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Non-innovation or the innovation of nothing?
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Conspicuous non-consumption in tourism: Non-innovation or the innovation of nothing?

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Abstract
Referring to current phenomena and consumer behaviour in tourism, this article develops the concept of conspicuous non-consumption. It addresses the deliberate avoidance of (over)spending during holidays and states that this behaviour may be just as conspicuous and provide social signals that are just as strong as those connected to the consumption of expensive luxury goods. The conceptual development is based on a combination of the two dichotomies of ‘consumption versus non-consumption’ and ‘conspicuous versus inconspicuous’, resulting in four conceptually distinctive categories of behaviour: Conspicuous consumption, conspicuous non-consumption, inconspicuous non-consumption and conspicuous non-consumption. The latter, conspicuous non-consumption, is of special interest in this article, exemplified through personal vignettes. Explorative readings of travel blogs lead to the identification of five themes that characterize conspicuous non-consumption in tourism: ‘identity building’, ‘recycling, upcycling and repurposing’, ‘spiritualizing’, ‘retreating and detoxing’ and ‘slowing down’. Usually, tourism innovation policies are characterized by a ritual growth compulsion, and do not celebrate non-consumption, which is found to be synonymous with non-innovation. This is a paradox for the timely modernizing of tourist services and destinations. Increasingly there is a need to re-orient innovation and to give consideration to how the innovation of “nothing” can also undergo a distinctive progression and even contribute positively to tourism economies. This article highlights the entry points for innovation at the tourism business and destination levels.

Keywords:
Conspicuousness; Non-consumption; Innovation orientation; Conceptual model; Innovation.

Introduction
Tourists travel for many reasons, and tourism behaviour is extremely and increasingly complex and multi-faceted. On the one hand, there is the matter of how tourists perceive their own preferences and attitudes, and another related issue is how others – peers, family, friends, but also anonymous others – recognize tourist behaviour, and not least the consumption patterns that come with it. Being a tourist and whatever it includes is important in individual life narratives and sensemaking (Gretzel, Fesenmaier & O’Leary, 2006; Ylikännö, 2013). Holidays are signifiers of lifestyle and life choice, prosperity, power, competence, etc. in line with other important consumer items, such as predominantly, but not exclusively, homes and cars. Individual holidaymaking is often much more than just relaxation, a change of environment and experiencing...
something new; it is also a symbolic act to demonstrate values to others at home or at the travel destinations (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Correia, Kozak & Reis, 2016). Spending money and acquiring lavish goods and services to publicly display wealth is a well-known phenomenon in tourism, and is often labelled “luxury tourism” (Bakker, 2005; Thirumaran & Raghav, 2017). Economic power is a means of either attaining or maintaining a given social status, and the purchase of expensive objects or services that are not strictly necessary gains and increases the attention of others. Causing envy among others is part of the process of boasting about lavish choices, and a communicable comparison can be made with relevant social and economic reference groups (Caletrio, 2015; Trigg, 2001).

This article addresses “conspicuous consumption”, a concept well-known from sociological, psychological and economic research and first coined by Veblen (1899). However, this article particularly scrutinizes its opposite “conspicuous non-consumption”, and thereby raises new issues and questions of importance for tourism destinations, industries and marketers. The main assumption is that over time, conspicuous consumption patterns have fostered a variety of objections and counter movements both among travellers (Smith, 2019), and in tourism regions. Backpacker tourism, for example, was not only a way of enabling travellers to experience the world on a low budget, it also represented an explicit criticism of the traditional travel consumption patterns of the more or less affluent bourgeoisie. Backpackers convincingly supplemented the styles of travel with new material, behavioural and symbolic values, and in this transformation new forms of conspicuousness emerged (Canavan, 2018; Sørensen, 2003). Another driving force for discarding the ideas of ostentatious consumption is a stronger focus on and awareness of the side effects of consumption that do not benefit the population at the destination, or forms of tourism that adversely affect natural environments or over-utilize scarce resources (Poelina & Nordensvard, 2017). Most recently, the overcrowding of tourists in high-profile (and expensive) destinations has raised local protests, and visitors may well not receive a wholehearted welcome if they choose to holiday there (Seraphin, Sheeran & Pilato, 2018).

Taking into consideration emerging trends in tourism, the assumption expressed here is that non-consumption can also be conspicuous. Therefore, the question to be investigated is whether there is such a phenomenon as conspicuous non-consumption, and if so, what characterizes it. Referring to the original groundbreaking social theory by Veblen (1899) and findings from more recent tourism literature, the study attempts to provide examples of conspicuous non-consumption and to systematize approaches for potential future deeper empirical examinations. Thus this presentation discusses types of peer recognition in conspicuous non-consumption, and addresses the communication formats, when there is “nothing” to demonstrate.

From a business point of view it could be claimed that conspicuous non-consumers would be nothing short of catastrophic. If tourists refuse to consume, they will generate very little benefit for the local host communities, and tourism’s role as a driver of growth and development would decline. Any tourism company or destination would find “non-consumption” highly undesirable and uncomfortable news for shareholders and stakeholders (Giaoutzi, 2017; Vanhove, 2017).

However, when it comes to tourism, consumption patterns are less simple than suggested here. Some tourists and travellers opt out of more extravagant and luxurious tourist behaviour, and rebrand the practice of tourism, making innovative choices such as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, nature-based tourism, wellness tourism, and voluntourism, where deliberate choices to consume less or differently are made (Dwyer, 2018; Liburd & Edwards, 2010). But at the same time, although these tourists make more careful choices in terms of material consumption, they may advertise their choices just as overtly as if they were purchasing and consuming luxury goods. This article focuses on the presence, nature and growth of these other more frugal, yet openly advertised, types of tourism.
Innovation literature often has a uniform focus on improving standards in tourism along a recognized trajectory, for example by adding stars and other quality features to hotels, attractions and destinations (Hjalager, 2010). More luxury, better service, higher variety are key parameters when trying to introduce innovations, and often success is measured by achieved international comparability (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005; Martínez-Román, Tamayo, Gamero & Romero, 2015). It is suggested in this article that conspicuous non-consumption is not necessarily the end of the world for the claim of tourism regions when it comes to economic performance and development. However, trends of conspicuous non-consumption will necessitate re-orientation when introducing innovations (Siguaw, Simpson & Enz, 2006; Ronningen & Lien, 2014). As indicated in the subtitle of this article, it is relevant to ask whether conspicuous non-consumption will lead only to a situation of non-innovation or declining innovation for enterprises and destinations, or whether the “innovation of nothing” can renew strategies and enable processes and services. One aim of this article is to stimulate the thinking and conceptualisation around innovation in tourism in a changing world, and in this sense, the ambition is to liberate and redirect innovation research in tourism. Thus, the term ‘conspicuous non-consumption’ may in a new way capture the essence of tourism and provide a useful conceptual framework within which to comprehend tourism and tourism innovation.

This article aims firstly to examine and add body and substance to the concept of the – at the first glance illogical and self-contradictory – term conspicuous non-consumption. The aim is to break down the term into sub-phenomena and to provide examples in order to give substance and value to it. The second aim is to contribute to the conversation about innovation in tourism, which is stagnating in insufficient rationales and needs provocative challenges. Thus, this article brings together two areas of inquiry that both merit closer attention in theory, and represents an initial step in this regard. The practical implications may be multi-facetted and this is also outlined.

After the methodology section, a model with four of fields of consumption and conspicuousness is developed. Based on consumption and tourism theory and practice the model will be explained, and evidence that articulates the tourism implications will be provided. Subsequently, the conspicuous non-consumption field is examined in greater depth, and the study of travel blogs is included for this purpose. From these contributions, the article moves into the field of innovation orientation, where it seeks to unravel what is in the “innovation of nothing”. The final section discusses the prospects for enterprises and destinations and the claims for future research.

**Methodology**

This article is highly explorative, both theoretically and empirically. It is based on an interpretation of consumer and tourism literature and supplemented with netnographic research for expressive examples in selected travel blogs. This contribution can be characterized as a “think piece”, i.e. mainly a conceptual paper that suggests new ways of analysing and reflecting on consumption issues and innovation in tourism.

The literature review and the development of conceptual frameworks focus on the term conspicuousness as used in consumer studies in general and as applied in tourism studies. Tourism research is found to deliver terms, dichotomies and approaches which are useful in this context, for example extensive studies on “luxury tourism” versus a variety of niche tourism phenomena, under the headlines of social tourism, responsible tourism, voluntourism, etc. The literature is used to state and discuss the content in the conceptual matrix, including its two axes and its four quadrants.

In order to be able to supplement the concepts with evidence from real-life examples, travel blogger entries are used as empirical evidence. This material is used only in connection with the quadrant 4 phenomenon of conspicuous non-consumption. As acknowledged by Bosangit, McCabe & Hibbert (2009), bloggers’ travel experiences and emotions are often represented in reflective narratives, i.e. bloggers use the media
to express self-identity and signal self-development and self-efficacy. This combination of self-reflective actions and the mechanism of exposure could be considered important elements of conspicuousness. Travel bloggers are also often “first movers” among tourists, i.e. people who aim to set new standards, influencing others and affecting opinions about not only travel destinations, but also travel behaviours (Xiang, Magnini & Fesenmaier, 2015). What travel bloggers talk about and how they talk is of interest for innovation-oriented destinations and enterprises, as the bloggers are influencers as well as trend-setters (Meinel, Bross, Berger & Hennig, 2016). For these three reasons, the examination of travel blogs was found to provide an appropriate starting point for the inquiries in this study.

Travel blogging is a flourishing leisure occupation and increasingly also a profession, and there are thousands of accessible blogs. The website http://www.joaoleitao.com/resources/top-travel-blogs/ lists approximately 2300 travel blogs, and this list has been an initial source for exploring examples of conspicuous non-consumption. The main criteria for the selection of the vignettes were that they exposed consumption matters and choices explicitly, and that they provided narrative content. The processes also included a search for travel blogs that embedded paradoxes in the conceptualisation of conspicuous non-consumption. Based on an explorative reading of the travel blog material, five vignettes with generically different basic symbolic values were captured. The analysis does not contain citations from specific blogs, but does include a rewriting in condensed form of the content and sentiments expressed in them.

The vignette technique is increasingly employed in qualitative research to assist reflective processes in conceptual and theoretical developments, and as a starting point for the academic identification of the knowledge gap (Barter & Renold, 1999). Hill (1997, p. 177) defines vignettes as “short scenarios in written or pictorial form”, and Hughes (1998, P. 381) embraces them as “stories about individuals, situations and structures, which can make reference to important points in the study of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes.” Vignettes are short impressionistic scenes, but nevertheless true stories that can give insight into ideas launched in the text. The dilemmas they unearth might inform innovation orientation as regards responsive destinations and enterprises.

The examples provided and their categorization should not be deemed exhaustive. As the paper is mainly conceptual, further inquiry into the practice of conspicuous non-consumption will require systematic ethnographic and content analysis and the application of other methods, including for example in-depth interviews with and surveys of tourists and business actors.

Consumption theory and nothing – a conceptual model and its axis

In an attempt to comprehend and conceptualize contemporary trends in tourism, a framework model combines the dimensions – ‘conspicuousness vs. inconspicuousness’ and ‘consumption vs. non-consumption’ – in four quadrants, as shown in Figure 1. The model defines four conceptually different types of consumption. Below, first the two axes and the build-in dichotomies will be depicted. Subsequent sections will focus on unfolding the four quadrants. As conspicuous non-consumption is the main emphasis for this study, Field 4 will be examined in greater detail than the other quadrants, and the vignettes will help to identify the formats of conspicuous non-consumption.
Figure 1. A framework for conspicuousness and consumption

The consumption versus the non-consumption axis
Consumption is usually defined as the selection, purchase, use or disposal of products (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2016). The needs and desires to be satisfied from consumption may range from hunger and thirst to efficiency, comfort, enjoyment or even love. In social research and particularly marketing disciplines, consumption often has a material manifestation, but can equally well comprise services and experiences. Implicitly in the research, consumption involves the exchange of goods and services for money. Contrastingly, non-consumption occurs in situations where consumers somehow do not select, purchase, use or dispose of certain products, services or experiences. This article examines the particularities in a tourism context, but prior consumption research carves out useful approaches to help understand this.

We may distinguish between “incidental non-consumption” and “intentional non-consumption. ‘Incidental non-consumption’ refers to the fact that the consumer "just prefers another alternative", while 'intentional non-consumption’ is a deliberate choice not to consume (Cherrier, Black & Lee, 2011). The main focus here is on the act of intentional non-consumption, i.e. situations where non-consumption is a matter of self-control (Stammerjohan & Webster, 2002). Intentional non-consumption has also been labelled ‘anti-consumption’ and has received growing research interest in recent years (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016). With inspiration from Lee & Ahn (2016), we define non-consumption as the voluntary and intentional avoidance of consumption, either generally or selectively (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). This type of non-consumption manifests itself in rejecting brands or boycotting selected products and services (Koskenniemi, 2019). When rejecting certain products or brands, consumption may be redirected towards greener alternatives, voluntary simplicity, and/or the substitution of material products for immaterial ones. The rejection of certain types of consumption may also be related to striving for personal well-being, simpler and less stressful lifestyles, or a more meaningful life with intrinsically satisfying activities. Personal growth and self-actualization are often mentioned in this connection. Overall, consumers seek to make conscious choices that are consistent with their values.
As noted by Lee and Ahn (2016), intentional non-consumers, in their terminology anti-consumers, do not reject consumption in an absolute sense. Rather, intentional non-consumption decisions involve pulling away from one source of consumption and pulling towards another. Even if consumers seek to be self-sufficient, it does not mean that they stop consuming; they just change their supply methods.

The conspicuous versus inconspicuous axis
‘Conspicuous consumption’ is a term coined by Veblen (1899). It refers to one of the oldest ideas in consumer behaviour, i.e. that extravagant consumption practices and leisure activities are pursued for the competitive purpose of signalling wealth and membership of a superior social class. In Veblenian understanding, the basis of conspicuous consumption is in part a free life without onerous daily obligations. More recently, the concept has been expanded to designate visible consumption that may serve multiple dimensions of social needs, and conspicuous consumption is no longer used only to define the attitudes and behaviours of – predominantly, but not exclusively - the most affluent segments of the population. Thus, Gierl & Huettl (2010) determine that there are several categories of conspicuous consumption. These can be defined by the reason for consumption in a social context.

Firstly, products or services can be conspicuous by being very expensive status symbols. This category of conspicuous consumption would serve the social need for showing off a real or imagined high position within a social hierarchy. This is consistent with Veblen’s original concept of conspicuous consumption, where the consumer may gain respect and experience envy.

Secondly, products and services can also be conspicuous by being unique, rare or unusual. With this kind of product, the consumer can express his/her differentiation from other people within the same social group. By choosing the unexpected, consumers may also deliberately seek to break social rules and run the risk of meeting with scepticism or disapproval – and later gain respect as an innovator.

Thirdly, products and services can be conspicuous in the sense that they are highly appreciated and sought after by members of a particular social group with distinct interests, e.g. ‘music lovers’, ‘model railway enthusiasts’ or ‘gourmet cooks’. By possessing the products relating to their interests, a consumer can express both conformity and belonging, and can aspire to a high and increasing status in the group.

A fourth reason, which resembles that of uniqueness, is suggested by Schaefers (2014). It embraces the purpose of establishing and maintaining an opinion leadership role in one’s peer group and among followers, i.e. being able to affects other consumers’ tastes and purchase behaviours. This role is supported by perpetually seeking information and knowledge about products and by choosing distinct niche products not familiar to everyone else. In this sense, the conspicuous consumer takes a lead in trend development and thereby gains a reputation.

Gierl & Huettl (2010), further state that products, independently of their type and the social need they serve, should meet three criteria in order to be categorized as conspicuous:

Firstly, the possession of the products or their consumption must be overt and visible to others. According to Veblen (1899), mere possession is not sufficient, there should also be evidence. Thus, consumption can only be conspicuous if others are able to observe, either by being present or watching in the media. As for the amplification of visibility and conspicuousness, the role of digital social media cannot be underestimated. In their study of personal websites, Jensen Schau & Gilly (2003), found that they represented “a very conspicuous form of self-representation” (p. 399). This statement appears no less true when considering contemporary media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube videos and personal blogs. When
posting pictures and descriptions of possessions and experiences on digital social media, the potential audience is “the world”.

Secondly, the products must have symbolic meanings that can be easily interpreted by relevant others in the intended way, i.e. they should clearly express status, uniqueness, affiliation or opinion leadership. Glitter and gold can be easily associated with wealth and status. Established brands and their logos are crucially effective when communicating, for example, uniqueness or uniformity.

Thirdly, the products or services that reflect conspicuousness must be scarce and not easily available to everyone, and therefore difficult and/or expensive to acquire. The real connoisseur can tell the difference between these and the many imitations that regularly pop up. The ability to distinguish between genuine rarities and the kitsch of the wannabe characterizes a personality of genuine conspicuousness (Caletrio, 2015).

The opposite of conspicuous consumption would be the consumption of more mundane alternatives that are considered ordinary, standard, modest or indistinct. These products and services are consumed not for their self-expressive attributes, but for a range of other reasons.

A lack of resources and consumption priorities may be a reason for inconspicuousness. Acquiring products and services that are not available to everyone can require a significant investment in terms of both money and time. Keeping up-to-date with trends and ensuring the necessary exposure of the consumption are also important issues that also take time and cost money. Selective inconspicuousness can be a way to create a balance (Rodkin, 1990), for example choosing a very modest lifestyle in one’s everyday life while stepping up one’s aspirations during holidays.

Another reason to remain inconspicuous is the need for anonymity. Affluent or in some respects important people can aim to “go under the radar” of the media by living “normal” lives in unpretentious neighbourhoods, sending their children to community schools, socializing with the neighbours, etc., and thereby enjoying the embedded freedom of being unrecognized (Sherman, 2017). There can be a safety issue to this as well, as when there is nothing to envy or steal, the need for protective measures such as guards and alarms will lessen, as the inconspicuous will not be obvious crime targets.

A third reason is that inconspicuousness might represent a silent protest. Eckhardt, Belk & Wilson (2015) suggest that due to the democratization of luxury and its affordability and availability in the mass market and the recent financial crisis, a climate of austerity has arisen, where the loud signalling of wealth and status is the object of ridicule. Thus, “noisy” products are substituted with more subtle brands.

These dimensions combine in a four-field matrix, resulting in four conceptually different categories: 1. Conspicuous Consumption, 2. Inconspicuous Consumption, 3. Inconspicuous Non-Consumption and 4. Conspicuous Non-Consumption. In the following section, the four quadrants are explained in more detail. Quadrants 1-3 will be examined succinctly with reference to tourism. In accordance with the purpose of the article, field 4, Conspicuous Non-consumption, will be examined in greater depth and the specific examples related in the empirical vignettes will help to progress the discussion to the innovation issues: non-innovation or the innovation of nothing.

Quadrant 1: Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous consumption has been the target of many studies and has also covered the aspect of tourism behaviour. Travel consumption is also included in Veblen’s (1899) paradigmatic conceptualization, where the “leisure class” is found to be mobile in space. In this process, they advertise wealth and prestige in a
variety of settings and social contexts. The ownership of exclusive property in destinations with pleasant climates, for example, signals high social status and counts as conspicuous consumption. The pursuit of certain types of activity, for example horse riding, also contributes to the air of luxury leisure. In recent years, tourism studies have increasingly embraced the luxury travel phenomenon and the characteristics and aspirations of the conspicuous consumers (Caletrio, 2015; Park, Reisinger & Noh, 2010). We will not go into any more detail about tourist’s luxury consumption, but as a precursor to the discussion of innovation issues in the final section of this article we will simply describe a few examples of how some tourism businesses and destinations cater to the social motives inherent in conspicuous consumption.

In the tourism sector, there are several examples of how service providers systematically take distinguishing measures that are both easily interpretable by customers and profitable to operate (Canziani, Watchravesringkan & Yurchisin, 2016). Flying from one location to another, for example, is a relatively basic activity, but the classification of customers in business and economy class segments respectively and the provision of extra services and facilities with signifier value have proved to be very effective instruments of distinction. Here, the expression of high social status and economic wealth may be achieved by air travel, where lounges are well-stocked, flight seats are wider, there is plenty of legroom and champagne is served, all of which is visible to other passengers. Such systems are seen across several subsectors of the tourism industry, for example airlines, hotels, restaurants, events, cruise ships, etc., and this clearly demonstrates the opportunities that tourism enterprises have to take conspicuousness into consideration in ways that contribute both to tourists’ satisfaction and to profitability.

*Uniqueness measures* taken by destinations and resorts represent another approach to enhance conspicuous consumption. Architecture can be an effective distinguisher in the case of pristine and well-protected cultural heritage and values, which are in scarce supply, and, for example, enjoying Venice in a manner consistent with high rank and fortune and without needing to compete for space, is considered a treat. Luxury consumption is also connected to recognizable iconic manifestations such as the hotel Burj al Arab in Dubai, an example of a destination whose uniqueness has been planned and shaped (Pacione, 2005). Destinations attempt to develop shopping areas, promenades and arcades with both well-known brands and high “local” high class galleries, antique stores, design boutiques, etc. with the purpose of attracting segments of tourists with above average purchasing power (Park et al, 2009). Such choreographed locations are spaces that make visible the ability and propensity to consume, and in that sense, destinations contribute to the enhancement of conspicuous consumption.

In the tourism sector, we also see efforts to amplify the visibility of conspicuous consumption behaviours by, for example, providing opportunities for others to gaze at those who advertise their status or uniqueness, etc. Providing such “gazing measures” represents a potential for innovation for tourism destinations, resorts and enterprises. The idea is to create “scenes” for visibility in time and space, allowing consumers motivated by status, uniqueness, etc. to display their consumption behaviour, while everyone else watches, admire and envies them (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Tourist equipment is visible to others in terms of how it is used or where it is parked, yacht harbours being good examples of the luxury on display. At events such as prestigious sport matches or cultural performances, VIPs are semi-disguised in special booths, but still open to the admiring gaze of the less privileged, and their cars may be parked in very visible spots in order to increase the attention of the other visitors towards those privileged guests as well as towards the event itself. This visibility can be further amplified through, for example, social and other media, and alliances with the media can be interwoven elements in this respect (Jones & Moital, 2017).

This brief look at literature suggests that the aspect of conspicuousness can be a critical element to consider in the innovative efforts of tourism businesses and destinations.
Quadrant 2: Inconspicuous consumption

Inconspicuous consumption refers to the consumption of less remarkable and less scarce goods with no strong or obviously symbolic meanings attached. Inconspicuous consumption comprises many everyday, mundane and indistinctive goods and services, which are bought for reasons other than their capacity to convey status and uniqueness, such as low price, comfort, or practicality, etc. Individual tastes and preferences are given less priority than the pursuit of purchasing efficiency and obtaining cost reductions, which are the hallmarks of industrialization and standardization.

In a tourism context, the consumption of standardized goods and services is recognized widely in package tours. Package tours can be obtained at budget prices, and they do not signal high social status. Motives for purchasing package tours are universal among large groups of tourists, for example physical relaxation, obtaining a suntan, or spending time with friends or family. The large and for many decades successful mass tourism destinations and the tourism enterprises have succeeded in identifying the common denominator for many visitors (Claver-Cortés, Molina-Azori & Pereira-Moliner, 2007).

Availability is another distinctive element that differentiates inconspicuous from conspicuous consumption. The products and services are not scarce. As for mass consumption items, tourism companies are committed to ensuring that the product is available on many platforms: websites, apps, travel agencies, travel shops, tourist offices, etc. (March & Woodside, 2005). Being easily available also includes open and inviting access directly from the street.

Consumption is not connected with difficult social codes and norms and deep knowledge. The food in restaurants, for example, tends to be familiar and recognizable for tourists from abroad, as is the case with the main fast-food concepts. One business enterprise and destination strategy is to embrace increasing demand by providing information materials that create confidence and trust. One of the things that customers try to do is to get value for money, possibly by being astute when it comes to the time of travel, and the industry addresses this by advancing their yield management strategies (Kandampully, 2000) and introducing rigid and easily comprehensible quality certification systems (Casadesus, Marimon & Alonso, 2010).

Consequently, inconspicuous consumption can also be an aspect of tourism innovation (Hjalager, 2010). Process innovations, including the use of technology, contribute to profitability on markets which are usually highly competitive and have low margins. The inconspicuous tourists are also intensively the targets of perpetual marketing innovations (Williams, 2006).

Quadrant 3: Inconspicuous non-consumption

The distinct characteristics of inconspicuous non-consumption are that the consumers do not find it necessary to advertise or justify their non-consumption to others, they choose to be silent or non-expressive of what they do and why. Inconspicuous non-consumption has a variety of manifestations related to tourism.

Downsizing may imply the choice of not going on holiday at all, but staying at home and relaxing and/or exploring the nature and attractions in the immediate neighbourhood. This is a phenomenon that has been labelled ‘staycation’. According to Blichfeldt (2008), the motives for a staycation are not only or exclusively financial, but also to make the best possible use of the little available leisure time, thus avoiding long travel distances, which can be considered a waste of time. Staying at home in a familiar environment provides a safer opportunity to prioritize consumption and manage spending in order to obtain benefits (Besson, 2017). In comparison, travelling may imply insecurity and unexpected expense.

The concern about stress and fatigue produced by a consumerist lifestyle and the pursuit of a simpler way of life may result not only in the acquisition of fewer consumer products in general, but also in the disposal
of already acquired possessions. Recurrent rituals of tidying up the home and disposing of things that do not make life easier and do not make the owner happier are performed to remove clutter and make personal energy flow more freely (Lee & Ahn, 2016). This also applies to tourism consumption, where decluttering would mean the removal of holiday behaviours that are not in accordance with the “true” non-consumption aspirations of the holidaymaker. Related to simplification is a wish to concentrate on and enjoy what is really important in life, not least cultivating social relationships or spending time on introvert leisure pursuits, for example reading, arts activities, listening to music or enjoying experiences in nature.

Abstention from social media has in itself been seen as an expression of non-consumption, but when the dimension of being inconspicuous – in a tourism context – is added, the downscaling of the use of social media is of significant interest. In inconspicuous consumption there is no particular drive or need to tell others about one’s holiday activities. Indeed, the chance to be digitally uncontactable is a type of benefit that can be appreciated as a quality of the holiday (Dickinson, Hibbert & Filimonau, 2016).

When the accommodation website Couchsurfing was first launched in 2004, it had a clear anti-consumption profile: exchanging and utilizing existing accommodation capacity possessed by private people in a trust-based and socially cohesive system (Molz, 2013). Since then the sharing economy has boomed in many new (and potentially more conspicuous and consumerist) business models, but the idea of putting private people’s possessions in a resource-conscious flow is a legacy of the original philosophy and potentially a condition for the general acceptance and positive feedback that the sharing economy is currently enjoying (Gyimóthy & Meged, 2018).

**Quadrant 4: Conspicuous non-consumption**

Quadrant 4 is the core focus of this article, where examples are supplied based on studies of travel blogs. As indicated above, conspicuous non-consumption is not addressed with any specific depth in tourism innovation literature. Taking into account new critical turns in tourism, for example the emphasis on social, economic, cultural and environmental side-effects (Fayos-Sola & Cooper, 2018), there is an emerging need to examine the changed forms of consumption, and not least how they communicate to wider audiences. This may inform both tourism destinations and tourism enterprises in their innovation orientation and endeavour.

Conspicuous non-consumption defines a situation where consumers abstain from or reduce their consumption of material goods or immaterial services and at the same time advertise their non-consumption and related motivations to others. This can be done in many more and less subtle ways. As with conspicuous consumption, conspicuous non-consumption will not work without observers and admirers. Hemetsberger, von Wallpach & Bauer (2012) find that ‘luxury’ is not only about having and owning material goods, it is just as much about having the opportunity to do, be or become a desired self. Based on this idea, we suggest that status, uniqueness and recognition are just as likely to be triggered when exposing the capacity to live out different selves, thus directing the gaze of other people to one’s capacity to do, be or become desired selves.

Although the abstention from or refusal of certain consumption objects and services in themselves may be a performative act (Portwood-Stacer, 2012), non-consumption is hard to make visible to the extent that it can be considered conspicuous and lasting. Therefore, if display and conspicuousness are sought, this needs to be done via channels other than what is known as “immediate display”. In a tourism context this is even more interesting to study, since an inherent obstacle for conspicuousness is that holiday time is normally spent away from admirers and the public eye that is present in everyday life. To flaunt their experiences, conspicuous non-consuming tourists need to communicate in completely different ways. By doing
so, as demonstrated in the categorization and the five vignettes below, they are not excluded from communication, even if they do not have material glamour to do the communication work for them.

Identity building
One motivation for choosing to level-down or refrain from consumption is to replace it with something believed to be “better”, more valuable, more meaningful. Distinct learning experiences and the development and refinement of transcending personality traits and qualities go beyond the standard understanding of tourism as merely relaxation and enjoyment. Volunteer travel is a major segment of tourism, and it has many formats (Wearing, 2003). Life travel careers with challenging and identity-building experiences can be important for later job chances and for access to education and social groups (Jones, 2011). The role of travel as an essential factor in the formation of human beings has a long history (Cohen, 1974), but it does not always mean non-consumption.

Travellers’ inclination to identity-building combined with explicit criticism of traditional travel consumption patterns have nourished the emergence of transformative escapes involving tourism (Canavan, 2018), where backpackers and volunteers display their concerns about the luxury, stress and resource depletion of mass tourism and seek more obscure itineraries for their own personal growth, self-actualization and learning. However, identity is no longer anchored in cultures, but is individualized and subject to continual reinvention and renegotiation (Larsen & Patterson, 2018) Some tourists continue to live like drifting humanitarians; always travelling and never coming “home” again, spatially or culturally.

Vignette 1: Internship in Bangladesh. Nadia, a finance student, could have spent her summer break like she used to, together with her well-off parents, shopping in the European capitals or relaxing on sunny beaches. This summer she decided to spend her time in another way. Like a growing number of young people, Nadia is increasingly worried about the uneven distribution of wealth in the world, and she felt something was missing in her finance study curriculum. Thus, to complement her education, Nadia applied for an internship in a bank specializing in micro-banking in Bangladesh in order to explore how the tool of microfinance can create a fairer distribution of wealth. During her “holiday” internship, she gained experience of some of the behind-the-counter administrative procedures and went to interview some of the impoverished people applying for micro-loans to finance their activities. Nadia shared her experiences on her blog, where sympathetic followers liked her posts and reassured her about the noble aims of her way of spending her summer-break. On her blog, she describes the experience as both eye-opening and life-changing. For example, after she came home, she stopped buying branded goods as she had done in the past and instead encourages other people to buy “alternative” travel goods and gifts.

Nadia’s story is an example of ‘conspicuous non-consumption’ as she visibly, on a travel blog, conveys her social and ideological worries about poverty in the third world and concerns about ways to solve this issue. The benefits described are concentrated on the educational and identity-building effects: learning the realities of life, and supplementing her education where the university seemed unable to contribute. Nadia very actively communicates her travel experiences, not only to family and friends who seem to admire her courage. But when demonstrating her continued concerns for people in many countries, she gained a “supportive audience”. She claims to no longer have the craving for branded goods that most of her peers seem focused on.

The paradox is lingering just under the surface: In the blog, Nadia advertises “alternative” travel goods and gifts. The message of non-consumption is also, albeit in new formats, communicated through channels of consumption. According to Bosangit et al (2009) travel blogger careers often start with reporting on low-
budget travel and humanitarian work experiences, where interesting experiences and evidence of personal growth and self-efficacy are communicated to family and friends. As the content increases in volume and professionalism, travel bloggers may expand their audience and transmission, and then they develop their activities to become a way of living. Like other travel bloggers, Nadia positions herself as a kind of opinion leader encouraging others to do the same as she did. Travel bloggers consistently point toward inner self-realization, chasing one’s own personal dream. The choice to leave everything behind is presented as an act of rebellion against the social norm or unfair conditions (Bosangit et al, 2009; van Nuenen, 2016).

Recycling, upcycling, repurposing
Tourism often involves substantial amounts of trash and waste, an issue discussed in depth in tourism sustainability literature (Gössling, Scott, Hall, Ceron & Dubois, 2012; Hall et al, 2015). The excessive use of non-renewable resources is an issue that some dedicated responsible-minded tourists tend to be aware of and want to avoid if possible (Caruana, Glozer, Crane & McCabe, 2014). Choosing tourism destinations and facilities known to be at the forefront when it comes to handling, recycling and upcycling waste materials can be understood as an act of conspicuous non-consumption. Selecting tourism destinations and facilities that are dedicated to recycling and upcycling can be an experience in its own respect, even if comfort and convenience are to an extent compromised by doing so. Tourists may willingly compartmentalize their trash and ensure that it is disposed of appropriately, and may conserve water, and make energy savings, if given good reason to do so (Carasuk, Becken, & Hughey, 2016). Such responsible behaviour is encouraged by eco-lodges.

These days, the tourism industry willingly embraces the trend for re- and upcycling. The industry foresees the potential in the trends to contribute transformative and selling narratives, and the trends can also contribute to the enhancement of experiences and aesthetics (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2017). For example, the reuse of shipwrecks for water amusements adds to the pleasures of those interested in the detritus of capitalism. Recycling and upcycling materials for building and decoration purposes may create healthier environments than using materials that are new and artificial and full of chemicals. Recycled tyres have become wall insulation materials in Sherwood Hotel, NZ, which also reused military blankets for curtains.

Vignette 2: Waste, trash and composting toilets. Alice earns her living as a travel journalist writing articles both in magazines and on various blogs, and she travels a lot. Despite this – or maybe because of this – she is keenly aware that tourism involves substantial amounts of waste and trash. For this reason, she deliberately avoids places with extreme and unnecessary waste and puts a lot of effort into seeking out places that are dedicated to recycling and upcycling. Recently, she published an article about a number of carefully planned and designed composting toilets at tourist destinations around Europe. She usually gets many positive reactions from readers and followers, who say they would like to follow her example. As a permaculture expert, Alice also reports on the production cycle, for example how waste, after full and virtuous recycling, ends up as lettuce and eggs on the breakfast table. Her blog and other writing also reflect on the attractions connected with garbage, and how cleverly repurposed trash can become attractive environments with a responsible non-consumption twist. Alice has the time and skill to seek out novel and special destinations – and not least she has the courage to try them out. In this sense, she can be said to be a frontrunner, who seeks out and tests novel places and experiences, and others can follow her example.

Many narratives presented in travel blogs transform the language of trash, for example by calling it “shabby chic”, and positive connotations may be added with terms such as “vintage” and “fashion”. Upcycled items make good subjects for photos and are easy to communicate to peers, for example via social media. As suggested above, the sorts of people who claim to use recycling strategies are also those who emphasize tourists’ participation in the production and co-creation of the facilities (Liburd & Becken, 2017). The experience
gained during holidays may be implemented at home and in professional connections, with opportunities for tourists to demonstrate to interested groups of like-minded observers that they are not only responsible but also knowledgeable. Conspicuous non-consumers will gain credit not only for the non-consumption, but also for the time and effort invested in the endeavour. In our observation, travel bloggers sometimes dwell on family experiences, where they emphasize the need to bring up children with an adequate understanding of challenges in world citizenship. This category of content seems to go viral very easily on blogs and social media.

**Spiritualizing**

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey, and among the reasons people go on them are, for example, the desire to undergo a rite of passage, experience emotional and educational benefits, witness a recurring miracle, reaffirm ethnical or religious identity, re-enact a religious event, atone for a transgression, comply with an obligation, or to be healed (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). The journey may be introvert and therapeutic in a physical or psychological sense. People derive their inspiration from pilgrims who during the trip left behind material excesses and chose to walk, to camp in primitive settlements and to take only modest food or meals composed in order to fulfil a purpose of healing and accompanying reflective endeavours. The material sacrifice made by dedicated pilgrims is found to be overwhelmingly compensated by the spiritual benefits obtained, new insights, more tolerance and generosity, self-control and self-confidence. Modern pilgrimage goes far beyond the strictly religious aspect, as shown by the many testimonials relating to, for example, the Camino de Santiago. Although comfort is added to the trip by way of upmarket hotel meals, luggage transportation and the availability of fine restaurant meals, the idea of some element of sacrifice may still remain. Consumption during pilgrimages may be symbolic, for example the purchasing of candles to light in a church.

**Vignette 3: Walking the Camino.** Being retired and single, Rick has plenty of time to pursue his interest in walking, and he uses every opportunity to talk about his accomplishments. Recently he spent seven weeks walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain – which he has done a few times before. Rick has always renounced materialistic endeavours in his life, trying to avoid too much stress and giving priority to leisure rather than work. When walking, he likes the combination of struggle and the need to travel as light as possible. For example, he brings with him only one change of clothing – he washes them out every day when he reaches his lodge – and he was one of the first to try out those made of ultralight bamboo fibres. He likes the challenge of cutting away as much everyday comfort as possible, and just concentrating on the simple task of walking from A to B every day and catering for his very basic needs: food, drink, shelter and the wellbeing of his feet. Walking the Camino provides him with an opportunity to reflect upon his life in an existential way. At home, his friends and acquaintances admire him and compliment him on his fitness and ability to cope with the physical effort of walking long distances, and they express respect for the small watercolour sketches that he manages to produce on his way on the Camino. He takes pride every time someone is surprised by how young and fit he looks for his age. Rick gladly shares his experience with light and simple walking gear with anyone who cares to listen.

The conspicuousness of pilgrimage is characterized by being present and actively involved in the sacred places, being observed by one’s co-pilgrims, and (if you like) God and His servants on earth, priests, nuns and monks. The rituals and behaviour may include the purchase of material objects, but these may be regarded as donations rather than consumption. Many pilgrims choose to document their rehabilitation from consumption dependency in photographs and other seemingly “worthless” memorabilia, such as Rick’s watercolour paintings or symbolic stones found on the way, good to show to friends and family at home or on social media.
However, pilgrimage is also an industry that stimulates the emergence of other forms of subtle consumption and related communication that does not overtly contradict the desire for a life of abstinence. As Rick’s case above illustrates, the gear and garments may have highly symbolic value, and the borderline between non-consumption and consumption is thin. The awe of others bestows on him a certain status, but at the same time his trying out of minimalistic and lightweight gear represents a pursuit of opinion leadership.

Retreating and detoxing
Leaving behind the stressful consumer society is part of the touristic experience, and the practice of frugality and immersion is an important goal that may be exemplified by yoga retreats in famous ashrams and retreats in medieval cloisters. Silent retreats seek very directly to eliminate the cacophony of everyday work and consumption. This category of conspicuous non-consumption is focused on the body and the bodily functions and holistic interlinkages with the mind. “Letting go”. “Indulging”. “Recharging”. “Reenergizing”. “Detoxing”. Those are among the benefits to the mind and soul that one gets when visiting a yoga or mindfulness retreat. The bloggers among the attendees describe the frustrations as well as the potential positive benefits when they discover that they need to spend perhaps several weeks in a totally vegan or non-alcoholic set-up, and where most of the day is occupied with sessions of various kinds, yoga, mindfulness, meditation, and life counselling and nothing else. The intake of food is controlled, the location often remote in developing countries, and there is nowhere to go shopping. Evidence from bloggers emphasizes the effects of the retreats and the fact that they help to escape from stressful job obligations, but also consumption habits that, when all is said and done, do no good (Heintzman, 2013).

The modern consumer society is full of tempting toxins: Alcohol, fats, food additives and even recreational drugs. Travel bloggers talk about the fact that unplugging from technology and taking a digital detox is very difficult, especially if the travel groups also include children. Both adults and children feel that they need to be connected, otherwise they will miss something. Or their family, friends and acquaintances on social media or in the work environment will miss them. It is a surprise to them that they can be unconnected for long time before anyone notices and that new digital habits can be learned. The benefits mentioned are the reinvigoration of social relationships with those (new) people who happen to be around, and the tightening of family bonds.

Vignette 4. Silent retreat. Nina had come to a crossroads in her life where she had to make decisions about work and family life. However, she found herself caught up in the daily activities of job, shopping, social media, TV, social events, etc. – a cacophony where it was increasingly difficult for her to hear her own thoughts and feelings about what she wanted from life. To give herself space to explore her own perspectives on major decisions, she decided to spend a week of her summer holiday at a silent retreat in the mountains. At the silent retreat, external communication with others was removed, both digital and face-to-face. No TV, no mobiles, no computer, no radios, no books, no magazines, no pens, no paper. No exercise except walking and long meditation sessions. There were only two simple vegetarian meals a day. The prolonged periods of silence left Nina’s mind no choice but to look at itself. It was not exactly a comfortable experience - two other participants left the retreat after two days – but Nina found the stay rewarding. Having muted all the distractions of her everyday life, she was able to examine her own thoughts, feelings and values, and after the retreat she felt able to make good decisions about her job and family. Afterwards, when she told friends about her experience, she would often get comments like “Oh my God, I could never be silent for a week! I’d be scared to find out what is really going on.”

Ultimately, conspicuousness at retreats consists of being invisible: NOT being seen doing updates on social media, NOT being available for urgent work tasks, NOT needing the constant approval of others, etc. Doing this demonstrates the superiority of having the capacity to prioritize and plan, to make personal life choices.
and not being overly influenced by others. This is very much the message forwarded in the blogs. In this respect it is perhaps a paradox that the retreaters communicate intensively, if not during the retreat, then after it (Molz, 2012). Of those who visit retreat facilities, some appear to develop their travel blogs from simple public diaries (Cardell & Douglas, 2010) into what looks like commercial businesses, where they work as web publishers at the same time as providing a service as marketers for the retreats and offering space for advertisers of selected lifestyle products. As noted by Cardell and Douglas (2010), a personal twist and even a slight naivety in style and approach can be more compelling than other marketing methods. They aspire to become “brands”, authorities in the selected field of wellbeing, sometimes enhanced with training courses. Setting up their own retreats is a business outcome, potentially even innovative.

**Slowing down**

Time is money is an old proverb attributed to Benjamin Franklin, and meant to ensure that we value resources and get the most out them for the benefit of both society and the individual. However, there is a trade-off between time and consumption. It may be very expensive to move fast and save time. The idea of slow food and slow travel underlines that the quality of the tourism experience may not be inversely proportional to the time it takes to get to the destination and consume what it has to offer. With slow travel, the meaning lies in the mobility, the travel per se, and the process is the destination. Slow travel has become a grass-roots movement, where addicted slow travellers help each other not only to tell their personal stories, but also to ensure a collective reflection on the outcomes of NOT rushing to the other side of the globe. Trains have lost some of their fascination to air travel. But the slower (and potentially more environmentally friendly) form of travel has regained some of its former reputation thanks to narratives proliferated on slow travel sites (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011).

Slow movers, no matter whether the journey takes place on a train, on horseback, in a boat or on a bicycle, can be seen to represent a politically motivated protest against the obsession with travel and a willingness to reduce one’s individual carbon footprint.

**Vignette 5: Promoting train travel.** Mark is a tireless advocate for train travel and helps people who have got out of the habit to plan their adventurous and yet slow rail trips. Mark is an engineer who used to work as a train ticket operator when at university. He believes that air travel is a waste of resources and a hassle. He wants to reduce the carbon footprint, and he wants to make the travelling itself a more personal and rewarding experience. On his webpage, he shares his own train travel experiences, mostly around Europe, and he provides information that can help other people to plan train journeys around the world. He is aware that planning long-distance train journeys can be a challenging task, since train operators often do not cooperate with each other in the same way as, for example, flight operators do. He seeks to inspire other people to travel by train – and to enable them to do so. Mark has also been interviewed for feature articles in newspapers and he has participated in various TV programmes where he communicates his fondness of travelling by train rather than plane.

The “slow movement” has existed for more than 30 years and over this time it has developed a communication eco-system of its own. In the case of eating, “slow food” does vigorously encourage consumption, but in more considerable amounts and forms; food which has not travelled a long way, food produced using environmentally sustainable methods and under fair ownership regimes, and food with a cultural origin and authenticity (Frost & Laing, 2013). Slow food issues are communicated in short and personal formats, for example at events and festivals, between volunteers nationally and internationally. The slow movement has some similarities with politically rebellious cells, apart from the fact that recruitment and all activities are very openly communicated. Slow tourists voice their conspicuousness by membership and voluntary commitment. Their dedication is demonstrated through their practice of selective consumption.
Discussion
This article aims to provide a systematic framework of conspicuousness and consumption and its four fields frame the combined analytical options. In the first quadrant, the occurrence of “conspicuous consumption” is demonstrated as lavish and demonstrative luxury tourism, whereas in the second quadrant, the more anonymous mass tourism illustrates inconspicuous tourism consumption. In the third quadrant, inconspicuous non-consumption is seen in the form of low-gear tourism practices. The main purpose of the article is to focus on the fourth quadrant, “conspicuous non-consumption”, the situation where the tourists are able to be very expressive about tourism practices that do not imply any significant amounts of material consumption. These tourists express seemingly self-contradictory attitudes in their political or social concern or willingness to show civil courage and commitment, without necessarily sacrificing the joy and pleasure of taking a holiday. Features of conspicuous non-consumption are illustrated in the vignettes and under the headlines “identity building”, “recycling”, “spiritualizing”, “retreating”, “slowing”. The communication formats used by the tourists are of distinct and critical interest. As there is not necessarily much to display, conspicuousness is largely conveyed on the Internet in order to reach an audience of interested followers and observers who are not necessarily immediately present in the consumption situation. Proficient conspicuous non-consumers are able to mobilize many media platforms and ensure a viral presence.

We suggest that conspicuous non-consumption - or rather the deselection of unwanted categories of consumption – is a phenomenon that is not in decline. Political and moral agendas are supporting the inclination to use non-consumption as a personal attribute, but also to explicate this for others to follow. Many of the travel bloggers observed in the explorative readings were, paradoxically, making a living from reporting on conspicuous non-consumption and they were found to be able to apply their knowledge and experience to new job functions and business models. Mosaics of behavioural patterns and attractive opportunities seem to open up for conspicuous non-consuming tourists, and judging from the blogs, holidaymaking with this mind-set is not at all unpleasant or boring, even if the material element is geared down or entirely altered.

Uniqueness is a yardstick that the conspicuous tourists seek be measured by, and they put a lot of effort into being different from others, adding elements in order to distinguish their experiences and thereby increasing interest in their narratives compared to those of others. The choice of destination is important, but so are the small things, down to the special dosing of herbs in the healing drinks on the retreat, and the way in which one can express concern for the environment. A travel blogger will carefully cultivate his or her signature style.

Scarcity is another important precondition for conspicuous consumption. But what are the scarce resources when it comes to non-consumption? What is it that is not easily available to any consumer, tourist or traveller? Based on the vignettes, the following come to mind: knowledge, courage, inventiveness, stamina, and access to people of importance. These are personal resources, and they include the capacity to reinterpret and re-perform the narratives over time. The opportunity to deliver eye-catching stories is therefore the most essential ingredient in conspicuous non-consumption. For this reason, it is likely that digital developments over the past two decades are responsible for conspicuous non-consumption shifting from a marginal phenomenon on the outer edge of policy, to a far more mainstream one.

While the reading of travel blogs for this study was explorative, much more insight can be gained by more in-depth analysis in the future. For example, the notion of conspicuous non-consumption merits studies of a more longitudinal nature where travel bloggers and specific issues are followed over a longer period of time. Visual and verbal analysis can also provide additional evidence about the consumption assumptions raised in this article.
Conclusion: non-innovation or the innovation of nothing?
This article examines the apparently self-contradictory concept of conspicuous non-consumption in tourism and elaborates on the inherent dichotomies – i.e. the dichotomies of consumption versus non-consumption and conspicuous versus non-conspicuous. By providing empirical examples from contemporary tourism, it is asserted that tourists and travellers do indeed reflect the apparent contradictions and find both pleasure and meaning in conspicuous non-consumption.

Returning to the perspective of innovation, the question is how the tourism industry and destinations could possibly relate to the ideas and manifestations of conspicuous non-consumption. Private enterprises and destinations are, unsurprisingly, often and overtly interested in revenues and growth – so how then can they embrace the idea of non-consumption? A predictable response would be to claim that without consumption no-one will benefit, that there will be no turnover from accommodation facilities, restaurants and attractions, and no jobs and incomes for local people in tourism communities. However, as illustrated in the examples, it is more fruitful to examine the idea of non-consumption from a somewhat different angle.

As previously mentioned, non-consumption is not a rejection of consumption per se. It is a move away from some sources and ideas of consumption towards others. The products, services and experiences that apparently non-consuming tourists enjoy today were not obvious ingredients of tourism consumption a few decades ago. Conspicuousness non-consumption is paradoxically not only a phenomenon, but also a market. For the tourism industry and destinations to get to grips with this will require innovation re-orientation.

Innovation orientation is a mind-set and process, and it can, according to Siguaw et al (2006), be defined as “a multidimensional knowledge structure composed of a learning philosophy, a strategic direction, and transfunctional acclimation” (p. 560). A learning philosophy comprises the company’s understanding of how to learn, think, acquire, transfer and use knowledge for innovating (p. 562). A strategic direction is usually articulated through statements of vision and mission of the company and includes future-oriented beliefs and understandings of the company, what it is and how its activities are assembled (p. 562) in a comprehensive business model. Transfunctional acclimation refers to the existence of an embedded knowledge structure that allows knowledge to transfer across and within the company’s subunits and functions in a way that both diversity of views and cooperative beliefs are retained and directed towards innovation (p. 563).

The three processual innovation preconditions pave the way for innovative endeavour. Those who claim that following the conspicuous consumers is a blind alley of non-innovation are over-pessimistic. It is a potentially fruitful phenomenon to study for tourism actors – firms and destinations - with the kind of learning philosophy, strategic direction and transfunctional acclimation described by Siguaw et al (2006). The embedded dilemma in conspicuous non-consumption calls for careful and open inquiries, and this category of tourist and touristic intentions can inspire innovative endeavour much more than both “normal” conspicuous consumption and inconspicuous non-consumption.

Drawing on the ideas of Hjalager & Madsen (2018), three potentially interlinked arenas of innovation can be outlined: the materiality-based, the experience-based, and the communication-based.

The materiality-based arena refers to the effort of innovating and developing the physical – or tangible – components of the tourism offering, hereby challenging the category of innovation that the tourism industry traditionally tends to emphasize (Hjalager, 2010). The innovative effort is often categorized mainly by advances in size, luxuriousness, visibility and comfort. However, the examples and discussions in the previous sections show that the innovation of “nothing” implies reorientation towards other dimensions of the
value proposition without necessarily compromising business opportunities. Thus, materiality-based innovations intrinsic in non-consumption may comprise distinct resource-saving measures, as can be seen in the vignettes. New ways of recycling, upcycling and repurposing building materials make sense for some conspicuous non-consumers, but only when made clearly visible for them, so that they can share their appreciation with others. Thus, despite the unmistakable restraint on the use of materials and resources, there might be supplementary material elements that could be important for firms and destinations to actually distinguish themselves from more standardized ways of serving the needs and priorities of the guests. Judging from the vignettes, solutions for food provision, transportation and experiences would also benefit greatly from a well-articulated touch of strategic abstinence. Uniqueness may be obtained in aesthetic expression (not necessarily beautiful in a classical sense), in being challenging (requiring an extra, but meaningful effort) or in humour (not taking service failures or mismatches too seriously). To a large extent, innovative material reorientation would suggest to the tourists that they must be worthy of the service, and that it is an honour to be granted access. When seen from this perspective, conspicuous non-consumption has some similarities with traditional conspicuous consumption as coined by Veblen (1899); the glamour and comfort have been removed, but the elements of prestige remain.

The experience-based arena refers to the substitution of material consumption with services and experiences of a spiritual or emotional nature. For example, organizers of outdoor trips may avoid transportation and hotels, and instead suggest walking and primitive camping. Innovative reorientation implies the efficient substitution of the craving for comfort with another meaning and focal component. The experience-based innovation effort will then be oriented towards the composition, casting, plotting and scripting known from literature and film making, the only difference being that tourists are not only observing, they are also participating (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). In order to accommodate the practice of conspicuous non-consumption, it is also important that the tourism service is not only an experience in the moment, but that if offers possibilities of exposure to tourists’ peers before, during and after the experience. Thus, innovative efforts may include, for example, the integrated provision of photo opportunities, or the possibility to take home samples of products as souvenirs and presents, etc.

It can also be seen from the travel blogs that the conspicuous non-consumers do not regard themselves as passive spectators. They seek involvement in the production and even the design of the experiences, for example by participation in the agricultural work that will result in the provision of delicious and healthy meals. In this regard, a new strand in tourism research explores co-innovation where researchers emphasize a shared responsibility between the tourists and the tourism enterprises in the innovation process (Li-burd, Nielsen and Heaper, 2017). Co-innovation, however, is not without its challenges, as responsibilities and balances of power will be modified. In addition, ambiguity and risk on the side of the tourist enterprise will dramatically increase. But working with this ambiguity and including tourists’ self-governed contribution to the tourism product appear to be vital elements in the innovation of “nothing”.

The communication-based arena comprises innovations that cover the full spectrum of media and communication support, and in this way seek to accommodate the need for exposure inherent in conspicuous non-consumption. It must be remembered that conspicuous non-consumption is not conspicuous unless others can observe, admire and envy. Enterprises and destinations that command the ability to amplify the conspicuousness are innovative in this way. They would have to cultivate communication channels, platforms and formats that provide tourists with the opportunity to demonstrate their tastes, affluence, power, position, competence, etc. Hence, if non-consumption is a phenomenon that the tourists will embrace, communication opportunities will be pivotal and a clear target of innovation efforts in the tourism sector. Furthermore, beyond the possibilities for tourists to broadcast their non-consumption, the communication element is also important for the tourist companies themselves to safeguard new business opportunities. Thus, many tourist enterprises may find that their business models will undergo a transformation from be-
ing service providers to visiting tourists to becoming halfway media organizations, serving a wider geographical territory. This is, for example, the case with signature food producers and gastronomy enterprises, which are active in TV-productions, campaigning, lifestyle cook-book publishing, etc.

As mentioned in the introduction, this article is mainly a conceptual “think piece”, which attempts strengthen the understanding of conspicuousness in tourism and bring it into line with new consumer trends. The perspectives for tourism innovation addressed above should be seen as a continuation of on-going research in the field. But this article also points towards new areas of research, where innovation endeavour and orientation are examined in more processual ways (Siguaw et al, 2006). This is about the ambiguous transformation from “nothing” to “something”, or in other words the shifting of apparently non-consumption practices to real business prospects.

References


