). When colonies ceased to exist, power structures were still reinforced and visible in travelogues. Awareness of colonial constructions only became present to a certain extent in later times. According to Thompson, the meaning of Othering is to claim a certain identity for yourself, using others to shape your own identity (Thompson 125). The core of travelling is also about negotiating between the self and the 'Other'. John Ross said:

> "Othering simply denotes the process by which the members of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and the members of another culture. In a stronger sense, however, it has come to refer more specifically to the processes and strategies by which one culture depicts another culture as not only different but also inferior to itself." (Cited in Thompson 132)

This definition has a negative focus on the inferiority of the Other. On the contrary, Henry Stanley states a definition of Othering where cultural development is emphasised, but still cultural superiority is present (Stanley). Othering has a function, but in neo-colonial times either positive or negative representations of the 'Other' maintain an unequal power dynamic between Western countries and the rest of the world, even until now.

Gayatri Spivak had looked at Othering in colonial times through three different dimensions (Cited in Jensen 64). He agrees that early postcolonial writing can be seen as a

reference point for Othering (64). However, he focuses mainly on the colonial gaze and the construction of the other as inferior. The three dimensions explained are: making the Other subordinate, making the Other morally inferior and implying that knowledge and technology do not belong to the Other, but to the 'Self'. Important in this vision is inferiority instead of fascination, where the 'Other' is reduced to a few negative stereotypes (65).

Contemporary travel writing

In 21st century-travel writing, writers attempt to distance themselves from the 'legacy' of the Empire and focus more on the possibilities that have emerged due to globalization (Lisle 452). This means obtaining a positive attitude towards cultural differences. Lisle speaks of two visions in the 21st century: the cosmopolitan vision and the colonial vision. The first one focuses on harmonising effects of globalisation, where boundaries are kept to indicate diverse cultural traditions. The latter holds a narrative where certain boundaries are maintained to protect the privileged from uncivilized 'Others'. (Lisle 453). These two visions cannot be easily separated, but fuse and fall apart together with contemporary travel writing.

This is interesting when looking at domestic travel writing on Kenya, as David Tavares and Marc Brosseau said (Cited in Frost et. al. 1403), that "representations of the 'Other' are embedded in language, culture and institutions, which are reflected in the marketing of a tourism destination." This all means that 'Othering' has an enormous role in whatever is being written about traveling in a certain country. Recent studies have criticised modern western, media for portraying (previously known) Third World countries as "primitive, untouched and sensuous" (Frost et. al. 1403). One could question if these conceptions change when writing about one's own country. Cultural misrepresentation is a problem that arise from Othering. It stems from great experience regarding travelling to other countries, while less is known about travelling within the own country. Therefore, it is interesting to find out more about domestic tourism.

The realisation that travel writers have certain responsibilities is characteristic of the

modern age. Where travel writers are aware of this, they often have issues with how to enforce this, for example in representing the Other. Likewise, they have problems in dealing with their impacts on environment and people (Frost et. al. 1410). However, realisation has come within their role as cultural mediator and therefore guide carefully. This awareness is also happening within domestic travel writers.

The three myths
The article by Charlotte Echtner will be used as a searchlight for interpreting and analysing the travel blogs (Echtner 669). In her text, different patterns used in the marketing of destinations in third world countries like Kenya are tackled. For this, she uses three myths, stemming from postcolonial theory. The representations of these myths apparently reproduce with colonial forms of discourse, emphasising the contrast between First and Third world countries. The first myth is the *myth of the unchanged*. Here, the past is portrayed by mysticism. The destinations highlight the lost glory, and invite the tourist into a historic world with ancient civilizations. Included, is also the portrayal of the people as relics. The relic people and places are the primary features of this myth of the unchanged. It perpetuates the idea of colonial exploitation. The second myth, the *myth of the unrestrained*, focuses more on a present paradise. This myth presents Third World destinations as a place to fully indulge in luxury. By the tourism industry, these destinations are also portrayed as 'unspoiled'. The people in these destinations are not relics (like in the first myth), but are essential for catering to the tourists' needs for indulging in luxury. This myth reinforces contrasts between the First World and Third World countries. As noticed by Graham Dann in Echtner's article, such exploitative indulgence can be ego-enhancing, in a place where touristic superiority is already present (Echtner 675). It is a paradise, but only through Western/ First World eyes. Lastly, the *myth of the uncivilized*, presents destinations as being absent of civilisation and having a savage-like nature. This representation stems largely from the colonial Empire, and forms

itself into an "expedition into deepest darkest frontiers" (Echtner 675). The nature, as well as the inhabitants, must remain 'untouched and untamed' to enable this type of tourism. Kenya could be seen as an example, with the Maasai as 'primitive inhabitants' that are forced to act as props.

These myths are all used as a perspective used by marketing destination organisations. When these cultures meet through tourism, they also partly define each other's identities, moving into hybrid identities. This is called 'transculturation' and is mentioned by Mary Louise Pratt. She focuses on the role of the travel writer, and is concerned by the production of contemporary ideologies through travel writing. Pratt wants to start a debate about "decolonizing knowledge" (Pratt 6), while also being aware of her own critical perspective. Pratt also wishes to disrupt binaries such as the self and the other, which are important in the context of this study. For indicating this 'clashing' of cultures, the term "contact zone" was used, a more appropriate term than "colonial frontier"(Pratt 7). The underlying desire of the travel writer is discussed, in which they wish to serve the needs of European expansionism, while also avoiding imperial ideas. This study focused on domestic tourists. Therefore, it is interesting to see how this binary plays out within one country. In this development of awareness, domestic travel writers in Kenya could play an important role and contribute to the image of the country in the tourism industry. This for instance can be done by introducing a different way of portraying their country in travel writing. Throughout the research, the content and importance of that role will become clear.

Methodology

In this research, an answer will be given to the following research question:

How do domestic tourists in Kenya represent their country and fellow countrymen

through travel blogs?

In this chapter the methodology of this research will be explained, as well as the justification of chosen methods and data sources. The research question will be tackled using a critical discourse analysis. Within this critical discourse analysis (CDA), the focus is on the different social contexts and how language plays a role. Blogs in this case, allow for a better insight into individual generated content than in-depth interviews, which are too time-consuming, and surveys, which are too superficial (Cited in Lange-Faria 199).

This research will be based on a methodology proposed by Norman Fairclough. The CDA is a method that sees language as a means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served (Cited in Janks 330). The focus in this kind of research lies on how the text is positioned and whose interests are served by it. This is a case study of online blogs produced by domestic tourists in Kenya. A phenomenon that is part of the case study is that of there being more domestic tourists blogging about Kenya than international tourists. This is an interesting given.

With the selection of bloggers attention was paid to the background of the authors, see below the list and information on why each blogger was chosen. First each 'about me' section on their website was read. After this, contact was sought with each blogger, through the contact details on their website or other social media. With *four* of them, communication via Instagram was established. Unfortunately it was not possible to establish contact with Winnie Rioba.

1. **Jeen G, Chinkutravels.**

Chinku, as he calls himself, is a city tour guide from Nairobi. He is in his late twenties, and

the main purpose of his blogs is to show to domestic travellers all that Kenya has to offer, and that it is not just reserved for the rich. He has travelled all over Kenya, and is very convinced of the hidden gems of Kenya. Furthermore, he mentions the magic of Kenya in relation to nature all over his blogs. He lives in Nairobi, which he calls the concrete jungle, but he is all about discovering the nature, and less busy places.

2. Winnie Rioba, JustRioba

She wants to show that you can travel on a budget. Through her stories, the reader and prospective traveller are getting a fresh perspective that travelling is more than just some pretty pictures. She also inspires solo travelling and motivates people to be adventurous, and wishes more people (from Kenya) would explore the country.

3. Rupi Mangat, Rupi the African Trotter

This third generation Sikh and true Kenyan says "The world is my oyster". She loves wildlife and nature and loves exploring 'wild spaces'. She sees Kenya (and Africa) as her home and a paradise. In everyday life she is an editor for a magazine on wildlife conservation. Under the impression that Kenya has a lot to offer, she provides insights, travel information and useful tips.

4. Wanjiru Lenana, By Lenana

She is very elaborate and detailed in describing nature, she relates being in and discovering of nature with being fully alive. She lives in Nairobi but enjoys 'escaping' to nature if she can get off work in the weekends. She is 28 years old, and followed a studies in media and communication. For her, the most important thing about writing travel blogs, is for her having a fun way of sharing things about Kenya. She also realises that not many locals in her country travel, so she would, like the others, motivate and inspire them to show what Kenya has to offer.

5. Wangechi Gitahi, Wangechi Gitahi Travels

She is very adventurous, always wants to discover more in her environment, and also promotes solo (backpacking) travelling. The reason she started writing and sharing her travel stories was because the information thus far about Kenya was incorrect according to her, and she wants to create a better, more truthful image. There is so much more about this country than just safari. Also, she wants to show that it is possible to travel alone and on a budget . in everyday life she lives in Nairobi and is a marketer. Lastly, Wangechi has Nilotic roots. Nilotic people are an indigenous group living in Turkana county (and other areas in Kenya and Africa.

These bloggers are most relevant to the research question, because they are all about discovering nature, going on adventures. They are also chosen because all of them are inspired to show Kenya off to the world/ other domestic travellers. They are convinced it is the most beautiful country and it has much more than meets the eye, and the standard tourist attractions. All bloggers are living in Nairobi, and are travelling next to their regular jobs, however some in a larger extent than others. This adventurous spirit, combined with them living in 'the concrete jungle' is what makes them interesting to read and see what they think of nature, themselves living in the least nature environment of the entire country (the biggest city of the country).

The blogs of these domestic travellers are selected, that featured a travel story, where they would go on some kind of trip. All travel blogs are average a 1000 words, and all of them include pictures of the nature, the environment or group or accommodation pictures. In the Appendix all blogs by the travel writers can be read. That document was used as data set. Following, interesting quotes were marked and from this stage of the research process, various categories emerged, these were the results. The analysis of these results can be read in

the analysis chapter.

The three myths of Echtner will be used as a searchlight. Attention will be given also to the studying of the text in relation to its cultural context and the conditions of its production and consumption. Themes are identified from the blogs that are mentioned around the appreciation of nature, and they are discussed in the following chapter, the results and the analysis. Also, the bloggers that are chosen have in common that they wish to promote domestic tourism and want to show to their fellow countrymen the beauty that is Kenya. No blogs from before 2010 were chosen. In the first place because this was the year that domestic tourism started rising, and becoming more popular. In the second place for actuality, so that the blog and the activities are not outdated.

Analytical results

The analysis of the travel blogs is done accordingly to the method of discourse analysis. In this chapter the most important findings will be explained.

The aim of this research was to find out how domestic travel bloggers in Kenya represent their country and the people in their travel stories in the form of blogs. The selection criteria for the five bloggers used for the dataset can be read in the methodology. The three myths of Echtner will be used as a searchlight, while reading the blogs. Various themes emerged, that were identified as categories after studying the blogs carefully. The following themes were identified from reading the blogs, that will be discussed in this chapter.

Representation of nature
Nature is defined as phenomena revolving around wildlife, vegetation and the environment. Overall it became clear that nature is an important part of Kenyan culture. Moreover, nature is an important feature of the tourism industry, as its animals, parks and overall biodiversity make it the foremost ecotourism attraction (BRON 44). The rest of the world views Kenya as a perfect destination for visiting national parks, spotting wildlife and seeing nature. However, here the focus will be on what domestic tourists' experience. The first travel blogger that will be discussed is the only male blogger, his travel blog website is called Chinku Travels, but his real name is Jeen G. As forementioned in the method chapter above, he lives in Nairobi, however often travels to nature. He makes a lot of references comparing the nature of Kenya to paradise, or an escape place. Mentioning the "Well-kept beauty of nature, that tend to make you forget all your city troubles of traffic jam and polluted air." (G, 14). Even though he lives in the city and his profession is being a Nairobi city tour guide, he speaks with desire of nature, calling it a "gift" (G, 40). Furthermore, artistic features are assigned to the nature perceived, calling the panoramic views at the Yatta Plateau in Kanzalu "A great natural artistic expression."(G,40). Jeen draws a comparison between the concrete jungle he lives in, and the indigenous jungle, where adventure lies within (G, 80). The reference to the concrete

jungle is made on multiple occasions. "Meeting as usual for domestic tourists and adventure seekers was in the concrete jungle of Nairobi city" (46). Furthermore he adds that it "Felt so nice to be far and away from the concrete jungle so polluted by noise and smoke."(53) Here he is assigning pleasant qualities to nature, while describing the city as a concrete jungle and a less pleasant place to be in. Jeen is the only one of the bloggers to use the concrete jungle term multiple times throughout his blogs. This becomes most clear in the blog where an adventure in the wild is discussed, that is preferable for him to the city, when it comes to experiencing adventure and beauty. Herein, it is told that: "towards Athi river town where an amazing paradise lays waiting to you us what no destination can offer just near the concrete jungle."(62) It is claimed that in order to experience paradise, the city and its close surroundings must be left behind.

Another blogger, Winnie Rioba, also uses nature to describe a quiet getaway. In this case, Kilifi is described as an "amble by the beaches as euphoric, especially if you are used to chaotic Nairobi life" (Rioba, 146). In this blog, Rioba also describes this place equipped with beaches, as tranquil, calm and laid back. These terms all allocate human qualities to a destination. Furthermore, this place and its natural characteristics, awakened feelings different from what could be achieved by human influence.

While the contrast between city life and nature is established, not every blogger portrays nature as a calm place. Wanjiru Lenana points out the savage paradise. She mentions "The place was beautiful, wild and green." (Lenana, 230) The blog where this savage paradise is stated, is during a trip to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. Lenana tries to convey her adventurous spirit by emphasising how amazing it is to be "in the same space as wild animals." (Lenana 236) However, the true wildness of these animals could be questioned, as they are living in a conservancy. It being a conservancy indicates that it is a place that is there for the preservation of certain natural resources. Pictured as a paradise, savage, 'untouched' paradise,

this may in fact not be completely true.

Representation of magic
Within this part of the research, bloggers will be discussed that make use of terms like enchantment, gem, but also appealing to some kind of deity, or a place that seems surreal. To make use of vocabulary such as this, the bloggers are trying to convey rarity regarding the experiences they have. The mystical elements are usually written as places or things that are unchanged, or not yet discovered.

Firstly, Rupi Mangat seem to have a theme of magic. This is related to the commonly used term of 'hidden gem'. In her blogs, she is attempting to show the true beauty of Kenya. This is done by writing the stories as an old tale:

"I'm enjoying a lone sail with the boatman along the mangrove-lined river with its dunes silhouetted against the night sky. Everything is elemental, pure and magical. As the stars sparkle above, the water is lit with phosphoresce. This is heaven on earth."(Mangat, 164).

Next to this, magic is used as mystification of the history. By drawing a connection between the past (ancestors) and modern day people, the present is portrayed as if it is magical: "For us modern sapiens it's simply amazing to be stepping on the same rocks as our good old ancestors and be fortunate to marvel at the beauty of space around us." (Mangat, 176). She is the only blogger to use the term 'enchanting' multiple times, when talking about the views or the animals. Furthermore, Rupi Mangat assigns human qualities to nature or natural phenomena. Examples of this are: "[the] snow-topped hat" of the Kilimanjaro, "A waterbuck…like the rest of its residents"(Mangat 162), "the heartbeat of any delta" (Mangat, 165). The way Rupi's blogs are written is almost poetical "The saffron sun tinged with a chilli red hot aura has chased the moon away." (Mangat, 168). Giving human qualities to natural phenomena gives the travel stories more of a surreal impression, making it up as a paradise.

Both Rupi Mangat and Jeen G, appeal to the magic and enchanting aspects of nature,

that should be experienced by travellers, but can only be discovered when "going beyond the known"(G, 135). Though, this could be contradictory, as promoting these hidden gems might just make these more visited. A reason behind his could be the fact that all bloggers within this research focus their blogs on domestic travellers, leaving harmful tourism out of sight.

This is remarkable, considering the opinion of all bloggers in stating that it is important that tourism will become more accessible for Kenyans themselves. When speaking of the mystical elements, another aspect in the blogs was the addressing of a deity. The majority in Kenya of the Kenyan people is Christian, so it was expected to encounter some phrases regarding this. However, the references made regarding God, are about the weather, or the facets visible in the sky. According to a Christian belief, this could be a connection to God that is looking down on the earth. As an example, Jeen G says "But here we were in the wild, so silent with the stars up in the sky as though it was a gift from God to us camping." (53)

Representation of the Other and the Self
Pratt introduced this term of transculturation in order to obstruct the Self/Other binary. She speaks of a hybrid identity for the travel writer, where the European expansionist perspective is trying to be avoided. This is done while still reproducing the western metropolitan authority. The playground for all this is what Pratt calls the 'contact zone' (BRON43), or a meeting place where contrasting cultures meet.

Rupi Mangat, poses the Maasai as a different kind in his blog. As said before, she is herself a Sikh, so that is why it could be that she already is Othering towards the Maasai and the Maasai guide. In the story, she discusses that the Maasai used to hunt for lions to prove their prowess, but have renounced this and are now in competitive sports. It is specifically stated that these sports still descend from the ancient Maasai warriors.

Othering towards other domestic tourists is also done by the bloggers. An interesting phenomenon, as the bloggers are Othering towards their own countrymen. Due to travel

writers mentioning hidden gems, and the encouraging of the discovering of the true beauty of Kenya, a certain stereotype is showed that the nature and beauty of Kenya needs to be uncovered. Following the fact that active promotion targeted towards international tourism was not so different from domestic tourism, it could create a new complex self/other relation. Herein, the Kenyans are placed in a unvoluntary binary. Being aware of certain conservancy issues, but still promoting these destinations as paradises, these travel writers used as examples in this paragraph, are strengthening this 'hybrid identity' as said by Pratt.

Another example is Winnie Rioba, using terms like 'the big 5' (156), which is a marketing concept designed for safari tourism, and now widely used by western travel operators, to see at least the most important animals. Furthermore, she speaks of how little she actually knows of Kenya. Like her travel colleague Jeen G, she is also saying that the motherland should be explored and that so little is yet known (157). Hereby, they are making the assumption that their fellow countrymen know less about their home country than they do.

Lastly, Wangechi Gitahi her blogs will be discussed. Her platform is now run by an organisation, due to growth, but all blogs selected are written from her hand. She is a Kenyan travel writer that shares stories of her trip to 'scenic Elgeyo Marakwet'. Throughout her travel blog she is Othering, placing the 'self' as her and her traveling companions, and the Other as all nature and people she encounters, meaning her own countrymen. What is most noticeable about her blog, is that it is not merely a description of her travels. Towards the end of her story, she talks about the locals being "the best marketing tool for any area"(Gitahi, 250). Using this sentence, she mentions that in order for this to happen, the (local) communities need to be educated and exposed. Even though it is a travel writer of Kenyan descent writing this, it aligns with the Euro imperialist perspective that Pratt speaks of. Side marks are placed by Wangechi with the whole statement she makes that visitor and host are shaping each other's identities. Here one could wonder if it is not globalization that reached the big cities

(Nairobi) and not yet the rural areas, that are at play here. In the blogs, a certain quest to find her true roots is also displayed. This blogger shares a lot of her thoughts, so we can see how she uses others to shape her identity, how she enforces a type of Othering. "I will keep you posted on what Akiru decides, on whether she is up to the task of becoming a Turkana lady." (259) She is talking about herself in the third person here, representing the Self here and that she is also unsure of how the story will develop. Later on she states "I was pleasantly surprised at how welcoming and friendly they were, to this solo backpacker, who sneaked into their county." (272) By this she expresses that she would have expected to be treated differently. Again, referring to herself in the third person, portraying herself as a solo backpacker, while she also wishes to become part of their community.

Representation of love and sensualism
Firstly, the blogs of Wangechi Gitachi must be further elaborated, due to her blogs being read like a novel. Herein, emotions are described in detail, putting extra attention to the feelings. She uses the term 'seducing' multiple times, in different contexts. Furthermore, it reads like a journey. During her blogs she also talks about finding her true roots. Despite her doubts, she disregards rationality and is seduced to discover her thus far unknown home. This can be seen in the following quote:

> "a home that knew not of me and that I knew so little about. I only hoped it
> would receive its prodigal daughter home with open arms. It seemed to have sensed
> my anxiety and overcompensated for the time we had been away from each other by
> over exposing itself to me." (266)

In this quote, she refers to feeling like a prodigal daughter. This draws to emotion, as she wishes to become one of them, like family .

However, she also means seducing of the people, to some freer kind of living, or let go of her set way of living. In her blog discussing this journey back to her roots, she mentions that it truly feels like she is being accepted and returning back home. "From day one, my heart

was at peace, my body was in a state of complete rest and I felt at home." (274) Overall, the people she encounters are very important for her travel stories. The stories are even developed around them. Love is an overarching theme in all of her travel blogs. Not only does she describe places as sensuous, she also creates a love story between her and certain places. "Watamu, I will soon be back, as I am now indebted to you, not having explored you to my satisfaction. I already have many ideas as to what I want our second date to include." (243) This manner of speaking is usually utilized when people are having a certain dating life, or in the beginning stages of a growing relationship. By doing this, Wangechi wishes to express her love for certain places. . But, she not only does this when speaking of places; in a blog where she visits Turkuna land, she encounters the native people, and describes this encounter as it is a romantic novel. She does this by telling:

> "I saw him from across the room and I smiled at him, even though I had only seen him from a far on my last visit to Turkanaland. He seemed to sense my gaze and looked in my direction, a beautiful smile breaking from his lips, revealing white sparkling teeth. He rose and walked towards me, eyes locked on mine as if daring me to turn away."
> (253)

This is written as if a romantic novel, describing thoughts, feelings and making use of sensual innuendos. She describes in detail the man's exterior, especially his mouth, which is a signifier that she was focused on this.

Lenana, one of the other travel writers, focuses a lot on the comfort of her destinations. Foremost because her trip is designed very luxurious, as she is staying in a big mansion. Furthermore, she mentions that she "love[s] vacationing at places that make me feel comfortable and cosy." (Lenana, 223). Overall, she mentions the word 'comfortable' sufficiently in order for it to be a noticeable preference of her when travelling. Additionally, she states that she loves places that "give me a sense of home for a few days" (223). Her

desire for places that feel familiar, express a love for experiencing the known, in the unknown. For example with expressions such as these, stating that a certain landscape makes her feel at home, and having a place where she can relax and indulge in luxury. The location she stays at is described by her in detail, and it is a luxurious and comfortable accommodation. Everything she writes, is connected back to the fact it is made to enjoy, get spoiled, indulge in luxury. Examples are that there is a private chef present, together with a swimming pool, and plenty areas just for relaxing. While exploring and having an adventure, it is important for her that the accommodation has a homely feel and is comfortable. All in order for her to fall in love with it, "I was super excited to spend the weekend eating, praying, and loving every single moment." (217) Her focus on these details and the fact that she praises these accommodations for being quite luxurious, shows that it is represented as significant when travelling.

Conclusion

This purpose of this thesis was to demonstrate how domestic tourists in Kenya, represent their county and fellow countrymen through travel blogs. After carefully examining the chosen travel bloggers and their texts, the following can be concluded. When it comes to nature, it can be established that it is an important part of the culture and it is a great contributor of the tourism industry. The domestic travel bloggers agree with this, as they speak of nature in great detail. Furthermore, Nairobi is called a concrete jungle with pollution and a lot of 'hustle and bustle' by local bloggers. In contrast, they sketch nature as a place to escape to, and have an adventure. The tranquility of nature compared to busy city life, is posed as a contrast, as nature is equally the place to have an adventure and forget about your troubles.

Rupi Mangat (one of the bloggers), especially has a theme of magic in her blogs. She uses it, to describe places that are like paradise, to assigning human qualities to natural phenomena. In addition, to give it a mystical vibe and referring to enchanting aspects that are magic (as they are only uncovered when going beyond the known). Celebrating and promoting these places, while also emphasizing these hidden gems, could be connected to the fact that all travel bloggers have a purpose of promoting the places to domestic travellers mostly.

When speaking of the representation of the other and self, the hybrid identity as discussed by Pratt is displayed in various ways. The identities of the bloggers that had roots in a different indigenous group in Kenya were interspersed. As thy find familiarity and a sense of returning home. Some bloggers see the locals as a way to promote the area for other travellers, while also being aware of conservancy issues. This is invigorated by their underlying aspiring to promote the country more to domestic tourists.

Lastly, the theme of love and sensualism became apparent. Every blogger speaks with admiring of their country and the things they encounter. Especially Wangechi Gitahi writes as

if a romantic novel, paying extra attention to the fact that she is being seduced by the people, the landscape and to learn more about her roots. During her travel stories, she slowly falls in love with the place and the people, and thereby creates a sort of love story between her and some of the places. This could be symbolic for the way that all blogger are trying to get more domestic tourist to fall in love with the landscape, and discover more.

When looking back at the three myths of Echtner, the myths which are most applicable with the domestic tourist representing their country is the myth of the unrestrained and the myth of the unchanged. The first speaks of the desire to an unrestrained way of living. Furthermore, it refers to unspoiled paradise, something that the bloggers are mentioning throughout their travel stories, as a way to sell these places. However, there are differences found within how this is achieved. As opposed to the situation with the myth of the unrestrained, they are not portraying the locals as being present to cater to the tourists' need. The myth of the unchanged speaks to the mystic aspect of places, something that eventually showed to be a big theme when analysing the blogs.

Regarding the myth of the uncivilized can be said that it is not present to the full extent. They are taking a new approach wishing to show the country to fellow domestic tourists. Even though they are treating other cultural groups as the Other, they are aware of their position. They wish to disrupt these by showing that it doesn't need to be expensive or difficult for others to travel, that it can be for anyone.

Domestic travel bloggers from Kenya all tried to promote their own country. They were all surprised how beautiful Kenya really is. The bloggers all live in Nairobi, and they seem to be loving nature extra because of this, it is like an escape out of the concrete jungle for them. Still, they keep living there, perhaps because the jobs make it possible for them to travel.

Recommendations in further research could be done within the audience. This analysis

mainly focusses on the domestic tourists, so that they are encouraged to discover Kenya. It could however be beneficial to change this focus towards international tourists, due to their blogs being accessible to a wider audience and therefore leading to more attraction towards this country.

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Appendix

Please find included as an attachment, the dataset I have used for this research. All blogs are included.

Images are adjusted in size, and deleted if it did they did not fit.

Just in case, data document can also be found here.