FAMILIAR TOURISTS AS SOURCE FOR HOPE, HAPPINESS, AND THE GOOD LIFE: *IN-SITU* TOURIST TALES

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on research that explores through *in situ* tourist tales how familiar places emerge for what we call familiar tourists, the critical touristic experience of such tourists in familiar places, and the resultant implications for themselves, others, and destination development. With the call for contributions to this text we reflected whether the experience of familiar tourists is usefully depicted as a source of hope, happiness, and the good life. The particular relevance of our exploration and reflection, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, for many the antithesis of hope, happiness, and the good life, is also deliberated.

Ten years ago Pearce (2012) recognised a neglected category of tourists whose motivation is to visit home and familiar places (VHFP) and stated that there is a need to study connected theoretical and practical themes. Pearce (2012) offers a highly stimulating synopsis but he is not entirely consistent with regard to terminology. We choose to label VHFP tourists from the outset under the umbrella term familiar tourists. The places they visit are identified as familiar places and their particular tourism is identified as familiar tourism. The adjective *familiar* refers by dictionary definitions to something well-known and the noun *familiarity* refers to acquaintance, understanding, and grasp. Academic discussion of familiarity extends back to Cohen (1972) and his comments on the comfort of the familiar tourist bubble. Baloglu (2001) defines three types of familiarity: informational (the extent of information used), experiential (previous experiences) and self-rated (how familiar with a place people believe themselves to be). Prentice (2004) later expanded those types from three to seven (informational, experiential, proximate, self-described, educational, self-assured, and expected) and it can now be stated that familiarity is a multi-dimensional concept with more depth than was originally envisaged. In their review Tan and Wu (2016) state that related concepts, specifically awareness, knowledge, experience and expertise are often used synonymously with familiarity.

In practice, as will emerge later in the chapter, a familiar place is often revisited multiple times, sometimes extending over a life-time. However, a distinction needs drawing at the outset between research on familiar tourists and related research on repeat travel. Not all repeat tourists are familiar tourists. As Schofield and Fallon (2012) remark, repeat tourists are not a homogeneous group. Pearce (2012) comments on a number of discriminators that distinguish comparatively well-established research related to repeat travel and that on familiar tourists. The focus of research on repeat tourists is normally at a macro-level, on a national or regional scale using aggregate statistics. Destination reports that are practice orientated invariably carry statistics on repeat tourists, often in contrast to first time tourists. They typically compare elements such as expenditure and time spent; use of accommodation, attractions, and transport types; and judgements such as intention to revisit. For example, repeat travel is often connected to notions of tourist satisfaction, loyalty and value from a single visit experience. However, as will become evident from our *in situ* tales, repeat visits

of familiar tourists to a familiar place relate to a much wider conceptual range and the familiar refers to both place and the activity within that place.

A distinction also needs to be drawn in this introduction between familiar tourism and visiting friends and relatives (VFR). VFR has a narrower focus. Some VFR can be categorised within familiar tourism e.g. when visits are made to where familiar tourists grew up and where their family and childhood friends may still live. However, a consideration of existing literature shows that much discussion of VFR is only applicable in part to familiar tourism or not applicable at all (Backer, 2012; Backer, Leisch and Dolnicar 2017; Uriely 2011). VFR is not synonymous with familiar tourism.

There is a much literature relevant to a study of familiar tourism, beyond that highlighted above (familiarity, repeat tourism and VFR tourism). In broad terms studies around the nexus of place and tourist behaviour are the most relevant streams. Pearce (2012, 1025) described familiar tourism as a 'messy and multi-faceted' phenomenon with a suggestion of many overlapping literature streams. Those can be sub-divided to include the following: space and place (Cresswell, 2014; Relph, 1976; Tilley, 2006; Tuan, 1977); place attachment (Hamitt, Buckland and Bixler, 2006; Lewicka, 2011; Low and Altman, 1992; Scannell and Gifford 2017; Williams, 2013); placemaking (Dupre, 2018; Iaquinto, 2020; Lew, 2017); co-creation (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prebensen, Vitterso and Dahl, 2013; Richards, 2020); memorable experience (Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012; Tung and Brent Ritchie, 2011) including tourist transformation (Filep and Liang, 2019; Kirillova, Lehto and Cai, 2017); and well-being (Knobloch, Robertson and Aitken, 2017). It is not the platform here to launch into a detailed literature review of such an indicative selection of authors. Rather the emphasis is on an holistic empirical exploration of the connection of familiar tourists to their familiar place, with the identification of how familiar places emerge for familiar tourists, the critical touristic experiences that characterise their relationship with their familiar place, and the resultant potential implications for themselves, others and destination development.

Our initial foray into research on familiar tourists involved two preparatory focus groups which in turn informed the critical core of our primary field research: specifically, 51 face-to-face, semi-structured *in situ* interviews with a total of 108 familiar tourists over a seven month period. To affirm our understanding of context and ensure credence, so that what we present is recognised and understood, a spectrum of tourism providers were also engaged in conversation prior, during, and after the stage of tourist interviews.

The tourist interviews were conducted in two case study areas, Gower and Mawddach within Wales, UK. Both are rural and comparatively peripheral within the UK space and both are long-established tourist destinations albeit with different geographic markets. Gower is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for planning purposes and Mawddach is contained within the Snowdonia National Park.

The following three research questions helped guide us to our reflective evaluation of familiar tourists as a source for hope, happiness, and the good life:

- How do familiar places emerge for familiar tourists?
- What are the critical touristic experiences of familiar tourists in familiar places?
- What are the potential implications for themselves, others, and destination development?

With regard to emergence the focus is centred on locational origin of familiar tourist-familiar place nexus and a more distinct categorisation of places beyond home area. With regard to

critical touristic experience the focus is on identifying experiences that set familiar tourists and their tourism apart from other related tourisms (including repeat tourism). That will extend much tourism study that otherwise remains confined in large part to a view of tourism as centred on the non-familiar. Finally, with regard to implications the focus is on the individual familiar tourist and family, friends and contacts plus a projection to the implications for destination development.

It is apparent that some tourists visit places they are familiar with. However, how those places become familiar to them, their experience in those places and the potential implications deserve more scholarly empirical attention. What will emerge is that the *in-situ* tales of familiar tourists are not yet captured in either their wholeness or nuance, so that the contribution of familiar tourism, including its role as a pathway to hope, happiness, and the good life, is frequently overlooked.

IN SITU FIELD RESEARCH

The build-up to *in situ* field research in Gower and Mawddach involved several stages. The catalyst from the gap identified by Pearce (2012) and the subsequent literature review led to an early preparatory exploration of ideas within a focus group setting. Two focus groups were conducted with residents in the UK city where the authors live involving volunteer participants who identified themselves as familiar tourists. There were a total of 13 participants (five male and eight female) ranging in age from 26-75 and covering six nationalities. Familiar places included world cities (e.g. Paris, France), smaller towns and cities (e.g. Lurgan, Northern Ireland), rural areas (e.g. Lake District, England), and islands and island groups (e.g. Skye, Scotland). The focus groups were organised around a structured schedule of themes and a word association task. Informants introduced their familiar place(s), the duration of such familiarity along with visit frequency; what they thought, felt and did in their familiar place(s); the meaning that familiar place(s) held for them when present or absent; any negative aspects of their relationship with familiar place(s) and how they thought the familiar place(s) gained from their visit. The focus groups were recorded and the resulting transcripts were analysed in tandem by the two authors leading to the joint construction of a mind map. The map informed the construction of a template for face to face, semi-structured *in situ* interviews with familiar tourists in Gower and Mawddach. The *in situ* tourist interviews formed the core of field research and they were in turn transcribed and analysed in tandem by the authors to reveal an evidence based evaluation of familiar tourism.

The research was exploratory. We very deliberately researched *in situ* and not in a setting away from where the experience was occurring such as an office room or pre-arranged location divorced from ongoing tourist activity. After approaching a potential interviewee we briefly introduced our research and followed up with an initial question that drew the interviewees into the research: 'Is Gower (Mawddach) a 'familiar place' for you and, if so, to what extent?' If the interviewees answered that Gower (Mawddach) was not a familiar place they were thanked and no interview was conducted. The great majority of potential interviewees had no problem with the terminology of the opening question. Comparatively few interviewees asked for more information. As the work was exploratory, a formal opening definition would have overly narrowed down the exploration. There is discussion on the relevance of self-rated familiarity in Prentice (2004) and an argument is made that self-rated familiarity can be confused with experiential familiarity. However, that was not the case in this field research, most probably because the research was conducted *in situ*. In the

terminology of Prentice, interviewees who self-rated themselves as familiar were also very able to self-describe their familiarity.

Part of the later questioning in the interviews revolved around whether the interviewees had other familiar places in which they had the same sort of experience and also how they organised those other familiar places in relation to Gower (Mawddach). During that questioning it was again apparent that the interviewees were able to clearly distinguish between familiar places and non-familiar places and between their experience as familiar and non-familiar tourists. From such evidence we can state with some confidence that the interviews produced valid data that was subsequently shaped into a valid evidence-based evaluation. The self-rated familiarity with place was always backed up in what the interviewees stated during the interviews. Following self-selection the remainder of the interview teased out the details of the interviewees' experience of the place.

Two case study areas of Gower and Mawddach were chosen because they provide sufficient similarity to add depth and sufficient difference to add nuance. They are similar insomuch as they are both peripheral areas in Wales; both subject to planning control as a result of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Park designation respectively; and both have a heritage as tourist destinations. Additionally, they have both been subject to some economic stress as a result of decline in farming, often said to be a stimulant for rural tourism growth (Oriade and Robinson, 2017). The role of tourism in the areas has also been subject to debate as witnessed by a series of public meetings held by the *Institute of Welsh Affairs* in Gower during the early preparatory phase of the research, 2013-15, as well as the ongoing pressure group activity of the Gower Society (Gower Society, 2020). The case study areas are different insomuch as they are in South Wales and Mid Wales respectively which have contrasting physical and cultural backgrounds. Ancillary knowledge of tourism within the two field study areas was provided through contact with tourism providers (prior, during, and after the tourist interviews) and a long association of one author with Gower and the other with Mawddach.

The *in situ* interviews were conducted in a range of locations within Gower and Mawddach at different times of the day and in both high season and shoulder season. In Gower interviews were conducted at six beach, cliff and settlement locations on the north, south and west of its peninsula. Overall, 30 interviews were conducted with a total number of 67 familiar tourists. There was an even split of male and female respondents (34 female, 33 male) and a range across the age groups (18-30 (20), 31-40 (9), 41-50 (3), 51-60 (11), 61-70 (18), 71+ (6)). Nearly all the interviewees were resident in the UK with the majority stretched from along the traditional source area that lies along the M4 motorway corridor from Swansea through to Cardiff, Bristol, and London 150 miles to the east. In Mawddach, 21 interviews were conducted with a total number of 41 familiar tourists in seven locations: two beaches, a spit point, coastal settlement, inland estuary bridge, inland lakes, and an inland campsite. The demographic split was comparable to Gower. The Mawddach's traditional source areas were well represented: the English Midlands and English North-West, 75-100 miles away. Overall, in both locations (Gower and Mawddach) 51 separate interviews were conducted with 108 familiar tourists. Interviews with two or more tourists were highly informative. Tourists in family or friendship pairs, or occasionally threes, were comfortable in each other's company, clearly thought independently and often generated rich, fast-paced discussion.

There was a determined intention to engage in relevant conversation with tourists *in-situ,* whilst holidaymaking, and to explore what they thought, felt and did as familiar tourists via a qualitative study. Accordingly, data on items such as employment or income range, as

commonly sought in quantitative surveys for statistical analysis of sub-groups, was not requested. However, interviewees revealed much evidence about themselves as part of their narrative. For example, they talked about their familiar place as a way to release stress from their job and so the breadth of trades and professions of the interviewees became clear. Among those employed there was a hairdresser, nurse and university lecturer. Among retirees there was a miner, high school teacher and architect. The questions were not asked or answered in a staccato or rigid manner and it is judged that the conversational style allowed the creation of a rich interview experience and set of transcriptions. In most cases interviewees talked freely about sometimes sensitive matters (the role of the familiar place at times of difficulty e.g. family problems and so on).

From the above it can be observed that all interviews were in a public or commercial space *in situ*, most often within an outdoor physical setting where the tourists were engaged in tourist activity. Overall, most interviews lasted upwards of 20 minutes although several interviews lasted for over 30 minutes. It was striking just how much information and how many ideas were gleaned from the interviews. That is most probably related to the *in situ* location which meant that interviewees were easily propelled into the heart of the questioning.

An interview was typically initiated after a 15-30 minute gap from a preceding interview in order to write quick field notes (for example, descriptions of interviewees appearance or specific weather conditions during an interview) to help future recall of interviews, check equipment and so on. In some more secluded locations, the interviewers sometimes delayed initiating an interview when it was observed that a tourist appeared in a particularly reflective mode. Breaking in on apparent deep reflection was considered insensitive.

In accordance with ethical guidelines, the broad nature of the research was outlined at the start of each interview, the interviewers did not ask for any name or contact details, the interviewees were told that all quotes would be non-attributable and that they could discontinue the interview at any time.

The series of interviews were continued beyond the point at which it was thought that data saturation was reached when very limited extra details and ideas were generated. Analysis used an adapted version of classic qualitative research in order to break down and put back together transcribed data into higher level themes with a clear analytic story (Saldana, 2013; Silverman, 1993; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In the first instance recordings were listened to separately on multiple occasions by each of the two authors. That process was repeated once transcripts were produced in order to develop full familiarity with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) through an iterative, cyclical process. An emphasis was placed on the search for *in vivo* codes via a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts. In such a way the authors kept close to the data and alive to what was emerging, constantly open to new things, even though they carried forward some *a priori* structuring of codes into the analytic process from reading of existing theory. Empirical observation was dominant over theoretical deduction. As an example of *in-vivo* coding, the word 'love' as referring to place was frequently revealed in the transcripts as was the word 'death' in reference to interviewees' wish, in numerous cases, to have their ashes spread in a sub-location within their familiar place. Following separate interrogation of the data, the authors increasingly used team discussions to examine the transcripts and cross compare for patterns at the unit level of both interviews and fieldwork areas (Gower, Mawddach). In so doing that developed higher order codes: an interpretative representation of what interviewees were saying. In the team discussions use was made of a variety of techniques, including visualisations as encouraged by D.G Pearce (Pearce, 2012). A final example of visualisation (Figure 1) is presented below in the findings and discussion. Figure

1 illustrates the outcome of the analytic process e.g. the theorisation of three overarching, higher order themes interpreting the experience of familiar tourists ('unfamiliar in the familiar', 'unexpected in the expected' and 'emotional charge'). Through adherence to sound methodological practice as detailed above what is presented in this chapter meets the various criteria for quality in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

IN SITU TALES

The *in situ* voices of familiar tourists as documented during visits to their familiar places are grouped into three discrete but connected behavioural parts: emergence, experience, and implications. Each has a recognisable cluster of components. The behaviours of familiar tourists also suggest implications for destination development as familiar place. A visualisation is provided in Figure 1. The voice of the *in situ* interviewees is expressed in a series of quotes, all of which are from different interviewees. Interviewees are identified by gender (F/M), age and location e.g. **M 40, Mawddach**. There are two instances in which gender, age and location of different interviewees are the same (**F, 55 Gower and F, 65 Gower**) and in those instances a further sub-division (**i, ii**) has been inserted.

FIGURE 1: see at back.

Emergence:

From the interviews we are able to extend and specify the locational origin of a familiar place to include the home area in which tourists grow up, other places that tourists have relationships with from work or study, introduced places from childhood holidays or holidays in adult life with friends or contacts, and also self-discovered holiday places (Figure 1). This fourfold division of locational origin is not previously categorised. Pearce (2012) was not consistent in discussion of home and familiar place locations and in any case produced a conceptual listing rather than one based on empirical evidence. Variants of familiarity (long-held, quick and cross) and counters to familiarity (resistance, reticence, and angst) are also specified in Figure 1.

The first tale below relates to Gower as a place visited when studying at university, whist the second tale describes Gower as an introduced place from a childhood family holiday:

Female F 35, Gower: Oh, well, we came here a lot while I was at university, which was quite a while ago, 15 years or something now. We used to just come for the weekend for beach parties and walking and stuff. So I've got some memories associated with it as well as this beach (still) being lovely, quiet, etc.

F 70, Gower: My parents had a static caravan. We came for five or six weeks. I remember having *wonderful* summers with friends and just having freedom to roam around the dunes and just having a great time.

There are variants of familiarity: long held familiarity developed over many years; quick familiarity developed from very few visits; and cross-familiarity developed from comparison

with other places of perceived similarity (Figure 1). Here is an example that is a hybrid of quick and cross-familiarity:

Interviewer: You said that you had been here about three times.

F 28, Gower: Yeah, I'd say three or four times, yeah.

Interviewer: OK, so what got you here originally?
F 28, Gower: I'd say people I know. But your earlier question (was) "what brings me back"? There are obviously other places to explore… (but) I love it here… it's beautiful, it reminds me a lot of home. I'm from South Africa and here, like there, you know, there are big beaches, lots of sand, good waves, warm water, a lot of green spaces…

Cross-familiarity has similarity to Scannell and Gifford's (2013) description of place attachment to a specific class of place or generic type (e.g. big beaches and wild rivers). A non-hybrid example of cross-familiarity is evident from a Canadian artist who partly attributed her established love of the Mawddach to her attachment for the wild rivers of Canada:

F 32, Mawddach: I love rivers and I especially like wild rivers and Mawddach, although it is not as wild as some of the rivers in Canada. Obviously, it is not. I mean London [*where she now lives with her English husband and son*], the Thames, is brilliant because it is a fascinating working river, but this is a proper wild river to me and I really like that. So it is geography as well, isn't it, that draws us.

The growth of familiarity is not a straight line trajectory. Tourists can sometimes take a break from their familiar place and on occasion they develop resistance, reticence, and angst about returning to a familiar place because they feel judged by others on their desire to return rather than explore a novel place. The catalysts for growth of familiarity embrace aspects of the physical environment (especially landscape and seascape in the field destinations) and the built or social environment, all ranged alongside personal or inter-personal experience, connection and resultant memories (Figure 1). These are all themes that are present as catalysts in discussion of the literature on tourists, place and space, place attachment and place making. The familiar place of most tourists is imbued with a sense of place (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977) and also the tourists show strong place attachment (Hamitt, Buckland and Bixler, 2006). However, whilst familiar places are consumed in the normal tourist sense the importance of the catalysts, compounded time and again on subsequent visits, is very much stressed by familiar tourists and resonates with the bottom-up, organic processes of place-making identified by Lew (2017). One group of family and friends recalled, reflectively and excitedly, the way in which they marked the dawn of 2000 in their familiar place of Rhosili Beach, Gower. The extract below illustrates growth and compounding of familiarity. There was no other place that they wanted to be on such a special night:

F 65i, Gower: We keep our (static) caravan at a farm. We took over a field for the night of the millennium and had a marquee and a four course meal. One family member cooked and we had loads of family members who all camped in tents or caravans or something. And then at midnight we went down onto Rhosili beach and had fireworks and music going, and I swam at midnight.

F 75, Gower: And a fire. It was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. And then in the morning, it was gorgeous weather, and we sat having a champagne and salmon and scrambled egg breakfast

out in the open, in a semi-circle, because it was so warm and lovely. Yes and it felt, seemed, an important place to see the millennium in.

Such tales about the emergence of familiarity lead us from the first to the second discrete but connected behavioural part: experience.

Experience:

Overall three critical touristic experiences of familiar tourists are worthy of emphasis (Figure 1) all rooted in a very detailed knowledge base. First, familiar tourists are able to make full use of space to search for the unfamiliar in the familiar. In that sense they seek novelty (Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018) but in a familiar rather than unfamiliar place. As a further twist, the familiar place often pivots around specified named sub-places or personal hotspots. Familiar tourists are not confined to iconic locations as identified, too, in an exploration of familiarity and sub-destination choice among international tourists (Lee and Tussyadiah, 2012). Often it is seemingly routine activities in the sub-places (e.g. walking familiar territory, taking photographs) that are at the forefront of tourist descriptions:

F 45, Mawdach: Every year I take photographs out there (Mawddach estuary). Even though it is the same view it has so many moods, so there are always different lights, different clouds, tide-in, tide-out…

The routine activities can develop into rituals:

F 28, Mawddach: As a tradition we have to go walk up Fegla Fawr (Mawddach) and have a picnic where Granny's ashes are scattered.

Some interviewees recalled how they found it difficult when an attempt was made to break rituals, often linked to such sub-places. However, such ritual nature of activity was not considered to be a negative thing:

F 35, Gower: You try different places and then you end up going back, you know, to the original ones.

Ehn and Lofgren (2010) argue that repetitive actions are an essential part of people's individual and social lives. However, the evidence from *in situ* interviews with familiar tourists suggests that the apparent repetition of activity does not lead to a mundane experience. Rather, through the opportunity offered by familiar tourism, tourists manage to transcend the mundane and find the unfamiliar in the familiar.

Co-creation of value and individual or group operant resources of familiar tourists, allied with involvement of effort, time and money (Holbrook 2006; Prebensen *et al*, 2013) allow for a multiplicity of varied actions in the familiar place. For example, in line with the thinking around value-in-use and tourists as resource integrators (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2006), each experience of the same beach is unique: a place to walk, sit or avoid in one type of weather, or in one time of day or with one set of companions. Tourists were able to casually pinpoint the names and characteristics of a range of locations and with their detailed knowledge they were able to tailor their behaviour to fit the day, even in a comparatively small geographic area:

F 55i, Gower: It's not like being a (new) visitor in that you could maybe come for a week and you've maybe not seen what you want to see. If you know where you're going... you know where to go, where to walk and what to do.

As a final aside in this section, whilst it is clear that some tourists use the same accommodation time after time (e.g. a static caravan or second home) others deliberately return to different accommodation. The familiar place by no means requires an established base and varying the accommodation is sometimes part of the way in which tourists seek the unfamiliar in the familiar.

The second critical touristic experience of familiar tourists that derives from a very detailed knowledge base is their discovery of the extraordinary in the ordinary (Figure 1). They enjoy special, memorable and even spectacular experiences from everyday occurrences in their familiar place. One familiar tourist, a barrister, narrated what it felt like a day after visiting her familiar place:

F 65ii, Gower: I went into work the next day and I still had this huge smile on my face, and people sort of said, "Goodness, why are you smiling so much all day". And I was just remembering being in the water, the sun and everybody else enjoying coming in on the surf and all that sort of stuff… I thought about it (the familiar place) when I was not there, especially when working. You know, when really stressed or something… there were moments, when I was being given a really hard time, when I'd just say to myself, "Just think of Mewslade (Bay) and just think of swimming, and this (work-stress) is going to be over in a minute". And, you know, I'd just put myself there and that would just, sort of, calm me down.

Cohen and Cohen (2012) comment on the end of binary comparisons. That is certainly the case from the evidence of how familiar tourists search for the unfamiliar in the familiar and the extraordinary in the ordinary. Contrary to what might seem the case, the activity patterns of familiar tourists characterize them as one particular sort of hybrid tourist (Boztug *et al* 2015).

The detailed knowledge base of familiar places also generates a distinctive emotional charge (Figure 1). Familiar tourists have noticeably strong affective bonds (Coghlan, Buckley and Weaver, 2012) with their familiar place and emphasise the affective over the cognitive. The very first interview in Gower was with a London hairdresser who had rediscovered a part of a beach that she remembered and connected with from visits as a child. An extract from her interview is intimate, intense, and complex. It is multi-sensory and it is also an experience that is embodied (Obrador-Pons, 2003), not just involving the tourist-gaze, similar to the quote from the barrister (above):

F 55ii, Gower: Yeah, well its part of my childhood it's one of my very, *very* sweetest memories of my childhood: this time of year, with my family. I *absolutely* loved it here, and I remember having many, *many* happy times playing on this beach, exactly here. There was hardly anyone here (then) and today, it's the same: it's beautiful, it's Monday, it's mega. Really, really, and it's very special to me. On the walk down through the dunes, you see all the really different types of flora and fauna and different wild plants. You know, I'm from London now, I mean we've lived there for years, and it's just *so* nice to see this. It's been heaven!'

The emotions of familiar tourists lead to the seduction of place. Familiar tourists often view their familiar place as a place that has the rootedness and at-homeness characteristic of non-

tourist home (Relph, 1976; Windsong, 2010). Moreover, it is not uncommon for familiar tourists to consider their familiar place as a spiritual home. They speak of pride, fondness, devotion, and love of their familiar place. Typical illustrations, here from Mawddach, include 'I fell in love' [**F 72**], and 'It definitely captured my heart' [**F 47**] demonstrate strong place attachment.

With such details on emergence and experience we are able to highlight implications as they apply to tourists and others, and also destination development.

Implications: Tourists and others

With regard to individual growth (Figure 1) familiar tourists repeatedly articulate how the emergence of a familiar place and the resultant experience can enhance a sense of personal and social identity, and deliver a sense of well-being. Oftentimes such transformation was the motive for return, in contrast to the unforeseen trigger to transformation described by Kirillova et al (2017). Moreover, familiar tourism can retain significance over a whole life-course.

The experience of the hairdresser [F, 55ii, Gower] and the barrister [F 65ii, Gower] quoted above illustrate individual and social identity that derives from their visits to familiar places and also how personal well-being has been added to their lives from visits to their familiar places, in their cases across a whole life course. All such outcomes were clearly and frequently expressed by familiar tourists. The familiar tourist-familiar place link also extends its significance, not unusually, after death, too. As interviewers we started to anticipate when interviewees were about to mention the hold of their familiar place after death, on occasion expressed when the recording was stopped and so captured via field notes. Here is an example from an interviewee who shared some tea with an interviewer after finishing kayaking for the day:

M 36, Mawddach: I know it sounds macabre, but I'd like to have my ashes scattered here.

The earlier example [F 28, Mawddach] regarding a ritual trip to where a grandparent's ashes were scattered also illustrates what we called as interviewers 'an ashes moment'. Such revelations became signifiers of data saturation and acted as markers for establishment of rapport.

In addition to using knowledge for their own purpose it is noticeable that familiar tourists also exchange knowledge, passing on what they know about their familiar place and their enthusiasm for their familiar place to family, friends and contacts (Figure 1). Parents and grandparents commonly seek to pass on knowledge and experience to children. For the most part they craft forward-looking inter-generational hand-over of their familiar place that links to the emphasis of Epp and Price (2008) on inter-generational transfer as a means to strengthen collective family identity. Gitelson and Crompton (1984) include the desire to show a destination to others as a motivation for repeat travel. Little is written on that since their study (Schofield and Fallon 2012) but it comes through very strongly as an outcome of the experience of familiar tourism.

Implications: Destination development

Implications extend beyond individual growth and knowledge exchange. In most tourism destinations there are three primary stakeholder groups: tourists, providers and residents. Recognition of tourist behaviours evident from this empirical study and emphasis on familiar tourism in a destination, with alignment of stakeholders and enhancement of a common vision and endeavour, can create opportunity for destination development that increases destination resilience (Figure 1). That is especially apt in a world that faces change from Covid-19, in the short term at the very least, as well as the threat of further pandemics or other crises.

Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser (2014) identify the danger of non-alignment between stakeholder groups within destinations, a situation that is recognised by many other authors (Boley, Strzelecka and Watson 2018; Dupre, 2018; Jamal and Getz, 1995). However, familiar tourism provides a basis for alignment of two sets of stakeholders: familiar tourists and tourism providers, on the one hand, and familiar tourists and residents on the other.

With regard, first, to stakeholder alignment of familiar tourists and tourism providers, background for this study was developed through conversations with a range of providers from businesses and tourism related organisations. Few providers appreciated the extent of familiar tourism or had knowledge of the behaviour of familiar tourists. Increasingly, destination development requires the need to compete through tourist experience (Mathis *et al* 2016). One crux of memorable experience identified by Kim (2014) is detailed knowledge of place and that is the driver of the unfamiliar in the familiar, extraordinary in the ordinary and emotional charge identified within the *in situ* interviews. Tung and Brent Ritchie (2011) comment that the delivery of memorable experiences needs to be made probable and that seems more realistic for providers to aspire towards via the behaviour patterns of familiar tourists.

With the caveat that the *in situ* interviewees in this research were dominantly domestic tourists, it seems that familiar tourists bring other major advantages for providers. On the pragmatic side, familiar tourists can more easily manipulate their visits according to circumstance: they are often not season dependent, or weather dependent or so subject to other vagaries caused by economic, social or political circumstance. They are a stable market not overly subject to flux. Familiar tourists can have a calling for their tourist place that is summed up in the Welsh words *hiraeth* (longing) and *cynefin* (a place to stand) the latter concept similar to the German *heimat* (home/homeland). Also, through their emotional charge with their familiar place, they can act as marketing foot-soldiers and engage like-minded people who in turn become familiar tourists. In this behaviour, they shift position somewhere along the continuum from Lew's (2017) organic place-making towards more deliberate or planned placemaking. However, destination management study rarely appreciates that tourists can engage with a destination way beyond the time-limit of the actual visit (Saraniemi and Kylanen 2011), something that familiar tourists are especially apt to do, both before and after a visit. As one interviewee stated:

M50, Gower: The knowledge has been passed down to me (from parents). I tell people a lot about it here. I'm quite proud of it, if I'm honest. I like to tell people to come here. I think it is good advice. I do give it a good press.

At present, familiar tourism does not have a strong industry lobby. It is stated by Shani and Uriely (2012) that VFR tourism does not happen naturally. The same applies to familiar tourism, of which VFR can be a part. Familiar tourists need to be recognised in whatever destination is their familiar place. Providers as stakeholders that understand their characteristics and behaviours, as evidenced in the *in situ* interviews, can align activity for consequent, mutual benefit. Providers can help create the unfamiliar within the familiar and the extraordinary in the ordinary or strive to maintain the emotional charge. They can work with destination management organisations so that the bond between tourists and place is not broken through inappropriate change pressures.

With regard, second, to alignment of familiar tourists and residents, in both Gower and Mawddach there were numerous comments by familiar tourists on favourable contacts with local residents, including aligned visions of place. There is a long established pressure group *The Gower Society* whose membership is drawn from local people as well as what we identify as familiar tourists, both from the UK and internationally. There is much scope for joint creation of shared places (Giovanardi, Lucarelli and Decosta, 2014; Richards, 2020; Sheller and Urry 2004). Amsden, Stedman and Kruger (2011) argue that place attachment can be used as a metric in tourism development, together with other more common metrics such as visitor satisfaction and ecological quality. Destinations that recognise and emphasise familiar tourism can fashion such an initiative taking into account the shared view of familiar tourists and residents.

The special scope for tourist-provider-resident alignment that familiar tourism embodies makes it particularly relevant as a form of tourism to be recognised and encouraged. In tandem the elements of familiar tourism (Figure 1) that make up the familiar tourist-familiar place nexus, allow tourism destinations to embrace rather than resist tourism. Butler (2017, 5) states that there is a need '(to) improve the ability of tourism destinations to withstand the effects of tourism or, in other words, to make them more resilient...' There are multiple perspectives of resilience and Berbes Blasquez and Scott (2017) refer to the need to specify resilience 'of what' and 'to what'. Familiar tourism facilitates resilience of tourism destinations to the tensions caused by a non-alignment of three primary stakeholder groups: tourists, providers and residents.

Familiar tourism seems particularly relevant whether Covid-19 leads to a shaping (modification) of established tourist behaviours or a radical resetting (Hall, Scott and Gossling, 2020). In the short-term, it seems likely that familiar places will feature heavily among the first destinations that tourists will return to after Covid-19 lock-down. Tourists will want to return to places with which they have personal/interpersonal connections, memories and detailed knowledge. In the medium/long term, in a world of tourists and tourism that is shaped rather than reset, due recognition and emphasis on familiar tourism by providers and destination organisations can help offer a counter to re-emergent stresses of over-tourism or other crises (Gonzalez, Coromina and Gali, 2018; Seraphin, Sheeran and Pilato, 2018). Alternatively, in a reset world, familiar tourism can still offer one among other realistic post Covid-19 futures. The characteristics of familiar tourism evidenced within this chapter and its potential to generate an aligned response of tourists, providers and residents mean that it is particularly relevant whatever post Covid-19 scenario emerges over the coming years.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explores how familiar tourism (an amended version of VHFP tourism) emerges for familiar tourists, their experience in familiar places and the resultant implications both for themselves, others and destination development. Tourist tales that emerge from *in situ* interviews among holiday-making tourists in Wales, UK, illustrate the above. Overall, familiar tourists appear to engage in a positive way with tourism and walk the pathway of hope, happiness, and the good life. Some not untypical quotes from one tourist in the preparatory focus groups encapsulate the way that the experience of familiar tourists can link with positive rather than forlorn hope (first quote) as well as happiness and the good life both for self and others (second quote).

F40, Focus group:

1: I am already super-happy, and (yet) I am still here (home). I know I am going to have such a good time.
2: (When) you are in this place, you are so happy and feel so well (and) people around you benefit from that too, I think.

We connected with tourists *in situ* whilst engaged in touristic activity in their familiar place. It was important to catch the attention of each tourist interviewee and the terms 'familiar place' and 'familiar tourist' were quickly understood. Tourists *in situ* immersed themselves in an account of their familiar places. They told detailed stories about their familiar place, often covering many years (and even generations) and fully justified their self-description as being familiar with their tourist place.

A wider view is offered than Pearce (2012) with regard to the locational origin of a familiar tourist-familiar place nexus. It is also shown that whilst existing strands of literature are applicable to familiar tourism, they require a twist because familiar tourists act in a distinct way. The very nature of familiar tourism, its emergence, experience and implications mark it out as discrete. Edensor (2007) and Caruana and Crane (2011) outline how freedom is controlled by power brokers in the tourism industry. However, compared to tourists who are not familiar with place, familiar tourists are freer of social controls (whether from social media, guidebooks or even directive notices along a pathway). Familiar tourists, with their detailed knowledge base, appear more rather than less likely to fulfil experiential needs when compared with non-familiar tourists. They find the unfamiliar in the familiar, the extraordinary in the ordinary, and an evident emotional charge. The implications affect familiar tourists' growth as individuals and also knowledge exchange with family, friends and contacts. There are particular implications, too, for destination development.

There is scope for iterative, extension and replication in other places, such as university towns in which students develop lasting, intense memories of and connection to sub-places from experiences that are vividly retained as alumni. Pearce (2011, 137) himself writes passionately and informatively of the 'career souvenir' that he developed as a student in Oxford. Specific emphasis could also be placed on any one of the many inter-related aspects revealed from this holistic study (Figure 1). In addition, whilst interviews with tourists lie at the heart of the study and conversations with providers helped to provide ancillary knowledge, there was no formal contact (e.g. through interviews) with residents. A study of resident engagement with familiar tourists compared to other tourists can add an extra

dimension to future research (Hwang, Stewart and Ko, 2012; Jordan, 2015). It may be that the hope, happiness, and the good life of familiar tourists are not reciprocated by residents. Our intention is to pursue this in the Gower case area as a follow-up to our initial study.

Other research techniques could also be employed. For example, we initially intended to use photographs in the field research to jog interviewees' memories of sub-places. That proved unnecessary because interviewees were very able to talk in depth about their familiar place. However, photographs would be a particularly good idea to use for research in places that have been subject to greater change. They would provide a baseline for discussion on the amount of change and the effect on familiarity. The use of space by familiar tourists vis-à-vis other tourists using the latest tracking technology (Grinberger and Shoval, 2019) would also enhance understanding.

As is the case with all exploratory research there is a limit as regards generalisation. This research relates to two case study areas over a high summer season and two shoulder seasons in two parts of Wales, UK. We acknowledge how the planning regulations in our two case study areas create restrictions on development that are not always present elsewhere in the UK and beyond. Tourist experiences and implications may be very different if the detailed knowledge base and so familiarity with place is beset by major change.

It is evident that familiar tourism offers a chance to create a competitive destination that is not subject to substitution from fashion or fad. However, familiar tourism is not staid as a tourism form. On the contrary, it is highly contemporary and happens to fit well with emerging tourism forms. These include slow tourism with its particular lifestyle motivation (Clancy, 2018; Oh, Assaf and Baloglu, 2016); creative tourism with the potential it offers for freer and more meaningful experiences for the tourist, plus a more equal relationship between the resident and the tourist (Richards 2011; Richards 2020); and transformation tourism (Reisinger 2013; Kirillova, Lehto and Cai, 2017) in which a tourist goes one step beyond co-creation and seeks meaningful wider life transformation. Future links between research on familiar tourism and research on such tourism forms may yield very useful benefits for destination development. The relevance of familiar tourism in the aftermath of Covid-19 has already been raised.

Most probably familiar tourism in Gower and Mawddach reflects a common unrevealed inclination among tourists to seek familiar places, with positive resultant implications for themselves, others, and destination development. A regular comment by tourists in this research on familiar tourism was that 'We just keep coming back'. The reason is evident from the hope, happiness and the good life so ensured.

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| Emergence | Experience | Implications |

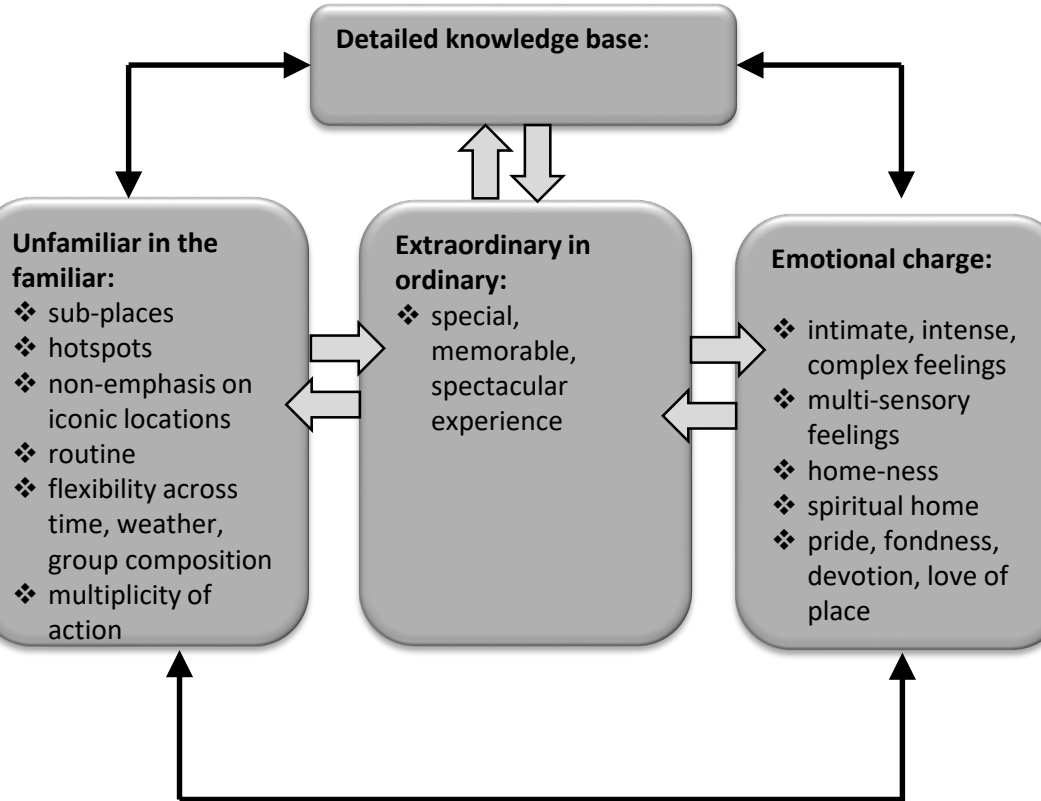**Locational origin of familiar tourist-familiar place nexus**:
- ❖ home area
- ❖ former place of work or study
- ❖ introduced place from childhood or friends or contacts
- ❖ self discovered place

Variants:
- ❖ long-held familiarity
- ❖ quick-familiarity
- ❖ cross-familiarity
- ❖ resistance, reticence and angst

Catalysts for growth of familiarity:
- ❖ landscape
- ❖ coastal space & seascape
- ❖ built or social environment
- ❖ personal/inter-personal connection and memories to above

Detailed knowledge base:

Unfamiliar in the familiar:
- ❖ sub-places
- ❖ hotspots
- ❖ non-emphasis on iconic locations
- ❖ routine
- ❖ flexibility across time, weather, group composition
- ❖ multiplicity of action

Extraordinary in ordinary:
- ❖ special, memorable, spectacular experience

Emotional charge:
- ❖ intimate, intense, complex feelings
- ❖ multi-sensory feelings
- ❖ home-ness
- ❖ spiritual home
- ❖ pride, fondness, devotion, love of place

Individual growth:
- ❖ identity
- ❖ well being
- ❖ significance across parts or whole of life course
- ❖ after-life significance

Knowledge exchange:
- ❖ inter-generational hand-over in families
- ❖ friends and contacts

Destination development:
- ❖ stakeholder alignment: familiar tourists, tourism providers, residents
- ❖ facilitation of resilience , counter to over tourism or other crises e.g. Covid-19

Figure 1.
Familiar tourist-familiar place nexus