The Young Maltese Habitual Tourist:
An Exploratory Study

Christopher Bonnici
Master in Youth and Community Studies
Department of Youth and Community Studies
Faculty for Social Wellbeing
University of Malta
May 2014
The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author’s rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.
Statement of Authenticity

I hereby declare that this work has not been submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for the award of a degree.

______________________________

Christopher Bonnici
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Albert Bell, head of department of Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta for his continuous support and guidance as supervisor throughout the various stages of this research.

Thanks also to all those who in some way or another, helped and supported me so that this work could be concluded. I am especially grateful to all contributors, whose experience and ideas were vital for this study.

Heartfelt thanks goes to my family and friends for their continuous encouragement, unfailing help and understanding throughout the preparation of this study.
ABSTRACT

Christopher Bonnici

The Young Maltese Habitual Tourist: An Exploratory Study

This study focuses on the incessant need that some young Maltese people have to experience tourism travel. The study investigates the various factors that trigger habitual tourism, the different ways it impacts young Maltese people and the motivations behind their will to actively engage in tourism travel. The study also examines the social influences that lead to such pulls.

To this effect a series of semi-structured topic guided interviews were undertaken with ten young Maltese habitual tourists. Respondents were recruited in the study on the basis that they satisfy various criteria including; being within the age bracket of eighteen to thirty years old, and also they had to be involved and/or are constantly motivated to engage in tourism travel.

Findings reveal that young Maltese habitual tourists are actively engaging in tourism travel mainly in search for freedom and escapism, to overcome the mundanity of everyday life, to socially interact with different people and to discover; both the world around them and their own self. Tourism travel affected research participants positively as it made them more open to other people and new opportunities. Tourism travel is perceived as an enriching experience which can lead one to actually renegotiate his/her life position. This study also found that young Maltese people are very much influenced by social media, family and/or friends in taking decisions in relation to tourism travel. General practical recommendations were given in order to make sure that all young Maltese people are exposed to tourism travel, and have access to it because of its rich inherent qualities.

Master in Youth and Community Studies

May 2014
# Table of Contents

Statement of Authenticity ......................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................... ii

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................. ii

List of Figures ............................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: Introduction .............................................................................................. 6

1.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 7

1.2 Habitual Tourism ............................................................................................... 8

1.3 Research Approach ........................................................................................... 9

1.4 Positioning ......................................................................................................... 10

1.5 An Overview of the Study ................................................................................ 11

Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................... 12

2.1 Mapping the Field: Tourism Travel ................................................................. 13

2.1.1 The Meaning and Nature of Tourism ......................................................... 14

2.2 Being a Tourist ................................................................................................. 17

2.2.1 The Habitual Tourist .................................................................................. 18

2.3 Why People Travel? Motivational Factors for Tourism ................................. 19

2.3.1 Travel Motivation & Travel Intention ....................................................... 25

2.3.2 Culture and Curiosity as Motivation .......................................................... 28

2.3.3 Destination Choice ..................................................................................... 31

2.4 The Social Dimensions of Tourism Travel .................................................... 32

2.4.1 Tourism Travel as Ritual .......................................................................... 33

2.4.2 The “Ritual Inversion” of Tourism Travel ............................................... 35

2.4.3 Tourism Travel as Trend or Fashion ......................................................... 36

2.4.4 Tourism Travel as a Form of Escapism ..................................................... 37

2.4.5 Tourism, Social Capital and Distinctiveness ............................................. 39

2.5 Conclusion: Human Behaviour and the Complexity of Tourism Travel ........ 43

Chapter 3: Methodology ........................................................................................... 44

3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................... 45

3.2 Research Approach .......................................................................................... 45

3.3 Research Process .............................................................................................. 47

3.3.1 Sampling Strategy ...................................................................................... 47

3.3.2 Choosing the sample .................................................................................. 48

3.3.3 Pilot study ................................................................................................. 49
3.4 Instrumentation ............................................................................................................................... 50
3.5 Ethical Considerations ..................................................................................................................... 52
3.6 Data Analytical Strategy .................................................................................................................. 53
  3.6.1 Themes ......................................................................................................................................... 54
3.7 Validity, Reliability and Limitations of the Study .............................................................................. 55

Chapter 4: Research Data and Analysis ................................................................................................. 58
4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 59
4.2 Leaving the Cage ................................................................................................................................. 61
  4.2.1 Freedom and Escapism .................................................................................................................. 61
  4.2.2 Malta: Running Away from Smallness ......................................................................................... 63
  4.2.3 Unknown and Away: The Anonymity of Tourism Travel ......................................................... 67
  4.2.4 Expecting the Unexpected: Overcoming the Mundanity of Everyday Life ......................... 69
  4.2.5 The Needed Touch: A Need for Social Interaction .................................................................... 72
  4.2.6 A Fresh Look at Life: A Ritual Inversion .................................................................................... 73
4.3 A Reality Check ................................................................................................................................. 74
  4.3.1 A Discovery ................................................................................................................................... 75
  4.3.2 The World is a Wonder: Exploration and Fascination .............................................................. 76
  4.3.3 Travelling Within: Discovering Self ............................................................................................ 81
  4.3.4 The Rewards of Change: A Renewed Mentality ....................................................................... 83
  4.3.5 Reaching Nirvana: Self-Actualisation ......................................................................................... 84
4.4 New Pastures ..................................................................................................................................... 86
  4.4.1 Openness ..................................................................................................................................... 86
  4.4.2 Beyond the Comfort Zone: An Enriching Experience .............................................................. 88
  4.4.3 Personality Gains: Renegotiating one’s Life Position through Tourism Travel .................... 91
4.5 Birds Flocking Together .................................................................................................................... 95
  4.5.1 The Social Dimension of Habitual Tourism .............................................................................. 95
  4.5.2 Better Together: An Experience to Share .................................................................................. 96
  4.5.3 Renouncing the Ready Made: Organised Tours ...................................................................... 100
  4.5.4 On Catching the Flu: The Impact of Social Media .................................................................... 104
  4.5.5 The Social Allure: Family and Peer Influences ....................................................................... 107
  4.5.6 The Chance to Fly: More Access to Tourism Travel ............................................................... 109

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations ...................................................................................... 113
5.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 114
5.2 Summary of Findings ....................................................................................................................... 114
5.3 Implications for the Field: Tourism Travel and National Youth Policy ....................... 116
5.4 Recommendations ........................................................................................................ 118
5.5 Areas for Further Research ......................................................................................... 121
5.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 121
Appendix .......................................................................................................................... 123
Bibliography ..................................................................................................................... 127
List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Dissertation Outline ................................................................................. 11
Figure 4.1: Thematic Map ......................................................................................... 60
Introduction

“The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it”.

*J.M Barrie*
1.1 Introduction

“In the past half-century, tourism has become a way of life for millions of people and a future dream for many more millions” (Smith and Brent, 2001, p.67). Tourism travel broadens horizons and when young people experience tourism travel, they are affecting the social structure and mode of life at the destination, but most certainly, they are in turn being affected by the experience, and often carry back home with them new habits and new outlooks on life. Tourism travel has the power to silently and subtly alter opinions and behaviour and has an educational, economic, political and also cultural significance. Most of all it brings people from different backgrounds, nationalities, cultures and races together, highlighting its social significance as well as promising a change from the mundanity of life.

A review of literature shows that there are many different ways in which different authors interpret tourism and travel. Many authors in fact, use them interchangeably, for example; the idea of going somewhere for pleasure is described by some as travelling while others describe that same idea as tourism. Another example could be the idea of having to go somewhere due to exigencies of work or family; this is also conceptualised as travel by some and as tourism by other authors in different readings. According to Burkat and Medlik, (1981, p.41) “the concept of tourism has been broadened” and nowadays includes various other areas like businesses as well as the vacational aspect.

An interesting difference between tourism and travel can be pointed out in their early meanings. Leiper (2004, p.9) maintains that ‘travail’ actually meant torture which was served to criminals in jail. “Over time, people began using ‘travail’ to describe their feelings while on journeys”, this was due to the discomfort of having to walk a lot or
spending a lot of time riding wagons on rough roads. The term ‘travail’ eventually evolved into ‘travel’, describing going from one place to another. Travelling was tiring and uncomfortable for many, but people endure it because of what it represents, like for example getting to meet someone, escaping, or going to somewhere new. Once they reach their destination, people can then experience tourism. Tourism is defined by Leiper (2004, p.9) as being “at leisure, seeking pleasure”.

The study’s conceptual framework was informed by these concepts and definitions. However in order to truly give voice to the research participants’ understanding and conceptualisation of tourism travel, the study does not adhere to a singular definition of the phenomenon.

1.2 Habitual Tourism

There are many different reasons why a young person might decide to engage in tourism travel and a review of the different literature indeed points out various motives. The researcher coined the term ‘habitual tourist’ to describe those young people who have an incessant need to experience tourism travel; a lifestyle which has become a very much sought-after one by today’s young people. Some of the reasons why young habitual tourists choose to travel are because they want to distance themselves from problems they face in their daily routine, to seek change or to escape from any social obligations they might have. Other reasons might be because they need a break, for recreational purposes, to see or to seek opportunities that go beyond their native land. Various habitual tourists use tourism travel for deeper purposes, they take it as a personal journey of inner growth and avail of their time abroad to try to find a meaning
for their life, discover themselves, search for ‘wholeness’ or simply to be able to express their true nature and free themselves from limiting mindsets. Contact with new cultures, and interaction with different people might also be a reason enticing habitual tourists towards more tourism travel. All these different reasons can be gathered into Iso-Ahola’s (1987, as quoted in Johnson and Thomas, 1992, p.39) categorisation of the push and pull factors towards tourism travel. Iso-Ahola in fact “identifies two main types of push and pull factors, mainly personal and interpersonal” ones.

1.3 Research Approach

This study is of an exploratory nature and deals with Maltese young people; aged between eighteen and thirty who are defined as ‘habitual tourists’ because they are constantly enticed towards tourism travel due to different reasons. I sought to explore further into the motivations and needs that triggered habitual tourism travel, young people’s perception of it, and how it impacted and shaped their lives.

My decision to adopt an interpretivist approach and collect qualitative data came about because through the qualitative type of data I could provide richer information, which eventually led me to a deeper understanding of the respondents’ lives, experiences, feelings and attitudes. My main interest was definitely not to collect statistical data but rather to further discuss and get personally involved with the young people interviewed in order to try and understand their interpretations and meanings.
Respondents were found using the purposive sampling method and the research was conducted by semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with ten different ‘young Maltese habitual tourists’.

During the study I addressed the factors that were triggering habitual tourism, the ways habitual tourism was impacting on individuals, the social influences that lead to such pulls and the connection, if any, of tourism travel to an individual’s social capital, lifestyle, class or even status.

1.4 Positioning

My interest in developing such a research study within the field of youth and tourism travel came about naturally. For me it felt like stating where I personally am when choosing this particular topic to study. I am an avid habitual tourist and I have always had a keen interest in tourism travel. Tourism travel is very dear to me and this is because it has taught me a lot, helped me discover new things and go through different experiences, and led me to encounter good friends which I treasure. I can also identify positive attributes in me which have been nurtured and strengthened through tourism travel. Tourism travel has indeed made me ‘richer’ as a person.

It is also a fascinating thing for me to see how many young people are becoming more and more attracted by this idea of tourism travel and this is why I want to investigate further into the matter.
1.5 An Overview of the Study

As shown in figure 1.1, the analysis in this study shall proceed as follows. The literature review in chapter two gives the necessary theoretical background to the issues under consideration. For this purpose I shall first attempt to map the field, and then go into the idea of being a tourist. I shall also examine both the motivational and the social dimensions of tourism travel. Chapter three describes the methodology used to obtain the data needed for this study and chapter four presents the main research data and its analysis. Finally chapter five lays out the conclusions and recommendations of the research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

“You cannot fly like an eagle with the wings of a wren”.

William Henry Hudson
2.1 Mapping the Field: Tourism Travel

Tourism travel has always been a central aspect of human life and nowadays it is one of the largest businesses in the world. It marks the temporary, short term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations. This movement is generally international and much of it is usually a leisure activity. “Tourism generates wealth and employment. It is a major source of income and employment especially for individuals in many places deficient in natural resources other than climate and scenery” (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p.v). Travel has always existed. Primitive people were from the very beginning setting out, to search especially for food and the clothing needed for survival. Throughout the course of history, there were many other reasons which led people to travel, such as trade, religious conviction, economic gain, war, and migration amongst others. However, tourism travel as we know it nowadays is a phenomenon of the twentieth century.

Historians suggest that the advent of mass tourism began in England during the industrial revolution with the rise of the middle class and relatively inexpensive transportation. Following the Second World War, the creation of the commercial airline and the subsequent development of the jet aircraft led to the rapid growth and expansion of international travel (Theobald, 1998, p.5).

Tourism travel is by its very nature a conspicuous phenomenon and the number of people, part of a mobile population visiting places outside their normal domicile, is certainly an expression of the standards of living and of quality of life. Tourism travel can decisively influence these standards of living and the quality of life in places visited; it is one of the visible pressures which modern society exerts on the
environment. Tourism travel is also a complex phenomenon since it also involves the activities and interests of the central and local government apart from other obvious candidates like the owners of different sites, attractions and the many tourist services. Each of these serves both the resident population and visitors, and their management must reconcile the needs of tourists with the needs of the resident population.

Tourism travel is important not only for the economy but it also has a great contribution towards the social, political, cultural, and educational development of people in society.

2.1.1 The Meaning and Nature of Tourism

In endeavouring to define tourism, it is helpful to distinguish between the concept and the technical definitions. The concept of tourism provides a broad national framework, which identifies the essential characteristics, and which distinguishes tourism from similar, often related, but different phenomena. Technical definitions, evolved through experience over time, provide instruments for particular study, statistical, legislative and administrative and industrial purposes; there are different technical definitions appropriate for different purposes.

The concept of tourism, first formulated in the period between the two world wars, was initially defined as “the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity” (Hunziker & Krapf, as quoted in Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p.41). Since then this basic concept has been broadened to include various forms of business and vocational travel. Burkart and Medlik (1981, p.42) maintain that five main characteristics of tourism can be identified conceptually:
1) Tourism arises from a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations.

2) There are two elements in all tourism: the journey to the destination and the stay including activities at the destination.

3) The journey and the stay take place outside the normal place of residence and work, so that tourism gives rise to activities, which are distinct from those of the resident and working populations of the places, through which tourists travel and in which they stay.

4) The movement to destinations is of temporary, short-term character, with intention to return within a few days, weeks or months.

5) Destinations are visited for purposes other than taking up permanent residence or employment remunerated from within the places visited.

Although most tourism is leisure activity, and recreation is often the main purpose, there is no reason for restricting the concept in this way, and the essential characteristics of tourism can be interpreted to embrace a much wider concept.

The technical definitions of tourism can at least be interpreted in three particular aspects according to Burkart and Medlik (1981, p.42-43). The first is the purpose of the travel or visit, which expresses a particular motivation. For example: a business holiday or due to common interest in tourism. Secondly, it is necessary to define the time element. The minimum and maximum period in terms of length of stay away from home or in terms of length of stay at a particular destination, may have to be established for a particular purpose. The stay at destination needs to be of at least twenty-four hours; otherwise it should be described as a day trip or as an excursion; and thirdly, a technical definition has to recognise the particular situations which may arise for particular purposes, like
for example: visits to friends and relatives, or for study, health, religious and other miscellaneous purposes.

Doswell’s definition (1997, p.14) is perhaps more enlightening. He argues that there are “three immediately striking aspects of tourism” which give it its unique character. These aspects are that 1) tourism is mostly not seen or tried out before it is purchased; 2) it is consumed where it is produced; and 3) it involves many sections of society because the place and the people where it is produced are part of the product itself. Doswell (1997, p.15-21) also points out other facets that make tourism different, like for example the issue of spontaneity. Tourism has a spontaneous aspect attached to it which comes from the intangibility of the service, and this intangibility makes it more difficult for its quality to be controlled. Since no person is the same, it is expected that people will greet, treat or even serve one differently; so no one guest experience will be exactly the same as that of another guest. One can standardise food, but most certainly one cannot standardise a smile, for example. Another significant facet of tourism is that of remembrance. When people go on holiday, they are already looking forward to creating memories. Tourism offers a chance of escape, a realisation of a dream or an indulgence in some sort of fantasy; so generally it is about enriching one’s life, and therefore while many parts of a person’s life will eventually fade away and be forgotten, holidays and journeys tend to live in the memories.

Doswell adds that tourism is also about matching, in the sense that the touristic product depends on the matching of quality levels and capacities to meet the needs of the markets, for example the matching of square metres of beach to sunbathers or the matching of theatre seats to theatre goers, but it is also about a country’s natural and cultural resources, which together with climate, comprise a country’s tourism patrimony. For sure, factors like climate, cities, mountains, historical sites, forests,
beaches and rich cultural heritage directly affect a country’s tourism possibilities and the more the tourism patrimony, the more chances that place has to attract tourists. Other facets of tourism are that as a product it is perishable, since it cannot be stored. For example, each day that a restaurant seat that goes empty, the restaurant loses revenue, as the use of space cannot be sold later. Also, the tourism sector would suffer from seasonal fluctuations in demand especially due to changing climatic conditions and holiday breaks, particularly of schools.

### 2.2 Being a Tourist

Jansson (2002), explains that being a tourist means

> temporarily leaving one’s home for a certain preselected destination, typically during a collectively shared vacation, for the main sake of gaining new spatial experiences. Tourism is a kind of organised retreat from the temporal and spatial features of labour practices and everydayness (Jansson, 2002, p.431).

A central feature of tourism that Urry (1990) discusses is that of the ‘gaze’, through which the tourist objectifies and interprets the place that s/he visits. However, it is vital to note that modern tourism is not really focused on first-hand gaze, but rather, it is continuously being governed by media which is replacing spontaneous considerations of the desires of individuals. Media is also creating wants and needs with respect to tourism.

Tourism is never a purely instrumental practice. All types of tourism involve a hedonistic aspect; a longing to experience different kinds of bodily and/or spiritual pleasure. It implies a negation of the everydayness and material austerity.
2.2.1 The Habitual Tourist

The habitual tourist is one who is continuously enticed towards tourism travel. This need to travel incessantly can be due to many different reasons. Generally, many young people are attracted to this tourism travel due to the fact that it promises a long term distraction; because one is not only transported from his/her home, but one is also transported mentally. The modern young person feels the need to always broaden horizons and this is why s/he would be more prone to tourism travel. Also, according to Boyer (1972) and Douchet (1949), if the young person lives in a modern city s/he may want to flee from its problems, such as social obligations and the mundane tiring routine. The habitual tourist therefore voluntarily visits places away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change and attempts to express one’s true nature and free oneself from limiting mindsets. Obviously, the habitual tourist may not merely want to get away from everything, but rather to go abroad to simply return to one’s true self. Young people will always search for opportunities to enhance and add meaning to their lives; those who may be considered expressive individualists will search for opportunities to fulfil intrinsic needs while experiencing tourism travel, whilst individuals whose aims are more associated with utilitarian individualism, may not consciously seek self-actualisation during their tourism travel, but instead simply focus on short-term satisfaction and material goals. Adler (1989, retrieved from http://www.authenticholidayfilms.com/travel_motivation_18.html) argues that self-discovery through the act of self-expression in tourism travel is indeed the synergetic effect young habitual tourists seek. Iso-Ahola (1983) maintains that

recreational travel is a dialectical optimizing process, in which two forces simultaneously influence a person: the desire to leave the personal and/or interpersonal environment behind oneself and the
The habitual tourist is the one in search of expressing and identifying his/her most intimate inclinations, in search of that ‘wholeness’ absent from the everyday life. Vukonic (1996, retrieved from http://www.authenticholidayfilms.com/travel_motivation_18.html) argues that tourism travel does indeed have the potential to do so, as it offers closeness to nature, the appreciation of beauty and an encounter with the diversity of human achievement. The opportunity for quiet contemplation and reflection, as well as the contact with other cultures and ideas in new and unfamiliar surroundings may raise the traveller’s awareness of his/her reality.

2.3 Why People Travel? Motivational Factors for Tourism

“It has long been said that travel ‘broadens the mind’. Now new evidence proves that jumping on a plane will not only make you smarter, but more open minded and creative” (Lehrer, J., 2010, March 14, Why We Travel. The Observer. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2010/mar/14/why-travel-makes-you-smarter). An old Chinese saying, ‘it is better to see for oneself than to hear about it many times’ is pertinent to the idea that travel is an educator and a vehicle whereby we can have a new and wonderful first-hand experience. Travel opens a doorway for the individual to seek the experience and be open to the absorption of these experiences. At no time in history
has travel been as easy as it is now. Flights to every country in the world are provided, and also within each country different means of transportation exist that can take the traveller to where s/he wants to go.

The researchers attempting to understand tourism motivation are ultimately trying to answer the question ‘why do people travel?’ According to Mayo & Jarvis (1981, p.147) “Motivation is often thought to be the ultimate driving force that governs behaviour”. Most attempts to explain tourist motivation are based on Maslow’s motivational theory, in particular the hierarchy of needs.

Researchers attempting to define tourist motivation typically develop a list of reasons to travel. For example, McIntosh (1977), as cited in Jayapalan (2001, p.47-48), divides basic travel motivations into four categories:

1) Physical motivators: related to physical relaxation and rest, sports participation, beach recreation, relaxing entertainment, and health considerations.

2) Cultural motivators: connected with an individual’s desire for knowledge of other countries – their music, art, folklore, dances, paintings, and religion.

3) Interpersonal motivators: related to the desire to meet new people, to visit friends and relatives, to escape from the routine of everyday life, family, or neighbours, or to make new friends.

4) Status and prestige motivators: identified with the needs of personal esteem, the desire for recognition, attention, appreciation, and a good reputation.

On the other hand, Doswell (1997, p.27) maintains that people primarily travel for two reasons, which are:
1) By obligation – Having to go somewhere on business, or feeling an obligation for religious reasons, or for reasons of family or friendship, or for medical reasons.

2) For pleasure – Choosing to go somewhere for pleasure: the pleasure for example, of rest, adventure, escape, discovery, excitement, sport or romance, or any other pleasure seeking motivations. These may differ from person to person.

“What the traveller says are his motivations for travelling may be only reflections of deeper needs, needs which he himself does not understand, may not be aware of, or may not wish to articulate” (Lundberg, 1974, as cited in Mayo and Jarvis, 1981, p.146).

Indeed every tourist is different and so are the factors they are motivated by. Motivators change over time for each individual due to changes in their personal circumstances.

Swarbrooke and Horner (1999, p.54) maintain that “No widely recognised way exists of categorising the main motivating factors in tourism”, however they do point out some of the major ones, which according to them are:

1) Physical: relaxation, suntan, exercise and health, sex.

2) Emotional: nostalgia, romance, adventure, escapism, fantasy, spiritual, fulfilment.

3) Personal: visiting friends and relatives, making new friends, need to satisfy others, search for economy if on very limited budget.

4) Personal development: increased knowledge, learning a new skill.

5) Status: exclusivity, fashionability, obtaining a good deal, ostentatious spending opportunities.

6) Cultural: sightseeing, experiencing new cultures.
Similarly, Middleton and Clarke (2001, p.72-73) also provide a list of main motives for travel and tourism. Their list comprises business or work related motives; physical or physiological motives; cultural, psychological and personal education motives; social, interpersonal and ethnic motives; entertainment, amusement, pleasure and pastime motives and also religious ones.

One’s motivation to travel away from home can be for work-related purposes like for example attending conferences, meetings, exhibitions or short courses, or else it might be the case that one travels because s/he is a truck driver or a service engineer. Apart from work, one can be motivated to travel to participate in sport or other recreation like sailing, golfing, skiing, walking or simply because they want to find warmth and sunshine and relax by the beach to unwind from the stress of everyday life. Participation as a spectator, a player or as a volunteer in festivals, theatres, music, museums or activities involving intellectual, craft and other leisure-time pursuits or even visiting destinations for the sake of their cultural and or natural heritage (including ecotourism) might also be another good motivation for travel and tourism. Middleton and Clarke (2001, p.72-73) further elaborate on interpersonal, entertainment and even religious motives; where one is enticed to travel to enjoy the company and visits with friends and relatives, to accompany someone travelling for their own reasons such as business or even visiting the place of one’s birth and exploring historical roots or simply because s/he wants to attend different social occasions ranging from weddings to funerals; visit theme and amusement parks, undertake non-routine leisure shopping sprees, watch sporting events as a spectator or even to participate in pilgrimages or undertake retreats for meditation and study purposes.
Another theorist, Theobald (1998, p.21) agrees with Middleton and Clarke’s list of motives for travel and tourism and in fact classifies tourism demand delineating the main purpose(s) of the visit or trip. Theobald’s list comprises the following:

1) Leisure, recreation and holidays
2) Visiting friends and relatives
3) Business and professional
4) Health treatment
5) Religion/pilgrimages
6) Other (crews on public carriers, transit and other or unknown activities)

Lickorish & Jenkins (1997, p.60), discuss the motivational factors which lead towards the demand for travel. They maintain that “the factors will vary according to countries but perhaps five are sufficiently important to be regarded as generally applicable: education, urbanisation, marketing, the trade travel and destination attractions”.

According to Lickorish and Jenkins, various American studies clearly show that there is in fact a correlation between the level of education achieved by a person and his or her predisposition to travel. The connection is believed to be between one’s level of education and his/her cultural curiosity. Many frequent travellers, perhaps because of the expense of the journey, might be quite wealthy with high educational levels. At the other extreme, other frequent travellers might be budget tourists, sometimes associated with the term ‘backpackers’. Usually these would be the younger people, who are not afraid of travelling vast distances to seek information, knowledge and experience.

It is interesting to note that most international tourists live in urban areas. Urban environments are well served with a network of travel agents, tour operators and transport hubs and all this certainly influences holiday trips, as living in these areas
means that these people are experiencing a higher level of pressure towards tourism in terms of their daily living environment, especially when compared with their counterparts who live in non-urban areas. This results in having more people that live in urban areas going abroad, and who are more likely to choose a holiday destination which would give them a different environment from that in which they usually live. Environmental quality and the quality of holiday experience are both very important determinants of demand. Another motivational factor in tourism is the promotion which is aimed at the potential tourist. For most people a tourism destination is bought ‘sight unseen’, meaning that many tourists are first time visitors to a specific destination. These holidays would have been bought because they were recommended by friends or through media influence, since they would not really have their own personal knowledge of the destination. Advertising definitely stimulates the motivation for travel.

What also stimulates the motivation for travel is the reassurance factor. If people are reassured, then they would be more likely to choose a particular destination instead of another. This is where travel agents and tour operators come into play, because as more potential travellers seek advice and information from them, then they become open to persuasion. Therefore this travel trade can influence and might also change some initial perceptions of a proposed destination. Finally, Lickorish and Jenkins also discuss destination attractions, one of the most obvious motivators for travel. People travel to satisfy a range of personal needs, both physical and psychological. Potential travellers can be grouped into market segments which are then targeted (cultural tourists, relaxation, winter sports, adventure, diving, gambling, etc.). Each individual has his/her own motivations.
In tourism pictured as pleasure or holiday travel, the reasons why people engage in it vary and are not always clearly evident. It may be said that people engage in tourism to escape and be elsewhere from the routine, constraints and stresses of everyday life, however temporary this may be. From this basic motivation, Burkart and Medlik (1981, p.57) quote Professor Gray who says that there are “two main and distinct motivations, Wanderlust and Sunlust”. Wanderlust is “the desire to exchange the known for the unknown, to leave things familiar and to go and see different places, people, and cultures or relics of the past in places famous for their historical monuments and associations, or for their current fashions and contributions to society” and Sunlust “generates a type of travel which depends on the existence elsewhere of better amenities for a specific purpose than are available in the domicile; it is prominent with particular activities such as sports and literally with the search for the sun”.

Although travel motivation classifications are usually composed of long lists comprising all the possible reasons for travelling; many researchers agree that a common denominator that probably underlies all forms of leisure travel is the need for variety. Travel represents one of the most popular ways of escaping from boredom and the tension.

2.3.1 Travel Motivation & Travel Intention

Mill and Morrison (2002, as cited in Jang, Bai, Hu, and Wu, 2009, p.55) explained that travel motivation occurs when an individual is made aware of a need deficiency. Human needs set the ground for understanding travel motivations and travellers. Their explanation can also be linked to Maslow’s (1954) hierarchical theory of needs: The
behaviour of an individual is determined by conscious or unconscious needs, which create the motivation for behaviour.

It seems to be generally accepted that “push” and “pull” motivations proposed by Dann (1977, 1981) have been the most widely accepted theory in the travel motivation literature (Goossens, 2000; Jang & Cai, 2002; Yuan & McDonald, 1990, as quoted in Jang et al., 2009, p55). Push factors are considered as socio-psychological needs such as, a desire for excitement, knowledge and education, relaxation, achievement, family togetherness, escape, safety and sightseeing that predispose a person to travel; the desire to go on a vacation and the destination(s) considered; while pull factors are ones that attract the person to a specific destination after push motivation has been initiated. Pull factors lead to destination(s) being chosen due to the perceived image of a destination, including atmosphere, activities, climatic conditions, scenery, culture, lifestyle and the social environment. Push factors (whether to travel) are internal to the person and establish the desire to travel, whereas pull factors (where to travel) are external to the individual and are aroused because of destination attractions.

Departing from the push and pull approach, Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982, 1983) proposed that people are motivated to pursue a leisure activity for two major reasons: seeking and escaping. These two motivational forces, of escaping from the daily routine and seeking different recreational opportunities were considered as the critical determinants of human leisure behaviour. According to Iso-Ahola (1982, as cited in Jang et al., 2009, p.55) leisure behaviour is a process that “provides an outlet for avoiding something and for simultaneously seeking something”.

Another theorist, Mansfeld (1992, as cited in Jang et al., 2009, p.56) examined the role of motivation in comprehending travel behaviour and stated that once motivated to travel, people gather information on their planned trips. Travel motivation is most certainly a key stage that triggers travel decision before the actual travel.

What actually precedes behaviour is the behavioural intention and according to Moutinho (1987, as cited in Jang et al., 2009, p.56) behavioural intention, varies according to three different factors which he terms as: 1) Evaluative beliefs, 2) Social factors that provide a set of normative beliefs, and 3) Situational factors. Travel intention, as a kind of behavioural intention, can be understood in the same theoretical context, and Jang et al. (2009, p.57) discuss a process of six major stages that forms a behavioural continuum of an action (e.g., travel):

1) Pre-contemplation stage (e.g., not currently considering travel),
2) Contemplation stage (e.g., feeling ambivalent about travel),
3) Preparation stage (e.g., getting ready for travel),
4) Action stage (e.g., practicing travel behaviour),
5) Maintenance stage (e.g., sustaining travel behaviour), and
6) Relapse stage (e.g., falling back to a before-action stage such as the preparation stage).

Travel intention literally emphasises one’s intent to travel or commitment to travel. Travel intention is an outcome of a mental process that leads to an action and transforms motivation into behaviour. That is, intention serves as an important mediator that connects motivation to future travel behaviour. Motivation is a vital variable because it works as the driving force behind behaviour and indicates the direction of tourist
behaviour (Fodness, 1994, as cited in Jang et al., 2009, p.57). Indeed, as individuals we are not a homogenous group, so different people travel to satisfy different needs.

2.3.2 Culture and Curiosity as Motivation

Motivation is a crucial subject because it is known to influence behaviour in every domain including tourism. Tourism motivation can be defined as “the set of needs which predispose a person to participate in a touristic activity” (Pizam et al., 1979, cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.94). Tourism motivation is generally examined in relation to the push and pull factors, a distinction widely accepted within the domains of tourism. Push factors comprise tourists’ socio-psychological constructs that predispose them to travel, whereas pull factors attract them to a given destination once the decision to travel has been made (Dann, 1977; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Yuan & McDonald, 1990, cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.94). Sharpley (2008) treats the push factors as extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors. The former represents motivations resulting from influences external to the tourist, whereas the latter includes motivations stemming from the personal needs of the tourists themselves (Sharpley, 2008, cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.94). Examples of extrinsic motivations could be for example, work, modernity, influence from peers, etc., while intrinsic motivations include status, prestige, self-esteem, etc.

It is difficult to understand travel motivation especially because we, as complex human beings, have a wide range of different needs which we seek to be satisfied. Motivations are produced through the values acquired within people’s everyday lives (Ateljevic 1997, as cited in LI and Cai, 2011, p.475). In the formation of motivations, an
individual’s values, which are defined as the strategies used to adapt a situation to one’s needs or oneself to a situation (Kahle 1983, as cited in LI and Cai, 2011, p.475), assist in evaluating the potential for objects, situations, or events (in the tourism context, destinations and/or other tourism facilities) to satisfy these values.

Among the works on tourism motivation, two motivational factors for tourism travel stand out:

1) The culture in which the tourists live (Carr, 2002; Crompton, 1981; Taylor, 1994; Thornton, Shaw, & Williams, 1997; Urry, 2002, as cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.94), which represents the impact of extrinsic factors, and

2) The novelty/curiosity the tourists seek (Crompton, 1979; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Mehmetoglu, 2007; Yuan & McDonald, 1990, as cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.94), which reflect the influence of intrinsic factors.

Culture is a set of ideas and beliefs commonly shared by a group of people or as Boyd and Richerson (2005) put it, it is the “information that people acquire from others by teaching, imitation and other forms of social learning” (as cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.95). Culture is what makes us unique, and generally cultural ideas get transmitted by individuals and are internalised by others, thus leading towards social stability. Cultural ideas are incidentally transmitted between people in various ways. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.95) suggest that there are two main types of cultural transmissions, namely vertical and horizontal. Vertical transmissions represent a process in which cultural information is conveyed from one generation to the next, and much of what is conveyed to children early in life (e.g. language, patterns of personal hygiene, etc.) usually stays with them. On the other hand, horizontal transmission takes place when cultural ideas are exchanged between people (e.g. peers)
of the same generation or between people (e.g., colleagues, friends) where relative age is not important (Stone, et al., 2007, cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.95).

Hofstede (1997, as cited in Li and Cai, 2011, p.473) suggested that culture influenced behaviour through its four manifestations of values, heroes, rituals and symbols. Heroes are “persons alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behaviour”. Rituals are “expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple forms of behaviour that occur in a fixed episodic consequence, and that tend to be repeated over time” (Rook 1985, as cited in Li and Cai, 2011, p.473). Symbols are a broad category of processes and objects that carry meanings unique to a particular group of people. A value has been described by Rokcach (1968, as cited in Li and Cai, 2011, p.473) as a “centrally held, enduring belief which guides actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence”. Values are the forms in which culturally determined knowledge is stored and expressed and are the basis on which attitudes, cognition, emotions and behaviour evolve (Hills, 2002, as cited in Li and Cai, 2011, p.473). Culture remains evident when an individual is at home or travelling abroad.

Culture has a significant influence on tourism demand, in that holidaying has gradually become internalised in the culture of the major tourist-generating countries. Therefore the idea of holidaying could be easily considered as a cultural idea which is continuously evolving.

When discussing curiosity, Kashdan (2009) provides an evolutionary justification for the trait of curiosity as follows:
In an unforgiving environment of animals fighting against each other to live another day, there was much to learn. To be motivated to seek out the new, our ancestors needed a hard-wired system that would cause them to eagerly anticipate and want rewards. This euphoria felt at the possibility of being rewarded compelled them to explore, seek and investigate. After all, it is the anticipation of being rewarded that motivates and the consumption that satisfies. This anticipation and seeking is all about being curious; it is evolutionary adaption at its best (Kashdan, 2009, as cited in Mehmetoglu, 2012, p.95).

Curiosity is seen as a desire towards new knowledge and new experiences, and can definitely influence individuals both positively and also negatively. Curiosity leads one to explore the environment, as individuals will always want to make sense of the world around them, and it might also lead individuals to learn something that is new. Curiosity in fact is a main factor in attracting individuals, especially younger people to engage in tourism travel.

2.3.3 Destination Choice

Destination choice is the process by which a potential traveller chooses a destination, for the purpose of fulfilling their current travel-related needs. According to Hwang et al. (2006) as cited in Lewis, Kerr and Pomering (2010, p.266-267), travellers follow a funnel like procedure consisting of:

1) Need recognition;
2) Formulation of goals and objectives;
3) Generation of alternative set of destinations;
4) Information search about the properties of alternative destinations under consideration;
5) Judgement or choice of destination

All this is then eventually followed by the act of travelling. On the other hand, Um and Crompton (1990) as cited in Lewis et al. (2011, p.267) suggest that there are three attributes which influence destination choice which are:

1) The ability of the destination to satisfy individual needs;

2) The social agreement, that is, the tourist’s inclinations to act in accordance with their social group’s opinion towards the destination; and

3) The accessibility of the destination

This idea is further reinforced by Oppermann (1999) and Woodside & Lysonski (1989) as cited in Lewis et al. (2011, p.267) who explain that the actual destination choice is affected by both the intention to visit but also by other situational variables such as time, financial resources and the opportunity to travel; so the decision comes as a mixture of the attitudes towards a destination, the individual’s characteristics and the situational constraints.

2.4 The Social Dimensions of Tourism Travel

The social actor influences society through individual agency, but reciprocally, society exerts a lot of influence on him/her. It is very important to consider the individual’s social dimension and to understand the society in which s/he is acting. The social actor influences society through the actions of individuals thereby creating groups, organizations, networks, and institutions, but reciprocally, society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. Social structures do emerge from individual actions, as those actions are patterned across
individuals and over time, but individual actions also occur in the context of the social structure within which the individuals exist. The norms and social relations which are embedded in the social structures of the society that a person lives in will coordinate one’s actions and lead him/her towards specific ‘desired’ goals, such as for example the wish to experience tourism travel or vice-versa.

There is a continuous interplay between the individual and society; most of what one does depends to a large extent on the society within which s/he lives. Such interplay also plays a vital role in tourism travel. Tourism travel, just as many other things, is also determined by one’s social networks, connections and relationships. One’s social dimension can facilitate or constrain opportunities, behaviour and cognitions; Hirschman (1981, as cited in Johnson and Thomas, 1992, p.59) maintains that one’s social dimension determines the symbolic meaning of any destination, and it is through this dimension, that the young person learns to associate particular countries with youth, prestige, fun, sexuality or conservatism for example, eventually leading him/her to choose a particular destination instead of another. One’s social dimension constitutes a powerful avenue for tourism travel.

2.4.1 Tourism Travel as Ritual

According to Rook (1985) and Solomon and Rabolt (2004), as quoted in Lewis et al. (2011, p.270), several processes and activities including grooming oneself, gift-giving and public holidays can be classified as rituals; since Rook (1985) himself defines ritual as “a type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviours that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time. It is dramatically
scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness, and inner intensity”. For this reason, tourism travel could easily be considered as a ritual as it includes an episodic string of events symbolising the break from the ordinary reality, a period of separation from home, a middle period of limited duration to experience the destination/s and an end that involves returning back home (Graburn, 1983, as quoted in Lewis et al., 2011, p.270).

Keeping the idea of tourism travel as a ritual in mind, Graburn (1983) as quoted in Lewis et al. (2011, p.270), with reference to Durkheim (1912) and Chapple and Coon (1942) identifies two types of leisure tourism. The first is the ‘modal type’ of tourism that in the Western world is regular and even predictable, where people take holidays at set times such as Christmas and Easter, and mark the progress of ‘cyclical time’. The second type of tourism “marks the passage of personal life from one status to another”. Graburn (1983) terms this as “rite of passage type tourism” as he argues that it is associated with major life changes, such as the emergence into adulthood and may also be a sign of personal milestones such as graduations, promotions, marriage and also retirement.

The “rite of passage type tourism” can play a vital role in young people’s transitions especially in their emergence to adulthood. According to Arnette (2006, as quoted in Santrock, 2010, p.19) this particular period of time is marked by instability. Young people experience a lot of instability especially in love, work and education, and therefore a desire to engage in tourism travel in order to be provided with an opportunity where they could reflect upon and be able to further explore their identity, is commonly felt, as tourism travel provides the perfect avenue for one to come to terms with himself/herself and gradually discover who s/he really is. Many young people actually use this period of time as a real opportunity to transform their lives, availing
themselves of tourism travel to start assuming this new status which was conferred upon or retrieved within. Tourism travel serves as a proof that one has advanced towards a new life stage and helps young people to start looking at themselves as fully-fledged adults.

2.4.2 The “Ritual Inversion” of Tourism Travel

A vital element in tourism travel is the idea or wish on the part of the individual to escape from his/her normal everyday routine/life and seek something different; a desire to overturn usual habits. Costa and Martinotti (2003), as quoted in Lewis et al. (2011, p.271), suggest that this desire for a different experience “allows the gratification of pleasures otherwise denied”. Crompton (1979) maintains that “a vacation is an essential break from an individual’s regular routine necessary to restore balance in a person’s life”. Tourism travel allows for the perfect escape from all areas surrounding the individual, mainly being the home environment, the work environment and also his/her social environment, and can lead towards the fulfilment of one’s needs; towards self-gratification. Lewis et al. (2011, p.271) suggest that if the “activities routinely participated in are perceived to require relatively little energy, individuals may tend to use vacations to burn up that extra energy, while an individual who perceives his regular routine to be strenuous and energy-consuming may prefer a relatively relaxing vacation”. Crompton (1979) as cited in Lewis et al. (2011, p.271) adds that tourism travel in such a case allows individuals to take part in activities and experiences that are inconceivable within the context of their daily routine but facilitated during vacations by the withdrawal from the individual’s usual role, obligations and responsibilities. Young people love to experiment and seek independence for various reasons, and since
they tend to be more self-focused, focusing primarily on autonomy in running their own lives without having a lot of social obligations and commitments to others, they tend to engage more in this type of ‘ritual inversion’ of tourism travel.

2.4.3 Tourism Travel as Trend or Fashion

Trends and fashion have been generally commonly been applied to clothing, however these may also be observed within aspects of science, art, education and literature (Sproles, 1981 as quoted in Lewis et al. 2011, p272). Fashion is greatly influenced by the industry, the supplier for certain trends, but also fashion is influenced by the demands that different consumers make. This concept of trend and fashion can also be applied in the context of tourism travel. Lewis et al. (2011, p.272) believe that the meaning that individuals attach to a destination is based on their group of influence. Young people are easily influenced by the ones with whom they constantly interact. It can also be the case where although young people would initially not really be comfortable with the idea of tourism travel, they might change idea due to the societal pressure that they experience, and they end up doing it because it is a trend/fashion; especially if it is made to appear as something which would help one achieve a better status; and indeed, there is a certain status associated with tourism travel. The role of society is extremely important here as it is helping to ‘mould’ individuals’ wants and needs. It is society which is acting as an external force in suggesting the influence of fashion on young people’s decision to engage in tourism travel.
2.4.4 Tourism Travel as a Form of Escapism

Young people today are engaged significantly in tourism travel. Habitual tourists are increasingly searching for forms of tourism travel that provide alternative experiences to the mainstream. Two examples of this phenomenon are the backpacker and volunteer tourism travel. Volunteer tourism is based on the idea of making a positive contribution to the social, natural and economic environment in which it is situated, where both the volunteer and the host community gain from the experience. While the backpacker, according to Jarvis (1994) and Riley (1998) is usually that person who seeks to break away and escape from the dullness and monotony of everyday life, jobs, career decisions and/or relationship responsibilities. The stresses of everyday life may also induce young men and women to take time out through tourism travel, motivated by ideals of freedom, independence, adventure and seeking new and different experiences (Jarvis. 1994, and Riley. 1998, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p. 194).

For many individuals given societal expectations to return to a role of responsible adulthood upon their return home, the backpacking experience is seen as a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience and explore foreign countries and cultures (Jarvis, 1994; O’Reilly, 2006, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p. 194).

The motivation to engage in tourism travel and encounter the “unknown” is often also perceived as a vehicle leading to self-discovery. This quest for personal growth and understanding (Vogt, 1976, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p. 194) occurs as the backpacker exposes himself/herself to new and challenging situations through interaction with foreign cultures and people. This can be compared to a certain extent to a ‘rite of passage’, as this type of travelling allows young individuals to prove themselves by resolving their own problems and making independent decisions, with
successful resolution indicative of their new found competence (Cohen, 2004, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p. 194). As they “exit” their normal lives, the creation of a new form of identity often occurs, allowing backpackers to redefine themselves according to personal experiences, as opposed to societal constraints (Maoz, 2007, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p. 194). Thus, backpacking is not simply about furthering one’s self-knowledge but it can also serve for the creation of a new identity.

On the other hand, volunteer tourists are “those individuals who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, 2001, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p.195). Through volunteering, the individual is able to develop the “self” through his/her altruistic efforts. By assisting others, many participants’ perception of “life” and “the world” is altered, with the individual becoming more “broad-minded, connected, relaxed, and less selfish and psychocentric” (McGehee & Santos, 2005, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p.195).

Similar to the backpacking experience, a genuine interest in making friends has been found to be integral to the volunteer tourism experience (Wearing & Neil, 2000, as cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p.195). Young people, as social beings, generally enjoy interacting with others; social interaction is enjoyable and can certainly be the main inherent reward.
2.4.5 Tourism, Social Capital and Distinctiveness

Dasgupta and Serageldin (2000), define social capital as “a set of norms, networks, and organizations through which people gain access to power and resources that are instrumental in enabling decision-making and policy formulation” (as cited in McGehee, Lee, O’Bannon and Perdue, 2009, p.487). While Lyda Hanifan (1916) was the first to define social capital as

those tangible substances that count for most in the daily lives of people namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy and social intercourse among the individuals and families that make up a social unit ... the community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbours (Hanifan, 1916, as cited in McGehee et al., 2009, p.487).

Social capital is the ability of members of society to be able to secure benefits for their own well being by virtue of their membership in social networks and different social structures. Social capital is something which continuously changes; it can be described as being fluid or dynamic, and therefore it requires continuous investment and cultivation by part of the members of society. According to Grootacrt (1998), there are three key roles of social capital for general economic success within communities. These are:

1) Information sharing,

2) Coordination of activities, and


It can also provide access to start-up capital; give tips about business opportunities, or even how to have access to markets. In tourism travel the most successful destinations
have found ways to engage in collective decision-making about the goals of the community. Since social capital provides the ‘glue’ for a community, it can be really supportive or detrimental in relation to tourism travel, in the sense that some destinations might be seen as sanctioned or out-casted due to different cultural/community reasons for example, while others would be encouraged and regarded as being really beneficial and enriching the individual. It is generally known that one’s culture strongly influences tourism travel demand and behaviour in many different ways. A touristic travel culture may, incidentally, come about primarily as a result of a number of social influences. Social capital is perceived as the ‘lubricant’ generating other forms of capital. Bourdieu (1984) develops a concept of social capital as part of a larger project for understanding how relations of difference, power and domination are created and sustained, and how social actors operate within these sets of relationships. According to Bourdieu, in order to understand social practices, one needs to understand the agents’ “habitus”, which he defines as “a system of dispositions to action produced out of the conditioning experiences of one’s life history and structuring one’s actions toward stimuli encountered in the field” (as cited in Ritzer, 2008, p.329).

The ‘habitus’ leading to one’s social capital does affect tourism travel, but what might impact as well is the idea of wanting to be as distinctive from others as possible. Munt (1994, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.178) suggests that there is constant struggle between the different classes for cultural and class superiority, and these struggles are key to many of the cultural and structural features of modern tourism travel. Young people try to be distinctive by enhancing their social status also through tourism travel. Locker-Murphy (1996, cited in Ooi and Laing, 2009, p.194) observed that “backpackers desire to increase their social status from visiting publicised destinations, providing them with cultural capital to be flaunted among other backpackers or upon their return home”.

Steinbeck (1962) as cited in Ooi and Laing, (2009, p.194) further adds that “one travels not so much to see but to tell afterwards”. So invariably, the idea of wanting to be distinctive from others leads to huge differences in the type of holiday that they choose to pursue. Lawler (2005 as cited in Casey, 2010, p.178) emphasised the idea of people engaging in different tourism travel due to coming from different social classes. He maintains that “working class people must be ‘pushed away’; expelled from … ‘middle-classness’ and the tourism experiences they undertake”. Smith and Hughes (1999, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.178) also elaborate on this idea of different social classes and maintain that social class is important for understanding how the structuring of tourism travel development occurred in different ways in different places. The perceived social class of others and of tourist sites is important due to tourism travel involving the movement of people through various sorts of spaces. In such spaces, people both gaze and are gazed upon by others (Urry, 2002 as cited in Casey, 2010, p.178).

Lifestyle and different social experiences lead young people to desire to belong or not to belong with others around them even during tourism travel. People classify their own behaviour in relation to that of others and use terms and categories to include or exclude others from their touristic experiences. According to McCabe (2005, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.179) “tourists construct identities for themselves in relation to places, and that ‘tourist places’ have describable features which allow people to be categorised as belonging to them by virtue of the types of behaviour people exhibit in them and/or physical characteristics of the places visited”.

Young people tend to communicate their cultural capital through the way they present themselves to others. This can be done by ensuring they are appropriately dressed, and also by sharing narratives of past holidays, so as to make sure to frame their class
background and aspirations, and distance themselves from mass produced and ‘inauthentic’ working class tourism.

Munt (1994, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.179) discusses what he terms as “members of the new middle class” who are continuously trying to assert themselves and mark their own distinction through unique modes of touristic consumption. They are concerned with distancing themselves from others and asserting their status differentiation, that of them being ‘the good tourist’ who feel the need to draw upon their cultural capital to ensure they are culturally aware and sensitive, openly judging what behaviour is appropriate and what behaviour is not. For Mowforth and Munt (1998, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.180), the ‘new middles classes’ are “key social groups in initiating, transmitting and translating consumption patterns and cultural processes”. These new middle classes are trying to stand apart from both the working class but also from the ‘old middle class’ who engage in mass tourism, by promoting the development of ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ forms of tourist consumption.

According to Bourdieu (1984), ‘social fields’ are arenas of interaction as well as arenas of competition for different forms of capital. Cultural capital in particular is not something that can be bought but instead relies on the ability of individuals to join in the game of being able to ‘know’ and appreciate’ what to eat, drink, wear, watch, what types of holiday to take and which ones to avoid (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, as cited in Casey, 2010, p.180). Therefore the need for the new middle classes, to differentiate and distinguish themselves and pursue authenticity and exclusivity is leading towards competition for cultural capital in the social field of tourism travel.
2.5 Conclusion: Human Behaviour and the Complexity of Tourism Travel

Throughout this chapter we have seen various facets of tourism travel. One clear thing has emerged, that tourism travel is a complex phenomenon, and all the different means of categorizing tourists, the discussions about tourism travel and the different motivations propelling one towards tourism travel mirrors the complexity of human behaviour. Most certainly people share the common characteristics of the species, however beyond this, they are infinitely variable. Differences vary from genetic make-up and sex, age, marital status, economic status, social status, education and experience, spiritual influences, and other major cultural influences; it could also be due to simple likes and dislikes, their interests and passions. This complexity of human behaviour makes tourism travel an extremely dynamic multifaceted system which includes different elements, varying from the movement of people, the different destinations, the different cultures, entertainment, the different needs, the changing customer behaviour, education, trade, the economic factor, globalisation, transportation, information technologies, labour, to the expectations and different interpretations of individuals, amongst many other factors.

Following this review of the literature, it is now opportune to have a detailed look at the study’s method. For this purpose various methods and procedures are examined.
Chapter 3

Methodology

“God gives every bird its food, but he doesn't throw it into its nest”.

*J.G. Holland*
3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the methodology utilised in this research study. In order to carry out an exploratory study on young Maltese habitual tourists, I opted for a qualitative kind of research, since this technique leads to rich and important information that provides a deeper understanding and knowledge of respondents’ experiences. A qualitative research method is needed when one desires to give a detailed view of the topic being studied and when extensive data is needed for text information. Through this type of methodology I managed to extract reliable information through young people’s own perspectives.

3.2 Research Approach

In order to carry out such an exploratory study on young Maltese habitual tourists, I adopted an interpretivist approach. Since people’s behaviour is influenced by the interpretations and meanings they give to social situations, my task was to try gain an understanding of these interpretations and meanings, and how people saw and understood the world around them. People are different than matter, they have consciousness; and they see, interpret and experience the world in terms of meanings that they actively construct in their own social reality. Meanings do not have an independent existence, a reality of their own which is somehow separate from social actors, and in fact “meanings are produced and reproduced via the practical application
and continued reformulation in practice of what everyone knows” (Giddens, 1997, p.443).

People do not simply react automatically to external stimuli; and so, adopting this interpretivist approach led me to decide on collecting qualitative type of data. Qualitative data provided richer information which led to a deeper understanding and knowledge of the respondents’ lives, experiences, feelings and attitudes. Through this type of methodology I extracted reliable information through the subjects’ own perspective. Qualitative research, as a method of data collection and analysis derives from the ‘verstehen’ tradition, which basically means an empathetic understanding of people gained by putting yourself in their place. The primary interest is definitely not in collecting statistical information, but rather to discuss and get personally involved with people in order to get at how they see the world and understand it. My role is to walk “in other person’s shoes, understanding the person’s point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.25). Carrying out such a study on what motivates the habitual tourist towards tourism travel through a quantitative approach would have been inappropriate since it would have only allowed for a very superficial and limited understanding without delving further into the topic. Making general statements about the social world is certainly not the aim of this study. I simply wanted to describe reality as seen and lived from the respondent’s point of view, interpret the social construction of reality that surrounded their lives and try to understand how they were constructing reality and how this reality was shaping their lives, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.
3.3 Research Process

Qualitative researchers focus on how the research participants chosen are relevant to the topic being investigated; relevance to the topic determines who will be selected and studied. This is important because qualitative research is not after representativeness but rather it focuses on shedding light on social life.

3.3.1 Sampling Strategy

The sample was made up of ten informants all of whom were experienced tourists for various reasons. The ‘relevant population’ was found using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling entails a selection based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The subjects were purposively selected because they met a specific purpose or characteristic. By this method, the researcher selected ‘young Maltese habitual tourists’ subjectively.

For the purpose of the study, the following sampling criteria were used:

1) Age

All respondents had to be within the age bracket of eighteen to thirty years and this age bracket was taken into consideration by the researcher because thirty years; according to the Maltese National Youth Policy (2010); was being taken as that period of age which marked the end of the ‘youth’ period.

2) Habitual tourism
It was important for the study to find young people who were continuously involved in tourism travel. Young people who consider tourism travel as being their passion and had the mentality that dictated that tourism travel is of utmost importance, even more than many other things which other young people would generally consider as being highly important, like for example having their own means of transportation, like owning a car or motorbike.

3) Different young people with different types of motivation to engage in tourism travel

When choosing respondents, I did my best to have different people coming from different backgrounds, like young people who were already working, young people who were still pursuing their studies in vocational institutions or at the university, young people who were members of different clubs or organisations, and also young people who did not fit in any of these categories. All these different young people had however to have one thing in common amongst them, which was that they had to have experienced some form of tourism travel during their lifetime, no matter the reason for actively engaging in it. It could have been due to education, marketing, trade, youth exchanges, leisure, or voluntary work or also simply because they were attracted particularly to a specific destination for various reasons, or to take a break from work. An attempt to ensure a mix of gender was also made.

3.3.2 Choosing the sample

Although ten interviews in no way provided a wide sample, and their feelings and answers cannot be generalised to the whole Maltese population, the idea was not to
provide percentages but rather to shed a light on motivations that propel different people from different strata of society and different backgrounds towards tourism travel. The ten respondents chosen were all people who have a passion for tourism travel and enjoy doing it a lot, although not all of them could afford to travel when they wished to, in fact some clearly expressed their frustration at not being able to do so. Respondents were chosen mainly due to this passion for travelling and the selection process for this purposive sample of respondents happened as the research developed. I did not select the respondents prior to the research and potential respondents were made known or made themselves known to me as the research was being conducted (snowball effect). I did not know the majority of the respondents prior to the interviews and before each interview, I explained the nature of the study as well as the reasons for carrying out the research. Respondents were happy to relate their feelings about tourism travel; generally for most people, the subject matter itself is a pleasant one to talk about. It was extremely important for me to probe, particularly when it came to discussing reasons for engaging in tourism travel.

3.3.3 Pilot study

Before carrying out the interviews; so as to be able “to detect and alleviate practical pitfalls” (Rubin and Babbie, 2008, p.278); I needed to familiarise myself with the interview itself, and so before actually starting out the interviews, I carried out two extra interviews to check whether the questions were adequate with the research study. The pilot study proved to be useful because it checked whether the questions made sense and were to be understood by the respondents. It also checked if the questions produced
3.4 Instrumentation

The research was conducted by semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews. I asked my respondents, who were personally approached and detailed with the nature of the study, questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research questions. The research questions for this study are:

1) What are the factors triggering habitual tourism?
2) In what ways does it impact the individuals?
3) Are there any social influences for such pulls?
4) Is tourism travel connected to an individual’s social capital, lifestyle, class or status?

If those approached agreed to take part, an appointment at the interviewee’s convenience was set up. As such, the data collection process was quite structured, with the interviews being conducted according to the respective agreed appointments. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the form of a conversation, a conversation with a purpose; and questions relating to the subject were put forward to the interviewee (refer to the interview schedule found in the Appendix section p.123). These semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to say what they really thought and felt about the issue in their own words, and it was necessary to let them talk at great length, even if sometimes they deviated from the original question itself. The goal was to explore the
topic more openly and give as wide a berth as possible to allow respondents to express
their opinions and ideas in their own words. In-depth interviews also allowed me to
make sure that my respondents fully understood the questions, and I clarified any
possible ambiguities and probed deeper for various shades of meaning.

The interviews were carried out in a very relaxed setting; some of them in the homes of
the respondents themselves and the majority of them at public places such as cafeterias.
I always explained that the study was an exploratory one and therefore there was no
‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers and all opinions were important for this study. Generally
speaking, respondents were comfortable about the subject as it was not of a sensitive
nature. The fact that many people enjoy travelling is very clear and many respondents
clearly enjoyed recounting their experiences.

I tried to move beyond my own experiences and ideas so as to really understand the
other person’s point of view, and since this was a face-to-face interview, it gave me the
opportunity of adapting to one’s line of enquiry that other self-administered
questionnaires couldn’t. The semi-structured/in-depth interviewing was an adaptable
way of unearthing important details and I needed to carefully listen to what my
respondents were saying and carefully follow their lead. Esterberg (2002, p.87)
describes the process as resembling a dance, “in which one partner (the interviewer)
must be carefully attuned to the other’s movements”.

In such field research, the primary source of data was definitely what people had to say
about what did. Therefore I recorded the opinions, ideas and behaviour observed by
writing notes and recording the interviewees. As tourism travels were being recounted, I
noted expressions of pure joy, and often the sighs of the respondents when talking about
particular destinations. These were enough to explain the rapture that they themselves
felt during a particular travel experience. I also made sure that I did not hinder any respondents by my presence. I always revealed my real identity and stated the purposes of the study. The interviews were carried out in the respondents’ preferred language. At times it was Maltese, others English. For the data analysis purposes, translations were provided when respondents replied in Maltese. Some respondents were also continuously switching codes, from Maltese to English and vice-versa, and whenever this happened I switched codes too so as to make my respondents feel more at ease. After each interview, a transcription was made and I made sure that I found the time to start jotting down some notes to prepare for the analysis. After all the interviews were conducted and transcribed, I was left with a lot of rich texts full of information about tourism travel which needed to be analysed. They were analysed in a way to try to find repeated patterns of meaning. This was an interpretative act where “meanings were created rather than simply a mechanical act one of putting sounds on paper” (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999 as quoted in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

When conducting the research I paid attention not to violate the rights and welfare of the research participants. In order to do so I took into consideration ethical considerations. Ethics are concerned with appropriate conduct and provide rules to guide research. Ethical issues “might be evoked by the research problem itself, the setting in which the research takes place, the procedures or method of data collection which the research requires, and also by the type of data collected” (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996, p.77).
I ensured that the participants freely agreed to participate in the research. They knew that their involvement in the study was of a voluntary nature and they received a thorough explanation of the research project before the actual interview was conducted. Participants were informed in a way that enabled them to understand their role in the research study.

During the research, I always took into consideration the sensitivities of those helping with the research; making sure not to ask any inappropriate questions which would cause any embarrassment or make the respondents feel uncomfortable. The physical, social and mental well-being of people who helped in the research was not to be harmed by the research; and in order to assure this, I will not disclose any information which was given to me in confidence. Also, this research respected the anonymity, privacy and interests of the participants; so for analysis purposes pseudo names are given to respondents when directly quoted.

Invasions of privacy are of great concern to all, especially in an era when computerised databanks, both governmental and commercial, are so accessible. The individual should be able pick and choose for himself/herself the time and circumstances under which, and most importantly, the extent to which, his/her attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and opinions are to be shared with or withheld from others (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.92).

3.6 Data Analytical Strategy

The rich text provided from the interviews conducted were analysed in a thematic way. Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated and rarely-acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.77-78) maintain that thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis as it has many
benefits, with the main one being that it is very flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. Boyatzis (1998) as quoted in Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) maintains that “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in detail; however, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic”. Thematic analysis is exciting because it leads to the discovery of themes and concepts within the interviews; however I cannot forget or deny that having an active role as a researcher in this study makes me the one who selects which themes or patterns are of interest and decides to report them to the readers. It is therefore very important for me as a researcher to be aware of my positionality as I am aware that no research is completely value free, and as far as possible I have to do my best so as not to bias the outcome of the research itself.

Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82).

3.6.1 Themes

“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). Since the researcher dealt with the qualitative research method, it was his judgement which determined what a theme was, there was no stipulated proportion of a specific issue which needed to prevail in order for it to be
considered as a theme. The importance of a theme in this research stemmed primarily from whether or not it managed to capture something important towards what was propelling one towards tourism travel. For each theme a detailed analysis was conducted and I tried to identify the ‘story’ behind each theme. I identified four general themes presented under the metaphorical headings of ‘Leaving the Cage’, ‘A Reality Check’, ‘New Pastures’ and ‘Birds Flocking Together’. I used an analogy to birds when analysing the data produced by the young people during the interviews.

3.7 Validity, Reliability and Limitations of the Study

Essentially validity is concerned with notions of truth; how far the findings of research actually provide a true picture of what is being studied. Validity entails the question, ‘does your measurement process, assessment, or project actually measure what you intend it to measure?’

Validity in a qualitative study “refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain; ‘true’ in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and ‘certain’ in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence” (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2002, p.1). As a researcher I want readers of this study to feel that the ideas and situations described and discussed in this study are similar to theirs and that they would be able to relate the findings to their own position. In order to enable the reader to make such a transfer, I need to present sufficient contextual information on habitual tourism from the interviews conducted. If this transfer is done, then validity is ensured as that would mean that the study is reflective of reality.
Reliability is concerned with replication; whether another researcher using the same method for the same research on the same group as I did would achieve the same results. To ensure reliability in qualitative research, the examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Seale (1999, as quoted in Golafshani, 2003, p.601) states that “while establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research, the trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability”. Issues of reliability can be questioned in qualitative studies like this one since the truth is that it is quite difficult for someone to create the same research, and be able to measure and achieve the same exact results. I did my utmost to be truthful and honest, but honesty and truthfulness are impossible to measure or reproduce in an exact way. I tend to agree with Patton’s (2001, as quoted in Golafshani, 2003, p.602) argument when he states that with regards to qualitative research, “reliability is a consequence of the validity in the study”. Maybe the “usual canons of ‘good science’ require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, as quoted in Golafshani, 2003, p.601).

There are various limitations that impinge on small scale qualitative studies such as this one. A main limitation is the fact that since it is a small study, I only consulted ten different habitual tourists and therefore it is difficult to generalise the ideas generated in this study and attribute them to society at large. Another limitation of this study is that since semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, it is possible that the respondents did not reveal all the relevant information because they did not think of it at that particular moment of the interview, or simply because they wanted to hide it, therefore, such happenings might have led to loss of potential outcomes.

As a researcher I tried as much as possible to avoid the ‘Hawthorne effect’ as I did not want to affect in any way my respondents, incurring the risk of influencing or hindering
any responses of the interviewees with my presence. If the ‘Hawthorne effect’ had materialised it would have led to answers which were not genuine and sincere, since the interviewees would have given answers which they thought I was expecting from them, rather than giving me their more honest answers. Therefore, to avoid this as much as possible, I tried to strike a careful balance in establishing rapport with the interviewees, and tried my utmost to make sure that power relations were balanced during the interview.

Whilst recognizing the existence of certain restrictions, the applied research method was still considered to be the best option for such a study, since it was the technique by which a vivid examination of each participant being studied was achieved.
Chapter 4

Research Data and Analysis

“A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song”.

Maya Angelou
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the research carried out through semi-structured interviews conducted on a sample of ten respondents (six female respondents and four male respondents), all of them being habitual tourists. The interviews conducted have led to considerable discussion.

As shown in figure 4.1, the research data and analysis in this study will be presented in four different sections under the metaphorical headings of ‘Leaving the Cage’ denoting the freedom and escapism that tourism travel can offer; ‘A Reality Check’ dealing with the idea of discovery during tourism travel; ‘New Pastures’ denoting the idea of openness and ‘Birds Flocking Together’ focussing on the social dimension of habitual tourism.
4.2 Leaving the Cage

4.2.1 Freedom and Escapism

4.2.2 Malta: Running Away from Smallness

4.2.3 Unknown and Away: The Anonymity of Tourism Travel

4.2.4 Expecting the Unexpected: Overcoming the Mundanity of Everyday Life

4.2.5 The Needed Touch: A Need for Social Interaction

4.2.6 A Fresh Look: A Ritual Inversion

4.3 A Reality Check

4.3.1 A Discovery

4.3.2 The World is a Wonder: Exploration and Fascination

4.3.3 Travelling Within: Discovering Self

4.3.4 The Rewards of Change: A Renewed Mentality

4.3.5 Reaching Nirvana: Self-Actualisation

4.4 New Pastures

4.4.1 Openness

4.4.2 Beyond the Comfort Zone: An Enriching Experience

4.4.3 Personality Gains: Renegotiating one’s Life Position through Tourism Travel

4.5 Birds Flocking Together

4.5.1 The Social Dimension of Habitual Tourism

4.5.2 Better Together: An Experience to Share

4.5.3 Renouncing the Ready Made: Organised Tours

4.5.4 On Catching the Flu: The Impact of Social Media

4.5.5 The Social Allure: Family and Peer Influences

4.5.6 The Chance to Fly: More Access to Tourism Travel

*Figure 4.1: Thematic Map*
4.2 Leaving the Cage

This section ‘Leaving the Cage’ presents the idea that is triggering young Maltese habitual tourists to engage in tourism travel; namely the desire to feel free and overcome the mundanity of life, the need to escape from the insularity of the island and be in a place where nobody really knows them, and the need for social interaction with different people.

4.2.1 Freedom and Escapism

Research has showed that there are many different factors which lead towards the demand for tourism travel; different theorists indeed list different reasons. Respondents in this study also gave a wide array of reasons for travelling, with the most prominent factors being to get away for a short while and take a break from their daily routine, to relax, to discover and to experience something different; especially by interacting with different people and experiencing their cultures. These factors mentioned would fall under two of McIntosh’s (1977) categories, mainly the interpersonal and cultural motivators, which are related to the desire to escape from the routine of everyday life, family, or neighbours and the desire to meet new people and experience new cultures.

The desire to escape at least for a short while emerges clearly, with one respondent, Anne, a twenty-five year old psychology trainee, comparing the actual take-off of the airplane with her own ‘take-off’ from the daily routine. She maintains that
‘Meta nitla’ fuq l-ajruplan, waqt il-hin tat-tluq, ghalija huwa wkoll il-hin li jien inhossni qed ningata’ fit mir-rutina tas-soltu u b’hekk nirrilassa ... inkun qa’jt minn kollox bażikament ghall-fatt li nkun hallejt kollox warajja u hemmhekk huwa l-hin tieghi li nirrilassa u naghmel dak kollu li nixtieq minghajr ma jkolli ebda hsieb ta’ xejn’.

‘Whilst on the plane, the take-off for me signifies a time when I feel I am breaking out of my usual routine, thus I relax ... I break out from everything for the fact that I leave everything behind me and that is the time when I can relax and do whatever I feel like doing without thinking a lot about it’.

(Anne, 25 years)

Research participants are the ones who mostly seek to broaden their horizons and so there is a constant need to always try and discover new things. Tourism travel is seen as an ideal arena from where one would be able to gain many new experiences, do unimaginable things and discover things s/he would have never even dreamed of.

Young people whet their appetite for discovery through tourism travel. Elisa, a thirty year old secondary school teacher insists that ‘the main reason behind my travelling is to see and discover different things. I also try not to sleep on the plane to observe all that there is’.

All the different reasons for tourism travel certainly reflect deeper needs that young people have; needs which sometimes they themselves do not really understand. This argument is corroborated by twenty-three year old MCAST student Abigail, stating that she can’t really understand why she feels the urge to go abroad but ‘I enjoy leaving, I feel at peace, I get detached from everything’.
4.2.2 Malta: Running Away from Smallness

Malta’s size or lack of it, and its high population density with no real availability of internal travel means that people are constantly bumping in each other, watching others but also continuously being watched. This invariably leads to an excessive interest in what others say, as well as to a desire to be seen in a good light by one’s peers. Research participants, especially twenty-five year old accountant Shaun and twenty-four year old university student Gerald, feel that living in a small island means that they have to continuously pay attention to how to behave, no matter where they are since they know that they are indirectly being watched by various people whom they know, and will from time to time end up bumping into them during various activities or events that they decide to engage in. Shaun states that ‘here in Malta, one has to pay extra attention because everyone will get to know everything immediately. When I am abroad I don’t care that much … in fact I do sometimes go a bit over the limit’. While Gerald on similar lines maintains that ‘due to our culture, here in Malta you have to be very careful because everyone will find out; colleagues, people from the football club, etc … especially due to Facebook; Facebook has become a real problem’.

Living in a small island exudes a sense of community which generally entails a lot of benefits since members are mostly there for each other and feel the responsibility as members of that society, to each other and to society as a whole. Community in its own right is a value and what constitutes these communities is primarily the citizen’s interaction in various contexts. Small islands like Malta could be compared more to Tonnies’ (1912, as quoted in Azzopardi and Grech, 2012, p.41) description of one mode of human association; what he defines as gemeinschaft. In gemeinschaft, individuals are regulated by common morals or beliefs about the appropriate behaviour and their
Responsibility as members of the association, to each other and to the association as a whole. Gemeinschaft associations are marked by various kinship ties, a similarity of individuals and what Tonnies describes as a “unity of will”. Small islands, having this gemeinschaft mode of association, can be seen like good grandparents; a dependable source of support. However, living in a small island could also mean that many would know about your whereabouts. This translates into the feeling that you can’t really be in a place where nobody knows you and those who you’d thought as strangers actually know more about you than your name. This is sustained by Shaun when saying that

‘Malta diffiċċli taqta’ għax in-nies ikunu jafu li inti bqajt Malta, specjalment il-Maltin ikunu jafu kollox fuqek allura jkunu jafu li qiegħed hawnhekk’.

‘It is quite difficult to detach yourself from everything and everyone in Malta because Maltese people would still know everything about you and so they would also know that you’re here (in Malta).’

(Shaun, 25 years)

Bank employees address you by your name, and the most neighbourly indiscretions will become instantly known by everybody and remembered for a long time. Therefore in a small island like Malta, young people might feel somewhat restrained, limited in the things they can actually do and very aware of the need to fulfil social expectations. Gerald especially conveys this sense of feeling restrained, claiming that

‘F’Malta ma’ jongsni xejn, pero issa kollox sar qisu rutina u allura xi haga li ddejjaqni; u l-pajjiż huwa wisq żghir issa biex nghid ghamilt xiħaga aktar. Jien naf per eżempju darba ma’ shabi mxejniha minn Birżebbuġa sal-Mellieha, ma’ stajtx nagħmel aktar, x’se nagħmel ha nerġa’ ninżel? Ha nara l-istess affarijiet’.

‘I don’t want for anything else here in Malta; however now everything has become a sort of routine and this bothers me. I feel the country is too small in size so I can’t really do something more, for example once my friends and I walked from Birżebbuġa to Mellieha, but couldn’t go further than that. What should I do? Walk it back? If I do, then I will simply see the same things’.

(Gerald, 24 years)
In a small island like Malta, social pressure is felt even more, and deviating from the mainstream norms and values would lead one to be frowned upon easily. So in one way or another, young people might feel the need to break away and escape for at least a short period of time and experience tourism travel, because once they are abroad they could easily deviate from some expectations that they experience within their society and could act more free without any fear of being labelled or frowned upon. Tourism travel offers freedom; opening up to a whole new world. Martha, a twenty-eight year old secondary school teacher asserts this idea of breaking away and experiencing the world. For her, breaking away from Malta feels as if it is an extremely important need.

‘I think that everybody should feel that Malta is too restrictive. Yes it is because first of all mainly most of us here are Maltese and there isn’t much diversity in Malta in all aspects, in what we do and in how we think. I work with foreign students during summer so of course I started working with them when I was sixteen and when I started mingling with them I saw a whole new world, and that’s what triggered this thing, I mean I have to go abroad. At that time I was sixteen and they were about my age; and at sixteen years I did not experience travel a lot, only once or maybe twice; whilst these people my age had already seen most of the world and I said to myself, I don’t want to be this person who comes from a very small island who’s very narrow minded, I want to be like these people because to me they were different and they were a lot of fun and they were somebody who I could look up to because they were my age; and also whilst talking to them I realised that it’s not only about travelling ... they’d knew about everything and that comes from discovering things’.

(Martha, 28 years)

Respondents felt that living in a small island like Malta stresses the need to go abroad, otherwise it is kind of perceived as not really doing anything apart from living in monotony. This idea is put forward especially by Martha when saying that it’s ‘something to do with your time’ and ‘people have to go abroad’. ‘Malta is a very small island, you have to discover other things, to mix with other people and to understand
more, because if you stay here I think it’s pretty much living in a very small area, not seeing anything’.

Also in order to escape from a small island mentality, it was not simply enough to engage in tourism travel but rather it felt like an important thing to try as much as possible to get rid of any pre-conceived notions formed within that small island and be free as possible from everything that could have any link to it. Getting away, Gerald maintains, meant getting rid of everything that feels like home.

‘Jekk trid vera tingata minn Malta, l-ideali fl-opinjoni tiegħi huwa li tnehhi kollox li hu Malti minn mieghek, igiżieri jekk se ssiiefer ma xihadd li hu Malti, iċ-ċertu mentalita Maltija ha tibqa, anki fil-mod ta kif ahna ‘we party’ bhala Maltin jew meta mmorru nieklu, jew il-fatt li ha titkellem bil-Malti, hekk il-kultura se tibqa’ mieghek, allura s-sabih li ssiiefer wahdek huwa l-fatt li nehhejt kollox li hu Malti minn mieghek u nqtaft ta’ vera, libera minn kollox’.

In my opinion, the ideal thing to do to completely detach yourself from Malta, is to try and eliminate all that is Maltese around you, in the sense that if you go abroad with a Maltese person, the Maltese mentality will stay with you. Even the way we Maltese people party or go out to eat, or the fact that you will be speaking in Maltese; the culture will remain attached with you. The benefit of going abroad on your own will be to be able to completely detach yourself from everything that is Maltese. Only in that way you’d feel completely free’.

(Gerald, 24 years)

The young people interviewed could be easily described as the “wanderlust type” since they coincide with Gray’s typology (as quoted in Burkat and Medlik, 1981, p.57) which maintains that some people would want to engage into tourism travel due to their “desire to exchange the known for the unknown, to leave things familiar and go see different places, people, cultures”, an idea emphasised by Martha, saying ‘I’d rather go for something totally different, because I want to get away from here, I want to get away from the mentality, I want to get away from everything, I want to see something different’. 
4.2.3 Unknown and Away: The Anonymity of Tourism Travel

The beauty of engaging into tourism travel is the fact that while abroad, over there, nobody knows what you ‘should be’ but rather, what they all know, is who you are there and then. So the notion of what one ought to be or not to be quickly vanishes and the young person is completely free to express himself/herself in whichever way s/he pleases. This idea of being freer when abroad since nobody really knows you there is sustained by a number of persons interviewed for this study. Martha maintains that when she is abroad she is ‘more free, more me, more fun.’ Similarly, Abigail feels that tourism travel ‘relaxes me, gives me a nice sensation, a free spirit’ and Gerald continues on the same vein by stating that while he is abroad, he feels ‘a sense of individuality, to do what I please without having anyone saying no. I don’t have to consider other’s opinions and the decisions I take will be for myself. No one and nothing will affect me’.

People feel the need to escape from their everydayness because once away from home, they can escape into a fantasy world; one can easily pretend to be who they want to be and indulge in kinds of behaviours without thinking much about it. Dann (1977, p.188) maintains that “the fantasy world of travel seeks to overcome the humdrum, the normlessness and meaninglessness of life, with more satisfying experiences”. This idea is translated in Martha’s and Gerald’s narrative when they discuss that

‘When I’m abroad that’s it ... I get lost, I love it, because nobody knows me there, It also says a lot about me actually because I am a very introverted person, and I don’t like when people get too close or get to know me too much, and the fact that I am in a different land, nobody knows me there, I can be whoever I want to be, I can let go completely’.

(Martha, 25 years)
I hate being in the same place or doing the same thing for a long period of time. I really hate routine; I get fed up easily with it. In fact, even in relation to my future job, I like what I’m studying and I want to do that job but I already can’t picture myself doing it for the rest of my life. I always try to search for something different’.

(Gerald, 24 years)

In their responses many respondents emphasised the idea of engaging in tourism travel to be free and escape from the daily restrictions that they encounter in their normal lives. Tourism travel offers the opportunity not only to be transported physically away but also to allow oneself to get carried away mentally. The following quote from Martha clearly states this. ‘At home with my family I cannot be myself, I would have to live up to what they think I am ... when I’m abroad its different’. Gerald further provides some poignant narrative in this regard by stating that

‘I had the opportunity to go and see a football match, however instead of spending two days just to watch the game, I stayed for a whole week because I really needed it. I wanted to escape from the situation that I was facing in Malta; I wanted to while away the time instead of thinking all the time about that issue’.

(Gerald, 24 years)

When abroad young people tend to feel freer in the sense that they would be ready to let go of what they should be for who they would like to be. Tourism travel allows research participants to free themselves from their mental ‘chains’.
4.2.4 Expecting the Unexpected: Overcoming the Mundanity of Everyday Life

Tourism travel is something completely different from the everyday life of young people. The everyday life has no real room for the unexpected, but on the other hand, the unexpected is something which is really present during tourism travel. Giddens (1990, as quoted in Hayward, 2004, p.153) colourfully equates the mundanity of everyday life in the modern world with “trying to regain control of an out of control juggernaut”. The modern world is defined as being “a difficult world” by Young (1999, as quoted in Hayward, 2004, p.153) since individuals have to face a greater range in life choices than ever before, and so respondents seem to want to overcome this out of control force that is keeping them stuck in the mundane routine of life by engaging in tourism travel and try to taste something different. Research participants have a tendency to want to overcome the mundane life and seek the unknown and the unexpected. They are attracted towards what is different. Different respondents gave a wide array of answers related to this idea of breaking from routine and also try seeking the unknown. Anne, a twenty-five year old trainee psychologist relates that she engages in tourism travel for ‘breaking out of the routine, therefore no commitments or everything done with hassle’. Sandra, a twenty-five year old lawyer retains that ‘the idea of something different really attracts me’ and Daniel, a twenty-two year old full time musician maintains that

‘What I seek is to experience the unknown. I would like to travel far and for longer periods of time. When deciding where to go I search for natural beauty, places of attraction, adventure and of course ideally it would be low cost. I am not afraid to go to unknown or undiscovered places’.

(Daniel, 22 years)
Respondents try to achieve this breaking from the daily life to seek the unknown by not only engaging into tourism travel, but also by trying as much as possible to not really plan their tourism travel. This is very much seen in what Elisa says. ‘I usually don’t like to plan a lot except for the very basics like for example getting a hostel for the first night, the rest I like to leave up to chance and according to mood as much as possible’.

Research participants maintained that they would only plan the basic things, like obviously buying the flight tickets and then getting a place where to stay for the first night or two; otherwise apart from that, most of the young people interviewed maintained that they would like to leave everything up to chance. Daniel and Martha, add to this idea. Daniel in fact states that ‘many times I don’t really plan, I decide on what to do or not once I encounter the actual thing, in that way I am free to do whatever I feel like doing’ and Martha maintains that ‘for me as long as it is something fun and something new, I’ll do it. I don’t plan’.

They do this on purpose as it gives them the possibility of being able to roam around freely, be more spontaneous, and gives them a sense of freedom, leaving them tied to practically nothing, not even the fact that they need to go back to the same place every night to sleep in the hostel/hotel. Having no strict plans for tourism travel for these young people practically stands for having a free spirit. This idea is seen especially in what Robert, a twenty-eight year old machine setter in a local factory said, claiming that he went to Laos and Cambodia specifically because he didn’t know anything about these places and so he ‘wanted to experience them’. After deciding on going there with his girlfriend, they started researching different trekking routes so as ‘to explore as much as possible, and we also checked from where we could hire some motorcycles because they are my passion and I love driving motorcycles when abroad’. But then Robert made it a point to highlight the fact that ‘we didn’t really plan apart from the
trekking part and we did that on purpose so that we would be as free as possible and do whatever we felt like doing at that point in time without having any restrictions’. Sandra, a twenty-five year old lawyer also shared this idea of freedom, maintaining that ‘it’s not the actual physical going away from what you’re used to, it is getting your mind off what is burdening you ... to take your mind off things. When I am abroad I manage to get my mind off things, I disconnect completely’.

Although the idea of not planning to be completely free emerged from these interviews, there was also something interesting to notice in the responses that these habitual tourists gave. They maintained that when they are thinking about tourism travel and roughly planning where to go and preparing some other generic things before the actual trip itself, whilst still at home; it felt as if they were already doing the actual thing and as one respondent, Martha, maintained that ‘the anticipation period is almost as good as going there, yes I mean the fact that you have something to look forward to’ whilst it was only Abigail who maintained that she enjoyed planning every aspect of her tourism travel and she believed that planning for her meant that she would actually already start feeling that she’s abroad. She gets carried away mentally whilst planning.

The anticipation period after having booked a flight ticket makes one feel as if s/he has already started to break from their everyday life and made routine more bearable as they had something to look forward to. Planning or thinking about the future trip, helped young people overcome the mundanity of routine life.
4.2.5 The Needed Touch: A Need for Social Interaction

The modern world continuously goes through various processes of change. Society is in a state of flux, it is continuously changing, and the sense of individuality, uniqueness and that of greater freedom transpire throughout. All this modern social development sometimes leads to the breakdown of some of the controls and standards of society and shakes the traditional norms and values that people in society would have internalised. This might therefore lead to a declining morality, a feeling of aimlessness and a situation of uncertainty about social norms, values and goals. Dann (1977, as quoted in Johnson & Thomas, p.38) in fact maintains that we are living in an anomic society, where people are in a situation of uncertainty since little moral guidance is being provided to individuals. Young people living in an anomic society would foster the need for social interaction which would be missing at home and therefore might want to travel away from the home environment specifically for this need of social interaction. Also, due to various factors like working performance, educational commitment or the idea that time is money, the everyday life in modern society does not really allow ample time for young people to interact with new people and so research participants try to express this need for social interaction during their tourism travels when they manage to break away from their daily hectic lifestyle. Many respondents provided poignant narrative in this regard. Daniel maintains that

‘I travel to meet people and experience as many different cultures as possible. In that way I increase my knowledge. When I travel I try live with locals or in the same way they do. I love making new friends and increasing my contacts’.

(Daniel, 22 years)

Similarly Martha maintains that she engages in tourism travel
‘to see things and to mingle with as many local people as I can. To see what they’re like, how they live there, what is different from where I come from. It interests me to see how others think. It’s more like kind of psychological’.

(Martha, 25 years)

Elisa shares the same view, who’s ‘very much interested to see how they live their lives there abroad and how it is different from mine’ while on these same lines Anne claims that she travels ‘to stop from my crazy life and see as many things as I can and meet as many people as I can’. All this narrative clearly indicates that young Maltese habitual tourists do seek to foster social interaction during their tourism travels. The idea of meeting new people attracts habitual tourists even more to keep on engaging in tourism travel.

4.2.6 A Fresh Look at Life: A Ritual Inversion

From the interviews conducted, respondents did not seem to link their tourism travel experiences with the idea of a ritual or rite of passage. As we have already seen in the literature review, Graburn (1983) maintained that tourism travel is usually associated with major life changes such as the emergence to adulthood or as a sign of a personal or professional milestone, however the perception of tourism as a rite of passage did not emerge in this study. Young people interviewed were not engaging into tourism travel as proof of their advancement into a new life stage or to ‘show’ that they are ready to assume their new status. The experiences of participants in the study could be more easily associated to the ideas of Costa and Martinotti (2003) and Crompton (1979). The latter, link the idea of tourism travel to a ‘ritual inversion’, in the sense that young people were simply seeking to overturn their usual habits and take a break and escape
from their normal everyday routine. This is very much seen in the following narrative extracts from the data collected. In fact Martha maintains that she engages in tourism travel

‘to escape from daily life and to experience something new. It does not mean that it is an escape from something or someone in particular but to move away from the daily routine and experience and experiment with something new; to relax my brain’.

(Martha, 25 years)

Ryan corroborates this idea by stating that he engages in tourism travel ‘to leave behind the hassle and stress of work and enjoy meeting different people, cultures, religions… the feeling that I am moving to another world different from mine, that’s how I like it’.

Respondents would want to visit a particular place simply because they believe that they will experience something positive there that they cannot easily experience at home. According to Crompton (1979) this break from their everydayness helps young people to restore their balance in life.

4.3 A Reality Check

This section ‘A Reality Check’ presents the idea of young Maltese habitual tourists engaging in tourism travel as an avenue for discovery and exploration, both on a personal level; which can help them in discovering their real self and become actualised in what they potentially are; but also as a discovery of different countries, new things and different people.
4.3.1 A Discovery

The idea of always seeking to detect something new, something which is still unknown is innate in many young people who always seek to discover. Tourism travel creates the perfect avenue for discovery because when abroad, one has the possibility to observe new phenomena, new actions and new events, and this will help in providing new reasoning to explain the new knowledge gathered from such observations and experiences. Sandra in fact maintains that for her to be able to see and detect something new is very important; she says

‘L-fatt li hija xihaga ġdida thajjarni hafna aktar. Tghidli allura ghax ma tmurx ġimga Ghawdex? imma Ghawdex huwa post li jien naf tajjeb hafna u allura naf x’se nsib, mhux ġdid, u jien thajjarni hafna l-idea li nara xihaga ġdida’. ‘the fact that it is something new attracts me much more. You might ask; so why don’t you go to Gozo for a week? however Gozo is a place which I know very well and so I also know what to expect, it is not new, and I am attracted to the idea of seeing something new’.

(Sandra, 25 years)

Elisa also seeks tourism travel for discovery. She says that if possible, ‘I will always go to different places since it is nice to always discover somewhere new’. Robert stresses the fact that tourism travel is important in his life because it is his ‘source of inspiration, exploration and discovery’ and Anne states that her travels are focussed primarily on the idea of discovering more and seeing something new. In fact, whenever she is abroad for her holidays, her holiday is not about staying relaxed and enjoying cocktails in the sun but rather ‘it is a continuous ’marathon’ in the sense that I want to explore, meet people and discover as much as I can’. Tourism travel is essentially the perfect avenue for young people to express their innate need of discovery.
Discovery comes from curiosity, and this curiosity leads one to explore further. According to Kashdan (2010, retrieved from http://experiencelife.com/article/the-power-of-curiosity/) cultivating and exercising our innate sense of curiosity is a most reliable key to happiness since it ‘creates openness to unfamiliar experiences, laying the groundwork for greater opportunities to experience discovery, joy and delight’. The young people interviewed for this study showed a need to make sense of the world around them; they would want to know more, to seek reasons behind certain things and to extend their knowledge about things which would particularly interest them. Gerald, Shaun and Robert highlighted the idea that tourism travel is not simply about getting to know about a different culture or country but rather it is a first-hand approach since it places individuals directly in the core of the experience. It is more of a ‘learning by doing’ approach, affirming that

‘Qisu l-kreattività tieghi qisha dejjem tiehu żvolta differenti meta qed nesplora u tara affarrijiġ godda, meta niltaqa’ ma’ nies godda, u dejjem se nitghallem xhaga ġdida ... is-safar mhux sempliċiment li tmur fuq l-internet u tghid ara kemm hu sabih hemm jew kemm hu sabih hemm flhint, inhobb jekk nara xhaga nghid ha naqbad u mmur nagmilha’.

‘It seems that my creativity always takes a different turn when I am exploring and seeing new things, when I meet new people and learn something new. Going abroad is actually doing; it is not just surfing on the internet and saying “look how nice it is there”; you understand? I love to see something and go and experience it’.

(Gerald, 24 years)

‘Jien ma nemminx ghax toqgħod tara fuq l-istampi u toqgħod tghid il-ahwa xi sbuhija, jiena l-isbuhja, tmur u tesperjenzahha int stess. Gieli mort postijjet lanqas hadt ritratti ghax nghid; jew hadt ritratt wiehed, mentri tara nies ghaddejjin jieħdu ritratti; ghax nghid dan bżżejjed ghaliċja. L-importanti li qegħda go mohhi’.

‘Beauty is not in pictures, for me, beauty is to go there and experience it yourself. I went to places where I didn’t take any pictures or just took one because this is enough for me. Sometimes you see people passing by taking loads of pictures. The important thing is that it is in my mind’.

(Shaun, 25 years)
‘I believe that Latin American countries have a lot to offer that other places can’t and I think I don’t know enough about them. So what’s better than experiencing them instead of seeing documentaries about them? I love to discover what I do not know. It makes me feel happy’.

(Robert, 28 years)

The fact that research participants are discovering and exploring new places instils in them a sense of achievement which is greatly influencing them. This thirst to always want to see more and discover new places, things and different ways of life of people came out as really strong from the interviews conducted. Anne admitted that she is ‘quite obsessed that if I am in a place I would like to see as much as I can and live it as much as I can. I love to see and explore the culture, see how people live ... if I don’t do this I feel that it’s not such a satisfying holiday’. Elisa showed her fascination on the fact that ‘sometimes I keep on asking myself, how is it possible to keep on seeing awe-inspiring things? even though I am thirty years old, lived and saw a lot of things; but still I keep on encountering things that make me wonder when abroad ... the need to see and to go through new experiences’.

Respondents have shown a great deal of fascination when seeing new places; the greater the difference between these places from what they knew in their habitual life, country or society, the more enriching the experience. This idea is very much seen in what Robert and Elisa maintain. Ryan maintained that the main reason for him engaging in tourism travel is ‘to see; in fact I like to travel in non-European countries to see different things especially different cultures’ and Elisa also corroborated Robert’s idea by stating that she travels ‘to experience something different. Generally if it is somewhere where I already know what to expect, I feel like I did not really experience
anything special; that is why I no longer travel within Europe; outside of Europe is a whole new world to experience’.

All this fascination comes from the fact that when respondents are in a completely different setting they have a bigger opportunity to gaze and discover new things and totally disconnect from their everyday life. Anne in fact insists that

‘... anki f’dak li ghalik tiehu ‘forgranted’ kultant, ċertu affarijiet kultant fir-rutina tal-hajja taghna, hekk speċi ma noqgħdx nahseb; lil tal-grocer naqbad u nagtiha l-flus meta nixtri u nigi biex inhallasha, , imma haw ‘tribal systems’ li jahdmu b’ ‘bartering methods’, hekk dal-affarijiet jaffxinawni, nahseb dik hi l-kelma’.

‘... even in what you sometimes take for granted, some things which are an integral part of our daily routine, we don’t really think about. Like for example at the grocer I just buy and give the money needed automatically, but one can still find tribal systems using bartering methods, so even the most obvious thing should not be taken for granted. All this fascinates me; yes that’s the right word fascination’.

(Anne, 25 years)

On these same lines, Sandra maintains that she is indeed ‘fascinated by everything which we do not have in our country, and I always make it a point to go see such things’. Gerald agrees with this idea, maintaining that even if he constantly travels to the same country, he always searches ‘to go see different places and search for an element of adventure and thrill’. Sandra agrees with this idea of trying to find anything which is different to see and explore, in fact she states that ‘I think I will never go to a beach resort for example because that is something I can easily do here in Malta. I would rather find things that one cannot do in Malta and explore them’. In such different settings respondents feel closer to nature, appreciate more the beauty of this world that we live in and also raise their awareness about their reality when compared to the one they would have just encountered. Robert in fact insists that
‘Dik il-haġa li tara xi haġa ġdida, totalment ma taħsibx f’affarijiet li ghandek fil-pajjiż tieghek, u li ninqata fit minn Malta infittixha hafna. Ma jfissirx imma li ninsa lil pajjiż, anzi xi kultant meta tiltaqa’ ma ċertu sitwazzjonijiet tibda tapprezza wkoll dak li ghandek f’pajjiżek’.

‘The fact that I am encountering new things, completely detaches me from my country, and I look forward to this detachment period, however it doesn’t imply that I forget all about it. Sometimes due to situations I encounter I start to appreciate even further what we have in Malta’.

(Robert, 28 years)

When faced with these different settings, the participants in this study showed that they are willing to adapt to the exigencies of the new surrounding environment that they would be in once abroad, with one particular respondent, Elisa clearly stating that ‘the more different, the better it is; maybe also because I am able to adapt to different circumstances’.

However, on the other hand it was also noted that three of the respondents, mainly Abigail, Shaun and thirty year old secondary school assistant head, Christianne, maintained that they are not really after experiencing something different, and engage in tourism travel generally to simply enjoy a very short break. For this short break, they look at somewhat somewhere rather similar to Malta since the short break would not allow ample time for them to adapt, so rather than wasting the few days that they have available to travel, in trying to adapt and understand the culture they would be in, they would simply try to go somewhere which is more similar to the culture, traditions and way of life that they are used to live. If it is a longer break, then they wouldn’t mind going to somewhere different. This clearly shows a difference in the way they perceive tourism travel; if it is a short stay then they would rather go for something similar while for a longer stay they wouldn’t mind experiencing difference.
‘If I am going on a holiday, on a short relaxed holiday in a way that I won’t have to strain myself, I prefer if it is similar to our own style and customs. On the other hand if I am going for a longer time and as an adventurous holiday, it’s fine if it will be different because I am going for adventure so I will be adventurous in everything’.

(Abigail, 23 years)

‘I went to Sicily and Italy several times because I have studied Italian and to tell you the truth also due to feeling comfortable with the Italian culture in being similar to our own’.

(Shaun, 25 years)

‘... I prefer customs that are similar to my own, for example once I had to go; and I did go because I had to, since if it was only up to me I wouldn’t have gone; Tunisia. I went to act in a play; but the experience there was terrifying, I felt really miserable. Lots of men looking at you like they have never seen a woman before, and dirt everywhere. A friend of mine told me “I am impressed that every road has a different horrible smell”. I hate these things and yes I prefer that when I travel, I upgrade from the Maltese situation, not go into one which is worse’.

(Christianne, 30 years)

So it seems that the idea of discovery is more tied to longer stays while shorter stays are not really done to discover but simply to slightly change their usual daily routine of work or school.
4.3.3 Travelling Within: Discovering Self

The discovery of a different place would probably also affect the self in the sense that the new surroundings that one would be in, would place him/her in a position where to reflect upon one’s own reality as compared to the reality that they would have just encountered. The youth period of life is particularly that time where people are more introspective. Their self-understanding is not only an internal matter but it also comes about when they interact with their socio-cultural experiences to influence their self-understanding. Stets and Burke (2012, retrieved from http://wat2146.ucr.edu/papers/02a.pdf) argue that society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. Their consciousness is shaped in continuing social interaction; they get to know who they are also by interacting with others. This idea coincides with Cooley’s (1902, as quoted in Ritzer, 2008, p.64) idea of the “looking glass self” in which he states that “people possess consciousness and that it is shaped in continuing social interaction”. Some of our self-views are indeed gained by direct experience with our environment however most of what we know about ourselves is derived from others. Tourism travel can serve up both purposes. Tourism travel gives an opportunity to young people to gain a self-view through the direct experience with the environment, but also, it provides various opportunities for interaction with different people, through which they can gradually start to discover themselves even more.

Tourism travel sometimes immerses individuals in some situations that might not be comfortable at all, but the individual has no other choice but to face them. The notion of one’s self is challenged especially when young people face an array of cultural praxes
and come in contact with various unfamiliar situations and different ways of life. Although this process might be a difficult one, it might make one understand more about one’s self and maybe lead him/her to face some aspects of this own self which they themselves realise they don’t like, or didn’t even know they had within. At different points during the interviews conducted, Daniel, Sandra, Martha and Anne asserted that ‘tourism travel has changed me’ in various ways. Tourism travel provides young people with an opportunity to reflect back upon themselves, taking themselves as objects. Stets and Burke (2012, retrieved from http://wat2146.ucr.edu/papers/02a.pdf) define humans as a “processual entity” in the sense that they are “able to regard and evaluate themselves, to take account of themselves and plan accordingly to bring about future states, to be self-aware or achieve consciousness with respect to their own existence”. During tourism travel young people might watch their angers or fears slowly be replaced by action and knowledge, for example, or even surprise themselves by acting in a manner they would have never thought they would/could. Tourism travel offers the opportunity for quiet contemplation and reflection while fully immerses one into the situation and therefore one has no other choice than to take action, and this action at the end becomes the basis of self discovery and as Goffman (1959, as quoted in Ritzer, 2008, p.238) maintains, “selves will eventually be constructed, modified and performed while in interaction with other people”. Sandra in fact discussed that ‘travelling taught me about my true self because I ended up having to face situations that I never imagined especially when I went to a voluntary experience in a very poor country’. She added that before she went to this particular country, she ‘never thought that I was capable of doing certain things that eventually I ended up doing’ and Martha corroborated the idea by stating that ‘my life has benefited greatly from travel. I have
learnt much about other people and places, but mostly about myself. I think my quality of life is better because I have experienced and seen so much’.

4.3.4 The Rewards of Change: A Renewed Mentality

Tourism travel places an individual in various different situations and when encountering such situations one has the opportunity to enquire and reflect more on some old patterns, ideas, habits or practices and evaluate if there are really other ways, ideas, chances or opportunities that could eventually be explored. Exposing oneself to new knowledge, facts, habits and practices that people in that particular country would have might be an eye opener on various issues, practices and situations back at home.

Tourism travel can help young people enter in what Piaget (1958, as quoted in Kaplan, 2003, p.314) defines as “a stage of formal operations, during which they develop new cognitive abilities”, especially since it provides ample space for them to think about their thoughts. Daniel maintains that tourism travel has provided him with a new understanding of how to approach life; he asserts that he is “no longer grumbling anymore on futile things”. Being exposed to different cultures, traditions and ways of living can propel young people to become more aware of their thought processes and of the origin and development of their ideas, and eventually start evaluating such thought processes and maybe also start considering different possibilities.

‘Tagjni ‘outlook’ differenta ta’ kif inhares lejn il-hajja, tipo isma jekk trid tgawdi l-hajja ta’ vera, ma tistax togoghod tgerger, ma tistax togoghod tghid ghax hekk jew ghax hekk, kun kuntent b’dak li ghandek u esplora kull opportunita’ li tigik’.

‘It gave me a different outlook on how to look at life; if you want to enjoy life to the full you cannot continue grumbling about this and that; just be happy with what you have and explore any opportunities that are given to you’.

(Gerald, 24 years)
Young people can start challenging or even changing their points of views after experiencing tourism travel, adopting different perspectives and empathising more with the people they encounter, who are in different circumstances, and once the mindset starts to change, then everything else will change along with it.

“You become aware that even though we see ourselves as very very different, deep down I think that, one’s human elements, what we really are, in reality one can discover that we are actually much more of the same than we ever thought”.

(Anne, 25 years)

4.3.5 Reaching Nirvana: Self-Actualisation

Maslow (1970) describes different levels in a hierarchical order which need to be fulfilled in other for a person to then reach the top hierarchical point; i.e. self-actualisation. The needs mentioned by Maslow (starting for the bottom, most basic one and ascending towards self-actualisation) are: 1) Physiological needs, 2) Safety and Security needs, 3) Love and belonging, 4) Esteem, 5) Self-actualisation. Self-actualization has been described by Maslow (1970, as quoted in Reitan, 2013, retrieved from http://brainblogger.com/2013/01/08/ maslows-theory-of-self-actualization-more-or-less-actualized/) as “the ability to transcend levels of physiological, psychological and social needs, to obtain fulfilment of personal needs in terms of life’s meaning”. All individuals have in them some desire to self-actualise and become what they feel they are made for. From the interviews conducted it was noted that research participants are also resorting to tourism travel in order to become actualised in what they potentially
are; to become everything that are really capable of becoming. When abroad, young people have more opportunity to acquire realistic perceptions of themselves, also through all the interaction that they have with different people, and this eventually leads to more self-acceptance. This self-acceptance eventually leads them to be more spontaneous both in their internal thoughts and also in their behaviour and become more autonomous. Research participants who are habitual tourists and therefore constantly engaged in tourism travel tend also to know how to better face problems that they would encounter in their daily lives. This is asserted by a number of persons who were interviewed for the study. Gerald and Elisa state

‘Titgħallem hafna, tkun hafna aktar indipendenti; l-fatt li nara l-haddiehor li meta jiġi biex jorganizza xihaga safra jew hekk jehel, jew inkella iii x’biża qbadt l-ajruplan wahdek? U dawn l-affarijiet lili ma jaffetwavnix, ma narhomx big deal dik nara li kbirt hafna, u kollu minhabba s-safar’.

‘Tgħallimt ukoll inkun jien l-aktar rilassata tipo jekk xihadd irid imur ximkien u jien ma rridx immur, sirt nadatta faċilmment, qabel ma kontx nadatta faċilmment ... u nahseb xihaga ohra li ġibt mis-safar li nkun naqa aktar rilassata; li nadatta’.

‘You learn a lot, you become more independent; the fact that I see other people stuck to organise a trip or else stating “oh how frightening you got on a plane alone?” and these things do not affect me at all, I don’t see them as big deal, I matured a lot due to tourism travel’.

(Gerald, 24 years)

I also learnt to be the most relaxed, for example if someone wants to go somewhere and I don’t, I adapt easily, before this would not have been the case ... and I believe that this is another thing I obtained from tourism travel, to be easier; to adapt’.

(Elisa, 30 years)

So in other words tourism travel can serve as a tool for self-actualisation, coinciding with Maslow’s (1987) idea of self-actualisation, as it encourages the power over one’s self; the unleashing of internal powers within; just as Church and Coles (2007, p.67) observe, during tourism travel people can “temporarily give up their comfort zone in order to achieve higher level of needs satisfaction”.
4.4 New Pastures

This section ‘New Pastures’ presents the idea that tourism travel provides habitual tourists with the opportunity to construct new knowledge and renegotiate ideas, feelings and events. Tourism travel challenges assumptions and enriches young Maltese habitual tourists by making them more open to different ideas and unconventional ways of doing things.

4.4.1 Openness

‘Travelling, experiencing new places, meeting new people, and seeing up new avenues of thinking as well has given me a new perspective of how to look on life. Travel makes you able to realise how small and irrelevant each and every one of us is and better still makes you able to come to terms with that simple fact and embrace it, allowing you to enjoy life in each and every simple moment’.

(Martha, 28 years)

It is easy to form ideas on how countries and people are by absorbing media images and getting influences through social media and various books, but it is a totally different thing visiting a country and experiencing the reality first hand. This is sustained by a number of persons interviewed for the study. Christianne says that ‘it is a good thing to study about different countries at school, or to read about them, however it is totally different to experience them, it is more inspirational’. Anne asserts that tourism travel gives one what she defines as ‘a different mindset’ which is a mind that is ‘more open and broad; broad to welcome other people’.
Once there, young people have the opportunity to realise that maybe some things which they thought were facts were simply based on stereotypes or prejudices and are not true at all. When one experiences for himself/herself s/he can come up to his/her own fresh conclusions and not simply pass impressions through the filters of others.

‘Meta titkellem fuq postijiet li inti tkun mort vera tista’ tifimhom ahjar l-affarijiet. Haddiehor iva se jipprova jifimhom imma ma esperjenzhomx l-affarijiet, dik taghmel differenza kbira. Anki jekk qed tara dwar pajjiz fuq it-televixin, jekk inti tkun mort thoss sensazzjoni differenti; tkun tista’ tifhem ahjar’.

‘When talking about the different countries that you have visited, you are in a position to understand things much better. Others will try to understand but since they didn’t get the experience, this fact will make a lot of difference. Even if watching about different destinations on television; if you have been there then it’s a totally different story, you will be able to get the real feeling, and understand more’.

(Robert, 28 years)

Tourism travel will challenge your assumptions and beliefs regarding what is ‘proper’ or ‘normal’. Through tourism travel one has the opportunity to realise that before judging, one needs to take a step back and understand that ‘their’ way is simply a different way, by no means less or a stupid way but rather a different one. Tourism travel, as Anne believes, gives one ‘a sense of openness, because when you encounter new things you can automatically open yourself to take in all the new experience’.

People’s cultural norms, values, beliefs and approaches to life are inherently different and that is what makes individuals unique after all. ‘Normality’ or ‘the right way’ is simply something subjective which can change from one society to another. Habitual tourists are the ones who generally tend to empathise more in such situations and they are less judgmental and more open to interact in other cultures and embrace differences.
4.4.2 Beyond the Comfort Zone: An Enriching Experience

The feeling that tourism travel enriches individuals was transmitted all throughout the interviews with the different young people. When engaging in tourism travel and living life in different countries around the globe, they seem to be more willing to construct new knowledge and refigure what is there. Eventually, the emerging knowledge can contribute to popular discourse, through which in turn, ideas, feeling and events in the world may be renegotiated. The literature has revealed that for many young people, tourism travel helps enrich people in various ways. According to Sofield (2001, as quoted in Smith and Brent, 2001, p.258), tourism travel enriches people because it empowers them by providing them with opportunities to learn, to choose and to decide. Tourism travel also bestows young people with the capacity to implement their decisions and then accept the responsibility for those decisions and their outcomes. This idea of feeling enriched due to experiencing tourism travel was corroborated by the participants’ narratives. Martha maintains that ‘when I go abroad I feel that I am enriching myself, I am getting to know more about the world and that it is something very individual, but then I am sharing what I am learning and whatever I am experiencing with friends’. Similarly Daniel claims that ‘I inspire myself when I am abroad, especially when I encounter artistic things, and that helps me to always try to achieve more and aim higher’. Anne continues on the same idea of enriching oneself through tourism travel when she states that ‘even through a simple conversation, you obtain a certain amount of knowledge in your background; there is no longer that insulation of a small island; you know beyond that’.

Respondents are well aware that exposing themselves to different countries, people and cultures will in turn instil in them more knowledge, and research participants could
extract many personal rewards which they achieved through tourism travel like more self-determination, a sense of competency and becoming better equipped to face challenges. All this eventually enhanced their ego and helped them feel better about themselves. Gerald confides that up to seven years ago he would define himself as being a shy person however today, ‘I am quite the opposite, and it was tourism travel which provided me with this opportunity as through it I met a lot of different people’.

Since tourism travel is regarded as this something which enriches individuals, research participants felt that it should be a must for everyone to actively engage in tourism travel at one point in their life, even if it is for a short period of time. Those persons who are deliberately not engaging in tourism travel are being regarded by the young people interviewed as choosing to not reach their optimum level in life, not releasing their full potential and not challenging themselves by seeking opportunities for development and growth. Respondents could not understand how someone would purposely opt out of tourism travel and not be intrigued by the idea of going abroad to a different country. Shaun states that everyone should experience tourism travel since ‘it is a nice experience where one learns and achieves self growth’. Anne, Christianne and Gerald take a different approach, and indirectly criticise those who do not engage in tourism travel. Anne maintains that ‘those who do not travel are really limited, even in their ideas’ while Christianne retains that sometimes she meets people whom she feels really need to experience tourism travel because as she says they are like horses on a race-track, they can ‘only see what’s in front of them and never have a chance to see the wider picture’. On other hand Gerald claims that he is frightened by the idea of those who feel comfortable staying in Malta all their lives and never experience tourism travel. He is afraid of finding this comfortable place and preferring to stay there and
never leave the nest again because he regards such people as ‘just being lazy and choosing to not even challenge themselves’.

Another respondent, Martha who works as a secondary school teacher believes that she can’t really perform her job well if she does not invest in herself first and foremost; and, for her, tourism travel means investing in oneself since it was enriching her as a person. Also she feels that she will not be a good teacher if she’s not at least at par in her travels with those students in her school who have travelled and seen a lot. According to Martha, not having any experience in tourism travel makes one unfit for the teaching profession

‘I think you need to do it; because for example, in my school there are many kids who come from well-off families and they have travelled quite a lot, so how can you be at par with those who are so experienced, with those who have really seen a lot? I can’t really teach them at school if I don’t invest in myself by travelling. Travel enriches me’.

(Martha, 28 years)

Most of the young people interviewed were quite flexible and ready to always try new things, so when they experience tourism travel they are eventually soaking up some of the culture, maybe also a bit of the language, they become aware of new realities, try new foodstuffs, meet a wide range of people, learn a great deal about lives in other countries and of course broaden their horizons. Robert, Sandra and Anne provide some poignant narrative in this regard.


‘I can easily say that tourism travel really affected my life, I can’t think of anything negative in relation to tourism. I feel that tourism travel has affected my life in a positive way. Through it I managed to learn a lot and increased my interest in various things as well’.

(Robert, 28 years)
Even the fact that through tourism travel you have friends who are not Maltese, not always being surrounded by the same people and same things. I believe this helps a lot and can open one’s mind’.

(Anne, 25 years)

4.4.3 Personality Gains: Renegotiating one’s Life Position through Tourism

Travel

Although none of the respondents made a direct reference to this, it was clearly implied that another major reason for research participants to engage in tourism travel was to eventually be able to impress their families and friends upon their return home. One of the respondents, Elisa, maintained that the fact that she’s been to countries where not so many habitual tourists have been, makes her feel good. She enjoys going to places that she knows are not that popular. Experiencing tourism travel, especially when visiting countries that are very far away in different continents, gave the impression that one is now more knowledgeable and that those young people who have been through such tourism travel practices in a way feel that they now have more power. Martha believes that habitual tourists are very interesting people since they ‘have a knowhow about a lot
of things and you can tell, you can spot the people who go abroad because they are very open minded, they can talk about a lot of things, they relate different experiences about what they’ve done’. So basically for Martha, habitual tourists call for interesting and knowledgeable persons.

Issues of power and tourism travel are far from being total strangers and through the various responses the habitual tourists gave throughout the interviews it was not difficult to realise that these young people do feel superior when they compare themselves to those who have never experienced tourism travel. In fact Gerald claims that when he compares himself to his university friends, ‘the fact that I am also a bit older then they are but especially because I have travelled much more then they did altogether; I don’t really panic while they seem to panic over very small issues such as doing an assignment’. Sandra believes that tourism travel helps the individual obtain certain experiences which s/he could never obtain from Malta and generally these people are ‘more open-minded and able to discuss on many topics because they experienced many different things’.

The message was inferred in a subtle way since these young people did not want to project themselves as snobs; however an intricate construct of tourism travel and power was definitely recognised. Tourism travel is perceived as being the ‘field of knowledge’ which constitutes power; an idea which perfectly corresponds to Foucault’s (1975) idea that power and knowledge directly imply one another.

Tourism travel is perceived by respondents as being a tool which can lead one to gain a lot personally. Abigail states that it makes one aware that ‘we are not just an island, there are various other opportunities out there’, and also, according to Christianne, these opportunities will make one ‘keep on searching further’. All these gains however do not
simply come in a vacuum but they come with responsibilities. The young people interviewed discussed that during tourism travel they need to decide about many essential things like where to stay, how to get to different places, what to eat, where to visit, what to do and also budgeting for all these necessities and as Elisa states, when she is abroad she realises how much she takes things for granted in Malta, and this serves as a reminder that she ‘should not take things for granted because they are not’. This is definitely broadening their horizons as it is placing them in situations where they have to go beyond their comfort zone, start thinking outside the box and approach things in a different way. Upon their return home, thanks to these new experiences, interests and skills acquired, young people become more confident. Anne and Elisa speak a lot about this idea of how tourism travel makes for confident and ‘better persons’. Anne discusses that ‘sometimes certain issues which people regard as being major ones, I would not really see the big deal about them, and this is maybe due to the various exposures to different situations I had to face while abroad’ while Elisa says that

‘Travelling opens new avenues, new perspectives. You enjoy the fact that when you come back to Malta you can say that you saw another place, however it is not just about seeing another place, but rather because you have a real taste of life in that particular country. Tourism travel makes you a richer person in the experiences obtained, however it will also make you poorer in your pockets, but that doesn’t really matter. Tourism travel is a beautiful thing as it allows you to experience the world and start looking at it from a different perspective. Tourism travel makes me a better person’.

(Elisa, 30 years)
Broadening one’s horizons also implies that these habitual tourists interviewed have started to see their own country in a different light. Some start perceiving it as being somehow limited especially as they become exposed to things they have never seen or start doing activities that they never thought existed and meet up with many different people. Just as Martha narrates that it is

‘A life changing experience for me; and coming back I started looking at Malta from a different perspective altogether. I started realising how limited it is, not in size only but even people’s perspectives are very limited in the way of thinking, and that’s what triggered my thought of going away and not living here for the rest of my life’.

(Martha, 28 years)

However others might become even more appreciative of what they actually have in their native land and start valuing some things which they usually overlook in their mundane life. This usually happens after realising that some things that they usually take for granted are missing or considered as a luxury in another land. Also when they meet up with people living in poor or unfortunate situations, young people start valuing their country more and the opportunities it offers. Tourism travel is indeed a tool that is leading respondents to start valuing and become more grateful for what they already have. It has helped them to create a positive outlook on their own country. Christianne and Robert substantiate this idea by saying that

‘Meta nsiefer napprezzza aktar ukoll lil Malta ghax f’Malta ghandna tendenza li niehdh l-affarijiet ‘for granted’ u ġieli tmur f’post barra minn Malta fejn in-nies idumu jirriklamawh dan il-post; tmur u ma ssib xejn b’tali mod li timpressjona ruhek u hemmhekk nibda nghid, ‘Ara Malta kemm ghandna affarijiet u ahna ghax qeghdin ġo Malta ma napprezzawhomx!’ allura jiena nahseb li s-safar iva ghallimni napprezzza aktar dak li ghandna fil-gżira taghna’.

‘When I’m abroad I learn to appreciate Malta much more. In Malta we tend to take things for granted, and sometimes it happens that you’d go to a country which has been heavily publicised, you go there and you’d find nothing really special there. Then I start saying to myself “Look how many things we have in Malta and since it is our daily life we don’t really take time to savour and appreciate them”, so I believe that tourism travel has indeed made me appreciate what we have in our island’.

(Christanne, 30 years)
4.5 Birds Flocking Together

This section ‘Birds Flocking Together’ presents the idea that young Maltese habitual tourists prefer to share their experience with someone else when abroad, but this does not always translate in joining an organised tour. This section also discusses the social allure and the role of social media in habitual tourism.

4.5.1 The Social Dimension of Habitual Tourism

Tourism travel is not so much individualistic as collective and social behaviour, because what individuals do when abroad is shaped almost entirely by what other people intend doing, are doing, or have done. Tourism travel is seen as an experience to be shared with others in order to be more complete; few go solo and those who do usually meet and mix with other tourists or residents of the places visited. When the young person is deciding about engaging or not in tourism travel, what to do and where to go, s/he does not do this in a vacuum; being a social being, the individual is constantly surrounded by different family members, friends and other people who continuously exert their influences upon him/her which will eventually influence his/her final decision.
4.5.2 Better Together: An Experience to Share

Interviewees emphasised the idea that tourism travel is enjoyed more when they have someone else with them to share what they were passing from. To have somebody accompany them felt important as when abroad an individual experiences many different situations which one can’t put into words and are difficult to express, and when someone eventually tries to talk about such situations that one has been through, in no way they could transmit the real feelings that the young person actually felt while abroad and it somewhat loses all the magical aura it had. So it was important for almost all young people interviewed to have someone with them while abroad as this gave them the opportunity to share with others all they were going through. Sharing their experiences was very important to them. One respondent, Gerald, even compared this situation to a woman who is giving birth, and he maintained that if the woman who is giving birth has nobody around her during delivery, she could not really share the happiness she feels inside.

‘Li tkun ma’ shabek se jaghtik dik il-haga li l-esperjenza se taqsamha ma xi hadd; fis-sens li inti f’hajtek ghandek mumenti li se żżommhom ghalik...tghid ‘this I will cherish for myself,’ imbaghad ikun hemm esperjenzi li sabih taqsamhom ma’ haddiehor ghax imbaghad tkun diċċli biex tesprimihom; per eżempju jekk esperjenzajt li tiqat fuq muntanja li kienet diċċli eċċ, jekk ghamilha wahdi forsi nista’ nghid nghidha imma haddiehor ma jistax jifimni u jhoss xi tfisser sakemm m’ghamlilhaix mieghi jew m’ghamilx esperjenza simili’.

‘Being with friends gives you that feeling that you are sharing the experience with someone; in the sense that there are moments in your life which you choose to keep for yourself; you say this I will cherish for myself; but then there are those experiences that are nice to be shared with others also because if not, it will be difficult to express them in words. Like for example if you experienced going up a difficult mountain, if you did it on your own you will be able to tell about it however others can’t really understand or feel what it really meant to you unless they did it with you or have experienced something similar to what you have done’.

(Gerald, 24 years)
Others corroborated this idea that they enjoy tourism travel more when they have the opportunity to share it with others. Christianne maintains that she is a very sociable person and loves ‘to laugh and I love to share the actual experience with others. I am not the kind of person to go on my own and then later relate about it, I want to share the experience there and then’. Abigail also feels that experiencing tourism travel with someone else is much better than doing it alone and she adds that it is also interesting to share such an experience because she is able to ‘see the other person’s perspective on that particular country and share ideas’. Also, experiencing tourism travel alone was perceived by respondents as being a bit too lonely. Although respondents were well aware that even when someone travels alone, the probability of staying alone would be very low since travelling solo would generally make one more available for other people and s/he will eventually meet various other people and other solo travellers alike; they still preferred to have some to accompany them while travelling.

‘Qatt ma sifirt waħdi u ma nhsibx li qatt nasal li nsiefer wahdi. Hija wisq ‘lonely’ li ssiefer wahdek, mhux ghax nibż; sabih li dejjem ghandek lil xi hadd ma’ min titkellem, anki jekk qieghed fuq tal-linja ghandek ma’ min tgħid kelma, mort f’restorant, hadt ritratt ma’ xi hadd... milli issiefer wahdek; nahseb isbah li l-haġa tesperjenzaha ma’ xi hadd iehor milli wahdek’.

‘I have never experienced tourism travel on my own and I think that I never will. It is too lonely to go abroad on your own; it’s not that I am afraid, but it’s nice to always have someone with whom you can talk. Even if you are on a bus ride, you will have someone to talk to, going to a restaurant, taking a photo with someone ... I’d prefer that rather than going abroad on my own. I think it is nicer to experience it with someone rather than being alone’.

(Christianne, 30 years)

Besides Christianne, many other respondents affirmed that they preferred to share their experience and not embark on a solo journey. Abigail emphasised that she won’t go on her own as she considers herself to be a person who doesn’t ‘like to be on my own, and I always try to find the company of different people’. Elisa also states that she prefers to travel with someone else although also admitting that if an opportunity for solo travel
arises she certainly would take up that opportunity and go as she saw it as ‘an opportunity of growth and a different experience’ however given a choice she’d always choose company in order to be able ‘to share my experience’. Anne did experience solo tourism travel many times, due to choosing to further her studies abroad, and admits that she thought that it was going to be an easier experience. It was while she was travelling solo that she realised that she liked having company while abroad ‘because having someone with me means that I can share the experience’.

Although still preferring company, respondents were aware that it might restrict them in being able to meet new people and interact more, as automatically they would rely on the other person accompanying them rather than go ask and interact with locals, for example. It seems that these Maltese habitual tourists that were interviewed do want to experience the unknown and be as free as possible when travelling however they would still want someone whom they trust with them in the form of a friend, a partner or a spouse especially for reassurance. The reassurance factor stimulates their motivation for tourism travel further.

...ġieli nkun ġo bar per eżempju jew fuq train u jekk qegħda ma' Malti iehor, awtomatikament se nintefa nitkellem miegħu eċċ. imma jekk se nkun fjaċjata b'sitwazzjoni li se nkun wahdi, awtomatikament se nibda konverżazzjoni ma' xihadd, eżempju jpoġgi xi hadd hdejja fuq train u tibda titkellem miegħu, jiġifieri fl-istess hin li tkun ma' xi hadd tista' tirrestringik ukoll. Imma jekk ikolli nagħżel xorta nippreferi li jkolli lil xi hadd mieghi, forsi anki bhala sens ta' sigurta'.

... it happens that I am in a bar for example or on a train and if I am accompanied by a Maltese friend, automatically we would start discussing etc. but if I am faced with a situation where I am on my own, automatically I will strike a conversation with someone. For instance I sit down near someone on the train and start talking to him/her. So at the same time it may be restricting to have someone with you. But still, if I had to choose, I would choose to be accompanied by someone, maybe also because it transmits a sense of security’.

(Anne, 25 years)

When respondents state that they would prefer to be accompanied by someone during their travels, this does not mean that they prefer to go abroad with a big group of people
since this would generally come with a lot of frustration because of various issues which arise and could lead to unwanted tension or friction amongst individuals. Elisa admits that she prefers to experience tourism travel with very few people and that ‘the fewer the people the better it is because in large groups there will surely be issues and tensions due to the different relationships people have; but yet still, it is nice to travel with someone else’. It was only in one case where a young person, Christianne, stated that she would prefer to experience tourism travel with as many friends and acquaintances as possible since people would make her experience more interesting. She was not after meeting many new people but rather tourism travel for her meant spending quality time with those she already knew. She prefers the group because

‘Bejn tnejn kemm se ddum tghid l-istess haġa? bejn tlieta diga ahjar, ghax tlieta ghandek intervent iehor mad-diskussjoni, u int ghandek tul ta’ hin il hin kollu flimkien; jekk taghmel, jien naf; gimgha, tnejn min-nies biss, naraha limitata, imma nsomma jiena nhobb, jien ghamilt hafla żmien mal-hbieb u allura bqajt inhobb il-hbieb’. ‘If we are only two people, one would eventually exhaust all arguments and so you’d end up saying the same things. Being three is already a better situation as then you have another intervention in the discussion. Consider that you’d be spending a lot of time continuously together, so I believe that being only two people for a whole week for example is very limited. I grew up with friends so I believe that is why I love spending time with a lot of friends’.

(Christianne, 30 years)

On the other hand, Gerald had a totally different view about being accompanied or not while travelling. For him it was essential to be by himself as this meant that he would be totally free and could express himself in whichever way he wanted to without anyone around to make him get any second thoughts about it. It was more of a spontaneous thing being alone, there were no restrictions to anything and nobody he knew would be around to act as his conscience. Tourism travel helped him to express his true nature and free himself from limiting mindsets.
4.5.3 Renouncing the Ready Made: Organised Tours

People who would choose to experience tourism travel with an organised tour by a private company, commonly do so because they see these organised tours as providing them with very easy access to many areas and also they are avoiding taking up too much time in planning where to go and seeing what to do; they would have everything planned, with someone else having done the preliminary groundwork. So, organised tours are seen as the easiest way to experience tourism travel without going into any disturbances, but rather, paying and finding everything ready-made. Christianne retains that organised tours ‘are great because you’ll have everything ready’, they avoid time wasting in planning and she sees them as a different experience because one will be with various people whom s/he did not choose themselves ‘and if you approach the idea of travelling with an organised tour in a relaxed manner then you will have a good laugh as well, either with these people or because of them’.

The habitual tourists interviewed for this study suggested that experiencing tourism travel through organised tours was not really an authentic experience because organised tours implied a staged quality in their proceedings and therefore are seen as something constructed rather than as experiencing the real thing. Through organised tours “authenticity itself moves to inhabit mystification” (MacCannell, 1976, p.93). Organised tours were regarded as if they have an aura of superficiality as when the tour leader is explaining or demonstrating something in particular it is his/her own interpretation and might not be the real or actual experience, so rather than coming up with conclusions of your own and building up your own knowledge, you are simply being presented with everything already made and set and you are just there to absorb what is being said. You are being fed, and your role is simply to be passive and not an
active individual seeking to divulge further in the life and experiences of the people living in that particular country and interpreting and building knowledge from the interactions done with them. MacCannell (1976, p.91) maintained that the ‘everyday life’ presented is like “making a production and a fetish of urban public street life, rural village life and traditional domestic relations”. These young people interviewed maintained that the real experience is done if one is totally free to roam wherever s/he wants and do his/her own thing. Going abroad with an organised tour felt as if the experience was not really theirs and one will end up doing things s/he did not really want to, and it was too restrictive for their liking, especially since organised tours are bound with strict schedules in timing and places. For them, this approach killed the idea of being a free spirit which they associate strongly with tourism travel. In fact some respondents emphasised this idea, with Gerald claiming that when one experiences tourism travel through organised tours, s/he is not having any say in any of the decisions made and that frustrates him personally since he wants tourism travel ‘to be mine not yours. I see organised tours simply as I am joining something rather than creating something myself” and of course he prefers the latter. Anne also agrees with the idea of ideally getting away from organised tours as she sees them as being ‘restrictive and surrounded by many Maltese people’ and therefore she only considers organised tours to be something to be considered later on in life, but since she is healthy and fully mobile, then organised tours are definitely not an option for her. Martha corroborates Anne’s idea by stating that she would never go on organised tours as she ‘would hate to be bound by a schedule and a group of Maltese people would bother me.’ Daniel also continues on the same vein and replies back with a question, clearly showing that organised tours are not something he would consider, when asked about his idea about
them. He maintained ‘why would you join an organised tour? Why wouldn’t you only do the things you really want to do?’

Organised tours are perceived as being an alternative for the older generations and not for younger people since the general feel of respondents is that to plan things yourself is the way to actually make the trip ‘your own’. Interviewees transmitted the idea that they were trying to mark their distinction through unique modes of tourist travel consumption; which was definitely not the ‘organised tours type’.

‘Le ta, ghax hija parti minnha li tipppjana l-affarijiet u li tinqabad f’dawn iċ-ċuċati li ghandek problema trid issolvieha mhux ghandek xi hadd iehor isolvihielek; ghalija hija parti mis-safr li torganizzaha inti, jekk se ssib xi intopp fit-triq tara kif se ssolvih, il-pjan kif se taghmel; jekk ma nagħmiż dik inhosser naqra ... ma nippreferix l-idea li nsib kollox lest. Jekk se nsib kollox lest nitlef nofs il-pjaċir ghalija’.

‘No, I would not want to travel with organised tours. An integral part of tourism travel is also the fact that you find yourself in situations which you need to solve, and it is nice to do this on your own and not finding someone else to solve it for you. If you find a problem, then you see how to solve it, plan how to deal with it and see what to do. Personally if I don’t do this myself then I feel a bit ... I don’t really like the idea of finding everything ready made. It takes away much of the fun’.

(Elisa, 30 years)

Young people interviewed saw organised tours as more appropriate for older people as they believe that older people would rather find everything prepared than preparing it themselves as this will waste them time. Organised tours are seen as a good source which provides opportunity to those who lack education and the know-how on how to do things themselves to engage into tourism travel. This idea was further substantiated by Martha and Robert. Martha claims that there are ‘types of people that yes, they decide to engage in tourism travel, however they do not have the know-how and capability of planning things themselves, how to book tickets or hotels, so organised tours are the ideal option for such people’. Robert perfectly agrees with Martha and states that organised tours fit those ‘who lack the motivation and know-how in planning
their own things and want to find everything readymade’. However he also states that at least organised tours are providing access to tourism travel to such people and ‘at least through them they go’.

It was only one respondent, Christianne, who maintained that she would consider organised tours to go abroad at her young age while all the other interviewees regarded organised tours as being a good option to be considered only at a later stage in life, when they become older. The general feeling was also that if one travels with organised tours s/he will end up with many different people who would not be so enjoyable to travel with. Young people saw themselves as being considerably ‘better’ than those who go on organised tours and that when they compared themselves to these people they saw themselves as not being on the same wavelength but rather they were coming from two different worlds. Therefore they wouldn’t want to hang out with these people especially during their holidays abroad. Martha clearly says that she ‘wouldn’t want to hang out with those people no and I wouldn’t want to listen or talk to those people no, especially when I’m on holiday! I have to be with somebody who is on the same lines...’ while Sandra maintains that the main issue she has with organised tours is the fact that you will constantly have people around you and therefore ‘you need a lot of patience and for sure there is no possibility to actually have a break’. This is different from when one goes abroad with friends as ‘more or less you’d be on the same wavelength with your friends, after all most probably that is why they are your friends’.
4.5.4 On Catching the Flu: The Impact of Social Media

In today’s world, the media and its influence on societies has grown exponentially with the advances of technology. In such a globalised era, the majority of young people continuously depend on information and communication to remain connected with the world and do their daily activities. All this information coming from the various media is clearly influencing young people as it manages to reach many people and has also transformed the way they communicate, search for information make decisions, learn and socialise. This is in turn affecting tourism travel as media has an important role in the choice of destination, what one does once there, what to see, where to stay etc. It is through media that young people are learning which destinations symbolise what, what they offer and why one should go there or not as they continuously use different social media to stay in touch with friends, to find and make new ones, but also to share information, photos and other content about life events; and tourism travel is generally considered as a major life event which is worth of sharing with others through social media. In fact, many young people who experience tourism travel tend to share their experiences online once they are back from their trips. This has become as a sort of a trend with everyone, in particular with the younger generation who constantly share their lives online. This sharing is mostly done through social media like facebook, twitter, tumblr and various blogs. The information that is being shared is eventually seen by hundreds of contacts that these young people have and can be very influential in the decision making process of other young people who will start thinking about planning their tourism travel. So in such a case, the true power of social media derives from their ability to reach large numbers of tourism travellers who share some common affinity in an engaging and dynamic way.
During the interviews, many respondents admitted that when they are thinking about going abroad or want to plan their trips they tend to check online to see what others who have directly experienced such thing had to say on that particular country that they would be thinking about visiting. It was also very common to ask their friends and contacts via social media about their experiences and look for any advice especially after seeing the pictures that someone would have uploaded on their facebook or instagram account for example. This is very much what Daniel does because he stated that some of his decisions were partially influenced by pictures of different countries some of his friends uploaded on facebook. Anne, Robert, Abigail and Sandra all admitted on being affected by such influences with Anne stating that ‘if while I am reading different things online I discover something new, then I insist on trying to go see it for myself’. Robert claims that it is close to impossible for anyone to not be influenced in this time and age of internet, as everyone will surely ‘see, read or search about different destinations before s/he actually goes there. I personally do that too and I admit that travel blogs influence me a lot’. He continues to argue that it is not possible for anyone to go to a particular place without having any influences at all. Sandra further emphasises this idea by saying that before she actually chooses a specific destination she tries to chat with people through different online travel forums to see about their experience and she claims that during some interesting chats she had, she was already wishing she was instantly there. In Sandra’s case, the influences she gathered from the different social media had the final say about actually visiting a particular country or not.

Social media is exerting a great influence on young people and they consider most of the advice coming from their social media contacts as very reliable, credible and honest and believe that this information is actually leading them to see the ‘real’ destination as
opposed to the staged touristic destination. Young people perceive messages they get through social media as being realistic since they believe there are no hidden agendas; it is not an advert coming from a company who wants to sell something and therefore showcases only the positive aspect, but rather it is a personal account of a person who has been there already and has lived it and experienced it before.

As stated by these habitual tourists interviewed, social media is such a powerful tool nowadays, also in the case of tourism travel consumption, that many countries are trying to exploit such a tool. This is also the case of Malta where for the first time, the Malta Tourism Authority has decided to gather bloggers from all around the world and welcome them on the island so that they could experience Malta and blog about it (http://blogisland.visitmalta.com/). They called this initiative ‘Malta is more’ and the first group of bloggers was welcomed in April 2014. These bloggers were given free flights, accommodation and also a special card which they used to savor different venues, historical sites, and restaurants, and experience the destination. This is obviously done so as to try and attract more tourists coming in Malta, especially younger people after they read such blogs. Other countries, like Hawaii, have also embarked on such an experience, and all this is done particularly because as these young people interviewed stated, people tend to be heavily influenced by the continuous messages they are bombarded with, especially through social media.

It is however important to note that social media is something which is continuously changing, evolving and growing rapidly so how it affects and influences young people today may definitely not be the case for tomorrow. Social media is something which is in a continuous process of change, always changing and improving in a technical way.
4.5.5 The Social Allure: Family and Peer Influences

The family is the cornerstone of society and it plays a major role in the transmission of norms and values in society as it is the primary source of socialisation for individuals. Family members teach their children what they themselves have learned and influence their children in the way they act, feel and also think. The family is one’s starting point for life where one learns many things. Apart from meeting social and physical needs of an individual, the family contributes to the intellectual development of its members.

Young people who have been exposed to tourism travel since they were young tend to be more prone to experience tourism travel themselves when they grow older, this is because the idea of tourism travel was instilled in them since when they were young.

Anne believes that

‘Taffetwa wkoll il-mentalita li tikber biha, nahseb jaffetwa daqsxejn il-background tieghek, jekk tkun trabbejit go post fejn is-safar jew in-nies ta' kulturi ohrain jidhru dejjem bhala xi haga ta' theddida ma nahsibx li ha tikber b'daqshekk openness u li trid tiskopri ... per eżempju jien nenmen li wahda mill-fatturi ghalix jien inhobb insiefer daqshekk mhux ghax konna familja li nsiefru darba fis-sena ... imma l-fatt li kont nisma’ u li kienu jżuruna nies minn pajjiżi ohrain; kont esposta haşna, u ghadni s'issa, jįğiżeri, il-ġenituri tieghi huma minn dawk it-tip li huma miftuha haşna ghal nies minn pajjiži ohrja fil-verita’ ... u jispiććaw qishom parti mill-familja tagħna; u apparti li l-mama u l-papa dejjem kellhom nies jigu minnhom u hbib taghhom joqogħdu barra, ġieli per eżempju, dawn in-nies ikunu jafu lil xi hadd iehor u jispiććaw dawn jigu ghandna ghax ikunu jafu lilhom. Ahna nilaghhum u nkunu kuntenti bihom. Ahna dejjem miftuhin ghal dan-nies.

‘What impacts the most is the type of mentality that one grows in. Your background certainly affects a bit. If you grow in a situation where tourism travel and different people appear as threatening I don’t think that you will grow up with such openness and wanting to explore further … for example, I believe that a main factor contributing to my love for tourism travel was not the fact that we’d travel at least once a year with my family since we were young, but rather the fact that I used to listen about and have many visitors from different countries at home. I was very much exposed to such an idea, and this is still present in our house even nowadays. My parents are the kind of people who are open to new people new different countries to enter their lives ... and we end up befriending them. Also both my mother and father have relatives living abroad. These relatives will know other people coming to visit Malta and they send them to us. We greet them and are always happy to welcome them. I’ve
Minn dejjem niftakarna bin-nies id-dar li jiġu jżuruna jien’. 
always had visitors around at home ever since I remember’. 
(Anne, 25 years)

So in order to better understand tourism travel it is also important to take into consideration not only one’s family background but also his/her friends and acquaintances since they are usually those that exert the major influences upon a young person. Christianne maintained that she gets influenced by family members and relatives living in other countries because since ‘I have uncles, aunties and cousins living in Canada they always invite me to go visit and influence me to go there, in fact I’ve already visited them three times’.

When the person grows up, friends tend to take up some of the place that was previously occupied by family members; and friends amongst themselves incessantly learn and influence one another. Elisa maintains that her parents did not like to engage in tourism travel and it was never an issue for her until she met some friends and through them she discovered tourism travel, and it was at that point that ‘I started realising what I was missing’. It is very common to find a group of friends who develop common tastes in music, have similar hobbies etc. and the more they frequent each other, the more these tastes intensify, so when one comes to discuss this in relation to tourism travel, it is quite evident that peers exert considerable influence on the type of tourism travel that one should experience. Martha argues that she’ll ‘prick my ears when I hear about a country from my friends living abroad, because I would always want to go and see it too’. Abigail says that it’s more of what she hears her friends say about a country that influences her while Sandra relates that before she buys an air ticket she always asks friends to see their opinion about the country and get advices from anyone who has already been there. On the other hand, Shaun says that he is currently engaging in tourism travel to go visit his friends who are living and working
abroad at the moment; in fact at the time of the interview, he had recently returned from Dubai after he went to visit his friend who works there and had persuaded him to visit the country.

An interesting observation which came out from these interviews was the fact that young people see the opportunity to engage into tourism travel as an opportunity to ‘refresh’ on life and kind of start anew on certain things. These habitual tourists interviewed pointed out that after their trips, when they are back home it was not uncommon that that their relationships with family members especially improved significantly, the temporary detachment from them strengthens their bond, maybe because it serves them as a sort of time out to actually reflect and appreciate more the relationship they have, which when in constant contact they might take for granted.

Elisa in fact maintains that

‘Spiss hassejli wara xi safra anki r-relazzjonijiet ma tad-dar jinbidlu, jigu nagra ahjar ... is-safar, li inti taqta’ naqra u terga’ tiqi ‘refreshed’ inti apparti minn kollox u tista’ terga’ tibda mill-bidu’.

‘I often felt that after coming back from my tourism travel, a change in some ways in my relations with my family members occurs. Usually our relations improve ... it is like tourism travel gave me the opportunity to break and kind of refresh; making me able to start again anew’.

(Elisa, 30 years)

4.5.6 The Chance to Fly: More Access to Tourism Travel

Young people did not perceive social class as being a determinant of tourism travel. They believed that tourism travel was accessible to almost everyone and in no way it was directly related to a specific class. Tourism travel cuts through social classes and although at first people would generally think that it is related to class, these habitual
tourists interviewed related that actually nowadays you realise that all sorts of people coming from all different backgrounds and social classes go abroad. Shaun believes that engaging in tourism travel is simply a matter of taste and has nothing to do with class. He states that

‘Naħseb li mhix kwistjoni ta’ klassi soċjali jew ‘lifestyle’ imma hija kwistjoni ta’ gosti ta’ dak li jkun. Tnejn min-nies bl-istess ‘lifestyle’u mill-istess klassi soċjali jistgħu jiddeċiedu li wieħed isiefer u l-ieħor ma jsifirx imma mhux għax il-‘lifestyle’ differenti, għax jiddeċiedu fuq kwistjoni ta’ gosti’.

‘I believe that it is not a question of social classes or lifestyle but rather it is a question of tastes. Two people can have a similar lifestyle, coming from the same social class, but one may decide on engaging in tourism travel while the other one not. It is simply a matter of choice due to tastes’.

(Shaun, 25 years)

Respondents believed that it was also true that coming from a higher class one was more prone to tourism travel due to having the necessary monetary funds available but what was more determining was not class but rather tastes and the predisposition of one to wanting to engage in it. If one wanted to do it then young people saw it as widely available to everyone, especially since the introduction of low cost airlines and so there was nothing to eventually prevent them from doing it. Everyone could make it happen if they set their mind to it. Everything depended on the will to travel, not on status, social class or lifestyle that one had. This idea contrasts with the idea of Casey (2011, p.178) who states that “the perceived social class of others and of tourist sites is important due to tourism involving the movement of people through various sorts of spaces”. Gerald in fact discusses that it is one’s character which is the determining factor in relation to tourism travel because ‘I don’t think that the social class you are coming from makes any difference’ in relation to tourism travel. Martha agrees too and maintains that ‘I believe you can make it happen if you set your mind to it, even if you’re in a bad
financial or social situation, but the will to travel needs to be there. If you’re willing you’ll always find a way to travel on whatever budget you have, no matter your status’.

Respondents however noted that lifestyle affected the way in which one actually tackles tourism travel. It does not determine whether one goes abroad or not, but rather it affected how one decides to travel. One can choose to engage in tourism travel but only go to luxury resorts for example and not really experience the culture of the country s/he is visiting or have contact with the residents, with Anne maintaining that ‘there is an intricate connection between lifestyle and tourism, in that tourism travel is a great building block which shapes your mentalities and thoughts. The way you tackle your travels says a lot about the way you choose to live’.

There were mixed ideas on considering tourism travel as being a luxury or not. Generally those who did regard tourism travel as being a luxury stated that although it was extremely beneficial for people, it was not a basic need and there were things which were more important and had to be taken care of before considering tourism travel, however after making sure to have the basic needs provided for, one could easily start saving up and at least engage in the least expensive form of tourism travel. Although respondents do not regard tourism travel as a need; many clearly stated that without it ‘the quality of life will be different’.

Tourism travel is however regarded as widely accessible to everyone since opportunities to actively engage in it are on the increase. These young people interviewed mentioned issues like subsidised youth exchanges that are being provided by different youth organisations and schools through the European Union funds, for example. Sandra perfectly wraps up the general idea which came out through these interviews when she states that

‘I believe that some form of travel on whatever budget is possible for everyone it just depends on priorities; people have money for what they want to have money for. Also nowadays one can find different opportunities to actively engage in tourism travel, so it is really up to the individual to decide to take up such initiatives. Tourism travel in our society is really accessible to everyone’.

(Sandra, 25 years)
"No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings".

William Blake
5.1 Introduction

Following is a summary of the findings of this study which will be given in section 5.2. Section 5.3 will then discuss implications in relation to the Maltese National Youth Policy 2010 – 2013, while section 5.4 will delve briefly into a number of practical recommendations. Areas for further research will be overviewed in section 5.5, followed by the final section 5.6 which will lay out the overall conclusion to the study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study, as already stated in the introductory chapter, was to explore the phenomenon of habitual tourism amongst young Maltese habitual tourists. This was done by tackling the factors triggering habitual tourism and delving further into factors such as the social influences that young Maltese people were experiencing and in what ways tourism travel was actually impacting them. Issues like social capital, lifestyle, class and status were also taken into consideration and evaluated in relation to tourism travel to further explore the matter.

The study notes that the roots of Maltese habitual tourism are varied. What is triggering habitual tourism comprises of the need of these young Maltese people to escape from the insularity of their small island at least for a temporary period, as sometimes it felt too restrictive to them; a desire to experience the unexpected which has no real room in their everyday life; a desire to feel free and act spontaneously without anyone who knows them around ready to judge; engaging in tourism travel as an avenue for
discovery and exploration, both on a personal level but also as a discovery of different
countries, new things and different people; and the wish to embark on a journey so as to
become actualised in what they potentially are.

Young Maltese habitual tourists are affected in countless ways when they experience
tourism travel. It made them more open to different ideas and unconventional ways of
doing things; tourism travel challenged their assumptions and enriched young people by
providing them with the opportunity to construct new knowledge and renegotiate ideas,
feelings and events. It helped them to learn how to empathise and understand different
circumstances that others were passing through; made them more self-determined,
helped them to start looking at themselves in a better light and gave them ‘power’.

Tourism travel is definitely a source of youth empowerment. An interesting thing was to
hear that these young Maltese habitual tourists hate to be alone when experiencing
tourism travel. They would prefer to share their experience with someone else;
otherwise the experience is regarded as not really complete. Sharing the experience
however in no way signifies that these young habitual tourists would go for organised
tours. These organised tours are perceived as providing a non-authentic experience and
are very superficial. Organised tours for these young people felt restrictive as they were
bound by a strict schedule but were seen as a good alternative for the older generations
and for those who lacked the education and knowhow of doing things for themselves.

It was clear that respondents were especially influenced to go to particular countries by
what they saw on social media. Social media has a vital role in the choice of the
destination as the information coming from it is perceived as being reliable, credible
and honest. These young Maltese people interviewed highly valued the advice provided
by family and peers in relation to tourism travel, and it is evident that friends exert
considerable influence on each other on the type of tourism travel that they should experience.

Social class or status did not really affect tourism travel according to these habitual tourists. Tourism travel manages to cut through classes and although they seem to be persuaded by the fact that the higher the class one comes from, the more prone towards tourism travel one is, what they saw as really connected to tourism travel was the lifestyle that one had, since that indicates how one tackles tourism travel. What really determines tourism travel is one’s predisposition of wanting to engage in it and not social class or status. With regards to social capital however, the young people interviewed recognised the fact that being exposed to the idea of tourism travel from a tender age within the family or also when growing up through the interaction with friends who are actively engaged in tourism travel, led one to actually start yearning for tourism travel even more.

5.3 Implications for the Field: Tourism Travel and National Youth Policy

Throughout this section, I tried to see how this study could actually impinge on the Maltese National Youth Policy 2010 – 2013. This youth policy is based on what policy makers term as the “five horizontal threads” which include: participation and engagement, youth information, social inclusion, family and mobility”. These threads are interwoven into “vertical themes” which include education, employment, health and well-being, culture and the arts, community cohesion and volunteering, sport, leisure, environment, information society, youth justice, transition and vulnerability.
After such a study, it becomes evident that there is an intricate relationship between tourism travel and the National Youth Policy 2010 - 2013. Tourism travel is really a perfect avenue, providing accessibility in most of the areas mentioned in this National Youth Policy 2010 – 2013. When one considers the main ‘horizontal threads’ of this youth policy, one cannot but think about tourism travel as it is really intertwined with many of the points discussed in it.

When discussing participation and engagement in the National Youth Policy 2010 - 2013, the rationale for youth participation acknowledges “the development of an environment where young people have the opportunity and motivation to develop the skills to become strong active citizens who bring about change” (National Youth Policy 2010 - 2013, 2010, p.8), and as this study shows, this environment can be easily found in tourism travel, equipping one with the skills and motivation required to bring about the needed change. Also this study shows that when young people are abroad they become better informed about various aspects and are provided with the opportunity to actually produce knowledge; so one can easily say that tourism travel is also a main contributor towards increasing information amongst young people. Youth information is another one of the five main “horizontal threads” of the Maltese youth policy since “information facilitates young people to promote their participation as active members of society and enables them achieve their aspirations” (National Youth Policy 2010 - 2013, 2010, p.8). Information makes young people more autonomous and empowers them. Yet another important aspect of tourism travel is that it provides opportunities for young people to share their social experiences and through this exposure to different cultures and the interaction with various people, they nurture inclusion. This idea again coincides with another main pillar, mainly that of social inclusion, which the National Youth Policy 2010 – 2013 discusses through the various “vertical themes”.

Considering all this it feels that tourism travel incorporates an up-to-date overview of the major characteristics of youth policy, so it is of utmost importance that more young people are provided with opportunities to benefit from the enriching experience that tourism travel offers.

**5.4 Recommendations**

The conclusions obtained from this study point to some recommendations, mainly:

1) Creating awareness

After noting the inherent qualities of tourism travel, I believe that one of the roles of schools and the various youth organisations who are actively involved in the formal, non-formal and informal education of young people should be that of creating more awareness about tourism travel and its benefits.

2) Developing partnerships

Apart from creating the necessary awareness, schools and different youth organisations should also seek to establish firm partnerships with other schools and youth organisations abroad and make sure to provide opportunities for young people to take part in exchanges and other tourism travel opportunities created specifically between the local and foreign schools/youth organisations. This will definitely help in forging creativity and innovation amongst many other qualities.
3) Establishing initiatives

The government, together with educational organisations and different youth groups should consider establishing initiatives where together they could foster dialogue and understanding of tourism travel, its importance and effect on young people and society at large; and try to develop collaborative approaches to see that all young people have the opportunity to experience tourism travel as much as possible.

4) Being proactive

Tourism travel is a type of lifestyle which we know is being sought after by many different young people at the moment, so youth workers should make the most of this idea and try to reach more young people by developing projects and initiatives within the realm of tourism travel.

5) A requirement in post-secondary and tertiary education

In post-secondary and tertiary educational systems, tourism travel should be facilitated to be an integral part of the curriculum as much as possible. During post-secondary education one should consider the idea to further his/her studies abroad at least for a semester. While during tertiary education it would be interesting to introduce the idea of a ‘gap year’, where the young person would stop for a year attending tertiary level education but would instead be enticed to embark on a scholastic year’s long tourism travel experience. Tourism travel gives a first-hand approach by placing individuals directly in the core of the experience and so it will help one to further exploration and discovery. Also, such an experience can place him/her in a situation where they could better understand what they really want in life. It will be a student’s time to stop and
reflect. Through such initiatives, young people are invited to be active participants in creating knowledge themselves and not simply take up the passive role behind a desk in a formal institution, where they are sometimes expected to simply reproduce knowledge. Through tourism travel they are given a real opportunity to be the main actors of their life. Tourism travel is the field of knowledge which constitutes power.

6) Changes in thinking

Tourism travel should not only be perceived as a leisure activity or something which people avail of when they have time to spare, but it needs to be redefined as a powerful educational tool. The role of the educational system in helping children make switches in their own thinking is very important here. This is due to the fact that children in schools today are tomorrow’s young people and the future adults of society, so they should have the right attitude towards tourism travel. Children are also the means to pass on the information and the right attitude to their other family members.

7) Strengthening support mechanisms

The government should take steps towards assuring that young people have free or cheaper services provided in relation to tourism travel to encourage them even more to engage in tourism travel, such as in cases where the young Maltese citizens need a visa to enter a specific country.
5.5 Areas for Further Research

After this study, one can identify various avenues for further research. One can look at:

1) A study concentrating on youth work and tourism travel. Is tourism travel impacting youth work within the local scenario in any way?

2) A study involving different Maltese people of all ages and their perceptions on tourism travel. Is it an investment or a waste of time?

3) A study investigating if tourism travel is really available to all young people. How easy is it to access it? What is keeping some young people away from it?

4) A study on the benefits of experiencing tourism travel at an early age.

5) A study concentrating on tourism travel as an educational tool.

5.6 Conclusion

This exploratory study has shed light on young Maltese habitual tourists and concludes that habitual tourism amongst Maltese young people is a complex phenomenon derived from various circumstances of a social, cultural, emotional, personal and behavioural nature. Tourism travel is perceived as a very positive experience by the young people themselves, permanently leaving its mark and transforming them. Tourism travel is such
an enriching experience that it should be experienced by everyone. When tackling young Maltese habitual tourists, the role of family and peers and the role of social media in particular is highly significant mainly because they are major sources of influence for young Maltese habitual tourists.

Tourism travel is a multi-faceted phenomenon which does not only take habitual tourists physically away, but it provides the individual with the opportunity of new mentally enriching endeavours. As one bird lover once said, “A bird that learns to fly has no qualms about returning to its cage”.
Appendix
Questions for semi-structured Interviews with Habitual Tourists

1) Name, Age, Location? Can you briefly tell me something about yourself?
   Isem, Eta’, Minn fejn int? Tghidli xi haġa żghira dwarek?

2) How often do you travel?
   Kull kemm issiefer normalment?

3) Why do you travel?
   Għaliex issiefer?
   • To escape from something/someone? Issiefer sabiex tahrab minn xi haġa/xi hadd?
   • To escape from any social obligations? Biex tahrab minn xi dmirijiet li ghandek?
   • Any particular needs you search towards fulfilling while abroad? Xi bżonnijiet li tara li tissodisfa meta tkun msiefer?
   • Ever celebrated any particular achievement/new step in life? Ġieli sifirt biex tiċċelebra xi haġa/xi pass importanti f’ħajtek?
   • Ever gone abroad because of social influences – family/friends? Ġieli sifirt x'imkien ghax kont influwenzat – familjari/hbieb?
   • A luxury experience? Esperjenza ta’ lussu?

4) How do you decide where to go?
   Kif tiddeciedi fejn tmur u x’fatturi żżomm f’mohhok biex tiddeċiedi l-post?
   • What do you look for when choosing your destination? Xi tfittex f’pajjiz qabel tiddeċiedi li tkun sejjer hemm?
   • Do you prefer going abroad to a country more similar to your culture/habits/traditions? Tippreferi li ssiefer f’pajjiz fejn il-kultura’, drawwiet, tradizzjonijiet huma simili ghal dawk tal-pajjiz tieghek?
• Would love to experience the unknown? Tippreferi tesperjenza xi ħaġa li qatt ma esperjenzajt/xi ħaġa totalment differenti minn dik li inti mdorri biha?

5) How has tourism travel impacted the quality of your life?
   Is-safar, kif affetwalek hajtek?

6) How do you plan your visits abroad? (before, during and for the future as well)
   Kif tippjana s-safra?
   • Do you set any goals/objectives in mind? Tpoġġi għanijiet f’mohhok li tkun tixtieq takkwista/taghmel meta tkun f’pajjiż iehor?
   • Any specific time of the year? Xi żmien partikolari tas-sena meta tippreferi ssiefer?

7) What drives you to keep on going abroad?
   Xi jżommok li tibqa' ssiefer?

8) Do you ever get bored of going abroad?
   Ġieli xbajt/ddejjaqt issiefer?

9) Do you prefer to travel alone or with family members/group of friends? Why?
   Tippreferi ssiefer/tivjaġġa wahdek jew ma' xi membri tal-famija jew ħbieb per eżempju? Ghaliex?

10) Do you believe that tourism travel is available to everyone?
    Tahseb li t-turiżmu huwa aċċessibbli ghal kulhadd?

11) Is tourism in anyway related to lifestyle? How?
    It-turiżmu huwa b’xi mod marbut ma' stil ta' ħajja? Kif?
12) Did you ever go on an organised tour (by a private company)?
   Ġieli sifirt ma' aġenzija tal-ivjaġġar (minn kumpanija privata)?
     • If no, why?
       Jekk le, għaliex?
     • If yes, how would you describe your experience?
       Jekk iva, kif tiddeskrivi l-esperjenza li kellek?

13) Is there somewhere you’d like to go but haven’t been? Why?
   Hemm x'imkien fejn verament tixtieq tmur imma għadek ma mortx? Għaliex?

14) Is there anywhere you would not want to go? Why?
   Hemm x'imkien li żgur ma tridx/ma tithajjarx tmur? Għaliex?
Bibliography


Commonwealth Youth Programme. (1998). *Youth Empowerment in the New Millenium*. Malaysia


iv.dk/papers/SkagenBlaabjergTorrasHansen%20Empowering%20students%20through%20information%20literacy.pdf](http://www.ck-iv.dk/papers/SkagenBlaabjergTorrasHansen%20Empowering%20students%20through%20information%20literacy.pdf)


